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TOLSTOY

HIS LIFE AND WORK

Every great philosophy is finally a confession, an involuntary memoir.

NIETZSCHE.

ROUTLEDGE LONDON

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Author's Note

THE dates quoted are old style: that is, until 1900, 12 days, and since 1900, 13 days, behind Western European Style.

For the sake of consistency and convenience, the feminine termination of proper names has been retained only in quotations from Tolstoy's diary, where it is the most natural means of designating the sex.

The method used of translating Christian names is arbitrary, an English form being used when it clearly exists, but the Russian form being retained (as in Sergey) when a translated form is as alien as the original.

In most cases the titles of Tolstoy's brothers and children have been omitted (they were, of course, all Counts and Countesses), since to employ them in each case produces, to the English eye, an unnatural effect. For the same reason the formal Russian mode of address has been retained only in quoted correspondence or diary entries.

Square brackets denote insertions made by the author; and a list of those books to which he is most indebted is to be found at the end of the volume. This does not purport to be a complete bibliography, nor does it include all the works consulted; but it indicates those of which material use has been made, and which are likely to be of most use to the student. Both French and English versions have been included, since in certain cases both translations are incomplete, and one version supplements the other.

Where numerals are appended to quoted passages, they refer to the number of the work from which such passages have been extracted, and, when necessary, indicate the translation used. In these cases the author has occasionally altered a word or a phrase. In cases where the work enumerated is in French, he is responsible for the version rendered.

Acknowledgement is made and thanks given to the following publishers for kind permission to quote from thos% volumes issued by them which are enumerated in the list of Works Consulted at the end of the book:

Allen & Unwin, Cape, Cassell, Chapman & Hall, Chatto & Windus, Constable, Dent, Harrap, Heinemann, Hogarth Press, Kegan Paul, Methuen, and Oxford University Press.

*An effort of reflection during my illness showed me that a biography written as biographies usually are, and passing in silence cater all the viciousness and guilt of my life, would be false, JKja that if a biography is to be written the whole real truth must be told. Only a biography of that kind—however ashamed one may be to write it—can be of any real benefit to its readers. . . **

TOLSTOY: *Introduction to* **Recollections.**[18]

/ have been reading Mendelssohn's Life, and now have started on the two volumes of Beethoven. But what is the use of biographies—how can one understand the spirit of the man from them? He creates with his spirit, and his art reflects the spiritual side of its creator, while the material side is usually wicked or insignificant.

COUNTESS S. A. TOLSTOY: Diary, Oct. 23, 1897.[67]

PART I

/ think and even know, for I have experienced it specially in childhood, that the love of others is a natural state of the soul, or rather a natural relationship to people, and when that state exists, one does not notice it. It is noticed only when one does not love, but fears someone, or when one loves someone particularly.. . TOLSTOY: **Recollections.**[18]

Chapter I

I. ***Birth and ancestry: early memories: the Ant Brotherhood: childhood at Yasnaya Polyana. 2. The move to Moscow: first love—Lyubov Islenev andSonichka Kaloshin: death of Leo* s father and grandmother: death of the Countess Osten-Saken: the move to Ka^an.***

A '

AT Yasnaya Polyana, a fine wooden house built in the classical style with a handsome columned portico, elegant balconies and more than forty rooms, Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy was born on August 28th, 1828. Byron had died four years before; Pushkin, Goethe and Stendhal still lived; while Ruskin and Dostoevsky were both younger than Turgenev, now ten years old.

Russia was very much separated from the rest of Europe. As a French traveller, after visiting the new palace of Czarskoye Selo, had recorded in his diary several decades ago: "In Russia there are two kinds of people—the nobles and the peasants. The nobles who have all, and the peasants who have nothing, the always toiling peasants and the all-devouring nobles." Less than three years before, on the accession of Nicholas I, the Decembrist conspirators, the intellectual elite of Russia, had failed in their aim of procuring a constitution for their country. Capital punishment was rare, though not infrequently a man who had been sentenced to several thousand strokes of the birch would die long before he had received his full punishment; while even fifty years later Marie BashkirtsefF was to be shocked, on returning to her country, to find an acquaintance beating his coachman with his fists and kicking him with his spurs on "as though it were the most natural thing in the world." As for the squalor, Tolstoy himself was wont to say in later life that in the old days, under the serfdom, when the landed gentry lived very dirtily and bugs were everywhere, if a guest remained for the night the butler used to be put into the bed first so as to *(ted* the bugs, and only after that was the bed made for the visitor.

On both sides Tolstoy was descended from the old aristocracy, his mother's and his father's families each having been closely connected with the service of the State, and of brilliant literary and historic associations. The first Tolstoy to be ennobled (the family, who had originally come from Germany, had been given that name by the Grand Duke Vasili Tyomny) was Peter Andreyevich, a political adventurer who had received lands and title from Peter the Great for going into Italy after the sovereign's fugitive son Alexey, and treacherously enticing him back to Russia, where he was subsequently tortured to death. Later, when Alexey's son Peter II had attained the throne, Peter Andreyevich Tolstoy, despoiled of his honours, was banished to a monastery at Archangel, from which he never returned. But, with the sudden reversal of fortune which occurred with so many of the Romanovs and their supporters, his grandson Andrey Ivanovich received back both lands and dignity from the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, and thereafter the family was firmly established amongst the high nobility. By the middle of the nineteenth century it was said that of all the families ennobled by Peter I or Catherine the Great, only the Tolstoys had survived.

Andrey Ivanovich Tolstoy had a son Ilya, a man "of limited intelligence, very gentle and merry, and not only generous and confiding, but senselessly prodigal," who married Pelageya Nikolaevna, a woman of narrow intellect and scanty education, daughter of the blind Prince Gorchakov who had amassed a large fortune. Having squandered both his own and his wife's estates in reckless extravagance, through the influence of wealthy relatives Ilya Tolstoy later became the Governor of Kazan. His son Nicholas was Leo Tolstoy's father.

Nicholas Tolstoy had been a young man during the famous campaign which drove Napoleon from Russia, but having been taken prisoner by the enemy when sent to France with despatches, he languished in prison while the allies were marching into Paris. By the time he was released the family fortunes had been completely dissipated, and it was imperative for liim to consider re-establishing them by a wealthy marriage. This he did by taking to wife the plain but lovable Princess Mary Volkonski, daughter of the distinguished and eccentric Prince Volkonski who had refused to marry the niece and mistress of Potemkin (What makes him think I will marry his harlot ? he is said to have asked) and had later married a Princess Troubetskoy instead.

The Volkonskis, who claimed descent through the Princes of Chernigov with Rurik himself, were rich, proud and independent. One of them had played a leading part in the murder of the mad Emperor Paul. Another (second cousin to Tolstoy's mother) had been one of the Decembrist conspirators, and exiled to Siberia for thirty years, in consequence, whither, as Nekrasov has told in his poem, his wife voluntarily accompanied him; while his brother, who had participated in every campaign against Napoleon, acted with such conspicuous courage

upon the battlefield that, when wounded and a prisoner, Napoleon himself had sent for him and offered him his freedom on condition that he promised not to engage in the war for the next two years—an offer that was proudly declined.

In addition to pride of birth and independence of mind and action, Tolstoy probably inherited literary talent also from both sides of his family. For, besides being distantly related to various distinguished critics, historians and contributors to magazines, through his father he was connected with the poet and dramatist Alexey Tolstoy, and through his mother he was a distant cousin of the celebrated Pushkin.

The marriage between Count Nicholas Tolstoy and Princess Mary Volkonski, though primarily one of convenience, was not unhappy. Each had loved deeply before. The Count had all but married a distant relative, Tatiana Ergolski, who had been brought up as one of the family in his father's house, and renounced her at last only because she had no fortune; while the Princess had been betrothed to a Prince Golitzin, son of that same Varvara Engelhardt whom her father had rejected. But he had died; and though no one else could ever take his place in her heart, she had named her youngest son after him.

The Count, a debonair, handsome, genial and kindly man whose distinguished bearing was unmatched by any remarkable abilities, retired from the army soon after his marriage, and occupied himself exclusively with the cultivation of his estates and the many lawsuits relating to his father's chaotic affairs. His wife devoted herself completely to the welfare of her family. A plain, awkward woman several years older than her husband, the Countess Tolstoy nevertheless possessed a charm of manner that was the expression of a cultivated and an understanding mind enriched by a charitable and affectionate heart. Accomplished, highly educated and deeply religious, she could speak five languages fluently, played the piano exceptionally well, possessed great discrimination of taste, and was gifted with so remarkable a talent for telling stories that in her youth at balls many of her friends would prefer to listen to her rather than dance.

Yasnaya Polyana, an estate of about eighty acres with a fine old house built by her father, had been part of the Princess Volkonski's dowry, and here they settled soon after their marriage* The elegant mansion of painted wood with its ample stone wings stood firmly planted on a slight eminence surrounded with shrubberies, and was approached by a noble avenue of birch trees wish two round white towers at the entrance. The grounds were finely wooded, with imposing avenues of lime trees. A river ran through them, and there were several ponds. Near at hand was the village, like a thousand others scattered throughout Russia: a broad flat street between straw-thatched huts of mud and wattle, with a communal pump and a simple church. Some ten miles north, across a gently undulating countryside rich with forests and unfenced cornland, lay the city of Tula: close by,

the old road to Kiev bore a continual stream of pilgrims to the sacred city, many of whom visited Yasnaya Polyana to seek rest and alms on their way.

Leo Tolstoy was the fourth boy in the family, and, until she died less than two years after his birth in bearing a daughter who was named after her, he was his mother's litde Benjamin. But he never remembered her with any clarity, though the picture he created of her from the tales of those who had known her remained an inspiration to him the whole of his life. Enraptured, the little boy would listen while her maid explained how, though she was quick-tempered, she was also very restrained; and though she might grow red in the face, and sometimes cry when she was vexed, "she would never say a harsh word—she did not even know any."

Like most Russian families of that period and class, the circle of which he was soon to become conscious was already a large one. Besides his father and his brothers and sister, it included his paternal grandmother, who had lived with her son ever since her husband had died; his aunt Aline, the Countess Osten-Saken, who, after a short period of disastrous married life, during which her husband had gone mad and one day shot her through the chest, had returned with her ward Pashenka to her brother for protection; that same Tatiana Ergolski whom Count Nicholas had loved in youth, and who, though she had rejected him when he had proposed to her after his wife's death, had promised him, nevertheless, always to be a mother to his children; a ward, Dunechka Temyashov, the illegitimate daughter of one of the Count's intimate bachelor friends; and an ample complement of tutors, nurses and old and faithful family servants.

Tolstoy's first recollection—an incident characteristic of his ardent, strenuous and frustrated life—was of lying tightly bound in his swaddling-clothes and bursting into a loud wail because he wanted to stretch his arms and could not do so. Someone who bent over him evidently considered it necessary that he should remain thus fettered, but he himself knew that it was unnecessary, and by his lusty bellows wished to make this clear to her.

Otherwise, his memories of early life in the nursery with his sister Masha (Mary) and his foster-sister Dunechka were but few and fragmentary: of sitting in a dark wooden tub being bathed, and enjoying the steaming, fragrant, swirling water, the smooth edge along which he ran his hands, the sight of his nurse's comfortable friendly arms, and his own small perfectly formed body with the ribs clearly visible beneath the flesh; of being deliciously terrified by his nurse with some mysterious, exciting phrase specially invented by her to amuse him; of >once being taken to an attic by his brother's tutor to dance in a ring with some washerwomen, and feeling privately affronted, in watching him, that any man could throw his legs about with such abandon.

The first unforgettable crisis of his life occurred when he was five

years old. One day his dear aunt Tatiana—the being whom of all those about him he loved most tenderly—came to tell him that it was now time for him to leave the nursery for the schoolroom. Affectionately she tied for him the girdle of his dressing-gown, and tried her utmost to console him for the loss of the childish innocence that in his heart he felt to be infinitely precious. But he remained sad, and it was only the knowledge that it would be unmanly for a boy of his age to continue to live amongst girls that gave him the strength to surrender himself to the tutor without tears.

The ordeal proved to be less terrifying than he had imagined, and very soon he became accustomed to the greater world. From the first he loved his brothers with a peculiar tenderness. He loved Mitenka (Dmitri), the nearest to him in age, with his merry smile and his strange, incomprehensible passions; he loved Nikolenka (Nicholas), the eldest, with his kindliness, his talent, his humour, his astonishing gift of telling endless fascinating stories, and of drawing wonderful devils with horns; but Seriosha (Sergey) the handsome and high-spirited, Seriosha the candid, proud and gay, who was always singing and cared nothing for what anyone thought of him, Seriosha he positively adored.

The whole house, the whole family, must have been pervaded with an unusual atmosphere of love, and this atmosphere particularly surrounded the boys. Not only did aunt Tatiana stand in the place of a mother to them, and teach little Leo the charm of loving—"not only by her words, but by her whole being," but Nicholas, who had evidently heard something of the Moravian Brothers, early initiated the others into his secret Ant (mouravey) Brotherhood, and announced one day, with mysterious self-importance, that he possessed a charm by means of which all men on earth could become good and happy. This secret he had himself inscribed upon a piece of green twig, which he had carefully buried in a spot that one day he made known to his marvelling brothers. Thereafter, to play at being Ant Brothers was their favourite game. Seated behind each other upon an imaginary coach, crouched under the table or huddled together in a wigwam made of chairs and shawls, they would press close to each other with a deliberate tenderness, while Nicholas explained that it was only through mutual love that all men could become brothers. He even hinted at a certain mysterious Fanfaron Hill, whither, if they promised to observe his diverse and curious instructions, he would ene day lead them, so that they might learn the final secret. Thus, even before he was six years old, there was born in Leo the dream of a world in which all men should be united in brotherhood through love.

Always an unusually tender-hearted and sensitive little boy, passionately susceptible to music, and so responsive to kindness and affection that when he was caressed or petted he would weep for joy, he was soon nicknamed by his brothers Lyova-ryova—Leo cry-baby. But evid-

ently without malice. To them, as to his aunt Tatiana, he was always to be known as *"notre cher Lion"*

The Tolstoys were the most important family in the neighbourhood, and it was inevitable that the aristocratic tradition in which they were brought up, and the deference which the children received from all sides, should leave an ineffaceable impression upon mind and character alike. Thus, although at Yasnaya Polyana the serfs were probably as well treated as upon any estate in Russia, one day when he saw a favourite peasant being taken to a barn by an overseer to be beaten, it never even occurred to the tender-hearted Leo to protest. " But why didn't you try to stop it?" aunt Tatiana asked him when he told her. Regarding her in abashed and guilty silence, Leo could think of no reply. He had not realized the possibility of crying out against such customary usages, and now it was too late.

Yet more distressing was the time when they hanged his tutor's little dog. This "dear brown dog, with beautiful eyes and soft curly hair," had been accidentally run over, and since her leg was broken and she could be no further use for hunting, it was decided to put her away. It was more than little Leo could understand. " The dog was suffering, was ill, and was to be hanged for it. I felt there was something wrong, but did not dare to trust my feeling in the face of the firm decision of people I respected."

Once he realized that animals could suffer pain, it became impossible for him to inflict it wantonly. One day when he had been beating his old horse Raven, the serf explained to him that it was useless to punish it, as the beast was simply too exhausted to carry him farther. At once Leo jumped down, and, observing how its steaming sides quivered and its breath came in painful gasps, he " felt so sorry that he began to kiss his sweaty neck and to beg his pardon for having hurt him." It had never occurred to him before that Raven could be any less happy than himself.

Such painful incidents, however, were of but rare occurrence, and for the most part life passed very pleasantly, with lessons in the school-room under the warm-hearted tutor; expeditions to the Little Forest to gather nuts with his old grandmother, who, seated in her yellow cabriolet drawn by a footman while he and his brothers bent down the branches for her, picked them and carefully stowed them away in a little bag; skating in the winter; bathing and picnicking in the summer; or visiting the kennels and the stables to see their favourite dogs and horses, for their father was an ardent huntsman, as his youngest son was to be after him, and from his earliest years Leo had a rare understanding and affection for all animals.

Then, in the house, there was Dunechka's nurse, who had a hanging chin like a turkey's, with a ball-like growth inside it that she would sometimes let the boys feel as a treat; Praskovya Isaevna, the faithful old housekeeper, who told them wonderful stories of the

days when grandfather was a soldier, lorded it over the other servants, and, on occasion, might even be persuaded to give her litde Leo some special delicacy from the store-cupboard; Vasili Troubetskoy, the butler, wh^ would carry the children in turn up and down the pantry on his tray; or some friendly pilgrim seeking shelter for a night before resuming his journey to the miraculous shrines at Kiev.

At Christmas there would be festivities of a traditional magnificence. The thirty house serfs, in fancy dress and exuberant spirits, would crowd into the huge drawing-room, and their neighbours the Islenevs would drive over from their estate of Ivitsa: three little girls and three little boys with their father Alexander Mikhaylovich, all in strange and wonderful costumes, so that the old house rang with the sound of laughter, music and dancing. Then would follow long winter evenings, when, upon going into the drawing-room to kiss their elders' hands and say good-night, the children would sometimes be invited to sit for a short time with them, while one of their aunts read aloud to the company, and their old grandmother, aided by her son, would lay out her patience cards in solemn ritual, and from time to time take a pinch of snuff from a gold box. It was on such an evening, while the whole family were thus assembled, that Count Nicholas, that "well-built, active, sanguine man with a pleasant face and eyes that were always sad," saw, in one of the tall mirrors that reflected the next room through the open door, one of the footmen entering on tiptoe to steal tobacco from his master's jar. When he pointed out the miscreant to the rest of them with benevolent amusement, Leo was so enchanted that on leaving the room he kissed his father's hand with special tenderness in order to show his appreciation of such kindness. He always had the greatest affection for this father of his, who petted his children when they went to speak to him in his study, and even permitted them to climb onto the back of his divan; who told such merry stories at the dinner-table, looked so wonderfully handsome in his frock-coat and tight trousers when he went off to town, or when he was seated easily upon his favourite hunter and followed by his pack of splendid hounds.

Gay, high-spirited and full of life despite his tendency to weep, Leo was not, however, a handsome child: and the fact that Dmitri and Nicholas were comely, and Sergey positively beautiful, made him all the more sensitive to his own lack of good looks. When his aunt Tatiana sometimes told him that he must always try to be good and clever, as certainly no one would ever love hirafor his face, he would sigh sadly, long passionately to be handsome, and even pray for some miracle that would work a transformation in his appearance* Doubly gratifying was it, therefore, when his father would sometimes pat his head and compliment him for reciting some favourite verses with unusual feeling. For even as a small child Leo desired to please and to be loved by everyone; and the blissful state of being full of goodwill to all was his most precious experience.

Like the Nicholas of *Childhood,* when he went to bed he would tenderly press some favourite toy animal into a corner of his pillow and, his face still wet with the tears that he had previously shed as he thought of all the misfortunes of his old tutor, pray to God to make everybody happy, and at last fall peacefully asleep.

2

All too soon this idyllic country life came to an end. In the autumn of 1836, when Leo was eight years old, the family moved to an old house in Moscow in order that the children could be educated in a manner becoming to their station. And sad though it was for him to leave Yasnaya Polyana—the dear familiar house, the horses and dogs, the old servants—his grief was soon consoled by some new trousers with straps which made him feel agreeably grown up.

In Moscow, their homely, affectionate German tutor, Feodor Ivanovich Rossel, with hisquilted dressing-gown, his red tasselled smoking-cap, his inevitable *History of the Seven Years War,* and his lugubrious but fascinating reminiscences, soon gave place to the scented French coxcomb St. Thomas, who, once when Leo had been particularly disobedient, threatened him with the cane and shut him up in a locked room—an experience which kindled in the boy's heart a feeling of indignation, disgust and loathing for all forms of violence that was to last his whole life; and on another occasion, complacently laid his hand upon his head with the gratifying remark: *"Cepetitaune tite; cestun petit Moliere"* But not always was the verdict to be so favourable; and the usually quoted testimony upon the scholastic capacities of the four young Tolstoys was that "Nicholas wishes and can; Sergey can but won't; Dmitri wishes but can't; while Leo neither wishes nor can." If their keenness for learning as yet left much to be desired, however, their faculties for metaphysical speculation were already acute; and when one of their friends imported into their circle the heresy that perhaps God did not really exist, the four brothers discussed the question from every point of view with unusual zeal.

In Moscow, too, there were many new acquaintances. And very soon the susceptible Leo fell in love. His first passion was for another litde boy—one of his Pushkin cousins—to whom he could scarcely bring himself to speak, so painful was his adoration. Then came Sonichka Kaloshin, a fair, blue-eyed girl no older than himself, in whose society he used to feel such tenderness, such tranquil bliss, that it was as though he understood her every unexpressed thought and mood; and even to think of her when she was absent was enough to make him weep for joy. So exquisite and pure were his emotions for her, indeed, that always, in die future, they were to serve him as a standard of comparison by which to assess the depth and quality of his feelings. But with Lyubov Alexandrovna Islenev, one of the daughters

of their country neighbour, who had now become the special friend of his sister Mary, his emotions were far from calm; and a passionate admiration became transformed into raging jealousy when she dared so much as to lo6k at another little boy. Once when she went so far as to speak to one in his presence, such was young Tolstoy's rage and indignation that he pushed her off the balcony where they were playing, as a result of which she was lame for several years.

With Love and Death, the two great mysteries of human life, he was to be acquainted from his early boyhood. For in the summer of 1837 Count Nicholas Tolstoy, while on the way to visit Dunechka's father in Tula, suddenly fell dead in the middle of the street. Some said that his death was due to an apoplectic fit; others that he had been poisoned by a serf. And though Leo knew perfectly well that both his brother Nicholas and his aunt, the Countess Osten-Saken, had seen him buried at Yasnaya Polyana, he could never bring'himself to realize that his father was really dead, and, hoping that he might suddenly see him again, in the streets for months anxiously searched the face of every passer-by.

Scarcely had they become used to this bereavement than a new one fell upon them. Nine months after their father's death, while they were engrossed in a beguiling game which involved the burning of paper in chamber-pots behind a screen, St. Thomas interrupted them to break the news that their grandmother had just passed away. Dropsy and inconsolable grief for her son had been too much for her. At once die boys' merriment gave way to a decorous gloom; though at the funeral Leo's grief was considerably alleviated by the solicitous deference shown them by all their relatives and friends. When he heard someone remark "... completely orphans ... the father has only just died, and now the grandmother has gone too ..." he was most agreeably impressed; and a new braided jacket made specially for the occasion added gready to his gratifying sense of self-importance.

After their grandmother's death, Nicholas and Sergey remained in Moscow with the Countess Osten-Saken, who was now their legal guardian, while the two younger boys returned home to Yasnaya Polyana with Mary, Dunechka, and their dear aunt Tatiana. Here Russian and German tutors were engaged to continue their education; and during the ensuing famine they indulged in the edifying activity of stealing oats from the fields of the neighbouring peasants in order to feed their favourite ponies.

Thereafter, the whole family moved betweenMoscow and Yasnaya Polyana until the autumn of 1841, when the Countess Osten-Saken also died unexpectedly during a retreat to the Optin Convent. A simple, unexacting, saindy woman, who gave away her money to the poor and made every action of her life subservient to her love of God, death had taken her where doubdess she felt most at peace. But it left the orphan Tolstoys with only one other near relative, their father's sister Pelageya Ilyinishna Yushkov, who still lived at Kazan.

A sympathetic but frivolous woman, "vain, small and pretty, sensitive and kind," she was nevertheless moved by the same piety that seems to have been characteristic of all the Tolstoy women, and promptly decided to take the unfortunate children under her care. Having gone at once to Moscow, where they now happened to be, she forthwith made drastic plans to transport the whole family—and half the effects of Yasnaya Polyana too—to her house at Kazan. Only dear aunt Tatiana was not to come. It was known that Col. Yushkov, a famous ladies' man, had once paid her great attention—had even proposed to her long ago and been rejected—and, perennially jealous, his wife was not inclined to put unnecessary temptation in his way. So, although she visited them regularly every summer when the young Tolstoys went home to Yasnaya Polyana, Leo's beloved aunt was banished to live with a sister; and with her went the last tender influence of his childhood.

PART II

It is easier to write ten volumes of philosophy than to put a single precept into practice, TOLSTOY : *Diary* 1847. [49]

Chapter I

1. ***Life in Kazan: early eccentricities: birth of the philosopher and the amateur of letters: friendship with Dmitri Diakov: plans for self-perfection: early lapses, 2, The fashionable student: the imaginary lover—Alexandra Diakov and Zinaida Molostvov: dreams of marriage : the youthful rake: the fascination of study: leaving the university,*** **3.** ***Removal to hospital: contradictory personalities: first diary reflections: the purpose of life: self observation: return to Yasnaya Polyana: the young reformer: early disappointment: puritan resolutions: departure for Petersburg,*** **4.** ***New resolutions and distractions : gambling losses: the young man about town: social aspirations: the Princess Barbara Volkonski: more diary reflections: vanity and the passion for play: first attempts at composition: self-disgust and disillusionment: departure for the Caucasus,***

KAZAN, in 1840, was the social capital of the Russia of the Kama and the Volga; and as grandsons of one of its, late governors, the young Tolstoys were soon numbered amongst the elite of the town. Mme. Yushkov was a generous hostess, and as her husband, who had once been a colonel in a crack regiment of the Guards, was also an amiable man, fond of music, company and cards, there were frequent parties to distract the boys from their studies. With balls, charades and concerts, their adolescence passed in an easy, frivolous atmosphere of provincial social supremacy. Each boy had his own personal servant (a serf from Yasnaya Polyana); everyone save those in their own circle was considered of small consequence, and they grew up with but little knowledge of life outside their immediate environment.

This change of circumstances was scarcely congenial to Leo. As his brothers developed different tastes and interests he grew less intimate with them; while in this new world in which social success possessed an exaggerated importance he became increasingly morbid over his lack of the social graces. When he was alone, he gazed more and more frequently at his unprepossessing appearance in the **mirror. With** his stubborn, dark short hair; his large ears; his deep-set, **narrow grey'** eyes, which, when he beheld them, gleamed with a baleful and angry

light; his ridged nose with its coarse wide nostrils, **and** his full, sensual lips, he was more than ever convinced that no one could regard him with emotions other than those of aversion or contempt; and as the years passed, increasingly frequent moods of pride, self-consciousness and introspection slowly quenched his natural buoyancy of spirits and his ingenuous tenderness of heart.

Impetuous, wilful and inordinately vain, at first he indulged himself in various harmless freaks. Already, in Moscow, seized with an ardent desire to fly, and persuading himself that the feat could surely be accomplished if, with arms tightly up-pressed against his knees, he jumped upwards into the air, he had hurled himself out of an upstairs window to put his theory to the test, and was fortunate in recovering consciousness, uninjured, after eighteen hours' unbroken sleep. But now vanity was the guiding impulse of most of his eccentricities. One day he would shave his head completely to see if it would improve his appearance. Another, he would brush his hair with elaborate art, hoping thus to give himself a melancholy, pensive and Byronic air. When this proved unsuccessful, he tried plucking out his eyebrows, the purpose being that afterwards they would grow more thickly, and so add a passionate and romantic quality to his looks. But his looks, alas, refused by such devious methods to be improved.

At last he sought consolation amongst his books; read everything he could lay hands on, and beguiled himself for hours with poetry, legends, novels, and the perennially new *Thousand and One Nights.* He took to observing the foibles of those about him with a scornful detachment, and merely smiled contemptuously when, at parties, he noticed the greatest deference being paid to the most wealthy guests. Music he still loved passionately, and at concerts listened with a slight pallor and a strained grimace of concentration which at times he no doubt hoped invested his personality with a subtle distinction. He fell so deeply under the spell of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that for some time he even wore a medal of him, instead of a crucifix, against his breast, and became so familiar with his *Confessions, Emile* and *La Nouvelle Hiloise,* that sometimes "he felt as if he had written them himself."

With his ardent curiosities, inevitably, as a youth, he was seized with an urgent desire to solve the great riddles of existence, and speculated for weeks upon the function of man in the universe, the immortality of the soul, and the possibility of a future life. He grew philosophical, and conceiving the idea that happiness depends, not upon any external causes, but only upon our relation to external causes, and that therefore a man inured to hardship cannot suffer, he would hold out heavy dictionaries at arm's length for five minutes at a time, or, shut up in a boxroom, lash his bare back with a rope until the tears came. Then, forcing his mind to dwell upon the imminence of death, and persuaded that one can experience happiness only by enjoying the present, he would refuse to learn his lessons, spend all his pocket-money on

sweets, and shut himself up to lie voluptuously upon his bed eating cakes and reading novels.

This would be followed by moods of a fantastic scepticism. He would imagine that in the whole universe he alone existed; that, since everything except himself was but a subjective phenomenon, as soon as he withdrew his attention the whole world about him would disappear. And in order to test the theory, he would sometimes even turn round suddenly in the hope of catching a glimpse of nothingness. After metaphysics, he lost himself in a gloomy labyrinth of self-analysis so intricate that he would find himself " thinking that he was thinking about what he was thinking about." So deep sometimes were his moods of abstraction, that once when he was going fishing, and had in one hand a loaf of bread and in the other a jar of worms, he absently stuffed a handful of worms into his mouth and began to chew them, to his quick disgust.

Fortunately, this morbid introspection was dispelled by the pleasures of friendship, and Tolstoy eventually became intimate with a naive, ingenuous, earnest and charming youth, Dmitri Diakov, who, with his tall figure, broad shoulders, fair hair, delicate complexion and fine teeth, was, despite his pleasant and expressive face, no less sensitive and bashful than Leo himself. (In *Youth*, he plays Nekhlyudov to Tolstoy's Irtenev.) Together, the two of them discussed "the future life, art, government service, marriage and the education of children, and felt that they had neither words enough nor time to express to one another all the thoughts that called for utterance."

Enchanted to find in each other the same frankness and the same desire for truth, impelled by an ardent desire for self-perfection, they promised to reveal to each other their inmost thoughts and feelings. After long and elevating conversations, Tolstoy would take himself sternly to task, make plans in future to be a model student, an expert gymnast, and even, in moods of inordinate optimism and ambition, the strongest man in existence. To be the cynosure of all eyes, in no matter what capacity, was a prospect infinitely intriguing, and often he indulged in fantasies of achieving universal approbation, if not through talent or heroism, at least by becoming the richest and most remarkable man in the world. But his favourite dream was of one day meeting some wonderful woman, combining in herself all the perfections he had ever admired in the feminine sex, who would eventually become his wife.

Following the more unworthy of his desires and imaginings, there would come a violent reaction of remorse and self-disgust, accompanied by an ardent determination henceforward to begin a new life. Once more he would formulate a new list of duties and occupations; determine to write down the purpose of his life and the means by which he hoped to attain it; and, although already intermittently sceptical, would even get up early to go to confession, in order that he might re-

assure himself that once more he was "a completely pure, morally regenerated and new man." But no sooner had he received the sacrament than vanity would once more subdue him, and, imagining himself as a model of perfection already on the way to sainthood, he would luxuriate in the idea that the confessor was " probably now telling himself that never in his whole life had he met before, or would meet again, another young man with so beautiful a soul as his."

But fact and imagination were realms apart. Physically strong and healthy, tormented by the lusts of the flesh, and sexually precocious, having early given way to that vice which has been publicly acknowledged by Rousseau in his *Confessions*, by the time he was sixteen Tolstoy had already seduced a handsome young servant girl living in the house. This would have been of less significance had the fact not come to the ears of his aunt, and the unfortunate girl not been banished from the place, to sink into a life of degradation which culminated in a premature and tragic death.

2

When he was sixteen, vaguely drawn towards the Diplomatic Service as a possible career, Tolstoy decided to enter the Kazan University in the Faculty of Oriental Languages. After an initial failure in history and statistics, he eventually passed a supplementary examination which admitted him as an external student. Dressed now in the dashing uniform of the undergraduate, with bright gilt buttons and a cocked hat, he was also presented with a room of his own, a horse and trap, and an adequate allowance. Thus elegantly equipped, he henceforward divided his time between society and the lecture-room. He bought himself impressive-looking pipes and made himself sick learning to smoke; visited fashionable confectioners where he over-gorged himself with rich cakes; learned to play cards and to drink champagne with the best of them; went out, carefully washed, brushed and scented, in his new clothes to pay calls; got pleasurably drunk, and did his utmost to impress both his social acquaintances and his fellows at the university with his own importance. At the balls which he condescended to attend he passionately desired to cut a figure and to have all the women at his feet; but in fact he was so disarmingly shy and awkward that although he was always dancing he was anything but a conspicuous success.

His latest craze was a passion for good form: the most desirable thing in the world to be a perfect gentleman, and to mix only with other such paragons as himself. To speak French with an air; to have the correct "set" to his trousers, elegantly manicured finger-nails, a pretty taste in waistcoats, and to dazzle his contemporaries by the originality of his character and the nobility of his bearing—this was now the height of his ambition..

By now the four brothers were seen but seldom in each other's company; yet when they met, in vain would the modest, talented and kindly Nicholas try to point out to " dear Leo " that it was crass stupidity to judge any man by the cut of his coat. For Leo still secredy worshipped the dazzling Sergey, who, handsome, elegant and coolly charming, was the most perfect gendeman that could possibly be^conceived, and consequently shone at every ball. As for the unassuming, passionate Dmitri, who had now "got religion," spent most of his time with some repellent, neglected dependant of their aunt, fasted, went frequendy to confession, and eschewed tobacco, wine and women —Tolstoy merely joined with the rest in contemptuously dubbing him Noah and jeering at his lust for righteousness.

At lectures he dreamed, stared about him, drew merciless caricatures of the professors, or gazed with contemptuous irony at some neighbour who bit his nails and was therefore outside the pale; while in society, in order to impress, he would cultivate a lordly air of boredom and fatigue, loudly assert the most absurd opinions, contradict rudely in the hope of displaying his originality; avow, at balls, that he disliked dancing above all things; blush, stammer, smile fatuously, and then, to crown it all, spill a glass of wine over his beautiful new clothes. Yet when he was able to forget his picture of himself, no one could be better company, his naturally expansive nature, his intelligence, his enthusiasm and his high spirits making him the most sympathetic of comrades. When he laughed uproariously, or his face kindled with understanding, one forgot the affectation of his manners and the clumsiness of his deportment; and despite his assumption of lofty indifference, he invariably endeared himself to those who could discern the man behind the mask.

In the country at home, too, he would become quite natural; and, sleeping in the open air on the verandah, getting up early to bathe in the river, to laze under the trees with a French novel, to go fishing or shooting, or simply to walk romantically through the woods, would observe, with a wry smile, the exaggerated follies of the previous year. But once back at Kazan, the desire to cut a figure would seize him irresistibly anew; and out would come the expensive clothes, the airs of languor, the aristocratic hauteur.

Of course he fancied himself in love—not once, but innumerable times. Now it would be with his dear Diakov's sister Alexandra, who, with her beautiful grey eyes and her cordial charm of manner, seemed the most appropriate person to be his future wife; now with some young and newly married woman before whom he would have rather died than confess his ardent and romantic feelings. At Kazan, too, he first met the gay, charming and intelligent Zinaida Molostvov, a pupil of the Rodion Institute and a special friend of his sister Mary, who moved almost exclusively in academic circles and thus combined with her delicate sensibilities a keen and educated intelligence that he was

quick to respond to and to appreciate. At balls he would always seek her out to dance the mazurka with him; when he met her out calling he would try to monopolize her in long and earnest conversations.

His favourite and most frequent dreams were still of love and marriage ; and often he would brood tenderly upon a perfect relationship in whicfc ardent passion and perfect understanding should be miraculously blended. Yet all the time women were becoming inevitably divided for him into two widely separated categories: those whom he could possess but were little more than instruments to satisfy his physical desires; and those for whom he felt a warmth of tenderness with which he concluded it to be unutterably base to associate any thoughts of carnal intercourse.

As only to be expected, this lordly manner of existence was scarcely conducive to successful scholarship, and it is not surprising that the Beautiful Leo, The Philosopher, The Recluse (as he was nicknamed by his various associates) failed somewhat ignominiously in his examinations ; as a result of which he now transferred himself to the Faculty of Law, and, having made this gesture, presently gave up even his former erratic attendance at lectures, and henceforward devoted all his energies to dissipation, dancing until the early hours at fashionable balls, playing cards with his cronies, or participating in drinking bouts which lasted until daylight. More than ever, Tolstoy was very deliberately the aristocrat; and a fellow-student who was confined with him at this time in punishment for some trivial offence found him "quite repellent with his assumption of coldness, his bristling hair, and the piercing expression of his half-closed eyes," and later assured the world that " never before had he met a young man with such a strange and, to him, incomprehensible air of importance and self-satisfaction."

But with his innate intelligence and his abundant energies no affectation of indifference could for long impede Tolstoy's intellectual development; and though he professed open scorn for the normal curriculum, and sneered at the pedantic mediocrity of the professors, he nevertheless continued to read extensively, and pushed his personal curiosities far beyond the limits required by the syllabus. When the professor of civil law, who took a particular interest in him, set him the task of comparing Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* with Catherine's *Code,* so fascinating did he find the subject, and so wide were the new horizons it opened up to him, that he decided to leave the university in order to avoid having his enthusiasm thwarted by extraneous studies that were of little interest to him and had no bearing on his line of work.

In 1846, when he was eighteen, Tolstoy and his brothers all left their aunt's house. By now Nicholas had passed out of the university and entered the army; but the three younger boys set up in rooms together, and without further supervision of any kind henceforward did precisely as they liked. A few months later, they inherited their patrimony;

and Leo, as the youngest son, besides other estates, came into Yasnaya Polyana and about 350 serfs. This legacy gave him good cause for reflection and roused him to a serious consideration of his responsibilities. By now thoroughly bored with the dreary ineptitudes of the lecture-room, and exhausted by the futile dissipations of Kazan society, he decided to retire to his estate to devote himself earnestly to his new duties as a landowner and to complete his education for himself. Without waiting to pass his final examinations, pleading in excuse the bad state of his health and the necessity of devoting himself to family affairs, he applied formally for his discharge from the university.

3

In March 1847, shortly before he left Kazan, Tolstoy was taken ill and removed to the public hospital. Here, impressed anew by Benjamin Franklin's habit of noting his faults daily in a diary, he returned to his old ideas of self-perfection, and decided henceforward to keep in earnest a similar journal for himself. Thus was formed the habit which lasted, with only one long lapse, throughout his entire life. The study of this early diary is illuminating, and shows without question the subtlety, clarity and integrity of the mind of this youthful observer, this *aristocrztic fldneur* of not yet nineteen. Already are manifest in its pages—and to the detached intelligence which notes them down—the conflicting, incongruous personalities which form the being of the giant who was Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, and which in the future, now one and now another, will alternately seize the reins and guide the course of his tempestuous life. The man of fashion, the sportsman, the peacock and the aristocrat; the libertine, the pagan, the gambler and the glutton; the moralist and the puritan, the altruist, the reformer and the philosopher; the family man, the lover of woman and the lover of God,—all these are already developed, and only waiting in the wings for the appropriate moment to take their place upon the stage. The literary artist alone has not yet appeared, and he will enter the theatre to complete the cast in the course of the next few years.

" Here I have no servant, no one helps me. In consequence, nothing external can influence my memory and judgment, and therefore my mental activity must progress. The chief advantage is that I have come to see clearly that the irregular life which the majority of fashionable people take to be a result of youth is really the result of early spiritual corruption. The man living in society finds solitude as beneficial as the man not living in society finds social intercourse. LeUjnan but withdraw from society and retire into himself, and his reason will cast off the spetecles through which he has hitherto seen everything in a corrupt light, andcause his view of things to undergo such a clarification that ne will be at a loss to understand how he fatted to perceive

things as they are...." [49] And yet, as he already knows too well, "it is easier to write ten volumes of philosophy than to put a single precept into practice." Which does not prevent him from presently formulating for himself a new set of rules to aid his intellectual development.

Outside the hospital, the force of habit and environment soon gave him cause to review his subsequent lapses with misgivings, and, clear-sighted, painstaking and honest, he recorded in the middle of April: " Of late I have failed to behave as I should like. The cause of this has been, in the first place, my having left the hospital, and, in the second place, the company *in* which more and more I begin to move. Hence I conclude that any change of place ought to lead me to consider very seriously how external circumstances may influence me under new conditions." Nevertheless, his gay and youthful dissipations did not prevent him from considering the future with characteristic gravity. "I keep finding myself confronted with the question: What is the aim of a man's life? and no matter what result my reflections reach, no matter what I consider to be the source of life, I invariably arrive at the conclusion that the purpose of our human existence is to afford the greatest help we can towards the universal progress of everything that exists." Brave words: and there is something little short of heroic in the resolutions which follow. "I should be the unhappiest of mortals if I could not find a purpose for my life, and a purpose both useful and universal... . Thus henceforward all my life must be a constant, active striving for that one purpose." [49] This resolved itself, for the immediate future, in employing his coming two years in the country in "studying the entire course of jurisprudence for the final examination of the university; studying practical medicine with a portion of theoretical; studying languages—French, Russian, German, English, Italian and Latin; studying estate management, both in theory and practice; studying history, geography and statistics; studying mathematics and the gymnasium course; in writing a dissertation; in attaining the highest possible perfection in art and music; in formulating a list of rules; in acquiring knowledge of the natural sciences, and in writing treatises on the various subjects which I may be studying." [49]

With such intentions in his mind, besides that of improving the conditions of his serfs, probably influenced by Grigorovich's recent novel *The Village,* which depicted their life in very sombre tones, this inexperienced young man with his abundant energy, his acute intelligence, his fastidious senses, his inordinate ambitions and ,his generous, uncorrupted and incorruptible heart, had a last riotous fling at Kazan, and set off to Yasnaya Polyana in the best of spirits.

Aunt Tatiana, who, well knowing her dear Leo's passion for music, had started to practise the piano again in order that she might play duets with him, listened, indulgent, sceptical, and a trifle amused, as he enthusiastically unfolded his plans for hastening the millennium

amongst his serfs. **Her** dark eyebrows **raised,** she even **ventured to** enquire whether he was not perhaps still dominated by the desire to be original. Her scepticism could have only been increased when, a few days later, in his desire to out-Rousseau Rousseau, *"notre cher philosophe"* suddenly appeared in a strange long robe of grey flannel which he proposed to wear for all purposes, both day and night. In this ostentatious and peculiar garb he went about for nearly a week; and might well have continued even longer had not a visitor appeared one day who could scarcely contain her merriment at so odd a spectacle. This was more than the young reformer could bear. It is scarcely surprising that a youth, one of whose chief, if more frivolous, aims was to appear "noble," had no intention of permitting himself to be an object of ridicule: and the unconventional robe was presently discarded, never to be seen again.

Scarcely more successful were Tolstoy's Utopian dreams. Shrewd, obstinate and suspicious, the Yasnaya peasants viewed with a scarcely veiled resentment most of his suggestions for their improvement. The new huts he built in the village they considered "just like jails," lacking in all the familiar associations of a crowded communal life; the school which he established for their children, and in which he sometimes taught himself, they looked upon simply as a new burden that made their own lot harder by preventing their sons from helping in necessary work; while, to his mortification, his somewhat priggish exhortations to industry and abetter life, and his sudden unexpected confessions that he had decided to settle upon his estate only in order to devote himself to their welfare, provoked little but their mute incredulity and misgivings.

Apart from theories and imagination, Tolstoy was already genuinely concerned for the welfare of his peasants. To hear forlorn tales of approaching destitution; to learn of some woman who was literally dying from overwork; to have a man go down on his knees before him in supplication: all this, in contrast to his own manner of life, often " tormented him like the memory of a crime committed and unatoned for."

No doubt, like the hero of *A Landlord's Morning,* which he was to write a few years later, he dreamed of a village of thriving peasants all smiling at him affectionately in acknowledgment of their indebtedness to him for prosperity and happiness. No doubt, like Nekhlyudov, he saw for himself a brilliant and happy future when he determined "to influence this simple, receptive, unperverted class of people; to rescue them from poverty, to give them a sufficiency, to transmit to them an education which fortunately I possess, to reform their vices arising from ignorance and superstition, and to develop their morality and make them love the right." [5]

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No doubt, like the hero of *A Landlord's Morning,* which he was to write a few years later, he dreamed of a village of thriving peasants all smiling at him affectionately in acknowledgment of their indebtedness to him for prosperity and happiness. No doubt, like Nekhlyudov, he saw for himself a brilliant and happy future when he determined "to influence this simple, receptive, unpervertfed class of people; to rescue them from poverty, to give them a sufficiency, to transmit to them an education which fortunately I possess, to reform their vices arising from ignorance and superstition, and to develop their morality and make them love the right." [6]

But it had never occurred to him that the peasants might not cooperate in his plans for their improvement with enthusiastic gratitude. Moreover, on his neighbouring estate of Pirogovo, the dashing

Sergey was now living with a gipsy woman whose voice was said to have been so beautiful that no one could hear it without tears; so that Tolstoy's intended monastic seclusion was frequently interrupted by periods of boisterous gaiety and dissipation. Gaming, drinking, whoring, and all the distractions of vigorous, carefree young men easily able to satisfy their material and physical desires, followed each other swiftly, until, by the middle of June, the moralist was writing in his diary: " How difficult it is for a man who is under the influence of evil to develop the good in himself!... Shall I ever reach the point of being quite independent of external circumstances ? In my opinion, that would mean immense perfection, since in the man independent of all external conditions the spirit necessarily keeps the material man in subjection, and he attains his destiny. To-day I will set myself another rule. Regard feminine society as an inevitable evil of social life, and avoid it as much as you can. . From whom, indeed, do we learn voluptuousness, effeminacy, frivolity in everything, and many another vice, if not from women ? Who is responsible for the fact that we lose such feelings inherent in us as courage, fortitude, prudence, justice and so on, if not women ? Woman is more receptive than man, and, during the ages of virtue, was better than we were; but now, in this age of corruption and vice, she has become worse." [49]

Significant words, which reveal the source of much of die future unhappiness of his life. Like the Kasatsky of whom he was to write in *Father Sergius* in his old age, Tolstoy himself was already "one of those men of the eighteen-forties... who, while deliberately, and without any conscientious scruples, condoning impurity in themselves, required ideal and angelic purity in their women, regarded all unmarried women of their circle as possessed of such purity, and treated them accordingly." [18] Thus, like Kasatsky, when he found himself attracted to a girl in his own class, he "did not experience any sensual desire for her, but regarded her with tender adoration as something unattainable." [13]

Watching him with an almost maternal solicitude, aunt Tatiana would sometimes throw out the hint that *"rien ne forme unjeune homme comme une liaison avec une femme comme il faut"*—but the role of the elegant cicisbeo was never to be for him. There was too much in him that revolted from it—his moral nature, his robust independence, his assertive masculinity. Moreover, he had never lost the sense of his physical repulsiveness, and this alone still made it impossible for him to approach well-bred women with the necessary assurance.

Alas for his noble resolutions! By the time autumn came, Tolstoy had had enough of Yasnaya Polyana. No doubt, again, he said to himself, like Nekhlyudov: "Have my peasants grown richer ? Are they any more educated or morally developed ? Not at all! They are not better off and it grows harder for me every day. If I saw my plans succeeding, or met with gratitude.., but no, I see a false routine, vice,

suspicion, helplessness. I am wasting the best years of my life in vain!" [5] Anyhow, the curiosity, energy and resdessness of youth made him long for new impressions. With characteristic impulsiveness, he suddenly decided to go to Petersburg to complete his education.

4

At first all went well. He settled down to work, and with the new idea of entering the Civil Service even managed to pass some examinations admitting him to the Faculty of Law of the University. To his brother Sergey he wrote early the following year with characteristic exuberance: "I am writing you this letter from Petersburg, where I intend to remain *for ever.* All are urging me to remain and serve.... So I have decided to remain here for my examinations and do so. If I do not pass (anything may happen), then I shall begin to serve at once, even if it is only in the fourteenth class. I know many Government officials of this second category who serve no worse than those of the first. To be brief, I must tell you that Petersburg life has had a wonderful influence on me: it accustoms me to work, and involuntarily takes the place of a curriculum. Somehow one cannot be idle. Everyone is occupied, everyone is busy: indeed, one cannot find a man with whom one could lead a disorderly life, and one certainly cannot do it by oneself...." [81]

But he had spoken too soon. Gymnastics, fencing, horse-riding, balls, restaurants, gipsies, brothels and gambling dens—all these were readily available to tempt the different sides of his complex being; and, as usual, he soon succumbed. In his next letter to Sergey, written at the beginning of May, he was singing a very different tune. " Seriosha, I expect you are saying that I am the most frivolous fellow: and to be honest, God knows what I have been doing! I came to Petersburg without any particular reason, and have done nothing useful—only spent a great deal of money and run into debt. Stupid! Insufferably stupid! You can't believe how it torments me. Particularly the debts, which I *must* pay, and as quickly as possible, because if I do not settle them soon, I shall lose not only the money but my reputation...." [81] Having pleaded for help, he then divulged his latest intention of joining the Horse Guards. Already he imagined himself on active service, and, owing to his outstanding abilities, gaining promotion even before the normal two years' term. But, like many other projects, it came to nothing: and instead, the lure of spring was too strong for him, and he unexpectedly returned to Yasnaya Polyana, intending to devote himself whole-heartedly (and no doubt for ever) to the study of music.

For the next three years Tolstoy divided his time between Yasnaya Polyana and the two capitals, indulging in turn the different aspects of his being that came uppermost. Having many influential relations in

both Petersburg and Moscow, it was easy for him to make new acquaintances and friends. Once more he plunged whole-heartedly into a worldly, bachelor life. He learned to perform spectacular feats of strength;he played chess; paid calls in fashionable drawing-rooms with a glossy top-hat balanced precariously upon his knees; he rode and hunted; he tried to manage his estates; he idled in the marriage market of gilt and mirrored ballrooms with budding girls in delicate flowered dresses and with flowers in their hair, then suddenly rushed off to sing passionate gipsy songs while his favourite Katia sat upon his knee and swore to him that he was the only man she had ever loved; he spent riotous nights drinking and gambling; encouraged himself to follow his aunt's advice and pay discreet attentions to charming hostesses; dined expensively in famous restaurants with congenial companions; practised the piano; wrote his diary; read omnivorously, and took to writing sketches—a *typical flaneur,* a typical young aristocrat of the day, though indubitably more intelligent and more talented than most. And all this time his being was tense with the contradictory desires of his different selves; bewildered by the unequal conflict between disparate aims and irreconcilable ideals. At times he even developed social aspirations, and brooded over the fact that his position in Moscow society was scarcely such as would open to him the doors of the more exclusive hostesses of Petersburg. His effort at self-conquest had now become wholly directed towards worldly aims: his resolutions directed towards standing well in the eyes of his associates, cutting an impressive figure at a ball, or declaring himself at last to the Princess Scherbatov, a lady with whom he fancied himself to be in love, but who seems to have been quite unconscious of the passion that she had inspired.

He made the acquaintance of the Princess Barbara Alexandrovna Volkonski, a cousin of his mother's, who had known intimately not only his grandfather but his whole family, and would delight him for hours by freely pouring out reminiscences in which they figured.

But such a life could scarcely satisfy him indefinitely. "This is the third year I have spent the winter in Moscow without holding office and living a futile, useless life, devoid of all aim or occupation," he complained in his diary in June 1850. "And I have lived so not because everyone in Moscow lives thus, but because such a life has pleased me."[49] With the utmost seriousness he then proceeded to draw up, in the hope of regaining some of his former losses, elaborate rules for card-playing. Then, since the need of money made it necessary for him to try to ingratiate himself in high places with the object of obtaining some lucrative post, there followed meticulous rules for deportment in society. But influential friends and acquaintances refused to be impressed. He wondered whether he could make a success of running the mail post at Tula; then that idea, too, seemed chimer-

ical, and presently, for lack of any other solution to his embarrassments, he retired once more to Yasnaya Polyana.

Six months of quiet country life led him to conclude, with characteristic, impetuous optimism, that at last he was a changed man. " My old follies, my old need to interest myself in affairs, has borne fruit. I have ceased to build castles in Spain, and to make plans which no human capacity can execute.... I have come to my senses___I have grown a little older." [49] For the time, indeed, save for the so frequently made resolution to overcome the need for sensual indulgence which had by now become a habit, "and in accordance with the laws of religion, to avoid intercourse with women," the moralist was in abeyance, and he presently returned once more to Moscow full of ambition to climb socially, to find some suitable position, or at least, if all else failed, to marry a wealthy heiress. Indeed, his next set of rules (he was always making them) shows an insensibility to the finer social relations that might have put to shame many men greatly his inferior.

By always striving to lead in discussion; by never expressing his real feelings; by always seeking to associate with men higher in the world than himself; by asking, at balls, for dances from only the most important ladies present,—thus he was now determined to storm the stronghold of social eminence. No adventurer in an outmoded picaresque novel could have laid his plans with more deliberate care. As for his self-love, it had again assumed all the supremacy of his student days at Kazan, and he was fully resolved "to allow no one to offer him the smallest insult or sarcasm without paying double for it."

Alas for his calculations! Although he noted that he had fallen in love, or imagined himself to have fallen in love, both lucrative positions and wealthy heiresses continued to elude him; and in consolation, probably ingenuously hoping thereby to put an end to the financial chaos in which he was now involved, he turned once more to gambling. Having lost heavily, he then proceeded to gamble more recklessly than ever, thereby only making die embarrassments of his situation even more acute. At last, gallantly determined to keep up his spirits by ordering a new frock-coat, he was nevertheless forced to pawn his watch in order to lay his hands upon ready cash.

This sobered him considerably, and inevitably brought into play other features of his nature. Severely taking himself to task once more, his detached and critical mind again observed the slightest, as the gravest, of his defects. "Two principal passions which I have noted in myself are a passion for play and vanity; the second of which is the more dangerous in that it assumes a countless multitude of different forms, such as a desire to show off, want of reflection, absence of mind, and so on." [49]

Like Dostoevsky, he continually wrote himself down as being "unpardonably ambitious and egotistic," and like Hamlet, accused himself

of" more offences... than he had thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in." Sensuality, boastfulness, vanity, gluttony, indecision and lying: all these were henceforward recorded daily, and in detail, with the same relentless care. He told himself that all his plans for self-perfection had hitherto failed him principally on account of lack of will, and tried once more to plan his days ahead and force himself to keep to the exacting routine which he determined. In consequence, he now saw even more clearly than before how he continually deviated from his intentions. Yet he still hoped for improvement by formulating further rules. "When any matter which has been occupying you ceases to demand effort, turn your attention to another subject or occupation.... One should never give up what one has set oneself to do on the grounds of absence of mind or distraction; but, on the contrary, take oneself in hand for the sake of appearances. Thoughts will then result." [49]

By now he had begun to contemplate literature as a possible career. Aunt Tatiana had first put the idea into his head. "With your imagination, Leo dear, I am only surprised that you don't set yourself to write a novel," she had remarked one day: and, still deeply interested in fiction—Rousseau, Dickens, Sterne, Gogol and Turgenev were among his favourite writers—the idea soon captured his imagination. For some time he hesitated as to the choice of a subject. Gipsies—like Pushkin? By now he intimately knew their ways. Or the story of his dear aunt Tatiana? Between his many social distractions he cogitated, and at length began to write down a keen, analytical description of a visit to the Princess Scherbatov the day before *(The Story of Yesterday)*. Presently, dissatisfied, he thought again. As he noted later: "To myself I said: I will go out and describe whatever I happen to see. But how best to describe it? Letters make words, and words make phrases, but how can one transmit feeling? Description is not enough...." [49] Finally, probably inspired by Herzen's *Memoirs of a Young Man*, which had appeared in 1838, and *David Copperfield*, which was then appearing in *The Contemporary*, he determined, as so many novelists of genius have done before and since, to re-create his childhood; and forcing himself to rise at five o'clock in the morning, he made an earnest start, writing continuously until eleven. Long hours for a beginner; but with his abundant energy he scarcely noticed it, and followed it up with letter-writing, an English lesson and gymnastics.

But the attractions of the gay life were too powerful to permit him to devote himself to this new interest without interruption; and once more sloth, gluttony and the usual distractions intervened. Thus, early next spring, without having passed his examinations (he was still vaguely attached to the university), without having found a suitable heiress, but possessed at least of some minor nominal position in the Civil Service which seems never to have occupied a moment of his time,

he returned somewhat disconsolately to Yasnaya Polyana and gave himself up to melancholy reflections. "Four months' absence from home finds me in the same position as before. Even as regards my indolence I am practically unchanged, though my capacity to deal with inferiors has undergone some slight improvement!"[49] And though country life, as usual, soon evoked his deeper feelings,, there still persisted die powerful desires of his healthy body. Having spent several evenings "prowling about and experiencing voluptuous desires," he very soon " could not forbear signalling to someone in a pink dress who looked comely from a distance. Opened the door, and she came in. Could not even see her: all seemed foul and repellent, and I actually hated her for having caused me to break my rule. I repented terribly. Never before have I felt this as now."[49] Deeply discontented with himself for his many failures, so seriously involved in debt that he was compelled to sell a part of his estates in order to meet his most pressing obligations, inwardly he hankered for a different life. Despite his deep affection for his aunt, when he saw too much of her he found that, though "very kind and high-minded," she was also very "one-sided, and could feel and think in one rut alone—nothing more." As for his former dreams of improving conditions on his estate, instead of helping the peasants he had simply squandered in dissipation the profits of their unremitting toil. He was not insensitive to the fact. No doubt, like the hero of *A Billiard Marker's Notes,* which he was presently to write in Tiflis, he scourged himself with the thought: " God gave me everything that man can desire: wealth, a name, intelligence and noble aspirations. But I wanted to enjoy myself, and trampled in the mud all that was good in me.... I am not dishonoured, not unfortunate, I have committed no crime; but I have done worse—I have killed my feelings, my reason, my youth."[6] Though acutely sensitive, Tolstoy was nevertheless possessed of an indomitable toughness, and it is improbable that, like the miserable Nekhlyudov of his story, he ever thought of seeking a solution to his troubles in suicide. A possible way out, indeed, suddenly appeared from a completely unexpected quarter.

Nicholas, now an officer in an artillery regiment stationed in the Caucasus, had come home on leave at Christmas and viewed coldly his brother's social and matrimonial aspirations. With regard to marriage, he had even offered sober, friendly counsel, and advised him to wait until his affections were seriously engaged. At first Tolstoy had been saddened by his apparent lack of sympathy; but very soon their old fraternal affection revived. So that when presently Nicholas suggested that his brother should return with him to the Caucasus, Tolstoy accepted the idea enthusiastically.

A family council was held as to the best means of disentangling their "dear Leo" from the grave financial chaos in which he was involved, and it was decided that Mary's husband, Count Valerian Tolstoy (she had married a distant cousin of the same name), should administer his

estates for him in his absence, and only permit him a modest allowance —the equivalent of about £150 a year—until all his debts were paid.

Thus temporarily relieved of his most pressing problems, and followed by his favourite black bulldog Bulka, who, having broken a pane of glass in the room where he had been confined, had escaped from captivity and followed him in the full heat of the day for nearly fourteen miles until the carriage halted at the first post station, Tolstoy set off, full of good spirits, to a new life.

Chapter II

1. ***En route: Zinaida Molostvov: Nicholas. 2. Impressions of the Caucasus: he enters the army: military action: disgust with the service.*** **3.** ***The lover of God: conflict between intellectual and emotional knowledge: the struggle for understanding: the early creed.*** **4.** ***The sportsman: Epishka: the gambler: the glutton.*** **5.** ***Desire for marriage: letter to aunt Tatiana: family affection: emotional attractions—Solomonida and Oxana. 6. Self observation: the addiction to play, vanity and lust: perplexity and disillusionment: struggles for self improvement.*** **7.** ***Recognition of the poet: early compositions: publication of*** **Childhood:** ***plans for future works: association between the writer and the moralist.*** **8.** ***Desire to leave the service: ambition for military honours: return to Yasnaya Polyana.***

IT was a leisurely, delightful journey, with pleasant interludes both at Moscow and Kazan; for the unconventional Nicholas had conceived the idea of travelling by carriage only as far as Saratov, and from there sailing to Astrakhan, by means of a hired fishing-boat manned only by a pilot and a couple of oarsmen, on the pleasant waters of the Volga.

At Moscow there were friends to visit, and Tolstoy wrote in triumph to his aunt, who had often been compelled to chide him for his extravagance, as had Mme. de Sevigne* her son, that at least he had overcome the temptation to dally with the gipsies. " Being, as you say, a man engaged in testing himself, I went among the people and even visited a gipsy camp. You will easily imagine the inner struggle which took place—both for and against! However, I emerged victorious. That is to say, those cheerful descendants of the illustrious Pharaohs got from me nothing save my blessing." [81]

At Kazan, too, he was in the best of spirits, and there are even tales of him, in a mood of exuberance, shinning up a tree in front of his aunt Yushkov's house. More important, he again met his old friend Zinaida Molostvov, and found that, despite the years of absence, his tender feelings for her had undergone no change. Of the delightful intimacy that was suddenly to reflower between them he himself recorded two months later: "I stayed a week in Kazan; and if you were to ask me why I did so, what I found there so agreeable, or why I was happy, I should not answer that it was because I was in love, in that knowledge of love is not mine. Yet I think such ignorance is love's chief feature, its whole charm. How morally light-hearted I felt during that period! I suffered none of the burden of petty passions which is now spoiling all the pleasure of life. I did not speak a word of love, and yet I felt

assured that she was aware of my feelings, and that if she reciprocated them it was because she understood me.... My relations with Zinaida have remained at the stage of a pure yearning of two souls for one another. Perhaps you doubt that I love you, Zinaida ? If so, forgive me. It is my own fault, for I might have reassured you with a word.

"Shall I never see her again? Shall I one day learn that she is married to Beketov ? Worse still, shall I see her so in her little cap, with the same open, happy, love-filled merry eyes as of old ? I have not yet given up the idea of going back to marry her; and though I am not quite sure that she would make me perfectly happy, I am in love. If not, why the delightful memories which continually revive me ? Why the expression with which I gaze whenever I see and become conscious of anything beautiful ? . . . Do you remember the Archbishop's garden, Zinaida—the side path ? It was on the tip of my tongue to declare myself, as it was on yours. But it was for me to speak first. Do you know why I thought and said nothing ? Because I was so happy that I had nothing to wish for, and I feared to spoil—not my happiness, but ours. That gracious passage will remain my most cherished memory to the end of my life." [49]

This episode but added a further charm to the poetry of floating down the river reading novels, exchanging idea with Nicholas, or lying back to receive the full force of the new impressions which beset him on every side. With his brother he found the closeness of understanding and the affection which formerly he had only experienced with Diakov in the old days at Kazan; and to aunt Tatiana he wrote in sprightly mood that Nicholas had said that, but for his irritating habit of changing his linen a dozen times a day, he would be a delightful companion.

2

At the end of May the two brothers arrived at Starogladovsk. Tolstoy's first impressions were disappointing. The country, his lodgings, and Nicholas's fellow-officers all seemed squalid and uncongenial: but shortly the two brothers moved on to Stari Yurt, an outpost near the hot springs of Goryachevodsk, where, at first living simply in a tent, the "bright, dead-white masses of the snowy mountains, with their shadows and outlines fantastic and yet exquisite in every detail, the wonderful crimson sunsets, and the yet more wonderful and iridescent dawns," the handsome Tartar women in their noble, brilliant robes, the invigorating air, and the medicinal waters, all compensated somewhat for the lack of agreeable company. "There are magnificent views, beginning where the springs are situated," he wrote to his aunt Tatiana. "It is an enormous mountain of rocks one upon another, some of which are detached, forming a sort of grotto; others remain suspended at a great height. They are all intersected by torrents of hot water, which **fall** noisily in certain **parts,** and especially in the morning

cover the whole upper part of the mountains with a white vapour which this boiling water continually gives off." [81]

In one or another of these remote Cossack villages Tolstoy lived, first as a civilian proudly wearing Circassian clothes, and afterwards as a soldier, for the greater part of the next three years. And though later he was often to look back to this period of his life with an almost wistful pleasure, there is little doubt that at the time he was often profoundly restless and dissatisfied, and considered himself little better than an exile.

At first he entered heartily into both the life of the village and the life of the regiment; and, having volunteered to participate in a raid against the Chechens, whom it was the business of the army to keep in subjection, he bore himself so well that the Commander-in-Chief, Prince Baryatinsky, suggested that he should join the regiment. Gratified at having gained the attention of so eminent a personage, Tolstoy agreed to do so. Thus, after waiting for several weeks until he received his discharge from the Civil Service, he repaired to Tiflis at the end of September, ostensibly to pass the necessary examinations. After the simple life of the last few months, he found the town quite a civilized and successful imitation of Petersburg, consorted with Prince Baryatinsky, Count Ilya Tolstoy—a relation of his own also in the regiment—and an "amusing" Pole, an apothecary's assistant who had been reduced to the ranks. He patronized the Russian Theatre and the Italian Opera, paraded the streets in the most handsome of new overcoats and a splendid opera-hat, and awaited eagerly the announcement that he had been nominated a volunteer to the Fourth Battery.

To Sergey he sent a letter full of his latest news. "If you wish to boast of intelligence from the Caucasus," he confided, "you may announce that the second personage after Shamil, a certain Hadji Murad, gave himself up the other day to the Russian Government. He was the first horseman and hero in all Chechenya, but committed a base act." [81]

In the New Year, Tolstoy returned as a soldier to Stari Yurt, where, Cossack style, he had sworn friendship with a handsome young Chechenian named Sado. In accordance with established ritual they exchanged presents, feasted each other at their respective quarters, and were thereafter to be comrades until death. Sado, who had a rich but ungenerous father, was often in great straits for money, to gain which he would raid some enemy village and jubilandy carry off a horse or cow in heroic style. When they both participated in military raids, he would willingly expose himself to danger to protect his friend. Once, when they were accompanying an expedition to the fort at Graznaya, Tolstoy, Sado and three comrades deliberately disobeyed orders and rode ahead .of the column, when they were presently sighted by a band of hostile Chechens. It happened that Sado had recently acquired a spirited young horse which he had exchanged with his *kunak* for an old ambler that could barely trot: moreover, for some reason his gun was

not loaded. Seeing their danger, their three comrades immediately rode away; but since Sado, without ammunition, had no chance of keeping up with them, Tolstoy naturally remained behind with him. Fortunately the Chechens had determined to take them prisoner; for, instead of opening fire, they merely shadowed them at a distance, following them towards the fort for three miles until a sentry on duty gave the alarm and they were put to flight.

Though Tolstoy and Sado had narrowly escaped being captured, it proved that they had been more fortunate than their companions. Embroiled in an unequal skirmish, one of them had been wounded (though he managed to regain the column on foot), while another, pinioned beneath his dead horse, had been slashed across the face with a sabre by several of the enemy in turn, and was found bleeding to death when the column reached him. This incident supplied the material for the first part of Tolstoy's later story, *A Prisoner in the Caucasus.*

But this was not the only time he was in danger. On another occasion he was nearly killed in action by a shell which burst almost at his feet and smashed the gun-carriage he was in charge of.

Once the novelty of army life had worn off, however, it soon became apparent to him that military duties, apart from the material which they afforded for his work, had but little interest. Less than nine months after he had joined the Service, he was recording: " Have been acting as orderly, and spending the day in colourless duties. Am very tired, but have learnt much that, though new, is quite unnecessary." And next day: "Have been on parade. The best thing I can look for from the Service is retirement." [49]

Evidently he made some abortive effort to escape, for late in October 1852 he recorded mournfully: "Must again calculate the period of my exile from to-day. My papers have been returned me, and therefore I cannot hope to return to Russia sooner than the middle of July 1854 nor to retire sooner than 1855. By then I shall be twenty-seven. How old! Three more years of service. I must employ them to advantage." [49] But the more he saw of army life, the more disagreeable he considered it. Early in the New Year the complaint was: "Stupid people! All—especially my brother—drink, and it is very unpleasant for me. War is such an unjust and evil thing that those who wage it try to stifle their consciences. Am I doing right ? My God, teach me and forgive me if I am doing wrong." [51] And a fortnight later: " My mental capacities have become blunted by this aimless and disorderly life, and by people who cannot, and do not wish to, understand anything at all serious or noble." [51]

Nevertheless, despite his congenital dislike of military service, life in the Caucasus made possible the expression of many of the different aspects of Tolstoy's broad Karamazov nature; and during these years, more than ever before, these inner contradictions involved him in continual conflict.

3

The lover of God had been evoked a few days after his first arrival at Stari Yurt, when the wealth of new impressions and the moving and silent beauty of his environment helped to induce in him one of the deepest religious experiences of his early life.

" Last night I hardly slept," he recorded. " Having posted the diary, I began to pray to God. I could never adequately express the blissful feeling which came over me during that prayer!... Having first recited my usual petitions—the 'Our Father,' the prayers to the Mother of God and to the Trinity, the 'Door of Mercy' and the 'Invocation of the Angel of Deliverance,' I continued to pray quite differently. Though if prayer is defined as petition or thanksgiving, then I was not praying. Rather, I was consumed with desire for something both lofty and good. What that something was I cannot explain, though I was fully conscious of what it was that I desired. What I longed for was to become fused with the All-Embracing Substance, as I besought It to pardon me for my sins. But no; this is not what I besought; for I felt that, since It had given me that blessed moment, It had, simply by doing so, already granted me pardon. True, I offered prayer, but at the same time I realized not only that I had nothing to ask for, but that I did not and could not know how to beseech. And,though I thanked the It, I did so not in words, nor even in thought, but combined everything—petition and gratitude alike—in a single sensation. And then the sense of awe disappeared completely. At the same time the feelings of Faith, Hope and Love could not have been separated from my general feeling. Yes, that was the emotion that I felt last night. It was love for God, but the exalted love which combines in itself all that is good and renounces all that is evil. At that moment it was horrible to look upon the petty, vicious side of life. Nor could I conceive how it had ever attracted me, as I prayed to God with a pure heart to receive me into His bosom. I was wholly unconscious of the flesh. Yet stay! Soon the carnal, petty side of life had once more got me into its possession, and not an hour was past before, half unconsciously, I heard the voice of vice, of vanity, and of the empty side of life calling me once more. I knew whence this voice came, and I knew it would destroy my state of blessedness. And though I struggled, I succumbed to it. I sank to sleep among dreams of fame andiwomen. Yet it was not my fault. I could not help it.

"Lasting happiness is impossible *here,* and tribulation is necessary. Why this should be so I do not know. Yet how dare I say that I do not know? How dare I presume that the ways of Providence are knowable at all? Providence is the resource of reason, which reason seeks ever to grasp. In the of transcendent wisdom of such a kind, reason becomes lost, and the emotions shrink from giving It a

cause of offence. Hence I can only be grateful to the It for the blessed moment which has shown me both my greatness and my insignificance. I wish to pray, but I do not know how: I wish to grasp It, yet I dare not venture. I surrender myself to Thy will.

"Why have I written the above? It expresses my feelings but poorly, feebly and senselessly. And they were so lofty!" [49]

Thus it is clear that though intellectually Tolstoy had for long been sceptical of the dogma of the Russo-Greek Orthodox Church in which he had been brought up, emotionally he had never lost belief in an Absolute that he realized he could not hope fully to understand. How deep was the conflict between his intellect and his emotions, and how urgent his desire to resolve it, is clearly indicated by other entries of the next three years.

"Conscience is our best and most reji^ble guide," he decided. "But what are the signs by which the voice of conscience can be distinguished from the many other voices in us as the only true one ? For vanity speaks with equal force.. .. That man whose aim in life is his own happiness is bad: he whose aim is the good opinion of others is weak: he whose aim is the happiness of others is virtuous: but he whose aim is God is great. Evil for me consists, in. what jsJbad for others; good in what is good ior them. Thus does conscience always speak.... The aim of life is goodness. It is a sentiment inherent in the soul. And the means of leading a good life is the knowledge of good and evil. . . . We are good only when the whole of our forces are constantly directed towards this aim." [49]

Once more he pondered long upon the questions that had beguiled his lonely boyhood in the first years at Kazan, still hoping to find reason alone an adequate instrument in his search for truth. "Even if the body is distinct from the soul, and undergoes annihilation, what is there to prove the annihilation of the soul?" he asked himself. "I have seen that the body dies; and therefore I conclude that my own will die. But there is nothing in me to show that the soul dies. Therefore, according to my own ide4S, I say that it is immortal." [49] And considering the efficacy of prayer he pondered: "Does God fulfil our prayers? Is prayer both necessary and useful? Only experience can give conviction of the fact." [49] At least, he decided, prayer could not be harmful, since it provided the inestimable benefit of moral solitude. "I pray thus," he noted: "O God, deliver me from evil—from the temptation to do evil; and dower me with good—with the possibility to do good. But whether I experience good or evil, Thy will be done." [61] Indeed, his conception of prayer became increasingly exalted. "There are thoughts the application of which is endlessly varied. Therefore the more general the expression of such thoughts, the more nourishment they supply for the mind and heart, and the more profoundly can they be realized. I am replacing all the prayers I have composed by the Lord's Prayer alone. Any petition I can make to

God is expressed more fittingly, and in a way more worthy of Him, by the words *Thy will be done *on* earth as in Heaven.' " [51]

Through the many distractions of his daily life he continued to try to formulate for himself what he could really believe in without any shadow of moral and intellectual deception. "Shall I ever succeed without question in gaining an idea of God which is as clear as my idea of virtue?" he noted on a previous occasion. "Yet this has become my strongest wish. The idea of God is the result of man's recognition of his own weakness,... Nothing has so convinced me of His existence and of our relations with Him as the thought that capacities have been given to all living creatures in accordance with demands that require to be satisfied. Nothing more, nothing less. And for what purpose has man been given the power of understanding such things as a first cause, eternity, infinity, omnipotence ? The position of which I speak (as to the existence of God) is a hypothesis supported by tokens. And faith, according to man's development, completes the correctness of the hypothesis." [49]

Yet, after months of speculation, he had still arrived at no satisfactory conclusion. "Am unable to prove to myself the existence of God, or even to find any convincing evidence of it. Nor do I think the conception absolutely necessary. It is easier and simpler to imagine the eternal existence of the universe with its inconceivably admirable order, than to imagine the existence of a creator of it. The cravinjg of man's body and spirit for happiness is the only path to an understanding of the mysteries of life. When the craving of the spirit conflicts With the craving of the flesh, the former should take control; for the spirit is immortal, like the happiness it procures. The attainment of happiness is the means of its development.... I do not understand the necessity of God's existence, but I believe in Him, and pray for help to understand Him." [61]

With all his urgent reflection, it was very many years before he was to revise the creed which he formulated in his diary in November 1852. "I believe in the one good and incomprehensible God, in the immortality of the soul, and in recompense for our deeds. What though I do not understand the mysteries of the Trinity, and of the birth of the Son of God ? I honour and do not reject the faith of my fathers." [49]

It was, for the present, the only possible conclusion that could be attained by the natural veneration of the great artist and the natural scepticism of the independent thinker the exercise of which were both essential features of his being. *

4

To the sportsman Caucasian life was a veritable paradise; and in Nicholas, Sado, and his Cossack landlord Epishka (the original of the Daddy Eroshka of *The Cossacks)* he found perfect companions for his

excursions. Epishka was a sturdy and picturesque old reprobate with white flowing beard, a seamed brown face, magnificent muscles, a passion for hunting, at which he was greatly skilled, and a ceaseless repertoire of tales of his Homeric youth, in which he had been the idol of all the girls, "a real brave, a drinker, a thief, a singer; a master of every art. I am a hunter. There is no hunter equal to me in the whole army. I will find and show you any animal and any bird, and what and where. I know it all 1 I have dogs, and two guns, and nets, and a screen and a hawk. I have everything, thank the Lord! If you are not bragging, but a real sportsman, I'll show you everything. Do you know what a man I am? When I have found a track—I know the animal. I know where he will lie down and where he'll drink or wallow. I make myself a perch and sit there all night watching." [4]

With Epishka, Tolstoy would linger outside his mud-and-wattle hut of an evening, drinking *chikir* and listening entranced to his pungent reminiscences; with Epishka he would set off on difficult and dangerous journeys to inaccessible mountain villages.

Even when he went to Tiflis, Tolstoy continued to hunt joyfully in the neighbourhood. "Sport here is wonderful," he wrote enthusiastically to Sergey. " Open fields, marshy ground, full of hares; and clusters, not of trees, but of rushes, in which foxes find cover. I have been out hunting nine times altogether, about ten or fifteen versts from the village, with two dogs, one of which is excellent and the other hopeless. I caught two foxes and over sixty hares. In time I shall try to hunt deer...." [81] In mid-August, too, when huge flocks of grouse would assemble on the steppes before migrating, with his specially trained horse, upon which he would carefully circle round them at a distance and then suddenly dash forward to take aim, he had wonderful shooting.

The Caucasus, however, was very nearly disastrous to the gambler. He had fled from his debts at home, nobly intending to practise the most rigid economy in order to pay them off, and never to touch a card again. But, surrounded by army officers whose chief relaxations were drinking and gambling, it was impossible for him to withstand for long what was to him one *of* the greatest of temptations; and soon after his arrival, resolve had given place to apprehension. "Several times when the officers have been talking of cards I have wanted to show them that I too could play; but have always refrained. I hope that, even if they should begin to persuade me, I shall refuse." [49] But a letter to aunt Tatiana written in January 1852 reveals the sad end of these pious hopes. " When I was at Stari Yurt, all the officers did nothing but play for rather high stakes. And as, when living in camp, it is impossible for us not to see each other often, I very often took a hand. ... One day, for fun, I placed a small stake: I lost. I began again; and again I lost. I was in bad luck; but the passion for play had reawakened, and in two days I had lost, not only all the money I had, but about 250 roubles that Nicholas had given to me into the bargain, to say

nothing of another five hundred for which I gave a promissory note____" tt Other losses rapidly followed; and disaster was averted only by the fortuitous intervention of his *kunak* Sado, who, despite Tolstoy's pious admonitions, was also possessed of a passion for cards, and, in one of his gambling bouts, had won back all his friend's promissory notes from the officer who held them. These (since Tolstoy was at Tiflis) he touchingly took at once to Nicholas. " He was so glad of his prize, so happy," Nicholas wrote to his brother, "and asked so often: 'What do you think? Your brother will be glad that I have done this ?' that I conceived a great affection for him. This man is indeed attached to you." [81] To Tolstoy, who had been praying in his extremity, this event seemed to be little short of miraculous; and for some time appeared to him to be an example of the efficacy of prayer.

But not always were matters to be settled so satisfactorily; and in March 1853 he recorded: "Service in the Caucasus has brought me nothing but difficulties and idleness and bad acquaintances. I must finish with it as soon as possible. Have lost all the money I had, and am still eighty roubles in debt to Ogolin, six to Yanovich, fifty to Sokovnin, and seventy-eight to Konstantinov; in all two hundred and fourteen, besides which I have spent two hundred and thirty which I owe. It is bad." [51]

Meanwhile, the lapses of the glutton were also beginning to have their effect. One day he would overgorge himself upon ices, another upon melon, a third upon "Turkish delight and other trash." There can be little doubt that it was these indiscretions, together with the continual inner conflict caused by his contradictory and hypersensitive nature, which gave rise to the stomach and bowel disorders from which he now began to suffer increasingly, and which in later life were to become chronic.

His health also suffered in other ways. Rheumatism, feverish colds, nose-bleeding, sore throats: all these occasioned not infrequent leave of absence to go to Pyatigorsk for treatment. But the writer was already beginning to find that ill-health had its compensations. " Do not think that I am concealing anything from you," he wrote to aunt Tatiana during one of these indispositions. " Though I am strongly built I have always had weak health——But it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good: and when I am not well I write with greater persistence... ." [81]

Even more strange than die fact that this youthful puritan, moralist and philosopher should indulge in puerile greediness was the fact that, when on holiday, he not only took to table-turning with enthusiasm, but even indulged in endless orgies of fortune-telling by cards.

5

When he was off duty, like the Olenin of the first version of *The Cossacks* that he was shordy to begin *to* write, Tolstoy would "sit in

his tent, smoke his pipe, gaze dreamily before him, and draw imaginary pictures of family happiness." Scene after scene would rise before him, as he fancied "his wife in a white morning-gown, his children frolicking in the garden and gathering flowers for their father." ** In a particularly charming, eloquent and revealing letter which he wrote to his aunt Tatiana in January 1852 the significance of this aspect of his nature can be easily appreciated. "This is how I picture it to myself," he told her, brooding with characteristic tenderness upon the future: "After some years I shall find myself, neither very old nor very young, back at Yasnaya Polyana again. My affairs will be in order, and I shall have no troubles in the present, no anxieties for the future. You too will be living at Yasnaya. You will be getting a little old; but you will be still vigorous and healthy. We shall lead the life we led in the old days. I shall work in the mornings, but we shall meet and see each other almost all day.

"In the evening we shall dine together. I shall read you something interesting; then we shall talk. I shall tell you about my life in the Caucasus, and you will tell me tales of my father and mother; you will tell me some of those' terrible stories' to which we used to listen in the old days with open mouths and frightened eyes. We shall talk about the people whom we loved and who are no more. You will weep, and I shall weep too; but our tears will be refreshing, tranquillizing tears. We shall talk about my brothers, who will visit us from time to time, and about dear Masha, who will also spend several months of every year with all her children at the Yasnaya she so much loves. We shall have no acquaintances, and no one will come to bore us with gossip. It is a wonderful dream. But that is not all I let myself imagine. I shall be married. My wife will be gentle, affectionate and kind; she will love you as I do; we shall have children who will call you granny, and you will live in the big house, in the same room on the top floor where my grandmother lived before. The whole house will be run in the same way as it was in my father's time, and we shall begin the same life over again, but with a change of roles. You will take my grandmother's place, but you will be better even than she was: I shall take my father's place, and the children ours. Masha will fill the role of both my aunts, except for their sorrow; and there will even be Gasha there to take the place of Praskovya Isaevna. The only thing lacking will be someone to take the part you played in the life of our family. We shall never find such another noble and loving heart as yours. There is no one to succeed you.

"There will be fresh faces that will appear amongst us from time to time, namely my brothers; especially one who will be very often with us, Nikolenka, who will be an old bachelor, bald, retired, but always the same kindly, noble fellow. I imagine him telling the children stories of his own composition, as of old; the children kissing his grubby hands, which will be grubby still, but nevertheless worthy to

be kissed. I see him playing with them, and my wife bustling about to prepare him his favourite dish; the two of us going over the reminiscences of the old days while you sit in your accustomed place, listening to us with interest. You will still call us by the old names of Liovochka and Nikolenka despite our age, and you will scold me for eating my food with my fingers, and him for not having washed his hands.

"If I were made Emperor of Russia, if I were given Peru for my own; in short, if a fairy came with her wand and asked me what I wished for, I should lay my hand on my heart and say that I wished for these dreams to become true...." [70]

Well might he write again to her a few months later: "There was a time when I was vain of my intelligence, of my position in the world, and of my name; but now I know and feel that if there is anything good in me, and if I have to thank Providence for it, it is a kind heart, sensitive and capable of love, that it has pleased God to give me and to preserve in me." [81]

This spontaneous family affection runs clearly through all the misgivings of these bewildered years. "Nikolenka is on an excellent footing here," he wrote to Sergey shortly after their arrival. "The commanders and fellow-officers all like and respect him; and he enjoys the reputation of being a brave officer. I love him more than ever. When we are together I am completely happy, and without him I feel dull." [81] Similarly with his sister, when she came with her husband to visit her two brothers at Pyatigorsk in the summer of 1853. "Masha is so naively sweet that she remains fine even in the wretched society here," he confided to his diary. "One involuntarily regrets that there is no one here to appreciate her charm." And often he dreamed of a scheme, "pleasant and feasible, though too good ever to be realized," that Masha, Nikolenka and himself should one day set up house together in Moscow. "Valerian, of course, would be in the way, but so agreeable are the others that they would make him equally agreeable." [61]

But it was not only for his family that he was capable of feeling this ardent affection. "I have so often been in love with men," he recorded in his diary when he was in Tiflis. "For me, the chief indication of love is simply fear—a fear of offending or not pleasing the loved object. I always loved people who were indifferent to me or merely esteemed me, and my choice was always much influenced by appearance ... though there was the case of Diakov. I shall never forget the night when we were leaving Petersburg by sledge, and, wrapped under the sledge rug with him, I wanted to kiss him and to weep. There was a feeling of voluptuousness in it, but why it occurred here it is impossible to say, for my imagination did not paint lascivious pictures. On the contrary, I had a very great aversion for them. ..." [75]

Owing to the incomplete and expurgated nature of the published diaries, the reason for this unexpected confession is still obscure. But that he felt considerable tenderness and affection for at least two of

the comrades of his Caucasian days is clear enough from the manner in which they figure in his work: the boyish and handsome young cadet Buemsky being the model for Alanin in *The Raid,* and Sado the original of the dashing Lukashka of *The Cossacks,* for whom Olenin-Tolstoy, despite the fact that they were both enamoured of the same woman, felt "something akin to love."

Nevertheless, his greatest emotional preoccupation was, as usual, with women; and after Zinaida Molostvov there were two who seriously attracted his attention. One of these, the stately and beautiful black-eyed young Solomonida, was, as we know from his later admission, the original of the Marianka of *The Cossacks;* and he experienced for her the same unrequited and impossible passion as did the hero of his novel. "In foolish dreams I imagined her now as my mistress and now as my wife, but rejected both ideas with disgust. To make a harlot of her would be dreadful. It would be murder. To turn her into a fine lady, like a Cossack woman who is married to one of the officers here, would be still worse. Could I turn Cossack like Lukashka, and steal horses, get drunk on *chikir,* sing rollicking songs, kill people, and when drunk climb in at her window for the night without a thought of who and what I am, it would be different: then we might understand one another and I might be happy. . . . Every day I have before me the snowy mountains and this majestic, happy woman. But not for me is the only happiness possible in this world: I cannot have this woman!" [4]

Of the other, no more is known than can be conjectured from a laconic entry in his diary in April 1853. " Sulimovski, in my presence, told Oxana that I was in love with her. I ran out quite confused." Otherwise, she would have doubtless remained one of the many women he admired passionately, but to whom he was too bashful to declare himself.

His bashfulness, indeed, was, to the puritan and the moralist, a matter for considerable rejoicing. As he had previously recorded: "On arriving home, found my young landlady in the kitchen, and spoke a few words with her. She is decidedly coquettish with me, and keeps tying bunches of flowers in front of the window, and tending a swarm, and humming tunes—endearments which are shattering to my peace of mind. For the bashfulness with which God has endowed me I thank Him. It saves me from corruption." [49]

6

Throughout this time, doubdess because he had begun to struggle with them more seriously, the realization of his failings became steacUry more acute. "So far as I have understanding of myself," he acknowledged in March 1852, "there appear to predominate in me three evil passions: an addiction to play, vanity and lust. The passion for play

proceeds from a passion for money. Yet most people (especially those who lose more than they win), having taken to play either through lack of something to do, or through imitation, or a desire to win, have no passion for the winnings themselves, but acquire a new passion for the game itself, for sensations. Consequendy the source of passion lies only in habit; and the means of the destruction of the passion is the destruction of the habit.

"But the basis of lust is completely different. The more one refrains from it, the stronger the desire for it grows. Its causes are two: the body and the imagination. To withstand the body is easy, but to withstand the imagination, which acts upon the body, is very difficult. Against both, work and occupation constitute the remedy—either physical occupation such as gymnastics, or moral such as composition. But no! Inasmuch as the impulse is a natural one, one which seems bad only because of the unnatural position in which I am placed (a bachelor at 23), nothing can avail to deliver one from temptation save strength of will and prayer to God....

"Vanity is an unintelligible passion, one of those evils like involuntary diseases, hunger, locusts and war, with which Providence is wont to punish humanity. The sources of it lie beyond discovery: but the causes which develop it are idleness, luxury and absence of privations or cares. It constitutes a kind of moral sickness which, like leprosy, destroys no definite part, but renders monstrous the whole—it creeps in gradually and imperceptibly until it has permeated the whole organism. There is not a function that it does not poison. It is like syphilis—when driven out of one part it reappears, with added force, in another. The vain man knows neither true joy, nor grief, nor love, nor fear, nor hatred nor despair; everything in him is unnatural and forced.

" Vanity is a sort of immature love of *eclat,* a sort of love of self transferred to the opinions of others. One loves oneself not for what one is, but for what one appears to others to be,. In our age this passion is developed to excess; and though men deride it, they do not condemn It, In that it does no harm to others. Yet for the man whom it possesses it Is a worse passion than any other—it poisons his whole existence." *•

In one of his intermittent moods of despondency, Tolstoy now concluded that "the cause of my sorrow must be that I appliecd myself too early to the serious Things of life. The result is that I lack any Strong faith in friendship, or "in beauty, or in love;, and while disappointed as to the important things in.life, am still a child in petty things. For, as he shrewdly observes, none of his more exalted reflections could prevent him from recalling with pleasure the fact that "I have ordered a saddle to carry me in my Circassian costume, and that I shall run after women, and relapse into despair because my left moustache is thinner than my right, and spend a couple of hours rectifying the matter before the mirror."[49]

This was a thing that he found it increasingly difficult to understand. "I despise life and all petty passions, yet am for ever being drawn towards petty passions and diverting myself with life." Nor was it a passing fancy. "The pettiness of my life worries me," he recorded later. "True, I feel this because I myself am petty; but I have in me a capacity for despising both myself and my life. There is something in me which forces me to believe that I was not born to be what other men are. From where does this come? From a want of agreement, an absence of harmony between my faculties, or from the fact that I really do stand on a higher level than ordinary men? I am fully grown, and the time for development is passing or past, yet I am tortured with hunger, not for fame—I have no desire for fame, I despise it—but for acquiring great influence in the direction of the happiness and the benefit of humanity." [4B] And presently the altruist was formulating a "noble aim, and one within my strength: to edit a magazine the sole aim of which would be the spread of works morally useful, in which contributions would be accepted only on the condition that they were accompanied by a moral, the insertion or non-insertion of which would depend upon the author's wish." [61]

Frequently he returned to his struggle with lust, vanity and play; and in November 1853 he formulated yet more rules with which to combat them. " One of my chief vices, and the one most unpleasant to me, is lying. It is generally occasioned by the desire to boast and to display myself in a favourable light. So, in order not to let my vanity reach a stage which leaves no time to reflect and stop, I set myself a rule: as soon as I feel the pricking of egotism which precedes the desire to say something about myself, I must reflect, keep silent, and remember that no invention can give one more importance in the sight of others than truth can, which has a compelling and convincing effect on everyone. Every time you feel annoyance and anger, avoid all intercourse with people, especially with those dependent on you. Avoid the company of people who are fond of drunkenness, and drink neither wine nor vodka. Avoid the society of women you can easily have, and try to exhaust yourself by physical labour when you feel strong desire." [61]

Although the appearance of the moralist was frequently suppressed by exuberant moods in which he would "sing, dance about," and "waste his good spirits and his time by chattering to acquaintances," nevertheless he pondered much on the fact that, amongst his comrades, he was invariably misunderstood. The continual ferment of his various unexercised capacities frequently oppressed him. "Am now twenty-four, and have done nothing," he had recorded on his birthday. "Yet I feel that not in vain have I for eight years been struggling with doubt and with my passions. For what am I destined? The future will reveal it." *[9]

7

Significant as was this Caucasian period in the development of many different sides of Tolstoy's nature, it was most significant in developing in him the recognition of the poet. For to his writing all the finer faculties of his richly endowed being were unconsciously directed. His warm and delicate emotional sensibilities; his vigorous and detached intelligence; the most intense and the most subde of his physical sensations,—all these were utilized in his literary re-creation of the past and his lucid interpretation of the present.

From *the* beginning of his career as a writer, Tolstoy fully understood the essential features of the genius that later expressed itself in the magnificent productions of his maturity. "Lnagjaation is the mirror of nature," he wrote in his notebook early in 1851: "a mirror which we carry within ourselves, and in which nature is portrayed. The finest imagination is the clearest and truest —that mirror which we call genius! Genius does not create: it reflects." [50] "To be good," he observed on another occasion, "literary compositions must always be, as Gogol said of his *Farewell Tale,* 'sung from my soul,' sung from the soul of the author."

To his work, despite the many diversions of his life, he applied himself with the diligence of the craftsman and the passion of the artist. Often he "wrote with such enthusiasm that it was even distressing." His heart failed and he trembled on taking up his notebook. At other times his excitement was so great that he could not restrain himself from reading each new chapter as it was completed to anyone who happened to call: a tendency for which he mercilessly castigated himself for becoming an egocentric bore. He copied and rewrote; deleted, altered, added, and then rewrote again. His serf Vanyusha, who proved a hopelessly "bad and lazy copyist," no doubt, in his master's more splenetic moments, often received a clout on the ear for his dilatoriness and incompetence; until finally, out of patience altogether, Tolstoy changed him for another secretary even worse. His notebook became filled with descriptions and observations put down with dispassionate fidelity for future use; and despite the inevitable disappointments, he very soon experienced the satisfaction of the dedicated artist. And as Nicholas was also writing his *Shooting in the Caucasus,* their literary interests doubtless united the brothers in an even closer bond.

Alternatively with *Childhood,* Tolstoy was working at his first sketches of army life. Having tossed off, in Tiflis, *A Billiard Marker's Notes,* he outlined the first versions of *Wood-Felling* and *The Raid,* The second of these he was ingenuous enough to read to his young friend Buemsky, who, "driven frantic, rushed from the room. I regret having offended him so painfully and unnecessarily," Tolstoy

confided to his diary. " At his age, and with his disposition, one could not have struck him a heavier blow." [49]

Childhood, after being revised for the seventh time, was finally completed in July 1852, and sent, a few days later, signed with his initials only, to *The Contemporary,* the leading literary periodical of the day. It was accompanied by a preface so expressive that certain passages are even more characteristic than the work itself: "To be accepted as one of my chosen readers very little is demanded of you: only that you should be sensitive, that is, able sometimes to pity with your whole soul and even to shed a few tears when recalling a character you have loved deeply, that you should rejoice in him without being ashamed of it, that you should love your memories, should be a religious man, should read my tale looking for parts that grip your heart and not for such as make you laugh.... Above all, you should be an understanding person—one who, when I get to know him, need not have my feelings and inclinations explained, but who I see understands me and in whom every note of my soul finds a response. It is difficult, and I think even impossible, to divide people into the intelligent and the stupid, or the good and the bad; but between the understanding and the non-understanding there is for me such a sharp line, that I cannot help drawing it between all I know." [8]

For nearly two months Tolstoy waited, a prey to every vicissitude of imagination, for a verdict upon his work; and when he received it at last, it made him "silly with delight." Nekrasov, the poet-editor, had read it with approval, promised to print it, and expressed a gratifying interest in the author. This good news was followed, a week later, by a second letter even more encouraging. Having read the story in proof, Nekrasov admitted to finding it "even better than it seemed to me at first. I can assure the writer positively that he is a man of talent. It is most important that you should be convinced of this now, when you are still a beginner."

This recognition (although unaccompanied by any material reward, since it was the custom of the best Russian magazines not to pay for the first works of unknown authors) was nevertheless sufficient to stimulate both industry and imagination; and very soon Tolstoy was engrossed in writing *Boyhood,* in redrafting some of his military sketches, in wondering whether his thoughts upon slavery were sufficient to fill a pamphlet, and in contemplating two novels: one based upon the four epochs of his life up to the period of Tiflis, which would portray the development of a man "intelligent, sensitive, but erring" and therefore be "instructive, though not dogmatically so"; and another of a Russian landowner which should be dogmatic, and end by the hero realizing that" one may be good and happy while enduring evil——The idea of my novel is a good one," he confided to his diary. "The hero seeks in country life the realization of an ideal of happiness and justice. Not finding it, and disillusioned, he would seek it in the

life of the family. But **a** friend suggests **that happiness does not reside** in any ideal, but in the constant labour of **a** life whose object is the happiness of others. It may not be perfection, but the book will always be good and useful. Hence I must work at it incessantly."[49]

At the same time, he noted ideas for stories and sketches, and considered Epishka and his Homeric tales of ancient Cossack life as admirable material. Thus was conceived **the** fundamental idea of many of the great future works.

Meanwhile, he was not finding the literary life to be without vexations. When he received the number of *The Contemporary* which contained his first printed piece, he was annoyed to find that the censor had made several excisions, it had been considerably "edited," and even the title had been altered to *The History of My Childhood.* Immediately he seized a pen and wrote indignantly to Nekrasov: *'... the title *Childhood and* my few words of preface had explained my idea of the work, but the title *The History of My Childhood* contradicts it. Who wants to be bothered with a history of *my* childhood? The alteration is especially disagreeable to me because, as I wrote you, I wished *Childhood to* form the first part of a novel, the subsequent parts of which should be *Boyhood* and *Youth,* I must ask you, dear Sir, to give me your word with regard to any future works that it may please you to publish in your magazine, that you will make no alterations at all. . . ."[81] In his diary he entered: "Read over my story, now mutilated to the last degree."

There was much that was exaggerated in all this; and though later Tolstoy frequently protested that in *Childhood* he had tried to give a picture of the childhood of his friends rather than of himself, shortly afterwards, when Turgenev read the work aloud to the author's sister, who was a country neighbour, she immediately recognized the picture as being so authentic that she thought it must have been written by Nicholas. Indeed, apart from a few portraits of the Islenev family which are mixed with his own recollections, the work, like nearly all that followed it, is factually very largely autobiographic, and psychologically wholly so. Nicholas Irtenev is the first of the great self-portraits.

Soon the writer and the moralist became closely associated. "What use is money or a stupid literary notoriety?" he presently recorded. "Better with conviction and absorption to write something useful...." And shortly afterwards: "I am astonished that we should have lost the conception of the one aim of literature—morality—to such a degree that if you were to speak nowadays of the necessity for morality in literature, no one would understand you."[49]

The next pieces to be published were *A Billiard Marker's Notes* and *The Raid;* the latter of which, "simply ruined" by the censor, as Tolstoy wrote bitterly to Sergey, appeared in *The Contemporary* in 1853. At last Tolstoy had found his vocation. "Whether it goes well

or ill, I must always write," he recorded, and continued to ponder upon the best methods of composition. " To look over work that has been completed in rough draft, striking out all that is superfluous and adding nothing—that is the first process." [n] Soon his methods became more detailed. " Must make a rough draft without dwelling on the arrangement or the correctness of the expression of the thoughts. Copy it out a second time, omitting all that is superfluous and giving each thought its right place. Copy it out a third time, attending to correctness of expression." [51] The third of these processes caused him presently to note: "I am frequendy held up when writing by hackneyed expressions which are not quite exact, true or poetic, though the fact that they are so often to be met with makes me write them. These unconsidered, customary expressions, of the inadequacy of which one is aware but which one tolerates because they are so usual, will appear to posterity to be a proof of bad taste. To tolerate these expressions means to drift with one'sage; to correct them, to be in advance of it." [61]

At last, reading a work upon the characteristics required by genius, he confided to his diary that he was convinced that he was remarkable both by reason of his capacity and his eagerness to work. "I am perfectly sure that I ought to acquire fame."

8

But if he had found his vocation, he was far from being satisfied. He remarked in himself a sign of old age. "I am conscious of, and regret my ignorance ... and to know that my mind is not formed, that it is (albeit supple) inexact and weak, that my emotions lack constancy and power, and that my will is so irresolute that the most trifling circumstance can cause all my good intentions to come to nothing, is a fact that grieves me. Moreover, it grieves me to realize and to feel that there are, or have been, the germs of these qualities in me, and that only their growth has been lacking...." [49]

Even greater than his disappointment with himself was his disappointment at having still found no one with whom he could communicate completely. "Must grow accustomed to no one ever understanding me. It must be a fate common to all men who are difficult to get on with."

His conclusions were a characteristic mixture of pride and self-abasement. " Once and for all I must become accustomed to the idea that I am an exception and ahead of my age, or else that I am one of those incompatible, unadaptable natures that are never satisfied. I must set a different standard (lower than my own) and measure people by that. Shall less often be mistaken. I have long deceived myself imagining that I have friends who understood me. Nonsense 1 I have never yet met a single man who was morally as good as I, and who really believed that I do not remember an instance in my life when I was not

attracted by **what is good, and not prepared to sacrifice everything** forit."[51]

By the summer of **1853** he was more than ever anxious **to** change his manner of life. Nicholas had resigned his commission shortly before, and now Tolstoy found his environment and companions almost more than he could bear. " It will soon be a year since I first began to **consider** how best to resheathe my sword, and still I cannot do it," **he wrote to** his brother the December following the outbreak of the Crimean War. "However, if I must fight somewhere, I find it pleasanter to fight in Turkey than here, and I have therefore applied to Prince Sergey Dmitrievich, who wrote me that he had already written to his brother, but did not know what the result would be. At all events, before the New Year I expect to change my way of life, which I confess has become inexpressibly wearisome to me. Silly officers, silly conversations, nothing else. If there were only one man with whom one might talk from one's soul!"[81]

With his usual inconsistency, Tolstoy was nevertheless deeply desirous of gaining a military decoration; and his ambition to wear the St, George's Cross was quite as strong as that to acquire literary fame. Although he had several times distinguished himself on manoeuvres, he was nevertheless to be disappointed: on one occasion (he was twice nominated for the honour) because, owing to his own negligence, he was not on parade when the medals were being distributed ; and on another because, at the suggestion of hifrcommanding officer, he voluntarily forfeited his claim in favour of an old soldier to whom it would mean a badly needed pension.

He received his commission early in 1854, and, having taken leave of his comrades, whom he found he had become quite fond of despite their limitations, and given money for vodka to the soldiers "out of vanity," he set out a few days later for Yasnaya Polyana, where, after having encountered a violent snowstorm on the way, he arrived to find that his old neighbour Arsenev had died and he had been appointed guardian to one of his daughters.

Chapter III

I. ***Departure for Silistria: experiences of war: retirement to Bucharest: Sevastopol: the soldier: resignation from the service, 2. The gambler: loss of the great house at Yasnaya Polyana.*** **3.** ***Further attempts at self-improvement: altruistic plans: more self-observation: prayer: the idea of founding a practical religion: reflections on methods of self-improvement: man*s two wills.*** **4.** ***The writer at work: the Sevastopol sketches: difficulties with the censor: the desire for truth.***

AFTER his three years' exile, Tolstoy was doubtless overjoyed to find himself at Yasnaya Polyana. But he did not remain at home for long. There was a warm reunion with his three brothers and some old friends, and they all rushed off together to Moscow to indulge in the sophisticated pleasures of the capital. Tolstoy, as usual, spent too much money on dissipation, and then capped it by treating himself to a complete new outfit of clothes. His extravagance, indeed, was only curtailed by the receipt of army orders, which summoned him now, in accordance with his own request, to the army of the Danube. Having once more taken leave of all his family, he set off without delay.

First by sledge, and later in a small and uncomfortable travelling-cart without springs, Tolstoy travelled by bad roads through Poltava, Balta and Kishinev to the frontier, and made his way from there to Bucharest. Here he was received by General Prince M. D. Gof chakov, who was in command of the army at Silistria, and had been a friend of his father's during the war of 1812, "really as a relation." He was generously invited to dine at his house every day, and soon introduced into his intimate circle. These attentions, together with gay visits to the Italian Opera or the French Theatre with the general's sons (to whom he was distantly related through his paternal grandmother), proved most congenial; and for some weeks he experienced only the more agreeable aspects of army life.

He was attached first to a battery stationed at Oltenitsa; but this failed to be satisfactory, and very soon he had got himself transferred to the Staff of General Serzhputovsky, Commander of the Artillery of the Southern Army, for whom he journeyed about Moldavia, Wallachia and Bessarabia on special missions. But he seems soon to have been troubled with his health; and presently, half ill with fever, he returned to Bucharest, where he diverted himself with "walking about, enjoying music and eating ices," and noted, with considerable complacency, that at least his companions were, for the most part, gentlemen.

Soon he was redrafted to Silistria, now in a state of siege; and, encamped on elevated ground in the beautiful gardens belonging to the Governor of the city on the right bank of die Danube, he saw the town, the fortress, and the little forts of the threatened town opposite, spread out "as it were on the palm of one's hand. One heard the booming of cannon and guns unceasingly, day and night, and with a glass one could even distinguish the Turkish soldiers." For hours at a time, mounted on his travelling-cart, Tolstoy, with a "queer sort of pleasure," would watch people killing each other and seriously study every movement that took place. Presendy he was sent across the river with some order to the battery stationed there, where the commander, on seeing him, apparendy thought, "Well, there's that little Count again. I'll teach him a lesson," and on purpose, with deadly slowness, took him across the whole line under fire, while, outwardly affecting an air of composure and indifference, Tolstoy's feelings were far from pleasant. For some time, too, he was terrified of the cannonade at night; until at last, lying down, he found a means of diverting himself by counting, watch in hand, the number of discharges to the minute.

At Silistria he had excellent opportunity for observing the behaviour of the Commander-in-Chief, the generals, and the officers and men of all ranks (including himself) while in danger; and when it was announced that there was to be an assault, though the carnal man felt fear, the observer in him felt both exhilarated and excited. "Towards morning," he wrote to his aunt Tatiana, "the nearer the moment approached, the more this feeling of fear diminished, and shortly before three o'clock, when we were all waiting to see the batch of rockets go up that were to be the signal for the attack, I was in such good spirits that, had they come to tell me that it would not take place, I should have been gready disappointed. And lo and behold, exactly an hour before the time fixed for the assault, an aide-de-camp arrived from the Field-Marshal with the order to raise the siege of Silistria. I may say, without fear of being mistaken, that this news was received by all, men, officers and soldiers, as a veritable misfortune, the more so as it was known through spies who often came to us from Silistria and with whom I myself often had the opportunity to talk—it was known that, if once this fort were captured—an event which no one doubted—Silistria could not hold out for more than two or three days." [tt]

So far, he considered that his war experiences had been a failure; and having retired with the Staff once more to Bucharest, he approached Prince Gorchakov, when he happened to see him one evening at an officers' ball, with the request that he should be transferred to the Crimea. After a few weeks' dalliance in Bucharest, where he had a minor operation for the removal of fistulas, towards die end of July he left with the Staff for Russia, and marched through Tekucha, Berlad and Aslui to Kishinev, where he remained inactive until November ist,

still making efforts to get himself transferred to the Crimea, and being continually moved between the battery and the Staff.

At last, having obtained leave to visit Nikolaev and Odessa, where he watched the French and English prisoners and saw the English steamers blockading the port, his request was granted, and he set off for Sevastopol, where he arrived early in November, and was attached to the 3rd Light Battery of the 14th Artillery Brigade.

Here he found the town, as he wrote to Sergey, "besieged from one side only—the south—on which, when the enemy approached, we had no fortifications. . . . Now we have on this side more than three hundred guns of an enormous calibre, and several lines of absolutely impregnable earthworks.

"I passed a week in the fortress, and up to the last day kept losing my way amongst the labyrinths of batteries as in a forest. For three weeks the enemy in one place has been only 180 yards away. But he cannot advance, as at his slightest movement he is covered with a hail of shot. The spirit of the troops is beyond description. There was not more heroism in the time of ancient Greece. Kornilev, when making the round of troops, instead of 'I greet you, lads!' said, 'One must die, lads! Will you die?' and the troops shouted, 'We will die, your Excellency! Hurrah!'; while a company of marines nearly mutinied because they were to be withdrawn from batteries in which they had been exposed to shell-fire for thirty days. The soldiers extract the fuses from the shells that fall. Women carry water to the bastions for the men. Many are killed and wounded. The priests with their crosses go to the bastions and read prayers under fire. In one brigade, on the 24th, more than 160 wounded men would not leave the front. It is a wonderful time." [81]

Sevastopol, in December 1854, was the major scene of action of the war. The charming town, with its harbour, its elegant library, its unfinished church, its arched aqueducts, gracious avenues bordered with trees and azure inlets brisding with masts against the glittering sea, was now filled with soldiers, sailors and stretcher-bearers carrying the wounded to the overcrowded and stinking hospitals. Cannon-balls lay about the roads, water-filled bomb-craters gaped on every hand, ruined walls and strange heaps of rubble mixed up with bricks and boards were to be seen instead of houses in almost every street.

After a month spent in the town" very pleasantly in a circle of good-natured fellows, especially engaging during real war and danger," his battery was moved to Simferopol, where for six weeks he was billeted in a comfortable house at EskJord hard by, and went frequently into the town to "dance and play the piano with young ladies" or to the Chaterdog with friendly Government officials to shoot deer. In January there was another redistribution of officers, and Tolstoy was transferred to a battery about seven miles outside Sevastopol, where he found his fellow-officers disagreeable, his commander "harsh, vulgar,

and the dirtiest creature imaginable," not **a** book anywhere and the mud hut in which he lived comfortless and cold. So irksome did he consider inaction and these uncongenial conditions, that he spent much of his spare time in working at "a project for the reorganization of the army," and when he lost interest in this, in trying to devise some way of obtaining leave, or else of entering the Military Academy. Presently, however, the battery was joined by a certain Bronevski, "one of the nicest fellows I have ever met," and immediately everything seemed changed.

At the beginning of April, Tolstoy's battery was ordered to Sevastopol; and during the bombardment he took charge of the fourth—the famous flagstaff—bastion, the southernmost and the most exposed of all the Sevastopol defences. As he wrote later in *Sevastopol in December:* "When anyone says, 'I am going to the Fourth Bastion,' he always betrays a slight agitation or too marked an indifference; if anyone wishes to chaff you, he says, * You should be sent to the Fourth Bastion.' When you meet someone carried on a stretcher and ask, * Where from ?' the answer is usually, 'From the Fourth Bastion.'" * Here, for periods of four days at a time with eight days' interval between each, exhilarated, after the first nameless dread, by the flying bullets and the falling bombs, he gave orders with a carefully assumed coolness, while his men often fell dead at his side. In his off duty he had billets in a small room in the town, where the broken windows were mended with paper, and the damp walls behind his rickety bed were covered with a common mat. It was amazing to find that, while -up on the bastions hundreds of bodies were lying mangled, bloody and with stiffened limbs, or groups of men could be seen swinging and heaving some mutilated corpse until it vanished over the breastwork, here in the town a regimental band still played, and officers, cadets, soldiers and young women paraded as gaily beneath the acacias as though they were on a summer holiday.

In his diary he recorded many of his impressions. "We do not prevent the enemy from entrenching their camps," he complained, " though it would have been quite easy to do so; and we, with smaller forces and without expecting reinforcements from anywhere, with generals like Gorchakov who have lost their senses, their feelings and their energy, not fortifying ourselves, face the enemy and await a storm and bad weather which St. Nicholas the Wonder Worker is to send to drive away the enemy. The Cossacks want to plunder but not to fight. The Hussars and Uhlans consider that military dignity consists in drunkenness and debauchery, while the infantry thinks it consists in robbery and money-making." [61]

A fortnight later, his entries were less gloomy. "The presence of Saken [a distant relative by marriage of his dead aunt Aline] is noticeable in everything. And not so much his presence as the presence of a new Commander-in-Chief who is not yet worn out and not yet ab-

sorbed in projects and expectations. As far as possible, Saken rouses the troops to make sorties.... He has constructed trenches in front of the bastions... and introduced order into the transport of the wounded and formed ambulance stations at all the bastions." [61]

Very soon he was Happy enough. " The constant charm of danger, observing the soldiers with whom I am living, the sailors, and the methods of war, is so pleasant that I do not wish to leave here, especially as I should like to be present at the offensive, if there is one," [n] he recorded on April 12th. But this was not to be. During the middle of May he was removed to form and command a mountain battery at Belbec, about fourteen miles from Sevastopol itself. Evidently he continued to observe "methods of making war" with a certain eager carelessness. " Count Tolstoy is in command of two mountain batteries, but he himself goes everywhere he likes," they complained at headquarters. "He is anxious to smell powder," it had been recorded of him previously, "but only erratically, as an irregular, without participating in the difficulties and hardships of war. He journeys about to different places like a tourist, but as soon as he hears shots, at once he appears on the battlefield. When it is over, he goes off again, on his own initiative, wherever inclination leads him. Not everyone is able to do his soldiering in so congenial a manner."

Despite his occasional haughtiness and arrogance, by now Tolstoy had acquired considerable popularity. His feats of strength—he could lie stretched out on the floor and lift a man on the palm of his hand—his kindliness, his simplicity, his coolness in danger, his skill at composing amusing verses and his repertoire of interesting anecdotes, endeared him both to officers and men. But his honesty and his popularity seem to have involved him in trouble with the authorities. "I wish to attend to the provisioning myself," he had recorded in May, "and I see how easy it is to steal—so easy that it is impossible not to steal." [61] When, after considerable indecision, Tolstoy resolved to return to the Treasury, instead of keeping it for himself, a sum he had not spent, so widespread had the habit become of keeping such money as a perquisite that he received a reprimand from his superior for compromising his fellow-officers.

The second source of disapproval was a popular song, disagreeable to the general Staff, that was on the lips of nearly every soldier. This had been composed by Tolstoy after a hilarious evening in the officers' mess, when, standing round a piano, his comrades had failed in their attempt to invent some new verses to suit a popular tune. Tolstoy's production proved to be exactly what was required, tempering the misfortunes of the campaign with ingenious shafts of scorn for the High Command which delighted the soldiers as much as it embarrassed their superiors. Though it probably brought its author some little notoriety, it is unlikely that, as some of his biographers have suggested, it was the cause of his not receiving any considerable promotion.

During August, Tolstoy took part in the "terrible and disastrous" action at Chernaya Reka; and three weeks later arrived once more at Sevastopol to see the French attack on the Malakhov, and to participate as a volunteer in the final withdrawal from the town. "I wept," he wrote to his aunt later, "when I saw the town wrapped in flames, and a French Standard, and even a French General, in our bastion." Apart from a few skirmishes during the retreat of the main Russian forces which his battery accompanied, this was the last military action that he saw; but a few days later he was sent by the Commander of the Artillery the reports of the various artillery officers of the different bastions, and officially asked to write a composite account to be sent to headquarters. The naivety and falsehood of most of them remained in his mind for many years, and proved invaluable material later when he was seeking a final interpretation of the phenomena of war.

With his final report he was sent, in the middle of November, to Petersburg, where he became officially attached to an army munitions works. This seems to have been a singularly unexacting appointment; and, like his former obscure position in the Civil Service, there is no evidence that it made the slightest claims either upon his attention or his time. It certainly did not prevent him from throwing himself passionately into civilian life from the moment of his return. By now he had had more than enough of soldiering. He applied first for his discharge, and then for leave of absence. Though his official resignation was not accepted for nearly a year (not until the end of November 1856), he was once again virtually a free man.

2

The soldier in Tolstoy had been produced only by contingent external circumstances and corresponded to nothing essential in his being. Therefore he soon disappeared when the causes which had created him were removed. It is more illuminating to follow other, and essential, elements of his character during these military campaigns.

On active service there was comparatively little opportunity for running after women; though, according to his own record, at Oleshko, on the way to Sevastopol, he got left behind by his fellow-officers through dallying with a "pretty and intelligent Ukrainian woman whom I kissed and caressed through the window." But if there were a few occasions when the glutton and the libertine achieved gratification, the tender emotions which the lover of women valued so highly were almost wholly in abeyance. Only one passage in his diary of these days gives any indication of the engagement of his affections; when, after the siege of Silistria, he noted: "In the evening D. Gorchakov came to see me, and the friendship he showed me gave me that delightful emotion of *ihe* heart which true feeling produces in me and

which I had not experienced for a long time." [51] In a long letter to Sergey from the Crimea he commented: "But one thing disturbs me. This is the fourth year of my life that I have spent without feminine society; and I am afraid that I shall become quite uncouth, and unsuited to family life, which I enjoy so much."

On the other hand, soldiering provided disastrous facilities for the gambler; and he seems to have availed himself of them all too frequendy.

, During the retirement from Silistria he "rode to Bucharest, gambled, and was obliged to borrow money—a humiliating position for anyone, and particularly for me." And after having lost further some of his valued personal possessions, during August he was in despair. " My God! Can it be that I shall never reform ? I lost not only the rest of my money, but 37 roubles more than I could pay. Tomorrow will sell my horse." [61] This made him pause for a short space; but during the days of tense, enforced idleness at Simferopol he played again, and, as usual, lost. Two months later he had surpassed himself. "Have played stoss for two days and two nights. The result is evident—the loss of the house at Yasnaya Polyana. It seems useless to write: am so disgusted with myself that I should even like to forget that I exist." [61]

In order to settle the most pressing of his debts, he wrote to instruct his agent to sell the gracious timbered house which had been built by his eccentric and fastidious grandfather; and which was taken to pieces and subsequently re-erected by the purchaser elsewhere in the neighbourhood. Even this did not bring him to his senses; and five days later he was compelled to confess: " It was not enough for me to lose all that I had; I have also lost on credit to Mescherski 150 roubles which I do not possess."

Ten days later he had " again lost 75 roubles. For the time being God has spared me from unpleasantness, but what will happen later ?" By now the gambler was completely beyond control. He continued to play and he continued to lose; and not even pathetic avowals that he was now "involved to the last extremity" could deter him.

3

Despite these failings, the altruist, the moralist and the lover of God continued to manifest themselves with intermittent vigour; and Tolstoy never for long abandoned his old hopes of self-improvement. " It is ridiculous that, having started to write rules at fifteen, when nearly thirty I am still writing them without having trusted or followed any one *of* them; and yet I still believe in them and need them," [51] he recorded during the campaign.

A few days later, he assured himself that "in regard to morals I have firmly decided to devote my life to the service of my neighbours.

For the last time I tell myself that if three days pass without my having done anything to be of service to others, I shall shoot myself." [51]

Before his worst losses at cards, he was considering how best he could disencumber his estates from debt with the intention of liberating his serfs; then, since for the time being all such projects seemed purely chimerical, he conceived the idea of publishing a new magazine that should be particularly beneficial to the common soldiers, and help to maintain a good morale among the troops. "We have written a prospectus of the paper and presented it to die Prince," he told Sergey. "The idea pleased him very much, and he has submitted the prospectus and a specimen number which we had composed to the Emperor for his approval. The money for the publication has been advanced by myself and Stolypin. They have made me editor, together with a certain Konstantinovich who has published *The Caucasus* and is an experienced man at such work. In the review we shall publish descriptions of battles, not so dry and untruthful as in other papers, exploits of bravery, biographies and obituaries of good men—particularly of the rank and file—military stories, soldiers* songs, popular articles on engineering and artillery, the arts, and so on. The idea appeals to me greatly; firstly because I like the occupation, and secondly because I hope the magazine will be useful and not too bad. But everything remains in the air until we get the Emperor's consent, and I admit that I am anxious about it, as in the trial copy we sent to Petersburg we carelessly inserted two articles . . . which were somewhat unorthodox." [81]

The Emperor refused his permission, and in a letter to his aunt Tatiana of January 6th, 1855, Tolstoy remarked bitterly: "... as in our country there are intrigues against everything, people were found who were afraid of the competition of our magazine; and perhaps the idea conflicted with the views of the Government as well.... I confess this disappointment caused me the greatest pain, and has much altered my plans...." [81]

The sense of wasted days never for long ceased to oppress his spirit: "Time, the time of youth, visions and thought, is all being lost, leaving no trace," and again and again he struggled not to succumb completely to his temptations. "As soon as I am alone," he recorded in July 1854, "I return involuntarily to my old idea—that of perfecting myself; but the chief mistake, the reason I have been unable to go quietly along that road, is that I confused the idea of perfecting myself with perfection. One must first thoroughly understand Oneself and one's defects and try to remedy them, rather than set„oneself „the. task of being perfect, which is not only impossible of attainment from the level at which I stand, but the realization of which makes one lose all hope of the possibility of attaining it.... One must take oneself as one is and try to correct the faults which can be corrected." [51]

In this new task of acquiring self-knowledge he observed the follow-

ing day: "My chief defects are: (i) Instability (by that I mean indecision, inconsequence, lack of steadfastness and inconsistency); (2) an unpleasant, difficult character—irritability, excessive *amour-propre* and vanity; (3) a habit of idleness. Will try always to watch for these three fundamental faults and note down every time that I fall into them." [51]

Three days later, once more out-Rousseauing Rousseau, he was writing himself down with inaccurate zeal as being generally inadequate. "What am I? One of four sons of a retired lieutenant-colonel, left orphan at seven years of age in the care of women and strangers, having neither a social nor a scientific education, and becoming my own master at 17 years of age, without a large fortune, without any social position and largely without principles: a man who has mismanaged his affairs to the last degree, who has spent the best years of his life aimlessly and without pleasure, and who finally banished himself to the Caucasus to escape from his debts and above all from his habits, and from there, by availing himself of connections which had existed between his father and the Commander-in-Chief, was transferred to the army of the Danube; a twenty-six-year-old sub-lieutenant almost without means except his pay (for what means he has he must use to pay his remaining debts), without influential friends, without the capacity to live in society, without knowledge of the service, without practical abilities, but with enormous self-esteem. . . . I am ugly, awkward, untidy and socially inexpert. I am irritable, tiresome to others, not modest, intolerant, and bashful as a boy. I am also an ignoramus. What I know I have somehow learnt by myself, in snatches, disconnectedly, unsystematically, and it amounts to very little. I am incontinent, irresolute, inconsistent, stupidly vain and passionate like all characterless people. I am neither brave nor methodical in life; and am so lazy that my idleness has become an almost unconquerable habit.

' "I am intelligent, but as yet my intelligence has never been thoroughly tested in anything, and I have neither practical, social nor business ability.

"I am honest—that is to say, I love goodness and have formed a habit of loving it; when I sever myself from it I am dissatisfied with myself and return to it with pleasure. But there is something I love even more than goodness—fame. I am so ambitious, and so litde has that feeling been gratified, that between fame and virtue I am afraid I might often prefer the former, if I had to choose between them. Yes, I am not modest, and am therefore proud at heart, but shy and bashful in society." [51]

For some time he continued to watch himself; and even once more to find relief in prayer. "I believe in the one, all powerful and good God, in die immortality of the soul, and in eternal retribution for our deeds; I wish to believe in the religion of my fathers and to respect

it.... I pray Thee prompt me to good thoughts and actions, and grant me happiness and success in them. Help me to correct my faults, spare me from sickness, suffering, quarrels, debts and humiliations. Grant me to live and die in firm faith and hope in Thee, with love for others and from others, and to be of use to my neighbour. Grant me to do good and to shun evil; but whether good or evil befall me, may Thy holy will be done. Grant me what is truly good. Lord have mercy ... upon me." [51]

At every lapse he filled his diary with self-reproach, particularly for his three "chief vices: idleness, irritability and lack of character." Day after day he returned to them with an insistence bordering upon despair; and observed with dismay how, despite all his good intentions, he still continued to quarrel with his comrades and to hit his man Nikita, in moments of irritability, upon the head.

Indeed, the more he tried to subdue the warring elements of his lower nature, the more he understood, with St. Paul, that "what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . " After a long lapse which lasted until the following spring, early in March he received communion, and recorded a sudden ambition which was both characteristic and curiously prophetic. " Yesterday a conversation about faith and divinity suggested to me a great, a stupendous idea, to the realization of which I feel capable of devoting the whole of my life. That idea is the founding of a new religion corresponding to the present development of mankind: the religion of Christ, but purged of all dogma and mysticism—a practical religion, not promising future bliss, but giving bliss on earth. I understand that to accomplish this the conscious labour of generations is necessary. One generation will pass on the idea to the next, and some day enthusiasm or reason will accomplish it. Deliberately to contribute to the union of mankind by religion is the guiding principle which I hope will dominate me." [61]

In this exalted mood he set himself once more to try to discover why all his efforts to lead a better life had had so little practical result. Three days later he recorded: " From the very beginning I adopted the most logical and scientific method, but the one least practicable: that of recognizing the best and most useful virtues by reason, and attaining them. Later I realized that virtue is only the negatiye\of vice, for man is good, and I wanted to cure myself of vices. But there were too many of them and correction on spiritual principles would be possible only for a spiritual being; while man has two natures, two wills. Then I understood that gradualness is necessary for improvement. . . . One must by one's reason prepare a position in which perfectibility is possible, and in which the bodily and the spiritual wills most nearly agrees forself-correction needs certain methods..... In general, man strives for spiritual life; but for the attainment of spiritual aims one needs a condition in which one's bodily tendencies do not contradict but harmonize with the ment:

is my new rule in addition to those I set myself long ago: to be industrious, reasonable and modest; to be always active in pursuing spiritual aims, and to consider all my actions from the point of view that those are good which are directed to spiritual ends; and to be modest so that the pleasure of being satisfied with oneself should not change into the pleasure of exciting praise or surprise in others...." [61]

It was a programme that was one day to affect his entire life.

4

Through all the vicissitudes of the soldier's life—whether in comfortable billets or the low-roqfed, crowded shelter of the Fourth Bastion itself—Tolstoy continued, despite his intermittent periods of idleness and distraction, to write and to perfect his work. He continued to note in his diary many ideas and observations with the intention of incorporating them in some later work; he corrected and recorrected the descriptions of the soldiers in *Wood-Felling,* which he finished on August 20th, 1854, at Berlad; he indulged in character sketches which might be usefully incorporated into some future novel; he continued slowly, with infinite care and patience, to progress with *Boyhood;* and (chiefly because Nekrasov had asked him to send him some articles about the war), even while on duty at the Flagstaff Bastion, he worked at *Sevastopol by Day and Night,* a first draft of the three later Sevastopol sketches. The more he devoted himself to his work, the more certain he became that letters were his true vocation. "Turgenev is right to say that we writers must occupy ourselves with some one thing," he recorded on March 27th, 1854; and presently he decided that he was "definitely ill qualified for practical activity, or, if capable of it, it costs me great effort, which is scarcely worth applying since my career is not a practical one."

Again he found himself in difficulties with the censor. Although *Sevastopol in December* had been so admired by the Emperor that he had himself ordered that it should be translated into French, *Sevastopol in May* evoked a storm.

Tolstoy himself had doubts as to whether it would pass the censorship. Too well he realized how little could be expected from an Administration which had humiliated Pushkin; declared Tchaadaev to be insane and had him put away in a madhouse; forced Gogol to repudiate his Opinions; exiled Lermontov and Dostoevsky; banished Saltykov and Herzen; and even arrested Turgenev for printing an article upon Gogol. " Though I am convinced that it is incomparably better than the first one," he wrote to Nekrasov, "I am sure it will not please. Indeed, I even fear that it may not be allowed at all." And the following day he recorded: "I have only now reached the period of temptation by vanity. I could gain much in life if I were willing to work without conviction."

His apprehensions soon proved to have been correct; for when it had been set up in type with the alterations which the censor had at first required, the authorities suddenly demanded the piece back for submission to the President of the Committee of Censors, who became "wild with fury both with the censor and with Panaev [Nekrasov's co-director of *The Contemporary]* for even presenting such an article to the censorship," and himself made further slashing deletions with his own hands.

Doubtless remembering Tolstoy's caustic observations upon the alterations to *Childhood,* Panaev pleaded in his letter of explanation: "At any rate, do not blame me that your article has been published in such a form. I was compelled to do it." Nekrasov, shortly afterwards, was even more apologetic. "The revolting state to which your article was reduced quite upset me. Even now I cannot think of it without indignation and regret. Your work will not, of course, be lost. It will always remain as proof of a strength which was able to state sucn profound and sober truth in circumstances in which few men would have achieved it .... You are right to value this side of your gift m'ost of all. Truth, in such form as you have introduced it into our literature, is something completely new amongst us. I do not know another writer of to-day who so compels the reader to love him and sympathize deeply with him as he to whom I now write, and I only fear lest in time the nastiness of life, and the deafness and dumbness which surrounds us, should do to you what they have done to most of us, and kill the energy without which there can be no writer—none, at least, such as Russia needs." *

The author's own reactions, on this occasion, appear to have been less violent than might have been expected. "It seems I am under the strict observation of the Blues on account of my articles," he recorded. "I wish, however, that Russia always had such moral writers; but I can never be a sugary one, nor can I write from * the empty into the void' without ideas, and above all, without aim. Despite a first moment of anger, in which I swore never again to take a pen in hand, my chief and sole activity, dominating all other tendencies and occupations, must be literature." [51]

Already Tolstoy's tales were conspicuous for the unique blending of intellectual and emotional perception which in his later works has never been surpassed. In these first sketches of army life, no matter how bluntly he deals with brutal facts, his vision is always that of the poet. He sees death in battle come, not to the unknown units of a battalion, but to quick and individual men. Alanin in *The Raid,* Valenchuk in *Wood-Felling,* and Volodya Kosetsov in *Sevastopol in August,* "straight, broad-shouldered, the uniform over his red Russian shirt unbuttoned—as he stood before his brother, cigarette in hand, leaning against the banisters of the porch, his face and attitude expressing naive joy, he was such a charming, handsome boy that one could

not help wishing to look at him,"[4]—these are all touched both with the tenderness of those who have loved them and of those whom they have loved; they have the human joys and sorrows of all living portrayed upon their features and inscribed upon their hearts.

Cowardice and courage; petty ambitions, petty vanities and deceits; dreams of glory and dreams of home; snobbery, fear and brotherly love—all these, expressed in the actions of generals, adjutants, officers and rankers, are reflected undistorted in the clear mirror of his genius. There is scarcely a fragment of all these early writings about which the author might not have written, as he wrote in conclusion to *Sevastopol in May:* "The hero of my tale—whom I love with all the power of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all his beauty, who has been, is, and will be, beautiful—is Truth."

Chapter IV

I. ***Petersburg: the*** **Contemporaries:** ***society and dissipation: Turgenev: the solecism at Panaev's: quarrels with Turgenev: disgust with literary circles: new friendships, 2, Plans to free his serfs: their failure.*** **3.** ***The desire to marry: dalliance with an early love,*** **4.** ***Return to Yasnaya Polyana: the erratic courtship of Valeria Arsenev: letters to her from Petersburg: he detaches himself from an embarrassing situation.***

BY the time Tolstoy arrived in Petersburg, in literary circles he had already acquired a considerable reputation. Dostoevsky had confided to Maykov that "he liked L. T. very much," though he had an idea that he would come to nothing; Panaev had admired *Childhood* to such an extent that Turgenev remarked that no one dare speak to him in the street without having long passages of it quoted to him from memory; Pisemsky (then writing *A Thousand Souls)* remarked gruffly to Gorbunov: "We might just as well give up writing—this young writer will one day eclipse us all"; the Emperor was so impressed with the first Sevastopol sketch that he himself gave orders for it to be translated into French, and that the life of the young man who had written it should be taken care of; while it was said that not only the Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna, but Turgenev himself, had shed tears over it. Whether or not this last was true, Turgenev had certainly written to Aksakov that he had not only read it, but "shouted Hurrah! and drunk the author's health."

Turgenev, who was now, after Gogol's death and the publication of *A Sportsman's Sketches* considered to be the foremost writer in Russia, had been Tolstoy's great admirer from the first. Before he was even aware of the identity of its author he had read *Childhood* enthusiastically to Tolstoy's sister, in consequence of which "dear Leo " had received from her soon afterwards "an enchanting letter in which she describes how she made Turgenev's acquaintance... a dear, charming letter, raising me in my own esteem and spurring me to activity." Since then, the two writers had exchanged letters; and as a token of his appreciation Tolstoy had dedicated *Wood-Felling* to the author of his favourite *Sportsman*s Sketches,* Having received, on his journey to Petersburg, an invitation to stay with him, Tolstoy had presented himself at Turgenev's apartment as soon as he arrived.

In a smart, well-fitting uniform, with his hair brushed upwards to give height to his forehead, carefully shaped curving side-whiskers to add distinction to a face he still considered to be abjecdy undistinguished, and an assiduously cultivated moustache to conceal the thick-

ness of his lips, Tolstoy was eagerly received, not only as a writer of talent, but as one of the heroes of Sevastopol. Balls at princely mansions, gay bachelor dinner-parties at the most exclusive restaurants, and all the other fashionable dissipations of the young aristocrat were soon as familiar as in the old pre-Caucasian days.

When the poet Fet called upon Turgenev one morning shortly after Tolstoy's arrival, he could not be received in the drawing-room because the visitor was still asleep on the sofa. " He is like this the whole time," Turgenev explained. "He came from Sevastopol, direct from his battery, put up at my place, and immediately plunged into dissipation. Carousals, gipsies and card-playing all night; after which he sleeps like a log until two in the afternoon. At first I tried to stop him, but after a while I gave it up."

But Tolstoy's introduction to the literary circles of Petersburg was scarcely a success. *The Contemporary*, which had been founded by Pushkin and Pletnev in 1836, was still the most progressive literary periodical of the day; and its contributors, amongst whom were Turgenev, Goncharov, Ostrovsky and Grigorovich, boasted not only the most famous names in Russia, but prided themselves upon their sympathy with the emancipation movement and the ardent liberalism of their views.

In order to present to this distinguished group their brilliant new fellow-contributor, Nekrasov and Panaev arranged a special dinner-party, presided over, as usual, by the lovely Mme. Panaev (of whom, a few years earlier, Dostoevsky had been enamoured), whose function, at these gatherings, was merely to "listen and observe." Now it was common knowledge amongst their intimates that Mme. Panaev, while married to one editor, shared her favours equally with the other, for which reason they were known jocularly as the co-husbands. And Tolstoy had even been warned of the fact beforehand, and cautioned to be tactful. During dinner the conversation turned upon George Sand, who was already a friend of Turgenev's, and whom later he was always to refer to as " one of his saints." And the more the company expressed their admiration, the more taciturn yet truculent the outraged Tolstoy became. Finally, when he could bear no more, he remarked with livid vehemence that for his part he considered that a woman who professed such principles should be tied to a hangman's cart and dragged through the streets as a public example. There was a tense embarrassed silence, during which, though apparently the fair Mme. Panaev remained unmoved, furtive and uneasy glances were exchanged amongst the guests.

A second public outburst occurred a few weeks later, when, at a gambling-party at Nekrasov's, Tolstoy was requested to read aloud a letter which had just arrived from a wealthy landowner and amateur of letters named Longinov. Unfortunately, and as no one could have guessed, it contained several caustic references to Tolstoy's supposed fear of liberalism. Controlling himself with difficulty at the time, as

soon as he left the party Tolstoy promptly sent the author of the letter a challenge to a duel.

It was only due to the exertions of others that, at this period, Tolstoy did not meet the same untimely fate that had overtaken both Pushkin and Lermontov. Although later Nekrasov himself went to Tolstoy and begged him to retract his challenge; although Longinov did not even reply to it, and, as is evident from certain entries in his diary, Tolstoy himself repented of his rashness, it was not the last time that his irritable, susceptible and passionate nature led him to seek a similar remedy for the most equivocal affronts.

Most serious of all were his clashes with Turgenev. It was doubtless inevitable that their characters should prove so incompatible that they could scarcely be polite to each other; nor is it wholly surprising that the impetuous and ardent Tolstoy, who, on occasion, could show himself to be conspicuously lacking in the social graces, and who considered it almost a point of honour not only to make it perfectly clear to others exactly what he thought and felt upon all matters under discussion, but even to overstate himself, should be frequently exasperated beyond endurance by this man ten years older than himself who, cosmopolitan, polished, endowed with exceptional talent and unquestionable artistic sensibility, with wealth, position and good looks, despite all his professed liberal views, remained apparently impervious and imperturbable in the face of the most flagrant social evils and prided himself upon his fine estates and his two thousand serfs.

The contradictory elements of his own nature still in ferment, and his many different capacities as yet unrealized, harassed by unusual mental, emotional and physical powers as yet unco-ordinated and uncontrolled, Tolstoy doubtless felt that Turgenev had already become, like his own Lezhynov in *Rudin*, " insufferably reasonable, indifferent and slothful," and was quite unable to appreciate the man whom, later, Goncourt wrote down as "a great charming fellow, a gentle giant with bleached hair who looks like the kindly genius of a mountain or forest."

Moreover, Turgenev himself had inherited from his notoriously violent-tempered mother a capacity to storm so powerful that it sometimes frightened himself; and had even told Polonsky how once, in Paris, during a particularly uncontrolled paroxysm, he had forced himself to stand in a corner with his face to the wall, wearing a dunce's cap made from a blind that he had torn down from the window, until his anger had subsided, so unrestrained could he sometimes be in fits of passion. In addition to this, since his youth he had been addicted to playing the role of amiable Maecenas amongst his poorer brethren of the literary world; and doubtless that tall, fair-haired and blue-eyed man still in the prime of life could not help sometimes assuming a touch of patronage in his manaer towards Tolstoy which the latter found insufferable.

Ten years before, the enthusiastic young Dostoevsky, who had at first found Turgenev "a really splendid person . . . a highly gifted writer, an aristocrat, handsome, rich, intelligent, cultured and only twenty-five," also very soon began to find his company intolerable; and even flew into a passion with him at one of the gatherings of the circle, in which he declared fiercely that "he was not afraid of any one of them," and that one day he would "tread them all into the mud." Even more significant, twenty years later (in 1867) he was still complaining that Turgenev "put on monstrous airs ... clumsily displayed all the wounds to his vanity," and that he could not stand die "aristocratic and pharisaical sort of way he embraces one and offers his face to be kissed."

Certainly Tolstoy and Turgenev were acid irritants to each other. There were frequent and surprising scenes. Grigorovich, who enjoyed nothing so much as to dine out on a good story, particularly if it concerned literary acquaintances and was lightly spiced with malice, went from one to another of the circle describing the latest outburst. " You can't imagine what it was like. Lord help us! Turgenev's voice gets more and more shrill; then, pressing his hand to his throat, he whispers, with the expression of a dying gazelle: 'I can't speak another word. It will give me bronchitis/ and with huge strides begins to pace up and down the three rooms. 'Bronchitis/ sneers Tolstoy, 'is an imaginary illness. Bronchitis is a metal.' To prevent a catastrophe I approach the sofa and say: 'My dear Tolstoy, don't get excited. You have no idea how much he appreciates you and likes you.' 'I won't permit him to be malicious to me/ answers Tolstoy with dilated nostrils. 'Just look at him walking up and down the room, wagging his democratic haunches on purpose each time he goes by!"'

When Stendhal met Byron in Milan forty years before, he had been astonished at the poet's frequent and somewhat ostentatious references to his aristocratic birth: a situation which seems to have now repeated itself with Turgenev and Tolstoy. Very soon the older man was remarking acrimoniously to his friends: "There is not one word, one movement which is natural in him. He is continually posing, and I simply cannot understand in a man of his intelligence this ridiculous pride in his paltry tide of Count." Presently Turgenev grew even more bitter. Although Nekrasov was to write of the new celebrity: "His face, although not handsome, is very pleasing—there is such energy and, at the same time, such gendeness and kindness in it. When he looks at one, it seems that he caresses"; and years later, Gorki admitted that Tolstoy's eyes were the most eloquent he had ever seen; to his friend Garshin, Turgenev confided that never before in his life had he seen or experienced anything more discomposing than the effect of Tolstoy's penetrating glance, which, combined with two or three stinging remarks, could exasperate to the pitch of frenzy anyone not possessed of great self-control.

This opinion was corroborated by Grigorovich, who (no doubt not uninfluenced by the fact that it made a good story) also found him contradictory and affected. "Watching him as he listened to the speaker and fixed him with his eyes, and observing how he compressed his lips, one guessed that he was preparing, instead of a direct reply, some expression of opinion which would confound his antagonists by its unexpectedness."

Nevertheless, no sooner had Turgenev left Petersburg to follow his usual" real gipsy life " than Tolstoy wrote to his aunt Tatiana: " Turgenev, whom I have begun to love (I realize it now) in spite of the fact that we always quarrelled, has left. Hence I feel terribly lonely." But though they renewed their acquaintance in the country the following summer, for the whole of their lives they were always to feel friendliest towards each other when they were apart. Nearly a year after their first meeting, Turgenev wrote to Tolstoy from Paris: "I feel that I like you as a man (my liking for the author goes without saying), but you have many qualities which grate on my nerves, and at last I realize that it is better for me to keep away from you. When we meet again, let us try once more to be more patient, and perhaps things will go more smoothly. But away from you, although it may sound strange, my feelings for you are those of a fraternal tenderness." [81]

As a writer, he realized already that he no longer had anything to teach the younger man. " My works may have given you pleasure," he wrote in a subsequent letter, "and even had some influence upon you: but only until the time when you found yourself. It is needless for you to study me further, as now you would only see my differences of manner, my faults and limitations. You must now study your own heart, man, and the really great writers. . . ." [81] "You need truth, remorseless truth as regards your own sensations," was always to be Turgenev's salutary advice to writers younger than himself.

Many years later, Tolstoy was to say that Turgenev was a man incapable of friendship. " He liked me as a writer; but as a man I never found any real warmth or cordiality in him. But he liked no one in that way, except women whom he happened to be in love with." This of the man of whom de Maupassant wrote after his death: "He was one of the most remarkable writers of this century, and at the same time the most candid, straightforward, universally sincere and affectionate man one could possibly meet. He was simplicity itself, kind and honest almost to excess, more good-natured than anyone else in the world, affectionate as men rarely are, ana loyal to his friends, whether living or dead!"

But that Turgenev (unlike Tolstoy) believed in sexual love far more than in friendship is also suggested by the Goncourts* Journal, in which he is claimed to have said, at a glorified *"diner de cinque"* which included Daudet, Zola, Flaubert and de Maupassant: "Love is the one source of all inspiration. For myself, I have never had any other....

My life is saturated in femininity . . . love alone produces a certain expansion of the soul."

Yet it was not only Turgenev in whom Tolstoy was deeply disappointed ; and once the novelty of being eagerly received by the most eminent writers of the day had ceased to gratify, he began to find the whole clique disagreeable. The mutual admiration masquerading as friendship; the indifference to moral values masquerading as tolerance; the lack of religious convictions masquerading as enlightenment; and the pettiness, complacency and self-importance of men who were fully aware that they had already "arrived," evoked in him a disillusionment that aroused his anger rather than his despair. Still as quick-tempered and turbulent as ever, he remarked in himself a frequent desire upon the slenderest provocation to slap the faces of those with whom he disagreed ; and when he was annoyed he could not restrain himself from saying deliberately disagreeable things, of which he later repented with characteristic fervour.

By the middle of November (despite the fact that he had spent the whole summer at Yasnaya Polyana) he was confiding to his diary: "Goncharov, Annenkov—all disgust me; and they disgust me because I want affection and friendship and they are incapable of it." And a few days later: " The literary atmosphere disgusts me as nothing else ever did." Soon afterwards, he was giving his work for publication to other magazines, and his connection with *The Contemporary was* over.

Nevertheless, he made several acquaintances and friends during this first period of success with whom he remained intimate for many years. The poet Tyutchev(whom he much admired) did him the honour to call upon him soon after his arrival in Petersburg, and welcomed him to his house; he became friendly with V. P. Botkin, a member of a wealthy firm of tea-dealers, who was also a critic and essayist of note; with Druzhinin, a story-writer, critic and translator of Shakespeare, who helped him with much useful criticism; with the poet Fet, "a dear fellow with great talent," a man of affectionate disposition, penetrating intellect and vast erudition, who had been an officer in the Guards, and who later bought himself an estate not far from Yasnaya Polyana in order to be near him; and, most important of all, he met now for the first time the Countess Alexandra Andreyevna Tolstoy, whom he visited at the Winter Palace where she was a maid of honour, and to whom he read before publication *Two Hussars,* which (apart from a short sketch, *The Snow Storm)* was his latest work. Very soon she was to become one of the most important influences in his life.

2

A few months after his return from the Crimea, Tolstoy began to find himself "greatly troubled by my relation to my serfs." Only recently, referring to serfdom, the Czarevich, who was said in this to

have been deeply influenced by *A Sportsman's Sketches,* had himself announced in public that "it is better to abolish it from above than to wait until it abolishes itself from below": and in accordance with plans that from time to time Tolstoy had considered during the last few years, and no doubt stimulated by the liberal ideas of many of his new acquaintances, and the atmosphere of progress which, prior to the coronation of Alexander II, surcharged the air, he wanted, not only to liberate them, but to see them in possession of some of his land.

But his estates were still heavily encumbered with debts, and it was difficult to know how to put his wishes into practice. However, he visited all the foremost experts and advocates of the abolition of serfdom, and finally, with the official permission of the Ministry of the Interior, devised the scheme of leasing to them the land they cultivated for thirty years at a nominal rent sufficient to liquidate the mortgages and leave him a small margin of compensation: which agreement would finally terminate all their other obligations to him as their owner. "What absurd relations!" he recorded, as at Yasnaya Polyana he considered the question from its purely practical aspect. "It is as if two strong men were bound together by a chain. It is painful for them both; when one of them moves he involuntarily chafes the other, and neither has room to work." [51]

With their customary innate suspiciousness, the peasants could not believe in the benevolence of his intentions. It was now rumoured amongst them that as soon as Alexander II ascended the throne not only would they be granted their freedom, but also endowed with land; so their master's proposition was simply a ruse to take advantage of them. "There was a meeting in the evening," Tolstoy recorded on June 10th. "They definitely refuse to sign." But he still had hope. "From to-morrow I will go round to all the peasants, find out their needs, and try to persuade them to enter into contracts separately." [51]

This proved equally fruitless; and thereafter Tolstoy's prognostications regarding the serfs were of the gloomiest.

3

"Four feelings have taken hold of me," Tolstoy recorded shortly after his return to Petersburg: "Love; the pangs of remorse (though pleasant); *the* desire to marry (in order to get rid of these pangs); and nature." Most powerful of these was the desire to marry.

But there were two factors that made the choice of a wife singularly difficult. The first was that either some congenital disharmony in his own nature, or else the combined effects of habit and experience, still separated into two irreconcilable categories women who appealed direcdy to his sensual nature from those who aroused in him any deep tenderness and affection: and the second, not unusual with particularly gifted men, was that a mind already so mature was scarcely likely to

find its affinity amongst the conventionally reared young debutantes of the fashionable ballrooms.

Shortly after his arrival in Petersburg, he had found a girl "extremely talented, but though she laughs well it seems insincere"; but she does not seem to have held his interest for long. And the more he indulged in the usual forms of promiscuous gratification, the more ardently he desired to find a suitable wife. "We went to Pavlovsk. Disgusting!" he recorded on May 14th. "Girls, silly music, girls, an artificial nightingale, girls, heat, 'cigarette-smoke, vodka, cheese, wild shrieks, girls, girls, girls! Everybody trying to pretend to be jolly, and that the girls pleased them, but without success.... I promise myself for ever never to enter a cabaret or a brothel again." [61]

Always faithful to his early affections, when he shortly arrived in Moscow from Petersburg, in a state of exceptional emotional susceptibility—("the means to gain true happiness in life is, without any rules, to throw out from oneself in all directions like a spider an adhesive web of love, and to catch in it all that comes: an old woman, a child, a girl or a policeman") [51]—he immediately called upon the women he had loved when still a child. At the Kaloshins' he found Sonichka not at home; and left the house feeling disgusted with her mother. With one of the Islenevs he visited the Lyubov whom, as a litde boy, he had been so frantically jealous of, and joyfully stayed to dinner with her and her three small daughters. "The children waited on us," he recorded. "What dear, merry little girls. Afterwards we walked and played leap-frog."

In Moscow, too, he now found another charming young woman with whom in his youth he had dreamed of marriage; and whom, as he now wrote to Sergey, he was "a little in love with" still. The inevitable fate of vacillating, fastidious and over-cautious young men—to look round one day and find the girls who once aroused their most tender emotions now happily married to others! For just as Zinaida Molostvovwas now Mme. Tiele, so Diakov's sister Alexandra was now the Princess Obolenski. "Did not recognize Mme. A. Obolenski, she has so changed," he recorded after dining with his old friend. "I did not expect to see her, and so the feeling she aroused in me was terribly acute.... Danced a little, and left there ... passionately in love. Yes, it hurts me even now to think of the happiness that might have been mine and which has fallen to the lot of that excellent fellow A. Obolenski." [51]

Two days later he met her again at the house of a mutual friend. "Once or twice while I spoke she was all attention. No, I am not being carried away when I say that she is the sweetest woman I ever knew. The most refined, artistic, and at the same time moral nature. . . . Obolenski is a fine and intelligent man.... I have such respect for him that I don't suffer as I might have done at imagining his relations with her.... They are just as they must be...." [61]

Nevertheless, his head soon became confused with romantic dreams. After he had met her again at the Diakovs' the following day he noted: "She told Sergey Sukhotin in my presence that when she was engaged there were no lovers. Her husband was not there. Can she have wished to tell me that she was not in love with him? Afterwards, when saying good-bye to me she *suddenly* gave me her hand, and there were tears in her eyes because she had been crying about her daughter's illness, but I felt awfully happy. After that she unexpectedly showed me to the door. Certainly since Sonichka's days I have not experienced such a powerful, pure and good feeling. I say 'good* because though it is hopeless it-gives me joy to arouse it. I want awfully to work at *Youth*: I think because in it that feeling is relived." [51]

But there was only one day left before he had arranged to leave for home. On it " Sukhotin and Obolenski invited me to the Diakovs', and I went and talked with A. for three hours, sometimes *tite & the* and sometimes with her husband. I am convinced she knows my feelings and that she is pleased. I was awfully happy. . .." [61]

That, for the present, was the end of the affair. Next morning he set out for Yasnaya Polyana.

4

He travelled with Mile. Vergani, his ward's French governess, and it was therefore inevitable that before reaching home he should pay a short visit to the neighbouring estate of Soudakovo, where Valeria Arsenev lived with a brother and two sisters in the care of a fashionable aunt. In his present susceptible condition, Tolstoy found himself most agreeably impressed. No longer a half-formed child, as when he had last seen her, she was now a dark, graceful and vivacious beauty in the first flower of youth.

At Yasnaya Polyana, things were much changed. The fine old timbered house had been removed, and the family life transferred to one of the substantial stone wings, which, apart from matters of sentiment, was adequate to the needs of the household. But no doubt as he surveyed the void where it had once stood, he experienced a deep nostalgia for the enchantment of the childhood whose very background he had himself destroyed. Perhaps,[1] too, for the first time, he now grieved a little for Dmitri, who had died of consumption at Orel in January.

Until the age of twenty-six, this youngest pf his brothers had lived a deeply religious life in accordance with the convictions of his youth, avoiding tobacco, wine and women, and strenuously trying to direct the spiritual life of the serfs, to whom he felt himself to be directly responsible. Then, influenced by O. Islenev, one of his oldest friends, while remaining essentially serious, he suddenly became dissipated; and rescuing a prostitute named Masha, the first woman he had known, from the brothel where he had found her, took her to live with him.

Shortly afterwards he had been taken ill with consumption; and in a few months he was dead. Although Tolstoy had visited him just before the end, the two brothers had scarcely seen each other since their boyhood; and he had been but little affected by the loss.

After a few days at home, Tolstoy went off to visit Turgenev at his "noble and opulent country house Spasskoye," and to see his sister Mary, who lived near him; and all the time he was away, his imagination kept reverting to that fine dark young head which seemed to exhale all the charm of youth and innocence. When he returned home shortly afterwards, he was completely fascinated. With Diakov ("yes, he is my best friend, and a fine one"), who was now at Yasnaya Polyana, he forthwith rode to Soudakovo again; and imagined that here at last he had found the girl destined to be his future wife.

All through that summer, in a poetic atmosphere of blossoming lilac, nightingales singing beneath a summer moon, cherries ripening in. the orchards, and the hay lying gold beneath the sun; surrounded by his two aunts (Pelageya Yushkov was on a visit to him), his brother Sergey, his sister Mary and her children, and his favourite friend, he paid strange and vacillating court to her, the observer confiding to his diary, in the intervals between bathing and picnic parties and frequent rides to Soudakovo, all the doubts and oscillations of his evanescent moods.

His family watched him curiously, fondly: the arch and worldly Mile. Vergani made tactful opportunities for him to be with Valeria alone; and the faithful Diakov (probably well aware of his friend's impossible passion for his sister) offered encouraging advice, and assured him that Valeria would make a charming wife. Thus, seated dubiously at his desk as he tried to continue to work at *Youth,* or considered his plans for freeing his serfs, the different selves within him would alternately seize possession of him, argue, hope, grow diffident or bold, so that he continued for months to be as vague and bewildered about his own intentions as were those who watched him. Each fluctuating shade of feeling he recorded with his usual impartial honesty. At first, despite her artless prattle about clothes and the coming coronation, he decided that "she is not a passing, but an enduring passion"; and a few days later, when he found her particularly charming in a becoming white dress, he noted that he had passed one of the happiest days of his life. And yet: Did he love her seriously? And even were she to reciprocate his feelings, could she love him long?

Probably it was never Valeria who attracted him so much as the idea of marriage, and marriage as a deliverance from the sordid, transitory commerce with peasant women which was the only easement he could find for the "terrible lust amounting to physical illness" which seemed to beset him now with an increasing frequency.

As the summer progressed,* his frequent visits to Soudakovo made aunt Tatiana's manner even more significant and interrogative. Per-

haps it was her too obvious interest in the affair that caused him to comment in an access of irritation: "It is abominable that I am beginning to feel a quiet dislike for my aunt, despite'her affection. One must learn to forgive triviality. Without that there can be neither happiness nor affection." [51]

But to overlook triviality in Valeria was less easy, and presently he found her "extremely badly educated, and ignorant, if not stupid." Even worse, his innate exacting fastidiousness was wounded by her lack of delicacy. "The word *prostituer* which she uttered grieved me greatly, disillusioned me." Which gave him serious cause to hesitate and to reflect. Presently he grew coolly critical, even hostile. He discovered that her bare arms were not shapely, and began to "pinch her morally" so cruelly that she did not" complete her smiles. There were tears in her smile." But compunction, if not desire, drew him back to her the following day, when, to add to his distress, he found her sitting writing in a dark room in a "horrid, showy morning-gown." Not unnaturally, after his recent behaviour, Valeria affected coldness and disdain, and even went so far as to show him a letter to her sister in which she had accused him of being an egotist, and even worse. Pleasurably piqued, Tolstoy became fierce, and there were reproaches and recriminations. When Valeria begged him with tears to forget, and let things be as they were, he found it "very sweet."

Soon afterwards the Arsenevs paid a visit to Yasnaya Polyana. Doubtless Tolstoy showed them round his estate with becoming pride, and aunt Tatiana and Mile. Vergani exchanged benevolent and meaning smiles. Valeria, too, was evidently at her best; yet Tolstoy nevertheless recorded: "Valeria is a splendid girl, but she really does not please me.... If we meet so often, I might suddenly marry her. That would not be a misfortune, but it is unnecessary, and I do not wish it." This was followed shortly by: "Valeria nicer than ever, but her frivolity and absence of interest in anything serious is terrifying. Am afraid hers is a nature that cannot love eveaa child. I am afraid of marriage and I am afraid of amusing myself with her. But to marry, much would have to be changed, and I still have much work to do on myself." [61]

After tjhis, he kept away from her for nearly a week. Then his misgivings abated, and, riding over to Soudakovo full of affection, he spent a "very merry day." His next visit, four days later, was no less agreeable. "For the first time Valeria was' without gowns' as Seriosha calls it. She was ten times nicer, and above all, more natural."

This sudden warmth of feeling was swiftly followed by a fresh revulsion; and after a short interval, when he once more saw her for three days in succession, he found her "in a confused state of mind ... simply stupid . .. and cruelly affected."

Everything by starts, and nothing long, an absence of ten days produced in him a fresh desire for her: and he decided that "she is not stupid and is remarkably kind." In fact, "V. and I talked about

marriage." Perhaps this sudden tenderness was evoked by the fact that she was shortly to leave for Moscow, for the coronation, when they would be separated for several weeks. Yet the struggle between infatuation and discretion continued unabated, and although when he rode over to take leave of her two days later he found her "unusually simple and nice," he was still so uncertain of himself that he wrote that night: "I should like to know: Am I in love or not?"

Had Valeria written to him, it is probable that he would have soon learnt the answer, despite his predilection for this pretty, unsophisticated, frivolous young girl who had by now doubdess managed to convince herself that at least she was in love with him. But Valeria remained discreetly silent; and, true to the psychological laws of Proust and Stendhal, this silence soon began to fill him with disquiet. He tried to console himself by working at his book; but the turmoil of emotion in which he had recently been living had reacted upon his health, and, reduced to bed by pains in his chest, he began to wonder if he could have possibly contracted tuberculosis.

After a further interval, during which his disquiet increased to agitation, a letter arrived from Valeria for aunt Tatiana. Written, there is reason to suppose, at the instigation of either her elder sister or the diplomatic Mile. Vergani, it was full of naive, girlish rapture at the coronation; at her social successes; at some handsome aide-de-camp who, in a terrible crush, saved her elaborate, delicate dress from being spoiled. Of course, as she was intended, aunt Tatiana, full of excitement, read the letter to her " *cher Lion*** If these outpourings had been written with the purpose of arousing his ardour, they certainly had the desired effect; for, without waiting to consider, Tolstoy rushed vehemently to his study to pen a reply full of passionate reproaches. " To love high society and not man is dishonest and even dangerous," he informed her: "for more worthless people are to be met with in high society than in any other." Undoubtedly Tolstoy was now jealous, and wished to sting, for he continued cruelly: "... and for you it can have no value, for you are not in high society, and therefore your relations, based on a pretty little face ... could be neither pleasant nor *dignes.* As for this aide-de-camp," he concluded furiously, "I believe there are forty of them all told, and I know positively that only two are not scoundrels or fools. . . ." [61]

To this ungracious effusion Valeria, not unnaturally, did not reply; and soon Tolstoy, filled with anxiety and compunction, became abjectly apologetic. At last, towards the end of September, the Arsenevs returned home, and Mile. Vergani, doubtless in order to acquaint herself with the position, came alone to pay a call at Yasnaya Polyana. As was to be expected, her conversation was largely of Valeria's life in Moscow; and as was to be expected also, Tolstoy was bitterly annoyed. " From what she says, V. disgusts me,** he noted angrily.

Two days later, Valeria came herself. Now that she was once more

accessible, Tolstoy grew coldly critical. "Sweet, but limited and incredibly futile," was his laconic comment. There now followed a repetition of his former doubts and misgivings. He discovered that "she is incompetent both in practical and physical life," and presently decided that "she is nothing to me but an unpleasant memory." But while on a visit to Soudakovo he learned that during her stay in the capital she had been greatly attracted by the musician Mortier. Again his reactions were typically Proustian. "Strange, it offended me. I feel ashamed both for myself and for her, but for the first time experienced something like feeling for her." Later he added: "She is terribly shallow, without principle and cold as ice, so she is always being carried away."

So the weeks passed. Already it was autumn. The leaves turned and fell: snow lay on the ground. Yet still Tolstoy's indecision affected his whole life. All very well to confide to his diary: " She has grown much stouter and I certainly feel nothing for her"; but a man in his position could not pay so much attention to a well-bred young girl without his intentions being taken for granted. Those hours spent together at the piano; the intimate walks in the garden, while Mile. Vergani and her sisters tactfully marched in front; the long evenings on the balcony listening to the nightingales and watching the stars: what meaning could they have but one ? By now aunt Tatiana expected him to tell her of his betrothal at any moment; his sister sent him messages of congratulation with her eyes. Slowly, horribly, Tolstoy saw himself drifting into a marriage which reason warned him could only prove disastrous; yet still he could not break the link which drew them together. Still he vacillated, hoped, observed; noted punctiliously: " Valeria charming. I am almost in love with her "; or " Valeria came. Did not please me very much, but she is a dear girl, honest and frank."

Then, in a moment of sudden confidence and tenderness, he showed her the recent entries in his diary. "I love her," he added: and felt, immediately he had made the admission, that it was not really true. But at last he had committed himself. When he called next day, to his extreme embarrassment he found her with her hair dressed in some terrible new style, and flaunting a hideous purple dress especially in his honour. "I felt pained and ashamed . . . involuntarily I was in the position of a sort of fiance."

Three days later (it was October 31st) he arrived at Soudakovo to take Valeria to a ball. She was very charming, and everyone treated them as though they were engaged. " The constraint of my position angers me more and more," he recorded. Suddenly he realized the danger of his situation: understood himself to be all but chained for life to a pretty, frivolous girl who could give him nothing but a possible easement from his exacting sexual demands.

Panic-stricken, he sought out Mile. Vergani, told her some incoherent story of a Mme. Dembinski and a Mr. Krapovitsky who be-

lieved they loved each other, but as yet were uncertain of their own hearts, and rushed back to Yasnaya Polyana where his aunt was expecting at last to be able to offer him congratulations.

Two days later, excusing himself for his precipitate flight by the necessity to be alone in order to learn the true state of his feelings, he was in Moscow.

In this, whether consciously or not, he undoubtedly deceived himself; for, save in aberrant moments of recurring infatuation, his chief preoccupation was how to extricate himself as painlessly and as decently as possible from so perilous and so delicate a dilemma. If there was consternation at Soudakovo, Yasnaya Polyana was equally disturbed. Aunt Tatiana, who had been looking forward to the wedding, was as distressed as she was mystified: while of his sister Mary, to whom he had flown as soon as he reached Moscow, he recorded laconically: "She takes her side."

Tolstoy's first thought, before leaving Moscow for Petersburg, was to restore some sort of understanding with the forsaken Valeria; and he made a serious attempt to explain to her his point of view without causing her too much pain. "... I already love in you your beauty," he assured her: " but I am only beginning to love in you that which is ever precious and eternal—your heart, your soul. \ Beauty one can get to know, and fall in love with in an hour, then cease to love it just as Quickly; but the soul one must learn to know. Believe me, nothing on earth is given without labour, even love, the most beautiful and natural of feelings. . . . Everything is acquired through love and hardship. And the more difficult the labour and hardship, the higher the reward. And there is great work ahead of us—to understand each other and to preserve each other's love and respect...." Then, suddenly becoming the avuncular guardian, he indulged himself in detailed exhortations for her improvement. " Please go for a walk every day, whatever the weather may be... and wear stays, and put on your stockings yourself, and generally make various improvements of that kind in yourself.... Try, please try, to plan out the occupations for every day and check them in the evening...." [61]

Having thus, to some extent, eased his bosom, he went on to Petersburg and, installed in a "nice quiet little flat with a piano," proceeded to devote his time to the writing that his protracted dalliance at Soudakovo had interrupted. Thus occupied, he would doubtless soon have forgotten Valeria had not two things occurred to stimulate fresh emotional reactions. Valeria did not reply to his letter; and a mutual acquaintance, who knew of Tolstoy's infatuation and had seen something of Valeria during the coronation, informed him that she had allowed Mortier openly to pay court to her.

At once pride and jealousy were piqued anew, and he sat down to pour out to her the chaos of his feelings. " * What has been will never come again,' said Pushkin.. Believe me, nothing is forgotten, nor

passes away, nor recurs. Never again shall I feel that calm attachment to you, that respect and trust which I felt before your departure for the coronation. Then I gave myself up with joy to my feelings, but now I am afraid of them." Then, warmed to ardour by his new misgivings: "Forgive, simply forgive all my unevenness of character: not I alone am to blame for it. Two things I implore of you: work, work at yourself, think with greater steadiness, make yourself give a sincere account of your feelings, and be sincere with me in the way that is most disadvantageous for yourself. Tell me everything that was, and is, bad in you. I involuntarily assume too much in you that is good——Surely the most important question is whether we can be friends and love one another. And to this end it is necessary to show all the bad, so that we may know whether we can reconcile ourselves to it, and not to conceal it, lest we should be disappointed unexpectedly afterwards.. .." [61]

No sooner had he despatched this letter than he repented of it and, partly to mitigate its effect, sent her a parcel of new books to improve her mind. Even so, he could not remain silent. The fact that he could be certain of her sentiments no longer aroused in him an irrepressible desire for self-exposition; and, probably in order to explain his feelings to himself, he wrote again: "Certain people know neither joy nor suffering—moral, of course—all their lives. It often seems to me that you have such a nature, and I am dreadfully pained by it; tell me, if you understand the question clearly, are you like that or not?" [61] Then, now that her presence was no longer there to disillusion him, imagining her to be far nearer the perfect companion of his dreams than he was ever able to do when she was near him, he continued frankly: "I think much less of you and much more calmly of you than during the first days, but I still think of you more than I have ever thought of any woman. . . ." At last, addressing some creation of his own imagination, he cried out: "If only you could understand and feel, and learn through suffering, as I have done, the conviction that the only true, enduring, and highest happiness is to be achieved by three things: work, self-renunciation and love. I know it, I bear the conviction in my soul, but I live according to it only for a couple of hours in the course of a year; while you, with your honest heart, could devote yourself to this conviction as thoroughly as you are capable of devoting yourself to people... . And two persons united by this conviction—that would be the height of happiness." [61] Having thus expressed his most cherished dreams, Tolstoy then continued to address himself to this new and imaginary Valeria: "Do write to me, for the *love* of God, every day. Though if you feel no need, don't write: or no, when you have no desire to write, write only the following phrase—to-day, such and such a date, I don't feel like writing—and send it to me. I shall be grateful. But for the love of God, don't make up your letters, and don't read them over—you see—I who could show off to you—and do you really think that I should not like to pose to you ?—

I want to show you only my honesty and sincerity: all the more ought you to do it. I know many women cleverer than you, but an honester woman I have never met....

"You see," he concluded, with an eloquence that clearly reveals his earnest desire for marriage, "I wish so intensely to love you that I teach you how to make me love you. And indeed, my deepest feeling for you is not yet love, but a passionate desire to love you with all my might."[61]

All this time Tolstoy was devoting himself to his work. He had promised contributions to two different magazines, and was trying to finish both *Youth* and *A Landlord's Morning.* Thus the quiet, isolated life he was living encouraged his imagination—and the more so the longer she remained silent—to dwell more and more upon this new illusory figure of Valeria.

Presently he began to wait anxiously for the post; but when it arrived, it still brought him no word from her; and three days after his last letter he burst out again: "I feel that I am silly, but can't restrain myself, my lovely girl, and not yet having received from you a single line, I am writing again. . . ." Then, presumably in order to clarify the situation for them both, he plunged into a detailed exposition of all the features in their relations which aroused his misgivings. "Krapovitsky," he told her, "is a man morally old, who in his youth committed many follies for which he paid with the best years of his life, and who has at last found his aim and vocation—literature. In his soul he despises society, longs for a peaceful, moral family life, and dreads more than anything on earth a distracted social life, in which all good, honest and pure feelings perish, and in which one becomes the slave of social conventions and of creditors. He has already paid for this delusion with the best years of his life, so that this conviction is not a phrase to him but a realization reached through suffering. But lovely Mme. Dembinski has not yet felt anything of the sort; for her happiness consists in balls, bare shoulders, a carriage, diamonds, acquaintance with chamberlains, lieutenant-generals, etc. But it so happens that Krapovitsky and Dembinski seem to love each other (perhaps I am lying to myself, but at this instant I love you terribly). And so these two with opposite inclinations have, it seems, fallen in love. How then should they behave so as to live together? In the first place, they must make concessions to each other; in the second, the one whose inclinations are less moral than the other's must make the most concessions." [61]

Having thus prepared her, passionate, painstaking, humourless but characteristically frank, he castigated her fiercely for her frivolous dreams; and as earnesriy expounded his own ideals for a useful life.

Once more his post arrived, and with it no letter from Valeria. At such neglect he could scarcely contain himself. "An instinct has long told me that nothing will come of all this **save** unhappiness for both

of us," he dashed off in chagrin. "We had better stop before it is too late."

A few days later, two letters from Valeria arrived together. The gendeness and meekness of their tone merely cooled his ardour and re-aroused his doubts. Contritely he begged pardon for his last letters, both "written under the influence of a silly feeling of which only the memory is now left me. I now look at you perfectly calmly.and sensibly... and still see in you an extremely nice young girl with whom I could be happy if I were different from what I am.... It would do you no harm to go to the ball. It should interest you to put yourself to the test. Do this, d. . . . .g, and tell me your impression sincerely. I have almost failed to test myself, i.e. have seen no women, been nowhere; but, *la main sur la conscience,* I can say that during these three weeks not a single woman has attracted my attention...." [M]

Another letter which arrived from her a few days afterwards suddenly rekindled all his old ardour—perhaps, as he recorded, because he had not" met any women all this time." His reply to it is the most unstudiedly affectionate of their correspondence. "I have just received your glorious, wonderful, excellent letter of Nov. 15th. Don't be angry with me, darling, that I call you so in my letters. The word so well fits the feelings which I have for you. Simply darling.... Nothing matters save that you may love me and be as I wish to see you, i.e. splendid; and from your letter it seemed to me that you love me and begin to understand life more seriously, to love good and to find pleasure in watching yourself and advancing on the road to perfection. •. • God help you, my darling; advance, love love, not me alone, but all God's world—people, nature, music, poetry, and all that is fair ia-it —and develop your mind so as to understand the things which are worthy of love on earth_" [61] Even so, he could not restrain himself from administering another snub; and Valeria's meek announcement that she was quite willing to spend her life between friends and relations in the country and at Tula merely aroused the comment that by so doing the Krapovitskys "will become provincial and will secretly hate each other for being provincial. No, my dear friend, the Krapovitskys will see either nobody or the best society in all Russia, i.e. the best society, not in the sense of the Czar's favour and wealth, but in the sense of intellect and education. They will have their flat on the fifth floor, but the most remarkable men in Russia will come there——" [61] He then relapsed even farther into his customary fault-finding. "Alas!" he now informed her, "you are mistaken in thinking that you have taste; that is, perhaps you have taste, but you have no tact..." (doubtless, in memory, he still smarted at that hideous new manner of doing her hair and the execrable purple dress), and he continued to reproach her mercilessly for her carelessness and frivolity. "There is another kind of elegance, modest, afraid of the unusual and gaudy, but very particular as to such details as shoes, collars, gloves, cleanliness of the

nails, tidiness in doing the hair, etc, about which I am firm as a rock if only it doesn't take too much time from the serious occupations which every person who cares for fine things can't help loving. . . . A taste for bright colours is excusable .. . but with your pretty little face, to make a mistake of that kind is unpardonable...." Nevertheless the conclusion, for Tolstoy, was ardent to the point of recklessness : " Good-bye, darling, darling, darling, a thousand times darling: whether you are angry or not, I have written it." [61]

But this sudden warmth was the final flare of a dying fire, for a few days later he recorded: "Had a stupid letter from Valeria. She humbugs herself and I see through it, and that is trying." In reply he admitted: " I don't know whether it is because your letters are not nice, or because I am beginning to change, or because in your last letter but one you mention Mortier, but your letters have not produced in me such a pleasant impression as the first ones." [61] After which unpromising beginning, he relapsed into a long grumbling homily about her indiscretion with the music-master: " The Mortier affair remains die Mortier affair ...," and he chided her severely for not having officially severed all connection with the man. He was not jealous, but only anxious. " I f Mortier wrote my wife a love-letter or kissed her hand (and who prevents him now ?) and she concealed it from me, then, if I loved my wife, I should shoot myself, and if not, I should divorce her instantly and fly to the ends of the earth out of respect for her, for my name, and from disappointment in my dreams of the future. . . . And these are not empty words: I swear to you by God that I know it as I know myself. That is why I am so afraid of marriage, because I regard it too strictly and seriously. . . . I stake everything on one throw. If I do not find complete happiness, then I shall ruin everything, my talent, my heart: I shall become a drunkard, a gambler; if I have not the courage to cut my throat, I shall steal. . . ." [61] As if he were a deceived husband already, he went on and on about Mortier, Mortier, Mortier.

By now he had begun to realize that his interest in Valeria was nothing compared to his interest in his work—"How *t* long to have done with magazines in order to write in the way I am beginning to think about, terribly high and pure," [61] he recorded during these days. And at the end of the month: "About Valeria I think little and unpleasantly."

Early in December, Tolstoy returned to Moscow, where he received a letter from aunt Tatiana, who was still secretly hoping that the marriage would shortly be announced. Only now he seems to have understood his feelings. "You again write to me about Valeria in the same tone in which you have always spoken about her, and I again answer in the way in which I have always answered. Just as I had left, and for a week later, it seemed to me that I was in love, as it is called; but, with my imagination, that was not difficult. At present, and especially since

I have seriously taken to work, I would like, and like very much, to say that I am in love with her, or even simply that I love her; but this is not the case. The only feeling I have towards her is gratitude for her love, and also the thought that of all the girls I have known and do know she would have been the most suitable for married life, as I understand married life.. . . "[81]

To Valeria, who now wrote to reproach him for the coldness of his last letter, he concluded: "Do believe that in all our relations I was sincere, as far as I could be; that I had and have friendship for you. ... Among all the women whom I have ever known, I loved and love you best of all, but all this is not yet enough."[61]

At last, so far as Tolstoy was concerned, the affair was ended; and his chief aim was to extricate himself as quickly as he could from a position which he still found extremely embarrassing; a task not rendered any easier since Mile. Vergani had written him a letter reproaching him in forcible terms for his "brutish" behaviour; both his sister and his aunt made it clear that in their opinion he had behaved far from well; and the affair was now one of the principal topics of conversation in Tula. For some time he had played with the idea of going abroad with his two brothers; and now it seemed that the best thing he could do would be to leave Russia for a few months until the unfortunate episode should be forgotten. He therefore made immediate application for a passport.

There followed a silence of three weeks, during which he returned to Petersburg and plunged once more into social distractions; which proved to him even more clearly than before that the world was full of pretty girls and he could live very well without Valeria. Then he received from her a long and rather pathetic letter by which she evidently hoped to change his feelings towards her. But his reply to this was so cool and impersonal that in her following one she forbade him ever to write to her again.

This did not prevent him from telling her: " That I have been guilty both to myself and you—extremely guilty—there is no doubt. But what can I do? What can I do, if I cannot return the feeling which your kind heart is ready to give me?... Good-bye, dear Valeria Vladimirovna, I thank you a thousand times for your friendship and I beg your forgiveness for the pain which that friendship may have caused you."[61] After asking her to send him a few lines of farewell to Paris he concluded conventionally, with a faint, iJl-concealed sigh of relief: "I am sure that you will make some nice, good man happy, but I, so far as my heart goes, am not worth your finger-nail, and would make you miserable."

To his aunt he wrote a few days later: " I have received my passport for abroad and have come to Moscow, intending to spend a few days with Mary and then go to Yasnaya to arrange my affairs and take leave of you. But I have changed my mind, chiefly on Mashenka's advice, and

have decided to remain here with her for a week or two, and then to go directly to Paris via Warsaw. You probably understand, dear aunt, why I do not wish to come to Yasnaya now, or rather to Soudakovo, and even ought not to do so. I think I have behaved very badly in relation to Valeria; but were I to see her now, I should behave even worse. As I have written you, I am more than indifferent to her, and fear I can no longer deceive either myself or her...."[81]

But aunt Tatiana continued to complain of her disappointment to Paris, and Tolstoy to explain. " I do not see why a young man should necessarily either be in love with a girl and marry her, or have no friendly relations with her at all, for as to friendship and sympathy with her, I have always retained a great deal. Mile. Vergani, who wrote me such a ridiculous letter, should have understood my conduct... how I endeavoured to come as little as possible, how it was she who engaged me to come oftener and to enter into nearer relations. I understand her being vexed that a thing she had greatly desired did not take place ... but that is no reason for telling a man ... that he is a brute, and making everyone think so. I am sure Tula is convinced I am the greatest monster.. ." [81]

His last words to Valeria were also written from Paris, whither, in accordance with his request, she had sent him a few lines: "Your letter, which I received to-day, dear Valeria Vladimirovna, made me extremely happy. It proved to me that you did not think of me as a sort of villain or monster, but simply as a man with whom you almost entered into more intimate relations, but for whom you still have friendship and respect.... I give you my word of honour... that there was no reason for the change you see in me. Neither, properly speaking, was there a change. I was always telling you that I did not know what kind of feeling I had for you, and that it had always seemed to me that there was something wrong. At one time, before I left the country, my loneliness, my frequent meetings with you, and chiefly your lovely appearance and your character in particular, were of such effect that I was almost ready to believe that I was in love with you. ... In Petersburg I lived a solitary life, but in spite of this, the fact alone that I did not see you proved to me that I never had been nor should be in love with you. And to be mistaken in that would be a tragedy both for you and for myself...." [61]

Thus ended Tolstoy's first serious attempt at marriage. And if reason had triumphed, it was perhaps less because reason was strong than because his emotions had been weak. Only very narrowly had he avoided disaster. The experience doubtless gave him good cause to reflect. Next time he might be less fortunate.

Chapter V

I. *Paris: Turgenev and the Princesses Lvov: the execution: hasty departure.* 2. *Geneva: the Countess Alexandra A. Tolstoy: Clarens: Lucerne: Schaffhausen—the idea of a village school: Baden—the gambler again: Dresden and the Princess Lvov: return to Russia.* 3. *Social life in Moscow: reconsidering marriage: literary activity: estate management.* 4. *The bear hunt.* 5. *Visit to the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy: a-confession of faith.*

AFTER the embarrassment of his relations with Valeria, and his disgust with most of the literary world of Petersburg, at first Tolstoy found Paris full of interest and charm. Nekrasov and Turgenev were there; and after a stormy scene in which Tolstoy challenged Turgenev to a duel, but was finally persuaded by Nekrasov to be reconciled, the two novelists departed together on a visit to Dijon. Then Sergey arrived, and Tolstoy surrendered himself whole-heartedly to new and exotic impressions. Having engaged English and Italian masters to improve his languages, he frequented the gymnasium; went often to the theatre (where he saw Ristori) and to the opera; looked at the pictures in the Louvre; explored old churches and the cemetery of Pere Lachaise; drove out diligently to admire Fontainebleau and Versailles; stood aghast before Napoleon's tomb at the *Hotel des Invalides,* where he recorded characteristically: "This deification of a criminal is awful"; found himself suddenly tormented by doubts of everything; dined with his Russian acquaintances; and mildly paid court to the two Princesses Lvov. (Of the mother he recorded: " Lvovis jealous of me, and, Heaven knows why, I am deprived of his wife's agreeable company "; and of the daughter: "I like her very much and think I am a fool not to try to marry her. If she were to marry a very good man and they were happy together I might be driven to despair."[61])

In order not to miss anything, he went to see a public execution. Byron, whose curiosity had led him, equipped with opera-glasses, to a similar spectacle in Rome in 1817, had observed that "although the two prisoners behaved calmly enough," one of them "died with great terror and reluctance, which was very horrible"; and the sight had left him " quite hot and thirsty," and with trembling hands. But the impression made upon Tolstoy was of the most powerful of his life. "A stout white neck and chest; he kissed the Gospels, and then—death. How senseless!... The guillotine kept me long awake, and compelled me to reflect," he recorded with the usual understatement of his private shorthand. "What is certain is that henceforward I shall never serve any

government. All governments in this world are equal in the measure of good and evil that they do. The only ideal is anarchy." [61] To his friend Botkin he wrote: "I saw many horrors both during the war and when I was in the Caucasus; but if a man had been torn to pieces before my eyes it would have been less frightful than the manner in which a powerful, vigorous and healthy man was put to death in a second by this ingenious machine." [66] Twenty years later, when the scene was still reflected in the mirror of his imagination, he wrote in *A Confession:* "When I saw the head divided from the body, and heard the sound with which they fell separately into the box, I understood, not with my reason, but with my whole being, that no theory of the reasonableness of progress could justify this deed; and that though everybody from the creation of the world held it to be necessary, on no matter what theory, I knew it to be both unnecessary and bad...." ^

So deep was the shock, that the whole charm of Paris was destroyed for him; and getting up late next morning feeling tired and ill after a nearly sleepless night, the "simple and sensible" idea occurred to him of leaving the city without delay. With characteristic impulsiveness he rushed off to Turgenev to say good-bye, even shedding tears as he did so—"he has made, and is making, a different man of me"—and caught the morning train for Geneva. Later that day, when he changed into a coach with the full moon shining on it," and everything standing out suffused with love and joy," for the first time for many months he thanked God that he was alive.

2

He had not come to Geneva without reason; for he knew well that he would find the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy there; and his feelings for her were already tinged with admiration and affection. Intelligent, cultured, sympathetic, with gracious manners and the unaffected bearing of one long used to moving in the most distinguished circles, she combined in herself nearly all the feminine virtues which he most admired—a beautiful voice, discriminating taste, deep religious feeling, natural warmth of heart and an understanding mind. Accustomed to friendship with the most intelligent and distinguished men of her day (at different times she was intimately acquainted with Turgenev, Goncharov and Dostoevsky, besides those eminent ministers who mixed most freely in Court circles), she could appreciate Tolstoy's latent gifts more than any other woman he had ever met. A first cousin of his father's (a relationship to himself that in Russia was known as aunt), Tolstoy soon averred that she was far too young to claim this title, and therefore called her affectionately Grandmamma instead.

Here in Switzerland, the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy was living at the Villa Bocage as maid of honour to the Grand Duchess of Leuchtenberg, the sister of Alexander I I ; while her sister was in charge of the

Grand Duchess's children. In later years she was herself appointed to take charge of the education of the Czar's only daughter, who later married the Duke of Edinburgh and became the mother of Marie, Queen of Roumania, on which occasion she was honoured with the Order of St. Catherine. When Tolstoy's wife, who, when unbiased, could be a shrewd judge of character, met her many years later, she found her " gay and kind, and interested in everything. But she is a lady of the Court to the very marrow of her bones; she loves the Court, the Emperor and the Imperial family—partly because she is prepared to love everyone, and partly because they are *Sovereigns* and she loves the Monarchy and the Orthodox Church." Of this devotion to the Royal Family, Tolstoy was perfectly aware; and in lighter mood, since that word, in Russian, was very similar to the name of the head of the famous girls' school that supplied the Court with most of its maids of honour, he always used to refer to her intimate circle as the Chimney.

Calling upon her as soon as he had arrived, Tolstoy immediately informed her that Paris had driven him to despair and he had come to throw himself upon her mercy. "What haven't I seen diere! First, at the furnished apartments where I stayed there were thirty-six *me'nages,* of which nineteen were irregular. That disgusted me terribly. Then, wishing to test my feelings, I went to see an execution, after which I could not sleep, and simply did not know what to do with myself.. .."

During the weeks that followed, amidst that wonderful scenery and the flowering of spring, when "nightingales sang, and the air was rapturous with a thousand joys" (as his cousin Alexandra wrote him years later), their friendship ripened to an intimacy that was deeply tinged with love. After his relations with the frivolous and inexperienced Valeria, he doubtless found the society of this agreeable, cultivated woman, with her mature mind and her charming manners, all the more satisfying to his critical intelligence and his responsive heart. Together with her and her sister, or accompanied by their royal charges, they explored the many enchanting beauties of the neighbourhood, picnicked upon the lake, or, having lustily climbed a mountain, would spontaneously arrange a concert at the hotel at the top, Tolstoy playing her accompaniments while his cousin sang. In her presence he was always at his best. Her sympathy and understanding evoked the simplicity, the modesty and the affectionate playfulness that appeared only with those whom he most loved; and for hours he would discuss with her all the problems that lay nearest to his heart, or divert the two sisters with the shrewd, though usually extreme, opinions which he formed of their acquaintances.

"Alexandrine's smile is wonderful," Tolstoy noted enthusiastically upon his arrival; and his diary of these months is lavisly strewn with praise of her. "Did not notice how the time passed with dear Tolstaya." And a few weeks later: "I am so ready to fall in love that it's

dreadful. If only Alexandra were ten years younger. A fine nature" —(she was, in fact, eleven years older than himself). "With Alexandra Tolstaya, to my shame, I feel awkward like a young man," he noted significandy on another occasion. And when, after a short absence, he met her again at Frankfurt in August: "Inimitable Sasha. A wonder! A delight! I never knew a better woman."

Studying their correspondence, which ended only with her death nearly forty-five years later, despite a reticence and a control on her side which often caused Tolstoy to complain that she withheld herself from him wilfully, and in addition to an almost maternal tenderness and solicitude, a devoted pride and interest in his unfolding talent, and a passionate concern for his spiritual welfare, there are overtones which make it abundantly clear that it was not only Tolstoy who sometimes cried from the depths of his heart: " I f only Alexandra were ten years younger."

The stray phrases—"All that I love in life disappeared when I left Switzerland.. .." "Even if you were not young as you are in years, you would always be young to me, and I too feel young with you—— How I thank God for knowing you and loving you . . ."—which, before his marriage, are scarcely discernible in a context almost completely devoted to his interests, later assume, on occasion, a significance that cannot be ignored. "I expect neither frequent letters, nor even any regular correspondence. I perfectly understand the difference in our respective situations. I can belong to you far more than you can ever belong to me; but I had to make sure that when we meet again, if God ever grants it, everything will be the same as it has always been ..." and "I cannot, will not believe that you will refuse to come and see me, even if only for two days. I have no attraction to offer you but my joy in seeing you again; but perhaps the thought of giving me this joy will be attraction enough, since I had your friendship once, and suffered deeply..." [62]: such passages alone (and there are others no less revealing) hint at one of those deep and abiding tragedies of the emotions for which there is no cause save the inexorable and impersonal laws of life.

After a few days at Geneva, Tolstoy had settled at the little village of Clarens, on the edge of the lake, enchanted not only by its natural beauties, but by all its sentimental associations with Julie and Saint Preux (it is the scene of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Hdloise).* And having walked to Turin to meet Druzhinin and his friend Botkin's younger brother, here he returned to linger for the next two months, which, apart from excursions with his cousins, he spent in reading Balzac, the Gospels, and a history of the French Revolution; in writing *Albert* (the sketch of a talented but dissolute musician, inspired by his acquaintance with the violinist Kiesewetter, whom he met during his last stay in Petersburg) and *The Cossacks;* and, under the influence of his pousin, in not infrequendy going to church.

"... I will not attempt to describe the beauty of the country," he wrote to aunt Tatiana, "especially at the present time when everything is in leaf and flower. I will say only that it is literally impossible to tear oneself away from the lake and its shores, and that I spend most of my time in gazing in ecstasy, either while walking or simply standing at the window of my room.... I am really happy. There is delightful Russian society here ... and they all, Heaven knows why, have taken a liking to me. I know this, and it has been so agreeable the whole time I have been here that I am sorry to think of leaving." [M]

When the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy was engaged he would go for long excursions by himself; and when these were at all protracted he would always find pretty faces of all types to appeal to his wandering eyes. On one occasion, the libertine even caused a scandal by making clumsy advances to a housemaid. "All the people came running and looked angrily at me.... Downstairs I hear that I roused the whole house.. . . They talked loudly for about half an hour." [61] But perhaps Tolstoy was really less of a Casanova than he fancied; for one evening when he and Vladimir Botkin had gone to a popular dance in Lausanne in the hope of providing themselves with women, his friend wrote complainingly to his brother that Tolstoy's "bashfulness and stupidity ruined everything." The journeys that he made at this time, apart from acquainting him with the beauties which have been described by so many poets, also provided him with rich material for psychological observation; and his notebook was filled with terse and significant sketches, not only of the magnificent scenery, but with the various oddities he met, such as "an Englishwoman whose sole interest in life lies in restaurants, and who thinks that the essential thing is to speak French, but that what she says is immaterial"; or a man at a fair who got his coat torn, and, supported by the crowd, demanded a franc in compensation for the damage. He even decided that "really nothing can be more stupid than a *comme-il-faut* Frenchman," a great change of attitude from the days of his youth.

Early in July he left Clarens for Lucerne, where he was literally "blinded and shaken by the beauty of the water, those mountains and that sky." "How lovely, how wonderful it all appears to me," he wrote to Botkin. "My two-roomed hut stands in the garden, and it is quite overgrown with wild vines and apricots; the watchman lives downstairs, and I above. On the ground floor there are pegs on the wall for harness—a little way off is a well with a penthouse. Apple trees, masses of leaves, crowd round the windows. The waving grass, the lake, the mountains—all is peace, silence, solitude. . . ." ** Here the incident occurred which he immediately transformed into the sketch *Lucerne* which was published the following autumn. " Returning from the *Privathaus* in the night, with the moon breaking through the clouds, I heard some fine voices, two belfries in a broad street, and a tiny man singing Tyrolese songs to a guitar splendidly. I gave him something

and invited him to sing before the *Schweizerhof.* They gave him nothing. He went away shamefacedly muttering something while the crowd laughed at him. Before that, die crowd and the visitors on the hotel balcony had thronged together listening in silence. I overtook him and invited him to the *Schweiierhof to* have a drink. We were shown into another room. The singer is vulgar but pathetic. We drank. The waiter laughed and the hall porter sat down. This upset me, I scolded them and grew terribly excited." This incident must have aroused far more than indignation, for, having noted it, he continued : " The night was wonderful. I don't know what it is I desire, what it is I long for so passionately—but it is not the blessings of this world. And how can one help believing in the immortality of the soul —when one feels in one's own soul such immeasurable grandeur. Looked out of the window. Blackness, broken clouds and light. Ready to die! My God! My God! What am I ? Whither going ? And where ami?"[61]

A few days later, at ScharThausen, he felt once more that the only meaning in life was to be found in activity devoted to others. " Most Important," he recorded. "The idea came clearly and strongly into my head of starting a school in my own village for the whole district, and general activity of that kind."

Two days later, when he had reached Baden, where he met the poet Polonsky, all other considerations gave place to the activities of the gambler; and the roulette table fascinated him to such an extent that he could not drag himself away until he had lost all the money he had with him. "Dined at home quite ill. In the evening looked on all this confusion pretty calmly, but am ill and weak."

This did not restrain him from rushing back to the casino at the first opportunity, though in order to do so he borrowed 200 roubles from an accommodating French stranger. Having lost diis, and a further loan, he suddenly decided that the place was inhabited solely by wasters. Fortunately Turgenev presently arrived in Baden and was able to advance him an additional sum. But no sooner was Tolstoy once more possessed of money than the roulette table again proved irresistible, and he could not give up playing until he was penniless. " It is long since anything tormented me so much."

At the beginning of August, Turgenev left; and, thoroughly ashamed, Tolstoy set off the following day for Frankfurt, where he was delighted to find his cousin Alexandra at the Darmstadt Palace. Two days later he was in Dresden, admiring the Sistine Madonna, visiting the theatre, drinking beer in cafes, and buying books and music. Then, hearing from some acquaintances that the Lvovs were at Marienbad, he dashed off to see them, and found the young Princess "trying to be clever, *a la Russe,* amongst a crowd of commonplace Russians." " In Dresden I most unexpectedly came across the Princess Lvov," he wrote to the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy a few days later.

"I was just in the right mood for falling in love, having lost heavily at roulette and being angry with myself. It is a theory of mine that love consists in wishing to forget oneself, and therefore, like sleep, comes on most easily when you are dissatisfied with yourself or unhappy. The Princess is handsome, clever, honest and kind. I tried my best to fall in love with her, but nothing came of it. For God's sake, what does this mean?" **

A fortnight later, having spent a few convivial days in Petersburg on the way, he was back at home, and firmly determined once more to devote himself whole-heartedly to family duties, literary work and estate management. But very soon these resolutions were once more shaken by doubts. "Everything seems useless," he recorded on August 16th. "The ideal is unattainable, and I have already ruined myself. Work, a small reputation, money. What for? Means of enjoyment. Again, what for ? Soon an eternal night."

He sought consolation, as usual, in his affections. "Nikolenka is delightful.... Seriosha and I draw nearer. The great thing is to find the chord which makes a man vibrate, and to respond to his chord." But again the great question confronted him: How best to live? He was still very far from any solution. Nevertheless, on September 3rd he recorded: "My youth is past! I mention this as something good. I am calm and want nothing: I even write calmly. It is only now that I understand that it is not the life around one which must be arranged symmetrically, as one would have it, but that one must break oneself up, and make oneself pliable so as to adapt oneself to any life."[51]

3

Often it seems that Tolstoy never loved Yasnaya Polyana and aunt Tatiana so well as when he was parted from them. Reading *The Iliad* and the Gospels; hunting-parties and visits to friends—even, when riding home, experiencing (as he wrote to his cousin Alexandra) "such a feeling of joy that Leo Nikolaevich should be alive and breathing; such a feeling of gratitude to Someone for allowing L. N. to breathe" —soon failed to satisfy him, and by the middle of October he moved to Moscow in order to fulfil another of his Caucasian dreams. His sister Mary, having recently discovered her husband in a series of infidelities —"a very nasty sort of rustic Henry VIII," Turgenev called him in a letter to Mme. Viardot—and "not wishing to be the chief Sultana in his harem," had decided to part from him; so now it was possible for Tolstoy to live with her and Nicholas without even the embarrassment of the unwanted Valerian.

For the next three winters (1857 to 1859) he lived principally in Moscow; and during these years the man of fashion sang his swan-song. Fashionable balls, dinner-parties in the houses of poets, writers and painters; morning calls attired in a new overcoat with a beaver

collar and the glossiest of top-hats worn at a rakish angle,—all the diversions of high society soon distracted him from his former moods of inexplicable dissatisfaction. Still passionately fond of music, he helped his sister to arrange informal concerts at their own house, in which the three of them performed; though not seldom when old friends called it would only be to learn that "Leo had put on a white tie again and gone to a ball."

Despite the fact that, on his return from Germany, he had been somewhat mortified to find that "his reputation had fallen so low that it hardly squeaked," the civilized pleasures of the capital soon restored his equanimity. In particular, they provided the environment which produced his most tender sentiments; and, probably because he had not yet abandoned his intention of getting married, a continual procession of charming young women passed before his eyes. He visited the Arsenevs and found "everything as of old—one might begin over again. She is kindly, but the emptiest of girls." He visited his cousin Alexandra, who was now in Moscow; he visited Diakov and his charming sisters; he visited the poet Tyutchev, and he visited the Lvovs. And in all these houses his susceptible emotions were continually being aroused.

In November he was still thinking most of the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy—"Alexandrine is charming. Decidedly she is the woman who pleases me more than any other. Talked to her about marriage. Why did I not tell her all?" But as he continued to see much of her (and possibly because the Princess Obolenski had returned to Moscow) his ardour presently died down. " Alexandrine was at our house. Did not move me much."[M]

It was "Diakov's wonderful sister" who was now in the ascendant. On November 26th he found her simply "merry and charming." But by the beginning of December he was once more fascinated as of old, and grateful to her for "holding me by a thread. Of an evening I am passionately in love with her and return home filled with happiness or sadness—I don't know which."

Even this attraction did not last for long, perhaps because the Princess suddenly realized the danger of the situation and returned to Petersburg. For by the New Year he decided that "Alexandrine has grown older, and has ceased to be the woman for me," while "Sukhotina is very sweet, and Tyutcheva is beginning quietly to attract me."

For some time he seems to have shared his somewhat erratic attentions between Catherine Tyutchev, the daughter of the poet, and his former friend, the Princess Lvov.

Meanwhile, there were other distractions. It was Tennyson who said of Browning that he would die in a white tie: innumerable were those who said the same of the young Proust. But it is more surprising to realize that there was a time when Tolstoy aroused similar comments. Elegant, genial and enthusiastic, during these years he became

a member of the Moscow Society of Admirers of Russian Literature; while with Perfilev, Botkin, and his late rival, Mortier, he helped to found the Moscow Musical Society, which later became the Moscow Conservatoire.

Such distractions, however, were of little immediate benefit to the writer; and his literary work progressed but slowly. He worked erratically at *The Cossacks*, which, since reading *The Iliad*, he had decided to remould completely. During a visit to the old Princess Volkonski, who still delighted him with her intimate reminiscences of his parents, he wrote the sketch *Three Deaths* (published in January 1859), and he now began a new work, *Family Happiness:* a tale inspired by his tentative courtship of Valeria Arsenev, but written from the point of view of the woman, and ending with the marriage and subsequent disillusionment of the two principal characters in a way which, like so many of his works, was to be curiously prophetic of the future.

As usual, a prolonged round of social pleasures left Tolstoy inwardly uneasy and dissatisfied. By the middle of February he was already complaining to his diary that his love of thought created a barrier between himself and his old friends; and, drawn by the first signs of spring, he returned home to Yasnaya Polyana and to the quiet selfless devotion of his aunt Tatiana, who "he never remembered uttering one harsh word. She fulfilled the inner work of love, and therefore she never had need to hurry. And these two features, love and repose, imperceptibly attracted one into her society, and gave a special delight to intimacy.... She never spoke about herself; never about religion, as to what one should believe, or what she herself believed and prayed for. She believed all, save that she repudiated one single dogma—that of eternal damnation, for *'Dieu qui est la bonti mime, nepeut pas vouloir nos souffirances* "[81]

It was a beautiful spring ("What a Whitsuntide we had yesterday! What a service at church, with fading wild cherry blossom .. . bright red cretonne and hot sun," he wrote to Fet), and Tolstoy threw himself eagerly into farm-work. His brother Nicholas, who had now settled on his neighbouring estate of Nikolskoye, would describe his activities to their mutual friends with affectionate humour. "Liovochka is trying hard to become better acquainted with the life of the peasant and his way of managing his land, of which we all know very little_He wants to take in everything, and not to miss*anything, not even gymnastics, and so there is a bar fixed under the window of his study. 'I would come for orders,' says his steward, 'and there was the master holding on to his perch by one knee, in his red tights, with his head hanging down and swinging, his hair flopping about, and his face so red that it looked as if it would burst. I scarcely knew whether to listen to his orders or to gape at him.' Then Liovochka was enchanted by the way Yufan would spread out his arms while ploughing. So

now Yufan has become symbolic of the country's power, something like Mikula Selyaninovich. Spreading out his elbows, he too would stick to the plough and try to imitate Yufan." [n]

But even while farming, Tolstoy could not escape the contradictions of his own nature; and on November 27th he recorded: "To-day Rezoun lied. I put myself into a rage, and, in accordance with a deplorable habit, ordered him to be flogged____Later I sent someone to Stop it, but the man arrived too late. I am going to ask his forgiveness. Never again shall I have people punished without reflecting beforehand for two hours.. . . Asked forgiveness and gave him 2 roubles. But it still torments me." [61]

Apart from the fact that "at times one suddenly wishes to become a great man" (as he wrote to Fet), "and it is so annoying that this has not yet come about," his chief anxiety was the barrenness of his emotional state. "I have put the question to myself with terror: What do I love? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Tliere is no possibility of happiness in life; though on the other hand, because of this, it is easier to become a spiritual being, 'an inhabitant of earth, a stranger to the needs of men' " [61]

4

That winter, Tolstoy nearly lost his life during a bear hunt which had been arranged in his honour by a Moscow acquaintance who had induced the famous bear hunter Ostaskhov to join them. This misadventure was chiefly due to Tolstoy's own refusal to follow the recognized procedure of treading down the snow round his position to allow himself adequate freedom of movement. "We are going to shoot the bear, not to fight him," he declared; and stood at his post with snow up to his waist. In consequence, when the bear eventually appeared and made straight for him, having fired twice without wounding it severely, he was unable to take aim again before it was upon him, and could do nothing but lie with his face pressed into the snow in the hope that the beast would bite only his fur cap. "I felt no pain," he used to tell his friends years later. "I lay beneath him and looked into his warm, large mouth with its wet, white teeth. He breathed above me, and I saw how he turned his head to get into position to bite into both my temples at once, and in his hurry, or from excited appetite, he made a trial snap in the air just above my head and again opened his mouth—that red, wet, hungry mouth dripping with saliva. I felt I was about to die, and looked into the depths of that mouth as one condemned to execution looks into the grave dug for him. I looked, and remember that I felt neither fear nor dread. I saw with one eye, beyond the outline of that mouth, a patch of blue sky gleaming between purple clouds roughly piled together, and I thought how lovely it was up there."

After giving one savage bite, which tore open the cheek below

Tolstoy's left eye and the right side of his forehead, before the beast could attack him again Ostaskbov arrived and frightened *it* away.

This incident is interesting, less because it supplied the material for the later children's tale *The Bear Hunt* than because it gave Tolstoy realization of his true feelings in the face of death, which later he reproduced in *War and Peace,* in the scene where Prince Andrew is lying wounded on the battlefield.

5

Early in April 1859 Tolstoy went to Petersburg to see his cousin Alexandra, where he spent "ten of the happiest days." Nevertheless, he suddenly rushed away without even saying good-bye to her, and sent her an apology from Moscow. "Don't be angry, Granny dear, that with all the firmness of my thirty years I have left the very same day that I wished *to* leave. Everything was so good and continued to get better every day, so that if I had not left then, there would have never been any reason to go.. .." [w]

The Countess was scarcely satisfied with this unceremonious departure. "Indeed, I liked you far better at twenty-nine," she told him. "... It was dear, kind Boris who came and told me of your leaving. I did not say a word, and yet he felt obliged (in his superlative goodness of heart) to take up your defence against his own conviction. I allowed him to go on, knowing very well what he thought. His idea of friendship is a very different one.... When I knew you were gone I had a feeling like a person sent away in the middle of a feast—thirst and hunger remained unsatisfied. The feeling was very similar to frost in spring. I could find many metaphors, but that is no matter. What grieves me is the thought that never again will you find me, or shall I find myself, in exactly the same state of mind, a condition rare even during youth, when the heart is full of candour and happiness and therefore receptive and prepared for complete sincerity. ..." [••]

Tolstoy, too, found himself strangely disconsolate. "This year my heart is silent before everything," he recorded. "Not even sadness! The one need is to work and to forget, to forget what? There is nothing to forget. To forget that I live...."

The fact was that once more he was in the throes of grave religious doubts; and his cousin, in her attempts to reawaken his faith, had merely brought him to the conclusion that ne could no longer even "honour the religion of his fathers."

"... Churchgoing, standing there to hear unintelligible and incomprehensible prayers going on," he wrote her a few days later, "and watching the priest and that incongruous crowd around him—it is all, to me, utterly impossible. And that is why my Easter prayers have gone all wrong for the last two years. On Thursday I went to the country. There I celebrated both Easter and the spring: I kissed the

peasants' beards (how wonderfully they smelt of spring!) and drank birch sap; I soiled all the children's dresses—dresses they had put on specially for the holidays (and Nurse has given me a terrible scolding); I picked yellow and purple flowers; and then went back to Moscow...." [62]

But his cousin was not at all gratified by these poetic strains, and admonished him severely upon an attitude she considered merely frivolous. " You say you do not understand the prayers," she replied. "And why don't you? What prevents you from making a serious study of Christian doctrine and the reason and meaning of life? It would be well worth your while to work^at this, even at the expense of literature and farming. Wilful ignorance has no justification. But you must needs have gratuitous ecstasies, ravishments, sudden transports leading you into a blissful state, without even disturbing your idleness and without any effort or volition on your part. Such raptures, when they do take possession of us, are usually but dangerous illusions that lull us to sleep. . . ." [62]

Her apparent lack of understanding (for he still valued her sympathy very deeply) soon stung him to an eloquent reply which is the most valuable document we have as to his beliefs at this time.

"A man's convictions are not those that he parades, but those that he has wrested from the experience of life, and which it is hard for others to understand. You do not know mine: if you did, you would not have crushed me like that.

"I will try to make a profession of faith. When I was a child, I believed passionately, with intense feeling but without reflection. Then, just before I was fourteen, I began to meditate upon life in general, and as my religion was irreconcilable with my theories, it was inevitable that I considered it laudable to destroy it. I lived without it quite comfortably for ten years. [This statement, like many others in the later *Confession,* is obviously only a rough approximation to the truth.] Everything seemed clear, logical and tabulated: there was no place for religion. The time came when everything stood revealed to my gaze; but though life no longer held any mystery for me, it began to lose all meaning. Then I lived in the Caucasus, where I was alone and unhappy, and there I began to reflect with an intensity that comes but once in a man's life. I have kept my private journal of those days, and when I re-read it I can no longer understand how a man could reach such a state of intellectual exaltation as I did then. This was both good and painful for me. Never, either before or since, have I reached such intensity of thought; never have I sought to penetrate the beyond as I did during those two years. And all that I discovered then will remain my conviction the whole of my life. It cannot be otherwise. In those years of mental travail I learned that old and simple truth which I know better than anyone: I learned that immortality and love both exist, and that in order to attain eternal happiness one must live

for others. * These discoveries struck me by their similarity with Christian teaching; so then, instead of seeking it within myself, I began to search for truth in the Gospels. But though I wept and suffered, and longed only to find truth, though I searched with the whole strength of my soul, I found neither God, nor the Redeemer, nor anything of all that____

"Without question I love and reverence religion. Without it, I believe that a man can be neither good nor happy. I struggle for faith more than anything in the world. I feel that without it my heart is steadily dying. But I still hope. At some moments it seems to me that I believe, but without being religious; at others, that I don't. Above all, with me it is life that awakens religion, and not religion that moulds life. When I live a good life, I feel very near to it, and ready to step into its blissful realm at any moment, but when I live badly, it even seems that I do not need it. At present, here in the country, I feel such self-disgust, such coldness of heart, that it fills me with horror and repulsion, and the need for religion is very clear. With God's help it will come....

" You make fun of my nature and nightingales; but to me these lead in the direction of faith. But each soul has his own way ... an unknown way that can be realized only in the depths of his being. ...

"Now I feel such coldness and aridity" of soul that it frightens me. There is nothing to live for. Yesterday, these thoughts pursued me so relentlessly that I began to ask myself: * Of what use am I ? Whom do I love ? No one. And I haven't even tears or sorrow for my state —only a cold compunction. Work alone remains. But what is work ? A pastime. One seems to be doing something, and one's heart contracts, withers and dies.

"I do not write all this in order that you should tell me what is the matter, or what I should do, or that you should comfort me. That is not possible. I write it simply because I love you and you will understand——" [65]

On May 28th he recorded: "... I am dissatisfied with myself. The order of my life has gone to pieces——I want to begin work on *The Cossacks* at once." Once again he sought solace in his writing.

*

Chapter VI

x. *Pleasure in manual labour: he starts the school: Nicholas's illness: Berlin: educational investigations: Kissingham—Julius Froehel: journey to Hyeres: Nicholas's death,* 2. *Foreign travel: breach with Turgenev.* 3. *The Yasnaya Polyana school: educational theories: Tolstoy the teacher: the magazine.* 4. *The Arbitrator.*

I

BY the spring of i860, Tolstoy had learned that manual labour can be one of the greatest satisfactions of existence. Getting up one morning at five o'clock in order to direct the farm-work himself, towards* evening he had found himself growing angry; but instead of giving way to his feelings he had started to work at the manuring side by side with the peasants until he was in a heavy sweat, and he had not only thrown off his anger, but had reached a state in which "everything seemed good and I felt fond of everybody."

Cheerfully reviewing the facts in his diary, he recorded: "It would be strange if this passion of mine for work went for nothing."

Moreover, he had now begun to put into practice the resolution which he had made that evening at SchafThausen, and to organize a school for the children of the neighbouring peasants, when his plans were suddenly interrupted by Nicholas falling seriously ill. He had contracted tuberculosis, as Dmitri had done before him, and, advised by the doctors to seek a warmer climate, at Turgenev's suggestion had set out shortly afterwards with Sergey for Soden, where, in those days, the drinking of the waters was considered beneficial to those suffering with complaints of the chest.

A few days later, Tolstoy wrote to Fet: ". . . I am oppressed by family cares, by Nikolenka's illness, as there is no news of him yet from abroad, and by the departure of my sister in three days' time. Owing to her helplessness and the desire to see Nicholas, I will tomorrow procure a passport for abroad and will probably accompany them, especially if I do not get any news, or get bad news, from Nicholas."

Thus, on July 3rd, he set out with his sister and her children for Berlin, where they parted, she to go straight to their brother, he to study educational methods (which, next to seeing his brother, was his chief reason for leaving Yasnaya Polyana) in the German capital. For nearly two months, while Mary remained with Nicholas at Soden, Tolstoy devoted himself with characteristic enthusiasm to his latest interest. He attended lectures at the Berlin University; he attended evening classes for workmen; he visited the Moabit prison, where

solitary confinement had **recently been introduced; he spent a day at** Leipsic investigating the schools—"**It** was **dreadful. Prayers for the** Kaiser, whippings, everything **learnt** by heart, **frightened, mentally** distorted children"—and in Dresden he visited **Berthold Auerbach,** introducing himself, much **to** the novelist's surprise, as **Eugene** Baumann, a character of one of his novels, who, formerly an imprisoned noble and army officer, after his escape bought a schoolmaster's passport in order to devote himself to the education of peasant children. Small wonder that at first the embarrassed author imagined that the stranger had arrived with the intent of bringing a suit for libel!

From there, on July 19th, he went to Kissingham, some five hours' journey from Soden, in order to become acquainted with Julius Froebel, nephew of the founder of the *Kindergarten,* with whom he talked for hours about the theories of his uncle. Here he remained, reading strenuously and paying visits to Soden, until the end of August, when Nicholas had become so ill that the doctors advised an immediate journey south, and Tolstoy and his sister decided to take him to Hyeres

Breaking the journey at Frankfurt, Tolstoy, eccentrically garbed like "a Spanish brigand in a picture-postcard," paid a call upon his cousin Alexandra, much to the astonishment of the Prince and Princess of Hesse, who were having tea with her and were filled with curiosity to know who this *" singulier personnage"* could possibly be.

Years before, while in the Caucasus, Tolstoy had written to aunt Tatiana: "God is my witness that the two greatest misfortunes that could come to me would be the deaths of you and Nicholas, the two people I love more than myself." And now it was impossible to disguise the fact from himself any longer: Nicholas was dying. As he grew steadily weaker, Tolstoy spent more and more time in his company, watching with growing anguish and despair the terrible fits of coughing which racked his frame when he awoke in the morning, and the patient, bewildered incomprehension with which he contemplated death. This brother, with his fine intellect, his charm of manner, his modesty and his good nature; whose "chief characteristic was neither egotism nor self-renunciation, but a strict mean between the two"; who "never sacrificed himself for anyone else, but always avoided, not only injuring others, but also interfering with them"; who all his life had kept his sufferings and his happiness to himself; of whom Turgenev said that he lacked only the quality of vanity to make him a great writer, and that all the humility that Leo admired theoretically he practised actually in his life; who lived always in the most modest lodgings, and would willingly share his possessions with those **who were** in need,—this brother was about to slip beyond all possibility **of** sight and knowledge; and there was nothing he could **do either to help or to** save him. Despite Nicholas's **apparent resignation—he**

refused, even during his last days, to have a commode in his bedroom —despite the deliberate awareness with which he drank in, from his window, the beauty of the external world, Tolstoy well knew, in his heart, that he bitterly resented his tragic end; and could read clearly, even during the last moments, the resistance and the mournful reproach which expressed themselves in* his dying eyes.

" On the 20th of September he passed away, literally in my arms," he wrote to Fet. " Never in my life before has anything made such an impression upon me. He spoke the truth when he used to say that there is nothing worse than death. And when one clearly realizes that it is the end, then there is nothing worse than life either. What should one worry about or strive for, if of that which was Nicholas Tolstoy nothing has remained? He did not say that he felt the approach of death, but I know that he followed its every step and knew for certain how little time he had to live. A few minutes before his death he fell into a doze, and suddenly awoke and murmured with horror: 'But what is this?' He had seen it, this absorption of oneself into nothingness. And if he found nothing to catch hold of, what can I find? Even less. Of what use is anything when the agonies of death with all the abomination of falsehood and self-deception will begin to-morrow, and when it will all end in nothing, in absolute oblivion? An amusing situation indeed! 'Be useful, be virtuous, be happy while you are alive,' people say to each other; but yourself and happiness and virtue and usefulness consist only in this truth which I have learned after thirty-two years of life: that the position we are placed in is terrible. 'Take life as it is,' they continue, 'it is you who have put yourself in this position.' Quite right. I do take life as it is. As soon as man reaches the highest degree of development, he sees that it is all bunkum —deceit; and that the truth, which he still values above all, is terrible: that when you look at it well and clearly you awake with horror, and say, as my brother did: ' But what is this?' But of course, so long as the desire exists to know and to express truth, one tries to know and to express it. This is all that remains to me from the moral world, and higher than this I cannot rise. And this only shall I do: but not in the form of your art. Art is a lie, and I can no longer love a beautiful lie. I shall pass the winter here, for the reason that it makes no difference where one lives. Please write to me. I love you as my brother did. He remembered you at the last moment." [ei]

To his last remaining brother he wrote: "With Mitenka, only memories of childhood were bound up; but this was a real man to us both, and one whom we loved and respected positively more than anyone else on earth. The next day I went to him fearing to uncover his face ... you cannot imagine what a beautiful face it was, with his best merry and serene expression." [n] And to his cousin Alexandra: "Never did I feel the need of you so much as at this time.... Not only was he the best man I ever met in my life ... but the best recollections

of my life were interwoven with him ... he was my best friend, and besides half my life being destroyed, all the energy of my life is buried with him. Why live *if* he is dead ? ... For you it is well: your dead live beyond, you will see them again (though to me it always seems that no one can believe it sincerely, it would be too beautiful), but my dead have disappeared like burnt smoke...." [w]

In the middle of October he recorded: "It is almost a month since Nikolenka died. That event has severed me terribly from life. Again the same questions: Why? Whither? ... I try to write, to force myself, but I do not succeed, for the one reason that I cannot attribute to work the importance which it must have for one to give one's energy and patience to it. ... During the funeral the idea came to me of writing a materialistic gospel. The materialistic life of Christ. Nikolenka's death is the most powerful impression that I have ever known." [52]

2

Because he felt completely cut off from life, and it no longer mattered where he lived, Tolstoy remained at Hyeres. Externally, he continued to occupy himself much as before. He worked occasionally at remodelling *The Cossacks*; he wrote an article on education; he devoted much of his time to his nieces and a small boy who were staying in the same *pension*, taking them for long rambles, telling them long and fascinating stories, organizing for them gymnastics, charades and concerts. He set them compositions, taught them to paint, joined in all their games, and acted as judge in their disputes. He astonished the local Russian society by appearing at an evening-party in walking-dress and clogs; he found an attractive young Miss Yakovlev with whom to philander; and he went to Marseilles to visit the schools, and contrasted the intelligent, agreeable and civilized manners of the workmen he engaged in conversation with the dull and timid expressions of the children undergoing State education.

Then, suddenly feeling the necessity for new impressions, he made a tour of Italy, stopping at Nice, Leghorn, Florence, Rome and Naples. From Italy he went to Paris. Here he spent much of his time in cafes and buses watching the people: but Turgenev was there; and presently the two of them went together to London, where Tolstoy attended lectures at South Kensington, heard Palmerston speak in the House of Commons, and visited the exiled Herzen, whose daughter proved terribly disappointed to find the author of *Childhood* a man dressed in the height of fashion who expatiated at length and with unexpected enthusiasm upon boxing-matches and cock-fighting.

In London, during February, learning both of the emancipation of the serfs and of his election to the position of Arbitrator, he impulsively decided to return home. Nevertheless, he did not go straight back to

Russia, but broke his journey at Brussels, where he visited Proudhon and the Polish historian Lelewel, and wrote *Polikushka;* at Weimar, where he was the guest of the Russian Ambassador, who obtained permission for him to visit Goethe's house, which was no longer accessible to the public, and where Tolstoy also studied the schools of the district and examined the methods of the *Kindergarten* there, which was under the direction of a personal pupil of Froebel himself; at Dresden, where he visited more schools; and at Berlin, where he met the " frigid peasant" Deisterwig, head of the Berlin academy for the training of schoolmasters. Towards the end of April he finally returned home, bringing with him a young mathematical master from Jena to help him with his school.

No sooner was he once more in Russia than Tolstoy felt a great eagerness to see some of his friends. "I embrace you from the bottom of my heart, dear fellow," he wrote to Fet, "both for your letter and your friendship, and for your being Fet. Turgenev I would like to see, but you ten times more."

Nevertheless, having received an invitation from Turgenev at the end of May, he went first to Spasskoye, with the intention that they should together invade Fet at his estate of Stepanovka while the nightingales still sang. And now there recurred a renewal of the friction that so often prevailed in the relations between Tolstoy and Turgenev, and which finally put an end to all friendship between them for many years.

Dissension began at Spasskoye. Anxious to have his opinion, and also as a gesture of friendliness, Turgenev brought out the manuscript of his latest novel *Fathers and Sons,* and gave it to Tolstoy to read. Probably tired, and evidently bored, Tolstoy committed the unwitting solecism of falling asleep over it upon a sofa. This would have mattered less had not Turgenev come in some time later to find his guest thus unflatteringly unconscious, or had not Tolstoy suddenly woken to find Turgenev disappearing on tiptoe from the room. Thus Turgenev could not help knowing that Tolstoy had found his work anything but absorbing; nor Tolstoy being aware that Turgenev was fully conscious of his lapse. An unnatural silence surrounded the subject *of Fathers and Sons,* and this engendered a rising friction which suddenly developed into open rupture two days later when they were at Fet's.

While the party were breakfasting together, Turgenev began to praise his natural daughter's English governess, remarking that, amongst other things, she had persuaded the girl to mend with her own hands the torn clothes of some poor in whom she was interested.

"And do you consider this right?" Tolstoy asked, a note of latent truculence no doubt already in his voice.

"Certainly I do," Turgenev replied. "It brings the benefactor nearer to real want."

This was no trivial matter to the younger man. It touched some of the deepest, though as yet not fully realized, aspects of his being. "Well, I think that a well-dressed girl who handles filthy and stinking clothes is acting a false and theatrical farce,*' Tolstoy remarked vehemently. (Here was speaking the man who, over twenty years later, was to write *What Then Must We Do ?)*

"I beg you not to say such a thing!" Turgenev replied, probably the more agitated because his daughter's education, from her earliest years, had been directed by Mme. Viardot.

"Why shouldn't I say what I believe?"

"Then you don't think I bring up my daughter properly?"

Tolstoy replied that he did not wish to pursue the matter further, but he hoped that he had already made perfecdy clear what he thought. Provoking as this was, it must be realized that, even if half-unconsciously, Tolstoy was defending some of his most passionate convictions. Turgenev did not realize this. With all his artistic sensibilities, both now and for years later he never understood the overwhelming importance that such moral questions had for Tolstoy. Instead, feeling that he had been deliberately challenged, he suddenly grew pale with rage and shouted that if Tolstoy persisted in expressing such views he would punch his head; after which, exasperated once more to frenzy by that "penetrating glance" that had accompanied remarks he apparently believed had been uttered deliberately with venomous intent, he rushed incontinently from the room. A few minutes later, elaborately ignoring Tolstoy, he came back to apologize to Mme. Fet before leaving the house.

After this scene the party was spoilt, and Tolstoy too took his departure. His *amour-propre* fully aroused, it never occurred to him to consider how offensive to Turgenev his own remarks must have been. Instead, seething with rage, he sent Turgenev a hasty note: "Ivan Sergeyevich: I hope you have had time to realize that you were in the wrong when you insulted me in the presence of Mme. Fet. Send me a written apology which I can show the Fets. Should you consider my demand unreasonable, then I have nothing more to say. I shall await your answer at Boguslov." [tt]

To this peremptory demand Turgenev replied: "Leo Nikolaevich: I can only repeat what I said at the Fets': I insulted you for reasons which I do not understand, and I beg your pardon. The incident has proved that no *rapprochement* is possible between two natures so opposite as yours and mine. This letter is doubtless the last that will pass between us; I hope it may give you the satisfaction you demand. You can make whatever use of it you please." **

Unfortunately this note miscarried; and Tolstoy arrived at Boguslov to find that there was no message awaiting him. This rekindled his rage; and, as he was wont to do in moods of extreme passion, he sent Turgenev a challenge to a duel. Later, repenting of his rashness,

he wrote to Fet, explaining what had taken place, and saying that if Turgenev replied he would return his letter unopened. Turgenev did in fact reply, stating that he would "willingly meet your fire in order to efface my truly insane words. That I should have uttered them is so unlike the habits of my whole life that I can only attribute my action to irritability arising from the extreme and continual antagonism of our views...."

Tolstoy did open this letter, and could not refrain from sending a scathing reply; after which he wrote to Fet, who had been trying to effect a reconciliation between them, to say that if he wrote to him again on the subject, he would not in future open his letters, any more than he would open Turgenev's.

Even this did not terminate a ridiculous comedy, in which Tolstoy had behaved m accordance with the social principles he had formulated for himself in Moscow during the period of unsatisfied social aspirations ten years ago. Some months later, in chastened mood, and doubdess by now aware that his own part in the affair had been not wholly blameless, he wrote to Turgenev to ask his forgiveness. Unfortunately, not only was this letter not delivered for some months, but in the meantime malicious and false rumours had reached Turgenev abroad that Tolstoy had been circulating amongst their acquaintances a letter in which he said that he despised him; in consequence of which, no less susceptible than Tolstoy, he in his turn now issued a challenge to a duel. By now, Tolstoy, in reasonable mood, and probably bored with the whole affair, replied: "Ivan Sergeyevich: Forgive me if I insulted you. I am sorry you should harbour any ill feelings towards me. It is true that you accused me of dishonourable behaviour, and threatened to punch my head; nevertheless, I absolutely decline to fight a duel with you."[43] After this not wholly unself-conscious act of magnanimity, Turgenev received Tolstoy's former undelivered message asking for forgiveness, to which he replied to Fet (since Tolstoy had made it known that he would consider any further communication from Turgenev as a deliberate insult): "... You may tell him that... I like him very much at a distance, I esteem him and watch his career with sympathy. But as soon as we are together, everything becomes different. It cannot be helped, and we must simply behave in future as if we lived on different planets or in different times."

It was nearly twenty years before they were to meet again.

3

Meanwhile, the continual craving of Tolstoy's generous and expansive nature was beginning to find expression in his school; and the self-love apparent in his quarrel with Turgenev was swiftly counteracted by the affection he lavished upon his pupils.

"You know that for the last year my mind has been taken up with schools," he had written to the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy early the previous December. " I can say quite sincerely that now this is the one interest that binds me to life. Unfortunately, over the winter I cannot busy myself with them practically on the spot, but I work for the future. . . ." Now, throwing himself with characteristic energy into his chosen vocation, he wrote again to share with her his joy in his new activity. "I have one charming and poetical occupation from which I cannot tear myself away—it is the school.... As it is being repaired, the classes are held in the garden, under the apple trees, to which one gains access only by stooping, the vegetation is so dense. The schoolmaster sits there with the pupils all round him, nibbling grass stalks and making lime and ash leaves pop. The master teaches in accordance with my principles, but not very well, after all, as the children feel. They like me better. So now we begin a long talk which goes on for hours, and no one is bored. . . •

"The schoolhouse is nearly finished. Three large rooms—one pink, two blue—are for the use of the school. In one of these rooms there is also a museum. Along the walls, arranged on brackets, there are stones, butterflies, skeletons, grasses, flowers and physics instruments. On Sunday this museum is open to everyone, and my German from Jena does experiments. Once a week we have a botany lesson, and all go into the forest to look for flowers, grasses and mushrooms. * Four times a week there are singing lessons, six times drawing (again the German), and it all goes very well... .

"There are three masters in all besides myself; and in addition, the priest, who comes twice a week. And you still believe that I am an atheist? Moreover, I tell the priest how he must teach. This is the way we proceed: on St. Peter's Day we tell them the history of the saints Peter and Paul and of the divine service. Then the peasant Theophane from our village dies, and we make this the opportunity for explaining the last sacraments, etc. And so, without any apparent system, we teach all the sacraments, the liturgy, and all the Church festivals of the Old and New Testaments.

"The classes are from eight to twelve and from three until six; but they generally last from two o'clock until twelve, because it is impossible to send the children away—they clamour for more. In the evening more than half of them remain in the garden |md sleep in a hut. During dinner and supper—also after supper—we schoolmasters discuss various subjects. Every Saturday we read our observations to each other and prepare ourselves for the following week...." [62]

To supplement his work in the school, Tolstoy now started his own magazine, *Yasnaya Pofyana,* which was to be wholly devoted to educational concerns, and in which he elaborated many of his own theories. (Twelve numbers of the magazine appeared in all, and as the circulation was very small, he lost about 3000 roubles over them.) But Tolstoy's

success as a teacher was due less to his theories than to his natural gifts of sympathy, ardour and understanding. His great desire was to convince his pupils from the first that the pursuit of knowledge was a stimulating adventure. No unnecessary burdens were placed upon them; and not only were they not expected to bring any copy- or reading-books with them, but there were no home lessons to arouse their antipathy to the process of learning. "They are not obliged to remember any lessons, or anything that they were doing the day before. They are not troubled with the thought of die impending lesson. They bring with them nothing but their impressionable natures and their conviction that to-day it will be as jolly in school as it was yesterday. They do not think of their lessons until they have begun. No one is ever rebuked for being late, and no one ever is late, except in the case of some of the older ones whose fathers sometimes keep them back to do some work. When this happens they come running to school at full speed and all out of breath." [81]

Discipline imposed by punishment did not exist. If the children arrived before the teacher, they played happily by themselves until the lesson began. So long as they snowed no malice, they were allowed to shout and to fight as much as they wished; and the only demands made upon them were that they should be clean, careful, and speak the truth. In school they sat where and how they liked—with their chosen friends either upon benches or, if they preferred it, upon the floor; and the confidence which he gained in the classroom Tolstoy carefully nurtured by close contact with his pupils out of school. Over week-ends he invited boys from the neighbouring villages to play with them, and would himself challenge them to try to throw him and keep him down. "Do not call me 'Your Excellence*—my name is Leo Nikolaevich," he would tell his pupils as he instructed them in gymnastics or fought them with snowballs.

All that he had longed to do, and failed in doing, when he was nineteen, he now accomplished with ease and patience. There is not one of his theories that was not evolved through personal contact with peasant boys whose charming, healthy and spontaneous laughter never ceased to rejoice his heart. The mutual affection which he shared with them, and the delight of seeing them profit by his exertions, afforded him the purest satisfaction that he had ever known; gratifying for the first time the innate desire to give himself wholly and to share what he most valued, which are the natural instincts of the artist no less than of the altruist. And as a teacher, Tolstoy was adored by his pupils much in the same way that, away in England, Ruskin was adored by his followers in the Working Men's College when he had first imparted to them something of his enthusiasm for art.

Tolstoy realized very soon that success in teaching is due less to any specific method than to the natural aptitude of the teacher; and that technique is valuable only to the extent that it produces beneficial

results. For him, the chief condition necessary for teaching was that spontaneous flow of affection that makes every achievement of the delighted pupil a source of instant satisfaction to the teacher, and is his one true reward. This is perfectly illustrated in many of his own descriptions of the workings of his school. In one of these he tells how, at their own request, he took a small band of his pupils to a deserted part of the forest m which there were said to be wolves; and, after telling each other stories, and prolonging their walk until very late, they eventually achieved such an extraordinary degree of mutual trust and understanding that he was able to talk to them, as a man to his intellectual equals, about many of the problems that lay closest to his heart.

Particularly illuminating is another description of writing a composition with the more talented of his pupils, in which the boys not only fearlessly criticized his work but, to his great delight, invented details artistically superior *to* his own. "All were exceedingly interested. It was evidently a new and exciting sensation for them to be present at the process of creation and to participate in it. Their judgments were all, for the most part, to the same effect, and they were reasonable, whether they spoke of the structure of the story itself, or of the incidents and the characteristics given to the various personages. Nearly all of them took part in the composition; but, from the beginning, those who distinguished themselves were the positive Semka, by his marked artistic power of creation, and Fedka, by the correctness of his poetical conception, and especially by the glow and rapidity of his imagination." This Fedka "directed the structure of the story so despotically, and with-such right to this despotism, that the other boys soon went home, and only he and Semka, who refused to give way to him, though working in another direction, were left. We worked from seven until eleven o'clock; they felt neither hunger nor fatigue, and even grew angry with me when I stopped writing...."

Finally, this same Fedka became so excited that he could not sleep. "I cannot express the feeling of exhilaration, joy, fear, and almost regret which I experienced during that evening. I felt that on that day a new world of delight and suffering was opened up to him—the world of art; I thought that I had received an insight into what no one has a right to see—the germination of the mysterious flower of poetry. I felt both dread and joy, like the seeker afte* the treasure who suddenly sees the flower of the fern: joy because suddenly and quite unexpectedly there was revealed to me that philosopher's stone which I had been trying in vain to find for two years—the art of teaching the expression of thought; and dread because this art made new demands and brought with it a whole world of desires which stood in no relation to the surroundings of the pupils, as I thought in the first moment. There was no mistaking it; it was not an accident, but a conscious creation____" [81]

During history lessons, Tolstoy would describe the Napoleonic Wars with such vividness that the boys would express the most bitter disappointment wheto they learned of Russian defeats, and shriek with triumph when they heard of the retreat from Moscow. When Keller (one of the masters) protested that the Germans taught a very different story, Tolstoy benignantly agreed that his narrative was perhaps less history than an imaginative tale designed to arouse national feeling.

That Tolstoy was deeply influenced in his methods by the theories of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel there can be no doubt. He had read *Emile* at sixteen, and had even then discussed with Diakov the absorbing question of education. But with his independence of mind and his impetuous desire for results, it was inevitable that his later theories and technique should be purely his own, and the expression of his personal temperament and genius. He firmly believed that schools should be State organized on the principles acquired by the practical study of methods in model schools, of which there should be one in each district, and his own school at Yasnaya Polyana should be the prototype. The Teutonic mixture of humanism with pedantry that he had seen in Germany aroused in him little but ridicule and contempt. "The Russian child neither can nor will believe—he has too much respect both for his master and himself—that he is being questioned seriously when he is asked whether the ceiling is above or below, or how many feet he has."[96] Such methods, whether established by ages of authority or surrounded with all the £clat of novelty, were for Tolstoy not dissimilar from a system that would teach walking by the contraction of certain muscles, when it is obviously learnt with the greatest ease ^efore the learner even knows that he possesses muscles of any kind.

A spontaneous affection for his pupils, and the natural capacity for understanding the child's soul—these are the first requirements of the teacher; and since modern civilization disseminates a subtle poison that it is difficult for even the most healthy to withstand, the essential principle of right education is to ensure that a being born naturally in a state of psychic health is not very soon corrupted by those very beings who are supposed to be responsible for his welfare. The child, when it has not been spoilt, no matter whether at home or at school, is a creature "full of life, gay and inquisitive, his eyes dancing with fun, and a smile on his lips, eager to know everything, and distincdy and forcibly expressing his own ideas in his own language." But once accustom him to any routine system of education, and he immediately becomes fatigued, bored, and even frightened, "timidly uttering foreign phrases in a foreign tongue, a creature whose very life, like that of a snail, is hidden in its shell."

Not to thwart this natural spontaneity which is always desirous of manifesting itself; not to force "the snail to draw in its horns when it

wishes to put them out,"—this should be the chief care of the teacher. If the child is left free and his interest spontaneously aroused, he will inevitably progress through his own delighted exercise of his faculties; and an essential sense of order will control his activities. For the one fruitful education is that which fully satisfies the inborn thirst for knowledge: and any method which is based on competition and the necessity for passing formal examinations can only stifle the natural curiosities, and thwart the child precisely in those things in which it needs to be encouraged.

Thus reading, Tolstoy found, was best taught by first arousing in his pupils their interest in the many absorbing and delightful things which are to be found in books. Nothing proved better for this purpose than telling them the stories of the Old Testament, which so touched their emotions that they immediately wished to be able to read the Bible for themselves. " They fell in love with the book, and with learning, and with me." In the same way, he encouraged their desire for self-expression in teaching them to write; when the mere joy of those most proficient was sufficient to stimulate the more backward in the class to follow their example.

Despite the continual play of his intellect, Tolstoy was essentially a practical man, as can be clearly seen in his article on *Methods of Teaching Reading and Writing.* " There is no such thing as the best method. The best method, for any particular master, is the one he knows best. All the other methods a master knows or invents should help forward studies that have begun under any other method.... The best master is he who always has ready an explanation of everything that proves a stumbling-block to the pupil. With this in view, he should know the greatest possible number of methods, be capable of inventing fresh ones, and especially refrain from a slavish adherence to any particular one, but rather feel convinced that each has advantages of its own, and that the best would be one which successfully met all the difficulties which the pupil might encounter. All this is equivalent to saying that it is not method which is required, but art and talent." [95]

For teaching, to Tolstoy, as with everything that he undertook whole-heartedly throughout his life, was not a profession, but a vocation; and the child was not invented for educational systems, but educational systems were to be invented for the child. As he wrote in *Education and Culture,* " I f you would encourage the pupil to increased growth by your knowledge, you must both love it and know it well, and your pupils will love both the knowledge and yourself, and you will benefit them. But if you yourself do not love it, then, no matter by what means you force them to learn, your knowledge will have no educative influence at all." [95]

Undoubtedly Tolstoy's own success as a teacher was his love of teaching; because, for him, to teach brought into full and spontaneous play many of the most vital aspects of his being. Nor were his efforts

wholly without influence, for eventually there were thirteen schools in the neighbouring villages run on lines similar to his own, and largely staffed by teachers whom he himself had recommended.

For some time the Yasnaya Polyana school was regarded by most of the peasants with little more than a good-natured suspicion; but as the children's appreciation became apparent their attitude quickly changed, and some of the more wealthy would bring their boys as far as thirty miles by sledge in order that they might attend it. But in general, Tolstoy's ideas on education were treated either with indifference or even with mild contempt; and he was frequently discouraged by the latent antagonism displayed towards him both in government and in scholastic circles.

In October i86z, for instance, since even in the liberal 'sixties in. Russia there were still "intrigues against everything," the Minister of ,the Interior wrote to the Minister of Education: ''The careful reading of the educational review *Yasnaya Polyana* edited by Count Tolstoy leads to the conclusion that this review, in preaching new methods of tuition and principles of popular education, frequently spreads ideas which, besides being incorrect, are injurious in their teaching——The continuation of this review in the same spirit must, in my opinion, be considered the more dangerous as its editor is a man of remarkable, and one may even say of fascinating talent, who can be suspected neither of being criminal nor unprincipled. The evil lies in the sophistry and eccentricity of his convictions, which, being expounded with extraordinary eloquence, may seduce inexperienced teachers in this direction, and thus give a wrong trend to popular education. I have the honour to bring this to your notice, hoping that you may consider it expedient to draw the special attention of the censor to this publication." [81]

The Minister of Public Education, however, was not to be persuaded. "I must state that Count Tolstoy's work as an educationalist deserves full respect," he replied, "and the Ministry of Public Education is bound to give him help and encouragement, even though not sharing all his views, some of which, after maturer consideration, he will probably discard himself."

Contrary to the generally accepted view, it was neither official attacks nor official indifference which caused Tolstoy soon to give up for some years one of the greatest interests of his life, and the one which, in later days, he often said had brought him more happiness than anything else he had ever known. The cause was very different, and, as will be seen later, was closely connected with many other intimate problems of his ardent and frustrated life.

4

As an Arbitrator, Tolstoy's efforts were less rewarding. Many of the neighbouring landowners were already prejudiced against him

owing to his open sympathy for the peasants, and soon after his appointment intrigues were set on foot for his dismissal. The Marshal of the Nobility of the province wrote to the Governor of Tula that, "owing to the hostile attitude to him on the part of the Krapivensky nobility, due to his method of administering his own estates," he feared that some unpleasant conflicts might take place, and amongst the more die-hard elements of the district plots were suggested either to have him beaten or even killed in a duel. Once again, Tolstoy was supported by the authorities, and the Governor declared that Tolstoy was well known to him as a well-educated man in sympathy with the present reforms, who had not only been recommended by the former Marshal of the Nobility, but was well suited to occupy the position. Nevertheless, the conservative elements of the neighbourhood continued to dislike him, just as they would have disliked anyone not determined on principle, irrespective of the merits of the circumstance, to support the interests of the landowners.

On all sides he encountered dissatisfaction and opposition. A woman who had unlawfully held in her service a house serf who should have been freed at the Emancipation, and whom Tolstoy ordered to release the man with adequate compensation, appealed to the Assembly of Justice to get his decision revoked, and was temporarily successful, until the provincial court later upheld it. Even the peasants, who seemed to imagine that because of his sympathy for them he could procure for them everything they desired, no matter how unreasonable were their requests, often became surly and discontented when he failed to do so.

" By some odd chance I happen to have been made an arbitrator," he wrote to Botkin, "and although I have always done my duty in the coolest and most conscientious manner, the nobility are furious with me. They threaten to assault me, to prosecute me, but nothing will come of it. I am only waiting until the people are quiet again, when I shall voluntarily give up the appointment."

"The post of arbitrator has given me little material for observation, and has merely spoilt my relations with the landowners and upset my health," he recorded in July 1861; and in February of the following year, complaining that as his decisions were continually being set aside it was useless for him to continue to act, he tendered his resignation.

Chapter VII

I. ***The problem of marriage: the peasant woman Axinia; Catherine Tyutchev and the Princess Lvov: the Behrs: visit to Samara and the police raid at Yasnaya Polyana: the Behrs at Yasnaya Polyana and Ivitsa. 2. The courtship of Sofia Behrs: marriage.***

TOLSTOY'S first serious attempt at marriage had ended in flight; but he still continued to believe that married life would settle many of the difficulties with which he was beset. This belief was strengthened after his return to Yasnaya early in 1857, when he first became entangled with a peasant woman named Axinia, who appealed so strongly to his sensual nature that, unlike his former casual affairs, he soon drifted into more or less permanent relations with her. Little is known of the woman, though there is reason to suppose that she was the model for the Stepanida of a later story, *The Devil;* and even the few diary entries which refer to her give but small indication of the force of the attachment. His relations with her, however, clearly went through all the oscillations that accompanied his purely emotional attachments. At first he found her "very attractive," and decided that he was in love "as never before in his life." He waited about in the hope of catching a glimpse of her; made assignations to meet her in the woods; called himself a fool and a brute; recorded her "bronzed flush and her eyes"; and was tormented with continual thoughts of her. Then, a month later, in one of his characteristic moods of revulsion, she had "grown repulsive to him."

This was but the outcome of satiety; and there followed a period of renewed intercourse, in turn succeeded by a new revulsion—"I only remember A. with disgust. Her shoulders..."—which again preceded a period when he continued "to see only A." After a long interval, when he could not find her, he decided that his feelings for her were no longer those of "a stag, but of a husband for a wife." She had, in fact, become a part of his life, and for three years, during which time she had borne an illegitimate son, he continued to see her.

Doubtless Tolstoy suffered morally as a result of this attachment. He had always been afflicted with a sense of the enormity of his lapses; and he had always been tormented because his physical desires were too powerful to be corrected by his will. It was for such natures as his that St. Paul had written: "It is better to marry than to burn," and still it seemed to him that in marriage was to be found the one possibility of the moral and natural life which his whole being demanded.

For some time he hovered, doubtful, in his choice of a wife, between*

Catherine Tyutchev and the Princess Lvov. Although, in 1858, before he had left Moscow in the spring, he had decided that "Alas! Tyutcheva leaves me cold," and even " T. decidedly displeases me," several times he considered proposing to her; and only the fact that when he visited her one day she received him coldly, restrained him from making a formal declaration.

"I must be married this year or never," he recorded at.the New Year; and during the autumn he once more paid court to the Princess Lvov. But she too seems to have finally chilled him. "Have been with the Lvovs," he recorded on October 9th. "The memory of the visit makes me howl. I had decided that it would be the last time that I would try to get married, but that also is childishness." Once back at Yasnaya Polyana, he even breathed a deep sigh of relief at his escape. "Here I am at home, calm and confident in my plans of tranquil moral perfection. God be thanked."

Nevertheless, Axinia still continued to be an obstacle to these plans, and in the spring of 1861, when he returned to Russia from abroad, he was still thinking of marriage. Then, on his way home he had again stopped to call on the Behrs, and was very much pleased once more with his old friend Lyubov's " dear, merry little girls." These children, indeed, were children only in his imagination. It was *five* years since he had first played leap-frog with them on his return from Sevastopol, and during that time they had developed into charming young women; so charming, indeed, that when, shortly afterwards, he was talking of the subject with his sister, he told her that *if* he were ever to get married, it would probably be to one of them.

One by one the possibilities seemed to be eliminating themselves. The Princess Lvov had rejected him. Catherine Tyutchev, he now decided, in a letter to his cousin Alexandra, "is too much of a hothouse plant; too lacking in the sense of the responsibility of human relations for her to sympathize with my work, let alone to share it." [w] Already, in fact, he had cast appraising glances at the oldest Miss Behrs. "Lisa Behrs tempts me," he recorded, "but nothing will come of it. Calculation is not enough; and as for feeling, it is absent."

To the Behrs girls, Tolstoy was an object of interest amounting almost to veneration. In his novels he had spun a web of romance over their mother's childhood no less than over his own; and well they knew that the charming Mr. Irtenev was a portrait of their grandfather IsleneV, Such was the author's glory in the eyes of the second girl, Sofia (Sonia), that when he had first visited them she had rushed into the drawing-room as soon as he had left the house, and tied a piece of red ribbon onto a leg of the chair he had sat in to commemorate the event.

Tolstoy had been charmed whenever he visited the Behrs. Lyubov Istenev had married when she was only sixteen; so that, while still a young woman, she already had a large family, and the house was rilled

with the pleasant sound of children's voices; of delightful girlish singing, and happy, innocent laughter. It had just this atmosphere of poetry that later he was to recapture so wonderfully in *War and Peace*, Comfortably off, though far from rich, the family moved in good society; and as the two elder girls, Lisa and Sofia, were preparing to be teachers, their friends were chiefly composed of intelligent and congenial scholars and professors. This, no doubt, was as agreeable to Tolstoy as the fact that they were always occupied: studying, practising the piano, embroidering, helping their mother with the housekeeping, or supervising the lessons of their younger brothers. Sensible, intelligent and charming, all three girls had inherited, not only their mother's dark-eyed, stately beauty, but a vitality and a warmth of temperament that in Sofia and Tania, in particular, were irresistible. Only the eldest, Lisa, was inclined to be self-conscious and affected.

It was inevitable, therefore, that, although in January 1862 he had recorded: "All my teeth are coming out and I am still unmarried; it is likely that I shall remain a bachelor for ever. Already the thought of a single life no longer terrifies me," as soon as he arrived in Moscow the following May he should not only visit them again, but be charmed anew by the cordial welcome extended to him. The fact was, that by now both Dr. and Mme. Behrs were under the impression that he was seriously attracted by the beautiful but haughty Lisa, and treated him with the consideration due to a potential son-in-law. Worn down in health (once more he feared that he might have contracted tuberculosis), Tolstoy had come partly to consult Dr. Behrs and partly to renew acquaintance with his attractive daughters. But as he was off to the steppes with a servant and two of his favourite pupils to take a *kumis* cure, there was little chance of any immediate developments.

Before he left, the gambler once more suddenly seized possession of him, and he lost a considerable sum at Chinese billiards, as a result of which he was forced to sell his unfinished novel *The Cossacks* to Katkov, editor of the *Russian Messenger*, in order to free himself from debt. When the three Miss Behrs were told the news, they wept. What could have been more touching, or more gratifying to the vanity of the author?

During his absence from Yasnaya Polyana an event occurred which deeply affected his attitude to the Russian Government. Evidendy suspecting that an illicit printing-press was housed there, or possibly at the instigation of some of his hostile neighbours, uniformed police one day raided the house, broke open locked cupboards and desks, tore up the floors of the stables with crowbars, and even dragged the ponds. Both his aunt Tatiana and his sister, who were alone in the house, were terrified, and unable to restrain the police from reading not only Tolstoy's manuscripts, but even his private diaries and his personal correspondence. It is scarcely surprising that when he heard the news the passionate Tolstoy was shaken with fury. "I often say to myself:

How exceedingly fortunate it was that I was not at home at the time. Had I been there, I should certainly now be awaiting my trial for murder." Even when his rage had subsided, for a long time he was troubled to think that in future his peasants would assuredly regard him with suspicion, and all his work amongst them had been poisoned,

Na sooner had the news reached him than he left for home. It was early in August; and while on her way to visit her father and his wife *("La Belle Flamande"),Mme.* Behrs called at Yasnaya Polyana with her three daughters and a litde boy to see the Countess Mary Tolstoy. Having already broken their journey at Tula to visit an aunt married to the Marshal of the Nobility, the girls were wearing their prettiest summer dresses. Tolstoy was delighted with them. To hear the rooms of his old home, still haunted for him with all the memories of his childhood, resounding after their usual silence with light-hearted girlish laughter wove about the day a curious new enchantment; and so manifest was his pleasure, so assiduous were his attentions, that once more Mary and aunt Tatiana exchanged gratified, significant smiles, expectant that their "dear Leo" might even propose to the stately beauty Lisa the same evening.

So charming, indeed, did Tolstoy find the society of these young girls, so anxipus was he to make their stay at Yasnaya agreeable, that when they had retired with their maid to make up their beds on the floor of the large room where they were to sleep (for it had been arranged that they should spend the night), Tolstoy himself joined them to ensure that they had all they required, and even helped them to arrange the room. While so doing he suddenly looked up, to find Sofia's gaze *fixed* upon him. His eyes met hers, and they exchanged a long significant look—one of those vast mysterious charged glances with which two beings exchange messages far more eloquent than those of words. Her graceful, animated figure, half woman's and half girl's; her lustrous dark hair and eyes; her well-shaped nose with its sensuous nostrils; her large, sensitive, passionate, half-smiling mouth,—all suddenly seemed transformed. He was face to face with a girl whom before he had never fully realized: a girl who seemed to him in that moment of illumination both strangely familiar and familiarly strange; and at last he realized, as did she, why he found himself so often drawn back to their house in Moscow.

So shaken by this knowledge was the git 1 that she could not regain sufficient composure to go in to supper; but sat alone, for a long time, on the balcony. When the meal was over, and Tolstoy had come out to her, she was once more in possession of herself. "How serene and simple you are," he said, with a smile that lit up his face. Apparently he was unaware of the inner turbulence of her emotions.

Next day, Fet and some other visitors arrived, and a picnic was arranged. The whole day Tolstoy rode at Sofia's side. The weather was perfect; the party in good spirits. After lunch, with shrieks of

merriment, the girls amused themselves by rolling down a haystack, until Tolstoy, too, was infected by their youthful gaiety. When their short stay was over, and they had departed for Ivitsa, the house seemed strangely cold and melancholy. Tolstoy suddenly gave orders for his horse to be saddled, and announced his intention of following them.

He arrived at Ivitsa to find the place full of guests and the atmosphere tense with the excitement that, in a household of girls, precedes a ball. As he sat talking with his old friend Alexander Mikhaylovich, he watched everything that went on about him like a spectator at a play: it all seemed infinitely pleasant, yet infinitely far away.

That evening, he stood for a long time against the wall, now observing, now lost in thought. This room brought back to him with acute vividness so many recollections of his childhood. Amongst these charming girls, in their beautiful, delicate dresses, he felt the presence of a past that still lived intensely in his mind. Old associations wrapped him in a tender melancholy. He thought of his father, that handsome and kindly man whom he had loved so deeply; of his aunt the Countess Osten-Saken, who had once been the beauty of the most fashionable balls; of Dmitri, whose early death had grieved him so little; of Nicholas, whose loss could never be replaced.

" Aren't you going to dance ? " Sofia asked, coming up to him.

" Ah no! Fm far too old for that."

There was no unconscious coquetry in the words. With a passion as deep as Byron's for the strength and beauty of youth, although he had always been acutely conscious of his own physical defects, he nevertheless felt with Byron an instinctive horror of the relentless ravages of the years. He who had flung himself passionately into life at seventeen, already felt himself an old, fully disillusioned man at the age of thirty-four, and these innocent girls with their dreams of happiness and their ignorance of life infinitely removed in spirit from himself.

When the dancing was over, for a long time Tolstoy sat with Mme. Behrs and her father, talking over the old days. He had known them for so long, and they shared so much of the past in common, that their pleasure in his reminiscences gave him an unwonted eloquence. So fascinating was his conversation that presently the three girls drew near to listen.

"Go to bed, girls. You'll all be so tired in the morning," their mother said from time to time. But Tania, Sofia and Lisa continued to sit enthralled. At last Mme. Behrs' tone became peremptory. The three girls—Lisa with haughty displeasure, Tania with an enchanting grimace—rose from their chairs. Tolstoy stood up with them, and followed them to the door, where he laid a hand upon Sofia's arm.

" Wait a minute."

"What is the matter?"

He led her to a table where they had been playing cards, and brushed away the score, which was written in chalk on the green baize.

"Try and read what I am going to write," he said, gazing at her intently. Once more an invisible wave of emotional understanding passed between them.

"Very well."

"But I shall write only the first letters."

" Then it will be impossible."

He made no reply, but continued to gaze at her intently.

"Well, go on," she said at last.

He wrote down the initial letters of a long sentence. Apparently she understood perfectly what was in his mind, for, with some gentle prompting when she hesitated, she read out: "Your youth and your desire for happiness remind me too acutely of my old age and my incapacity for happiness."

She smiled up at him, saddened by his melancholy and trying to reassure him. In silence he brushed out the letters he had written and wrote a further series in the same way.

Again Sofia translated: "Your family have false ideas about me and your sister Lisa. Won't you and your sister Tania help me to dispel them?"

Before she could reply, her mother's voice interrupted them. "Sonia, will you please go to he'd!"

The next moment she had run from the room.

2

A few days later the Betas' carriage once more drew up at Yasnaya Polyana. On their way back from Ivitsa they had called to say good-bye to Mary, who was soon going abroad with her children. During the whole of their visit, Tolstoy was unusually grave and silent. When the girls came to say good-bye to him, he announced abruptly: "I shall go to Moscow with you. How can I stay here at Yasnaya without you all ? It would be too dull and lonely!"

After a few hurried alterations in their arrangements, they were soon ready to set out. As the coach had four seats inside and two outside, Tolstoy was to have one of the latter, and Lisa and Sofia were to sit with him in turn. By now he was fully involved in another delicate situation. Both girls were convinced that he loved them; while the only thing which he was certain of was*that he had no longer any serious intention of marrying Lisa. They travelled all night, now Sofia and now Lisa drowsing at his side as he told them tales of his adventures in the Caucasus; but at the last halt Lisa begged her sister to let her have the outside seat again. Thus, when the carriage was ready to start, and Tolstoy waiting to hand her up, Sofia quietly got inside and closed the door. For the rest of the journey, Tolstoy remained silent.

When they reached Moscow, the Behrs went on to their country house at Pokrovskoye; and having promised to visit them soon, Tol-

stoy found himself lodgings. Once alone, he made it his first business to call at the palace and in person hand to the A.J.D.C. on duty a protest to the Emperor for the way in which Yasnaya had been raided during his absence (an official apology for which he eventually received). Then he sat down at his desk to try to consider his position. "I am afraid of myself," he recorded. " What if this is not real love, but only the desire for love ? I try to notice only her failings—and yet I love." He thought of what his life would be like if he married; he thought of what it would be like if he remained single. And he was fully aware of the difficulties and dangers involved in whichever course he took. He still felt, as he had felt with Valeria, that to make a mistake in the choice of a wife would be fatal: on the other hand, if he continued to exercise his characteristic caution, he would probably miss his last chance. And what was the alternative ? Squalid associations with peasant women; increased loneliness and the sight of bastard children growing up at Yasnaya Polyana. He had already seen a bastard of his father's, who resembled him far more closely than did any of his lawful sons, act as coachman to the family, and it had filled him with misgivings and disgust. He felt himself slowly becoming estranged from his old acquaintances, and the thought troubled him. "I am alone," he recorded the following day. "While I served Mammon I had friends: but now that I serve truth I have none.... I think less of Sonia; but when I do think of her, it is very kindly."

Next day he walked out to Pokrovskoye, and was once more captivated by the atmosphere of youth and innocence which permeated the household. Little boys ran about the garden playing merrily, and there was an intelligent and charming young professor Popov also paying court to Sofia. Nevertheless, there were frequent subde tensions and embarrassing allusions. Although, superficially, everyone was friendly and light-hearted, strange undercurrents of feeling were suddenly apparent, and as suddenly died down. Lisa, proud, cold and beautiful, still believed that Tolstoy intended to propose to her; Sofia, torn with doubts and misgivings, coquetted playfully with the amiable Popov; while Dr. Behrs, a man of rigid and conventional views, felt that it was high time that Lisa's engagement was announced, and had even begun to suspect that perhaps it was the beauty of his wife, rather than that of his eldest daughter, that drew Tolstoy so frequendy to the house.

Not until after dinner was Tolstoy able to speak to Sofia alone. Then they managed to slip out into the garden, where they walked together for a long time. In every way he could, Tolstoy tried to discover her real thoughts and feelings. If only he could be sure that her charming face and graceful figure really concealed an intelligence and a temperament more suitable to his own than Valeria's had been. Too well he knew the ambiguous quality of his emotions. How discover whether they were really suited to each other—he and this

girl who was sixteen years younger than himself? At last, fully prepared to ask her to let him read it, he enquired if she kept a diary. To this she replied that she did not, but confided that she had poured out all her most intimate thoughts and feelings into a novel. Begging to be allowed to see it, when he left that night Tolstoy took away the manuscript with him in his pocket.

As soon as he reached home he began to read it; and continued reading until he had reached the end. As might have been expected, the story was autobiographic, and concerned the perplexity of a young girl (obviously Sofia herself) in choosing between two lovers, one of whom represented Polivanov, a friend of one of her brothers, who, in her girlhood, had aroused in her the most ardent dreams of love, and whom she had vaguely promised one day to marry, and the other, a talented, charming, but ugly and erratic Prince Dublitski, who was evidently a portrait of himself.

The situation of his former courtship was thus curiously reversed. Then.it had been he who had tried to clarify an ambiguous position with inventions of a Mme. Dembinski and a Krapovitsky who " believed they loved each other," and now, unaware of the fact, Sofia had done exactly the same thing. No sooner had he finished it, than Tolstoy recorded his impressions. "Walked to the Behrs. It is comfortable and quiet there. Girlish laughter. Sonia was vulgar and not good, but she still holds me.... She gave me her story to read. What truthfulness and simplicity. The indefiniteness tortures her. I read it without constriction of the heart, without jealousy or envy: but 'unusually unattractive appearance and uncertainty of convictions' hit me hard.... I have calmed down, however. All this is not my affair.... Work, and just the satisfaction of one's needs...." [52]

Two days later, on his thirty-fourth birthday, he was still vacillating. " Ugly face! Don't dream of marriage. Your vocation is of another sort, and much has been given you for it." Nevertheless, he returned to Pokrovskoye the following day, and continued to observe his reactions with more than usual care. " No love as formerly, no jealousy, not even regret, but I know of nothing analogous, and that is sweet: one would say a little hope (but it must not be—pig). Delicious night, tender and delightful feelings.... Popov is extremely intelligent and sympathetic." [52]

Despite his apparent calm, he still could not keep away. "Am not at all jealous of Popov when he is with Sonia," he recorded the following evening, "and can't believe that this can be myself. It seems to be the right moment, and then night comes on. She too speaks sadly and peacefully. We went for a walk; in the arbour, in the house, at supper—her eyes: and it is night. . . . Idiot. You are not worthy of her. All the same, I am in love, just as I was with Sonichka Kaloshina and with A. Obolenskaya. Not more. Spent the night with them. I couldn't sleep—always her...." **

Next day the whole family moved back to Moscow, where Tolstoy continued his frequent visits, bringing the girls music, and accompanying them on the piano. And the longer he philandered, despite its many subtle charms, the more embarrassing the situation threatened to become. All the family, with the sole exception of Sofia, continued to believe that he was paying court to Lisa: and not only was Lisa obviously distracted, but Dr. Behrs was becoming daily more incensed at her anomalous position. "Poor Lisa.. . . But there also, Sonia is nice," Tolstoy commented, fully aware of every implication.

For another fortnight Tolstoy's indecision continued, while his feelings steadily increased in power. Apparenriy uncertain of Sofia's feelings for him, this uncertainty, as usual, acted as an emotional stimulant. "With them again," he recorded on September 3rd; "at first all went well. Then there was a walk. Never has my future life with a wife presented itself to me so clearly, joyfully and calmly. . . . Above all, it seems so simple and opportune, with no passion, no fear, and not a single regret." And the following night he never slept, "so clear was'the picture of happiness I created. In the evening, we spoke of love. From bad to worse."

By now, nothing else existed for him in life but these visits to the Behrs. "To-day I am at home alone, and reflect at leisure on my position," he recorded on September 7th. "Dublitsky, don't push yourself where there are youth, beauty, poetry and love . . . for that, old fellow, there are younger men. A monastery of labour; that is your place, from the seclusion of which you may gladly watch the love and happiness of others. I have dwelt in that monastery, and will return to it. . . . My diary is insincere. *Arrifre pensie* . . . that she is with me and will sit beside me and read . . . and this is for her." *[2]

Next day, he again dined with the Behrs. "Tania grave and severe. Sonia opened the door for me. She seems to have grown thinner. There was nothing about her different from usual, or different from others, but she attracts me irresistibly. It seems that Lisa conquers me passively. My God. What a terrible misfortune it would be if she became my wife." [52]

His diary entries of the following days clearly reveal the steadily increasing tension.

"September 9th. She blushed, overcome. O Dublitsky, do not dream. . . . Instead of being busy, I have written her a letter which I shall not send. I could not sleep for nearly three hours. Dreamed and tormented myself like a lad of sixteen."

"September 10th. Went to the Kremlin. She was not there. . . . I went away discouraged again, and more in love than ever before. At bottom, hope still persists. . . . I must, I simply must settle the problem. I begin to hate Lisa even while feeling pity for her. God help me, teach me. Again a terrible blank night to be passed, I feel it: I who laugh at the sufferings of lovers! What plans I have made

for confessing to her, to Tania, to everyone, but in vain. I begin to detest Lisa with all my heart."

"September nth. My feelings are still as keen as ever. To-day, just as yesterday, I did not dare to go to them. Nobody exists for me."

"September 12th. I am in love as I did not believe it was possible for me to love. I am crazy and will blow my brains out if *it* goes on. like this. I spent the evening at their house. She was altogether delightful. But I am the hideous Dublitsky. I should have been on guard sooner. Now I cannot stop. Even if I am a Dublitsky, I am transformed by love. There were some opportunities, but I did not profit by them. Was afraid, but should have spoken simply. I should like to go back and speak before them all."

"September 13th. Despite Seriosha's arrival, nothing has happened. Every day I think it is impossible to suffer more and yet be happy, and every day I become more insane. Again I left with anguish, remorse and happiness in my soul. To-morrow I will go there as soon as I am dressed, and will tell her everything. 4 o'clock in the morning.—I have written a letter which I will send her to-morrow—that is to-day, the 14th. My God, how afraid I am of death. Such happiness seems to me impossible. God, help me."

"September 14th. Have slept only an hour and a half, but am nevertheless fresh and extremely excited.... At the Kremlin with the Tyutchevs and with them. She is strange. . . . I cannot write for myself alone. I know, I am sure, that soon I shall no longer have any secrets for myself alone, but only secrets for us both—she will read all. Slept little. Yesterday I was more calm, to-day more calm still. What will happen ? "

"September 15th. Have not asked her, but have told her that I have something to ask her." [52]

The following evening, in a state of great inner excitement, Tolstoy arrived at the Behrs' with the letter that he had been carrying about in his pocket for the last three days. Finding Sofia at the piano, he sat down beside her, intending to speak, but he was too agitated to be able to begin. Infected with his emotion, Sofia began nervously to play "// *Baccio"* which she had been practising before he came. At the same moment, Tania came into the room. "Come and sing," she called to her sister, in order to cover her confusion.

Standing in the middle of the room, Tania sang to her accompaniment in her charming unspoilt, girlish voice—that voice which made Tolstoy later call her Mme. Viardot, in honour of the great singer to whom Turgenev was devoted all his life—while Tolstoy held his letter in his pocket, and promised himself that if she took the last note well, then he would give it to Sofia; and that if she didn't he would wait. Presendy, such was her agitation, Sofia began to falter in her accompaniment, and struck some false notes. The next moment Tolstoy had slipped into her seat and taken her place.

At last it was over. Tania had taken the top note perfectly. "How well you sing to-night," Tolstoy said in an agitated voice. Aware of the tension in the atmosphere, Tania then discreetly disappeared, while Tolstoy, saying that he would wait for her answer, thrust his letter into Sofia's hand.

"Sofia Andreyevna," he had written: "it is becoming unendurable. For three weeks I have been saying to myself, *I shall tell her now/ and yet I continue to go away with the same feelings of sadness, regret, terror and happiness in my heart. Every night I go over the past and curse myself for not having spoken to you, and wonder what I would have said if I had spoken....

" I thought I could love you all like children. At Ivitsa I might still have been able to break away and return to my monastery, to have gone back to my solitary and absorbing work. But now I can do nothing.... I feel that I have created a disturbance in your home, and that your friendship for me, as a good, honourable man, has been spoiled. I dare not leave and I dare not stay. You are a candid, honest girl: with your hand on your heart, and without hurrying (for God's sake don't hurry), tell me what to do. I would have laughed myself sick a month ago if I had been told that I would suffer, and suffer joyfully, as I have been doing for this past month. Tell me with all the candour that is yours: Will you be my wife ? If you can say yes, decisively, with all your heart, then say it; but if you have the faintest shadow of doubt, say no. For Heaven's sake think it over carefully. I am terrified to think of a no, but I am prepared for it, and will be strong enough to bear it. But it will be a terrible thing for me if I am not loved by my wife as much as I love her." [56]

That night he recorded: "Asked her. She: yes. She: like a wounded bird. Useless to write. Impossible to record that."

Next day (it was September 17th) was Mme. Behrs' name-day; and there was a large party at her house, during which the engagement was announced. There were congratulations, presents, champagne. Yet, despite his happiness, the sensitive Tolstoy could not but be aware of Lisa's disappointment. "Lisa, pitiable and painful, she must have hated me." So distraught was she, indeed, that the following evening she could not bring herself to appear at dinner, and her father apparently felt with her that she had been badly treated. Certainly there had been a time when Tolstoy had paid her marked attentions, and as his eldest daughter he had expected to see her married first.

But this could not for long spoil Tolstoy's delight. "Do you remember saying to me, dear friend Alexandrine," he wrote to his cousin, " * When will the day come that you will write to me and tell me you are in love and going to marry?' . . . Now I do write: on Sunday, September 23rd, I am going to be married to Sofia Behrs, the daughter of that old friend Lyubochka Islenev. To give you an idea of what she is like would take volumes. I have never been so happy

in my life.... Of course she knows and loves you already. How glad I shall be when I bring her to see you, and can observe with a trembling yet confident heart the impression she makes upon you...." **

Characteristically ardent and impulsive, now that he had been accepted, Tolstoy wanted to be married at once, and would listen *to* no reasons in favour of delay. When Mme. Behrs said that at least they must be given time to assemble a fitting trousseau, he merely replied: "Surely she already has enough clothes? She is always perfectly well dressed."

But his happiness was even yet not entirely free from misgivings; and the more he anticipated the perfect intimacy he had always dreamed of, the more he felt compunction for his sordid past. Since he could not begin his married life as uncorrupted as his wife, he was at least determined that no deception on his side should spoil their future relations; and in order that she should be fully aware of the weaknesses of the man she had accepted, he brought her his diaries to read. Demanding from marriage perfect trust and understanding, he was fully willing to give the same honesty that he expected to receive.

Sofia sat up with them all night. Innocent and inexperienced, his confessions were the cause of much distress. They simultaneously shocked her moral sensibilities, disillusioned her as to her lover's character and shattered all her girlish dreams. The impression that she received was powerful to the point of exaggeration. Nevertheless, when Tolstoy, tense and anxious, came to see her next morning, she forgave him; and, deeply moved, they wept together.

Even so, despite a transfiguration of "his whole emotional state, which filled him with love even for casual strangers that he encountered in the street, his passionate, idealistic nature could not rest. Supposing, after all, they were making a mistake? Supposing, after all, she only imagined that she loved him? "Jealousy on account of her past, doubt of her love, and the thought that she deceives herself." [52] And on the very morning of their wedding day he rushed round to her house in a state of uncontrollable agitation, and poured out to her all his apprehensions and misgivings, until Sofia was reduced to tears and Mme. Behrs insisted upon his going away.

He would have been better employed in looking after practical matters; for when it was time for him to dress, he found that his man had forgotten to put out a clean shirt, all his trunks were packed and at the Behrs' house, and, it being Sunday, the shops were closed. There was no alternative but to send to the Behrs' and have his trunks unpacked. This entailed a long delay, and the bride, who had no idea what was the matter, was kept waiting at home for at least an hour, believing, after that morning's scene, that her betrothed had suddenly decided to run away.

According to custom, Tolstoy had confessed and taken the sacra-

ments; and at seven o'clock in the evening they were married in the Royal church of the Kremlin by priests in magnificent copes of cloth of silver and cloth of gold.

Immediately after the service, they set out to Yashaya Polyana, where they had both agreed to spend their honeymoon, accompanied by old family servants, in a new *dormeuse* drawn by six horses. When they arrived, nearly twenty-four hours later, aunt Tatiana holding an icon of the Virgin, and Sergey with bread and salt, welcomed them home with ceremonious affection.

"Incredible happiness," Tolstoy wrote in his diary next morning. "I can't believe that this will last as long as life."

PART III

Pascal says: There are only three kinds of people: those who, having found God, serve Him; those who, not having found Him, are engaged in seeking Him; and those who, though they have not found Him, do not seek Him,

The first are sensible and happy; the last are senseless and unhappy; the second are unhappy, hut sensible,

I think that the contrast Pascal makes between the first and second groups, between those who are engaged in seeking Him and those who, as he says in another place, having found God, serve Him with their whole heart, is not only not so great as he thought, but does not exist at all, I think that those who, with their whole heart and with suffering (en gemissant, *as Pascal says) seek God, are already serving Him, They are serving Him because by the suffering they endure in their search they are laying and revealing to others the road to God, as Pascal himself did in his* Pensees, *and as Amiel did all his life in his journal,* TOLSTOY : **Introduction to Amiel's Journal.**[16]

Chapter I

I. ***Married relations and early disillusionment: the Countess Tolstoys diary: the end of the school: incompatibilities of temperament and outlook, 2, The family man and the artist:*** **Polikushka** ***and*** **The Cossacks:** ***life at Yasnaya Polyana: the writing of*** **War and Peace. 3.** ***The Countess Tolstoys jealousy and dissatisfaction,*** **4.** ***Tania Behrs: her engagement to Sergey: her illness: the incidents of her life reproduced in*** **War and Peace.**

NEARLY fifty years later, when Tolstoy's life was over, Leonid Andreyev wrote in his reminiscences of a visit to Yasnaya Polyana: "There was much in Sofia Andreyevna's treatment of her husband and in her words that touched me by its sincere affection, and gave me a false confidence that Tolstoy's last days would be passed in peace and joy. I cannot think that in this there was any deception on either side, any conscious or unconscious deception such as often occurs in the presence of outsiders. I explain my mistake to myself by there having been in their lives two truths, one of which I saw." [76]

This is a profound statement; but it is incomplete. The truth is

control her jealousy by reason. On the contrary, she sought every means of exacerbating it, particularly in the continual re-reading of her husband's early diaries. "Some day I shall kill myself with jealousy.—* Never so much in love as now!'" {she was still brooding over his passion for Axinia). And, indeed, to such a pitch did this jealousy grow, that there were even times when she would go out and lurk about the estate disguised as a peasant woman, to see whether her husband might accost her.

"Woman has a duel with man," said Balzac in a letter to Mme. Hanska, "and when she does not triumph, she dies. If she is not right, she dies. If she is not happy, she dies. It is frightful." One aspect of the Countess Tolstoy's relations with her husband, from the first, was such a duel.

"I sometimes have a silly, unconscious desire to test my power over him," she admitted four months after her marriage. "It is simply a desire to see him obey me. But he will always be stronger than I, and my desire for self-assertion will pass...." Unfortunately, this desire could have been curbed only by deliberate efforts; and with all her good points, the Countess Tolstoy never seems to have made the slightest efforts at self-control. Nearly three years later she was still writing: "I am afraid of everything and feel unfriendly towards the whole world. It is a strange desire for power, for being above everybody else. It is hard even for me to understand, but it is true." [66]

Excessive jealousy, possessiveness, the lust to dominate; incapacity to understand Tolstoy's innate nobility of character; the tendency to find a perverted pleasure in her real and imaginary misfortunes; and latent hysterical and suicidal tendencies,—these are all apparent from the first. Nevertheless, many of her difficulties were due simply to her youth and unexpended vitality. She had come, a young, ardent and energetic girl, into a home which for decades had been run according to family traditions (even the cook at Yasnaya Polyana was an old flute-player from the eccentric Prince Volkonski's orchestra of serfs; and when he died he Was succeeded by his son), a home already supervised by a devoted housekeeper who had been in the service of the family long before Tolstoy himself was born; and she had exchanged a circle of merry, intelligent and affectionate brothers and sisters for the society of two old ladies with whom she had nothing in common save a passionate affection for their *"cher Lion"*

Moreover, she was sixteen years younger than her husband in age, and about half a century in experience and understanding. It was therefore inevitable that, despite their periods of happiness, there should be frequent interludes of misunderstanding, friction, tears. "There is no end to Natalia Petrovna and Auntie [the first lady was the companion of the second], and Natalia Petrovna again...." "I should like to flirt with someone ... or lose my temper with a chair or anything at all...." " He is too old and solemn, while I feel full of youth,

and am longing to do something crazy. Instead of going to bed, I should love to turn somersaults. But with whom? "[56] Such entries as these cannot but evoke sympathy when one remembers the warmth and cheerfulness of the atmosphere of her home, and the long moods of silent preoccupation with which Tolstoy would be seized when he was absorbed in some new idea.

Despite these early incompatibilities, in March 1863 Tolstoy recorded: "I love her more and more. To-day, in this fifth month, I feel in her presence an emotion of humility such as I have not experienced for a long time. She is so inexpressibly pure and virgin in my eyes. At such moments I feel that I don't possess her, because I don't dare to—I feel unworthy to. I am apprehensive, and that is why my happiness is incomplete. Something torments me. I am jealous of the man who would be fully worthy of her."[62]

By now the Countess Tolstoy was several months advanced in pregnancy, and this seems to have added considerably to her emotional instability. It also caused her to record her tendency to masochism. "I am afraid of a miscarriage, and yet the pain in my belly gives me pleasure. It was the same in my childhood. Although Mother would forgive me for some misdeed, I would not forgive myself and would pinch my hand and prick it with a needle as a punishment. Though the pain becomes unbearable, I endure it with a feeling of intense pleasure."[56]

In the middle of June, Tolstoy was already beginning to realize that he was involved in precisely the situation that he had tried to avoid whenever he had contemplated marriage. Had he chosen Valeria Arsenev or Catherine Tyutchev for his wife, his predicament could scarcely have been more unsatisfactory. It was not only the Countess's continual complaints—"He promised to be here at twelve, and now it is nearly two.... Why does he like to torture me like this?..."—but the realization of her complete indifference to all moral values, that most troubled him. " Where is my true self—that self that loved and understood?" he asked himself the following June. "... I have become both petty and insignificant. And what is worse, I have become so since I have been married to the woman I love. Nearly all that I have written in this book is lies—falseness. The thought that she is always there to read over my shoulder restrains me and prevents me from being honest. My God, help me! Grant me to live always with the consciousness of Thyself and of Thy power. I must add some words for her, for she will read this—for her I write not what is not true, but what I would not write if I wrote for myself alone. It is shocking, terrible, insane, to say that a man's happiness is created by purely material circumstances—a wife, children, health, money. One can have a wife, children, health, and all the rest, but happiness does not lie in that. God, give me grace and come to my help."[6a]

While early in August, at the time of the birth of his eldest son, he

wrote in maddened despair: " Her character grows worse from day to day.... True, this happens when she is unwell, but her injustice and deliberate selfishness frighten me and fill me with misgivings. Someone told her—and she believes it—that husbands do not love their wives when they are unwell, and she is convinced that this justifies her. Or is it that she never loved me, but deceived herself? I looked through her diary—latent animosity towards me seems to breathe from under words of tenderness; and it is thus so often in our life. If this is so, and the whole thing is a mistake on her side, it is awful. To have given up everything—not as other men do, who on marrying give up their mistresses and a dissolute bachelor life at Dusseaux's—but to have exchanged all the poetry of love, of contemplation, and of activity among the people, for poetry of the domestic hearth with its egotism towards all except one's family, and instead of that to have the troubles of an eating-house, baby powders and jam-making, together with grumblings, and without anything that can brighten family life, without love or a serene and dignified family happiness, and with nothing but excesses of tenderness, kisses and so on, depresses me terribly. In the morning I come in happy and cheerful, and find the Countess in a rage ... and everything collapses, I feel frightened of everything, and realize that it is only when I am alone that I can be in a poetic mood. I am kissed with customary tenderness, and then she begins nagging at her maid, at Auntie, at Tania, at me and at everything, and I cannot bear it calmly, because all this is not only wrong, but terrible when compared to what I want. I don't know what I would not do for her happiness; but she can debase and defile our relations so as to make it seem as though I grudged her a horse or a peach... . There is in her ... a kind of unhealthy and capricious self-satisfaction and a resignation to her supposedly unhappy lot." [2]

So far, marriage had proved the greatest disillusionment of his life. But he accepted it without further complaint, and tried to adapt himself as best he could to the new circumstances it had created.

2

For the time, circumstances had relegated the teacher, the altruist and the moralist to a dim background from which they were not to emerge for many years. It was the noontide of the family man and of the artist. With practical work on his schools no longer possible, Tolstoy's abundant physical energy was at first thrown into the care of his estates. He planned orchards and gardens, planted woods, restocked his farm and his stables with pedigree cattle, bred pigs with "gorgeous snouts" and started to keep bees with so intense an interest that frequently he had his lunch sent out to him in the apiary. Most of his days were spent consulting his stewards and overseeing his farmwork : and for change of occupation, as usual, he had his writing.

Since Nicholas's death, when he had decided that "art is a lie, and I can no longer love a beautiful lie," save for his work at the magazine, he had devoted less time to literary activity than for many years.

Family Happiness he had referred to contemptuously as "a foul blot on my career both as author and as man," and its appearance had given him but little pleasure. But now, with the publication, in January and February 1863, of *The Cossacks* and *Polikushka,* his literary reputation was once more in the ascendant, and this, too, probably served to stimulate his talent. Of *Polikushka,* the moving tale of the tragedy ot a serf which occurs through a combination of circumstances chiefly accidental, Turgenev wrote to Fet: " I have read Tolstoy's *Polikushka,* and been amazed at the power of his enormous talent. It makes shivers run up and down my spine, which has already grown tough and callous. He is a master, a master." While of *The Cossacks* he was even more enthusiastic: "I read *The Cossacks* and went into ecstasies about it, as did Botkin. Only the personality of Olenin spoils the generally wonderful impression. To contrast civilization with fresh, primeval nature there was no need again to produce that dull, unhealthy fellow always preoccupied with himself. Why doesn't Tolstoy get rid of that nightmare?" Ten years later, when he was trying to introduce Tolstoy's work into France, he wrote again: " The more often I read that story, the more convinced I am that it is not only Tolstoy's masterpiece, but the masterpiece of all Russian narrative literature." These remarks are an admirable illustration of Turgenev's generosity and limitations as a critic. As regards Tolstoy, in particular, he could appreciate in his work only those qualities which resembled his own: while Tolstoy's unique genius, which resides precisely in the introduction of moral values into all his work, he disliked as whole-heartedly as he disliked the passionate moral fervour of the man.

Undoubtedly *The Cossacks* is the masterpiece of Tolstoy's first period. He took nearly ten years to write it; and it was completely recast more than once. The pity is that he never completed the full-length novel of which it was intended to be but a part. Probably he had been occupied with it too long to return to it again with the necessary creative impetus; besides which, his mind was now seething with many different new ideas.

His first achievement after his marriage was one of his finest short stories, *Strider, the Story of a Horse* (which was not published until 1888). Then he turned his attention to playwriting, and produced *The Nihilist,* a playlet intended for perfotmance at Yasnaya Polyana, where it was played with much gusto, the Countess Tolstoy and her sister taking the principal parts, and the Countess Mary Tolstoy being sacarried away by her role of an old pilgrim that she made up several impromptu speeches. This was followed by *The Infected Family,* which was rejected by Ostrovsky, then connected with the Imperial

Theatre, on the **grounds that the theme was too advanced for popular** taste, a fact which quenched for **many** years **Tolstoy's** interest in **this** medium of expression.

The summer of **1863,** at Yasnaya Polyana, seems to have been very gay. The eldest son, Sergey, was born on June 28th; and although there were quarrels between Tolstoy and his wife as to whether or not she should suckle the baby herself (her breasts were sore and so she wished to give it into the care of a wet nurse, a course which to Tolstoy seemed abhorrent), the care of her child gradually absorbed much of the Countess's superfluous energy. Moreover, there were frequent and congenial guests. The Countess's favourite sister Tania, and her young brother Stephen, a boy of eleven, came to stay with them; Tolstoy's brother Sergey would frequently drive over with his ten-year-old son Grisha from Pirogovo, and there were visits from Diakov and from Fet. There was music and singing—Tolstoy himself would play the guitar and sing passionate love-songs—there were picnic and bathing parties; and on the Countess's name-day dinner was served on the verandah at a table charmingly decorated with flowers, to the strains of a regimental band which Tolstoy had ordered specially to give pleasure to his young wife.

By now, considerable reconstruction was going on on the estate. "We are without a steward," Tolstoy wrote to Fet, "and have only the people who help us in the fields and with the building. My wife looks after the books and the money by herself; and I have bees, goats, a new garden and the distillery. Everything progresses by degrees, but slowly compared with our ideal." [89] Once, when for some reason the peasants refused to make the hay, Tolstoy and his wife and visitors themselves worked to get it in before the weather changed. Aunt Tatiana, who watched over the young couple with an almost maternal pride, seeing only the happier side of their relations, touchingly confided to all who visited the house: "You see, with *mon cher Ldon* things could not be otherwise."

During the autumn, Tolstoy eloquendy described his state in a letter to the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy. "Indeed I hope you are entirely happy," she had written to him during the previous May, "but if one has any experience of man in general, and of you in particular, there always remains an undertone of concern, of anxiety, that one would have soothed."

" I am a husband and a father well satisfied with his state, and so much accustomed to it that, in order to realize my happiness, I have to reflect and to recall what I was before. I search neither into my state nor my feelings, and feel only, without thinking, of my family relations. This state of mind affords me a huge mental span. Never before have I known my intellectual and moral faculties so free and ready for work. And I have work, in the form of a novel of the period of **1810-1820,** which has completely absorbed me since the beginning of the autumn.

•.. Now I am an author with all the passion of my soul. I write and reflect as I have never done before." [65]

This novel was *War and Peace.* It had evolved, almost in spite of himself, out of his researches into the activities of the Decembrists; for he had long been contemplating a novel with the abortive conspiracy of 1825 as its theme. In a posthumously published preface to *War and Peace* he has himself described how this transition took place.

"In the year 1856 I began to write a tale with a definite theme—the hero was to be a Decembrist who returns to Russia with his family. Unconsciously I turned from the present time back to the year 1825, the point at which all the misfortunes and mistakes of my hero had their beginnings. Having got so far, I laid the work aside. Now in 1825 my hero was supposed already to be a married man of mature age, so in order to understand him I was obliged to realize the days of his early youth, which would have coincided with Russia's year of glory—1812. Again I rejected all that I had written, and set myself to describe that period, the glamour of which surrounds us still, but which is sufficiently remote *to* be judged with impartiality. Yet again—for the third time—I was forced to make a fresh beginning; I found that the figure of the hero, whose youth I was describing, receded more and more into the background, while other figures, some of them historical, some of them creations of my own imagination, gradually took a stronger hold on me. For the third time, then, I went back still farther into the past, prompted by a feeling which to most of my readers may perhaps seem strange, but which I trust will be intelligible to those whose judgment I value. This feeling can only be described in one word—shame; I felt ashamed to tell the story of our victories over Napoleon and his armies without mentioning also our own disasters, our own disgraces. Who can read the many patriotic accounts of the year 1812 without this feeling of secret shame? If the reason for our successes was not mere chance, but had its roots in the soul of the Russian people and the Russian Army, our failures and disasters must be traced to a similar source.

"Accordingly, in my backward survey from 1856 to 1805 I proposed to trace the career, not of a single hero only, but of many such, both male and female, through the historic events of 1805, 1807, 1812, 1825 and 1856. In none of these periods could I foresee how the relations between the various people would work out. I had taken care at the beginning to imagine a romantic development and *denouement* for each of the different parts, but I soon became convinced that it was beyond my powers. In the end I decided* in drawing the various characters, to rely entirely on my customary methods, while doing all I could to make each division of my book interesting for its own sake." **

Indeed, one of the earlier fragments of the'book begins: "Those who knew Peter Kirilovich Bezukhov at the beginning of the reign of Alexander II, on his return from Siberia, a man in the fifties with snow-

white hair, could hardly have pictured him as the careless, frank, impetuous youth that he was in the early years of Alexander I, just back from Europe, where he had recently completed his studies in accordance with his father's wishes." [42]

The writing of *War and Peace* occupied Tolstoy for the greater part of the next five years; though he worked at it, according to his custbm, most diligently during the winter. At last he found himself in that perfect state for composition when "the intelligence and *the* imagination are in complete equilibrium," and he was able to devote himself to his work with the whole power of his richly endowed nature. Inevitably, there were periods of stress and tension. "Writing is like birth/' he used to say of such pensions. "Until the fruit is ripe, it does not come out; and when it does, it comes with pain and labour." When he found himself unable to press forward as he wished, he would jump onto his horse and ride for ten or twelve hours at a stretch; or, calling his young brother-in-law, go out walking for the rest of the day.

As is only to be expected, during these years the creation of *War and Peace* completely dominated the Tolstoys' lives. Visits to Moscow in order to study historical documents relating to the Napoleonic Wars and the ramifications of Russian Masonry before its suppression after the Decembrist conspiracy; detailed research into the costume and habits of the time; a vast correspondence with historians or distant relatives in possession of authentic and unknown material; long hours immured in his study, during which the servants were enjoined to an unnatural silence and the children forbidden to raise their voices; lengthy consultations with his wife; tentative readings to his intimate circle; erasures, alterations, and amplifications; and slowly yet surely that huge, magnificent structure was raised into being.

These labours were interrupted, in the autumn of 1864, by an accident while out hunting, during which Tolstoy fell from his horse and dislocated and broke his arm. After unsatisfactory treatment at home, he finally went for an operation to Moscow, where he stayed with the Behrs and was nursed by Tania, who even took down some passages of *War and Peace* from dictation, with great devotion. "After this fall from my horse when I broke my arm," he wrote to Fet, "I said to myself, when I recovered consciousness: I am a writer. . . . I regard everything that I have published until to-day as no more than exercises. . . . "

Just before his arm was operated upon, while he was under chloroform, it is recorded that he suddenly cried out, "No, my friends, it is impossible to live this way. I think I have decided...." But he said no more, and we are left only with this fragmentary evidence of what must have even then been going on below the surface of his conscious thoughts.

At Yasnaya Polyana, the Countess Tolstoy brooded with customary despondency: "I feel so sad, so miserable at the thought that he may

die, and I picture to **myself the scene of his death so clearly.** This feeling **has** been growing ever since the day he **sprained his arm.** I suddenly realized the possibility of losing him, and since then I've been thinking of nothing else. I am practically living in the nursery **just** now, nursing and looking after the children, and that distracts me. I often feel that this feminine world must bore him, and **that** I **am** incapable of making him happy. I begin to believe that I am a good nurse and nothing else. No brains, no education, no talent, nothing. I wish something would happen quickly, for I can feel it coming. Looking after the children, playing with Seriosha, all this keeps me amused at times, and yet there is nothing in which I can take real joy; all my old cheerfulness seems to have disappeared. Often before I have known some misfortune would come, such as Liova's irritation against me. For all I know, he may be secredy hating me...."[M]

But if latent, and sometimes even overt, strife existed between them, it was nevertheless the Countess Tolstoy who was responsible for creating the conditions which made his great task possible. It was as the wife of a world-famous writer that she saw her role; and in these early years, at least, she played it with intelligence and devotion. Between her already arduous duties of housekeeping and childbearing; of supervising her children's education, tending their ailments, making their clothes, she acted almost continuously as her husband's amanuensis, copying out his involved and difficult manuscripts, thick with alterations and insertions, long after the rest of the household had retired, always ensuring that he should find upon his desk a clean and legible copy for the following morning; never complaining when this, too, heavily overscored and altered, was once more offered her to copy anew.

When the work of composition went well, and Tolstoy had spent a successful day in his study, or hidden away in the summer-house he had built for himself in a wood amongst the oaks, the whole household would be pervaded by a pleasant sense of well-being: the author would remark complacently that he had left "a little of his flesh in the inkpot" and cast benevolent glances upon the assembled company. When it went ill, he would be seized with moods of gloomy despondency, or even of uncontrollable rage. Once when he was irritated with his wife, and she followed him into his study, he even caught up from the table a fully laden tray and hurled it upon the floor. "You mustn't get so angry, Count, it's bad for your health," a doctor who visited Yasnaya Polyana remarked. "I can't help it," Tolstoy replied. "I try to restrain myself, but I can't. It se^ms that I am made like that."

Nevertheless, marriage had begun to mellow him. "How we are changed by married life!" he wrote to his cousin Alexandra. "It is a thing I should never have believed. I was like an apple tree with **its** branches growing anyhow; and now life has been pruning them **and** binding them and fastening them to the fruit-wall, so that the **apple**

tree may not thwart others, but root more deeply and strengthen its trunk." [62] And on another occasion: " Do you remember I once wrote you that it is mistaken of men to expect a perfect happiness in which there is neither suffering nor deception? Well, I was wrong. Such happiness not only exists, but I am enjoying it for the third year, and every day only serves to make it deeper and stronger. And the ingredients of this happiness are of the nastiest: the children (forgive me) dirtying themselves and screaming, and my wife, nursing one and leading the other, continually pouring out reproaches that I am blind to the fact that they are both on the brink of the grave; and the paper and ink with which I describe human events and feelings without existence." [85] In general, his bearing had grown even more gentle and considerate. "I never heard him scold a servant," his brother-in-law, S. A. Behrs, wrote of him years later. "Yet they all had the greatest respect for him, were fond of him, and seemed even to fear him. Nor, with all his zeal for sport, have I ever seen him whip a dog or beat his horse."

In November 1866, the year when Tolstoy visited Borodino with this same brother-in-law to study the battlefield, the Countess Tolstoy recorded: "I spend a great deal of time copying out Liova's novel. This is a very great pleasure to me. As I copy it, I live through a whole world of new ideas and impressions. Nothing has such an effect upon me as his ideas and his genius." And two months later: "All this winter Liova kept on writing; full of irritation and excitement and with tears coming to his eyes. I believe his novel is going to be wonderful. The parts he reads to me often bring tears to my eyes; is it because I am his wife and can sympathize with him, or is the novel really so wonderful? I believe it is the latter. His family gets only his *fatigues de travail,* and he has become impatient and irritable with me, so that I am beginning to feel very lonely." [56]

3

In her passionate, erratic, revealing diary of these years, the Countess Tolstoy has left an illuminating record *of* the ebb and surge of their complicated and apparently happy relations with a candour and a subtlety that are invaluable in the study of their life.

In February 1865, when they were to go on a visit to Moscow, she recorded: "I shall be ashamed in Moscow not to have a carriage and pair, with a footman in livery, and fine dresses and a fine house. . . . Liova is extraordinary. He simply doesn't care about such things. It is a result of his wisdom and virtue." Yet she still continued, though Tolstoy never gave her the slightest cause, to be passionately jealous: "I am still madly jealous of the peasant woman, and suspect him every time he goes out." She was jealous even of Tolstoy's friendship with her own sister. " I am angry with Tania for poking her nose too much

into Liova's life——My jealousy burst out yesterday, for the first time, and now it makes me sad to think of it." "I can't understand him sufficiendy, and that must be why I watch so jealously—his thoughts, his actions, his past and present," she had written on an earlier occasion. "I should like to be able to grasp and understand him fully, so that he might treat me as he treated Alexandrine, but I know that that is impossible, and I have to accept the fact that I am too young, too silly, and not sufficiently poetic. To be like Alexandrine, quite apart from any natural gifts, one needs to be older, childless, and possibly even unmarried. I wouldn't mind if they resumed their old correspondence, but it would hurt me to have her think that Liova's wife was fit for nothing else except the nursery and commonplace everyday relations. But I am well aware that, no matter how jealous I may be about his spirit, Alexandra cannot and must not be cut out of his life; she has played a part for which I should have been useless.... I should like to get to know her better. I wonder if she would think me unworthy of him ? She knew how to understand and to appreciate him. I found a letter from her inside the desk, and it made me wonder about her relationship to Liova. One of her letters is fine. I thought once or twice of writing to her without mentioning it to Liova, but I didn't dare. She interests me greatly, and I seem to like her very much. I have been thinking of her ever since I read Liova's letter to her. I would have loved her." [56]

At this time she observed her own lapses and limitations with a healthy lack of self-justification which is often touching. "I am very like my mother, and it grieves me to find in myself the traits which I always disliked in her. Especially the conviction that I am a good woman and therefore all my weaknesses ought to be forgiven me."

Nevertheless, during the summer of 1866 she was once more consumed with jealousy: this time of the wife of the new steward who had come to live on the estate—a handsome and agreeable woman of advanced views, well educated and intelligent, with whom Tolstoy used to have frequent and lengthy conversations upon literature and politics. "I remain locked in my room, while she sits in the drawing-room with the children," the Countess recorded bitterly. "I simply can't bear her: it infuriates me to see her beauty and vivacity, particularly when Liova is there."

No less significant and revealing is her almost pathetic gratitude when any of her husband's friends helped her to support her life-illusion that she was the indispensable priestess at the sacred shrine of Tolstoy's genius. "He [Sollogub] said that I was the ideal author's wife—one who knew how to nurse her husband's talent. I am grateful to him for saying it, and shall do my best to be even more of a nurse to Liova's talent."

Similarly touching in its naivety and candour is an entry after one of their frequent quarrels just over a year later (September 1867). "'You

say one thing and always do another'—But what is the use of arguing in this superior manner, when I have nothing in me but this humiliating love and a bad temper, and these two things have been the cause of all my misfortunes, since my bad temper has always interfered with my love." But not always was she able to see so clearly, and already there were times when her self-pity and dejection reached morbid proportions. "I want nothing but his love and sympathy and he won't give it me; and all my pride is trampled in the mud; I am nothing but a miserable crushed worm, whom no one wants, whom no one loves, a useless creature with morning sickness and a big belly, two rotten teeth, and a bad temper and a battered sense of dignity, and a love which nobody requires and which nearly drives me insane... ." [56]

Possibly this was merely the result of pregnancy; for, contrary to her more usual lamentations, she was writing in July 1868: "It makes me laugh to read over this diary. It is so full of contradictions, and one would think I was such an unhappy woman. Yet is there a happier woman than I? It would be hard to find a more happy or more friendly marriage than ours."

4

"I do not cease to observe Tania...." "Tania is a miracle of naivety, egoism and sensibility." So Tolstoy recorded of his sister-in-law the first Christmas after his marriage. And for the next few years he continued to observe her with the detachment and understanding of the artist. Thus, while he worked with dedication at his book, the material for future scenes developed at Yasnaya Polyana before his eyes, with their central figure that slim, graceful, vivacious girl with her delicate complexion, her dark, naturally waving hair, and her large, expressive mouth and eyes. "You think that you are living here for nothing," Tolstoy once laughed at her. "Not at all! I note down the whole of you."

Her past, no less than her present and her future, was the subject of his patient and affectionate study. The tenderness of his interest in her is clearly revealed in his letters. To the young girl, saddened by the absence of her newly married favourite sister, he wrote: "I recognized in it [her letter] your sweet and wonderful nature, with laughter against a background of poetic seriousness. Really such another Tania could not easily be found, nor anyone who appreciates her as does ... L. T." To the same enchanting young woman, carried away by the attentions she received at fashionable balls: "Tania, my dear friend, you are young, pretty, gifted and sweet. Be careful of yourself and of your heart: a heart once given away can't be taken backhand a tormented heart always bears a scar."[76] There was something about her wilful, eager spontaneity that never failed to charm him, "Let her be, Aunrie, laws are not made for her!" he would tell aunt Tatiana when Tania sprang up on the box to ride with the coachman: while his

sister used to say of her: "You know, Tania is an absolute siren. When one sees her one finds fault with her, but when one goes away, something draws one back!"

As a young girl of fourteen, Tania had been in love for the first time with Alexander Kuzminsky, a cousin who was brought up in the family as a brother, and had even solemnly made him kiss her doll (as Natasha makes Boris kiss Mimi in the early part of *War and Peace).* But now, at eighteen, her volatile, susceptible heart was open to be won anew.

Always closely observing her, and completely in her confidence, Tolstoy was as sensitively aware of her passing moods and emotions as she was herself. It was he who, during his wife's pregnancy, when she was unable to leave the house, took Tania to the ball given in honour of the Czar's visit to Tula, at which she had stood against the wall, suffering all the embarrassment of a charming girl without partners, until he was able to introduce her to suitable acquaintances of his own; it was he who first warned her, when, enraptured during a visit to Petersburg by the flattering attentions of the good-looking and dashing young Ariatole Shostak (a friend of his cousin Alexandra's) who paid open court to her, she wrote to her sister that "this week in Petersburg has been a fairy dream": "Petersburg is a man-eater." And later, when this same Anatole Shostak, at a house-party at Yasnaya Polyana at which both Tania and Alexander Kuzminsky were present, continued to pay her attentions that he considered to be both audacious and unseemly, it was he who expelled him unceremoniously from the house.

When they had first met in the summer of 1863, Tania and Sergey had been much attracted by each other; and two years later they became engaged. " Everything was settled between Tania and Seriosha the other day," the Countess Tolstoy recorded early in June. " They are going to be married. It is a joy to look at them, and their happiness gives me more pleasure than my own ever did. As they walked about the garden I acted as chaperon, which both amused and annoyed me. Seriosha is very nice to me now on account of Tania; and everything is going to be splendid. The wedding is to be in twenty days or so." [66]

But as Sergey had been living at Pirogovo for fifteen years with the same gipsy woman with the beautiful voice who had been his mistress since his youth, and by whom he now had several children, it was not possible for their marriage to be arranged as quickly as originally it had been hoped. The delay which followed caused grief to many of those concerned; and not least to Sergey's mistress, who was so heartbroken that he could not bear to see her suffering, and presently confided his misgivings to his sister. She, in turn, spoke of them to Tolstoy, who undertook the delicate mission of making them known to Tania. When she fully understood the .truth of the situation, Tania, although she was still desperately in love, broke off her engagement.

"He is completely, inexcusably in the wrong," Tolstoy wrote to her parents. "He should have first entirely finished with everything in Tula. It would be less painful for me were he not my brother. She, with her honest, passionate and energetic nature, could not do otherwise. It cost her terribly much, but she has the greatest consolation in life, that of knowing that she has acted well.. . . From being a child she has turned into a woman, and a splendid woman——" [7e]

"It has all fallen through: Seriosha has deceived Tania," the Countess Tolstoy recorded towards the middle of July. "He has behaved like a perfect cad. It is now a whole month since it happened, and it breaks my heart to look at Tania. To think that such a charming, poetic girl should be wasted like this. Her symptoms of consumption worry me terribly. . . . Tania's attitude to the whole affair was very noble. She loved him very much, while he only pretended. The gipsy woman was dearer to him. But Masha is a good woman. I feel sorry for her, and have really nothing against her. . .." [56]

Tenderly anxious to help to cure her by a change of scene, Tolstoy took her, with the rest of his family, to Nikolskoye, the neighbouring estate which had come to him on his brother's death. "She is kind, gentle, submissive," he wrote from here to Dr. Behrs, "and one pities her all the more and would tfo anything to help her, but there is no way of helping her. She seldom, hardly ever, takes up her guitar. And then, if one asks her to sing, she will sing in a small subdued voice, and soon break off." [76]

Nikolskoye served but little to improve her condition, and in the autumn Tolstoy suggested that she should accompany him on a visit to his friend Diakov, whose estate of Chermoshyna was so near that he had frequently ridden over to advise him upon farming matters, or to sing gipsy songs to the guitar. Here they invited Tania to stay for the winter; but though she wrote in one of her letters, "they spoil me and love me as much as I love them," she continued to remain pale and thin, developed a cough, and even brought up blood. In Moscow the doctors diagnosed consumption. "Three doctors are still attending me," she wrote in the spring to Polivanov, her sister's old admirer. "But no capsules, drops, etc., can help. Oh God, how is it possible not to understand that? Leo alone understands...." [76]

She attended communion, however, and gradually grew calmer; returning presently to Yasnaya Polyana, and going from there to Chermoshyna again, in order to be with Diakov's wife, Daria, who was now very ill. So close an attachment grew up between the two women, that die dying Daria even begged her friend to marry her husband after her death, which she knew to be imminent; while Diakov is recorded to have said to her, "Were I young and free, I should consider it happiness to be your husband."

By now it was an open secret that Tania was playing a prominent part in Tolstoy's novel. "I am afraid he will describe the affair with

Anatole" (Anatole, in fact, later became transformed into the Anatole Kuragin with whom Natasha attempts to elqpe, besides figuring as an unwelcome admirer of Kitty's in *Anna Karenin),* she remarked in one of her letters. "Father is most annoyed." Indeed, Dr. Behrs, who had been so affronted that Sonia had got herself engaged before her elder sister, was now fuming lest acquaintances should recognize his youngest daughter as the heroine of a novel, and her chances therefore be spoiled.

That spring, Daria Diakov died. Tania returned to Yasnaya Polyana, andthe house was frequently visited both by Dmitri Diakov and by Alexander Kuzminsky. One day Tolstoy was asked by his old friend whether he thought that a proposal would be favourably received. "You had better be quick," he said. "I think she is going back to her first love."

He was right. Tania married the tall and handsome Alexander Kuzminsky the following July. A child was born to her during the first year of her marriage; and for the next two years she was so absorbed by her family that she scarcely went outside her own circle. But every summer, for the next twenty-three years, she came with all her children to stay in the detached, white, green-roofed, three-storied "wing" of Yasnaya Polyana; and she never lost that spontaneity and zest for life that gave her character so much charm. " Tania, you know you will have to die some time," Tolstoy would frequently remark to her with amused affection. "What nonsense! Never!" was her invariable reply.

Chapter II

I. War and Peace: ***the material of its composition: genesis of the characters: Prince Andrew: Pierre: their final conceptions of life.*** **2.** ***Natasha—the portrait of Tarda Behrs: the Princess Mary: Petya: general psychology,*** **3.** ***The understanding of history: the relation of commands to events: the law of inevitability: inevitability and free will*** **4.** ***Contemporary views of*** **War and Peace —** ***Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Flaubert and Chekov,***

THE first part of *War and Peace* had been published in the *Russian Messenger* at the beginning of 1865, under the title *The Year 1805.* But it was not until 1869 that the work was obtainable in its entirety as a six-volume novel. Its publication had been attended by the same patient, painstaking, punctilious care as its composition. With the devoted help of the Countess Tolstoy, proof sheets were corrected and re-corrected, elaborate insertions made; and, in accordance with the desire for perfection which characterized all Tolstoy's constructive activities, deletions, alterations and amplifications followed each other in rapid succession. Even when the last proof sheets had been at length sent off, telegrams containing further improvements in language and style were despatched to the compositors.

Time has accorded *War and Peace* the distinction of being the greatest novel of our day. Though *The Brothers Karama^ov* may sometimes surpass it in intensity of emotion, and *In Search of Lost Time* in subtlety of perception, both these masterpieces lack precisely that harmony between the intellectual and the emotional faculties that gives to *War and Peace* its incomparable symmetry of understanding. For into it Tolstoy poured without stint all the wealth of experience of his early manhood. The understanding of his delicate and uncorruptible emotions, of his powerful and independent mind, of his vigorous and susceptible senses,—all this, with the sensibility of the poet, is truly reflected in the creative mirror of his imagination.

The observations and experiences of army life; the pagan exuberance of his youthful bachelor revels; the glitter of fashionable balls; the physical intoxication of the hunt; his tenderness for his family; the philosophy painfully achieved through turbulent experience and profound reflection; the whole of his rich and contradictory being, in fact, is to be found in this monument erected to the memory of a previous epoch.

"There are exquisite people in it whom I love deeply," he had written previously to his cousin Alexandra; and it is this embracing

poetry of tenderness, in addition to his " Heroes—that's a lie and invention ; there are simply people, people and nothing else "—that gives to *War and Peace* its unique quality. No novel could be more moving and less sentimental: no characters than those in its pages so ordinary and yet so richly endowed with life. Nearly every character and every scene is fully realized; every shade of thought and feeling perfecdy communicated, largely on account of Tolstoy's literary tact in never (save for historical purposes) venturing beyond the range of his own circle and of his own experience. Into the pattern of a past already formalized by memory and time he wove the living images which life had printed upon the retina of his eye and engraved upon his impressionable and responsive heart. For though some of the characters (such as the graceless but lovable Princess Mary with her nobility of nature and her beautiful eyes, and the old Prince Bolkonski with his intimidating, selfish affection and his fastidious idiosyncrasies) are portraits as accurate as he could paint from the details handed on to him by those who had known and loved them—in this case of his mother and her father; and others, such as the enchanting Natasha and the handsome, calculating Mile. Bourienne, are drawn almost completely from models before his eyes (Tania Behrs and a French governess who taught his children), the greater number, as with the characters in most convincing novels, are composite in the sense that more than one model posed for them, not excluding a certain aspect of the author himself, so that finally they have attained an artistic reality of their own.

Of the two chief families—the Bolkonskis and the Rostovs—there is very little that does not derive either from his own family or from that of his wife; and, like Pushkin with Boris Godunov, it was the greatest satisfaction for him to be able to include some of his illustrious ancestors in their historic setting. But the imagination of the poet has completely transformed his material. For example, while the old Count and Countess Rostov are closely copied from his paternal grandparents, Nicholas Rostov from his father, and Sonia from his aunt Tatiana as he imagined her to have been in her youth, their eldest daughter, the beautiful, haughty and affected Vera, was drawn from Lisa Behrs, and the charming, generous and impetuous young Petya from two of his brothers-in-law—Stephen and Petya. Many of the minor characters were also based upon originals in the circle *o£* his wife's family; such as her first admirer Polivanov, who appears as Denisov in the novel, and Tania's too bold pursuer, Anatole Shostak, who becomes Natasha's would-be abductor, Anatole Kuragin. (Tolstoy was always addicted to the habit of making the Christian names of his characters the same as those of the models who posed for them.)

Nevertheless, such connections cannot be pressed too far. For though Nicholas Rostov has much in him of Tolstoy's father, and Prince Andrew Bolkonski has much in him of Tolstoy's brother Sergey, both these characters derive very largely from the author him-

self. Indeed, so deliberate and penetrating was Tolstoy's self-observation, that sketches of his different selves are to be found among many of the important male characters of the book. The idea that he divided himself between Prince Andrew and Pierre Bezukhov is purely arbitrary. Certainly many of his characteristic features are deliberately manifest in these two friends—in Pierre, perhaps, those that he most valued: intelligence, ingenuousness, simplicity, goodness of heart, a passion for abstract thought and an unconquerable desire for self-improvement; in Prince Andrew his earlier weaknesses of pride, reserve, impatience and the inordinate desire to impress that for so long had obscured his own natural character. But other traits no less significant are apparent in nearly every important male character who appears. For if Prince Andrew exhorting Pierre not to marry is indicative of his early disillusionment with married life—"Never, never marry, my dear fellow! That's my advice: never marry till you can say to yourself that you have done all that you are capable of, and until you have ceased to love the woman of your choice and have seen her plainly as she is, or else you will make a cruel and irrevocable mistake" [6]; and Pierre's reflection when first attracted by the beautiful H61ene—"This happiness is not for you. This happiness is for those who have not in them what there is in you"—is clearly that which he had so often murmured to himself in the past when contemplating marriage, no less expressive of the views of his early bachelorhood are those upon women disclosed to Nicholas Rostov, during the period of their friendship, by the swashbuckling Dolokhov (whose character was based upon that of Count Theodore Tolstoy and a notable daredevil of the days of Alexander I named R. I. Dorokhov): "I have met affectionate, noble, high-minded men; but I have not yet met any women—countesses or cooks—who were not venal. I have not yet met the divine purity and devotion I look for in women. If I found such a one, I'd give up my life for her! But those!... And believe me, if I still value my life, it is only because I still hope to meet such a divine creature who will regenerate, purify and elevate me." [6]

Similarly, Dolokhov's begging Pierre (whom previously he has gratuitously provoked into a duel) on the eve of battle to forgive him is clearly reminiscent of Tolstoy's earlier behaviour towards the affronted Turgenev; Nicholas Rostov's infatuation for the Czar (so wonderfully described) is representative of some early infatuation of his own; and his remorse after his heavy losses at card-playing, his gratitude and astonishment when, after having prayed for some miracle that will permit him to marry the Princess Mary, he presently receives Sonia's letter freeing him from his engagement (no less of a miracle than Sado's winning for Tolstoy the I.O.U.s which might easily have plunged him into disgrace), and his subsequent methods of managing his estates, are all re-created from his own experiences in similar situations. Even the complacent, amiable and boastful little opportunist

Berg, explaining painstakingly to his wife that "one always could and should be acquainted with people above oneself," because then "one can get to know something, one can ask for something," and who attributes all his petty worldly success to knowing how to choose his acquaintances, is but that aspect of Tolstoy which had confided to his diary years before his new rule for "always seeking association with men higher than oneself in the world," and at balls, "*to* ask for dances only from the most important ladies."

Both in Prince Andrew and in Pierre, however, are exemplified the passionately moral and philosophic aspects of his own nature which had forced him always to struggle to understand the ultimate purpose of life. For in this vast panorama of life and death, of birth and sickness, of frustration and love, this is the persistent and inevitable question that gives the work its peculiar quality of moral grandeur, and is applied alike to the study of war, the study of history, and the study of humanity.

For the women, the solution of the problem is not difficult. Natasha finds the complete fulfilment of her being in marriage and motherhood, as the Princess Mary finds it in religion; but for Pierre and Prince Andrew with their education and their restless minds the meaning of life is a continual preoccupation.

Profoundly disillusioned by the war; by his observation of all the lies and pettiness expressed by many of his fellows even in the face of death; by his worship of Napoleon, whom, when lying wounded on the battlefield, he realizes to be paltry and insignificant, Prince Andrew seeks, after his recovery from the wounds of Austerlitz, to find a new meaning in life by freeing his serfs and working upon the much-needed revision of the code of laws at the request of the famous Speransky, now his model of what a perfectly rational and virtuous man should be. But Speransky, like Napoleon, soon proves a disappointment; and as he gradually recovers his former good health, the enlarged span of understanding that was the result of his nearness to death slowly fades, and he becomes caught up once more *in* military affairs, so that his brilliant mental faculties are absorbed anew by unproductive speculations. Only at last, when he is dying on the road from Moscow with the Rostovs, the true significance of existence strikes him like a blinding light. "Yes—love," he thought again, quite clearly. "But not love which loves for something, for some quality, for some purpose or for some reason, but the love which I, while dying, first experienced when I saw my enemy and yet loved him. Inexperienced that form of love which is the very essence of the soul and does not require an object. Now again I feel that bliss. To love one's neighbours, to love one's enemies, to love everything; to love God in all His manifestations. It is possible to love someone near to you with human love, but an enemy can only be loved by divine love. That is why I experienced such joy when I felt I loved that man....

"When loving with human love one may pass from love to hatred, but divine love cannot change. No, neither death nor anything else can destroy it. It is the very essence of the soul." [e]

For Pierre, who has to live, to achieve an unfaltering understanding of the meaning of life is less easy; and when at last he feels that he has found a system that explains to him all the questions which perplex him, he becomes quickly disillusioned with it. After his final separation from his first wife, the questions which had occupied Tolstoy intermittently ever since his early youth beset Pierre anew with a pertinacity that refuses to be denied: "What is bad? What is good? What should one love and what hate ? What does one live for ? And what am I? What is life, and what is death? What Power governs it all?"

At first it seems to Pierre that Freemasonry supplies a satisfactory solution, and he accepts with joy the words of the old Freemason who tells him that "the highest wisdom is not founded on reason alone, nor on those worldly sciences of physics, history, chemistry and the like, into which intellectual knowledge is divided. The highest wisdom has but one science—the science of the whole, the science explaining the whole creation and man's place in it. To receive that science it is necessary to purify and renew one's inner self, and so before one can know, it is necessary to believe and to purify oneself. And to attain this end we have the light called conscience that God has implanted in our souls." [6]

Thus Pierre, like Tolstoy, becomes seized with a passionate desire for self-perfection, and in addition an enthusiastic Freemason. " Not a trace of his former doubts remained in his soul. He firmly believed in the possibility of the brotherhood of men united in the aim of supporting one another in the path of virtue, and that is how Freemasonry presented itself to him."

For a short time Pierre experiences the satisfaction of a man who feels that at last he has found what his soul most needs. After his first meeting it is as if "he had returned from a long journey on which he had spent dozens of years, had become completely changed, and had quite left behind his former habits and way of life."

Then he begins to have doubts. Having been initiated into many mysteries, and raised to a higher degree, he brings to the Petersburg Freemasons an address from abroad from the highest leaders of their order; and his delivery of this evokes not only misunderstandings, but even irony and ill-will. He is further disheartened by the fact that a great many brothers had joined the order merely to ingratiate themselves with wealthy or influential members, while others saw nothing in Freemasonry but the observance of external forms and ceremonies, without having any real interest in their inner significance. "My brother Masons swear by the blood that they are ready to sacrifice everything for their neighbour, but they do not give a rouble each to the

collections for the poor, and they intrigue, the Astraea Lodge against the Manna Seekers, and fuss about an authentic Scotch carpet and a charter that nobody needs, and the meaning of which the very man who wrote it does not understand. We all profess the Christian law of forgiveness of injuries and love of our neighbours, the law in honour of which we have built in Moscow forty times forty churches; but yesterday a deserter was knouted to death and a minister of that same law of love and forgiveness, a priest, gave the soldier a cross to kiss before his execution." [6]

The despair which follows this disillusionment is far greater than any that had gone before; and the fact that everyone else seems quite prepared to accept the deception never ceases to fill him with astonishment. He seeks refuge from his despondency first in study, then in orgies of dissipation. "Only after emptying a botde or two did he feel dimly that the terribly tangled skein of life was not as dreadful as he had thought."

Shortly before the entry of Napoleon's army into Moscow, Pierre finds a new purpose in life by juggling with numerology and persuading himself that he has been chosen by fate to put an end to " the power of the beast," which he feels is an apocalyptic reference to Napoleon. Later, having been captured by the French and narrowly escaped being shot as a spy, when he sees a band of reluctant men impelled by the force of circumstances to shoot another band as innocent as themselves, "it was as if the mainspring of his life, on which everything depended and which made everything appear alive, had suddenly been wrenched out and everything had collapsed into a heap of meaningless rubbish. ... He felt that it was not in his power to regain the meaning of life." [6]

But contact with one of his fellow-prisoners, that wonderful peasant soldier Karataev, in whom he sees personified in unconscious simplicity all the Christian virtues, again revives his belief in goodness, and causes him to feel that" the world that had been shattered was once more stirring in his soul with a new beauty and on new and unshakable foundations." Pierre, like his friend Prince Andrew, concludes at last that the highest good in man lies in his capacity for pure and disinterested love; a capacity which is developed in Platon Karataev to an extraordinary degree. For Karataev had no personal attachments; he was bound to no particular being by excessive ties: and therefore he was able to love, purely and impersonally, all those with whom he came in contact.

For the first time, as a prisoner, Pierre attains the serenity of mind which had formerly impressed him whea he watched the soldiers going to their death at Borodino. Having sought it in vain in altruism, in Freemasonry, in fashionable dissipation, in spectacular feats of heroism, in romantic love for Natasha, and in the exercise of reason, now, at last, when he had ceased to pursue it, he found tranquillity through the horror of death, privation, and, most of all, through the nobility of being which he perceived in Karataev. And though while in captivity

he daydreamed continually of the time when he would be free, later, when he was released, he always remembered with pleasure the clear and powerful perceptions and the inner harmony he had experienced during this very period. In prison Pierre had learnt what formerly life had been unable to teach him: that happiness for man is only to be found within, and from the satisfaction of simple human needs; that unhappiness arises not from privation but from superfluity; and that there is nothing in life too difficult to be faced. "He had learnt that, as there is no condition in which man can be happy and entirely free, so there is no condition in which he need be unhappy and not free. He learned that suffering and freedom have their limits, and that those limits are very near together. . . ."

After the illness that follows his release, he discovers that his former search to find an aim in life no longer even exists for him. Instead, he has attained faith. "Not faith in any kind of rule, or words, or ideas, but faith in an ever-living, ever-manifest God. Formerly he had sought Him in aims he set himself. That search for an aim had been simply a search for God, and suddenly in his captivity he had learnt that in Karataev God was greater, more infinite and unfathomable, than in the Architect of the Universe the Freemasons acknowledged. He felt like a man who, after straining his eyes to see into the far distance, finds what he sought at his very feet...." [6]

But in his character of Pierre, Tolstoy temporarily exceeded himself. He had not yet, to his own satisfaction, found God.

2

Against the background of the Napoleonic Wars the women of *War and Peace* live with an intensity that is never dimmed or weakened by the vast tides of history. Natasha Rostov falls in love, while still a girl, with the Boris Dubretskoy whom subsequently she is not permitted to marry owing to his lack of means; meets Prince Andrew at her first ball, and becomes engaged to him, suffering deeply on account of the year's absence imposed upon her fiance* by his autocratic father; meanwhile she becomes madly infatuated with the handsome but vapid Anatole Kuragin, with whom she is forcibly prevented from eloping; and then, after recovering from her subsequent decline, realizes that she still loves the dying Prince Andrew, whom she helps to nurse during their flight from Moscow.

Soon after his death she once more meets Pierre (who during the period of her humiliation, and while still married to Helene, had assured her, as Diakov had assured Tania, that were he young and free, he would consider it happiness to be her husband) and presently consents to be his wife. And now this girl, who in her teens had always created about her an atmosphere of amorousness and poetry; who, radiant in a white muslin gown with pink ribbons, was so filled with

rapture at her first ball that she immediately fell in love with everyone she looked at; who used to sing with such virginal freshness, such unconsciousness of her own powers, such beauty and lack of artifice, that no one could hear her and remain unmoved: now this "miracle *ot* sensibility*' immediately loses all her former animation of expression and appears as nothing but a strong, handsome and fertile woman who lets her love of husband and children so exceed all bounds that it becomes absurd. Though completely unconscious of the fact, as a wife she is as deeply enslaved to the purposes of nature as she was when she was madly infatuated with the physical beauty of her lover Anatole. "The subject which wholly engrossed Natasha's attention was.her family, that is, her husband whom she had to keep so that he should belong entirely to her and to the home, and the children whom she had to bring into the world, nurse and bring up." In this, the relations between Pierre and Natasha greatly resemble those of Tolstoy and his wife during the first years of their marriage. "From the very first... Natasha had announced her demands. Pierre was greatly surprised by his wife's view, to him a perfectly novel one, that every moment of his life belonged to her and to the family. His wife's demands astonished him, but they also flattered him, and he submitted to them. The entire household was governed according to Pierre's supposed orders, that is, by the wishes which Natasha tried to guess. Their way of life and place of residence, their acquaintances and ties, Natasha's occupations, the children's upbringing, were all selected not merely with regard to Pierre's expressed wishes, but to what Natasha supposed his wishes to be from the thoughts he expressed in his conversation. And she deduced the essentials *of* his wishes quite correctly, and, having once arrived at them, clung to them tenaciously. When Pierre himself wanted to change his mind she would fight him with his own weapons." [6] She has, in fact, become a humourless, exacting scold; untidy, self-neglectful, jealous, stingy, and caring only for the society of those "to whom she could come striding dishevelled from the nursery in her dressing-gown, and with joyful face show a yellow instead of a green spot on baby's napkin, and from whom she could hear reassuring words to the effect that baby was much better." All the feminine allurements unconsciously acquired by every means of civilization so that she can fulfil her instincts, naturally drop away from her; and she is fully revealed as the healthy female animal wholly devoted *to* the continuation of the race: a principle which she serves when most she believes that she is satisfying her personaj desires.

In direct contrast to Natasha stands the Princess Mary. Having rejected, partly out of deference to her father's wishes, and partly because she encounters him making love to her companion, the same Anatole whom later Natasha falls in love with, and who pays court to the Princess solely on account of her large fortune, she patiently resigns herself to the fact that, on account of her plainness, married life,

for which she feels herself particularly gifted, is not for her. But, after her father's death, left lonely and unprotected at Bogucharevo, amongst suspicious and rebellious peasants who refuse even to let her have horses with which to escape from the approaching enemy, the unexpected appearance of Nicholas Rostov, and his chivalrous treatment, arouse all her latent tenderness of heart. So deep are her feelings for him, that later, when, on account of the loss of the family wealth, he treats her with apparent coldness lest she should consider him a fortune-hunter, it is she who involuntarily declares herself, and so makes their marriage possible.

This episode is a perfect example of the economy with which Tolstoy can convey a wealth of emotional impressions so naturally that the expression seems to be inevitable.

"'I had come so near to you ... and to all your family, that I thought you would not consider my sympathy misplaced, but I was mistaken,' and suddenly her voice trembled. 'I don't know why,' she continued, recovering herself, 'but you used to be different, and . . .'

"'There are a thousand reasons why'—he laid a special emphasis on the why. 'Thank you, Princess,' he added softly. 'Sometimes it is hard.'

"'So that's why! That's why!' a voice whispered in Princess Mary's soul. 'No, it was not only that gay, kind and frank look, not only that handsome exterior, that I loved in him. I divined his noble, resolute, self-sacrificing spirit too,' she said to herself. 'Yes, he is poor now and I am rich.... Yes, that's the only reason.... Yes, were it not for that . . . ' And, remembering his former tenderness, and looking now at his kind, sorrowful face, she suddenly understood the cause of his coldness.

"'But why, Count, why?' she almost cried, unconsciously moving closer to him. 'Why? Tell me. You must tell me!'

"He was silent.

" ' I don't understand your *why,* Count,' she continued, 'but it's hard for me ... I confess it. For some reason you wish to deprive me of our former friendship. And that hurts me.' There were tears in her eyes and in her voice. 'I have had so little happiness in life that every loss is hard for me to bear.. .. Excuse me, good-bye,' and suddenly she began to weep and was hurrying from the room.

'"Princess, for God's sake!' he exclaimed, trying to stop her. ' Princess!'

"She turned round. For a few seconds they gazed silently into one another's eyes—and what had seemed impossible and remote suddenly became possible, inevitable, and very near." [6]

Though her marriage is perfectly successful, and she is no less devoted a wife and mother than Natasha, so that even Sonia and the old Countess Rostov can find no fault with her, the Princess Mary can never be completely satisfied with earthly happiness. As with Tolstoy

himself, at once her creator and her son, her soul "always strove towards the infinite, the eternal and the absolute, and she could therefore never be at peace."

No less emotionally impressive is the feeling and the restraint with which is described Petya Rostov's gallant but unnecessary death. The tragedy of Petya is the tragedy of Alanin in *The Raid,* of Volodya in *Sevastopol in August:* though Petya, although he appears in the novel but rarely, is drawn in fuller detail. His portrait is composed of a few bold and characteristic strokes that miraculously re-create his generous and impetuous youth. His immense admiration, as a boy, for his soldier brother Nicholas; his proud deference towards Denisov; his anxiety to join the colours; his passion to lead an expedition; his boyish, ingenuous and touching generosity: all these are clearly portrayed in a series of scenes in which he sometimes speaks little more than a sentence. " Please keep it," he says to an older officer, of a penknife he has just lent him while they are eating round the camp fire. "I have several like it.—Heavens! I was quite forgetting," he suddenly cried. "I have some raisins, fine ones; you know, seedless ones. We have a new sutler and he has such capital things. I bought ten pounds. I am used to something sweet. Would you like some?" . . . and Petya ran out into the passage to his Cossack and brought back some bags which contained about five pounds of raisins. " Have some, gentlemen, have some." [6]

His compassion for their prisoner, the French drummer boy, tempered by his desire to behave towards him in a manner which befits his own dignity; the music which he conducts in his last dream; the peculiar atmosphere of affection which surrounds him, just as it surrounds the whole Rostov household: all these render infinitely poignant his tragic death. No matter that man's destiny is governed by implacable laws; Tolstoy still responds to every vicissitude which befalls his characters with the sensibility of the poet.

But if Tolstoy obtains his emotional effects with an unexpected economy for a writer who can on occasion be extraordinarily prolix, no less surprising is the economy with which he illustrates the hidden subtleties of his characters' psychologies. For example: "Prince Andrew always became specially keen when he had to guide a young man and help him to worldly success. Under cover of obtaining help of this kind for another, which from pride he would never accept for himself, he kept in touch with the circle which confers success and which attracted him." Similarly with Julie Karagin, the wealthy heiress to whom Boris Dubretskoy eventually proposes. "There was no need to say more: Julie's face shone with triumph and self-complacence, but she forced Boris to say all that is said on such occasions—that he loved her and had never loved any other woman more than her. She

knew that for the Penza estates and Nizherogod forests she could demand this, and she received what she demanded." Or what could be more incisive and complete than this thumbnail sketch of Davout auditing accounts in a peasant's hut. "Better quarters could have been found him, but Marshal Davout was one of these men who purposely put themselves in most depressing conditions in order to have a justification for being gloomy. For the same reason they are always hard at work and in a hurry. 'How can I think of the bright side of life when, as you see, I am sitting on a barrel and working in a dirty shed ?' the expression of his face seemed to say." [6]

This penetrating observation is no less revealing when applied to whole nations; and however much danger may lurk in generalizations, we should be hard put to it, even to-day, to find a more shrewd and a more succinct definition of the various brands of European self-assurance than this: "A Frenchman is self-assured because he regards himself personally both in mind and body as irresistibly attractive to men and women. An Englishman is self-assured as being a citizen of the best organized state in the world, and therefore, as an Englishman, always knows what he should do and knows that all he does as an Englishman is undoubtedly correct. An Italian is self-assured because he is excitable and easily forgets himself and other people. A Russian is self-assured just because he knows nothing and does not want to know anything; since he does not believe that anything can be known. The German's self-assurance is worst of all, stranger and more repulsive than any other, because he imagines that he knows the truth —science—which he himself has invented but which is for him the absolute truth." [6]

Nor is Tolstoy's understanding and portrayal of mass psychology any less sure. The excessive gaiety of Moscow "preparatory to its fall; the reactions of the crowd, and of each participant, at the murder of the wretched scapegoat Vereschagin by order of the city governor Rostopchin, who justifies it to himself by the hypothetical idea of "*le bien public";* the behaviour of the French soldiers after shooting their Russian prisoners; and the emotions of the prisoners themselves when their comrade Karataev is shot because he is too ill to keep up with the rest any longer: all this is described with an accuracy and a detachment that make more easily understood the implications of Tolstoy's philosophy of history.

3

It is Tolstoy's deep penetration into the usual fallacies that masquerade as the science of history that gives to *War and Peace* much of its extraordinary authority. In this he is much indebted to Stendhal, and he himself often used to say that until he read the first part of the *Charterhouse of Parma* he never understood to what extent things

happened on the battlefield which had no connection with any previously determined plan.

Tolstoy's philosophy of history is developed by applying *to* events on a large scale one great fundamental law that he observed operating in the lives of individuals. This, in contradistinction to a purely illusory law of will, he calls the law of inevitability.

Pierre sees himself, like a man in a dream, inevitably drifting towards a marriage with the beautiful Helene from which his inmost soul revolts—but revolts in vain: Natasha, under the compulsion of her infatuation for the handsome Anatole, cries out to the horrified and disgusted Sonia who seeks to restrain her from eloping: "I tell you that I have no will."

Both are acted upon by a combination of inner and external forces which makes it impossible for them to behave in any other way. They are the victims, and not the masters, of themselves.

During the Crimean War, Tolstoy had observed generals driven before the storm while clinging ineffectually to the supposition thai they were directing the tide of events; just as Prince Andrew at Schon Grabern, while listening carefully to Bagration's conversations with his commanding officers, had found to his surprise that he had an expert technique of making it appear that he was responsible for everything that took place, or that it had been done in accordance with his intentions, when in reality it had taken place through accident, through orders issued by subordinate officers on their own initiative, or simply through necessity, because in the given circumstances there was simply nothing else to do. This illusion is supported by the fact that no sooner is the action over, than all truth as to what really happened is at once obscured by an involuntary or deliberate conspiracy of lies, and everyone describes it, not as it really happened, but as they imagine it to have been, as makes an impressive story, or simply as they have heard others describe it.

At Austerlitz, as Tolstoy reconstructs it, a series of unexpected accidents happens so quickly that even Weyrother is forced to discard his customary illusion that he directs affairs, and to realize that he is simply at the head of a movement that has by now become completely out of hand. "He was like a horse running downhill harnessed to a heavy cart. Whether he was pulling it or being pushed by it he did not know, but rushed along at headlong speed with no time to consider what this movement might lead to." [6]

This persistent pressure and interaction of the accumulation of past events makes it impossible for the impartial observer to arrive at any particular cause for the phenomenon of war. While historians are never at a loss to produce a series of glib explanatory facts (each usually completely contradicting all that has been said by the others), those who are neither historians nor "experts," and can therefore better study the matter with impartiality and common sense, soon

become aware of so many different contributory causes that it is impossible to isolate any particular series. Compared with the eventual cataclysm, each of these causes, or even series of causes, is so insignificant that however indubitable it may at first appear, on closer investigation its validity can never be complete. Which is in fact true. For the most evident causes, when arbitrarily isolated, are quite insufficient to be regarded as causes in themselves, unless they are taken in conjunction with innumerable other complementary and antecedent events without which they could have but little significance.

Thus the figures who appear superficially to have the greatest influence upon the course of events are usually no more than the results of the same causes which have given rise to the direction of the current; just as a rash is not the cause, but merely the symptom, of a disease. To Tolstoy they are simply labels which give their names to events, and have no more to do with causing the events than the trade-mark of a commodity has with the manufacture of the goods which carries its imprint. Every action of a historical character appears to himself to be the result of his personal will, whereas in reality it is the one inevitable course possible under the immense, invisible pressure of antecedent and contingent events. It is the realization of this mysterious law of inevitability, by means of which everything happens as the result of incomprehensible forces for which men continually substitute meaningless labels, that leads Prince Andrew, once he has been present at the military councils of the great, to the conclusion that, owing to the incalculable different possibilities dependent upon even one of the incalculable unforeseen events that can occur at any moment, there can be no such thing as an exact science of war, and therefore there can be no such thing as military genius. Military genius is simply an epithet applied to any general so long as the historical tide is flowing, quite independently, in the direction which happens to suit his plans..

For this reason he has implicit faith in Kutuzov as the commander of the Russian armies. It is irrelevant that the old man falls asleep at councils of war which, though supposed to be indispensable, can decide nothing, since those who participate in them are necessarily ignorant of most of the facts that will play a decisive part in future events: what is important is that his lack of personal ambition and self-seeking will save him from trying to divert the inevitable tide into a channel that might appear temporarily favourable to himself. "He will not bring in any plan of his own. He will not devise or undertake anything,*' thought Prince Andrew, "but he will hear everything, remember everything and put everything in its place. He will not hinder anything useful nor allow anything harmful. He understands that there is something stronger and more important than his own will—the inevitable course of events, and he can see them and grasp their significance, and seeing that significance can refrain from meddling and renounce his personal wish directed to something else.

For the impartial study of history teaches that nothing can be continually directed from above. The very idea that this is a practical possibility is an illusion. When the battle of Borodino has been fought and won, nothing is simpler for the historian than to assert that military genius was responsible for choosing the positions taken up by the victorious army. But in fact these positions were not chosen at all, but were simply taken up because, in accordance with the way things happened, there was no alternative. The retreating army had passed many positions better for their purpose than Borodino, but in each case either it was unable to stop, or there were innumerable other reasons why it was impossible to occupy them. Borodino was the scene of battle, not because the position had been deliberately chosen, but simply because a complicated combination of circumstances made it inevitable that the Russian army should give battle at that precise moment. The position at Borodino, where the battle was fought," far from being strong, was no more a *position* than any other spot one might find in the Russian Empire by sticking a pin in the map at hazard."

Similarly absurd is the French historians' version that the French lost the battle of Borodino because Napoleon happened to have a cold. The French soldiers fought the battle of Borodino because all the horrors of the campaign had produced in them a state of mind in which there was no alternative for them but to try to destroy the army which was preventing them from reaching Moscow; and even if Napoleon had forbidden them to fight, they would have murdered him and fought just the same. Napoleon's orders at Borodino were neither better nor worse than usual. They were like the orders he always gave. But when the tide of events was flowing in his favour, it appeared that there was some special sort of skill in his order-giving; and when the tide of events flowed contrary to his will, it seemed that this special skill had disappeared. Merely an illusion. Napoleon gave orders; and when they happened to correspond to the independent course of events, he seemed to possess military genius; when they did not happen to do so, a genius that he had formerly appeared to possess seemed to have failed him. His orders had always been negligible; but this was the first battle in which the fact was apparent, simply because this was the first battle that he had not won.

Even Napoleon's famous axiom that military art is simply the art of being stronger than the enemy at a given^noment failed him as soon as the tide had turned. At the moment of battle, all was chaos. " The marshals and generals, who were nearer to the field of battle, but, like Napoleon, did not take part in the actual fighting and only occasionally went within musket range, made their own arrangements without asking Napoleon and issued orders where and in what direction to fire, and where cavalry should gallop, and where infantry should run. But even their orders, like Napoleon's, were seldom carried out, and then

but partially. For the most part, things happened contrary to their orders. Soldiers ordered to advance ran back on meeting grape-shot; soldiers ordered to remain where they were, seeing Russians appear unexpectedly before them, sometimes rushed back and sometimes forward, and the cavalry dashed without orders in pursuit of the flying Russians." [6]

Napoleon himself is no more than a creature of fate "predestined by Providence for the gloomy role of executioner of the peoples, assuring himself that the aim of his actions had been the people's welfare, and that he could control the fate of millions and by the employment of power confer benefactions." [6]

Whereas the phenomena of history are produced, by a continuous movement of cause and effect largely set in motion by the elaborate and complicated interaction of innumerable human wills, the understanding of which should be the function of history, the professional hisotrian devotes himself to the exclusive examination of but one series of events quite arbitrarily abstracted from its background, or. else...adopts the point of view" that the study of a king or a commander is identical to the study of die innumerable wills which they believe to be vested in him, This is a major error, because no historical personage can ever truly represent the sum of the individual wills of the nation of which he is but the nominal head.

Everything happens, and the way in which it happens is immediately taken to be the result of someone's will: like the burning of Moscow, which in the given circumstances could not have been avoided. Given a town built of wood, deserted by its usual inhabitants and occupied by soldiers continually smoking pipes, cooking meals and lighting camp fires in the careless mood of a victorious army, and what alternative could there be ? Similarly with the retreat from Moscow. If any idea of cutting off Napoleon and his army really existed, it existed in the heads of a few military strategists whose effectiveness was so negligible that their plans for preventing the enemy from reaching Moscow had been entirely without result. The retreat from Moscow occurred because the whole of the Russian people on the one hand sought nothing but to rid their country of the invading enemy; and the French army, on the other, at last sought nothing but to return home with as little disaster as possible. A fleeing army, harried on all sides by guerillas and pursued by many divisions who only had not to arrest the flight of their enemy in order to rid their country of them, could have done nothing but retreat, even if Napoleon had ordered it to stand its ground.

It is the relentless momentum which is the aggregate of innumerable human wills, in themselves quite insignificant, but acting upon each individual with a power no less inescapable than that of planetary laws, that shapes historical events. Dimly perceiving this, when he is sentenced as a spy Pierre feels that he is being unjustly deprived of

life, not by any individuals, but by a concurrence of circumstances far more powerful and irresistible than the will of any isolated group.

But even more misleading in the historian than his inability to understand the laws which govern history is his complete disregard for ethical and moral values. "When it is impossible to stretch the very elastic threads of historical ratiocination any farther, when actions are clearly contrary to all that humanity calls right or even just, the historians produce a saving conception of 'greatness.' 'Greatness,' it seems, excludes the standards of right and wrong. For the 'great' man nothing is wrong; there is no atrocity for which a 'great' man can be blamed."[6] And it occurs to no one that for any man to admit the conception of greatness without any relation to moral values is simply to acknowledge his own nullity, his own incapacity and his own immeasurable baseness.

Thus, for Tolstoy, the idea of applying the term "great" to Napoleon is no less ludicrous than corrupt. Far better apply it to such men as Kutuzov—"this procrastinator Kutuzov, whose motto was 'Patience and Time,' this enemy of decisive action, who gave battle at Borodino, investing the preparations for it with unparalleled solemnity"; who possessed in full purity the strength of national feeling, and who alone, during the retreat, insisted that useless battles should not be fought, and that a new war should not be begun nor the frontiers of Russia crossed. "That simple, modest, and therefore truly great figure could not be cast in the false mould of a European hero—the supposed ruler of men—that history has invented."[6]

In the assumption of historians that cataclysmic movements are the result of great men, it is necessary to employ the two concepts of genius and chance. To Tolstoy these concepts do not correspond with observed facts, and therefore can never be satisfactorily defined. They are simply the outcome of a defective understanding. For only when we acknowledge our complete ignorance of the purpose of historic events, and admit that their meaning is beyond our comprehension, can we begin to elucidate the sequence of events in the lives of historic characters and realize their position in relation to the events with which they are connected. The very words chance and genius will then become superfluous. With the acknowledgment of our ignorance of the meaning and purpose of such convulsions, not only will itceaselo be essential to see unique ability—that is, genius—in the men closely connected with them, but we shall be unable to consider them as being men in any way different from other men, and have no need to explain by the concept of chance the many apparently trivial events which made these men such as they were and which examined in relation to each other and to other events, will then be seen to have been inevitable.

In order that the people of the West could invade the East—for Napoleon to invade Russia—it was necessary that there should be at

their head a man who could justify convincingly, both to himself and to them, all the crimes which would have to be committed during the movement. In Napoleon's case, chiefly due to his previous successes, this justification was based upon the ideal of "glory" and "grandeur" —which simply consisted in considering nothing that he did to be wrong, and ascribing to every crime he committed some incomprehensible supernatural significance.

Modern historians, who have discarded the idea of providential interference in human affairs, substitute for this subjective, and obviously absurd idea, the concept of power. Power, to the historian, is the collective will of the people transferred, either by expressed or by silent consent, to the rulers it has chosen for itself. But their very definition of power can be reduced immediately to an absurdity, so that the impartial student is again forced to admit that power is another concept of which we do not understand the meaning, and which, like the false conceptions of "genius" and of "chance," can only be employed so long as we are content to ascribe to ourselves a knowledge that we do not possess.

No event in history can be considered apart from some previous cause, which in itself is dependent on another cause, and so on until it is realized that to isolate one link from the chain is impossible. We say that Napoleon commanded his armies to invade Russia. This is itself a dangerous confusion of thought. By facilely combining together a whole series of commands, all interconnected and each depending upon another, we simplify falsely an infinitely complex proceeding that cannot thus be simplified. Not only did Napoleon not command an invasion of Russia, but he never could have done so. To-day he ordered certain despatches to be written and sent to various capitals: to-morrow he issued many different orders to various services and State departments, who in turn issued other orders to certain personages who issued other orders to their subordinates. What Napoleon actually did was to set in motion a very complicated and interconnected series of orders each of which the various parties concerned were both prepared and able to carry out. This is the important point. For any command to be effective it is necessary that a whole series of conditions should exist which makes it possible for the command to be carried out. Occasionally conditions are such that commands can be executed as they are given; very often they are not.

Before a command that can be obeyed, and can have the desired result, is issued, it is necessary that the person who issues the command should know beforehand that it can be executed. In general, this never can be known. Thus, for every command that is executed according to plan there are many that are executed only partially, or not executed at all. Every command, in fact, that is at all contrary to the already determined course of events can have no effective result; and only those commands can be executed, and have the desired effect, which

are in accordance with possibilities inherent in the existing state of affairs. Out of an innumerable number of orders which have been issued, only a very small number are ever realized; and those which are realized were effective only because they corresponded to what would probably have happened even if they had never been issued at all. Napoleon's armies were victorious so long as an extremely complicated concatenation of events made it possible for them to be victorious; but so soon as this concatenation of events changed, no matter that Napoleon continued to issue just such commands as he had always issued before, his commands were as futile as those of Canute when he ordered the tide to turn.

Historians write as if they understood the causes of war; whereas all they can do is to enumerate the justifications which the participants pretend, or misguidedly believe, to have been the causes. For the more we penetrate into the real facts, the more it becomes clear that these alleged causes have as little to do with the events which follow as a thunderstorm has to do with the anger of Jupiter. When, as a result of a series of causes known or unknown, the French began to kill one another, this is explained by the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity, and the welfare of France. When they stopped, and united to attack their neighbours, reasons are offered such as that Europe had to be resisted, and that her welfare demanded the centralization of power; which has nothing to do with the facts themselves. Men went from the West to the East killing their fellow-men, and those who participated in the event hypnotized themselves with phrases about the glory of France and the baseness of England, which had as much connection with what was happening as the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity had to do with the internal convulsions that had gone before. Such ideas, without relation to the events themselves, merely serve as a justification to release those who take part in the events from moral responsibility: a necessary device when masses of men are voluntarily engaged in crime.

Thus Tolstoy formulates the results of his research: "Examining only those expressions of the will of historical persons which were related to events as commands, historians have assumed that the events depended on those commands. But examining the events themselves and the connection in which the historical persons stood to the people, we have found that they and their commands were dependent on events. The incontestable proof of this deduction is that however many commands were issued the event does not take place unless there were other causes for it, but as soon as an event occurs—be it what it may—then out of all the continually expressed wishes of different people some will always be found which by their meaning and their time of utterance are related to the events as commands."[6]

Therefore he concludes that "power is the relation of a given person to other individuals, in which the more this person expresses opinions,

predictions and justifications of the collective action that is performed, the less is his participation in that action." Obviously, the movement of nations is caused neither by power, nor by intellectual activity, nor by any combination between them, as historians usually suppose. It is caused by the activity of all the people concerned, combined in such a way that those who take the largest direct share in the event take on themselves the least responsibility and vice versa. What causes this combination we do not know. What causes wars and revolutions we do not know. We know only that for one or the other to occur, people combine themselves in a certain formation in which they act in accordance with this principle, and without which neither of the phenomena could occur. Farther than the fact that this peculiar combination is a necessity, and therefore a law, we cannot go.

It is the study of such laws that should be the true function of history, and it is precisely this study which history ignores. For Tolstoy, the right understanding of history resolves itself at last into the understanding of the operation of the law of inevitability; and of the destruction in man of the illusion of free will. Man believes in his freedom of action in inverse ratio to his self-knowledge; therefore the greater becomes his understanding, the more will his belief in his capacity to act as he wishes diminish. In connection with himself, his ignorance is particularly tenacious. No matter how ready he is to accept the results of reasoning and observation with regard to external events, and to admit that he is subject to a whole series of physical laws which are inescapable—such as that he can .continue to exist only between certain degrees of temperature, or that unaided he cannot resist the laws of gravity—he nevertheless finds it difficult to discard the idea that he can act in opposition to the laws which govern his own nature. Either he cannot or he will not accept the idea that his will is subject to so many different obstacles, both inner and outer, that it can scarcely be said to exist. Time after time he may observe himself, when placed in the same circumstances and governed by the same nature, react in precisely the same way; yet when confronted with exactly the same conditions, even for the thousandth time, he will still continue to believe that it is possible for him to behave in a different manner from before. Eyery man, savage or sage however incontestably reason and experiment may prove to him that it is impossible to imagine two different courses of action in precisely the same conditions, feels that without this irrational conception (which constitutes the essence of free will) *he* .cannot imagine life. He feels that, hawever impossible it maybe*, it is so, for without this conception of freedom not only would he be unable to understand life, but he would be unable to live for a single moment."[6]

"The question of inevitability and free will, rightly understood, can alone solve for us the apparently inexplicable processes of history. And history can approach such a solution only by pursuing a method

contrary to that employed by other sciences. Instead of first accepting and defining the conceptions of inevitability and free will, and then arranging the material of its observations in one or the other category, it must itself find and understand the meaning and significance of those phenomena which seem always to contain an admixture of these two possibilities in varying degrees. Every action that we observe we consider to contain a combination of these two elements, one of which is necessarily diminished by the presence of a preponderance of the other. We do not usually recognize the fact that the proportion in which the two elements appear to us is directly dependent upon the extent of our knowledge. An individual man, considered without relation to heredity, environment and essential characteristics, seems to us to be perfectly free. But once become aware of the details of his life, of the composition of his character and the history of his past, no matter in only a slight degree, and he at once becomes limited in many things in which formerly he seemed to be free. And the greater becomes our knowledge of the various factors which condition, or have conditioned, his being, the less there seems possible to us any chance of his acting without regard to them. Thus the deeper our understanding, the less our illusion that he is free to act: as he desires.

"When we do not understand all the subtle, complex and connected causes of a man's action at all, it seems to us that his action was entirely free. And if his action was a criminal one, we feel that he should be punished for it; if noble, that he should be praised for it; if independent, that he should be considered with respect. But let even one of the causes which dictated the action become known to us, and at once our judgment becomes modified. We recognize a certain element of inevitability which at once alters our former whole-hearted approval or disapproval. And the more of such causes become apparent, the more do we begin to perceive that the action could have happened in no other way. If our examination is directed to an action where the performer can be studied completely in relation to the inner and outer conditions of his life, and of which all the contributory causes are open to us, then this action will seem to us at last to have been inevitable; and the doer of it to have acted in the only way that was possible for him. But if even some of these causes are withheld from us, for no matter what reason; even if they are presented to us while our understanding is incapable of interpreting them, then at once it seems as though an element of will was present. And the more limited is our knowledge of all the facts relative to any given action, the greater appears to be this element of will; until in the case of an action so *remote from us in time and space that we know nothing* about the conditions in which it. took place or the causes that gave rise to it, it seems that it was the result of free will alone.

Conversely, in order to imagine an action entirely free, and containing no element of inevitability, it is necessary to imagine the doer of

it completely isolated and completely independent: that is to say, not even subject to the laws of space and time. Obviously an impossibility. Thus, in the study of history, the element of inevitability depends upon our knowledge; and the greater our knowledge, the more inevitable becomes the action. Free will, or rather what we take to be free will, is simply the reflection ofour ignorance. It is a conception which has, and can have, no correspondence with reality. Once admit its truth with regard to any single action, and no historical laws can exist.Only when it is reduced to an infinitely small quantity, that is to say, when it is disregarded altogether, can we begin to realize that the true causes of events are hidden from us, This realization alone can direct history into the one scientific course open to it, not the discovery of causes, but the establishment of laws. For in order to establish historical laws, it is necessary to renounce an idea of free will that is purely illusory, and recognize a dependence of which as yet we are not aware.

4

Now that *War and Peace* has achieved and maintained a unique position in modern European literature, it is the more interesting to learn that contemporary critics were far from being unanimous in its praise. As usual, it required greatness of mind to appreciate greatness of mind, and for many years the most enthusiastic admirers of the novel were themselves men of talent. Apart from N. N. Strakhov, an eminent reviewer who devoted a series of articles to the work, and who later became one of Tolstoy's close friends, few journalists realized the significance of the book, and many of them were virulent in their attacks. With the malice that is so often the accompaniment of stupidity and ineptitude, they cried triumphantly that the novel was lacking in a subject sufficient to hold the attention; that it abounded in pretentious and unconvincing philosophic opinions; and that the first part had been completely forgotten long before the last part had appeared. Even the generous Turgenev was long in understanding the merits of the piece. Fet, who had already received a letter from Botkin complaining of the French conversations and the negligence of the style, soon received another, even more abusive, from Turgenev. "The second part of *1805* is feeble," he declared. "How trivial and artificial it all is. Hasn't Tolstoy had enough of his eternal arguments ? Am I a fool or not ? And all that psychology of war 1 Where are the features of the period? Where is the historical background?" The following year he was still complaining: "Tolstoy's novel is bad .. . because the author has studied nothing, knows nothing, and, under the names of Kutuzov and Bagration, depicts petty generals of our time slavishly copied." Even as late as 1868 he was writing to Annenkov, in answer to his criticisms of the work: "... the historical picture, which most of all delights his readers, is nothing but comedy and

charlatanism... there is no real development in any character... but simply the old method of transmitting hesitations, variations of the same emotion, of the same situation, which he pitilessly puts into the mouth and the conscience of each of his heroes.... How many times already have I been bored by these pretentiously fine reflexions and these observations on his own feelings——" [89]

About the same time, Dostoevsky was writing to Maykov: "I read a review of *War and Peace,* How much I should like to read it all. I have read only half. It must be a wonderful thing; though it is a pity there are so many small psychological details in it. There should be just a little less. Yet owing to those details, how much in.it is good." [ua]

In June of the same year, however, Turgenev seemed to have changed his opinions, for he was writing easily to Mme. Viardot that *"le dernier roman de Lion Tolstoy a du Wagner"* which was presumably meant to be a compliment; while presently he confided to Fet: "I have just finished the fourth volume of *War and Peace.* There are things in it that are unbearable, and things in it that are tremendous; and the tremendous things (they predominate) are so magnificently good that we have never had anything better written by anybody, and it is doubtful whether anything has been written as fine." [89] Over ten years later, when he was interesting himself (though without much success) in the French translation made by the Princess Paskevich, to the extent of distributing complimentary copies to his many acquaintances in the literary world, Turgenev eagerly passed on to its author the opinion of his friend Flaubert, who had written apropos the " novel in 3 vols, by Leo Tolstoy, whom I regard as the greatest writer of our time ": "Thank you for having made me read Tolstoy's novel. It is first rate. What an artist, and what psychology! The two first volumes are wonderful, but the third goes to pieces badly. He repeats himself and philosophizes. Moreover, one can see the gentleman, the author and the Russian, while until then one could see only Nature and Humanity. It seems to me that sometimes there are things like Shakespeare. I had to stifle cries of admiration while I was reading, and it is a long book! Yes, it is fine, very fine——" [111]

" You can't imagine how much pleasure your letter and all that you said about Tolstoy's novel gave me," Turgenev wrote in reply. "Your approval strengthens my own opinion of him. Yes, he is a very great man...." «

Marie Bashkirtseff, who read the same translation as soon as it appeared, was so impressed (she cried out that it was like Zola) that she promised herself that if ever she were to cultivate a great talent like Tolstoy's, she too would work only for the glory of her "beautiful, great, sublime Russia." While, over twenty years after its publication, Chekov, who was reading the novel for the first time, wrote with his customary frankness and perception to his friend Souvorin: "I wake every night and read *War and Peace* with the curiosity and the naive

wonder of one who has not read it before. It is astonishingly good. But I dislike the passages in which Napoleon appears, when at once there are strained explanations and a number of tricks in order to prove that he was stupider than he really was. Everything done and said by Pierre, Prince Andrew, or the perfectly insignificant Nicholas Rostov —all that is good, sensible, natural and moving; but everything Napoleon thinks and says is unnatural, not sensible, inflated and insignificant— If I had been near Prince Andrew I should have cured him. It is strange to read that the wound of a prince, a rich man, attended day and night by a doctor and nursed by Natasha and Sonia, should exhale a cadaverous smell. What a miserable affair medicine was even in those days...."[121]

Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Flaubert and Chekov! Tolstoy could well afford to ignore the jibes of the reviewers and the scorn of the "military experts."

Chapter III

I. *Reaction from prolonged absorption: a trip to Samara: an incident with the authorities. 2. Re-orientation: the altruist again: the affair of Chibunin: the Samara famine: the* Readers: *more educational work.* 3. *Tolstoy the father: life at Yasnaya Polyana: his description of his children: games and amusements.*

THE writing of *War and Peace* not only left Tolstoy physically and mentally exhausted; but once this great absorption to which he had devoted the best of his energies for so many years was removed, he found himself confronted by a desolate sense of emptiness. Inevitably, he now sought diversion either in completely new interests, or in interests that had for long been laid aside. For a whole winter he gave himself up to reading philosophy: soaked himself in the works of Kant and Schopenhauer, both of whom he admired; and wrote down Hegel as being but a trafficker in empty and pretentious phrases.

This deep immersion in abstract thought was followed by moods of melancholy so intense that there were times when he feared for his own sanity. But his restless, vigorous and penetrating mind could never for long be idle; and presently he was teaching himself Greek (which he learned with great speed) and writing enthusiastic letters to his friends full of the praise of Homer, Herodotus and Xenophon. So quick was his progress, that although his immediate aim had been to learn enough to teach his eldest son, in a few months he was discussing classical literature with a Moscow professor, and even correcting him in his interpretation of elusive passages.

This was followed by an intensive course of play-reading—Shakespeare, Goethe, Moliere—of which he wrote to Fet: "... as always happens with men of nearly forty, who have never reflected upon a certain subject and know nothing about it, quite suddenly, with the clarity of their forty years, they pay attention to this neglected subject, and it always seems to them that they discover in it much that is new."

But none of these diversions was able for long to subdue the moods of depression which threatened to overwhelm him each time he tried to face unshrinkingly the moral and philosophical problems which still beset him; and eventually his mental state began to react unfavourably upon his health. In the summer of 1871, on the advice of his wife, he went to Samara to take a *kumis* cure, as he had done the year before their marriage. Here he entered into the life of the Bashkirs with the same spontaneity and ease with which, years before, he had entered into the life of the Cossacks in the Caucasus. With his brother-in-law

Stephen, and Ivan, his man, he lived in a tent, of which one corner served for a bedroom, the second for a store-room, the third for a wash-house, and the fourth for a combined library and study, made friends with all his neighbours, and, sweating profusely from morning till night, ate the mutton and drank the fermented mare's milk of which the cure consisted. As usual, the simplicity and goodness of heart of the unpretentious people he met—Bashkirs and Russian peasants alike—touched him deeply, and in a letter to his wife he confided that the least poetic inspiration made him want to weep. Reading, visiting their neighbours twice a day, eating mutton, Bashkir fashion, with their fingers, going on expeditions into the surrounding country, where they were offered lavish hospitality—so the days slipped away. "We arrive, the host kills a fat sheep, puts out an enormous pail of *kumis*^ places cushions and carpets on the ground, which serve as seats for the guests, who cannot leave before having eaten his mutton and drunk his *kumis.* He himself serves his guests, and taking a whole handful of mutton, puts it into your mouth. And it is impossible to refuse without giving offence." [89] In the end, he was so charmed by this primitive way of life that he bought an estate there, where he went with his family for several future years.

But the benefit he derived from this holiday was only temporary. "The two months' *kumis* cure has done him no good," the Countess Tolstoy recorded after his return: " the disease is still in him; I can't see it, but I can feel it as I watch that strange apathy towards life and his surroundings which began to show itself last winter. A shadow seems to have passed between us and divided us." [66] From certain later references in his own diary, it seems that this was the time, after years of pushing the thought away from him, that Tolstoy first realized that his marriage was a failure, and that intellectually and spiritually he was alone.

The following summer Tolstoy went to the Samara province again, to look after his property; and soon after his return there occurred one of those apparently trivial events which aroused all his fiery pride and all his detestation for the authorities. "A young bull at Yasnaya Polyana has killed a shepherd, and I am to be tried for it," he wrote indignantly to his cousin Alexandra. "I am under arrest, and cannot leave my house, on the orders of some urchin miscalled an examining judge; and in a few days I shall be summoned to defend myself in court.

" I f I do not die of rage and boredom in prison, where they are certain to put me (I am convinced they detest me), I have made up my mind to live in England for ever, or at least until the time comes when the freedom and dignity of man are respected here....

"We intend to settle first of all near London, and then to find some pretty place near the sea, where there are good schools, and buy a house and a small estate. But for life in England to be agreeable, one must be

acquainted with some of the good old families. In this you can help me, and I want you, if you have no acquaintances of this kind yourself, to procure for me through your friends two or three letters of introduction which will admit us into pleasant English society. I can't tell you yet when we are going, because I am at their mercy and they can still persecute me interminably. You can't imagine what this means.. •." [65] And to his friend Strakhov he wrote pages in similar vein.

But the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy was not sympathetic to this effusion; and presently Tolstoy informed her that "I blush with shame when I think of having written to you with the hidden motive (now quite clear to me) that you might talk about my annoyances in your circle. . .." As usual, his indignation was soon forgotten; and once he was officially exonerated from all personal responsibility in the matter, other interests soon caused it to fade from his mind.

2

The years of *War and Peace* had been predominantly flourishing years for the family man, the poet and the sportsman; and during this period many of the most significant aspects of Tolstoy's being seem to have been in complete abeyance. Some of them, indeed, had died a natural death owing to the lack of conditions necessary to sustain them; while others were merely waiting, like actors in the wings, ready to reappear in the drama of his life as soon as they received their cues.

The man of fashion, the gambler and the indiscriminate lover of women—these were never to reappear; the libertine, the glutton and the aristocrat, though now under control, were still to raise their heads from time to time for many years; while the moralist, the philosopher and the lover of God, for the time wholly subordinate to the poet, as is fully apparent from our short exegesis of the novel, were later to reassert themselves with a vigour the more powerful for their long suppression.

Women were still a great temptation to him, and although he was, until the end of his life, the most faithful of husbands, there were times when this faithfulness caused him great inner struggles. Once, when he found himself seized by a sudden intense desire for one of the peasant women on the estate—Domna, the servants' cook—he implored V. I. Alexeyev, his sons' tutor, always to accompany him in his walks until it had passed away, in order that he should find no opportunity to succumb to it.

The altruist in Tolstoy, however, was far too imperative a figure ever to be ignored for long; and in 1866 he had manifested himself in a manner that was later to become habitual," by the personal intervention in a case which seemed to him to be an affront to all natural human instincts.

During the summer, a guest at Yasnaya Polyana narrated a story

that had just produced a great sensation in his regiment. A private soldier, by name Chibunin, much given to drinking, and systematically singled out for reproach by his commanding officer, a Pole whom he detested, had finally, under considerable provocation, struck this officer in the face. According to military law, he was therefore liable to be shot. Deeply moved by this, Tolstoy agreed himself to undertake the prisoner's defence.

That man could bring himself to kill in an outburst of hatred or rage; in defending himself or those he loved; that he could indulge in mass murder, at the risk of his own life, under the stimulus of patriotism during war—all jhis he understood. But that, in full possession of their faculties, and in cold blood, men could contemplate the necessity of murdering, and of forcing others to participate in the murder, of a man like themselves for so trivial an offence—this he could neither comprehend nor tolerate.

Of course he pleaded in a lost cause. The judges listened to him with apparent politeness as, in extenuation of the prisoner's offence, he tried (to his own later disgust) to prove an abnormal psychological condition which rendered the man virtually irresponsible for his actions. But they had already decided upon their verdict in advance, and Chibunin was sentenced to be shot.

Even then Tolstoy did not lose hope of getting the death penalty commuted; and straightway he both telegraphed and wrote to his cousin Alexandra, begging her to use her influence at Court to obtain mercy for the condemned man. This she did. But she went first to the Minister of War, who, before laying the case before the Emperor, wished to know particulars of the regiment in which the affair had happened, which, in his haste, Tolstoy had omitted to send. By the time he was able to supply them, the man had already been shot. Like the execution which had shocked him so deeply in Paris, this incident greatly intensified his disgust with all courts of law.

And now, during the years 1870-1875,[tne] altruist again had opportunity to exercise his faculties, both in famine relief work and in his favourite teaching.

In the summer of 1873, when Tolstoy had taken his whole family to his Samara estate, it was evident that the failure of the harvest for the last few years was about to plunge the whole neighbourhood into severe want, so that, with his generous sensibilities, Tolstoy immediately concerned himself with its relief, writing articles for the newspapers, and seeking help, as usual, from his cousin: " If you would and could make the Good and Mighty of this earth, who are fortunately the same, take an interest, things are sure to improve quickly," he told her. "I hate writing jeremiads, but I have lived for forty-five years, and'never before have I seen such suffering. I should not have believed it possible. I am filled with horror to think what it will be like during the winter. This letter was already written when we heard

of a young peasant, a reaper, being struck down with cholera. He has no food except bad brown bread, and if we did not happen to be in the immediate neighbourhood it is more than likely that he would die from lack of nourishment—" [62]

Owing to the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy's intervention, the Empress subscribed generously to the fund which the Countess Sofia Tolstoy had opened; and as many others followed her example, the worst of the distress was soon alleviated. But Tolstoy was never enthusiastic about charity at second-hand; and in person visited the most stricken families, making himself acquainted with their needs, providing them with corn, and finding the means, for those who had lost everything, to buy cattle.

Fortunately, the harvests in the Samara province soon improved; and when he returned with his family two years later, his energies were directed, not to alleviating distress, but to arranging horse races in heroic style, much to the delight of the surrounding neighbourhood. Bashkir ladies came in closed carriages, for fear of being seen by their men folk; there was dancing, wrestling, flute-playing and folk-singing, accompanied by great repasts of mutton and *kumis;* while the winners were presented with imposing-looking prizes—a rifle, a watch patriotically adorned with a portrait of the emperor, to say nothing of a noble supply of richly coloured dressing-gowns.

Meanwhile, Tolstoy had once more become deeply engrossed with education. It was a feature which ran through every important aspect of his being that he could never finally abandon any of his projects until he was fully satisfied that he had given them of his best. So it was now, when, returning with all his old ardour to the activity which had given him more satisfaction than any other, he set himself to compose a primer for the teaching of Russian to children, at which he worked for nearly three years. This contained simple stories of how he learned to ride; of his dogs, Milton and Bulka; adaptations of Aesop's fables and popular legends of many different lands. "For the last three years I have been writing an alphabet," he wrote to his cousin Alexandra in January 1872. "And now it is being printed. It is hardly possible to convey to you what this work of several years, this alphabet, means to me. I hope to send it to you this winter, and perhaps you will read it out of friendship for me My proud dreams about this alphabet are these:—that this very alphabet alone shall be the study of two generations of Russian children; that all these may get their first poetical impressions by means of it, and I, having written it, may die in peace.. . ." [62]

But work on his primer inevitably, with one so essentially practical, led to an ardent desire to see his methods in application; and very soon he was thinking of reopening the school.

The following month some thirty-five peasant children were again

coming to the house to be given lessons, not only by Tolstoy and his wife, but by his two eldest children. "Tania and Seriosha teach quite well," the Countess Tolstoy wrote to her sister on February 3rd. "In a week they have all learnt their letters and syllables by the phonetic system. We hold the classes downstairs, in the hall, which is immense, in the small dining-room, under the staircase, and in the new study. What most of all urges us to teach reading and writing is the great need which we feel there is for it; and the children learn willingly and with pleasure." [89]

Meanwhile, publication of the primer was continually delayed. "My primer leaves me simply no time for anything else," Tolstoy wrote to Fet during the middle of March. "The printing goes at snail's pace, and Heaven knows when it will be finished. And then, I still add, and strike out, and correct. What will remain of it? I don't know, but I have put my whole soul into it." About the same time he wrote to his cousin: "My life goes on the same as usual, and I could not wish it to be better. A few great intellectual joys—as many as I am able to bear—and a thick sprinkling of trivial ones, such as teaching reading to the village children, breaking in a colt, admiring the large room that has just been added to the house, calculating the income from a newly bought estate, satisfaction over the good translation of an Aesop fable, playing a symphony four-handed with my niece, the birth of some fine calves and so on...." [a]

To Strakhov, in Petersburg, who was helping him see the ABC book through the press, Tolstoy admitted: "I don't expect much money for the book. I am certain that, despite its merit, it will earn but little. The first edition will be sold at once; then schoolmasters will begin to criticize the book's peculiarities; everything will be stolen by the anthologies, and it will not sell. *Habent sua fata libelli,* and authors sense this fate. . . . When I published *War and Peace,* though I was aware of its many faults, I was certain of the success that it eventually attained. On the other hand, in my primer I see but few faults, I am quite certain that it is better than every other book of the same kind, yet I do not expect success; particularly the kind of success that a school-book should have." [89]

At first Tolstoy's worst fears came to pass. There was little demand for the primer, but several attacks on his method of teaching. With characteristic ardour, Tolstoy defended himself by publishing articles and letters in newspapers and magazines. Presently, he even engaged in practical demonstrations. "At home here, we even have a crowd of schoolmasters," the Countess Tolstoy wrote to her sister Tania the following October. "A dozen of them have arrived and are staying here for a week. Leo instructs them in his method of teaching children to read and write, and they all have discussions. They have brought some children who have never been to school before from the villages of Teliatinki and Groumoi, and now they are watching how long it

takes them to read and write by Leo's method. His novel is completely set aside, and that saddens me...." [89]

Presently Tolstoy noticed that several of his pupils wished to continue with their studies; and with the help of his brother-in-law Stephen he began to teach some of them algebra. This proved to be so successful that he now entertained the idea of starting a more advanced school for the people, to be organized so that the pupils need make no change in their way of life in order to attend. The Marshal of the Nobility of the district, who was a friend of Tolstoy's, eventually became so infected with his enthusiasm, that he disclosed the fact that the local Zemstvo was in possession of a considerable sum of money destined for public education, which might well be utilized in such a manner. Tolstoy thereupon took the trouble to get himself elected, not only a member of the Zemstvo, but also a member of the board of education. But when the project came under review, it appeared that his respectable fellow-members preferred that their fund should be spent upon erecting a statue of Catherine II.

Nevertheless, Tolstoy continued to write articles elaborating his previous theories of education, which aroused considerable attention in the press; and once again it was probably the Countess who was responsible for his eventually giving up this work. He still" disgusted her with his people," though now she was able to cloak her lack of sympathy by posing in her favourite role. " Schools for children and schools for future schoolmasters occupy him from morning till night," she wrote to her brother Stephen in November 1874. "I look on astonished, and regret the energy wasted upon such occupations instead of being exercised writing novels; nor do I understand to what extent it can all be useful', since these efforts profit no one but a tiny corner of Russia. . . ." And to her sister Tania she confided a few weeks later, still lamenting on the same subject: "It is not the money I regret. The chief thing is that I love his literary work, I appreciate it and it affects me. While this primer, this arithmetic, this grammar, I despise it all, and can't even pretend to be interested in it. And now there is something lacking in my life, something that I loved, and it is precisely Leo's work that is lacking, that work which has always given me so much pleasure and inspired me with so much respect. You see, Tania, I am a true writer's wife, so greatly do I take his work to heart."[89]

But to Tolstoy, his work with the district scfiools, many of which were now organized in accordance with his principles, was still of the greatest interest and importance. "At once I began to love the thousands of children I am concerned with just as I did fourteen years ago," he wrote at this time to his cousin Alexandra. "Whenever I enter a school and see a multitude of children, ragged, thin and dirty, but with their clear eyes and sometimes angelic expressions, I am seized with restlessness and terror, as though I saw people drowning...." [62]

And he persevered in bringing out a new edition of his primer,

correcting, modifying and improving in accordance with the fruits of his latest experience; even adding a fresh section of carefully written graduated exercises. This new ABC book exceeded even its author's hopes for it. Published in 1875, it went into edition after edition, and eventually sold many hundreds of thousands of copies.

3

During his days of exile in the Caucasus, Tolstoy had dreamed of reviving the past glories of Yasnaya Polyana: of re-creating, for another generation, the happy and poetic atmosphere of his own childhood. Now this desire was perfectly attained. He was the father of a sturdy and increasing family; and the house and grounds were filled continually with the shouts, not only of his own children but of their Kuzminsky and their Tolstoy cousins, who came to stay regularly for the summer. Nor was Tolstoy in any way oblivious of his position in the neighbourhood. The aristocrat in him died hard (in fact, to the end, it never really died at all), and he exerted himself to the utmost to procure conditions for his family becoming to their station.

Yasnaya Polyana was never a place of enervating luxury—much of the furniture was made on the estate by local carpenters, and the farms were run on the most practical and efficient lines—but Tolstoy was nevertheless anxious that his children should be accustomed to the best. From the first they were brought up to be, not proud, but conscious of their station; and though Tolstoy, in a sudden mood of paternal exuberance, might suddenly decide to teach his eldest son mathematics and, warning him in advance to remind him when he became too angry, clout him irritably over the ear when he proved particularly dense; though the Countess, when inclined, might teach her favourite younger ones music, drawing, or the rudiments of Russian or of German grammar, the children's education was supervised with elaborate care. The best tutors and governesses were procured for them; they were never allowed to travel other than first-class; and the family meals were served as a matter of course by men-servants in white gloves. On name days and festivals there were costume balls and amateur theatricals of a traditional magnificence; and if, for himself, Tolstoy already began to evince a liking for the simple life, and, at reaping, would take a scythe and exercise himself, much as he had done before his marriage, by mowing with the peasants; would wear, for ease and comfort, the smock which later became his habitual and characteristic garb, these were as yet no more than the amiable eccentricities of the poet-aristocrat.

Like many men of unusual sensibility and exceptional emotional capacity, Tolstoy was undemonstrative to a degree; nevertheless, children were always instinctively drawn towards him, and his young brother-in-law even acknowledged to him, in a moment of confidence,

that the one thing he would always regret most was not having been born his son. "I cannot sufficiently describe the joyous and happy atmosphere there usually was at Yasnaya Polyana," he wrote later in his reminiscences. "Its source was always Leo Nikolaevich. In conversation about abstract questions, about the education of children, about outside matters, his opinion was always most interesting. When playing croquet or during our walks, he enlivened us all by his humour and his participation. . . ."[2]

As soon as they were old enough, Tolstoy took his children hunting and shooting with him; showed them the places where to find the best mushrooms; taught them gymnastics; skated with them, surpassing them all in the skill and agility of his capers; taught them to swim, and entered with complete simplicity into all their interests.

The extent to which he studied and understood them is best revealed in a letter which he wrote to his cousin Alexandra in the autumn of 1872. "You gave me a theme for my letter: my children, and it is upon this theme that I want to write to you. Here you are. The eldest is fair and quite nice-looking; there is something defenceless, patient and very sweet in his expression. When he laughs, his laugh is not infectious, but when he weeps I can scarcely restrain myself from weeping too. Everyone says he is like my eldest brother; but I am afraid to believe it, it would be too good to be true. Sergey is intelligent; he has a mathematical mind and is very sensitive to art. He is good at his studies and does gymnastics, but is awkward and inattentive. He has not a very decided personality, being too easily influenced by conditions. He is two different boys according to whether he is well or ill.

"Ilya, the third [born May 22,1866], who has never been ill, is well-built, strong, pink and white, and radiant, but he is a poor scholar, is always thinking about what he shouldn't be, invents his games by himself, and is very particular, careful of himself, and concerned with his own personality. He is passionate, violent, apt to hit out suddenly, yet at the same time very sensitive and gentle. He is sensual: fond of eating and a comfortable bed: when he eats raspberry jelly or buckwheat his lips moisten. He is individual in everything: when he weeps he is furious and perverse, and when he laughs, his laughter wins all hearts. Forbidden things attract him irresistibly, and he has a particular gift for discovering them....

"Were I to die, the eldest, whatever his fate, would be a fine boy and certainly the first in his class. But Ilya would be lost without a stern but loving guide. . . .

"Tania [born October 4th, 1864] is eight years old. She comes after Seriosha; everyone says that she is like her mother, and I believe it; for although this is enough, it is obvious. Had she been Adam's eldest child, she would have been a very unhappy girl. Her greatest delight is to look after the little ones. She displays an obvious pleasure in

touching their tiny bodies, and her dearest dream is to have children. A few days ago I took her to Tula to be photographed. She began by asking me to buy a penknife for Seriosha, something for this one, and something else for the other; and she knew how to find the exact present that would give pleasure to each. As for her, I bought her nothing; and she never thought of herself for a moment. . . . She is not very clever, and she doesn't like using her mind, though the mechanism is good. Should God give her a husband, she will make an admirable wife. And I am ready to offer a prize to anyone who can make a 'new woman' of her.

"The fourth, Leo [born May 20th, 1869], is nice-looking, agile, graceful, and has a good memory; any clothes suit him. He does everything that the others do skilfully and well, but he doesn't quite understand things yet.

"The fifth, Masha [born February 12, 1871], is two. It was at her birth that my wife nearly died. She is delicate and sickly, with a milk-white body, ash-blonde hair, and strange, great blue eyes with a serious and profound expression. She is very intelligent, but plain. She will be one of those perplexing people who search and suffer. But she will never find, because she will search always for the unattainable.

"The sixth, Peter [born June 13th, 1872], is a gigantic and fine baby in his little bonnet. When he thrusts his elbows in all directions and stretches out, my wife snatches him up in a passion of admiration. As for me, I do not understand that. I see only one thing: that he has an enormous store of physical energy. But whether all this reserve of energy serves any purpose I don't know. That is why I don't care for children before they are two or three——"

Despite the continual complaints of his neglect of his family which the Countess poured into her diary whenever she was feeling out of humour or depressed, Tolstoy was one of the most devoted of fathers. "I have felt and thought about them so much—made such efforts—and to what end?" he wrote to his cousin again nearly two years later; while on another occasion he confided: "I try very hard, but I never succeed in not being proud of my children."

The same energy and originality which characterized all his other activities soon became apparent in his relations with his family, for whom he devised all sorts of ingenious and diverting games. There were times when his playfulness and exuberance infected the whole household; as when, if his wife were late in coming to dinner, he would incite the assembled company to hide under the table with him, so that the mistress of the house would arrive to find an apparendy empty room, whilst children, governesses, tutors, and any guests that there might happen to be, sat crowded in the darkness below, hugely entertained by her astonishment, and nobly repressing the desire to shriek with laughter. Then there was the famous "charge of the Numidian Cavalry," when, particularly if the atmosphere had become more than

usually constrained by the appearance of some pompous or solemn visitor, Tolstoy would suddenly jump up from the table, and; joyfully followed by the children and anyone else who cared to join the frolic, would run nimbly from room to room with his right arm extended with the hand limply dangling from the wrist, whilst those at his heels copied his every gesture. Even more thrilling was the hunt for some mysterious and elusive "He," who might be found at any time lurking with sinister intent behind cupboard doors. "Quiet, or He will hear us," Tolstoy would whisper impressively, leading the children silently from room to room: while a sudden cry of "There He is!" would throw them into convulsions of excitement, during which the terrible "He" invariably managed to escape into the gloom from which he had emerged.

Then there was a wonderful guessing game during which, having been carried about the house in a closed basket, the child would be asked eventually to say where he was—"Is it the dining-room? Is it the hall? Is it the nursery? Is it my study?"; and that other, even more delightful one, when, seated upon some expensive rug, the children were pulled across the floor as though in a sleigh. This last, however, was a diversion invariably frowned upon by the Countess Tolstoy, who disliked to see her floor coverings put to such base usage, and therefore it could be indulged in only when she was out of sight.

No less gifted was Tolstoy in the devising of less uproarious amusements. Who else, at the dinner-table, could make such wonderful boxes stuck together with jelly; or fold paper into the shape of fascinating birds that flapped their wings? Who else, other than his brother Nicholas, could draw such entertaining devils, or illustrate so excitingly a novel by Jules Verne? Even his skill in finding apt phrases with which to illustrate their psychological foibles was characteristic; and his son Ilya has explained how the phrase "for Prokhor's sake," much used in the family circle to connote the doing of anything in order to impress others, originated in the fact that, surprised, one day, to hear this son, usually so lazy at practising the piano, playing unusually well, Tolstoy entered the room only to find that this special performance was being given for the benefit of a carpenter of that name who happened to be working there. All attempts at self-justification were likewise dubbed the architect's fault," since one day, when Ilya had fallen over a step, and, to his great sorrow, broken a cup and saucer which had been a Christmas present and given him particular delight, he had remarked tearfully that it was not his fault, but all the architect's fault for putting the step there.

So much in favour were practical examples in the education of the Tolstoy children, that one day the French tutor, in order to prove to his pupils that it was not poisonous, aroused a great storm in the kitchen by attempting to fry a snake for them to eat.

At Christmas time, in particular, Yasnaya Polyana, as in the old

days, was the scene of much gaiety. The children would eagerly dress dolls for the village children, while their father would appear amongst them as a dancing bear, watch with pleasure as they played with absorbed enthusiasm; or, sitting at the piano, would indulge his talent for improvisation by the hour.

Already Tolstoy was a man of the most unexacting habits. " From my youth onward I always admired more than anything else that negative quality—simplicity," this man who had, at sixteen, valued above everything the nice distinctions of "good form," wrote in one of his letters to his cousin Alexandra, "and the older I grow the more I value it." Punctilious, now, in the treatment of all his dependents, he insisted that his children should be no less considerate; and when, after some engrossing but protracted nocturnal conversation, he would look round to see that the servant had fallen asleep, rather than wake him he would himself creep to the larder to find supper.

Chapter IV

I. *In search of a subject: Peter the Great: a fragment of the projected novel: Mirovich: the genesis of* Anna Karenin. 2. Anna Karenin: *models of some of the characters: Levin—his philosophical reflections and conclusions.* 3. *Contemporary views of* Anna Karenin: *Dostoevsky, Turgenev and Chekov.*

AS always with Tolstoy, no matter what other interests preoccupied him, he could never go for long without writing; and once he had recovered from the exhaustion which immediately succeeded *War and Peace,* he was again faced with the most exacting of all problems: the choice of a subject. Soon he was contemplating the period of Peter I; and, carried away by his recent enthusiasm for the drama, even began a play of that period, of which he wrote a scene. But lack of material and the strict requirements of an unfamiliar medium soon caused him to change his mind, though for long the period continued to fascinate him, and he spent much time in studying it and in collecting documents and information from every available source.

As early as November 1870 the Countess Tolstoy was writing to her brother: "We are now leading a very strenuous life, and work all day. Leo sits before a heap of books, portraits, pictures, and, with corrugated brow, reads, examines and makes notes. In the evenings, after the children are in bed, he tells me of his plans and what he intends to write. Now and then he is disillusioned, seized with despair, and thinks that nothing will come of it. And then he grows full of enthusiasm for his theme once more. But so far, one can hardly say he is writing; he is only preparing to write." [89]

The following month, Tolstoy himself wrote to Strakhov: "Until now, I have done no work. I am surrounded with volumes upon Peter I and his period. I read, make notes, and try to write, but without success. But what a marvellous period for the artist! However one looks at it, it teems with problems and mysteries that poetry alone can unravel. The whole key to Russian life lies, there. . . . It seems that my preparations will be in vain; they have gone on too long and excite me too much...." [89]

Despite his many other interests, two years later he was still occupied with the same subject. "Do you by any chance know anything about our Tolstoy ancestors that I am unaware of?" he asked his cousin, who had been instrumental in getting him some important information, in June 1872. "If there should be any documents about it, will you be kind enough to send them? The darkest period of our ancestors'

life is their exile to the convent of Slovetzk where Peter and Ivan Tolstoy died. Who was Ivan's wife, the Princess Troiekurov ? When and to where did they return ? Please God I shall go to the convent of Slovetzk in the summer. I hope to learn something there. It is both affecting and very important that Ivan refused to return though he was permitted to do so. You say that the period of Peter the Great is not interesting, that it is cruel. Whatever it may have been, it was the beginning of all things." [w]

The following March the Countess Tolstoy wrote to her sister: "All the characters of the period of Peter the Great are ready, in costume, and in their place, but they do not breathe yet. Yesterday I told him so, and he agreed. Perhaps they are going to stir, to begin to live, but not yet___" [89]

Meanwhile Tolstoy continued to fill notebooks with facts, with impressions, and even with detailed sketches. At last he set himself to work; but after several attempts at a beginning, he gave it up. The subject had become distasteful to him. Though the detached eye of the artist might still see its possibilities, the generous, sensitive spirit of the man revolted. He had come to realize, as his cousin Alexandra had warned him, that there was too much cruelty in the period for him to present it with any sympathy. He could not agree with the established opinion as to the greatness of a sovereign in whose reforms he saw only the desire for personal advantage; in whose founding of Petersburg he saw only an attempt to weaken his nobles and to create conditions which would leave him free to lead an immoral life; in whose friendships he saw only the pandering of sycophants and debauchees; and in whose murder of his own son, which he deemed most revolting of all, he saw a lack of moral feeling that made it impossible for him even to imagine his psychology. Nor could he have been anything but embarrassed to consider the part his own ancestor had played in the affair.

A short scene from one of the few fragments that have come down to us should make it abundantly clear why the genius which could portray all the noblest emotions of the human heart failed completely before this theme of cruelty, cupidity and lust.

"Confronting the boyars stood Feodor Shaklovitz, the former leader of the *strelitsti;* he had just been taken off the rack, and his muscular body was covered with blue weals from the lash of the torturer. His hands were tightly tied behind his back by a rope, the end of which was in the executioner's hands. His splendid body writhed in pain, his handsome face was pale, his teeth chattered, and his eyes were half closed.

"'Read!' said Narishkin to the clerk of the court.

"'Have you ever counselled the Czarina to depose the Czar and Prince, Peter Alexeyevich ?'

"It was not two days since Shaklovitz had been arrested; only yesterday, in the courtyard of his own house, he had mounted his splendid charger, conscious of the supple strength of hands and feet. To-day, his flesh torn to ribbons, his left shoulder dislocated, he stood there before men he had always hated, men who had stood in awe of him a month ago, and had striven to win his favour. At first he could not even speak in answer to the question—he could only moan; had he opened his lips he would have shrieked aloud like a woman. Groaning he sank to the ground. 'For God's sake give me something to eat! It is two days since I tasted food J'" [tt]

Having sacrificed so much preliminary labour, Tolstoy then played with the idea of utilizing some of his acquired knowledge of the period by writing a novel about Vasili Yakovlevich Mirovich, a lieutenant in the Smolensk infantry regiment who, during the years of unrest following Peter's death, was executed for his attempt to rescue Ivan Antonovich from solitary confinement. But even as he considered this, his mind was also turning over an event that had happened in the neighbourhood, and impressed him deeply, the previous year. One of his acquaintances, Bibikov by name, had a mistress, Anna Stepanovna, who, continually jealous of the governesses who were engaged to teach his children, finally succumbed to this jealousy so disagreeably that her lover quarrelled with her; upon which she left him and went away to Tula. For three days no one knew where she was. Then, arriving at Yasenki station in the early evening, she sent a letter to Bibikov which read: "You are my murderer; and if murderers can be so, then be happy. If you wish, you can see my dead body on the railway lines at Yasenki." Before this letter was delivered, she had thrown herself under an incoming train, and was dead.

Tolstoy, who had himself been present at the inquest, naturally saw in so dramatic an event promising material for a novel; but, being already provided with a subject, he did not turn his attention to it at once. Now, with his mind still in a state of indecision, and driven by the urge of the artist to set to work without delay, he suddenly plunged into it as the result of a trivial family incident.

On going into his aunt Tatiana's bedroom one afternoon, where his son Sergey had been reading aloud to her from Pushkin, Tolstoy took up the book, and, opening it at random, came up<5n the phrase: "The evening before the party the guests began to arrive. ..." Suddenly his face lit up with enthusiasm, and the same man who, years ago in the Caucasus, had decided that the methods of Pushkin were already outmoded, exclaimed with appreciation: "That is just how a novel should begin. The reader is thus suddenly brought straight to the action. Airy other writer would have begun by a description of the guests, or of the rooms, while Pushkin goes immediately to his **goal——"**

The same evening, sitting in his study, he wrote the first version of the first chapter of *Anna Karenin:* "Everything was upside down at the Oblonskis'. . . ."

2

Despite the incident upon which it was based, *Anna Karenin,* like *War and Peace,* is predominantly a novel of family life. In its intricate and masterly treatment, three themes run parallel: the tragic marriage where, chiefly owing to the coldness of the husband, the wife is unfaithful to him, openly takes a lover, and is finally driven to suicide; the usual marriage where the wife is wholly devoted to her family while the amiable husband continually diverts himself with other women; and the happy marriage where the husband and wife are not only passionately in love with each other, but further welded together by their mutual interest in their children. And whatever the moralist may have intended by his initial text: "Vengeance is mine: I will repay" (it is difficult to believe that Tolstoy considered Anna's unhappy end to be the righteous dispensation of an avenging deity), these three interwoven themes are treated with such artistic surety and detachment, such sensitive and accurate psychological penetration, that the whole work is deeply impregnated by that understanding which alone is the precursor of forgiveness.

Not only is the tragic love-story of Anna and Vronski carefully counterbalanced by the love-story of Levin and Kitty; but it is, in fact, this part of the novel which is the most interesting, partly on account of its autobiographical nature, but chiefly because Tolstoy's genius always reached its highest peak when he was writing about himself. Just as Pierre and Prince Andrew are partial and, to an extent, complementary self-portraits of Tolstoy between his first Petersburg period and the time of his marriage, so is Levin a self-portrait of certain aspects of his nature from the time of his courtship until the time when the novel was complete. The very background of this story (like the Bogucharevo of *War and Peace)* is Yasnaya Polyana, widi its familiar traditions and its old family servants (here the faithful housekeeper Agafia Mikhaylovna, who had once been his mother's maid, even appears by name), and its major characters are all drawn largely from those closest to him. Tolstoy is frequently quoted to have said of the enchanting Natasha: "I took Tania, ground her up with Sonia, and Natasha was the result." But this remark, if made at all (it was the Countess Tolstoy who first repeated it), was undoubtedly made as a tactful concession to His wife's exacting sensibilities, since all the available evidence suggests that, at least until the epilogue, Natasha was an as closely observed portrait of Tania as he could make it; though after her marriage to Pierre there undoubtedly enters into her much of her elder sister. Indeed, in a letter to her friend Polivanov,

Tania had herself written: "It is true that there is a bit of you in Boris, and a bit of my sister Lisa, but there is nothing of Sonia. The Sonia of the novel is his aunt Tatiana Alexandrovna." But in *Anna Karenin* the influence of the Countess Tolstoy is far more evident. And just as there are traces of Tolstoy in Vronski (when he is calculating his debts, for instance; or riding; or feeling particularly irritated by Anna's exacting demands), so there are traces of his wife in each of the three most important women of the book. For if she posed to him full length as the model for Kitty, she also posed to him for several aspects of the dutiful, perplexed and tender young mother, Dolly Oblonski; and not least, she posed to him unawares for the morbidly jealous aspects in the character of Anna herself. Not for nothing did Tolstoy read those revealing, self-torturing passages in his wife's diary in which, time after time, and upon the slenderest provocation, she exposed every tremor of her jealousy and despair.

As a physical type, Anna is said to have been copied very closely from one of Pushkin's daughters, a Mme. Hartung, whom Tolstoy had met at Tula; and while her character is the integrated creation of a master novelist, much of the material that went to her making was available to him in unstinted measure close at hand. Not that he was himself ignorant of the full workings of jealousy and passion in his own being. Self-knowledge is for every great writer (and was pre-eminently for Tolstoy) the one certain foundation of his psychological insight; but the certainty with which this has been abstracted and reapplied is so extraordinary, that it makes Anna Karenin a classical model for the study of the workings of these passions in much the same way that Julien Sorel (the hero of Stendhal's *Scarlet and Black)* is a classical model for the demonstration of ambition, pride and self-esteem. Thus, out of material largely personal, Tolstoy, like Flaubert with Mme. Bovary, created a figure that gives the illusion of being completely objective.

It is in the study of Levin that we are able to trace the evolution of Tolstoy's personal emotional experience, from the moment of the terrible, blank sense of negation which began to obsess him at the time he had finished *War and Peace,* until the time when, nearly ten years later, he had completed *A Confession,* This was, in fact, a re-action of those very deeply implanted aspects of his being, the moralist, the altruist, the philosopher and the lover of Gofl, from the ruthless manner in which they had been excluded from any active participation in his life by the circumstances which arose out of his marriage. After ten years, during which the family man had taken control of his being, and the incessant labours of the artist had drugged him into evading the issues that formerly had always been the cause of an abiding inner conflict, he had suddenly awoken as from a long dream to realize that for a character such as his there could be no ultimate evasion. Marriage had been neither the cause nor the cure of this crisis. It had

merely served to delay what otherwise would probably have occurred ten years earlier.

At his brother's death (which is a re-created episode based partly upon the death of Dmitri and partly upon the death of Nicholas, to suit the needs of his story) Levin seriously, and for the first time, considers man's mortality. "Death, the inevitable end of everything, confronted him for the first time with irresistible force. ... It was within himself too, he felt it. If not to-day, then to-morrow, or thirty years hence, was it not all the same? But what that inevitable death was, he not only did not know, not only had never considered, but could not and dared not consider. . . . But the more mental effort he made, the clearer he was that it was indubitably so: that he had really forgotten and overlooked one little circumstance in life—that death would come and end everything, so that it was useless to begin anything, and there was no help for it. Yes, it was terrible but true." [7]

Once this realization had been established in him with sufficient depth, there was no evading it. "The paths of glory lead but to the grave" was no longer a skilful poetic phrase, buf a grim reality. Despite his material well-being and his immense capacity for enjoyment ; his loved and loving wife; the satisfaction of exercising his powerful, healthy body mowing with the peasants; the instinctive, almost physical communion with nature he feels when hunting and shooting, this idea continues to haunt him with an increasing frequency and an urgency that will not be denied. " Just think I " he says to Oblonski later. "This whole world of ours is only a speck of mildew sprung up on a tiny planet, yet we think we can have something great. .. thoughts, actions 1 They are all but grains of sand.... It is old ... but do you know, when you have once grasped it clearly, everything becomes so insignificant! . . . And so one passes one's life finding distraction in hunting or in work, merely not to think of death!" [7]

The inner truth of such a state of mind is a fact known to all genuine psychologists. Pascal expressed it perfectly when he wrote: "Nothing is so insufferable to man as to be completely at rest, without passions, without business, without diversion, without study. He then feels his nothingness, his foriornness, his insufficiency, his dependence, his weakness, his emptiness. There will immediately arise from the depths of his heart weariness, gloom, sadness, fretfulness, vexation, despair." But Levin soon reaches a further stage when all distractions cease to have effect, and the condition that arises during their absence persists in spite of them. Unlike Prince Andrew, whose problems are solved by death, and Pierre, who finds a temporary solution in the satisfactions of married life, Levin is fully aware that the only true solution must be wrested from himself, by some fusion of understanding in his warring intelligence and emotions. " Organisms, their destruction, the indestructibility of matter, the law of the

conservation of energy, of development. . . were all very useful for mental purposes; but they gave no guidance for life, and Levin suddenly felt like a person who has exchanged a thick fur coat for a muslin garment and who, being out in the frost for the first time, becomes convinced, not by arguments, but with the whole of his being, that he is as good as naked and that he must inevitably perish miserably——For him the problem was this: 'If I don't accept the replies offered by Christianity to the questions my life presents, what solutions do I accept?' . . . He was in the position of a man seeking food in a toyshop or at a gunsmith's....'Without knowing what I am, and why I am here, it is impossible to live. Yet I cannot know that, and therefore I cannot live.'... And though he was a happy and healthy family man, Levin was several times so near to suicide that he hid a cord he had lest he should hang himself, and feared to carry a gun lest he should shoot himself." [7]

Levin's problem, in fact, was largely an intellectual one. The heart has its reasons; and, as before with Prince Andrew and with Pierre, when enlightenment comes, it comes from an emotional understanding that has survived despite all his intellectual doubts. One day when he is sitting with his family in his apiary—they have assembled there for tea—he enters into conversation with a fine old peasant, by name Theodore: one of those characters that Tolstoy and Whitman both excel in realizing.

"Oh well, you see, people differ!" this Theodore remarks in answer to one of Levin's questions. "One man lives only for his needs: take Mityuka, who only stuffs his belly, but Platon is an upright old man. He lives for his soul and remembers God."

"How does he remember God? How does he live for his soul?" Levin enquires.

"You know: rightly, in a godly way...." [7]

And suddenly Levin's understanding is illumined, just as Pierre's was during his acquaintance with Karataev, and he reflects: "I, and all other men, know only one thing firmly, clearly and certainly, and this knowledge cannot be explained by reason: it is outside reason." (Here it must be understood that Tolstoy uses reason in the sense of the logical mind, which is valueless in realizing the validity of those moral laws that inspired precept has handed down to him, and that the deep inner recognition generally called conscience has inscribed indelibly upon his heart.) Recognizing this, Levin at once feels the necessity to live for something bigger than himself (as Olenin had done before him), and this gives him back his belief in life, in just the same way that a sudden conviction of supra-temporal and supra-terrestrial reality gave back Proust his belief in art. And just as Proust (or the Marcel of his novel, which in this case can be identified with him) finally realized that real art can exist only in the pursuit of ultimate truths, so Levin finally realizes that real life can only be lived, not for

the transitory desires of the body which perishes, but for the eternal life of the spirit, which exists under different laws.

"I shall still get angry with Ivan the coachman in the same way," Levin reflects at last, who knows himself too well to expect any sudden spectacular change in his reactions: "I shall still dispute in the same way, shall express my thoughts inopportunely; there will still be a wall between my soul's holy of holies and other people: even my wife I shall still blame for my own fears and shall repent of it. My reason will still not understand why I pray, but I shall pray, and my life, my whole life, independently of anything that may happen to me, is every moment no longer meaningless as it was before, but has an unquestionable meaning of goodness with which I have the power **to** invest it."[7]

3

On December 24th, 1874, Dostoevsky, who was always (and no doubt rightly) convinced that if he could spend two \or three years at his own books as Turgenev, Goncharov and Tolstoy could, he would have produced a work that men would still be talking about in a hundred years—on December 24th, Dostoevsky wrote to his wife Anna: "I read yesterday (but perhaps you have already heard about it) that Leo Tolstoy has sold his novel, forty sheets, to the *Russian Messenger,* and it will begin to appear in January, at 500 roubles a sheet, i.e. for 20,000 roubles. They hesitated about paying me 250 roubles while they readily agree to pay Tolstoy 500. Yes, they undervalue me because I have to live by my work."[118]

The news was true. Tolstoy had, in fact, with Turgenev, ever since the publication of *Childhood,* received for his work the highest figure ever paid to a Russian writer; and *Anna Karenin* appeared in the *Russian Messenger,* in the first four numbers for 1875, the first four and the last number for 1876, and the first four numbers for 1877. But publication was not completed there, because the reactionary Katkov disapproved of Tolstoy's sentiments against the Russo-Turkish war (which he himself championed with customary journalistic chauvinism), and even sent back the proofs of the last part, greatly altered by himself, expecting Tolstoy to make many changes which would conform to his own attitude. This was no new departure for an editor who evidently considered himself a sort of dictator of letters; for in the spring of 1867 Turgenev had written to Mme. Viardot complaining of the alterations he had insisted upon being made in *Smoke*—"He wants at any cost to turn Irene into a virtuous matron, and all the generals and other gentlemen who figure in my novel into exemplary citizens. I have made several concessions, but to-day I finished by saying—hold, enough!"

But Tolstoy, less amenable than Turgenev, characteristically (and

very naturally) refused to have his work tampered with by any journalist; and the *Russian Messenger* was therefore obliged to print a notice to the effect that the novel was really finished by the death of Anna, though the writer had added a short epilogue "which he might develop in the definitive edition of the novel." Tolstoy, in fact, published the eighth part of *Anna Karenin* himself; and the novel appeared in a complete edition at the end of the year. Small wonder, however, that he wrote to Fet, who had complained that Katkov was still holding some of his verses: " You write that the *Russian Messenger* has printed someone else's poem while your *Temptation* lies waiting. It is the dullest and deadliest editorial office in existence. They have become terribly repulsive to me, not on my own account, but on account of others. . . ." Which shows that Tolstoy, like most other men, could at times be very easily deceived as to the origin of his emotions.

" Over *Anna Karenin* there has been no end of discussions, ravings and quarrels," he wrote to the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy the previous January. " The first praise, like yours, before I know whether what I have written is good or bad, is very agreeable to me, and I am not ashamed of it. But if they praise me very much, then I begin to feel some emotion about myself, and get disgusted with myself. . . . I might even go for solitary walks in the woods, and say very flattering things to myself. It hasn't come to that yet, thank God, but it may." [62]

Although during its serial publication such was the interest aroused by *Anna Karenin* that society ladies sent their coachmen to the offices of the *Russian Messenger* to try to find out what was going to happen in the next instalment; and, at a meeting of the Society of the Admirers of Russian Literature, when they were reading the chapter where Anna is travelling by train, the chairman of the Society jumped up with delight, and, in the innocence of ignorance, loudly proclaimed (much to Dostoevsky's indignation, at whom it was a direct hit): " We don't want gloomy novels even if they are full of talent, we want light and amusing novels like the works of Count Tolstoy," for some time only a minority in literary circles was wholly enthusiastic.

Dostoevsky, who was in Petersburg while it was first appearing, refers to the event in several letters to his wife. "There was not a word about my novel," he told her, describing a reception at Maykov's where he had met Strakhov, "and it was quite evident that it was because they didn't want to hurt me. They didn't'say very much about Tolstoy's novel either. But what they did say was absurdly enthusiastic." [118] He himself found *Anna Karenin* "rather dull and far too—God knows what." He could not at all understand what they were raving about, and two days later he reported, not without satisfaction, that Nekrasov had paid him a visit, during which he had said: " In Leo Tolstoy's last novel there was merely a repetition of what I had already read in his other books, only it was much better before." Turgenev, too, was once again almost perversely unappreciative. " He

has remarkable talent," he wrote to Souvorin, "but in *Anna Karenin* he has taken the wrong direction. It smells of Moscow, incense, old-maidism, Slavophilism and the aristocratic regime, to say nothing of his isolation and the lack of real artistic work."

However, when the novel was complete, and Dostoevsky's first acrimony had been softened by increasing personal success, he wrote enthusiastically: "This novel is unprecedented, incomparable. Who of our writers can compare to Tolstoy? And in Europe, who ever wrote anything that could approach it?"

Years later, Chekov, too, was whole-hearted in his admiration, and ' in moments of dejection was wont to say that the only thing he could think of that might have been a fitting consolation for his adversities would have been to have written *Anna Karenin.* "When one thinks *of Anna Karenin,"* he confided to Souvorin, "all those young ladies of Turgenev's, with their seductive shoulders, fade away into nothing."

In a letter to the same friend written in 1888, with characteristic insight Chekov explained exactly why *Anna Karenin* is a perfect work of art. "You are right in demanding that an artist should take an intelligent attitude to his work, but you confuse two things: solving a problem, and stating a problem correctly. It is only the second that is obligatory for the artist. In *Anna Karenin* and *Eugene Onegin* not a single problem is solved, but they satisfy you completely because all the problems in them are stated correctly."[120]

Chapter V

I. *Deaths at Yasnaya Polyana—Peter, aunt Tatiana and aunt Pelageya Yushkov: facing the great questions: the possible attitudes to life: the conflict between reason and faith: the return to Orthodox religion and subsequent disillusionment: the study of Christianity: visits to monasteries: the evolution and formulation of his beliefs.* 2. *Worldly position: reconciliation with Turgenev.* 3. *The Pushkin celebrations: Tolstoy and Dostoevsky: the Decembrists:* A Confession, A Criticism of Dogmatic Theology, An Examination and Harmony of the Four Gospels, The Gospel in Brief *and* What I Believe: *a short examination of these works**

IN *Anna Karenin* Tolstoy had touched upon the subject which he now felt to be all important. But, to use Chekov's phrase, in his novel he had done no more than state the problem correctly. The solving of it was to demancT all his energies for the next five years. Death, and the meaning of life, which formerly he had contemplated so often: these could no longer be evaded by excursions into new activities. And death had been a frequent visitor these last years to Yasnaya Polyana. In November 1873 his youngest son Peter, "a fat little boy my wife doted on," had been suddenly taken ill with croup, and died a few days later. In June 1874 came the death of his dear aunt Tatiana. "When already beginning to grow feeble, having waited her opportunity, one day when I was in her room she said to us, turning away (I saw that she was ready to cry)," Tolstoy wrote years later in his *Recollections:* "'Look here, *mes chers amis,* my room is a good one, and you will want it. If I die in it,' and her voice trembled, 'the recollection will be unpleasant to you; so move me somewhere else. . . .'" Towards the end, she could recognize no one save her *"cher Leon"*; but at his approach her face always lit up with joy, and sometimes she moved her lips as though to pronounce the name Nicholas, "thus in death completely and inseparably uniting me with him she had loved all her life."

This loss was quickly followed by another—tjie death of a second baby boy—(" at a few months old one could see his wonderful, delightful disposition")—after a week of terrible agony, from dropsy on the brain. Then, in the autumn of 1875, the Countess Tolstoy, while very ill, gave premature birth to a baby girl who died almost immediately; and a month later his one remaining aunt, Pelageya Yushkov, with whom he had passed his boyhood at Kazan, also died with great sufferings. "When I buried little Peter, I began to think for the first time of my own resting-place," Tolstoy wrote to his cousin Alexandra in

March 1874; and two years later he told her, "Strange to say, the death of this octogenarian impressed me as death never did before. She was the last link with the generation of my mother and father."

Small wonder that the writing of *Anna Karenin* gave him but little satisfaction; that he was wont to say of it: "My novel simply gives me a feeling of nausea: she worries me like a pupil with an execrable disposition."

By the time the book was finished, Tolstoy found himself in a moral dilemma that, with his passionate integrity of mind and heart, it was impossible for him to escape. The high ambitions of youth that he should win fame, that men should know and love him, that he should experience the joys of marriage, that his old home should be restored to its sweet, traditional uses: all these had now come to pass in as great a measure as any man could expect. Yet still the eternal, abiding questions remained unanswered; and so long as they remained unanswered he felt that he could no longer live. The moments of perplexity and the sense that life had come to a dead stop that had beset him from the first days of his marriage became more steid more frequent. All this constant striving: where would it lead him in the end? His wife, his family, his horses, his estates—could any of these stay for but an hour the relentless and unappeasable approach of death? His projects for his children, his plans for his peasants, his schemes for future work: what could they all amount to in the end but a tale told by an idiot? As for his much-coveted fame, what did it profit him? He was one of Russia's greatest novelists. Very well. But suppose he became more famous than Gogol or Pushkin, than Shakespeare or Moliere, what then? The ground beneath his feet had collapsed. He had walked until he had reached a precipice beyond which was nothing. He must face the fact that life was meaningless, and ahead of him lay only destruction. He could neither pause, nor go back, nor avoid seeing the terrible truth.

Life presented itself to him as to the traveller in the Eastern fable who was overtaken on a plain by a savage beast. "To save himself," Tolstoy wrote later in *A Confession*, "the traveller gets into a dried-up well; but at the bottom of it he sees a dragon with its jaws wide open to devour him. The unhappy man dares not get out for fear of the wild beast, and dares not descend for fear of the dragon, so he catches hold of the branch of a wild plant growing in a crevice of the well. His arms grow tired, and he feels that he must soon perish, death awaiting him on either hand, but he still holds on; and then he sees two mice, one black and one white, gnawing through the stem of the wild plant as they gradually and evenly make their way round it. The plant must soon give way, break off, and he will fall into the jaws of the dragon. The traveller sees this, and knows he must inevitably perish; but, while still hanging, he looks around him, and finding some drops of honey on the leaves of the wild plant, he stretches out

his tongue and licks them. Thus do I cling to the branch of life, knowing that the dragon of death inevitably awaits me, ready to tear me to pieces, and I cannot understand why such tortures have fallen to my lot. I also strive to suck the honey which once comforted me, but it palls on my palate, while the white mouse and the black, day and night, gnaw through the branch to which I cling. I see the dragon too plainly —and the honey is no longer sweet. I see the dragon, from whom there is no escape, and the mice, and I cannot turn my eyes away from them. It is no fable, but a living, undeniable truth, to be understood of all men. The former illusion of happiness in life, which hid from me the horror of the dragon, no longer deceives me...." ^

And Tolstoy, like Levin, had to watch himself lest in a moment of complete despair he should take his own life. For the more frequently he enquired of himself what would become of all his efforts, what would become of his whole life, the more clear it became that there was only one possible fate for every man—to suffer and *to* die.

In the counterfeit answers supplied by the sciences there was no help. Everything of major importance to man they did not study or else ignored; and their whole efforts were directed to the solution of irrelevant questions that were not of the slightest interest to anyone save the technical expert and the specialist. The only sincere approach to the fundamental problems of life was to be found in the philosophy of such sages as Socrates, Buddha, Solomon and Schopenhauer; and these seemed to him to solve the problem purely negatively: to sum up the whole of their attitude in the one phrase: "All is vanity^ and happy is he who has not been born."

Yet if the majority of people in the world managed to live, and to live without intense moral suffering, there must be some solution other than this. Yet logically he could see only four possible attitudes. That of ignorance—of not understanding the truth that life is an evil and an absurdity (from which he could learn nothing, since no man can cease to know what has already taken possession of his mind); that of epicureanism—of realizing the hopelessness of the situation, and nevertheless making the best of the situation (a philosophy which was also of no help to him, since temperamentally he was incapable of adopting it); that of honesty and action—of himself destroying the life that he understood to be worthless (which some deep inner instinct prevented him from doing, despite the temptation) ; and that of seeing the situation clearly, and clinging to life while fully aware that the future must be as futile as the past. This was probably the most tormenting position of all; and it was the one in which he remained.

But once again he considered life; and once again he saw that from the beginning of time enormous masses of people had managed to live, and to live, moreover, both as though they were content and life had a meaning. Then what had he left out of account ? The one significant fact that he had based his observations upon the narrow circle of his

own class, and ignored completely the simple and the poor whom people of that class usually regarded as little more than catde; and who not only did not fit into any of his four divisions, but who managed to find a meaning in existence, like Karataev and like Theodore, and to live by it. It therefore seemed that the logical mind alone was not equipped to deal adequately with the matter, and that irrational knowledge, that is to say faith, could not be left out of account. But faith, to Tolstoy, was inevitably connected with all the tenets of the Russo-Greek Orthodox Church that he had never been able to bring himself to accept.

Therefore his dilemma was terrible. The exercise of his mind led only to a denial of life; and the acceptance *of* faith meant a denial of reason. The only thing to do was to admit either that reason was an inadequate instrument of cognition or else that faith was far less unreasonable than he had hitherto supposed. Moreover, he had formulated his question in one way and answered it in another. What he wanted to discover was the meaning of his life beyond time, cause and space; and his answer referred only to his life within them. What other than a negative answer could the logical mind produce, when a real solution involved a relation of the finite to the infinite, and without this there could be no possible solution? For this relationship is considered only by religion which teaches that life has, and can have, no meaning, unless man admits the concept of an infinite God, divinity within the human soul, and the difference between good and evil in connection with his relation to the unknown and infinite source from which he comes.

In fact, as we should know in any case from the evidence of his two novels, Tolstoy had inclined more and more to an emotional acceptance of the idea of God ever since his marriage. As early as 1865 he had written in one of his letters to his cousin Alexandra: "I know now that I have an immortal soul (at least I often believe I know it), and I know that there is a God. You used to be interested in my spiritual education, and so therefore I tell you. I admit that before I never believed in all that, but of late I have seen more and more proofs that confirm the fact. I am not a Christian—I am still far from that; but experience has taught me not to believe that my reason is infallible, and that everything is possible...." [65]

And now, so desperate was his state that he was even willing to sacrifice logic if Christianity could give him an acceptable reason for living. When his aunt Pelageya had died, and a priest had arrived to bless her with holy water, inwardly Tolstoy had felt so affronted by what he considered to be an almost blasphemous supersition that he escaped from the room and hid himself. But a year later, when, owing to a violent storm, a priest who had come from Tula to give the children a lesson in divinity was obliged to stay at Yasnaya Polyana for the night, he spent the whole time deep in conversation with him.

Seriously, sincerely, by every means at his disposal, he tried to cultivate the gift of faith. He read the fashionable current theological works: he read the writings of the Church Fathers and the lives of the saints. Admitting that nothing could be fully understood unless it was practised, he even attended church services, went to communion, and observed the fasts. But for a long time he remained in a painful state of perplexity and doubt.

With characteristic candour, he wrote in despair to his cousin Alexandra : " I believe nothing that is taught by religion. But what is more, I not only hate and despise atheism, but I can see no possibility of living, and still less of dying, without faith. So little by little I build up my own beliefs. But although solid, these beliefs are neither very precise nor very consoling. When questioned by the brain, they answer well enough; but when the heart suffers and seeks response, there is neither help nor consolation." [62]

The following month he wrote to her again: "I have a friend, the learned Strakhov, one of the best men I ever knew. We are much alike in our religious views; we both feel that philosophy does not pay, that it is impossible to live without religion, and as for believing, we cannot. During the summer we mean to go together to the Optin Monastery. There I shall explain to the monks every reason that prevents me from believing." [62]

Two months later (it was April 1877), when he was in bed with a chill, he wrote to Fet, who in a glade at Yasnaya had explained to him the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and with whom he shared his deep enthusiasm for Pascal: " This is the first time that you have spoken to me about the Deity—God. But I have long been thinking of this great problem. Don't say that one cannot think about it. One not only can, but must. In all ages the best, the real people have thought about it. And if we cannot think about it as they did, then we must find out how to." [2]

At the end of July, with Strakhov, the one friend with whom he was wont to " philosophize to the point of weariness," Tolstoy went to the Optin Monastery as he had intended. Here he had long conversations with the eminent Father Ambrose, who had been consulted at different times by Gogol, Dostoevsky and Soloviev; and also with another devout monk who had once been an officer in the Horse Guards. But his doubts were not resolved.

Shortly afterwards he was writing to Strakhov: " It is both painful and humiliating to live in absolute idleness, and it is base to console oneself by saying that one is observing oneself and waiting for inspiration. . . . Above all, I beg you not to console me by recalling to me the fact that I am a writer. By that means, and for a long time, I have consoled myself a great deal better than you could. Lately, I have been listening to the priests giving the children their lessons in the catechism. It was monstrous. One sees so well that the intelligent children not

only do not believe their words, but despise them. I should like to try to express in the form of a catechism what I believe myself. I have even made an attempt. But I found it very difficult, if not impossible. That is why I am depressed and suffer." [89]

Nevertheless, at the end of the year the Countess Tolstoy recorded: "Leo Nikolaevich's character is changing more and more. Although he has always been very modest and simple in his habits and requirements, he is becoming even more modest, meeker, and more tolerant. This great struggle for moral self-perfection, which began in his early youth, must surely be crowned with success." [68]

The following year, Tolstoy again began to keep a diary (he had given up the practice in 1863), and one of his earliest entries (for May 22nd) clearly reveals his present state of mind. " On Sunday I went to Mass. For all that is done during the service I can find a satisfactory explanation. But the wishes * world without end* and the prayer for victory over enemies, these are sacrilege. The Christian must pray for his enemies and not against them.... I read the Gospels. Everywhere Christ says that what is temporal is illusion, and the truth is eternal. . . . To consider religion from a historical point of view is to destroy it. . . ." [89] Indeed, Renan's *Life of Christ* he considered "a childish, trivial and mean prank."

Prayers for the royal family, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the doctrine of the trinity, and the miracles of the saints—all these were beyond his power of acceptance. Very eloquently he has recalled this period in *A Confession:* "I shall never forget the painful feeling I experienced when I took the communion for the first time after many years. The service, the confession, the prayers, all these I understood, and they produced in me the joyful conviction that the meaning of life lay open to me. The communion I explained to myself as an action done in the remembrance of Christ, and as signifying a cleansing from sin and a complete acceptance of Chrises teaching. If this explanation was an artificial one, I at least did not perceive it. It was such happiness for me to humble myself with a quiet heart before the priest, a simple and mild old man, and, repenting of my sins, to lay bare all the past troubles of my soul; it was such happiness to be united in spirit with the meek Fathers of the Church who composed these prayers; such happiness to be one with all those who have believed and who do believe, that I could not feel my explanation to be an artificial one. But when I drew near to the altar, and the priest called upon me to repeat that I believed that what I was about to swallow was real body and blood, I felt a sharp pain at the heart; it was no unconsidered word, it was the hard demand of someone who could never have known what faith is.

"I now allow myself to say it was a hard demand, but then I did not think so; it was only exquisitely painful. I no longer thought as I had done in youth, that all was clear in life; I had been drawn towards

faith because outside it I had found nothing but ruin, and as therefore I could not throw my faith aside, I had believed and submitted. I had found in my heart a feeling of humility and meekness which had helped me to do this. I humbled myself again, I swallowed the blood and the body without any mocking thoughts, in the wish to believe; but the shock had been given, and knowing what awaited me another time, I could never go again." [25]

Nevertheless, for nearly two years he deliberately struggled to humble his intellect, and continued to observe with strictness and regularity all the rites and fasts of the Orthodox Church.

Once again, in his diary, he formulated his most pressing problems: " (a) Why am I alive ? *(b)* What is the cause of my, and of everyone's, life ? (c) What is the goal of my, and everyone's, life ? *(d)* What does the duality of good and evil that I feel in myself mean, and why does it exist? *(e)* How should I live? *(f)* What is death? And the most important, besides the most complex of all: How can I save myself? I feel that I am perishing. I live and I die. I love life and I fear death. How can I save myself? " [89]

Still the only answer he could find was, through religion, through faith. But this merely removed the question temporarily, to substitute another in its place. Through what faith ?

Nevertheless, there remained to him one indubitable fact, based upon the accumulated experience of his whole life. He had only experienced fully the real significance of life at such times when he either believed in God or was struggling to believe. And even now he had only to remember the existence of God, and at once life became mysteriously illuminated; just as he had only to forget it for the sense of the wonder and meaning of life to wither and die. But to believe in God was one thing; to believe in all the doctrines of the Russo-Greek Orthodox Church quite another.

Still hoping to find further help within the Church, in June 1879 [ne] visited the famous monastery of Kievo-Petchersk.

Of the holy city of Kiev, Marie Bashkirtseff had written a few years before: "I saw Kiev eight years ago, and I can still remember the underground passages." But it was scarcely to be expected that "the mother of all the Russian cities, the richest in the world in churches, convents, monks and relics," with its fabulous wealth in jewels (" the convents have cellars full as in the Arabian Nights*) and its holy relics of dubious authenticity which pilgrims still came from every part of Russia to see, would prove profitable to Tolstoy in his search for ultimate truth. " I spent the whole morning until three o'clock looking at chapels, crypts and monasteries," he wrote to his wife, "but I am very disappointed with my trip. It was hardly worth while. At seven o'clock I went to see the hermit Antoine. But I learned very little. . .."

Nevertheless, he continued to study the great scriptures of all

religions, and to learn by personal contact with pilgrims and orthodox believers in precisely what lay their faith. Only very occasionally, "conquered by the beauty of the world," he would fling himself into the activities of his family or of his guests. "As meek as a dove and as enthusiastic as a youth," one visitor found him at this time; while, after spending a few days with him, Strakhov confided to a friend that "there are no young men who could search for truth with such enthusiasm."

About a mile and a half from Yasnaya Polyana there were two inns for pilgrims, run by charity, and here Tolstoy went day after day to listen to the devout, much as, years before, when they had come to Yasnaya Polyana, his mother had listened to them before him. Or else he would stop some likely-looking old man on the road, and spend hours with him in conversation about his beliefs. And the more he thought and felt himself, and listened to the beliefs and convictions of others, the more it became clear to him that in orthodox Christianity truth and falsehood were inextricably woven together. Yet for a long time he still submitted to his father confessor; and, when he was unwell, even went to him to obtain permission to break the fast, rather than dispense with any usage of the Church. But at last he gave up even this external allegiance; and one day at lunch, when the whole family were fasting with the exception of two tutors, for whom a dish of cutlets had been prepared, Tolstoy asked one of his sons to give him a cutlet from the dish which had been left on the window-sill. With this his temporary allegiance to the Orthodox Church was over.

That autumn he recorded: "From the third century until to-day, the Church has been nothing but lies, cruelty and deceit. In the third century something great was still to be found there——" This meant, for Tolstoy, not a renunciation of Christianity, but the beginning of a new search. Never, throughout this time, did he lose sight of his own weakness, his own dependence. " There are in this world heavy people,' without wings," he recorded. "They manifest here below. Among them are powerful men—Napoleon. They leave terrible traces among' mankind. They sow discord: but all this upon earth. There are light» men who grow wings for themselves, and slowly learn to fly—monks. There are light men-who rise easily, and again fall back—good idealists.' There are men with strong wings whom carnal desires drag down among the crowd where they break their wings. Of such am I. I beat with my broken wings, hurl myself powerfully into the air, and , fall again. My wings will be healed. I shall fly high. May God help me. There are men with heavenly wings, who, for love of mankind, descend upon earth by folding their wings, and teach men to fly. Then, when they have done their work, they ascend once more. Christ."

"He is writing about religion, and the disagreement between the Church and Christianity," the Countess Tolstoy wrote late in 1879.

"He reads all day, and eats Lenten food on Wednesdays **and Fridays.** ... All his conversation is full of the teaching of Christ.... **This work** has been going on for two years now and he must be half-way through it. He has become, so he says, 'happy in his soul.' . . . But he has grown thin during the past winter, and his hair has turned grey...." [89]

As with everything else he undertook, the expression of his new ideas filled him with **a** passion that could easily turn to anger when he felt thwarted or misunderstood: and a month later, when, in Moscow, he had shown a rough formulation of his new beliefs to the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, her apparent lack of sympathy was such that he even left her without saying good-bye.

"Your sudden disappearance has utterly shocked, offended and pained me to *the* depths of my soul," she told him in a letter dated January 23rd, 1880. " There is such harshness, such lack of friendship, and, I had rather not say it, such vindictiveness in your behaviour. Freaks such as this are disgusting even in youth; but at our time of life it is absolutely unpardonable not to hold out one's hand when separating—each separation being possibly the last—and I find it difficult to forgive you——" [62]

A week later, however, she had repented of her outburst, and wrote again: "Forgive me, dear friend. I am sorry, and accuse myself of having exploded like a bag of gunpowder. . . . Only remember how once I used to torture myself about your lack of faith. ... I am so utterly convinced of there being no blasphemy in your heart that I will not and cannot see it in your denial. But, like yourself, I can speak to you only without reservations, and I confess I *feel* terrified to see how rashly you cross out of Scripture everything that finds no response in your mind and in your present views. ... I fear both for you and for those you may lead astray by your spirit, your sincerity, and by the utter falseness of your views." [62]

Early the following month, Tolstoy wrote her an eloquent reply that concludes this long and painful period of uncertainty and inner struggle. "The essence of your letter is that your profession of faith is that of the Church. I know it and da not share it. But I have nothing to say against those who profess this faith.... Not only do I not deny this doctrine, but should you ask me which I would prefer—for my children to be unbelievers as I have been, or to believe in the doctrine taught by the Church, I would answer without hesitation that I prefer the doctrine taught by the Church. . . . But it is impossible to believe a thing that seems to me to be false. And it is still more impossible for me to persuade myself that I believe when I cannot believe. ... I have reached solid earth now, breaking down everything that seemed unsound, and I no longer fear anything, because it would exceed my strength to destroy what I now stand upon, which **means** it **is** the real thing..,." [6a]

And it is a revealing testimony of his affection and sympathy that

when, later, the final version of *What I Believe* was revised for the last time, Tolstoy wrote to his wife: "Tell Alexandra that not two words of the old version remain. I have rewritten it completely."

2

Whilst Tolstoy wrestled to co-ordinate the understanding of heart and mind, his material life continued to prosper. The Samara estates, besides his hereditary ones, yielded him a handsome income; which together with the royalties of his novels made him now a man of considerable substance. His books were beginning to procure for him European celebrity; and such was his fame in Russia that, as early as 1873, the painter Kramskoy, wishing to paint his portrait, and aware of his dislike of intrusive strangers, rented a house in the neighbourhood for the sole purpose of becoming acquainted, and so persuading him to sit to him. Three years later, when his portraits of the author were already famous, and Tolstoy had been introduced to Tchaikovsky, that composer used to say that never had he been paid so great an honour as when the author of *War and Peace* (stfll extremely susceptible to music), while sitting next to him at a performance of his concerto in D major, suddenly burst into tears during the *andante.*

Despite the liberality of his views and the generosity of his nature, Tolstoy had always severely discouraged his children from undue familiarity with the peasant children of the village; and if life at Yasnaya Polyana was not particularly luxurious, it was nevertheless adorned with many graces, and his family was fully conscious of its social eminence. Indeed, the Tolstoy children (of whom two more besides those already mentioned—Andrew on December 6th, 1877, and Michael on December 20th, 1879—had been recently born) were brought up in an unostentatious grandeur well befitting their period and condition. The elder boys were taught six languages, and the girls five; five tutors and governesses—English, French, Swiss or German—were resident in the house, while as many more visited the estate to give lessons in music, drawing, divinity, mathematics, and anything else that Tolstoy happened to consider necessary.

Towards the end of the 'seventies—in the spring of 1878—in a particularly softened mood in which it saddened him to think that there was any man alive with whom he was on bad terms, Tolstoy decided to try to become reconciled with Turgenev. "Ivan Sergeyevich," he wrote: "After carefully examining my feelings for you I am certain that I cherish no ill-will of any kind. God grant that you may feel the same towards me! Give me your hand, and let us forget the past! I know well that you once showed me great kindness—I have you to thank for my literary reputation—and I hope that in the depths of your heart you still like me a little. I offer you my sincere friendship, and should rejoice to see all misunderstanding between us cleared up." [tt]

As soon as he received this letter, Turgenev replied: "Your letter gave me great pleasure and touched me deeply. I am only too happy to resume our old friendship, and warmly shake the hand that you hold out to me. You are right in thinking that I have no hostile feelings for you. I f l ever had any, they have long since vanished; I remember only the man to whom I was deeply attached, whose first steps I was able to hail before others, and whose each new work aroused in me the keenest interest. I am delighted that the misunderstanding between us is over. I hope to go to the province of Orel this summer; in which case we shall doubtless see each other. Meanwhile, I wish you all good, and cordially shake you by the hand." [89]

But these letters were considerably warmer in tone than the relations that followed. Acquaintanceship was resumed, and visits were exchanged ; but there was no real depth or satisfaction for either of them in the renewal of their friendship. During one of his subsequent visits to Yasnaya Polyana, Turgenev was in such good humour that he gave a spirited rendering of the Parisian cancan with Tolstoy's daughters and their Kuzminsky cousins. Although this capacity to enter into the frolics of the young with an ingenuous abandon had endeared him to many of his friends, and even caused the young Henry James, after a Sunday evening at the Viardots* in the spring of 1876, to write indulgently to his father that" it was both strange and sweet to see poor Turgenev acting charades of the most extravagant description, dressed out in old shawls and masks, going on all fours. The charades are their usual evening occupation, and the good" faith with which Turgenev, at his age and with his glories, can go into them is a striking example of that spontaneity which Europeans have and we have not:" Tolstoy, in his present strenuous mood, was far from being amused. "Turgenev. Cancan. Sad," was his laconic private comment.

The person who derived most pleasure and gratification from Turgenev's visits was the Countess Tolstoy. One day, when they were out snipe-shooting, she asked Turgenev why he had given up writing: and upon being informed that the reason was that before he could write it was necessary for him to experience the fever of love, she even playfully enquired why he did not fall in love with her. And when she overheard him remark to Tolstoy: "How well you did to marry your wife," it made so deep an impressicyi upon her that she recorded it in her diary seven years later.

No matter their intentions, neither Tolstoy nor Turgenev was sufficiently master of himself to avoid a recurrence of the old friction. Soon Turgenev was going about disseminating strange rumours of Tolstoy's new attitude to life: while Tolstoy, having first confided to Fet: "He is still the same, and we already know to what extent we can approach each other," presendy wrote to him again, after receiving a letter from Turgenev which annoyed him: "He is

really a most disagreeable man, and I have decided to keep as far away as I can both from him and from sin."

3

In May 1880 die literary world of Russia assembled in Moscow for the unveiling of the memorial to her greatest poet—Pushkin. Only Tolstby was absent. The committee had sent Turgenev as an ambassador to Yasnaya Polyana to beg his presence; but, deeply absorbed in what he considered to be the most important work of his life, Tolstoy remarked that he had neither time nor use for such a farce, and remained at home.

Grigorovich, who still delighted in running from one to another of his acquaintances with the latest literary gossip, visited Dostoevsky to impart the news that Turgenev had told him Tolstoy was deranged, and had perhaps gone mad. Having passed on this story to his wife, a few days later Dostoevsky wrote to her again to embroider the theme. "As for Leo Tolstoy, Katkov also confirmed tljat he has gone quite mad. Yuriev urged me to visit him at Yasnaya Polyana; to go there and back would take less than two days, but although it would be very interesting, I shall not go."[118]

By now Dostoevsky was at the height of his fame. Barely a week later, when, at the Pushkin celebrations he made a speech to the Society of the Admirers of Russian Literature, such was the excitement that the meeting had to be suspended. Turgenev (who had evidendy now forgiven the bitter caricature of himself as Karmazinov in *The Possessed and.* forgotten that he had once called Dostoevsky "the most evil Christian I have ever met") rushed to embrace him with tears in his eyes; a crowd of women surrounded him on the platform; there were howls, shouts and sobs of emotion; a young man, out of sheer excitement, fell at his feet in a swoon; and finally he was presented with a magnificent laurel wreath nearly six feet in diameter. "Admit, Anna, that it was worth remaining for," he wrote to his absent wife. "Those were pledges for the future, for *everything,* even if I were to die." [118]

But although Dostoevsky did not visit Yasnaya Polyana, he shortly became friendly with the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, and such was the interest he evinced in her cousin's new ideas, that at last she showed him one of the letters Tolstoy had sent her the previous winter. " No, it is not like that! It is not like that!" he is said to have exclaimed passionately when he read it. And fearing lest Tolstoy might be indignant at her indiscretion, the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy wrote to tell him that she had done so, and to beg his pardon should he be vexed.

There is little doubt that Tolstoy would have valued a visit from his celebrated contemporary. "A little time ago I was feeling ill, and spent my forced leisure very pleasantly by reading *The House of the*

Dead" he wrote to their mutual friend Strakhov during the summer of 1880. "Though I had read it before, I had forgotten much of it. In the whole of modern literature, not excepting Pushkin, I know no finer book. It is not the style, but the attitude that is so wonderfully sincere, natural and Christian. A truly uplifting book. It gave me more pleasure to read it than I have felt for a very long time. When you see Dostoevsky, give him my love.*' **

And before the end of the same year, when Dostoevsky, after his brief hour of triumph, lay dead, Tolstoy once more wrote of him to Strakhov (who was to be his biographer): "I only wish I could express all I feel about Dostoevsky. Though I never saw him, or had any personal communication with him, now that he is dead I realize that he was nearer, dearer and more important to me than anyone else. It never once occurred to me to try to rival him. Everything he did was so good and so sincere that it gave me pleasure. Though I am capable of envying a man his intellect or his talent, actions that spring from the heart can only give me pleasure. I always thought of Dostoevsky as a friend, and hoped that one day I should know him. But it was not to be. . . ." [43]

Far from being insane, Tolstoy was still engrossed with what he considered to be infinitely more important than the writing of novels: the precise formulation of his new beliefs. Having finished *Anna Karenin,* he had, in fact, considered once more returning to his old theme of the Decembrists. There had been the usual elaborate preparations. He had made the acquaintance of some of the conspirators; he had studied innumerable manuscripts and documents; he had received permission to visit the fortress of Peter and Paul, which he wished to describe; he had once more obtained much special information through the good offices of his cousin Alexandra. "He told me that he was starting his new book for the tenth time," the Countess Tolstoy recorded during October 1878. "It is to begin with a cross-examination of a case between a number of peasants and a landowner. He got the idea of the case from some genuine documents, and is even going to leave in the actual date. This case will be like a fountain, scattering events into the landowner's home, to Petersburg, and other places where certain characters play a part." [56] In his own diary, Tolstoy wrote: "The thing is simply to describe the Decembrist uprising, without condemning anybody—either Nicholas I or the conspirators." But he could not settle down to such work. As after the death of Nicholas, art had again become a " beautiful lie." His spiritual problems demanded the whole of his energies; and the novel was presently laid aside. It was necessary for him to write of the things that lay closest to his heart. This task involved enormous labour, and absorbed him fully until 1881.

The four works which he produced during these five years were: *A Confession* (completed in **1879, and** first circulated in **1882); *A***

Criticism of Dogmatic Theology (written about the same time, but not published until much later); *An Examination and Harmony of the Four Gospels* (written in 1880, but again not published until later, though an abridged form, known to us as *The Gospel in Brief* was circulated by hand); and *What I Believe* (written about 1880, circulated in Russia in 1884, and published at Geneva, with *A Confession,* and its cognate works, in 1888).

In these works, step by step, with ruthless honesty and infinite clarity and care, he traced the inevitable evolution of his faith as he turned from agnosticism towards Orthodox Christianity, and from Orthodox Christianity to his personal interpretation of the teaching of Christ. Of this work, which cost him "the greatest and most joyous effort of his life," he later said that it was not only the turning-point of his whole existence, but served as the basis for everything that he wrote later. Until the end of his life he continued to write religio-philosophical essays of considerable importance: but these are so numerous that for convenience* sake much of their content will be examined with the major works of which they are elaborations.

" Until the age of fifty," he wrote later, in his preface to *The Christian Teaching,* "I lived thinking that his life from birth to death constitutes the whole life of man, and that therefore his aim should be to secure his happiness in this mortal life. I tried to secure that happiness, but the longer I lived the more evident it became that such happiness does not and cannot exist. The happiness I sought for did not materialize^ and all that I attained ceased to be happiness as soon as I had attained it. My unhappiness became greater and greater and the inevitability of death more and more apparent, and I understood that in this meaningless and unhappy life nothing awaited me but suffering, sickness, old age and annihilation. I asked myself: Why is this so? and received no answer. And I came to despair." [9]

A Confession is the powerful and deeply moving record of his spiritual experiences from this point until the time when he realized with certainty that Christian truth existed, but that it was so obscured by dogma and theology that he must rediscover it for himself. *A Confession* is the finest of all Tolstoy's non-fiction works. Its place is amongst the greatest religious writings of its kind, and it should be read by everyone who wishes to understand Tolstoy and the development of his thought. But it should be read rather as a record of his inner experiences than as a piece of pure autobiography. This is not only because, as so often with Tolstoy, he is magnificently inaccurate with his irrelevant details; but also because if we were not fortunately in possession of his diaries, it would leave us with a very distorted picture of his earlier life. While the diaries exhibit Tolstoy's daily life as he viewed it contemporaneously, *A Confession* presents that same life when viewed from a different altitude; and is therefore best considered as a supplementary aspect, rather than the whole, of truth.

Like many men of unusually passionate and sincere disposition, in saying all that he meant at any given moment Tolstoy was apt to say a good deal more than was strictly accurate from a more detached point of view. And while what he said was perfectly true for the self that happened at the moment to be uppermost, it was not necessarily the truth for his many other selves. This fact has led the insufficiendy instructed into many attacks that are easily explained by their failure to state in correct terms the apparent inconsistencies with which Tolstoy's whole life was beset.

We have already seen that Tolstoy's past was a manifestation of the complex contradictions inherent in all men, though in his case particularly remarkable, which expressed themselves through various different interests or environments. And never were the philosopher and the lover of God for long in abeyance. Yet whereas formerly these had had no greater power—less, in fact—than many of their fellows, now experience had endowed them with a force which enabled them to rise pre-eminent and to direct even the activities of the writer. Moreover, there was always in Tolstoy a tendency to exaggeration where his own actions were concerned. Like Nicholas Irtenev, until the end of his life he retained something of the propensity to "revel in his repulsion for the past, and try to see it blacker than it was." Of this he was himself aware. Speaking years later to a friend on this subject, he remarked: "It is surprising how the past becomes *me*. It is in me, like something folded. But it is difficult to be perfectly sincere. Sometimes I remember only the bad acts and events. It is difficult in this to keep the balance, so as not to exaggerate one way or the other." [78]

In *A Confession*, there is little doubt that he unintentionally exaggerated the bad side of his life: but with this taken into account, it is a document of deep psychological importance written with consummate art. So great is its universal significance, that it speaks not only for himself, but for all men born into similar conditions. The early disillusionment with an organized religion to which all about him pay a hypocritical lip-service, while continuing to act in all respects as though it did not exist; the turning away from this to base the whole of his philosophy on vague pseudo-scientific theories of general human progress; the gradual recognition of the decadence of so-called modern culture; the final realization that life viewed without illusions must be completely meaningless for man unless he can change his whole attitude and bring himself into relation with some unknown power higher than himself: all this, no less than his final acceptance of Orthodox religion, and its complete inability to satisfy the demands both of heart and mind, are described with the clarity, simplicity and truth that are the characteristics of his unique genius.

In his next work, *A Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*', using the orthodox theology of Makarius, the Metropolitan of Moscow—a vast work translated into French and at that time the authority in use

in all Russian theological colleges—he attacked each in turn the doctrine of the trinity; of angels and devils; of the creation of the world in six days; of the Garden of Eden and Adam's expulsion therefrom; of the virgin birth; of the crucifixion and the resurrection; of the holy succession of bishops; of sanctification through the ritual of the sacraments; of infant baptism; of anointment and of eternal salvation and eternal damnation according to belief. Everything from which his intelligence revolted, but which the Orthodox Church required him to accept literally before he could be saved, he denounced, after protracted study, as being not only hypocrisy, but as that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come. Though many of his arguments are extremely plausible, there are nevertheless times when his own pronouncements present difficulties of acceptance almost as great as those which he rejects: and he himself admitted years later that in his passionate anxiety to counteract what he considered to be the flagrant evils of the Orthodox Church, he had sometimes permitted himself to strain the meaning of the Scriptures too much in a contrary direction.

It must be understood that at the time Tolstoy was writing the Russo-Greek Orthodox Church was in a somewhat parlous state. On the one hand, it harboured in many of the monasteries scattered throughout the country educated and intelligent, as well as sincere and simple, monks living arduous and deeply religious lives in accordance with monastic principles handed down uncorrupted from the most enlightened of the Church Fathers; while on the other it openly encouraged superstition of the most flagrant nature. Some monasteries, such as at Kiev, had in their catacombs images stuffed with straw which pretended to be the " incorruptible" bodies of famous saints; while even in Moscow, in a chapel near one of the gates of the Kremlin, there was a copy of the famous Iberian Mother of God (supposed to have miraculously crossed the sea to Mount Athos in A.D. 29, in a monastery of which it was now kept) which was habitually taken about in a carriage to cure the sick, so providing the Church with considerable revenue. And such was the general level of understanding amongst the faithful, that on one occasion when Tolstoy was himself on a visit to a monastery, he found at the bookshop a devout old woman who wished to buy a copy of the Gospels for her son, to whom the monk in charge declared that it was not a suitable work for her to give him, and upon whom he tried to press instead a book dealing with the history of the monastery and the miracles of the saints.

In addition to this, the Russo-Greek Orthodox Church not only wielded great political power, but there was hardly any form of moral outrage or persecution in which she did not willingly and openly participate in order to uphold the autocratic rule of the Romanovs, and to maintain her own waning temporal and spiritual authority.

In his own *Examination and Harmony of the Four Gospels*, by sub-

jecting every phrase of the original Greek to an intense scrutiny, Tolstoy sought to recover for himself the essential truth value of the Christian Testament, which he considered that the Orthodox Church had either lost or obscured in a mass of unnecessary ceremony and dogma. Here we have at last at work the man who, while still in the service, had thoughts of "founding a new religion based on the Gospel teaching," and who, after the death of his brother Nicholas, had considered writing " a materialistic Gospel. A materialistic Life of Christ." But since those days his attitude had undergone a profound change, and the idea (so frequently encountered) that Tolstoy's Christianity is a purely material doctrine deliberately excluding the whole mystical element of religion is a false one.

"All that could be done was done excellently," Tolstoy conceded in his introduction to this *Examination*, when referring to the Church's selection, from the hundreds of manuscripts at her disposal, of the canonical and apocryphal books. "But in drawing the line between them she made one grave error. In order to reject more emphatically the books she did not accept, and to give more weight to those she did accept, she put one general seal of infallibility on all that she approved: it all proceeded from the Holy Ghost, and every word was true. By this she ruined and harmed all that she accepted; for, having accepted . . . both the more and the less pure teaching, and having stamped it all with a seal of infallibility, she deprived herself of the right to combine, exclude and elucidate what she accepted, which it was her duty to do, but which she has not done and is not doing." [8] Indeed, by accepting everything as proceeding from the same level (and that the level of God), from the Gospel of St. John to the Epistles of St. Paul, she could only try to explain away many contradictions and obscurities which were probably due to human error.

It was these apparent contradictions and absurdities that Tolstoy sought to reconcile and to elucidate on principles of his own. Having first read the whole of the Bible from beginning to end in its original tongues (in order to do so he learned Hebrew with the Chief Rabbi of Moscow), he tried to establish all that was immediately clear as to the nature of God and man, and the relation between them; and then, upon the basis of this clear understanding, to review once more everything that seemed obscure. In particular he devoted himself to the four Gospels, which his emotions informed him with certainty contained the highest truth; and disregarding all historical questions, and retranslating every doubtful passage in accordance with the recognized meanings of distorted words, and such understanding as was already certain, rather than to fit in with the arbitrary teaching of the Church, he finally ascertained for himself that, instead of being the strange doctrine preached by the orthodox which had tormented him by its senseless contradictions, Christianity was a profound but clear explanation of life which corresponded to the highest needs of the human soul.

As he saw it now, Christianity was neither an "exclusive divine revelation" nor a historical phenomenon, but a teaching which explains to man, through the medium of the Gospels alone, the nature of the spirit which guides the life of all who truly live. In order to understand the teaching of Jesus, it is necessary to regard it, not in the Church sense as the revelation of a God-man (which belief, paradoxically enough, causes them to attribute no more weight to his words than to those of the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles, the Apocalypse, or even to the decisions of the Church Councils and the expositions of the Church Fathers), but to consider it as a practical and positive religion realizable here and now, and a religion which promises to those who follow it, not salvation in some future heaven, but salvation upon earth. For Tolstoy it was not essential to prove that Jesus was not God, and therefore his teaching could not be divine; just as it was not essential to prove that he was the first founder of the Catholic Church. The one thing needful was to know and understand in its unperverted form the doctrine which by itself is so noble and so precious to men that many of them have willingly believed that he who gave it was God himself.

This doctrine is based on certain clearly expressed principles. That man is the creation of an infinite source, and is the son of that source, not by the flesh, but by the spiritual capacities implanted in him. That his true life can consist only in serving the infinite source of life, and that manifestation of the infinite source which is inherent in mankind. That this true life is independent of time, which, by continual imagination of the past or future, always conceals from man the present, which alone is real. And that therefore man should always strive to destroy within himself the illusion of time, and thus unite himself with the life of the source of life through love, the one indubitable manifestation of that source.

For this two things are essential: to discriminate continually between the temporal and the eternal manifestations of life; and to struggle continually with everything in oneself which manifests as self-will and personal desire, and thus can lead only to death, and to substitute for it the active service of the source of life, which alone can give life. It is precisely how to do this that Jesus teaches.

The basis of understanding, the basis of faith, must be reason. (And here Tolstoy means not that seat of lucid but sterile reflection which is incapable of dealing with any but material problems, but that faculty which, in the words of Marcus Aurelius, "acts in conformity with nature, does nothing without due reflection, loves all men and obeys the Gods in all things.") For the principles of true faith, though they cannot be proved by logic, can never contain anything which is either contrary to reason or incompatible with real knowledge. On the contrary, they can only help to explain those phenomena of life which in their absence would remain incomprehensible and contradictory.

Therefore, when Tolstoy re-translates, the divergence **of his version** with the authorized versions is always in conformity with reason, **and** contrary to superstitious belief. He explains away all supernatural happenings, by providing an alternative version that renders them superfluous. For example, the blind man miraculously made to see becomes the far more easily understandable man devoid of moral perception who suddenly becomes aware of truth. Similarly, the feeding of the multitude is simply accounted for by the fact that, on the instructions of Jesus, those who had brought food with them shared what they had with those who had none. Most important of all, the Kingdom of Heaven is neither a place nor a state reserved for the faithful who have been saved by faith, but a condition to be entered upon earth by those who truly live in accordance with Christ's clearly expressed precepts.

Christianity is an active religion which teaches **man what to do in** order, by the use of his own reason, and through his own struggles (for the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence), to aspire continually towards perfection. It has nothing whatever to do with the pseudo-Christian Church idea that salvation can be attained through grace transmitted by the Church in accordance with established ceremonial. True Christianity exists in order to serve God. Pseudo-Christianity and the Churches exist in order to try to make God serve man. Maintaining that Christ was the second person of the Holy Trinity, who came down to earth in order to show men how to live, the orthodox Churches have invented elaborate ritual and ceremony, sent out missionaries to every part of the world, trained and ordained priests, held convocations without number to establish matters of doctrine—and the one essential feature of Christianity they have left out of account: the teaching that for man to live as he should, he must change his life. In exactly the same manner as unbelievers, the faithful, while pretending to live a Christian life, act and behave as though in order to be saved it is not necessary to do anything, and they can continue to live precisely as though the Christian ideal does not exist. They degrade truth to suit themselves, and wallow complacently in the illusion that they are saved.

To Tolstoy, for whom Christ's teaching, besides having "a profound metaphysical meaning," has also an "all human meaning—the simplest, clearest and most practical meaning "for every single man—" Christianity means a continual struggle to practise *five* simple and clear precepts, which he has formulated in the work *What I Believe**

These five precepts from the Sermon on the Mount are:

Do not be angry, but live at peace with all men.
Do not indulge in illicit sexual intercourse.
Do not promise anything on oath.
Do not resist evil by violence.
Do not judge, nor go to law; and make no distinction of nationality, but love all foreigners as your own people.

The carrying out literally of these laws by ail men would inevitably create the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. But inasmuch as the Kingdom of Heaven is also a spiritual state, it can be attained by each man to the extent which he can live in accordance with these laws which were laid down by Christ himself, and which orthodox religions have always done their best to explain away.

Thus, for Tolstoy, the greatest enemy to true Christianity is the organized Church, which produces, not Christians, but pseudo-Christians. All that is necessary for these pseudo-Christians is a profession of faith, and the acceptance of the sacraments. In order to be saved, a man neither need do anything for himself nor abstain from doing anything. He can, in fact, do what he likes (without even loving God), and all that is necessary for his salvation will be done by the Church. Since the time of Constantine the Church has not only demanded no action from its members, but it has deliberately adapted itself to the barbarism of the world and without protest permitted the world to behave as though it had never existed. Worse even than its betrayal of Christianity to Mammon is its denial of reason and the necessity for personal effort, both of which it pronounces complacendy to be the manifestations of pride and of self-will; whereas it is only through the constant use of each that the precepts of Christianity can be fulfilled.

In fact, however heretical his denials may be, Tolstoy's conception of the practical aspect of Christianity accords very closely with the teaching of certain of the Church Fathers. One example should be sufficient for illustration. For a long time he could not understand the injunction that one should not be angry without a cause, since obviously everyone who is angry justifies himself with a cause, no matter how trivial or ridiculous this may be. Finally, he saw quite clearly that either the precept had no practical value, or else the words "without a cause" had been added later. After much investigation, although the significant phrase was supported by all modern expositors and by the canonical version, he nevertheless found, as he had supposed, that in the original text it did not exist.

Nearly fifteen centuries before, John Cassian, one of the first founders of monasteries in Western Europe, had written on precisely the same subject *(Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. xi, book viii, chs. vii and xvi): "Anger is justified only when directed against the lustful emotions of our own heart.... The words 'without a cause' are superfluous, and were added by those who did not think that anger for just causes was to be banished; since certainly nobody, however unreasonably he is disturbed, would say that he was angry without a cause. Wherefore it appears to have been added by those who did not understand the drift of Scripture, which intended altogether to banish the incentive to anger, and to reserve no occasion whatever for indignation; lest while we were commanded to be angry with a cause,

an opportunity for being angry without a cause might occur to us. For the end and aim of patience consists, not in being angry with a good reason, but in not being angry at all"

Many of Tolstoy's commentators have dismissed his religious ideas with a smile of tolerant indifference, because there was nothing new in them. This is very true. At the same time that Tolstoy was formulating his beliefs, even the young Marie BashkirtsefF was writing in her diary in Paris: "... the religion of Christ, as taught in his own words, is very little like your Catholicism or your orthodoxy, which I refrain from following, limiting myself to following the precepts of Christ, and not embarrassing myself with the allegories taken literally, or the superstitions and the other nonsense introduced into religion later on by ordinary men, for political or other reasons."[126] If truth has already been given to the world, there is open to the seeker only the possibility of discovering it. It is one of the naiveties of the insufficiently instructed to conceive the idea that it is possible for a man to invent an original truth. What is important, in the study of Tolstoy and his life, is to realize that, by infinite patience, struggle and moral integrity, he had at last found a system of truth which satisfied the demands of his whole being, and which served as the end of a golden string by which until the end of his life he struggled to raise himself to a higher level of consciousness.

PART IV

... If people are going to occupy themselves with my writings, let them dwell upon those passages in which I know that the Divine power spoke through me, and let them make use of them in their lives. There were times when I felt that I had become the agent of the Divine Will. Often I was so impure, so filled with personal passions, that the light of this truth was obscured by my darkness; but at times the truth passed through me, and these were the happiest moments of my life. . . .

TOLSTOY : *Will of March* 27, 1829,.

Chapter I

1. *The murder of Alexander II: Tolstoy's letter to Alexander III: Pobedonostsev and the reaction: the censorship on Tolstoy s works.* 2. *The move to Moscow: the problem of poverty:* What Then Must We Do? 3. *Tolstoy and Ruskin:* On Life: *a short commentary by H. P. Blavatsky.*

ON March 1st, 1881, there occurred a public tragedy that was to have grave repercussions throughout the whole of Russia. Alexander II, whose reign had been joyfully hailed as the dawn of a new age, was murdered by a group of Nihilists jusi when he was said to have been considering a liberal constitution for the country. The result was a period of grim reaction. The press was kept under rigid control, public meetings and all public discussion of political questions were forbidden; and a censorship, which during the previous decades had been somewhat relaxed, was now imposed on all polemical writings with the rigour of fanaticism.

Turgenev, abroad and ill, confided to a friend that he was deeply worried by the thought that it was his duty to write to Alexander III begging him *o give Russia a constitution at last, and proving to him by solid argument why this was necessary. At home, deeply shocked by the thought of the imminent execution of the conspirators, one of whom—Sophie Perovsky—was a woman, Tolstoy determined to write to the Czar imploring him to pardon them in the name of Christian charity. "I thought," he wrote years later to Birukov, "of those men and of the fate being prepared for them, and quite suddenly I seemed to see clearly . . . that it was not they who were going to be executed, but myself, and that it was neither Alexander III, nor the

executioners, nor the judges who were making plans for their death, but that it was I myself who was killing them." [89]

His letter, written with a passion and a complete lack of reserve of which only Tolstoy could have been capable, pleaded "as one man to another" that, in his temptation to punish the terrible murder of his father, the Czar should ignore all the sophistries of his councillors, renounce all thoughts of revenge, and act only in accordance with the law of forgiveness of Christ. " Sire, if you were to do that, if you were to call these men, provide them with money, send them to some part of America, and issue a proclamation beginning with these words: * And T say unto you, love your enemies/ I do not know how others would leel, but I, who am but of little account, would be your dog, your slave. . . . One word of pardon and Christian love pronounced from the height of the throne, and the path of Christian rule which lies before you waiting to be trod, that alone could destroy all the evils from which Russia is now suffering. As wax in the flame, all revolutionary struggles would melt away before the Czar and man who fulfils the law of Christ." [2]

Through the agency of Strakhov, this letter was sent to Pobedonostsev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, accompanied by a personal letter from Tolstoy in which he begged him himself to present it to the Czar. But Pobedonostsev—that Pobedonostsev who only a short time before had written to Aksakov on the death of Dostoevsky: " I knew him intimately. It was solely for him that I held my Saturday evenings, and he often used to come and spend them with me. He thought out the character of Zossima with the help of my advice. We had many intimate talks. . . . And now he is irreplaceable, for he stood alone . . ."—withheld the letter, and returned it to Tolstoy only after the conspirators had been hanged—". . . not from impoliteness or indifference," he explained: "but from the impossibility of finding my bearings quickly in the bustle and confusion of thoughts that overwhelmed me..." and because he "saw that your faith is one, and mine and that of the Church another." It is said that the letter eventually j-eached the Czar through some other channel, who sent word to Tolstoy that had he himself been the victim, he would willingly have spared the conspirators; but that he was in no way free to spare the murderers of his father.

Already the evil influence that Pobedonostsev was to have upon his country was manifest, and he was trying to persuade the Czar that the laws of history in other lands did not apply to Russia, who enjoyed a special dispensation of Providence. To stifle all liberal and progressive thought throughout the empire, and to bring every subject into the sphere of influence of the Orthodox Church, these were his fanatical aims. Tales of the new terror rapidly spread abroad. "The Russians who have come to see us tell me the news of Russia," Marie Bashkirtseff, then in Paris, confided to her diary. "Their eldest daughter is

under the strict observation of the police because she said, on an examination day when the Grand Duke was expected, that she would far rather pass her examination than receive a visit from the Grand Duke. On another occasion, as she is very short-sighted, she wore pince-nez, on account of which she has been denounced by the police, spectacles or eye-glasses being considered signs of advanced ideas amongst women! They transport, poison or exile for a word. They visit your house at night, send you to Viatka or Perm if you are not very dangerous, and to Siberia or the gallows if you are. They say that there is hardly a family without one member in exile, hanged, or at least under observation. The spy system is so well organized that it is impossible to talk in one's home circle, without everything being reported to someone in authority.... After two hours talking, the girl assured me that for a tenth part of what I said I should be sent to penal servitude or hanged, and that if I go to Russia I am lost." Although there was undoubtedly much in this that was exaggerated, it nevertheless indicates quite clearly the general trend of events.

This naturally had great effect upon Tolstoy and his work. *A Confession* was prohibited by the Spiritual Censor (though it circulated freely in manuscript), and fully aware that *What I Believe* would meet with the same fate, he had a small private edition printed for circulation amongst his friends. But even this was seized by the authorities; though instead of destroying it they sent it to Petersburg, where it enjoyed considerable popularity amongst influential government officials. In fact, for him, the situation was far more serious than in the old days when he wrote his articles on Sevastopol. If he wished to see his works published, then he must write what he did not believe. If he wrote what he believed, then inevitably there was no chance of publication. But for Tolstoy there was no question of choice. For him, now as ever, "the one thing which has been, is, and will be beautiful" was Truth. Even when, later, his version of the Sermon on the Mount was arranged for children, a licence for publication was refused until the section *Take no Thought for the Morrow* was suppressed.

But this was not all. After Turgenev's death, the Society of the Admirers of Russian Literature asked Tolstoy to give them an address upon his celebrated contemporary; and although he very rarely spoke in public, this he consented to do. With his usual thoroughness and energy he re-read all Turgenev's works (discovering anew that he was a great artist and that he "loved him terribly") and took great pains with the composition of his lecture.

Although a day had been fixed, and all Moscow was looking forward to the lecture with excitement (no event of such importance had taken place in the literary world since Dostoevsky had spoken at the Pushkin elebrations), it was suddenly forbidden by the Minister of the Interior. ince the publication of *Virgin Soil even* the memory of Turgenev was garded by the higher powers as a menace to the nation no less sinister

than the new activities of Tolstoy, and to them it was unthinkable that such a function could be permitted. "Everyone without exception is annoyed," the Countess Tolstoy wrote to her sister, "except Leo, who is quite pleased not to have to speak in public." But, as was inevitable under such a state of affairs, the more Tolstoy's writings were suppressed, the more widely read they became. Later, when they were printed both in Geneva and in England, translations were made into nearly every language; while lithographed copies circulated freely even in Russia.

2

Meanwhile, Tolstoy's elder children were growing up. Tania (so the Countess decided) must be brought out; the boys must have their education completed. For this reason, in the winter of 1881, the whole family moved to Moscow, occupying a house rented from the Prince Volkonski. Tania went to an art school, and was launched into elegant society; Sergey entered the university; while Ilya and Leo, who had been refused admission to the Moscow Classical Gymnasium because Tolstoy, in accordance with his new beliefs, refused to sign the customary declaration guaranteeing their loyalty to the Czar, were sent to Polivanov's classical school instead. It being apparent that this removal to Moscow would henceforward have to be made regularly, Tolstoy finally decided to buy a house, in which the family established itself the following year. A simple, unpretentious two-storied villa in the south-west outskirts of the city, it stood in a large, straggling garden, deriving its water supply from a well. Anxious to do everything possible for his family's welfare, he also bought a carriage, a calash, a droshky, sledges and horses: which done, he once more turned his attention to more serious affairs.

From the first week in Moscow, in his newly awakened state, Tolstoy was appalled by all the poverty and misery that he saw there: shocked in his whole being as deeply as he had been when he had seen the execution in Paris. It must be remembered that Tolstoy had very little imagination, in the sense of being able deliberately to feel and experience what was physically remote from him. Indeed, all that was outside his immediate environment, until his later life, he was scarcely able to realize at all. But once face to face with human misery, no man could be more deeply responsive.

"A month is past, the most painful of my life," he recorded on October 5th. "They are moving in. When will they begin to live? All that they do is not in order to live, but because others do it. . . . Stink, stones, luxury, suffering and vice. Criminals have formed an alliance, robbed the people, got together soldiers and judges to protect their orgies and they feast. As for the people, they can do nothing but take advantage of these men's passions in order to get back from them what they have stolen." [89]

A few days later, the Countess Tolstoy wrote to her sister that she had wept every day, because "Leo was not only sad, but completely overwhelmed. He neither slept nor ate, and sometimes he even wept."

With his own eyes Tolstoy now saw what, during the peaceful years during which he had lived isolated at Yasnaya Polyana and immersed in his own personal interests, had been concealed from him: a ragged and dropsical peasant being carted to the police station for begging; a washerwoman dropping dead from consumption in the crowded streets; the degradation of thousands of human beings condemned by a system to live without any hope of escape in filth and destitution such as he had never conceived. "At the sight of the hunger, cold and degradation of thousands of people," he wrote later in *What Then Must We Do?*^ "I understood not with my mind or heart, but with my whole being, that the existence of thousands of such people in Moscow—while I and thousands of others overeat ourselves with beef-steaks and sturgeon and cover our houses and floors with cloth or carpets—no matter what all the learned men in the world may say about its necessity—is a crime committed not once but constantly; and that I with my luxury not merely tolerate it but share in it."[u]

There was nothing exaggerated in this feeling. Uncorrupted men all over Europe and America were experiencing just such inner abhorrence at the appalling results of economic *laisser faire*; but few possessed the eloquence to transmit their feelings with similar force. In England, nearly twenty years before, Ruskin also had been "tormented by agony of indignation and compassion," till he was forced to give up his "peace and pleasure and power; and rush down into the streets and lanes of the city, to do the little that is in the strength of our single hands against this uncleanness and iniquity. . . ."

"One cannot live so! One cannot live so!" Tolstoy would cry out with tears in his voice, whilst in his despair those about him tried to console him with the fact that this was no new thing, and that anyhow in London conditions were infinitely worse. And, practical as ever, he set himself the task of himself investigating poverty and trying to discover some kind of cure for it. In *What Then Must We Do?* (not completed until 1886) Tolstoy has given a significant and moving account of his own reactions and experiences while trying to solve the problem, followed by a devastating attack on the organization of a social order that makes such things possible, and concluding with his new religio-sociological ideas for improving the situation. Since this work embodies many of Tolstoy's most important sociological views, which influenced his personal life profoundly, it is necessary to study it in some detail.

Tolstoy's first observation, when he began to discuss with his friends how deeply he was disturbed by. the sight of so much human misery about him, was that no sooner were they impressed by his reactions,

which they attributed to his particular kindness of heart, than at once his former feelings gave place to complacency in his own benevolence which he wished to exhibit: and he sought to assure himself that any alteration in his personal life could have no possible effect upon the inevitable conditions of society. By trying to alter his own life, he would simply make his own family miserable, while all the evils that he had observed would continue to exist as before. Therefore, although in his inmost heart he was aware that this was a form of self-deception, he tried to still his deep sense of inner unrest by an attempt to administer private charity.

Preparations for the census were being made, so he determined to try to arouse the public conscience (while at the same time stilling his own) by writing articles for publication, collecting money, enrolling helpers, and with the census-takers visiting all the worst tenements and slums, with the object of discovering those who were most in need and helping them with money or practical relief. But not only were the rich extremely reluctant to help with contributions to his scheme (they preferred fashionable charities where, in luxurious drawing-rooms, young women in elegant clothes made dresses for dolls which would later be auctioned for less money than that spent in organizing the function), but deserving poor were extremely difficult to find. No matter the squalor in which they lived, each of the thousands of beings who inhabited the most abject doss-house was a unique human being just such as himself; and not only were the idlers and destitute in a small minority, but such as there were had already been relieved by their more fortunate neighbours. Those who were in greatest need of help fell into three categories: prostitutes, children, and those who had "come down in the world," these last being the most numerous and the most degraded of all, who were only waiting some stroke of luck which they were certain would restore them to their rightful position. And such cases could be helped by no giving of alms. Their position could be cured only by a radical alteration in society. In order to have saved the prostitutes, it would have been necessary first to have saved their mothers, that is to say, to have destroyed the current attitude to women, in which it was considered not only desirable, but even obligatory, for one class of women to be victimized for the security of another; and in which even the most protected women were brought up with no idea other than that of eventually satisfying the sensuality of some man, without working, and frequently without even bearing children. In order to have saved the children, it would have been necessary to put them in conditions in which they could develop with a right understanding of the necessity of work (a thing he found to be impossible with one little boy he took into his own house, when it was continually necessary to try to conceal from him the idle and pleasurable lives of his own children); and to save those who were waiting for some unexpected stroke of good fortune it would have been necessary

first to destroy in society the attitude that every form of necessary manual work is degrading, and that the next best thing to a life of complete leisure is a life without participation in exhausting toil.

All his slumming experiences and giving of alms, far from satisfying his inner disquiet, merely increased his sense of self-dissatisfaction, and finally convinced him that it was self-deception to believe that it is possible to help the poor and at the same time to go on living that very kind of life the maintenance of which depends solely upon the existence of the poor. The root of the matter lay in the corrupt attitude of society to the idea of work; in which the greatest blessing to have been conferred upon man, which alone can fill his life with interest and joy, is considered as an evil at all costs to be avoided, so that a life of leisure is the goal to which everyone, no matter how humble, aspires; and one class of the community can exist only at the expense of another class who fulfil its perverted desires.

True charity, Tolstoy learnt at last, meant not to give a few kopeks to a beggar (to the end of his life he considered this simply an unavoidable form of politeness, such as giving a light to a man about to smoke a cigarette) but to teach him how to work, and to supply him with the possibility to work. How could he come near enough to the poor to do this, when every trivial circumstance of his life was arranged in order that the poor should be separated from him by as great a distance as possible: when the chief object of every man of his class was to possess as much money as he could—that sinister agency by which the masses were always enslaved to the will of the few?

If he wished to help the poor, there was only one way for him, as for every man, to do it. To refuse to participate in a scheme of things in which one class of society is continually victimized by another. "I sit on a man's back, choking him and forcing him to carry me, and yet I assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to ease his lot by all possible means except by getting off his back." [n]

For to Tolstoy the possession of money is the root of all evil. No matter what sophistries in its justification are produced by pseudo-scientists, political economists and bankers, it cannot be denied that those who have a large reserve of money can very quickly reduce to slavery those who have none.

In his attack upon the pseudo-science of political economy (as it is recognized to-day to be by such scientists as Alexis Carrel) Tolstoy follows very closely many of the ideas of Ruskin, by whom he was undoubtedly much influenced; though his own solutions are all more uncompromising, more vehement and more radical. In *Unto This Last,* published as early as 1860, Ruskin had written: "... the art of making yourself rich, in the ordinary mercantile economist's sense, is therefore equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor... in accurate terms it is the art of establishing the maximum inequality in your own favour.../'which is precisely what Tolstoy was

saying now: but much as Tolstoy doubdess admired Ruskin for his words in *Munera Pidveris*: "I have no terms of English, and can find none in Greek nor Latin, nor in any strong language known to me, contemptuous enough to attach to the bestial idiotism of the modern theory that wages are to be measured by competition," he would never have conceded that "any given accumulation of commercial wealth may be indicative, on the one hand, of faithful industries, progressive energies and productive ingenuities; or, on the other, it may be indicative of mortal luxury, merciless tyranny, ruinous chicane." The conditions of his life were such that he saw only the wealthy landowners whose substance was gained by the terrible over-exertions of the peasants; and to him money meant only "mortal luxury, merciless tyranny, ruinous chicane." The so-called natural factors of production, beloved by the political economists, are, in fact, in Tolstoy's view, no more natural than cannibalism. All that the economists have done is to observe the workings of a system thoroughly vicious, and then proclaim to the world that because these things are so, they are therefore necessary. Ruskin also felt bitterly over precisely the same point, and declared that he knew of no previous instance in history of a nation's establishing a systematic disobedience to the first principles of its professed religion.

It is only in an ideal society, Tolstoy considered, that money could have the innocent qualities which political economy attributes to it; in any other it serves, with the support of a rule of violence, as the direct means of exploitation. "Where the violent coercion of one man by another exists in a society, the significance of money as a medium for the exchange of the products of toil gives way to its significance as the most convenient means of exploiting the labour of others." [u] What other name than slavery can be given to such exploitation? "Every enslavement of one man by another is based entirely on the fact that one man can compel the others to obey his will.... If a man gives his whole work to others, gets insufficient nourishment, hands his little children over to hard labour, leaves the land and devotes his whole life to hateful labour on things he himself does not want—as occurs before our eyes in our world (which we call cultured only because we live in it), it is safe to say that he does it only because he is threatened with death if he does not." [11]

Three methods of slavery continue which have never ceased to exist. The method of intimidation by threats of violence; the method of indirect coercion by depriving the masses both of land and of stores of food; and a third method by a demand for money in the form of taxes which they do not possess, and in order to pay which it is inevitable that they should sell themselves into bondage. Each of these three methods is employed in turn. When one ceases, another begins. It was no emancipation to free the serfs in name, while the landowners continued in possession of the land, and the Government immediately

imposed taxes upon the peasants; because the inevitable result was a slavery as merciless as before.

The slavery of the masses to the few is supported by two superstitions: the superstition of pseudo-religion, which maintains that the sacrifice of human lives to some imaginary being is necessary; and the superstition of pseudo-science, which maintain that a man's duty to the State is greater than his duty to his fellow-man, and that he must be forced to serve the Stateif necessary by violence. Thus one form of slavery is exchanged for another even more terrible, and people justify it by the fact that things could not be otherwise. A small minority, by professing alone to know in what the common good consists, are able to impose their will upon a whole people, and force them to do what they know is evil.

In these two superstitions, of which the pseudo-scientific one which masquerades beneath the name of political economy is the most insidious, lies concealed the spring of poison which corrodes contemporary life. For Tolstoy, no less than for Ruskin, the real science of political economy is that which " teaches nations to desire and to labour for the things that lead to life; and which teaches them to scorn and destroy the things that lead to destruction." But the chief aim of pseudo-political science, and in particular of political economy, is to hide from the masses the condition in which they are, principally by hypnotizing them with the idea that the violence which conditions the whole of their lives is inevitable and necessary, and so to divert them from the real cause of their misery. Where violence is legalized, there slavery exists; and to the masses it makes but little difference whether the violence is imposed by an invading enemy, legal slave ownership, or a government department collecting taxes by civil machinery supported by the intervention of police or soldiery when their demands are refused.

To organize trade unions, or to nationalize capital and the land, offers no solution, for the means by which the minority controls the masses will still remain in the form of the violence which armed men exert upon unarmed men, and their power to wrest from them the land and the produce of their toil. While living in such conditions, to go about giving alms is but little different from offering cheques drawn upon the account of the recipient.

How then can a man establish for himself what it is right for him to do, and keep to his aim? First, by understanding that the present conditions, no matter by how many sophistries and pseudo-sciences they are supported, are against the natural laws implanted in man's heart; and secondly, by participating in them as little as possible, by refusing to exploit other people's labour, or to own land, or serve the Government, or use money; these being the chief means by which slavery is achieved.

In practice, this means that each man who wishes to live without adding to the burden of poverty in the world must reduce his personal

needs to the minimum, and do for himself what formerly **other people** did for him. " For him who sincerely suffers at seeing the sufferings of those about him, there is a very clear, simple and easy means, **the** only one possible for the cure of the evils surrounding us and to enable **us** to feel that we are living rightly... not to have more than one coat and not to have money—that is, not to make use of other people's labour, and therefore, first, to do all that we can with our own hands. What else can alter a situation when, at the height of the harvest season, the rich retire to their country estates to lead a life of luxury and idleness, while the peasants who live on ryebread and onion work eighteen hours a day, go ill-clad, and do not get enough sleep ? " [u] Here it might well be noted that, as this passage clearly shows, it is a misunderstanding to suppose that Tolstoy taught that one should renounce money as a means of exchange: what he taught was that man should renounce the principle of living at the expense of others, which in contemporary society was inherent in the possession of undue wealth.

Scientists, artists, civil servants and industrialists all like to persuade themselves, in accordance with various convenient nineteenth-century theories, that their function in society is as important as that of the manual workers: but to apply in this sense the idea that we are "members of one another" is sophistry and self-deception, since without the labours of the manual labourers they could not continue to exist, while the manual labourers could not only very easily exist without them, but exist a very great deal better than before. Not until science and art apply themselves to the needs of those who make possible the lives of their practitioners can the scientist or the artist pretend with any degree of honesty or truth that he is part of an organism in which his activity is a necessary function. In every peasant hut there are pictures and icons; every peasant sings, and many of them are deeply musical; they all tell stories and recite verses; most of them read: yet the artists who consider their activities to be necessary to the community imagine that it is possible to ignore completely the very audience upon which their whole means of existence depends. " Science and art are as necessary to man as food, drink and clothing—even more so—but they become so not because we decide that what we call science and art are essential, but because science and art really are essential." [u] But as both the activities masquerading beneath those names are in general pseudo-science and pseudo-art, their indispensability to the community is not only hypothetical but non-existent.

In every enlightened age of mankind there existed one true science concerning the welfare and destiny of all men, which invariably stood highest in general esteem. This science was taught by such men as Confucius, Buddha, Moses, Socrates and Mohammed; and, except in our own times among a small circle of so-called educated people, it was understood by everybody and considered indispensable for everybody. But without knowledge of what constitutes the destiny and welfare of

all mankind, science and art become merely a pernicious form of diversion, offering distraction which nobody needs, and answering, with an air of grotesque infallibility, abstract questions, which no one has put, or is ever likely to put. Since the beginning of history, true science and true art existed for no other purpose than to express man's vocation and welfare. They existed only to serve the teaching of life, later called religion; and when they ceased to do so, they not only lost all meaning and purpose, but ceased to be important human activities.

True scientific or artistic activity is fruitful only when it knows no rights, but only duties; and it is because humanity has always recognized this that it is valued so highly. For goodness of life has always been understood by all sages and by all true Christians in exactly the same way: the way that all ordinary uncorrupted men understand it now: that the real worth of a man varies in exact ratio to the extent that he gives to others, or demands from them. But when science and art become no more than a production of idle thought and feeling aiming simply at arousing similarly idle thought and feeling in others, then the scientists and artists are "scribes and pharisees who have taken the keys of the kingdom, neither entering in themselves nor allowing others to enter.

" We, not only rich men but men in a privileged position, so-called educated men, have gone so far along a false road that we need either great resolution, or the experience of great suffering on our false path, to enable us to come to ourselves and acknowledge the lie we are living. . . . What to do ? consisted for me in repenting, in the full significance of that word, that is, completely changing my estimate of my own position and activity. Instead of considering our position useful and important, we must acknowledge its harmfulness and triviality; instead of priding ourselves on our education, we must admit our ignorance; in place of pride in our kindness we must acknowledge our immorality and cruelty, and instead of our importance admit our insignificance." [11]

It is not usually sufficiently emphasized that no matter how drastic and revolutionary Tolstoy's practical precepts appear to be, it is never assumed that they can have the slightest significance unless they are connected with a complete inner change, both of attitude and of understanding. Once man fully realizes that he has no rights or privileges, but only duties and obligations, then he will immediately see that it is necessary for him to participate in the physical struggle to support himself and others. If he refuses to do so, nature inevitably takes her revenge by destroying either his physical or his psychic health. What is first of all necessary is for him to destroy in himself the illusion that life exists for his personal satisfaction, and to understand that man is a machine that cannot work without food, and that food is produced only by work, so that to eat and not to work is a dangerous condition resembling a disease. Once this is realized, there will be no difficulty in finding useful work which will satisfy the needs both of body and

mind and be perfectly consistent with man's highest needs, since manual work and handicrafts supply just the change of work which is most necessary even to the creative artist.

And the alternative? Bloodshed and revolution. Already the prophet, thirty years before its occurrence, foretells the inevitable destruction that awaits a social system that has divorced itself from the requirements of all true life. "The workers' revolution with horrors of destruction and murder not merely threatens us, but we have been living over it for some thirty years already, and only for a while have somehow managed by various temporary devices to postpone its eruption. Such is the condition of Europe, such is the condition with us, and it is yet worse with us because there are no safety valves. Except the Czar, the classes that oppress the masses have no justification in the people's eyes; those masses are all held down in their position by violence, cunning and opportunism ... but hatred amongst the worst representatives of the people and contempt for us amongst the best of them increases every hour." [11]

Thus, followed by an attack upon property in essence very similar to his attack upon money, and a final (and somewhat unexpected) appeal to women that looks very much as though it owed its origin to *The Crown of Wild Olive,* to instil right principles into their children, so that they may act in accordance with the law of service rather than with a demand for privileges, *What Then Must We Dot* comes to an end. Its message is one that he was to assert and reassert continually all through his later life. In his essay on *Non-Acting,* written in 1893, in the most concise terms its essential principle is summed up. "Metanoite. Change your view of life, or you will perish," said Jesus. "The meaning of your life cannot consist in the pursuit of your personal well-being, or in that of your family or your nation, for such happiness can be obtained only at the expense of others. Realize that the meaning of your life can consist only in accomplishing the will of Him that sent you into this life and who demands of you not the pursuit of your own personal interests but the accomplishment of His aims—the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus expressed it." [18]

3

Tolstoy was fond of saying that two of his favourite books were TurgeneV's *Sportsman's Sketches* and Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead,* and that it was probable that, as a result of these two works, a new literary form would evolve which would leave the novelist free from the usual necessity of devising a formal plot. This prophecy, like so many of his others, was proved to be correct by the publication of *Swann,* only three years after his death, in which the usual demands of the novel were so little considered that for a long time they seemed to be deliberately ignored.

And with their long digressions, their redundancies and their prolixity, his own more important religio-philosophical works were the expression of a personal method combining autobiography, observation and reflection which has all the idiosyncrasy and charm of the more discursive passages of Proust or the later writings of Ruskin.

Tolstoy's debt to Ruskin, although realized by the two men themselves, has been seldom recognized. To Tolstoy (who often declared that the English and the Russians had more in common than any other two European nations, and that, had he not been born a Russian, he would have liked to have been an Englishman) Ruskin not only had "more understanding than the whole of the House of Commons," but was "one of the most remarkable men, not only of England and our time, but of all countries and all times. He was one of those rare men who think with their hearts *('les grandespensees viennent du coeur'),* and so he thought and said not only what he himself had seen and felt, but what everyone will think and say in future." Ruskin, on his side, who had been sent, by the young Sydney Cockerell, the article on Tolstoy by George Kennan which appeared in the *Century* in 1887, wrote to him that" the Story of Count Tolstoy is the noblest thing I ever read," and even lamented to him that he had not renounced his possessions. " I f I had done this, and lived in a garret, I could preach that Queen Victoria should do the same. I have always held that the only way to get rid of the East End is to get rid of the West End first." And learning now, when his health and his mind were already beginning tragically to fail him, that Tolstoy considered him to be the greatest living Englishman, he admitted to another friend that he looked upon Tolstoy as his disciple, and considered him to be the one man in Europe who was carrying out the work that he had hoped to do himself.

Sixteen years later, when Cockerell paid a visit to Yasnaya Polyana, after remarking that Ruskin was a very great man, Tolstoy added: "I like his face. I have seen two portraits, front face and profile, both after he had grown a beard. He was like a Russian peasant." And when his visitor mentioned how Ruskin had expressed his regret that he had not renounced his possessions, he said: " That interests me very much, for it is my case also. And why didn't Ruskin do it?" "He found it so difficult. He had so many ties, artists to support and so on." "Ah," Tolstoy replied with a sigh, "that is it. We do not become Christians until late in life, and then there are ties."[107]

Many of the ideas which inform *What Then Must We Do?* were derived from primitive Christianity, Ruskinian political-economy and nineteenth-century socialism, and transformed, through the medium of his peculiar genius, into a consistent view of life which corresponded with his personal understanding of the Gospels. But while the socialistic influence came direct through his friend V. I. Alexeyev, "the first man of education of my acquaintance who, not only in words, but in

spirit, confessed the faith which has become for me a clear and steadfast light," who had been a member of P. I. Chaykovski's group for spreading socialist propaganda in the early 'seventies, and had lived at Yasnaya Polyana for some years as tutor, the others were the result of study and research carefully meditated and deeply assimilated into the general body of his ideas until they formed a comprehensive system of religion, philosophy and ethics.

It is impossible to isolate any single idea from the main structure of Tolstoyan thought, and to consider it profitably without relation to the whole. By so doing, it is easy enough to demonstrate its apparent absurdity; but the absurdity is very often little but an indication of an incapacity for understanding. And while it is inadvisable to accept any statement of Tolstoy's as being infallible before one can recognize the virtue of his fundamental position, in studying his ideas it is necessary to follow the principle which he himself adopted in his study of the Gospels: to become acquainted first with the general drift of his thoughts, leaving on one side all that at first seems inconsistent, contradictory or impractical, until its true relation to the general scheme has been determined and it can be judged in relation to the many other ideas of which it forms but a fragmentary part.

What Then Must We Do? was followed, in 1887, by *On Life*: one of the least known and also one of the most important of Tolstoy's philosophical works, which forms the culminating point of the ten years of reflection and inner struggle that began in the middle of the 'seventies.

Reduced to its simplest terms, *On Life* is an eloquent, carefully reasoned and convincing argument by a highly gifted and understanding mind that, in the words of the peasant Theodore, only two possibilities are open to man: to live in order to stuff his belly, or to live for the needs of his soul. The first of these leads inevitably to death; the second to the only level of life which is worthy of the name. Each of these ways of life is the manifestation of a fundamental attitude which proceeds from a different level of consciousness: one of the animal, or personal consciousness, in which a man lives only in order to wrest from life what he imagines will procure his own happiness; the other of reasonable consciousness, in which he realizes that in order to live fully, without continual frustration, inner conflict, suffering and the final extinction of his being, it is necessary for him to serve, not himself, but the united spirit of life.

One impulse alone dominates the whole of mankind (and here Tolstoy is merely elaborating the reflections of Olenin that had been his own while a soldier in the Caucasus)—the desire for happiness. But in the impartial observation of life, reason soon makes it clear that the idea that happiness can be attained by the satisfaction of personal desires is the great and abiding illusion of mankind. No matter how great may be a man's apparent success, it can never be more than evanescent and partial, not only because the desires of the personality

are insatiable, but because the immutable laws of life are contending with him every hour, and no triumph can evade the implacable laws of time, no skill keep off the slow disintegration of the mind and body which must eventually result in death.

"I was happy only once," Stevenson wrote to Colvin from the South Sea Islands the year following the publication of *On Life*: "that was at Hyeres; it came to an end for a variety of reasons, decline of health, change of place, increase of money, age with his stealing steps; since then, as before, I know not what it means. But I know pleasure still; pleasure with a thousand faces, and none of them perfect, a thousand tongues all broken, a thousand hands, and all of them with scratching nails." It is the conclusion reached by every honest man in whom the higher aspect of his being has not been wholly extinguished, just as it is the conclusion reached by every great sage and teacher that the world has ever known.

When reason clearly demonstrates to a man that happiness is not to be attained through the satisfaction of personal ambitions; and that the usual activities of men, with their commerce, wars, arts and sciences, can never satisfy the whole of his being, then inevitably he begins to seek for true happiness in a new direction.

And it is in his search for this new direction that man is first confronted with the complete failure of modern science. Whereas a true science would study the whole of man and his needs, make it clear to him in what his highest welfare resides, and show him the way to attain it, modern materialistic science has deliberately ignored all man's higher faculties and higher needs, and succeeded in hypnotizing the so-called cultured world into believing that a study of the laws which govern the lower aspects of man—laws of self-preservation, of reproduction, or of the struggle for existence—constitute the whole of knowledge; while the one thing that he really needs to know it flagrantly ignores.

Only a correct understanding of life can give a right direction to science; and the so-called sciences which profess to study man and his needs objectively (that is to say, without any reference to the fact that besides being an animal he is also a reasonable being) are as specious and as ineffective as would be a science that professed to know everything about an egg while remaining in ignorance of the one important fact that out of it can come a living creature.

This same blindness, which also pervades philosophy, education and the whole of modern culture, makes the very faculty of reason, which is the greatest gift with which man has been endowed, at its first appearance seem to be an unmitigated misfortune, since in its exercise he sees in his reflections only a denial of life, without realizing in what direction a reasonable life can be sought. But in reality these sufferings are but the birth-pangs of a new awakening consciousness that perceives for the first time that all that he had formerly believed could

give him happiness can give him nothing, without showing him at once in what true life consists, or how he can live in accordance with its laws.

The desire for happiness is the desire for welfare, the desire for goodness; and once reason has fully ascertained that these are unattainable in the satisfaction of personal ambitions, then it inevitably seeks a different form of life in which such desires can be realized. And such a life not only exists, but lies waiting to be entered as soon as the level of animal-personal consciousness has been transcended.

For true life for man begins only with the appearance in himself of reasonable consciousness; with the realization that in order to live without continual frustration, suffering, and final annihilation, it is necessary for him deliberately to renounce the desires of the animal-personal level of consciousness, and rather than to serve himself, to lose himself in a higher service. This understanding itself raises him above the laws which govern the animal-personal life, and connects him with all those who have attained the same understanding, even if they lived thousands of years ago or at the other end of the earth.

To a man governed by reason, the renunciation of the welfare of the personal life is as natural as that a bird should fly instead of running with its feet. Because a bird runs with its feet, it is no proof that it cannot fly; and because the majority of men, supported by the ignorant conclusions of the materialistic sciences, believe that the whole of life consists in the satisfaction of material desires, it does not mean that this is natural for man, and that his true life does not consist in transcending these desires, and so attaining the level of reasonable consciousness.

With the growth of reason in man, there must happen what happens with every creature that is born: the life of one level (of the seed) must be destroyed in order that a new growth can take place, and his interests and activities be transferred to the new life which is opening before him.

To define the life of man only in terms of space and time is precisely similar to defining the height of an object in terms of its length and breadth. For the true life of man exists on a different level from that of space and time; and the relationship of the animal-personal level of consciousness to the reasonable level of consciousness is the relation between an upward and a horizontal movement, the first of which is independent of the second.

No man, if he is to continue to live, can arrest or destroy his horizontal movement in space and time; he can only transcend it by movement in another dimension. This movement is dependent upon the attainment of his real welfare through the subjection of the life of the personal desires to the life of reason; and through it alone can he free himself from the laws which govern the existence of the animal-personal man.

In order to overcome the fear and disgust of the transitory life that he inevitably feels when once, if only for a moment, he has glimpsed the true life of reason, it is necessary for a man *to* realize that another life is possible for him which is independent of the laws of space and time, and that in order to attain it, he must raise himself through his own deliberate efforts to a new level.

Reasonable life is the one abiding good which man can attain. And because the demands which it makes upon a man contradict the desires of the personality, it is said in the Gospels that in order to gain it a man must be born anew.

For a man to live for himself means inevitable frustration, disillusionment, suffering and death. Only when he has become absorbed by a true life independent of time, has he freed himself from annihilation. Suffering begins for man when, in order to stifle the demands of reasonable consciousness, he uses his reason to serve the expanding and insatiable demands of his own personality. To the man who lives on the level of reasonable consciousness it ceases to exist, since he understands that the demands of his own personality contradict his own welfare, and that true happiness can be attained only by serving others.

For conscious service—the deliberate manifestation of love—is the only activity possible for a man who is governed by the laws of reason. Everyone who has experienced the emotion of love knows that it alone is capable of solving all the apparent contradictions of life, and affording man the complete happiness towards which he continually blindly strives. Thus both emotion and reason corroborate each other in determining that the welfare of man lies in his capacity for self-abnegation. (Here, by a process of reasoning, Tolstoy reaches the same conclusion that he had reached emotionally many times before in the persons of Olenin, Pierre, Prince Andrew and Levin.) But such love (and Tolstoy uses the word here in the same way that St. Paul uses it in the thirteenth chaptei^f the First Epistle to the Corinthians) has little connection with the excessive partiality for individual creatures that usually goes by that name. True love means the desire to do good to all men realized in active service; and the false feelings which most men call by that name no more resemble it than the life of the animal-personal man resembles the life of reasonable consciousness.

What is usually called love is no more than a strong preference for certain individuals over others, governed by the exclusive desires of the personal man. Such a passion may contain in it an element of selflessness that is capable of developing into real love; or it may be the expression of a selfishness that can result only in evil.

Only in the man who has deliberately renounced the life of personality does love cease to be a manifestation of the animal nature, and have the power to generate an activity that can afford complete happiness. Then it becomes transformed into an aspiration for the ultimate

good of all men, a childlike bliss which incorporates everything about it, from those nearest down to the very grass.

Not until a man has become fully conscious of the phantasy and the illusory nature of the life of the personality can he fully realize that the life of reasonable consciousness, which consists in the service of others through love, is the only means of attaining his own true welfare and surviving the physical death of the animal man. For the manifestation of love belongs to a state of being independent of the laws of time, and reflects that aspect of man which alone is eternal. Then at last he will also recognize that his life is not a wave, but an incessant movement which appears as a wave only within the limits of the life of space and time; and that it is towards this supra-temporal and supra-terrestrial life that men are steadily driven by the suffering which results from the self-delusion of personal desires.

The most interesting commentary upon *On Life* was written by Tolstoy's remarkable fellow-countrywoman, Mme. Blavatsky, and published in her organ *Lucifer.* "It may be called/' she said, "a treatise on the Alchemy of the soul. For that solitary light in man which burns for ever, and can never be darkened in its intrinsic nature, though the 'animal' outside may be blind to it—is that 'light' upon which the Neo-Platonists of the Alexandrian school, and after them the Rosecroix and especially the Alchemists, have written volumes, though to the present day their true meaning is a mystery to most men.

"True, Count Tolstoy is neither an Alexandrian nor a modern theosophist; still less is he a Rosecroix or an Alchemist. But that which the latter have concealed under the peculiar phraseology of the Fire philosophers, purposely confusing cosmic transmutations with Spiritual Alchemy, all that is transferred by the great Russian thinker from the realm of the metaphysical into the field of practical life. That which Schelling would define as a realization of the identity of subject and object on a higher plane, or the Unknown Deity—all that Count Tolstoy has blended together without quitting the terrestrial plane. He is one of those few elect who begin with intuition and end with omniscience. It is the transmutation of the baser metals—the animal man—into gold and silver, or the philosopher's stone, the development and manifestation of man's higher self, which the Count has achieved. . . ."[106]

Chapter II

I *Family conflict:* The Light Shines in Darkness: *the attitude of the Countess Tolstoy.* 2. *The Countess Tolstoy's first attempt at suicide: she becomes the publisher of her husband' s works: Tolstoy attempts to leave home: he gives his wife power of attorney over his property.* 3. *Adjustments to the new views of life: his apology to accusers: handicrafts and manual labour: life at Moscow and at Yasnaya Poly ana: Tolstoy's daughters.* 4. *The new man: new friends—Chertkov, Birukov and Maude: Tolstoyan colonies: Tolstoyism and Tolstoy's attitude to it.*

TOLSTOY'S character being such as it was, it was inevitable that, long before his philosophy was fully developed, he wanted to put his new ideas into practice in their most radical form. Whereas Ruskin, with engaging charm, could remark to a group of sympathizers in his Oxford rooms: "Here I am trying to reform the world, and I suppose I ought to begin with myself. I am trying to do St. Benedict's work, and I ought to be a saint. And yet I am living between a Turkey carpet and a Titian, and drinking as much tea as I can *swig,"* Tolstoy, whose earnestness was often lit with the same self-mockery, with regard to his ideals, could only be passionately serious. If, in argument, it was urged that Christ had preached complete self-renunciation only for those who wished to be perfect, then he would answer with candid sincerity, just as he might have answered in a mood dominated by deep religious feeling as a boy: "But I wish to be perfect." At last his being was wholly subservient to the altruist, the philosopher, the lover of mankind and the lover of God.

A simplified expression of the tragic conflict that arose in consequence between Tolstoy and his wife is to be found in his posthumously published play (written between the middle 'nineties and 1902), *The Light Shines in Darkness.* Here, where many of his own views are put into the mouth of Nicholas Saryntsov, and those of the Countess into the mouth of Mary Ivanovna, his wife, Saryntsov appears as a sort of exaggerated Gregers Werle, who, going about with his continual demands of the ideal, causes suffering and destruction on every side. As Tolstoy himself said later: "A drama is sculptor's work. It has no shadows and half-tones. All must be clear-cut and in strong relief. The incidents must be ready, finished; and the whole work lies in representing these fully matured moments, these final moods of the characters"; and it is for this reason (since the play does not produce quite the effect that he intended) that it can only be considered as a failure. In trying to be strictly objective, Tolstoy has been less than

fair to himself; though his notes for the **unfinished last act show quite** clearly that, despite the havoc created by some of his ideas as soon as they are brought into contact with the resistance of life, he nevertheless still had faith in their complete validity.

Converted after a long inner struggle, like Tolstoy, to a similar understanding of Christianity, Saryntsov believes that the only way out of the continual friction caused between his new convictions and those of his wife is either to sign away his estates to the peasants, which he wishes to do, and live with her and his family a life of laborious toil; or else to leave her altogether: both of which seem to her to be perversely unnecessary and cruel. Finally, after continual pressure upon her part, he makes over his property to her; though not without warning her that if she is unable to curtail the luxurious manner of their life, such is the suffering that this causes him that he doubts if he will be able to continue living with her. Tortured by the fact that his children are being brought up in conditions which he feels can only be deeply harmful to them, there are further scenes in which, telling his wife that he can endure it all no longer, she threatens now to follow him, and now to throw herself under a train.

Every life that Saryntsov tries to influence for the better is either affected tragically, or else remains the same. A priest whom he has persuaded to leave the Orthodox Church returns to it; and the young man who, in accordance with his teaching, has refused to undertake military service, is mercilessly persecuted by the authorities, until, driven desperate with despair, his mother (in the last act, which was never completed) goes to Saryntsov, whom she considers to be the cause of his sufferings, and shoots him.

In fact, the tragedy which played itself out at Yasnaya Polyana over the next thirty years was infinitely more complex and infinitely more moving. It was the tragedy of a man who, swayed now by one combination of selves and now by another, while struggling with himself always to act in accordance with the highest teaching that he knew, simply did not understand what was the best course for him to follow, and in consequence taxed his powers beyond all human endurance.

We have already seen how, despite their passionate love for each other, there had always existed a latent antagonism between Tolstoy and his wife since the first days of their marriage. And now this steadily widened until finally it became a gulf impossible to bridge. Tolstoy wanted to live the life of reasonable consciousness: his wife could not renounce the life of the personal consciousness. Tolstoy could not, and his wife could not, change their attitudes; and this fact, complicated by the latent tenderness and affection, besides the latent antagonism, that they had for each other, produced a state of continual tension between them which at intervals erupted in violent explosions.

The Countess began to complain openly as early as 1879. In writing

to her sister, she hopes that Tolstoy's study of the Gospels will "pass like an illness," and refers to his learning of Hebrew as a "useless imbecility" over which she cannot hide her discontent. There is something infinitely touching in the fact that a man such as Tolstoy should find it necessary to write to his wife: "Don't be angry as you sometimes are when I mention God. I cannot avoid it, for He is the very basis of all my thoughts."

"I want to have a good time, with flippant company and new dresses, and I want to be admired and hear people praise my beauty," the Countess Tolstoy had recorded ingenuously in 1873; and eight years later, as a handsome and agreeable woman still under forty, the wife of one of the most distinguished writers in Russia, she was able to gratify her desire for social success in a way that had never been possible before.

"One's family is one's flesh," Tolstoy recorded on May 5th, 1881. "To desert one's family is the second temptation: to kill oneself. But do not yield to the third temptation. Serve not the family, but only God." His laconic jottings show only too well the way his family reacted to his views. "Talked with Fet and my wife. 'The Christian doctrine is impracticable.' 'Then it is stupid?' 'No, but it is impracticable.' 'But have you tried to practise it?' 'No, but it is impracticable.'" Or again: "Conversation with Sergey about God, continuing that of yesterday. He and they think they have to say: 'I don't know. It can't be proved. I don't need it.' They think this is a sign of intelligence and education when it is simply a sign of ignorance."

When Tolstoy proposed to his wife that they should give up their property and live a simple life in accordance with his convictions, the Countess was embarrassed, grieved, perplexed and furious by turns. But the one thing she would never do was to listen patiently to his intentions. She still wished to play Natasha, and could not realize that he was no longer Pierre, to be convinced that the whole duty of man lay in serving his wife and children. Had he married Valeria Arsenev, Tolstoy could scarcely have found himself now in a more unfortunate dilemma. "Often I wonder why it is given me to see their stupidity so plainly," he wrote to V. I. Alexeyev in October 1882, referring to the conditions which surrounded him, "while they are incapable of understanding their wrongness and stupidity. And so we remain in conflict, without understanding, and blaming each other. Only they are many, while I am alone." [89]

So life passed, between Moscow, Samara and Yasnaya Polyana; and always the same problem pressed heavily upon his spirit. Yet the Countess Tolstoy was by no means an uncharitable woman; but she liked to practise charity in the recognized manner of her station, that is to say, as the lady of the manor: an attitude, as we have seen, diametrically opposed to all Tolstoy's deepest feelings. When he wrote her once from Samara telling her of his sorrow for the poverty of the

peasants, she replied practically enough: "It is impossible to feed the thousands of starving people of Samara, or of all poor populations. But if you yourself see or know any man or woman who has neither bread nor cow, nor horse, nor hut, then one must give them at once. One cannot prevent oneself from doing so, because they are very pitiable and one must help them." [89]

Very early, Tolstoy felt himself cured of "the error of believing that others can and must see things as I do. I am very much to blame towards you, my dearest," he continued (he was writing from Samara to his wife), "involuntarily to blame, but to blame all the same. My excuse, such as it is, is that in order to work at such a high tension and create something, one has to forget everything else. And I have forgotten you too much, and I am sorry for it."

During 1881 it seemed that they could live happily only when apart; yet it is clearly evident from passages of their letters that they still shared together a deep tenderness and affection. "I am more and more convinced," wrote the Countess, when Tolstoy had returned to Yasnaya Polyana after his first disgust at town life, "that if a happy man suddenly sees only the evil side of life and closes his eyes to the good, he must be ill. You must get well. I say this with no ulterior motive. It seems to me to be true. I grieve much for you, and if you will reflect without taking umbrage at my words, perhaps you will find some remedy for your state. You began to suffer long ago. You used to say *I want to hang myself because I can't believe.' But why are you so miserable now that you have faith? Didn't you know before that there are ill, unhappy and wicked people in the world? But look, there are also good, joyful, charitable and happy ones. May God help you! But what can I do?" [89]

"Do not distress yourself about me, and, above all do not accuse yourself," Tolstoy wrote in reply. "'Forgive those who trespass against us.' As soon as one has forgiven others, one feels right with oneself. And I, for a long time, have ceased to reproach you. To judge by your letter you have forgiven me, and are no longer angry. I don't know myself why I was so unhappy; perhaps it was old age; perhaps ill health. But I have nothing to complain of: Moscow life has given me a great deal; it has shown me the path I must follow if I am still to act, and it has brought us nearer together____But I fear lest we may change roles, and I become well and in good spirits while you become depressed and tired. You say: * I love you, and now you have no further use for my love.' It is the one thing that I have need of: nothing else can do me more good, and your letters have revived me. . . . Isolation was very necessary for me and has done me good, and your love gives me the greatest joy in the world. ..."

But the cause of Tolstoy's inner suffering at this period was one that was to recur for the rest of his life. A significant entry from his diary reveals it clearly. "At home, a big dinner with champagne. Tania in

a smart dress: each child wearing a sash worth five roubles. While we dined, the carriage had already left for the picnic, amongst peasant carts which were bringing back people made ill with overwork."[89]

2

Towards the end of August 1882 the Countess Tolstoy tried for the first time to commit suicide. Having blamed her husband "for not taking sufficient interest in the children, for not helping me to nurse Ilya, who is ill, or to make jackets for the children," Tolstoy had not been able to restrain himself from exclaiming that his most passionate wish was to escape from his family; which threw his wife into one of her characteristic moods of self-pity and despair. "I am begging God to let me die," she recorded, "for I cannot live without his love—it is the same love which I have given him all these twenty years.... If he doesn't come back, I shall know that he loves another woman. . . ." And, walking through the wood to the bathing cabin (they were at Yasnaya Polyana), she plunged into the "ice-cold water," in which she remained for a long time, " hoping to catch a chill and die." Presently, as her health continued to remain unaffected, she went home to nurse her "happy, smiling little Alyosha," the youngest of her children, whom she had borne on October 31st of the preceding year.

Twenty-four hours later there was a reconciliation. "We both wept, and I saw with joy that the old love, the loss of which I had lamented during that dreadful night, was still alive in him."[66] She had wished to prove that she still had power over him; to satisfy herself that she was at least as important to him as his ideas.

In lighter mood, Tolstoy understood precisely the qualities in each of their natures which precipitated these harassing scenes. Now that the house was filled with young people between fifteen and twenty (not only his own elder children, but their Tolstoy and Kuzminsky cousins), many of whom had talent and were full of ideas they wished to express, an established ritual had grown up at Yasnaya Polyana known as the reading of the Letter Box. During the week, anyone who felt burdened with the desire for self-expression wrote down his thoughts either in prose or verse, and on Sunday evening at tea-time, when the whole family—children, tutors and guests—were assembled, either Tolstoy, his wife, or her sister Tania would read these out to an eager and enthusiastic audience. This presented Tolstoy with an excellent opportunity of lampooning good-naturedly both himself and his entire family in a *Bulletin of the Patients at Yasnaya Polyana Lunatic Asylum,* in which his diagnosis both of himself and of his wife are of particular significance.

"No I. L. N. Tolstoy. One of the harmless sort. The patient is subject to the mania known to German doctors as *Weltverbesserungs-*

wahn. His hallucination consists in thinking that you can change other people's lives by words. General symptoms: discontent with the whole existing order of things; condemnation of everyone except himself, and irritable garrulity quite irrespective of his audience; frequent transitions from fury and vexation to an unnatural and lachrymose sentimentality. Special symptoms: busying himself with unsuitable occupations, such as cleaning and making boots, mowing hay, etc. Treatment: complete indifference of all surrounding the patient to what he says; occupations designed to use up all his energy.

"No. 2. Countess S. A. Tolstoy. Belongs also to the harmless sort, but sometimes has to be suppressed. The patient is subject to the mania *petulanta hurryupica maxima.* Her hallucination consists in thinking that everyone demands everything of her and that she cannot manage to get everything done. Symptoms: the solution of problems which are not proposed; answering questions before they have been put; repelling accusations which have never been made; the satisfaction of demands which have not yet been put forward.... Treatment: hard work; diet; segregation from frivolous, worldly people."[70]

The Countess Tolstoy, who had always been a woman of enormous energy and vitality, now had many different opportunities of using them. There were not only her many children, the younger of whom, despite the aristocratic complement of governesses and nurses, required her constant attention; the management of two houses; the making of clothes and the numerous recordings in her diary, which (quite rightly) she felt would be invaluable to Tolstoy's future biographers ; but now, in addition, there was the editing and publishing of her husband's works. For Tolstoy's complete absorption in matters religious and philosophical, together with his growing indifference to money, which caused him to believe that his family would be better off with less rather than with more, had led to a neglect of his estates and a decline in royalties which diminished the family income just at a time when its expenses were continually increasing. As a result of which, following the example of Anna Dostoevsky, who had long been the successful publisher of her husband's works, the Countess borrowed money from her mother and an intimate family friend, and now issued, at a moderate price, a carefully produced complete edition of everything Tolstoy had written which was permitted *hy* the censor.

In her more detached moments, she too was fully aware of the nature of her domestic problems; recording that her enjoyment of "Tania's successes, and her own, thanks to her gaiety and youthfulness, and all the round of social pleasures," were "all wrong ... but she did not know how to stop"; admitting in a letter to her husband, after she had read one of his manuscripts, that she felt compelled to say that, while one could not deny that one should be perfect, and that it was necessary to recall the fact to men, and even to show them the way to attain it, it was "difficult to reject all the toys of life; everyone,

myself even more than others, clings to these toys, and it pleases me to see them about me, to make a noise, and to amuse myself. And if one does not reject these toys, then one cannot be perfect, one cannot be Christian"; and, in another to her sister Tania, that "Leo cannot help writing articles and speaking against town life and the life of the upper classes in general. He is a man ahead of his age who points the way that men must follow. But I, I am one of the crowd. I live with him, and I see the light which is carried by every advanced man like him, and I admit it is the light; but I cannot keep up with him—the crowd and my habits and environment all keep me back.. .." [89]

Nevertheless, in the summer of 1884 there was another terrible crisis between them. It seems to have begun in April, when the Countess was again far gone in pregnancy: a condition during which she usually became morbid, and, as we have seen, accused her husband of being disagreeable to her. "It is very painful at home," Tolstoy recorded on April 16th, "and it hurts me that I cannot sympathize with them. All their joys, examinations, successes in society, music, furniture, shopping, I consider as an evil for them, and I cannot make them understand it. I can and do tell them, but my words do not seem to reach anyone. How is it that they do not see that, apart from my suffering, I have had no life at all these three years? They give me the part of a peevish old man, and I cannot get out of it in their eyes." [84]

Meanwhile, the Countess Tolstoy, declaring to her household that her husband no longer loved her, wept and complained, and went to Tula to try to procure a miscarriage. But the midwife, fearing to implicate herself, refused to help her. Then, during the following weeks, while Tolstoy was shut up in his study to escape from her continual lamentations, recording: "At home the same general death. Only the little children are alive," the Countess, still determined not to bear her child, sat with her feet in scalding water, took baths so hot that she could scarcely bear them, or frightened the old nurse by climbing onto chests-of-drawers and jumping down. "I don't want to bear the child, Nurse," she would say. "The Count wants to leave us, to go away."

As her time drew near, the tension in the atmosphere became steadily more acute. "I am trying to be cheerful and happy, but it is very, very hard," Tolstoy recorded. "Everything I do is wrong, and I suffer horribly from this wrongness. It is as though I alone were not mad in a house of lunatics managed by lunatics." And three days later: "I cannot find a way of treating my wife so as not to hurt her feelings and not to give in to her. . . I am seeking it. I am trying." [84]

On June 17th, while Tolstoy recorded that he "could not go on with this savage life," and that he could only benefit them all by going away, the Countess's labour began. That morning there was a scene between them, which ended by Tolstoy, goaded beyond endurance, saying that he could stand no more, and would go to America. Having packed a

few necessities in a calico bag, he even left the house and walked halfway to Tula. But he could not overcome the thought of his wife suffering alone in childbirth, and eventually returned to the house. By then it was nearly *five* o'clock in the morning. As soon as he entered, the Countess went downstairs to him. "Liova, I am feeling very ill," she said," the child will soon be born. Why are you angry ? Forgive me if I am to blame for anything; for all I know, I may not survive this day." Without replying, Tolstoy turned towards her and gazed fixedly at her without speaking. One hour later, their daughter Alexandra was born.

"It was a mistake not to go away," Tolstoy recorded afterwards. " I think it will be bound to happen sooner or later." But the Countess Tolstoy was not to be pacified; and a month later "she came into my study and began a hysterical scene—the upshot of which was that nothing can be changed and she is unhappy and wants to run away somewhere. I was sorry for her, but at the same time I realized that it was hopeless. To the day of my death she will be a millstone round my and my children's necks. I must learn not to drown with this millstone round my neck." [84]

Crudely, in a moment of passion and pain, Tolstoy had expressed the problem that was to obsess him, despite the many periods of reconciliation, until the end of his life. Although on August 21 st" Sonia was reconciled. How glad I was. Certainly if she would take to being good she would be very good," and nearly three weeks later: "It is pleasant being with my wife. Told her unpleasant truths and she was not angry," the Countess Tolstoy's temper was becoming steadily more violent and more uncontrolled, so that the graph of their relations was like the temperature chart of a feverish patient, fluctuating continually and reaching at intervals peaks of crisis when the spirit was taxed and the nerves excoriated beyond endurance.

That autumn, alone at Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy still hoped that he might bring his wife to understand and appreciate his desires, and confided to her his new plan for organizing his estate in accordance with his convictions. "My reasoning is as follows," he wrote her. "It is true that we have the property on the false basis of private ownership, but even so we must manage it as best we can upon principles of equality, justice and goodness. Clearly, if something seems to me to be the law and the truth for mankind, it must necessarily be the law and the truth for my own actions; and therefore we, the rich, who profit by the law of violence, must ourselves voluntarily renounce both riches and violence. This cannot be done suddenly, but only by degrees. For to do so, we must ourselves make the estates pay, and enter into personal relations with those who work for us. I want to try doing this.... I don't believe any great harm or loss could come of it, and perhaps it would turn out to be a good thing. I should like to tell you of it in one of your good moments, when you would listen, because it is

difficult to write about it. . . . Perhaps, unknown to myself, this idea comes of my wishing to spend more time in the country: but I feel that the direction of my life has been wrong because of my remoteness and indifference to what is done contrary to my convictions.

" This neglectfulness was caused by my non-recognition of property, by false shame, and because I wanted to have nothing to do with it in order not to be taxed with inconsistency. But I think I have got over that now. I know how inconsistent I am, but, my friend, I beg you not to forget that this work means a great deal to me, and so not to reply at once under your first impression, and not to frustrate my plans_____"[89]

Unfortunately, the Countess Tolstoy, who, despite a sudden access of affection which prompted her to write that "there is something so wise, so good, so naif, so persevering in you," could not also resist the thrust that he was staying at Yasnaya in order to play Robinson Crusoe, or concluding her letter of reproach with the words that she had calmed herself with the proverb: "Let the child play with whatever he likes, so long as he doesn't cry." It was not so much that she would not as that she could not appreciate either his new works or his ideas. All those aspects of his being that he considered to be the most important, she was incapable of recognizing; save at moments when, passionately antagonistic, she felt that they threatened her personal interests and desires.

This seems to have been the last serious effort that Tolstoy made to reconcile her to his new way of life. That it was a complete failure can be gathered from the fact that he made no further attempt to interfere in the practical management of the estate.

"Agonizing struggle, and I do not control myself," Tolstoy recorded that year. "I look for the reasons—tobacco, incontinence, absence of imaginative work. It is all nonsense. The only cause is the absence of a loved and loving wife. It began from that time fourteen years ago when the cord snapped and I realized that I.was alone. All that is not a reason. I must find a wife in her. I ought, I can and I will." [M]

But in the autumn, realizing the hopelessness of his struggle, he finally gave the Countess Tolstoy power of attorney over all his property, and the copyright of his books written before 1881.

3

When Tolstoy gave himself up to the production of non-fiction works, the general reaction was not dissimilar from that which had confronted Ruskin when, twenty years before, he had turned from writing upon art to writing upon political economy. He was similarly "reprobated in a violent manner"; and the general opinion of the critics that "only a genius like Mr. Ruskin could have produced such

hopeless rubbish" might equally have been applied to him. Nor was his wife's attitude any different from that of Ruskin's dying father, who, though his eyes had formerly "glistened with tears over early poems and prose eloquence, strongly disapproved of this heretical economy." " You know how long I have waited and longed for this," the Countess Tolstoy once wrote to him, when he confided to her that he was again thinking of writing something poetic. "This is your salvation and happiness. This will unite us once more: it is your real work, and will console you and illumine our life." [89]

But Tolstoy thought otherwise; and when his friends and acquaintances sometimes reproached him for no longer writing novels, he would shake his head and reply with a smile: "You know, that is simply like *the* former admirers of some elderly French whore saying to her: 'How enchantingly you used to pick up your petticoats and sing chansonnettes!'"

He had always considered art as a vocation, and smiled contemptuously when people remarked to him that both Byron and Pushkin had written only for money: but now his attitude was even more austere; and he felt that it was an obligation deliberately to dedicate his talent to the service of mankind. " Formerly I thought it cruel that I was not permitted to see the fruits of my work," he recorded in December 1882. "But now I see that it is not cruel, but absolutely right. . . . What' you do with love, without seeing any reward, is the work of God. Sow, sow, and the word of God will spread, and not you will reap, but that in you which sows."

As early as 1881 he had told V. I. Alexeyev that he was now convinced that the only means to show the way was by the example of life; and whether he was living in Moscow or at Yasnaya Polyana, he conscientiously tried to live up to his principles. In Moscow he carried water from the well; learned to make boots; cleaned his own rooms, and discovered some congenial peasants with whom he could saw and chop wood. At Yasnaya he joined actively in the physical labour of the peasants; himself felled timber for those he knew to be in need of it; sowed seed in the kitchen gardens of widowed peasant women who were too old and too ill to work for themselves; dusted his own rooms; cleaned his own boots, and, in sheepskin coat and cap and gumboots, in winter looked more like a peasant than ever.

Nevertheless, until the end of his life he was continually ridiculed and attacked for hypocrisy. His reply to this (when he considered it necessary to reply) was always the same, and is found eloquently expressed in his letter to M. A. Engelhardt. "' But'—people say to me—r 'i f you consider that apart from the fulfilment of the Christian teaching there is no reasonable life, and if you love that reasonable life, why do you not fulfil the commands ?' I reply that I am a base creature and deserve blame and contempt for not fulfilling them. But, not so much

in justification as in explanation of my inconsistency, I say: * Consider my former life and my present one, and you will see that I try to fulfil them. I do not fulfil a ten-thousandth part, it is true, and for that I am to blame; but it is not because I do not wish to fulfil them, but because I do not know how to. Teach me how to escape from the nets of temptation that have ensnared me, help me, and I will fulfil them; but even without help I desire and hope to do so. Blame me—I do that myself—but blame *me,* and not the path I tread and show to those who ask where the road lies!... With all my might I try to practise it, and at every failure not merely do I repent, but I pray for help to enable me to perform it, and I gladly meet and listen to anyone who like myself is seeking the road. . . .'" [11]

And when, as late as March 1909, a stranger wrote to him: "I beg you to tell me, if only in a few words, why you are not poor, and what prevents you from becoming so, instead of continuing to live in conditions which not only exclude the idea of poverty, but even of the least discomfort," he replied simply: "I have not done what you ask of me simply because of my weakness and mediocrity, and I never cease to repent for this weakness before God."

There can be little doubt that, in his belief in manual labour (apart from the fact that he enjoyed it) Tolstoy tried to follow the discipline .which he had observed practised in monasteries; for he continued his J visits to them long after he had given up all faith in the Orthodox • Church, and on a visit he had paid to the Optin Monastery with one of (the Yasnaya Polyana servants in the summer of 1881 was particularly ! interested to observe the monks mowing, ploughing, and engaged in iall manner of "obedience." After a second talk with the famous Father Ambrose, he wrote that his soul "felt light and joyous. When one speaks with such a man, one really feels the presence of God." For Tolstoy, "there always was a true church, in the sense of people united in the highest truth accessible to man at any given period," and he cared not a whit to*what religion they belonged. In this, he meant precisely what Ruskin meant when he called himself a "Christian Catholic in the true and eternal meaning of *the* term."

With his aversion to the unnecessary use of money, rather than use the train Tolstoy would walk wherever he could, and, supplied only with food, a notebook, pencil and change of linen, would sometimes even tramp the 130 miles from Moscow to Yasnaya Polyana, either . with friends or with companions he had met on the road, willingly sleeping in any hovel by the way. Thus he became acquainted with I many different types of simple people that he studied with the deepest ' interest and reproduced later with characteristic skill.

The house in Moscow, where the Countess Tolstoy gave balls and concerts, and there were receptions every Saturday, attended by " the best society in all Russia," as Tolstoy had described the distinguished men that would visit him during the days when he was writing im-

passioned letters to Valeria Arsenev, began to be frequented also by all sorts of shabby strangers, who, desirous of meeting Tolstoy, would be escorted, looking perplexed and awkward, through the crowded drawing-room to the two small rooms occupied by the master of the house. Sometimes, dressed like a peasant, in sheepskin coat and cap and greased gumboots, his hands in his pockets or tucked into the opposite sleeves, Tolstoy would set out to wander about the streets and investigate the life of the people, or even to visit society acquaintances. There were times when he would eyen appear in his peasant half-length coat, his dog at his heels, at a fashionable ball.

At the same time Yasnaya Polyana also became a place of pilgrimage of all kinds, from tramps and sectarian peasants to princes and distinguished foreigners. Not only the devout on their way to Kiev came to be given alms and food, as in the old days when he was a child, but also, in the words of Anna Seuron, who was a governess at Yasnaya Polyana at this time, and later published her reminiscences, "those oppressed by riches and boredom . . . sons of good families who had already skimmed the cream of life, women who had buried the bloom of their illusions in unwomanliness, poor half-developed students who wished to imitate the Count. . . . Sons of the highest aristocracy discarded gold and lands and went into the desert to eat locusts. Ladies from Cronstadt and *dames de classe* appeared and manured the fields in galoshes and white dressing-jackets. . . . The Count ploughed and worked with the peasants, but often when he talked with them . 1. the eighteenth-century serf-owner awoke in him . . . his eyes would become angry and cold and the beggar would go away shaking his head disconsolately." [2] Having~given up the use of his title—"my name is Leo Nikolaevich," he would now tell those who addressed him in any other way, just as he had told the children in his school long ago—it was less easy to suppress other manifestations of the aristocrat.

During the haymaking "counts, princes, teachers and all sorts of blue-blooded people tried to work in rivalry with the peasants. Scythes hacked awkwardly, mowing the lush grass. Everyone strove to outdo the others. ... All the peasants were there, and so was the Countess in a Russian dress; children and governesses, we all helped to turn the hay. The hunting dogs lay around, and an unusually hot sun shone on the smiling meadow——And ther^he stands, that peasant Count, in a Russian shirt and trousers, his legs wide apart, mowing; and looking at him I see that he is quite absorbed in it. He is listening to the sound of the scythes and enjoying himself." [2]

All his life long, henceforward, Tolstoy was to be mistaken for a peasant: and there were many amusing incidents when, having treated him with the casual indifference accorded only to a servant, people discovered, to their extreme embarrassment, that they had offered a tip or been uncivil to the great Tolstoy. Once again, Tolstoy's instruction of others in the art of manual labour is reminiscent of Ruskin, who

"believed heartily in diggings of all sorts," and had, broom in hand, in 1872 organized a street-cleaning expedition between the British Museum and St. Giles', and, three years later, having taken lessons in stone-breaking, together with a number of friends and admirers (amongst whom is said to have been the undergraduate Oscar Wilde), had set to work to repair the neglected road at Hincksey.

As the decade passed, Tolstoy grew increasingly strict with himself over all those former indulgences which now he felt might hinder him from leading the life of reasonable consciousness. A famous vegetarian arrived from America, and (though this by no means cured him of the old gluttony which had helped to destroy his digestion, and sometimes even now, when he ate inordinate quantities of water-melon or green peas, made the Countess Tolstoy "quite frightened") he gave up eating meat "because, to say nothing of the excitation of the passions caused by such food, its use is simply immoral, as it involves the performance of an act contrary to moral feeling—killing; and is evoked only by greediness and the desire for appetizing food." He refused to serve on a jury because all legal activity was contrary to his convictions. Then, after a prolonged struggle, during which he often fell back, he gave up hunting and shooting; he gave up the use of tobacco; and he gave up drinking all wines and spirits, so that in future the dinner-table was graced only by jugs *of kvas*, and visitors requiring more stimulating refreshment were obliged to introduce it into the house secretly and drink it in unfrequented corners. Thus the sportsman followed to extinction the gambler, the libertine and the man of fashion; leaving Tolstoy in future to struggle with difficulties more subtle and more potent.

Although the Countess Tolstoy was frankly hostile to this new way of-life, and Tolstoy no longer tried to coerce either her or his children to his views, both his daughters tried for many years to live in accordance with their father's principles. "The first member of our family who most resembled my father," Ilya Tolstoy wrote later, "was my sister Mary. In 1885 she was fifteen years of age, light-complexioned, slight in build and rather tall. Physically she reminded me of my mother, though her face was a little like father's, with the same prominent cheekbones, the same light blue eyes. Gentle and modest, she gave the impression of being of a retiring disposition. In her inmost soul she felt her father's isolation, and, abandoning the society of her friends, she passed quietly, though decisively, over to his side." [70]

This young and sensitive girl, nurtured amongst all the graces of civilization, with a lovely voice and a passion for gipsy songs, out of devotion both to her father and his aims would tend the sick of the village with complete selflessness, or work for long hours with the peasant women in the burning sun. Next to her in understanding of their father came her elder sister Tania, for whom, even as a child, he had so ardent a love that she alone, *of* all the family, was permitted to

disturb the sanctity of his study while he was at work upon *War and Peace,* "My impression, after reading *War and Peace,"* the same brother wrote of her, "was that my sister Tarda, at 16, resembled Natasha far more than did my aunt. I was amazed to think that my father had written this book when Tania was quite a child, and had foretold her character exactly."[70] Ardent, vivacious, intelligent, with brown eyes, waving chestnut hair, and a captivating turned-up nose, Tania was equally devoted to, and loved by, both her parents, and managed to steer her way between them with resilient ease, helping her mother with the younger children, and also attending to her father's continually growing correspondence. Often, when he felt that he could bear the city no longer, Tolstoy would retire to Yasnaya with his two daughters, where, in accordance with his precepts, they had established their own laundry, and had long and exhaustive arguments as to the best methods of wringing.

"Tolstoy's daughters are very sympathetic," Chekov wrote of them to Souvorin when he first visited Yasnaya Polyana in 1895. "They adore their father and believe in him fanatically, and that means that Tolstoy really is a great moral force, for were he not sincere and beyond reproach, his daughters would be the first to be sceptical about him, daughters being like sparrows—they can't be deceived with chaff."[121]

"Do you know what Father hopes for?" Mary would tell their visitors. "That he will bring us all round to a new life, and that we shall all believe as he does. Our dear precious Leo Nikolaevich! What a terrible task he is undertaking!" Nevertheless, she herself not only worked in the fields during harvest until the hay was all in, but every day, after her work, went home to fetch food for her patients in the village, cleaned her own room, and went to be^ early, completely exhausted.

Mary, indeed, who was also working for a diploma so that she might become a teacher, was so beloved by the peasant women of the village that they would confide to her all their most intimate affairs, and had it not been for her mother's tart injunction: "You were born Counts and Countesses, and Counts and Countesses you will remain," would at one time have gone to live altogether among them. Instead, she devoted herself henceforward to acting as her*father's secretary and copying his manuscripts.

Thus, towards the end of the 'eighties, Yasnaya Polyana became the background for two completely different kinds of life: one representative of Tolstoy's ideas, and the other of those of his wife. On the one hand, there was the open-handed, traditional hospitality of the Russian landowner, with innumerable guests and the usual diversions of riding, swimming, tennis, croquet, picnic-parties, amateur theatricals and concerts; on the other, a life of service and manual labour inaugurated by Tolstoy, which each could share in to the extent that Jae pleased.

But the Countess Tolstoy never more than suffered this state of affairs. And when Tolstoy sometimes came into the house smelling of manure and healthy sweat, she would ostentatiously fumigate the room with scented pastilles. Smoking out the unclean spirits with incense, Tolstoy called it.

4

The struggles of these last years had made greater alterations in Tolstoy than turning his hair to grey. When Polonsky met him at Turgenev's at the end of the 'seventies (he had not seen him since the occasion at Baden) he was struck by his new gentleness, and found him "like a man regenerated, penetrated by another faith, by another love." Instead of the old arrogance in argument, he listened serenely to others, without seeking to impose his own opinions; and was no longer the same man that he had been in youth. To Stephen Behrs, who met him again in 1887, after an interval of nearly ten years," his face showed evident traces of the serious mental sufferings he had endured. It was calm, sad, and had a quite new expression. Nor was it his face only, but his whole personality, that had completely altered. The playfulness that was formerly present in him, and so enlivening to others, had now quite vanished."

Nevertheless, Tolstoy still had (as he was always to have until the end of his life) occasional moods of exuberant good spirits, and the garrulous Anna Seuron once saw "the wise man dance a waltz with as much lightness and agility as though he were the Count of former days. And really, quite unconsciously, he sometimes shakes twenty years off his shoulders; while having the peculiar talent of never appearing ridiculous, no matter how he is dressed—even when his sock shows through a hole in his boot." [2]

Indeed, Tolstoy never completely lost his capacity to laugh with the exuberance of a schoolboy, or the engaging quality of viewing even his own foibles with candid irony. Many have remarked the way this natural candour would often confuse the disquisitions of the moralist. On one occasion, when a large party was going to see a special performance given by Sarah Bernhardt, and he had seized the opportunity to deliver a fierce diatribe against the luxury and idleness of the rich at the expense of the poor, he suddenly concluded with the ingenuous admission: " But all the same, you know, I am most awfully sorry that I am not coming too"; while on another (many years later), when, out walking with a friend, he had seen two guardsmen in the distance, and started to inveigh against military service in general, and these men in particular, exclaiming acidly: "What pompous idiocy! Like animals trained by the whip," he unexpectedly brought out, as they drew level, with the most disarming of smiles: " How splendid! Old Romans, eh? What strength and beauty! O lord, how charming it

is when a man is handsome, how very charming."[77] Far from being intolerant, no matter how austere his own principles, he was both indignant and amazed, towards the end of his life, to learn that Gorki and Mme. Andreyev had been refused admittance to the United States because they were not married.

His levity was often directed towards the increasing tendency to falsify and sentimentalize his own activities; and of one of the Repin portraits, which later became famous throughout the world, he would remark acidly: "He took away my boots: I should be thankful that he left me my trousers 1 No, really, it is so pretentious, so unnatural. Doesn't he know that I don't walk barefoot? Only once in my life have I taken my boots off in public, and it was my bad luck that he was there to see it 1"

Corresponding with the great change which had occurred in the man himself was the eventual change that took place in his whole circle of friends and acquaintances. As his interests altered he lost touch, or at least ceased to be intimate, with many of those who had formerly been close to him; estranged by their indifference, or even hostility, to his new principles, or disheartened by the impossibility of being able to share with them any deep understanding. For some, like Fet, who wanted from life "nothing but a soft bed, a well-cooked steak, a good bottle of wine and a couple of good horses," he always retained an indulgent affection; others ceased to affect him even to this extent.

On the other hand, from the beginning of the 'eighties he was approached by an increasing number of sympathizers, many of whom became his friends and disciples (or pseudo-disciples) and some of whom were henceforward to play a part of considerable importance in his life. There was the peasant Sutaev, a Christian sectarian, who had served in a disciplinary battalion for refusing military service; and lived, with his whole family, a strictly communal life, owning no personal possessions, and carrying out, to the best of his ability, the practical precepts of the Gospels: there was N. F. Feodorov, a museum librarian, who dwelt in a hovel and possessed neither linen nor bed, in order that he might give all he had to the poor—a saint, Tolstoy called him: there was a schoolmaster Orlov, an elderly man, always serene and in good spirits, who, though poor and ill, led an ascetic life and supported nine people: there was a peasant, Novikov, who changed his life on account of some of Tolstoy's books which had been given him by his brother who was a footman. There were educated and gifted men, such as Soloviev, the philosopher (said to have been the model used by Dostoevsky for Alyosha Karamazov): Gay, the painter, who, deeply impressed by Tolstoy's article *On the Census*, had arrived one day at the Moscow house, and offered to paint any of Tolstoy's family that he wished—a man of fifty, "bald, charming and naive, with clear blue eyes and a nice expression," as the Countess described him to her sister when she presently sat to him: P. A. Boulanger, a successful

engineer, "kind and intelligent and deeply devoted to Leo Nikolaevich" (the Countess Tolstoy recorded): Arvid Jarnfeld, the Finnish writer who translated Tolstoy's works and tried to live in accordance with his ideals: and G. A. Rusanov, a small landowner and literary critic, who, confined to an armchair for years with tuberculosis of the spine, before he died wrote in his will that, having lived as an atheist from his fourteenth to his thirty-eighth year, he then, " thanks to the greatest of men, Leo Tolstoy, acquired faith in God and belief in the teaching of Christ."

There were active and practising disciples such as the young prince D. A. Khilkov, who, although he had never met Tolstoy personally, gave back nearly all his land to the peasants, and went to work without pay as an apprentice, hiring himself out only when he had become a skilled workman, and later, having also relinquished the Orthodox Church, was exiled to the Caucasus, where he lived amongst the Dukhobors until banished to the Baltic provinces, whence he received permission to go abroad in 1898, when he went to England to stay in the Tolstoyan colony at Purleigh. Or Feinermann, a vigorous and ardent young Jew of nineteen, who one day arrived at Yasnaya Polyana saying that he wished to work; astonished the faithful by giving away his clothes (whereupon he had to be provided with new ones), settled in the village, and, having been converted to orthodoxy, became a schoolmaster there until he was conscripted for military service. Later, he went to live in one of the unsuccessful colonies, and afterwards, under an assumed name, wrote a book about Tolstoy. Or there was Mary Alexandrovna Schmidt, a spinster who had been head of one of the most fashionable girls' schools in Russia, and on reading Tolstoy's books had decided to change her life. " Her whole existence is just a fanatical adoration of Leo Nikolaevich," the Countess recorded later. "She was once a devout churchgoer; but after reading Leo Nikolaevich's articles, she took down all the icons and hung up his portraits all over the place, and collected a whole lot of his prohibited works, which she copies out for other people for a living." [67] After a short stay at Yasnaya Polyana, Mary Schmidt joined a community elsewhere, bearing without complaint the many grave hardships of their life. Later, when this colony disintegrated, she lived with a friend in a modest hut in the Crimea, where they supported themselves by toiling in their small kitchen garden. Finally, she settled in the village at Yasnaya on a piece of land lent her by Tolstoy's eldest daughter, where she lived a life of extreme simplicity until his death.

More important, there were Birukov, Chertkov, Maude and Goldenweiser. Goldenweiser was a gifted young pianist who had accompanied Chaliapin when he sang for the first time at a concert at the Tolstoys' Moscow house, and remained Tolstoy's friend (as indeed did the others) until his death.

Vladimir Grigorievich Chertkov, who later became Tolstoy's

closest friend, was at the time of their meeting in **1883** a **very** handsome young man of thirty, well-born, intelligent, rich and much courted by the women of the most aristocratic circles. A childhood friend of Alexander **I I I ,** the son of a famous general with great influence at Court and a wealthy mother who to the end of her days adored him, he had early joined the army as a profession, but in 1879 had, for reasons of conscience (as he said) or because such was his temper that he could not bear to be in a subordinate position (as others said who disliked him), left the army. After travelling for a year in England, he had been then persuaded by his father to accept a commission in the Guards: but this too he soon resigned in order to lead a simple life amongst the peasants. When he met Tolstoy, he felt all his vague seekings were at an end. Here was a man who understood Christianity precisely as he understood it himself; and what better could he do with his future life than dedicate it, by becoming his fellow-worker and disciple, to the advancement of their mutual ideals? "The moral tie which established itself between us," he wrote later, "inevitably had a particular significance for us both: for him it meant appreciation and support of all that he recognized to be the best and highest in himself; for me it was an indispensable help in the growth of my inner life."

Of fine physique and commanding presence, self-assured and perfect-mannered, "in his eyes, which sometimes darkened with anger, in his narrow forehead, in his arched Roman nose" (Tolstoy's daughter Alexandra wrote many years later), "there was so much power and authority that people involuntarily did his bidding." [73] When the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy met him, she found him "pure as crystal and liked him very much." When the Countess Sofia Tolstoy was received by Alexander III, one of the things that struck her most was that he resembled Chertkov both in his appearance and in his manner of speaking. Maude, who has tried to be fair to him despite a powerful and obvious dislike, has described him as "a man of noble sentiments, high aims, and great enthusiasm . . . but he was accustomed to command, had a very strong will of his own, and held Tolstoyan views of non-resistance, property and government to their fullest extent. . . ." When convicted of lying, he would reply "with the disarming naivety that was one of his most attractive qualities: 'Yes, when I want something very much, I do sometimes say the thing which is not/ With his charm of manner, striking personality and the prestige of being Tolstoy's first lieutenant, he seldom failed to impress people favourably on first acquaintance, and those who were not obliged to work with him retained that impression more or less permanently." [2]

Chertkov's enthusiasm, at times, apparently reached the limits of fanaticism. So extreme were his views of money (and so irreconcilable with the necessities of life) that it is said of him that while he refused to handle it himself, he permitted his wife to sign cheques on his behalf,

and invariably, when he travelled, made his secretary accompany him to the station in order to buy his ticket. But if this is so, it was simply out of incapacity to carry out a very literal understanding of one of Tolstoy's fundamental dogmas, and certainly did notxontain any element of hypocrisy, since there is no doubt that he was always devoted, to the point of considerable self-sacrifice, to the ideals which he served.

It was Chertkov who introduced to Tolstoy his friend P. I. Birukov (who later became Tolstoy's authorized Russian biographer) the following year. "I had known Chertkov for some time," Birukov wrote later, "and from him had learned to love the wdrks of Tolstoy. . . ." Expecting to find Tolstoy a "gloomy old man, absorbed in the study of the old standard works of Christian literature," he found instead "a sincere and good man whose simplicity could not but charm and attract!" The family were at tea, and at first the conversation was general. Then Tolstoy began to speak of the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,* which had recently been rediscovered in a monastery at Mount Athos. Presently the talk turned upon the incompatibility of certain professions with the Christian life, and Tolstoy "serenely explained that one could be a Christian and practise any profession save only two: the law and the army. Then, giving a look at my uniform, he added: * Excuse me for saying that in front of you/ And I well recall how ashamed of that uniform I felt." So ashamed, indeed, that the next time he called he wore it no longer. He had thrown up his career in the navy in order to follow Tolstoy's interpretation of the Christian life; and towards the end of the decade established a printing press at Geneva for publishing his prohibited works.

Aylmer Maude, who was taken to see Tolstoy for the first time in 1888—"a ponderous and dull man who seemed to consider it his duty to follow me about when I was anxious only to be alone to think," the Countess Tolstoy found him on a subsequent occasion—was the manager of a well-known carpet business, who later retired and devoted the rest of his life to the translation of Tolstoy's works, participation in his scheme of helping the Dukhobors emigrate to Canada, and the writing of his biography. When he met Tolstoy first, what most impressed him was "his power of vivid, concise and humorous expression, the keenness of his interest in all sorts of things . .. the power of putting people at their ease and getting them to talk on subjects they knew something about." [2]

In 1885, with the help of Chertkov, Birukov and. other friends, Tolstoy was able to put into practice a project which, in various different forms (the first we heard of it was when, in the Caucasus, he wanted to edit a magazine, the sole aim of which would be the spread of works morally useful), had occupied his thoughts for many years—the establishment of the *Intermediary,* a publishing house which would

supply, instead of the current trash that alone was available to them, both cheap and good literature to the people. Works of great moralists such as Aurelius and Epictetus; translations of European classics, and tales specially written for the purpose by himself, were all printed in large quantities and sold at prices varying from the equivalent of a farthing to a penny. In this way he was able to demonstrate the practical possibility of the artist serving the needs of the people, and as a result of it in England W. T. Stead started the penny Universal Classical Library, which eventually developed into the World's Classics in which, to-day, most of Tolstoy's own works are obtainable.

With the passing of time, the sphere of Tolstoy's influence steadily increased. Before long, people calling diemselves Tolstoyans formed themselves into groups not only in Russia, but in England, Holland and the United States, and, though it was not a proceeding that he himself advised, lived together in colonies with the intention of practising what they understood to be Tolstoy's teachings. But these colonies were of but short duration, and were it not for the fact that there is always something deeply touching about the failure of high ideals, the chaos and confusion in which most of them ended would be merely comic.

One of them in the province of Smolensk disintegrated because a lad who had been adopted stole one of the men's waistcoats, and, refusing to return it, justified himself by some of the advanced sophistries he had recently imbibed. This occasioned such dissension amongst the colonists, that it was immediately clear to all of them that they had no idea what should be done.

At Tver, a stranger felled some trees belonging to the colony, and offered to buy them, upon which one of the colonists declared that, as they themselves did not use the wood, they therefore had no moral right to it, and should let anyone who needed it have timber free. The idea was adopted; and peasants came from far and near in fierce rivalry to remove as much as they could. To prevent conflict, a system of supervision had to be introduced, in consequence of which peasants who owned many sledges and had money to bribe the hired forester in charge took away all that was to be had, and the poorer ones got nothing. Disillusioned at the results of their principles, the colonists decided to abandon their way of life.

At the colony at Kharkov the cause of failure was most fantastic of all. An aggressive stranger arrived one day, calmly announced himself to be the new master of the place, and insolently demanded that, as they had no right to resist him by violence, the present owners should all leave the farm. Apparently it occurred to no one that if they ignored him he would eventually have tired of his caprice; and, deeding the land and buildings to the local peasant commune, they meekly withdrew.

Later still, the English colony at Purleigh culminated in an outbreak

of misunderstandings, quarrels, and even lapses into insanity so astonishing that one of their sympathizers remarked: "There is more tomfoolery to the square yard in this movement than in any other I have ever known." Of this failure, Tolstoy himself wrote to Maude: "This is only an indication that the form of life which was chosen by the colonists for the realization of their spiritual needs was not adequate. When a definite inner content exists in man, it finds itself a corresponding form—generally unconsciously, that is to say, when one is not thinking about the form and when the form is not defined in words."[2]

Although, later, the Third Pan-Russian Missionary Congress denounced Tolstoyism as being a well-defined and harmful sect, Tolstoy himself was wont to say that, for the most part, Tolstoyans were to him the most incomprehensible people, and the most alien to his way of thinking, that he had ever met. "I shall soon be dead, and people will say that Tolstoy taught men to plough and reap and make boots; while the chief thing that I have been trying to say all my life, the one thing I believe in, the most important of all, they will forget." In his later life, Tolstoy would never advise people to settle amongst the peasants, as usually nothing came of such attempts. " One should not, above all, look for new ways of life, for usually, in doing so, one's whole energy is spent on die external arrangement of life. . . . Let everyone first do his own work, provided it does not clash sharply with his convictions, and let him try to steadily improve in his own situation, and then he will find new ways of life incidentally. For the most part, the external aspect of life should be neglected. Don't bother about it. Do your own work."

Like all passionate and individual thinkers, nothing distressed him more than that people should ignore the inner meaning of his ideas and consider that there was some mysterious virtue in their external aspect. "Why live in a community?" he once demanded. "One ought not to separate oneself from other people. If there is anything good in a man, let that light be spread about him wherever he lives. What numbers of people settled in communities, and nothing came of it! All their energies went at first into the external arrangements of life, and when at length they settled down, there began to be quarrels and gossip, and it all fell to pieces."[78] Similarly with physical labour, which he held was important chiefly because it prevented the mind from wandering. " If work be not actually a vice, it can from no point of view be regarded as a virtue. Work is a necessity, to be deprived of which involves suffering; and to raise it to the rank of a merit would be as ludicrous as to make a merit of eating."

An entry in his diary for November 1899 makes his ideas upon the subject of Tolstoyism fully clear: " Talked with Dushan. Since he has involuntarily become my representative in Hungary, he asked my advice about the attitude he should adopt. I took this opportunity to

clarify the matter for myself, and to say that to speak of a Tolstoyan teaching, and to come and ask my advice, is a grave mistake. There is neither a Tolstoyan sect nor a Tolstoyan teaching. There is only one unique teaching, that of truth—that universal and eternal teaching so perfectly expressed, for myself no less than for others, in the Gospels. This teaching calls man to recognize his sonship to God, and to realize, according to his understanding, both his freedom and his service, since in freeing himself from the influence of the world he enters the service of God and His will. And as soon as a man has understood this teaching, he enters into free communication with God and has nothing more to ask from anyone." [54]

Again, it is impossible to ignore the similarity with Ruskin, who wrote in *St. Mark's Rest:* "No true disciple of mine will ever be a Ruskinian. He will follow, not me, but the instincts of his own soul, and the guidance of its creator."

Chapter III

I. *Turgenev's last letter to Tolstoy: the return to artistic activity: folk tales:* The Death of Ivan Ilych: The Kreutzer Sonata: The Devil. 2. *The storm over* The Kreutzer Sonata: *Chekov's views: the Countess Tolstoy s reactions: her audience with the C^ar: Tolstoy s own view,* 3. *'The meaning of* The Kreutzer Sonata: *Tolstoy s sexual morality: the difficulties of marriage: the personal and impersonal aspects of his attitude to women,* 4. The Power of Darkness *and later plays.*

IN the summer of 1883, Turgenev had known himself to be dying. "I have had all the happiness which I could have wished," he told a friend. "I have worked; I have had success; I have loved, I have been loved. It is bad to die before one's time; but for me, it is time." And as he lay on his bed, his mind thronged with memories of the past, his thoughts reverted continually to Tolstoy. Of *A Confession,* he had written: "It is a remarkable work on account of its sincerity, truth, and passionate conviction; but it is based entirely upon false ideas, and, in the last analysis, leads to the most sombre negation of all human life." Since then, only strange rumours had reached him; amongst them, that Tolstoy had definitely abandoned art. Realizing at last, despite all their misunderstandings and all their quarrels, not only that Tolstoy was a very queer fellow, though undoubtedly a genius and " the kindliest of men," but an artist "the latchet of his shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose," he addressed Jo him the most moving appeal that one writer has probably ever written to another.

"Dear Leo Nikolaevich, I have not written you for a long time, for, to be frank, I have been, and am still, on my death-bed. I can never get well, it is useless to think of it. I am writing to tell you how happy I was to have been your contemporary, and to make you one last request. My friend, go back to literature. It is your gift, which comes whence comes all else. Ah! How happy I should be if I could believe that my words would influence you! . . ." [89] But years passed, and still Tolstoy published no new fiction. It was a sad time for Russian literature. Turgenev was dead: Dostoevsky was dead: the new stars, Chekov and Gorki, had not yet risen: and Tolstoy, "the one hope of our orphaned literature," remained silent. Yet he had been far from idle. In addition *to* his other work, and some of those stories for the people written originally for the *Intermediary{*now collected as *Twenty-Three Tales)*—those stories of which the poet Carmen Sylva, Queen of Roumania, wrote: "Of all the works this great man and artist has written, his short stories have made the greatest impression upon me.

I regard them as the most perfect tales ever written. In these popular stories thought of the highest purity reaches us which to my mind is far more eloquent than the subtlest style. The highest art is presented; and like Dante, Shakespeare and the Bible, it will survive all time, for here is Eternal Truth. ... If Tolstoy had written nothing but these stories he would still rank amongst the greatest men of the world. When writing them he cannot have had a single base thought, but must have been a friend of suffering humanity and a real Christian,"— towards the end of the 'eighties he produced *The Death of Ivan llych* (published 1886), *The Power of Darkness* (played in Paris in 1888) and *The Kreutier Sonata* and *The Devil* (written 1889).

Thus, after an absence of nearly ten years, he returned to art in two different mediums. "I have so much work (which it is to be hoped will be of use to people) that I cannot finish it all," he wrote to Gay in December 1887. "... And when one knows that one cannot finish, the desire for reward disappears, and only the consciousness of performing a service remains." "What matters is not that Nikolay Nikolaevich should be praised," he wrote to the same friend the following March, but to feel that you are saying something new and important, something people need. And when one feels and works for that, it is the greatest happiness on earth. One is even ashamed of the privilege...."

All three of these stories are intimately connected with Tolstoy's personal life, and with his new ideas. *The Death of Ivan llych* is one of his best short pieces, and the artistic expression of the main theme of *On Life;* that without inner movement towards the state of reasonable consciousness in a man's life, there is no alternative to the disappointment, frustration and final extinction of the personal ego. Ivan llych is a judge of the educated classes who, like most of his fellows, has lived only for the satisfaction of the desires of the animal-personal self. He is a generic type, and his fate the generic fate of all his type. Living in a world in which nothing exists save the illusions of the personal consciousness he reaches maturity: then, as the result of some trivial accident, has no alternative but to face death with these illusions disintegrating with his disintegrating body, as his illness follows an inevitable course through the various stages of increasing suffering, until nothing remains but the reality of approaching death. Only at last does he realize that true happiness can be found in self-abnegation alone, and the voluntary service of the united spirit of life. And just as his own life has been completely useless, so is his passing without the slightest meaning for others. He dies, as he had lived, leaving no trace to survive him in a single human heart.

The Kreutzer Sonata, though possibly inferior to *The Death of Ivan llych* as a work of art, has, however, a far deeper biographical significance. The form, as Tolstoy later told his son Leo, was suggested to him by two different events which happened at about the same time:

his marriage for a peasant woman who had been his mistress during his bachelorhood. There are variant endings to this dilemma, in one of which he shoots the peasant woman, and in the other, himself. For Eugene Irtenev is at heart a sternly moral man, who recognizes the truth so often expressed by Tolstoy, that true debauchery^consists^jiat in sexual relations themselves, but in sexual rejations in...which there exist no moral obligations. The peasant woman, he feels in his inmost heart, is in reality his wife, and he her husband: the tragedy that he realizes this only when he possesses a legal wife.

His relations with Axinia before marriage, and his attraction towards Domna, the servant's cook at Yasnaya Polyana, which troubled him much later (but which he resisted), are both closely connected with the genesis of this story. Infinitely more important, it is an attempt to illustrate by means of his artistic gifts his personal interpretation of Christ's teaching of marriage and divorce:" that true marriage consists in the natural relations that exist between a man and the woman with whom he first has sexual relations, and that to deviate from this for any reason other than death inevitably creates conditions in which sin is unavoidable, not only for the man himself, but also for the woman whom he has cast oft. Thus, in deserting a woman, a man becomes morally responsible for all the sexual temptations into which she later falls,

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When *The Kreutzer Sonata* was first read aloud at Yasnaya Polyana, even Tolstoy agreed that it would be advisable to send the young women of the party from the room: but the lack of reticence that made the story unsuitable for young unmarried girls is scarcely sufficient to account for the storm that it provoked.

At one extreme, the exponents of free love were furious that an iconoclast such as Tolstoy should express ideas which seemed to them as antiquated as the precepts of St. Paul and the doctrine of the Orthodox Church: at the other, the Church was violent in protest of Tolstoy's rejection of the principle that marriage is a sacrament. Sermons were preached against it, and one Archbishop denounced Tolstoy from the pulpit as being a dangerous menace to society who should be exterminated. And though lithographed copies found their way to both capitals, and meetings were arranged in private houses in order that the work could be read aloud, its publication was soon prohibited by the censorship. That this was largely due to the attitude of the Church, can be seen from the letter which Chekov wrote to Souvorin on the subject on March 22nd, 1890. " Yesterday a young lady told me that Professor Sorozhenko had related to her the following anecdote. The Sovereign liked *The Kreuqer Sonata,* But Pobedonostsev, Lubimov and the other cherubim and seraphim hastened to justify

their attitude to Tolstoy by showing His Majesty *Nicholas Stick,* After reading it, His Majesty was so furious that he ordered measures to be taken!" [121] (*Nicholas Stick* was a story Tolstoy had written, based on the reminiscences of an old peasant about the terrible and frequent beatings prevalent during that august monarch's reign, which had provoked the extreme censure of reactionary government circles.)

Chekov by no means shared the opinion of the work then current in literary circles. "Did you really dislike *The Kreut^er Sonata?"* he wrote to A. N. Pleschayev on another occasion. "I would not say it is a great work of genius destined for eternity—I am no judge of that—but in my opinion, amid all that is now being written here and abroad, it is hardly possible to find anything of equal importance either in conception or beauty of execution. Apart from its artistic merits which are in places amazing, we should be grateful for the story alone, for it is a wonderful stimulant to thought. When reading it, one can hardly refrain from exclaiming: * That is true!' or * This is absurd!' Certainly, it has very annoying defects. Apart from those you mention, it has something for which one does not readily forgive its author—namely, the audacity with which he treats matters he has no knowledge of and from stubbornness does not wish to understand. For instance, his remarks about syphilis, Foundling Hospitals, women's aversion to conception, etc., are not merely open to dispute, but frankly reveal an ignorant man who during his long life has not taken the trouble to read a couple of books by specialists. But for all that the defects are blown away like feathers before the wind. The quality of the story obliterates them, and if one notices them it is only to feel rather annoyed that the story should not have escaped the fate of all human work—none of which is perfect or free from blemish." [121]

In Tolstoy's private life, *The Kreutzer Sonata* caused repercussions even more painful than the public uproar. "I am terribly afraid of becoming pregnant," the Countess Tolstoy recorded on December 25th, 1890, "for everybody will hear of the disgrace and jubilantly repeat the recent Moscow joke—' *Voila le veritable postscriptum de la Sonate de Kreutier."* [57] "I don't know why and how they have connected *The Kreutier Sonata with* our married life," she complained again on February 10th of the following year, "and yet it is a fact that everyone—from the Czar right down to Liova's brother and his best friend Diakov—have all felt sorry for me. But what is the good of taking other people? In my own heart I have felt that this story was directed against me; it has wounded me and disgraced me in the eyes of the whole world, and has destroyed the last remnant of love between us. And all this despite the fact that during the whole of my married life I have never done anything wrong." [67]

On March 21st, she recorded again: "Liova is unusually kind and pleasant and cheerful. But all this, alas, is due to the same old cause. If only the people who read *The Kreutier Sonata* with such feelings of

veneration could look for a moment at the erotic life he leads—and which alone makes him happy and cheerful—they would cast this little tin god from the pedestal on which they have placed him. And yet I love him best when he is weak and kind and normal in his habits. It is no good being an animal, but neither is it any good being a preacher of principles which one is unable to practise."[57] In this last reflection, the Countess was, as later she was to do with increasing frequency, practising an almost deliberate form of self-deception; for, as she was presently to inform the Czar, she knew perfectly well that what Tolstoy taught was that the highest form of sexual morality possible for man was complete chastity, but as, in most cases, this was an unattainable ideal, then purity was possible only in matrimony. (Tolstoy, of course, went a great deal farther than this; but at least she knew perfectly well that he had never made the slightest pretensions to being a celibate.)

Such was her inner resentment that she finally decided to solicit an audience with the Czar, and to beg him to remove the ban from the publication of the story because " i f it had really been written about me and our married life, I wouldn't have asked the Czar to release it. Everyone will look at it in that light."

Her historic audience with the Emperor reveals many traits of the Countess Tolstoy's psychology, and, as she herself has recorded, was anything but the heroic and self-renunciatory gesture that for a long time it has been supposed. With the help of various interested relations and friends, she first drew up a letter which was sent to the Royal Palace, in which she begged to be allowed "to explain the circumstances which might help my husband to return to his former literary work, and also to show that certain allegations made against his present activities are so false that they undermine the spirit and energy of the Russian writer, whose health, as it is, is not very good, but who perhaps could still work to the glory of his country."[67]

Paying a visit to the Censorship Committee to find out on what grounds the volume in which it had been printed was suppressed, she discovered that *On Life* had been prohibited by the clerical censorship, on the orders of the Holy Synod: that *What Then Must We Dot* had been suppressed by the police, and *The Kreut^er Sonata* by the direct intervention of the Czar himself.

Received in audience by the Emperor with exemplary courtesy, she began by informing him that not long ago Tolstoy had said to her : "I have become so detached from my religious and philosophic writings that I could again write something literary; and a long novel similar to *War and Peace* has begun to crystallize in my mind." This may not have been wholly untrue, since the idea of *Resurrection* was in Tolstoy's head years before he actually began to write it. But her argument that Tolstoy needed some gesture of official encouragement before he could begin was obviously specious, since he was the last man to be prevented from writing by all the authorities in the world.

To this the Czar replied that *The Kreuqer Sonata* was written in such a way that he was sure that the Countess Tolstoy would not permit even her own children to read it. Nevertheless, he was impressed with her argument, and at the thought that Leo Nikolaevich was inclined to "go back to literary work" even murmured "What a blessing that would be! Such a wonderful, wonderful writer."

With very little persuasion, he finally agreed that he might well permit the story to appear at least in the Complete Works, since, in that case, as not everyone could afford to buy the full set, it could not be too widely read. Most gracious, he expressed his regrets that Tolstoy had forsaken the Church, as there were so many harmful heresies amongst the common people already; sympathized with her at the attitude of the local priests, who had sent lying reports of her husband's activities to the authorities; questioned her kindly about all her family; remarked that he had heard that Chertkov had become completely converted to Tolstoy's ideas; tentatively enquired whether Tolstoy could not perhaps change *The Kreutzer Sonata* a little, and, on being informed that this was quite out of the question, promised finally, not only that he would permit its appearance in the Complete Works, but that if, in future, the Countess cared to send Tolstoy's works direct to him, he would in future himself decide whether or not they could be published.

At length, having graciously offered the Countess Tolstoy his hand, he even requested that she should not leave the palace before he had arranged for the Empress to receive her.

That was not, of course, the first time that a Czar had undertaken the duties of a censor to the discomfiture of his ministers; and Gogol's *The Government Inspector* had only reached the public because Nicholas I had been amused by it and loudly applauded at its private performance. Nevertheless, the Countess Tolstoy considered this an extraordinary personal triumph. "There is no doubt that my personality did it," she recorded. "I told everybody that if only I could feel sufficiently inspired, even for a moment, to influence the Emperor as a man, I should be successful; and indeed, the inspiration came, and I persuaded him: however, it was not an impossible thing, for he is a kind-hearted man and quite capable *of* yielding to a good influence. Whoever reads this will think me boastful, hut he will be wrong and unfair."[67] Later she added: "I am told on all sides that the Emperor has spoken of me very highly. He told the Countess Shermetyev that... he would have liked to continue such a pleasant and interesting conversation. Countess Alexandra Tolstoy also wrote that I had created an *excellent* impression. Princess Urusov said that Zhukovsky had told her that the Emperor had found me very pleasant, natural and sincere, and that he had been surprised to see how young and handsome I still was. All this tickles my feminine vanity, and I feel revenged for the way my husband has always treated me: for not

only did he never try to raise me socially, but, on the contrary, always did his best to lower me——" [57]

Small wonder that Tolstoy was "displeased with my adventures, and particularly with my interview with the Emperor. He said that it looked as if he had undertaken obligations that we might be unable to fulfil; that hitherto he and the Emperor had always ignored each other, but now this business might harm us and lead to complications."

For himself, Tolstoy wrote to a friend: "Yesterday my wife arrived from Petersburg, where she had seen the Czar, and had spoken to him about my writings—quite unnecessarily. He promised to allow the publication of *The Kreutier Sonata*—a thing that does not please me at all. There must have been something bad in my *Kreutier Sonata.* I am absolutely sick of it, and with every memory of it. There was something unpleasant in the motives which dominated me when I wrote it. ... I will try to avoid this in future. . . ." [2]

3

The moral of *The Kreutier Sonata* was, to use a phrase of Ruskin's: "There is no licentiousness so mortal as licentiousness in marriage." Clear as this is, thousands of people from all over the world wrote to Tolstoy later to seek his advice in their sexual difficulties; on account of which, he wrote his *Afterword,* wherein, without complete success, he tried to formulate his true ideas on the subject. "The devil take the philosophy of the great ones of this earth!" Chekov wrote to Souvorin when he had read it. "All the great sages are as despotic as generals, and as ignorant and as indelicate as generals, because they feel sure they cannot be touched. Diogenes spat in people's faces, knowing that he would not suffer for it. Tolstoy abuses doctors as scoundrels and displays his ignorance of great questions just because he is such a Diogenes who won't be locked up or abused in the newspapers. And so to the devil with the philosophy of all the great ones of this earth!" [121]

It is to the whole body of Tolstoy's later writing that one has to go before it becomes clear that his ideas of sexual morality are very different from the dotard's babble that they are usually supposed. Once again, they approximate closely to the teaching of early Christianity. For ordinary people, chastity is neither a rule nor a precept: but an ideal, or one aspect of the ideal. And because it is an ideal, it therefore represents a state of perfection towards which a man desiring to lead the good life will always struggle, no matter that he continually fails, and even realizes that while it may be steadily approached, so long as he retains all his natural vigour, it can never be attained. That Tolstoy laid full emphasis upon the struggle is clearly revealed in his reply to the question of what he thought about the Skoptsi, a sect who practised castration. "Judging by what I have heard about them, they

lead a moral and laborious life. But whether they correctly understand the Gospels when they mutilate themselves on its authority, I answer with the fullest assurance that they understand the Gospels wrongly, and that by mutilating themselves and especially others they act in direct opposition to true Christianity. Christ preaches chastity, but chastity, like every other virtue, is of worth only when it is attained by an exertion of the will supported by faith, but not when it is attained through the impossibility of sinning."[84]

In answer to the continual jibes of those who professed to see something ridiculous and hypocritical in a man who had himself begotten many children advocating the practice of continence, he would explain: "When speaking of how married people should live, I not only do not imply that I have myself lived or am able to live as I should: on the contrary, I know positively, by my own experience, how one should live only because I have lived as I should not."[34]

Of the terrible disillusionment with the married state which, in *The Kreutzer Sonata,* finally affects Pozdnyshev's mind, Tolstoy wrote again later in his diary towards the end of 1899: "The chief cause of unhappiness in marriage lies in the fact that young people are brought up to believe in the idea of married happiness. Sex attraction, encouraged by public opinion and by literature, surrounds marriage with a charm full of promise. But marriage, far from being a happiness, is always a misery—the price of sexual satisfaction. Slavery, satiety, repulsion, and the physical and moral faults of one's partner—these are sufferings that must be endured, as are malice, stupidity, lying, vanity or drunkenness, all faults which are even more unbearable in another than in oneself, to say nothing of physical defects such as ugliness, dirtiness, smell, sores, insanity and so on. Of all this there is bound to be enough to make each one's burden heavy enough. We accept as a right all the care, satisfaction and help that marriage gives—things which should compensate for its bad side—and consider only its deficiencies. Thus we suffer in exact proportion to the happiness we promised ourselves. The essential cause of this suffering is that we expect what never happens, and do not expect what invariably does happen. So that the only way to insure ourselves against such suffering is to expect nothing good and to be ready to bear all the bad."[M]

About the same period, he also recorded: "AH calamities which are the result of sex relations, from being "in love," are the result of one thing: that we confuse fleshly lust with spiritual life—with, terrible to say—love. We use our reason not to condemn or to limit this passion, but to adorn it with the peacock feathers of spirituality. Here is where extremes meet. To attribute every attraction between the sexes to sexual desire seems Very materialistic; but, on the contrary, it is the most spiritual point of view. Thus do we distinguish from the realm of the spiritual everything which does not belong to it, in order to value the spiritual more highly."[M]

Although, once again, this is in accord with the highest religious writings of mankind, nevertheless there was always to be a deeply personal element in many of Tolstoy's views of marriage and of women which was the inevitable result of the tragic disappointment of his own marriage.

During his later life, he once remarked to Gorki: "I will tell the truth about women only when I have one foot in the grave—I will tell it, jump into my coffin, pull the lid over me, and say: Now you may do what you like." "Woman, in my opinion," Gorki has written, "he regards with an implacable hostility, and loves to punish her, unless she be a Kitty or a Natasha Rostov—a creature not too narrow. It is the hostility of the male who has not succeeded in getting all the pleasure he could, or it is the hostility of the spirit against the "degrading impulses of the flesh."[77] But it was more even than this last. It was the hostility of the man who had "staked everything on one throw"—and had lost.

4

While confined to bed during 1866, Tolstoy had written that powerful and sombre tragedy of peasant life, *The Power of Darkness.* This was shortly afterwards produced at Court by some members of the aristocracy and, it is said, much admired by Alexander III; but Pobedonostsev took it upon himself to write personally to the Czar warning him that such a play was likely to give Western Europe a very bad impression of the Russian peasantry, and was successful in causing its suppression in Russia until 1895. A singularly futile action, since in 1888 it was produced in Paris by Antoine at the *Thidtre Libre,* and was so great a success that it was soon running simultaneously at three playhouses. Not only did Zola think unusually highly of this piece; but years later Bernard Shaw wrote of it to its author: "I remember nothing in the whole range of drama that fascinated me more than the old soldier in your *Power of Darkness.* To me, the scene where the two drunkards are wallowing in the straw, and the older rascal lifts the younger one above his cowardice and his selfishness, has an intensity of effect that no merely romantic scene could possibly attain."[2] And, not a little of Shaw's earlier work was influenced both by Tolstoy's dramatic methods and by his ideas.

The Power of Darkness was followed, three years later, by *The Fruits of Enlightenment,* an entertaining satire upon spiritism and the state of mind and civilization that produces it, into which is skilfully introduced the serious problem of land ownership. Written, originally, for his family to perform at Yasnaya Polyana, it was shortly afterwards produced publicly, and with great success, at the Imperial Theatre.

A third play, *The Live Corpse* (not written until towards the end of

Tolstoy's life) in addition to the unfinished *Light Shines in Darkness,* already mentioned, completes the number of his major dramatic works. This play, which was based on an occurrence that actually took place, has for its theme the unnecessary suffering caused by the law when it officiously interferes in private lives. Finding that his marriage is a tragic failure, an educated man pretends to have committed suicide in order to free his wife, so that she can marry the devoted friend who has been her unconfessed lover for many years. But when she is happily settled with her second husband (neither of them having any idea that the suicide was not genuine) it is discovered that the first husband is not really dead, and they are accused of bigamy. During the public investigation that follows, learning that the least punishment that can befall his wife is the annulment of her second marriage, the real husband finally takes his own life in order to prevent the destruction of her happiness.

Chapter IV

I. *The growing antagonism of the Countess Tolstoy: her dislike and jealousy of Chertkov: her contempt for her husband's disciples: her jealousy of her daughters: diary entries: Tolstoy's repudiation of the later copyrights: quarrels occasioned by this: the division of the property. 2, The famine : Tolstoy goes to help : the scandal over his famine articles : the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy intercedes for him with the C{ar.* 3. The Kingdom of God is Within You: *non-resistance to evil by violence: exertion of choice the only freedom.*

AS the years passed, the defects in the Countess Tolstoy's character that had at first been latent, grew steadily more pronounced. No longer even trying to understand her husband's ideas, in order to gain her own ends she deluded herself into believing that it was her duty to her family to thwart him in every possible way; and became more and more subject to moods of self-pity and self-justification. "Everyone, Leo Nikolaevich as well as the children, who follow him like a flock of sheep, has come to think of me as a scourge," she recorded on October 25th, 1886. "After throwing on me the whole responsibility of the children and their education; household duties, money matters and all the other material things, which they all make much greater use of than I ever do, they come along, and, with cold, official and pious expressions, tell me to give a horse to a peasant, or some money or some flour, or this, that or the other——" There were painful occasions when she deliberately refused. "At dinner they asked me for some money to give to some old woman and to that thief Ganya. The request was made to me by Liova through the girls. I was hungry, and annoyed that everybody was late for dinner, and didn't want to give any money for the thief; so although I had a few roubles left, I told them I had no money. But later on I felt ashamed, and after finishing my soup, I went and got some." [58]

Even more difficult for Tolstoy must have been her attitude of hostility to many of his new friends, which she took but little trouble to conceal. Particularly .important is it to note her early dislike of Chertkov, caused solely by the fact that she felt that his friendship with Tolstoy was a menace to her own domination. Chertkov, who had no idea that the Countess Tolstoy considered it her right to read all her husband's private correspondence, had been sufficiently indiscreet, after being present at some painful family scene, to commiserate with Tolstoy upon the lack of harmony in his domestic life. "We have a letter from Chertkov," she recorded in March 1887. "I do not like

him: he is clever and onesided and sly, and is not a good man. Leo Nikolaevich is very partial to him because of his adulation." Three days later, her remarks were even more revealing; and the situation which, years later, was to reach so tragic a climax, was already foreshadowed as clearly as, to a doctor, the final ravages of a mortal malady are revealed in its apparently trivial early symptoms. "I read over Chertkov's letter in which he spoke of the happy spiritual communion between himself and his wife, and expressed his sympathy and regret that such a worthy man as Leo Nikolaevich should be ignorant of such happiness and be deprived of such a communion—an obvious allusion to me. That blunt, sly, lying man, having succeeded in getting round L. N. with his flattery, is now trying (I suppose that is Christian!) to destroy the bond which has so closely kept us together for nearly twenty-five years!"[56]

"What disagreeable characters all these disciples of Leo Nikolaevich are!" she complained the following July. "Not a single sane person among them. Most of the women are hysterical... I find it very trying not to be able to choose my friends and to have to receive anybody and everybody. ..." There are many similar references. "Liova has his Mark* people with him ... a disagreeable lot of strangers, very depressing and unbearable in our family circle. And there are so many of them! It is a heavy price to have to pay for Liova's fame and new ideas." And again: "The dark ones have arrived: Popov, that inane and stupid Asiatic, and that fat fool of a Khoklov, of shopkeeper origin. And these are the followers of a great man! Miserable abortions of human society, aimless babblers, uneducated loafers."[57] It is true that many of the people who arrived at Yasnaya Polyana to see Tolstoy were cranks or fanatics of a very dubious type; but, as usual when stating her grievances, the Countess Tolstoy chose to forget that the house was even more frequently visited by men distinguished in every branch of human thought, or highly endowed with artistic gifts, who came, eventually, not only from all parts of Russia, but from every continent in the world.

To all this there was presently added the latent jealousy of her daughters, and the morbid obsession, which for some years had been in abeyance, for wilfully exacerbating her feelings by reading Tolstoy's private diaries, in spite of the fact that, fully awart of the effect that this had upon her, he had gone so far as to forbid her to do so, and had even hidden them away. "In the old days it gave me joy to copy out what he wrote. Now he keeps giving it to his daughters, and carefully hides it from me. He drives me frantic with his way of systematically excluding me from his personal life, and it is unbearably painful. This unfriendly existence drives me at times to the depths of despair. I feel like killing myself or running away, or falling in love with someone—anything to escape from a man whom, in spite of everything, for some unknown reason I have loved all my life, although I now see clearly I

idolized him, without realizing that there was nothing in him except sensuality...."[56] " I am going on copying Liova's diary. I wonder why I have never read or copied it before; it has been in one of my drawers for such a long time; I don't think I have ever got over all the horror I experienced when I read Liova's diary before our marriage, and I doubt that the sharp sting of jealousy and my bewilderment at the thought of such filth and debauchery has ever quite disappeared."[M] In order to justify herself, the Countess now found it necessary to persuade herself that whatever Tolstoy did was occasioned by vanity and self-esteem. " This self-adoration comes out in every one of his diaries. It is amazing how people existed for him only in so far as they affected him personally. And the women! . . . I copy his diaries with the frenzy of a drunkard, and my drunkenness consists in working myself in a state of jealousy over the women he describes.... It is beginning to worry him that I have been copying his diaries. . . . He would like to destroy them and to appear before his children and the public only in his patriarchal robes. His vanity is immense!" [56]

Like most women whose possessive love for others is but a form of extended egotism, while excessively sensitive to the slightest incident which affected herself, the Countess Tolstoy displayed an obtuseness over her husband's deepest sensibilities which is almost inconceivable. For example, that year some peasants badly in need of timber unlawfully cut some birch trees on die estate; and though fully aware of his attitude to the matter, without consulting him she instituted legal proceedings against them. As a result, "Liova was nearly driven to despair" when they were sentenced to be imprisoned and fined. "He could not sleep at night, jumped out of bed, and kept pacing up and down the drawing-room, gasping for breath, and, of course, blaming me." This occasioned the Countess a very poignant access of self pity. "Why should people be punished in my name, when I wish no one evil.... I had spasms in my throat again, and felt like weeping all day long. I felt so *sorry* for *myself,...* I've been seriously thinking of saying good-bye to everyone, and then lying down on the railway line...."

So necessary had it become for her, in order that she should be right, only to see the worst in Tolstoy, that he could never even show her affection without her attributing it to his sensuality. Small wonder that there were times when she recorded: "It was sad to come home, for no one seemed to pay the slightest attention to the fact that I had returned. I often wonder why they don't love me, and why I love them so much. It must be because of my outbursts of temper, when I become disagreeable and say unpleasant things."

" Genius must not be sold," said Ruskin. " The sale of it involves in a transcendental, but perfectly true sense, the guilt both of simony and prostitution. Your labour only may be sold: your soul may not." Tolstoy, who, as we have seen, possessed so high an integrity as an

artist that even in his early days of the Sevastopol sketches he refused to recognize any other hero save truth, had never been in any serious danger of selling his soul: but so exalted and austere was his code of? ethics, that he believed it to be no less ignoble for the artist to sell his work. To use the rewards of a gift, the exercise of which, in itself, was one of the greatest privileges with which a man could be endowed, for the exploitation of others—(for so he considered the power of obtaining the menial labour of others through the possession of money)—was so inconsistent with his personal ideals, that it was inevitable that he should presently decide to renounce the copyright of his works. Here again he met with passionate resistance from his wife; and as the whole family now derived their support principally from the royalties on the Complete Works published by the Countess Tolstoy, once again he was forced to compromise by making the publication or translation of only those works written since 1881 freely available to all who wished. This, he hoped, would make possible the spread of his religio-sociological ideas to as large a public as possible. Thus, on September 16th, 1891, Tolstoy wrote to the more important newspapers: "Because of the requests which I receive for permission to publish, to translate and to dramatize my works, I beg you to insert in your paper this declaration: I give to all the right to publish without payment, in Russia and abroad, in Russian and in translation, those of my works which were written after 1881, and which are printed in volume twelve published during this year 1891, besides all my works as yet unpublished in Russia which may appear in the future."

In one of her now rare moods of detachment, the Countess Tolstoy has recorded the sort of painful scene between them that was to become more frequent and more bitter when once Tolstoy had firmly decided upon this course. "While Liova was having his breakfast, some letters came and I told him that I still had no news about volume thirteen. To this he replied: 'Why do you worry so much? You know that I will be obliged to announce that I abandon the copyright on this thirteenth volume.' So I said to him: 'Just you wait until it comes out!' He said: 'Why, of course.' Then he left the room, and I again became furious at the thought that he was trying to deprive me of a little extra money which the children need so badly. So I thought of something unpleasant to say to him, and remarked as he was going out for his walk: 'If you print that you give up the royalties, I in my turn shall print below it that I hope the readers will not be so inconsiderate as to make use of the copyright belonging to your children.' So he started telling me how inconsiderate I was myself, though he said it gently, and I made no reply. Then he said that if I loved him, I myself ought to put in that he had abandoned all claim to the copyright. He went away, and I felt sorry for him; and all my worries about our material prosperity looked so petty compared to the pain I felt because of this coolness between us. After dinner I said I was sorry I had said those

unpleasant things to him, and that I certainly wouldn't print anything, since I hated above all the thought of hurting him. We both wept." [67]

But this was by no means the end of the matter; and presently the Countess recorded again: "Just before dinner, Liova said he was writing a letter to several newspapers, renouncing the copyright of his latest works. When he brought up the question last time, I had made up my mind to bear it patiently and succeeded in doing so. But when, a few days later, he came back to the subject, I wasn't prepared for it, and my first feeling was a spiteful one. I immediately felt how unjust such an action would be towards his family; and for the first time I realized that this publication would be an open avowal of his disagreement with his wife. This upset me most of all, and we said a great many unpleasant things to each other. I told him he was ambitious and vainglorious, and he said that I was always out for money, and that he had never seen such a greedy and stupid woman. I said that he had made it his business to humiliate me all his life because he had never had anything to do with decent women, while he replied that I only spoiled the children with the money I got. Finally he began to shout: 'Leave me alone! Leave me alone!' So I went out...." [57]

Once again, in her unquenchable desire to assert her power over him, the Countess Tolstoy, like Anna Karenin, decided to triumph finally by taking her own life. Having written in her notebook that constant friction with her husband had exhausted her, she set out to Kozlo vka intending to put this threat into execution; but happening to meet her brother-in-law, Alexander Kuzminsky, on the way, eventually returned home with him. Late that night "Liova came up to me and kissed me and made some conciliatory remark. I asked him to publish his announcement and not to mention the matter again. But he said that he would not until I *understood* that it must be done; so I said that I could not tell lies, and that I could not understand it...."

"Yesterday's wound will never heal," she wrote the following day. "I went twice to tell him to print the announcement renouncing the copyright of his last works. Let him tell the public of his disagreement with his family, I have a clear conscience, and am not afraid of anything. The money I get for his books is all spent on his children___"

After this, her attitude steadily hardened into the form it was to take until the end: "The one and only reason for all this is his vanity, his thirst for more and more fame, and his desire that everybody should talk about him." [67]

But Tolstoy, who, probably now, like Ruskin, wrote "not in any hope of being listened to, but to disburthen his heart of the witness he had to bear," knew himself better. "I have asked myself: could I write knowing that no one would read me?" he recorded a few years later. "I felt a little deception, but it was only for a moment. Yes. I realize that I could write. There is indeed in me still a little of the love of fame: but the essential thing is there: the need to speak before

God." [54] With all her moods of sentimentality and passion, the Countess Tolstoy was a woman incapable of appreciating true nobility of character.

This renunciation of his copyrights was a source of continual conflict between them. In future, whenever Tolstoy was nearing the end of some work, his wife would indulge in every form of stratagem, from a sudden access of interest and solicitude to violent scenes, threats and further attempts to commit suicide (during one of which, after she had rushed out into the snow screaming: "Let them take me to the police station or the lunatic asylum," Tolstoy had been compelled to follow her half-dressed in order to bring her home), in order to prevent him from sending the piece to the printers before she could bring it out first in her own edition of his works. So distasteful were these scenes that in the end he laid aside some of his best stories (such as the posthumously published *Father Sergius)* rather than be compelled to participate in them. But the Countess was a woman who thrived upon scenes; and was quite able, when she had triumphed through this form of moral coercion, to "correct the proofs with joy in my heart," and "eyes rilled with tears, realizing the greatness of his work."

At the same time that he decided to renounce his later copyrights, Tolstoy also consented to divide up his estates amongst his wife and family. This was a course that seems finally to have become necessary owing to the Countess Tolstoy's inability to agree, over any matters of importance, with her two elder sons, who acted as bailiffs. "Liova finds all these conversations very unpleasant, and I find them ten times more unpleasant," she confessed, after the subject had been approached for the first time, "because I have to protect the little children against the elder ones." Apparently it was a difficult and complicated problem; for three months later, in the second week in June, she added: "We don't know yet how to divide the property. Someone is always dissatisfied or frightened—it is hard to please everyone. It upsets me a great deal, while Liova tries to shun the problem altogether." [67]

On the nineteenth of September, three days after he had published the renunciation of his copyrights, the matter was finally completed. Tolstoy was greatly discontented over the whole affair. He had never given up hope that one day he might bring his family to agree to give their lands to the peasants. Now he could hope no longer. The youngest children, Alexandra and Vanichka, drew lots to settle which of the estates should go to each; and the whole of his worldly possessions (said to have been worth then about £60,000) were divided amongst his wife and children, Yasnaya Polyana going to the Countess Tolstoy, and secured, upon her death, in accordance with family tradition, to the youngest son. At first the two eldest daughters had declined to accept their portion of the bequest. "My business has been further complicated by the fact that Masha has now refused to take her

share," the Countess recorded. "I realize that the poor girl is unable to see things clearly, and to imagine what it would mean to her to be penniless after the life she has led."

Later, in 1897, when Mary married Prince Nicholas Obolenski, an aristocratic and cultured young man without fortune or any other means of support, she changed her mind, and accepted the portion which her mother had held in trust for her. It was a great happiness to Tolstoy when Tania, also, spoke of renouncing her share. " I have spoken with Tania about Ovsyannikovo, and I greatly wish to arrange for her that the money and land should go to the common use," he recorded: and finally she decided to give the ploughland and the forest to the peasants, and to keep the house as a place of refuge for sympathizers of her father who were without means. At this time she was deeply under his influence; and even wrote a treatise on the land question, favouring Henry George's single tax system, which she sent to him under the assumed name of Polilov, lest, knowing it to be by her, he would not treat it seriously. To this he wrote a long reply; and when she told him the truth, he was disappointed not to have found a new disciple who shared his views.

2

Scarcely had the division of the property been settled than Tolstoy was confronted by a far more serious problem which affected all Russia —famine. Receiving a letter from an old friend, 1.1. Rayevsky, asking him to come and see for himself the terrible conditions in his district, he immediately set out with his daughter Mary. The state of the afflicted villages was appalling. People were swelling from hunger and dying by scores; there was no firewood; the peasants had to burn the thatch from their roofs in order to keep warm, and the only available food was bread, as black as coal, made from goosefoot.

At once Tolstoy decided to spend the winter there with his two daughters, and to devote himself to alleviating the general distress. For the next two years the whole of the Tolstoy family was engaged in some form of relief work. Sergey and Ilya organized food kitchens in the province of Tula; Leo threw up his studies at the Moscow University and rushed off to help in the Samara area; Tolstoy and his two daughters lived with Rayevsky on his estate in the Dankovsky district; while the Countess Tolstoy, who for a long time "did not want to let them go, it was so painful to part with them," wrote an appeal to the newspapers on her own account begging for public assistance for the starving, which produced an enormous response. "Contributions came streaming in. It was truly touching the way people responded to my appeal. Some of them come here and weep as they bring their share...."

Tolstoy, as usual, flung himself into this work with energy and

ardour; going amongst the people and writing impassioned articles in the hope of rousing the public conscience.

Chekov, also busily engaged in the Nizhni Novgorod district, " where there are no landowners, nor doctors, nor even well-educated young ladies who are now to be found in numbers even in hell," wrote enthusiastically to Souvorin in December: " Tolstoy! ah, Tolstoy! In these days he is not a man but a superman, a Jupiter. In the *Sbornik* he has published an article about the relief centres, and the article consists of advice and practical instructions. So practical, simple and sensible that, as the editor of the *Moscow Veydemosti* said, it ought to be printed in the Government Gazette, rather than the *Sbornik*." [m]

" There is much about it that is not as it should be," Tolstoy wrote of his own activities to the painter Gay. " There is Sofia Andreyevna's money and the subscriptions, there is the relations between those who feed and those who are *fed.* There is sin without end, but I cannot stay at home and write. I feel the necessity of taking part in it, of doing something." [2]

Living in a small room with little furniture but an iron bed, and bare alike of curtains and carpet, Tolstoy worked unceasingly at establishing eating-houses for those who were dying of lack of food. "We have eighteen soup kitchens, and the Filosovs have six," he wrote at first to his wife: but very soon the number increased to thirty, in which 1500 people were fed regularly. Although he gave himself up wholeheartedly to the work, while typhus, scurvy, influenza and small-pox raged on all sides, he could never lose sight of the fact that private charity was utterly inadequate to deal with the situation; and in an article, *A Fearful Problem,* fiercely castigated the luxury and indifference of the rich who could permit such a state of affairs. The abuses that he saw round him stirred him almost to frenzy. Landowners hypocritically pretended to combat the famine by intensive cultivation, or gave donations to public subscriptions; while at the same time they were profiting by the state of affairs by selling grain to the peasants at the highest possible price, and even charging them for the useless potato bines which were the only form of fuel they could get to prevent themselves from freezing.

During the middle of all this, his friend Rayevsky died of influenza, and his daughter Mary fell ill: but he himself continued to fight with unabated energy until finally he had established no fewer than 246 eating-houses for adults, and 124 for children, in which over 13,000 people were fed twice daily on meals of vegetable and cereals, much of which had been sent by the Society of Friends in England, and as a gift from sympathizers in the United States.

In addition to feeding the starving population, it was necessary also to help them with seed and cattle so that they could start farming at once the following spring. And this again filled him with acute dissatisfaction, since all that could be given was but a fraction of what was needed, and much ill-feeling was displayed by those who thought

that they had been neglected. In the end, Tolstoy grew unendurably weary of seeing so much unrelieved suffering: horses starving to death, peasants unable to leave their huts from lack of clothes, or dying horribly of typhus and cholera and want, because no matter how much was done, there always remained infinitely more to do.

Nevertheless, he did not cease to concern himself in every way he could, and besides his physical exertions was responsible for the publication of two Miscellanies to which contributions were made freely by many well-known writers, and the profits devoted to famine relief. To both of these he contributed stories himself.

Eventually, his former energy began to exhaust itself, and he "felt indifference to the empty business of relief and repulsion at the hypocrisy." Meanwhile, his activities had been the cause of a new public scandal. He had written an impassioned article on the famine for the *Moscow Philosophical and Psychological Review,* which, by reason of its outspoken nature, was inevitably prohibited by the censor. But before this Tolstoy had given permission to an Englishman, Dr. E. J. Dillon, who had approached him, to translate this article into English: and Dr. Dillon had not only done so, but sent it to the *Daily Telegraph,* where it appeared in 1892, causing a great sensation both in Great Britain and the United States.

From England, this article had been wired back to Russia, where, not wholly correctly re-translated, and supplemented by extraneous passages in order to make it appear that Tolstoy was deliberately fomenting a peasant revolution, it was published in the highly reactionary *Moscow Gazette,* a journal which had the official support of Pobedonostsev. The Government, who had been doing everything in their power to conceal from the people the true state of affairs, found this a grave embarrassment: and from the more fanatical there arose an outcry that Tolstoy was unpatriotic: Tolstoy was a dangerous revolutionary: Tolstoy was anti-Christ himself.

This outburst caused the Countess Tolstoy the gravest misgivings. "The rumours which are circulating about the article in the *Moscow Gazette* worry me terribly," she wrote to her husband. "My sister Tania writes me from Moscow that the Council of State has decided to send you into exile, and that the Emperor has yielded to this decision, though he said: 'He has given me into the hands of my enemies/ and showed that he was very sorry. He added *I have even received his wife, a thing which I have never done for anyone.' You will lose everything with your provocative articles. Where is your love and your non-resistance to evil? And you have no right, with nine children, to be the cause of their ruin, and my own.... I am very agitated. I don't know yet what I am going to do, but things cannot be left as they are." [100] Then, nervous at the increasing fury of the denunciations, she solicited an audience with the Governor-General of Moscow, **told** him that the article published was a forgery, and begged him **to**

allow a denial from herself to be published in the *Official Messenger*, To this the Governor-General replied that a denial could come only from the pen of Tolstoy, and that nothing would give the Emperor and his ministers so much satisfaction as to see such a denial appear.

Forthwith the Countess Tolstoy wrote to her husband demanding that, for all their sakes, he should publish some official explanation. "I write what I think and what cannot please the wealthy classes/' Tolstoy replied. "I have been doing this for the last twelve years, not casually, but deliberately, and I do not intend to justify myself for doing so."

Nevertheless, she obtained from him at last an admission that the text published in the *Moscow Gazette* was not authentic; and when now the *Official Messenger* declined to print it on the grounds that it could not involve itself in newspaper controversies, this she had lithographed, and herself distributed many copies of it both in Russia and abroad. At the same time she sent a statement to an important newspaper in which she declared that Tolstoy had never submitted any article to an English newspaper; the sort of equivocation to which she was addicted whenever she wished to gain her own ends.

Forthwith Dr. Dillon, taking the statement to be a direct imputation of dishonesty on his part, and fearful that his reputation would suffer in consequence, rushed furiously to Tolstoy to demand corroboration that his translation had been authorized. This Tolstoy readily gave him: but already feeling himself to have been deeply injured, Dillon seems to have helped to spread the rumour that out of mtfral cowardice Tolstoy had sought to protect himself behind his wife's skirts. Malice and slander against him increased from all quarters, eagerly propagated by the most insensately reactionary elements of Church and State. Bishops preached sermons that Tolstoy was malignantly seducing the souls of the peasants to perdition by gifts of money and food; the Archpriest of Kharkov publicly pronounced an anathema upon him, praying that" our most righteous Monarch will suppress his destructive activity before it is too late"; Durnovo, the Minister of the Interior, submitted a proposal that he should be confined in the terrible Suzdal Monastery until he should "repent and amend"; and Prince Scherbatov raised a public agitation for his "complete extermination."

The position presently became so grave that the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, on her own initiative, herself *ought an audience with the Czar, in order to intercede on her cousin's behalf.

"On his asking what I had to say to him" (she wrote later), "I replied directly: 'In a day or two a report will be made to you in favour of incarcerating Russia's greatest genius in a monastery."'

"'Tolstoy?' he asked briefly, his face instantly becoming stern and profoundly sad.

"'You have guessed rightly, Sir.'

'"Then he has designs on my life?'"

Encouraged by the fact that only this would induce the Czar to con-

firm the minister's decision, she then related all that she knew about the affair, waiting for his face to assume its usually mild and friendly expression before she ventured to add that if Tolstoy were touched, it would not be upon his ministers that the execration of the whole civilized world would fall, but upon himself. Two days later she learnt that, pushing aside the report as soon as it was submitted, Alexander had remarked firmly that he had "not the slightest intention of making a martyr of Tolstoy, and so bringing universal indignation upon himself."

In his *Afterword* on the famine, at the time suppressed in Russia, Tolstoy summarized his own views on the situation once more. "Only two paths are open to the governing classes—the rich and the idle: one is to repudiate not only Christianity in its true meaning, but also humanitarianism, justice, and everything like them, and to say: 'I hold these privileges and advantages and, come what may, I am going to keep them.... The power is in my hands: the army, the gallows, the prisons, the rod and the courts': the other is to confess our fault, to cease to lie, *to* repent, and to go *to* the assistance of the people not with words only, or—as has been done during the last two years—with pence that have first been wrung from them at the cost of pain and suffering, but by breaking down the artificial barrier that exists between us and the working people and acknowledging them to be our brothers, not in words but in deeds: altering our way of life, renouncing the advantages and privileges we possess, and, having renounced them, standing on an equal footing with the people, and together with them obtaining those blessings of government, science and civilization which we now seek to supply them with from outside without consulting their wishes." [18]

More than ever, after his experiences amongst the starving, the conditions of his own life, both at Yasnaya Polyana and in Moscow, were a source of continual unhappiness to him. In February 1894 he wrote to his daughter Tania: "Just now they are going somewhere to a party. They are all dressing, and Theodore is curling Sasha's and Vanichka's hair. It is all very merry, but it hurt me very much to see Vanichka curled and Sasha dressed up." [73] Two days afterwards, he wrote to his cousin Alexandra: "The longer I live and the nearer I approach death, the more convinced I am that we are utterly wrong to live in wealth, and I cannot but suffer acutely because of this."

3

Apart from his famine articles, and the two essays, *The First Step* and *Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves ?,* which eloquently reveal his attitude to meat eating and the use of narcotics, such time and energy as Tolstoy had for writing during these last years was directed to *The Kingdom of God is Within You,* which he finished in the early summer

of 1893, and which principally concerns the political aspect of his religious and philosophical ideas.

The argument of the work is that the Kingdom of God, as a state upon earth, can be established only when the majority of men act unfailingly in accordance with the moral laws which are the external expression of the reasonable or Christian state of consciousness, most perfectly expressed in the Gospels, and also engraved indelibly upon every uncorrupted human heart. The fact that henceforward Tolstoy employs the term Christian consciousness to express precisely the same state that he meant before when he employed the term reasonable consciousness, need cause no confusion to those who wish to study the evolution and consistency of the main structure of his ideas.

Since the practical life of the Christian consists in a continual effort to resist actively in his own life everything which would cause him *to* act contrary to those laws, much of the book is concerned with the principle of non-resistance to evil by violence, and an attack on compulsory military service enforced by a corrupt government and actively supported by the pseudo-Christian Church.

So much over-emphasis has been laid upon Tolstoy's teaching of non-resistance, to the exclusion of other principles with which it is inseparably connected, that before disagreeing with them, it is at least as well that it should be understood what his ideas really were. Towards the end of his life, when people would come to see him with the express purpose of trying to reduce this principle to an absurdity, he would sometimes cry out: "Really, now it is time to die!" so futile were the objections which they raised and so crass their complacent misunderstanding.

Tolstoy's main contention is that we live in a world full of suffering, most of which is the result of the direct or indirect application of violence; and that the great error of those who wish to help to alleviate this suffering lies in the fact that they imagine that what is an inevitable effect of a certain course of action can be cured by the very course of action that produced the undesirable effect. The only way in which the load of misery which overweighs human life upon earth can be lightened is to seek for its starting point in the world of causes, and then to try to fight and conquer those causes which produce the undesirable effect. So long as a man permits himself to participate in violence, just so long is he contributing to those causes which can only affect human life in terms of suffering. "The revolutionaries whom you have seen in Siberia undertook to resist evil by violence," he told Kennan when he visited him in 1887, "and what has been the result? Bitterness, misery, hatred and bloodshed. The evils against which they took up arms still exist, and to them has been added a mass of previously non-existent human suffering. It is not in this way that the Kingdom of God is to be realized on earth. The whole history of the world is the history of violence; and of course you can cite violence in

support of human violence; but surely you must see that in human society there is an endless variety of opinions as to what constitutes wrong and oppression, and that if you once concede the right of any man to resort to violence to resist what he regards as wrong, he being the judge, you authorize every other man to enforce his opinions in the same way, and inevitably you have a universal reign of violence."

Nearly ten years later, when he was still considering the problem, he wrote in his diary: "Non-resistance to evil is important because it is a means by which man develops in love. But it is even more important because, by absorbing it, neutralizing it, stopping its movement, it is the sole remedy against evil which, like a rubber ball thrown against a wall, can only continue when confronted by resistance, and requires a medium that will absorb its elasticity. Active Christianity consists, not in creating something new, but in absorbing evil." [54] Thus the essential feature of his teaching is precisely opposite in significance to the accusation so often levelled against him, that he did not consider it necessary to fight evil. Tojight evil *was* for Tolstoy, one of the first principles of a man's life: Jbutinjorder to fight evil successfully, it must be confronted with an absorbent. Only so can a" result be avoided which will affect the world as further evil.

With regard to the most common objection, Tolstoy himself has replied to it in his introduction to the Life of Garrison, in which he recounts a conversation with the American, Bryan, who was about to stand for the presidential election. " In that same manner of his which showed an obvious intention to point out to me gently and agreeably wherein I erred, he asked me how I explained my strange doctrine of non-resistance to evil by violence; and, like everyone else, used the argument which seems so irrefutable to most people, about the bandit murdering or assaulting a child. I told him that I profess non-resistance to evil by violence because, having lived seventy-five years, I have never met anywhere save in theory this fantastic brigand who would under my eyes murder or outrage a child; but that I have continually seen, and still see, millions of brigands outraging children, women, and grown men, old men and women, and all labouring people, in the name of the right they have recognized to use violence over their fellow-beings. When I said this, my charming companion with his characteristic quick understanding did not let me finish, laughed, and agreed that my argument was correct." [78]

In the Russia of Tolstoy's day the practical application of this principle was fraught with grave peril, since military service was generally compulsory, even in time of peace, and objectors were usually submitted to a course of "reformatory" treatment so sinister and drastic that it frequently ended either in insanity or in death.

Once again, in *The Kingdom of God is Within You,* Tolstoy attacks contemporary science and the organized Church, one on account of its rejection, and the other on account of its perversion, of the laws of

Christ, as being the two great obstacles to the establishment of the state of peace and brotherhood on earth which must be an inevitable step in the natural advancement of mankind. Having progressed through various stages in which it has recognized its highest virtue to consist in sacrificing itself for the family, the tribe, the race and the State for the achievement of personal glory, at last mankind has reached the stage when it is apparent that the highest virtue can consist only in die renunciation of the personal life for the sake of the united spirit of life. The argument that history demonstrates that Christianity is a failure, or impracticable, because it demands perfection from creatures manifestly incapable of it, is invalid, because Christianity deals only indirectly with sociological problems, and cannot be approached in the same manner as a political programme. It is, in fact, precisely in its infinite nature that the Christian life conception has value for man; it alone permits him to advance along a path in which his good can be continually increased and his life continually enriched. For the conception of perfection, as nothing else, has the power to deflect man's life from its purely animal condition towards the divine.

Those who profit by the present arrangement of society, and therefore find it agreeable and fear lest it may be changed, in so far as they call themselves Christian, understand Christianity as a convenient collection of revelations and rules that can be accepted without the slightest personal inconvenience; whereas Christianity defines for man a completely new activity, quite different from all that he is familiar with, and appropriate to the historical periodwhich he is now entering. Only the Christian life conception can put an end to the evils of exploitation and of war. For the miseries of men are caused by the discord between them; and discord results from their refusing to follow the truth which unites, and from their following, instead, falsehood which is legion. There can be only one brotherhood, therein he only one unity—that which exists in the fullness of understanding..and the fullnessof truth. "This has a deep inner, no less than an outer, significance. If men sicerely wish to be united, they must sincerely approach truth: "a law which is "as inflexible as that which has decreed that the only way for points existing upon the circumference of a circle to approach each other equally,is by movement along the radii which connects each of them with the centre of the circle.

It is useless for man to think that he can approach truth and at the same time continue to participate in activities which corrupt society. To exploit necessities, to trade in articles which deprave, to speculate on the stock exchange or in land, to acquire vast fortune from the manufacture of goods which can be produced only at the cost of the health of the workers, to pander to human vices or to serve the State, and then to flaunt the wealth thus gained in public charities which win the approbation of the community, is infinitely more disastrous to public morality than all the thefts, frauds and robberies which are com-

mitted in defiance of existing law. But most disastrous of all is our irresponsible participation in violence. " For to-day we kill people by so complex a transmission, and the consequences of our cruelty are so carefully guarded from us, that there are no effects tending to restrain cruelty, and the cruelty of one set of men towards another is ever increasing until it has reached dimensions it never attained before."

One way alone leads to the Kingdom of God, and to follow it nothing is required of man save an internal effort of consciousness. This demands that his mind shall be receptive to truth; that no matter what may be his errors and his failings, that whenever his actions conflict with his consciousness of truth, at least he will recognize the fact, and not justify, but condemn himself. In this capacity to recognize, or to refuse to recognize, truth, lies the whole possibility of his development.

Here we have an admirable and necessary corollary of the law of inevitability which Tolstoy so powerfully demonstrated in *War and Peace,* in which free-will was reduced to an infinitesimally small quantity that, for all practical purposes, is entirely negligible. If we forget that, in addition to the ordinary process of history, there proceeds simultaneously movement in another direction—from darkness to light, from a lower understanding of truth to a higher—and if we consider man as static in his relation to this movement, then certainly all his reactions will seem purely automatic

If man knew no truth at all, or if, on the other hand, he knew the whole of truth, then not only would he not be free, but he could have no conception in what freedom could consist. For man's freedom consists precisely in the fact that, while his external reactions are strictly governed by the pattern of his own nature and the pressure of the circumstances of his daily life, he is at the same time completely unhindered in respect of the assimilation of truth.

With regard to truth man is always in a threefold relation. He has already assimilated so deeply certain aspects of truth that unconsciously they influence all his actions: other aspects are still so far from his immediate field of perception that even if they exist for him they cannot influence him; while yet others, between these two divisions, though not yet fully assimilated, are at least sufficiently clear to demand a definite reaction, in the sense that he must either accept them or reject them. And it is only in this capacity to accept or reject such truths that man is free.

This freedom does not mean that he has the power to act externally independently of the stream of effects which are already determined by causes which lie in the past; but that by recognizing and conforming to the truth he can voluntarily and joyfully participate in "the eternal and infinite work performed by God or by die life of the world"; or by refusing to recognize and conform to it, he can become the slave of incomprehensible forces acting without reference to his personal desires.

For truth not only indicates the road by which humanity must travel, but also determines it, so that man is forced to follow her direction whether he would or not. Therefore his freedom consists in his voluntarily accepting the work which life demands, rather than reluctantly being dragged in a direction in which he does not wish to go.

Such freedom may seem small in comparison with the imaginary freedom which humanity usually ascribes to itself, but it is the single measure of freedom which exists, and within its limits lies the only welfare possible to man. In accordance with true Christianity, freedom can be found only in the realm of causes—riiat is to say, in the world of principles which condition actions—and never in the world of action itself, which is always determined by inescapable laws. When a man lives wholly in the external life of the world, he is always dependent upon influences which arise outside himself, and *to* which he is forced to adapt himself. While imagining that he is acting, he is an instrument used by alien forces which he does not understand. Instead of being the master as he believes, he is life's slave. But if a man once admits that his true life lies in the recognition of universal truths which are being revealed to him, and in his acting in accordance with them, then he becomes attached to the source of universal life, and his actions, instead of being influenced by forces outside himself, result from completely different causes and therefore have a different significance and different effects. To act in accordance with the truth within oneself is that "immense perfection" which he had dreamed of as a youth, when he realized that "in the man independent of all external conditions, the spirit necessarily keeps the material man in subjection, and he attains his destiny."

The universal truth—the truth of reasonable consciousness—the truth of Christianity—surrounds us always and seeks to enter our souls; and only our own lies, self-deception, hypocrisy and arrogance prevent us from accepting it. Were we once courageous enough to do so, then we should find that millions of others, like ourselves, also recognized the truth, and were only waiting for others to do so before acknowledging it.

In the practical acknowledgment of truth lies the dissolvent of the evils of the world. What would be the external manifestation of many men attaining the Kingdom of God within*themselves we do not know. We know only that it would inevitably influence the whole social order; and that in this way alone can there come any general and lasting improvement.

Revolutionary though all Tolstoy's sociological ideas were, no one could have detested more than he the thought of violent methods, which could result only in exchanging one form of tyranny for another. To him the social structure was the inevitable effect of a certain cause —the deliberate preference of the majority for the animal-personal life; and in order to alter the effects, then it was necessary for **men** first to

alter the cause, and to exchange this level of consciousness for the higher level of reason and Christianity. For him "the revolutionary and the Christian stand at the two extremes of an uncompleted circle. Their nearness is therefore illusory: in reality there are no two points farther apart. If they are to meet they must turn right round and traverse the whole circumference."[63]

If socialists and communists believe that the private possession of capital and property is a source of social evil; and anarchists that government itself is evil: these will always be resisted by monarchists, conservatives and liberals, who consider socialism, communism and anarchy no less evil. And none of these parties can offer any better way of reconciling mankind than that of violence. Whichever eventually gains power, in order to maintain itself, inevitably it will be forced to an even greater violence as a result of the resistance which the struggle for power will have evoked. Thus the slavery will remain; and the only change will be in that of the organization and the victims. No revolution in the history of the world has yet produced any other result; nor can violent revolution ever do so,

"Society resembles a crystal," he wrote in his diary on another occasion. "No matter how you grind it, dissolve it, compress it, it will reform itself at the first opportunity into the same form. The constitution of a crystal can be changed only when chemical changes occur within it."[53]

This is the one supreme fact that is always ignored by the whole materialistic school, just as it was ignored by Marx. Even if all his predictions were to come to pass, the only result would be that despotism would change its form, and labour organizations would rule instead of capitalists. Therefore those who sincerely desire to improve life, whose desire for revolution is not causect'by an abject self-interest, should direct their. efforts to a change in the consciousness of themselves and in other people. This is precisely what most people wish to avoid;.,and by directing all their *efforts to' altering the external form* of life, appear to expect that in this way the general consciousness can be transformed. Whereas Christianity alone can liberate men from the slavery of our time, and Christianity alone afford the means of transforming the individual consciousness, and so, eventually, the consciousness of society.

The Kingdom of God is Within You was, as usual, prohibited by the censorship. Nevertheless, lithographed copies circulated freely in Government circles; and, by the exposure of his brutal conduct, it is even said to have been responsible for the dismissal of the Governor of Tula.

Chapter V

I. *Death of Ivan: the diary will: the Countess Tolstoy's infatuation with Taneyev: Tolstoy's second attempt to leave home: the two letters: latent conflict.* 2. *Nicholas II: the Dukhohors: the banishment of Chertkov and his friends: his activities in England.* 3. *Religious Essays:* What is Art?: *a short examination of Tolstoy's views.* 4. Resurrection: *Neklyudov the last of the great self-portraits : Chekovs opinion: preparations for publication.* 5. *Father Sergius: Gorki s reminiscence.*

ON February 23rd, 1895, the Countess Tolstoy recorded: "My dear Vanichka died at eleven o'clock at night. And, my God! to think that I am still alive." Alexey, the youngest boy but one, had died in 1886; but the birth of Ivan two years later had more than compensated for his loss, so deeply beloved was he by the whole family. Now that he too was gone, the household was plunged in grief. "A highly gifted child, with a warm and gentle heart" (as Anna Dostoevsky called him), he was not only his mother's, but his father's favourite; and Tolstoy had often said of him that he hoped that he would live to carry on his work. To Tania and to Mary, both as yet unmarried, he had also been an object of maternal affection: to Alexandra, an inseparable companion. While Tolstoy took his wife into Tania's empty bedroom, and, seated on the sofa, the Countess rested her head on his breast, both of them "nearly unconscious with sorrow," Alexandra wandered forlornly about the house, not knowing what to do.

"Liova has grown quite old," the Countess wrote to her sister Tania. "He wanders about stooping, with a sad look in his bright eyes, and I feel that the last ray of sunshine of his old age has vanished. Two days after Vanichka's death he sat down and wept, and said: "I have lost heart for the first time in my life." Three days after his son's death, Tolstoy recorded: "We have buried Vanichka. A terrible loss. No, not terrible, but a great spiritual experience.".*

"When I buried little Peter, I thought for the first time of my own resting-place," he wrote of a similar bereavement nearly twenty years before; and now his thoughts again continually reverted to the fact that soon he too must die. Thus for the first time he formulated in his diary the terms of his will.

"(1) To bury me where I die, in the cheapest cemetery if I die in a town, and in the cheapest coffin, as paupers are buried. Flowers and wreaths are not to be sent, speeches are not to be made. If possible, bury me without priests or burial service. But if those who bury me

dislike this, let them bury me in the ordinary way with a funeral service, but as cheaply and simply as possible.

"(2) My death is not to be announced in the newspapers, nor are obituary notices to be written.

"(3) All my papers are to be given to my wife, V. G. Chertkov, N. Strakhov, and to my daughters Tania and Masha, for them or for such of them as survive, to sort and examine. (I have myself struck out my daughters' names. They ought not be troubled with this.)

"I exclude my sons from this bequest, not because I did not love them (I have come of late to love them better and better, thank God) and I know that they love me; but they do not altogether understand my ideas, they did not follow their development; and they may have views of their own which may lead them to keep what ought not to be kept and to reject what ought to be preserved. I have taken out of my bachelor diaries what is worth keeping, and I wish them to be destroyed. Also, in my married diaries, I wish everything to be destroyed which might hurt anyone if published. Chertkov has promised to do this even during my lifetime, and, knowing the great and undeserved love that he has for me, and his moral sensibility, I know that he will do it excellently. I wish the diaries of my bachelor life to be destroyed, not because I wish to conceal the wickedness of my life—my life was the usual vicious life of an unprincipled young man—but because the diaries in which I recorded only the torments which arise from the consciousness of sin produce a false and onesided impression and represent . . . Well, let my diaries remain as they are. In them, at least, is seen how, in spite of all the frivolity and immorality of my early youth, I was not deserted by God, though it was only in old age that I began, if only a little, to understand and love Him.

"I write this not that I attribute great or even any importance to my papers, but because I know beforehand that after my death my books will be published and will be talked about, and will be thought to be important. If that is so, it is better that my writings should not harm other people. As for the remainder of my papers, I ask those who will have the arrangement of them not to publish everything but only that which will be of use to people.

"(4) With regard to the publishing rights of my former works—the ten volumes and the ABC—I ask my heirs to give these to the public, i.e. to renounce the copyrights. But I only ask this, in no sense order it. It would be a good thing to do. It would be good for you also. But if you do not wish to do it, that is your affair. It means that you are not ready to do it. That my books for the last ten years have been sold was to me the most painful thing of my life.

"(5) There is one more request, and it is the most important. I ask all relations and strangers alike not to praise me. (I know that this must happen, because it has happened during my lifetime and in the worst

possible way.) Also, if people are going to occupy themselves with my writings, let them dwell upon those passages in which I know **that the** Divine Power spoke through me; and let them make use of **them in** their lives. There were times when I felt that I had become the **agent** of the Divine Will. Often I was so impure, so filled with personal passions, that the light of this truth was obscured by my darkness; **but** at times the truth passed through me, and those were the happiest moments of my life. God grant that their passage through me did not profane those truths, and that people, notwithstanding the petty and impure character which they received from me, may find sustenance in them. The value of my writings lies in this alone. And therefore am I to be blamed for them, but not praised.

"That is all. L. T."

Tolstoy's great hope at this time was that, out of this tragedy of Vanichka's death, there might come a spiritual awakening for his wife, whose grief was so deep that, had it not been for the fact that he was warned that if once he left Russia he would probably never be permitted to return, he would have taken her abroad for a change of scene. "Yesterday she went to confession," he wrote shortly afterwards to his cousin Alexandra, "to a very intelligent priest Valentine (the friend and spiritual director of my sister Mary), who told Sonia a great truth: that mothers who lose children always turn to God at first, but later usually become reabsorbed by their worldly cares, and so withdraw from Him, and he warned her against this. But it seems to me that this will not happen to her." [62]

Unfortunately Valentine was right and Tolstoy wrong. The Countess Tolstoy, bereft of her dearest child, bewildered, ageing, eternally dissatisfied, eventually sought consolation in a platonic attachment to the composer Taneyev. *The Kreutzer Sonata* had proved to be prophetic as well as retrospective, much in the same way that *Family Happiness* had been before it.

In Moscow, the infatuated mother would drag her daughter Alexandra to concerts at which Taneyev always happened to be present; and after the performance would suggest to him that they should walk home together, despite the fact that it was a walk of about fifty minutes, and it was already after eleven o'clock.

Presently Taneyev, a brilliant pianist, became a frequent visitor to the house; while the Countess took to going out with him for drives, kind, cheerful, and elegantly dressed; and even to visiting his apartments. So obvious became her partiality, that everyone seems to have known of it except the musician himself. The child Alexandra one day poured out her dislike of him to the gentle Mary, who begged her to be "meek and patient like father," as he was also suffering deeply.

Although for a long time he never referred to the matter, Tolstoy seems to have been perfectly aware of the state of affairs, **and, in his late**

sixties, as deeply jealous, and as outraged in his sense of the proprieties, as the Levin who had so unceremoniously turned out of the house the guest whom he fancied was paying undesirable attentions to his wife.

That there were painful scenes and bitter recriminations there can be no doubt. "When I think of the sufferings of my husband, and his blind jealousy, I feel a terrible bitterness and shame, and wish to put an end to it all, to die rather than have to listen to his offensive accusations: —I who all my life have paid the greatest regard to propriety, so that neither my husband nor children should ever have reason to blush for me . . .," [100] the Countess Tolstoy wrote to Mme. Annenkov in 1896.

The affair seems to have dragged on, a source of distress to the whole family," the musician alone, who considered himself a friend of the family, scarcely realizing the danger of the position, until the spring of 1897, when there was a painful crisis.

The Countess Tolstoy, who had hitherto kept the fact secret, suddenly announced one day at dinner that Taneyev was coming to Yasnaya Polyana for a short stay.

Tolstoy, goaded beyond endurance, said that if Taneyev set foot in the house again, he himself would leave it. There must have been a frantic family scene; for Prince Obolenski, who was in Moscow waiting for his fiancee, Mary, to arrive in order that they could be married before Lent, received a wire to say that she was delayed owing to grave family reasons; while Tolstoy himself rushed off to stay with his brother Sergey, vowing that he would never return.

After struggling with himself for several days, however, he did so: and on June 2nd the Countess recorded: " Sometimes Leo Nikolaevich really frightens me with his thinness, his headaches—and oh! that jealousy. I don't know if it is my fault. When I became friendly with Taneyev, I felt that it would be a good thing to have such a friend in one's old age: a gentle, kind and talented man."

The following day, when, leaving the railway station at Tula, his daughter Mary and her young husband found Tolstoy on the road "in a pitiable condition, exhausted, weak and miserable" but entirely silent as to the cause of his state, the Countess was writing: "Just now I feel calm and serene; but it was dreadful to see Leo Nikolaevich's morbid expression of jealousy when he heard of Taneyev's arrival. At times I find his anguish quite unbearable." "Taneyev left to-day," she recorded shortly afterwards, and Leo Nikolaevich is happy and quiet; and I am contented too because I have seen him. There is only one reason for Leo Nikolaevich's demand that I should break off all relations with Taneyev—and that is his own pain. Yet it would give me pain, too, to lose his friendship. There is nothing sinful in it—and yet so much calm joy in my pure feeling for the man, that I simply could not cut him out of my life. . . ." [67]

But the Countess Tolstoy was a woman who, once having achieved a victory of any kind, immediately wished to follow it up with another;

and the following month, though fully aware of the turmoil her action would cause, she invited Taneyev to Yasnaya Polyana again; a thing which she would doubtless never have dared to do had her husband been the master of the house, rather than a guest living upon the hospitality of his family. "I had a cool little letter from Taneyev," the Countess recorded. "He is coming on Sunday. I haven't told Leo Nikolaevich yet, in case it upsets him. My God, will he be jealous again ? It is a painful thought, and, above all, considering his illness, I fear it may harm him. Wouldn't Taneyev be surprised if he knew! But I can't help being overjoyed at the thought of so much lovely music and pleasant conversation with such a cheerful, charming man."

Evidently her misgivings were soon justified, for the following day : "At dinner Misha referred to Taneyev's arrival. Leo Nikolaevich simply flared up and said: 'I never knew anything about it!'" By now her children, too, were deeply concerned at these repeated indiscretions. "Masha told me to-day that Ilya was rather annoyed that they should all be talking of my affection for Taneyev at my sister Tania's in Kiev and also at the Filosovs'.... But all this gossip does not worry or upset me. I am even proud to be connected in people's minds with such a wonderful, kind, talented and moral man. I have a clear conscience; I am as pure as a new-born babe in body, soul and even mind in the eyes of God, my husband and my children."

Despite this convenient illusion, her elder children continued to protest. "Let them!" the Countess recorded. "This man has given me a rich, joyful gift: he opened the doors into a world of music for me, a world which brought me consolation only since I heard him play. His music brought me back to a life which I had left after Vanichka's death. His meek and gentle presence was a balm to my spirit. And now, after seeing him, I always feel serene and happy. Yet they all believe that I am in love. How vulgar they are! I am too old—such words and thoughts no longer suit me." [67]

Pathetic, deluded and bewildered woman! Even ten years later, the Countess Tolstoy remembered this infatuation with relish; repeatedly asked Taneyev to play her her favourite *Song Without Words,* investing her request with a mysterious significance which embarrassed all those present, and, in particular, the musician himself. She still recorded in her diary: "The day of the heart's anniversary. . . . Oh, this *Song Without Words,"* and even went the length of writing a novel with that title, which she asked Tolstoy to read, and was quite surprised when he did not like it.

Again, at this second visit, Tolstoy decided to go away. This time he wrote her two letters of farewell; the first, in which he told her frankly the real reason for his sudden decision; and the second, dated July 8th, in which he enumerated the various contributory causes in such a manner that if she wished she could use it to avoid any scandal that might harm herself. Only the second of these letters has been preserved:

"I have long been troubled by the inconsistency between my life and my convictions. I could not make you change your life and the habits in which I had trained you, and until now I have felt equally unable to go away and leave you, lest in so doing I should deprive the children, whilst still young, of such influence, even if slight, which I could still have upon them, and also lest I should cause you all grief. But I can no longer continue living as I have lived for sixteen years, sometimes struggling against and irritating you, sometimes succumbing to the familiar temptations that surround me all the time; and now I have decided to do what I have long wished to do—to go away.

"First, because this life is becoming more and more of a burden to me, and as my years increase, I long more and more for solitude; and second, because now that the children are grown up, my influence is no longer needed in the house, and all of you have more vital interests which will make you feel my absence less. But the principal thing is that just as the Hindus, when they approach their sixtieth year, retire to the woods, just as any aged and religious man wishes to devote his last years to God and not to jokes, gossip and tennis, so I, having entered my seventieth year, long with my whole soul for peace, solitude, and, if not complete harmony, then at least not such flagrant discord between my life and my conscience and convictions.

"If I were to carry out my plan openly, there would be entreaties, reproaches, arguments and complaints, and I might weaken and perhaps not carry out my intention—and yet it must be carried out. Therefore please forgive me if my action hurts you, forgive me, all of you, in your hearts; but chiefly you, Sonia; let me go with goodwill; do not search for me, do not complain and do not condemn me.

"That I leave you does not prove that I am dissatisfied with you. I know that you were unable, literally unable, and are still unable, to see and feel as I do, and therefore that you could not and cannot change your life and make sacrifices for the sake of something of which you are not conscious. Therefore I do not blame you, but, on the contrary, remember with love and gratitude the thirty-five years of our life together, especially the first half of that period when, with the motherly self-sacrifice which is innate in you, you bore so energetically and firmly what you considered to be your duty. You have given me and the world what you were able to give, a great deal of motherly love and self-sacrifice, and I cannot but appreciate it. But in the last period of our life—the last fifteen years—we have grown apart. I cannot think that I am to blame for this, for I know that I have changed not for my own sake or even for the sake of other people, but because I could not do otherwise. Neither can I blame you for not following me, but think of you, and always shall think of you, with love and gratitude for what you have given me." [78]

Neither of these letters was ever seen by the Countess Tolstoy until

after her husband's death; when she herself immediately destroyed the first one, only her mutters of "more stupidities, jealousy and reproaches" giving her son-in-law, Prince Obolenski, who had been entrusted with their delivery to her, any clue as to the nature *of* its contents. Once again, despite the intensity of his desire, Tolstoy decided against leaving his family. But it is evident that this time his indecision was the result of a profound and prolonged inner struggle. For although on July 21st he wrote to Chertkov: "Read this to no one. I teach others, but do not know how to live myself. For how many years have I asked myself the question: Is it fitting that I continue to live as I am living, or should I go away?—and still I cannot make up my mind. I know that everything is decided by self-renunciation: and when I attain to that the solution is clear. But such moments are rare";[63] nevertheless, when relations with his wife became particularly difficult, he often considered making his escape.

For example, the following year he wrote to Jarnfeld, a Finnish writer deeply sympathetic to his views: "Although we have never met, we know and love each other, and it is because of this that I write to you fearlessly and ask you to render me a great service. What it is about must remain a secret to everyone except yourself. Let me know where you are at present and if you are ready to help me." [100]

Although Tolstoy went no further with the matter, when he met Jarnfeld some months later in Moscow, he confided that he had intended to leave his wife, but once more had subsequently changed his **mind.**

But life at Yasnaya Polyana at this period must have been very painful for him. Isolated from most of his friends, who were now either dead or banished (the faithful Diakov, like Rayevsky, had died during the famine), less closely united than formerly to his elder daughters, the younger of whom was now married, and the elder in love (the following year she married Michael S. Sukhotin, a kind, cheerful and educated widower much older than herself, with six children), he continued to work at his treatise on art, while his wife grew steadily more exacting, difficult and unreliable.

Subject to moods as contradictory as any which had ever beset her husband, she passed the days alternating between periods of the most tender affection for all her family, and others of the most bitter acrimony. Still passionate, unbalanced, querulous, devoted and completely humourless, the passing of the years and the growing up of her children had left her more than ever frustrated and dissatisfied. Still she wished to dominate her husband; and still the deep inner estrangement which was the inevitable result of her attitude to all his views continued to increase. Her lamentations and complaints grew daily more unreasonable. Having formerly recorded that she was driven frantic by Tolstoy giving the work which he required copying to his

daughters rather than to her; now that she had prevailed upon him to resume the practice of their early life together, she found herself "terribly tired after copying," that "one's spirit grows dull always contributing to other people's work, and not doing anything for oneself," and even finally complained of being "callously enslaved."

More and more her native intelligence became subject to her undisciplined emotions, her increasing self-pity, her tendency to scold. One day she longed for "spiritual intimacy with Liova, not just that disgusting bodily intimacy"; and the next she told him that "really one hasn't time to change one's life to suit all one's husband's spiritual whims and to follow him in his ideas, especially when, after all, they are only things to be regretted."

Nor could she find any consolation in the children who were "not at all as I should like them to be. I wanted them to be well educated and refined in their tastes and to have a sense of duty. Leo wanted them to lead a simple life and to do hard work, and we both wished them to have high moral ideals. But it has all failed." In fact " Masha gets to know of all that is terrible that goes on in the village . . . and brings all that filth home. . . . This daughter whom God sent me is a curse, has never brought me anything but worry, annoyance, pity and unhappiness":. . . Tania is "morbidly in love with an elderly feebleminded man": . . . Andrusha has again "wasted all his money at the gipsies and has had to borrow 300 roubles. . . . He has no morals and drinks heavily. . . . I find him and his disgraceful way of living most unpleasant and depressing": . . . Ilya "starts his drinking bouts with the neighbours so that Sonia [his wife] has to leave the house with the children": . . . Misha's conduct is such that "I have to feel ashamed of him in front of his tutor": . . . and "Sasha annoyed me too. She has been working very badly lately... there never has been a governess who could manage her. . . . No, I cannot bear the weight of bringing up a lot of weaklings and wastrels. . . ."

No doubt the Countess Tolstoy had many real difficulties and vexations to contend with; but many of them were largely imaginary, while others were the inevitable creation of her own erratic and exacting nature, as she herself was the first to admit, when, in her less harried and dejected moments, she records with a touching sincerity her delight in going mushrooming with her younger children, and watching their happy faces as they carried home the well-filled baskets: or in the sight of all her sons and daughters assembled together for a marriage.

Although, two years before, Tolstoy had confided to his diary: "I often tell myself that without my wife and children I should lead a saindy life ... but the real obstacle is myself," that autumn he sought a temporary solution to the problem by remaining at Yasnaya when the rest of the family removed themselves, as usual, to Moscow. The Countess Tolstoy found this a further cause for lamentation. "I had a letter from Leo Nikolaevich saying that, although he missed me, he

wanted to be left alone to write, as he was getting old and hadn't many more years left in which *to* work. . .. Humanity may find these arguments very convincing, but as for me, it requires a great deal of effort to believe that the writing of an essay can matter more than my life, my love, my desire to be with my husband, and my longing to find happiness in that and not in the world outside." [67]

Three days later, on November 22nd, Tolstoy recorded: "Fate is very strange. When one is young and lives in a turmoil of passions^ one tells oneself that it will pass with marriage. And, indeed, everything did change for me with marriage, and for nearly eighteen years I had a long period of peace. Then came the reaction, and I wanted to change my life. There were new struggles and sufferings, and peace at last, so that I thought I had reached harbour. But not at all. The worst has scarcely begun, and doubtless it will go on until my death." [54]

To his daughter Tania he wrote at the same period: "You speak of my refusal to come to Moscow. I think of the matter every day, and yet I cannot make up my mind. To return to that life of unworthy and idle torment, abandoning my fruitful solitude when I have so little time left me in which to live and to work would be a kind of spiritual suicide—and to what purpose? . . . I know that this makes Mother suffer, and I should like to help her. But I know also that my coming to Moscow would not help her: she would only surfer in some other way, and I would injure myself—or rather that something which is in me but which does not belong to me. I keep thinking and wish to decide this question not for myself, but as though I were standing before God.. .." [73]

2

But family problems were not the only difficulties with which Tolstoy had to contend during these years. On the accession of Nicholas II in 1895, when the Father of his People regaled the multitude with free beer and buns, with the result that, in the inevitable struggle to avail themselves of this munificence, many hundreds were trampled *to* death; and, at the same time, declaring that " I , devoting my whole strength to the national welfare, will maintainable principle of autocracy as firmly and infallibly as it was maintained by my late, never-to-be-forgotten father," pronounced to be " senseless dreams " the people's growing desire for a constitution, Pobedonostsev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, had become even more demented with pride in his increasing influence and temporal power. No less a plan now dominated all his actions than to unite Russia, no matter by what means of violence or persecution, in totalitarian adherence to the Russo-Greek Orthodox Church. All her many troubles came from inner disunity; all her many troubles could thus be miraculously cured. **The Jews** were to be either converted, massacred, or driven from the **country;**

the Christian sectarians were to be brought within the fold by every available means of intimidation, theft and physical ill-treatment. While it took several years to bring this fanatical scheme into the most elementary form of action, savage attacks were made immediately against the Dukhobors.

The Dukhobors, according to Chertkov, who, like all Tolstoy's intimate friends, was deeply concerned in their welfare, were a sect that "base their mutual relations and their relations to others—and not only to people, but to all living creatures—exclusively upon love; and therefore regard all men as equals and as brothers. They extend this idea of equality to the Government authorities; obedience to whom they do not consider binding upon them when the demands of the authorities conflict with their conscience; though, in all that does not infringe what they regard as the Will of God, they willingly fulfil the wishes of the authorities."

One of the things which they did not believe to be in accordance with the will of God, however, was military service; and in 1895 they had organized a public meeting at which they determined to burn their arms. News of this must have reached the authorities beforehand, for, while engaged in this demonstration of defiance to the Government, they were suddenly attacked by Cossacks and severely flogged. This was followed by a systematic persecution so revolting in its details that Birukov had himself gone to the Caucasus to collect information for publication, while Chertkov issued a public appeal, for which Tolstoy wrote an introduction, entitled *Help!*

On February 8th, 1897, as a result of these activities, the police raided Chertkov's house, and took away with them (as Chekov wrote to Souvorin) "everything the Tolstoyans had collected about the Dukhobors and sectarianism—and thus, at one swoop, as if by magic, all evidence against Mr. Pobedonostsev and his seraphim has disappeared." Birukov and Tregubov were banished to small towns in the Baltic; and Chertkov, who still had influence at Court, was offered the choice either of accompanying them or of going abroad. He chose to go to England, and a few days later a whole crowd, including Tolstoy, assembled at the station to see him off. Many people seemed to have felt in the affair as did Chekov, who " cherished no tender feelings for Chertkov," but found the way he had been treated "deeply, deeply revolting." [120]

Even the Countess Tolstoy was incensed at Chertkov's banishment. " Having made a collection of documentary evidence, Chertkov wanted to expose truthfully and honestly the persecutions to which the Dukhobors have been subjected in a short note which he intended to send to the Czar begging his gracious intervention," she wrote to her sister Tania on February 19th. "What harm could that do the country? Both to my astonishment and my great joy the whole of Petersburg society is indignant about these banishments and under-

stands perfectly who is responsible for the infamous action. . . . The place which Tolstoy and his adherents will take in history over this affair will be a great deal more enviable than that occupied by gentlemen such as Pobedonostsev and his supporters." [10o] And to Mme. Annenkov she confided: "I have wept much, for I consider those who have been banished to be the best and the most devoted of our friends, and it is very painful for us to be separated from them." [100]

This triumph on the part of the Orthodox Church led, on August 15th, to the Missionary Congress at Kazan passing a resolution, in order to stop the growth of sectarianism, to forbid dissenters from having schools, to exile them to Siberia, and to propose new laws for confiscating all their property and forcibly removing their children to be educated in orthodox institutions. In consequence, many peasants came to Tolstoy, the one man in Russia who could be relied upon to protest against such measures, begging him to interest himself in the matter; but though he composed a letter to the *Russian News,* they dared not print it. The first draft of this letter, indeed, had been so passionate that it had aroused in his wife all her old fears for their mutual safety, and in order to counter her continual frenzied cautions he had been obliged to write to her: "For God's sake, dear Sonia, be reasonable. Drive away your groundless fears, or, if you cannot do that, at least submit to them calmly, without doing injury to the good relations which are so dear to both of us, because we love each other. In any case I cannot alter my determination always to write that which my conscience and convictions lead me to believe is useful and necessary, without regard to external considerations. . . ." [10o] Nor did the fact that he sent his daughter Tania personally to plead with Pobedonostsev have any better effect. Already, and apparently quite illegally, the Orthodox Church had forcibly removed their children from some Molokan peasants; and the most that Tolstoy was able to do was to seek legal advice from his friend Koni, a famous lawyer, whose opinion was that, even if the case had to be laid before the State Council, and took years to decide, the children would have to be returned to their parents.

In England, Chertkov settled near Purleigh with various other Tolstoyans who were publishing a magazine called *The New Order;* in which they hoped to make familiar to the public the principles of Tolstoy's teaching. But quarrels and misunderstandings very soon sprang up (in particular between Chertkov and Maude) and he presently settled with his wife at Christchurch, where he started the *Free Age Press,* which stood for "an attempt to assist in spreading those deep convictions in which the noblest spirits of every age have united —that man's true aim and happiness is unity in reason and love; the realization of the brotherhood of all men—and that we *must* all strive to eradicate each from himself, those false ideas, false feelings, and false desires, personal, social, religious and economic, which alienate us one

from another and produce nine-tenths of the sum of human suffering." This press published, at extremely low prices, many of Tolstoy's works which were prohibited in Russia; compilations of his thoughts gathered by Chertkov from private letters sent to him, or extracted from Tolstoy's private diary; and such general literature as concerned the ideas in which he most believed. "No Rights Reserved" was proudly printed on the covers of these publications; and when it is realized that they produced a translation of *A Confession* (entitled *How I Came to Believe)* and, later, a complete edition of *Resurrection* for the price of a few pence, it must be admitted that they rendered the public a considerable service.

But the marriages of his two daughters and the banishment of the closest of his friends could not but increase Tolstoy's sense of spiritual isolation: that tragic payment that most great men are compelled to make for the privilege of seeing life more clearly and more wholly than the majority of their fellows.

3

Since *The Kingdom of God is Within You,* Tolstoy had once more confined himself to the formulation of his now fully mature religious and philosophical ideas, in a series of essays which included *Christianity and Patriotism, Reason and Religion, Religion and Morality, Patriotism and Peace,* and culminated in *What is Art? What is Art?* is the last of the major religio-philosophical works which, taken together, form the main structure of the Tolstoyan view of life. It can be understood only in relation to the whole body of his thought; and this is probably the reason why, usually, it is not understood at all. On its first appearance it suffered the usual fate of Tolstoy's later non-fiction works. Published originally in England, in Maude's translation, the Russian version was so heavily mutilated by the censor that the main argument was completely obscured. On all sides, both in Russia and abroad, there was raised an uproar of dissentient voices. As Bernard Shaw remarked," this book is a most effective booby-trap. It is written with so utter a contempt for the objections which the routine critic is sure to allege against it that many a dilettantist reviewer has already accepted it as a butt sent up by Providence. Whoever is really conversant with art recognizes in it the voice of the master." [2]

The general rage provoked by Tolstoy's *What is Art?* was the rage of Caliban seeing his face in a glass: and it was only to be expected that the accomplished purveyors to the public of the successful vapidities usually known in our time as art, were anything but pleased to be told that their activities were devoid of all value and their respected profession was little better than an insidious form of prostitution.

There is little doubt that Tolstoy experienced more difficulty in the composition of this treatise than in anything else he ever wrote, as may

be gathered from a diary note of this period. " I do not cease to reflect upon art and upon every form of temptation which obscures the spirit: art is certainly one, but I do not know how to express my thoughts." Which does not alter the fact that the argument of *What is Art?* is fully trenchant, coherent and persuasive to those who choose to follow it.

The obscurity and fatuity which usually surround Tolstoy's theory of art result from two causes. Firstly that, as in *The Kingdom of God is Within You,* he uses the concept of Christian consciousness to take the place of what, in earlier essays, he had termed reasonable consciousness, which is confusing to those who have not followed all his previous works: and secondly, that he illustrates his arguments with examples which often disturb some cherished preconceived idea of the reader, who is so resentful of having his Shakespeare or Wagner pulled down from his acknowledged pedestal, that his petulance prevents him from even trying to comprehend the main argument. But this need prove no persistent barrier to understanding. In the first case, we have only to remember that when Tolstoy talks about Christian art, he does not mean at all what is usually meant by the term—that is to say, art which deals with religious subjects in accordance with the legend and doctrine of the Church; but that he means, instead, an art which conveys the emotion and the understanding which proceeds from the Christian or reasonable level of consciousness: and, in the second, that he himself considered the examples he gave to be quite arbitrary and unimportant, "for besides being insufficiently informed in all branches of art, I belong to the class of people whose taste has been perverted by false training. And therefore my old, inured habits may cause me to err, and I may mistake for absolute merit the impression a work produced on me in my youth."

The chief contention of Tolstoy's *What is Art?* is this. The phenomena which in our time are generally considered to be works of art can be divided into three kinds. Good art, bad art, and pseudo-art. The difference between good art and bad art is a difference of quality and value based upon inner taste and understanding; but the difference between art and pseudo-art is the difference between the counterfeit and the real.

The value of art cannot reside in any purely abstract theory of aesthetics; it can reside only in its relation to living people and the essential principles which are beneficial to those people. Hence to divorce art from the question of morality is precisely the same as evolving a theory of clothes without reference to the people who wilf wear them.

Art is a means of transmission. By means of his art a man communicates to others those experiences which have touched him deeply, and which it would be impossible for him *to* express effectively in any other way. In art, as distinct from pseudo-art, only two things are necessary. The genuineness of the emotion which the artist wishes to

convey, and his capacity to infect others so that they share his feelings! (No matter how trivial or profound the emotion he transmits; no matter whether it is mirth, joy, pleasure, rapture, voluptuousness, courage, defiance or serenity: if he is successful in transmitting to others emotions which have affected himself, then his activity is that of art. First he must revoke in himself some experience which moved him; and then, through the medium of line, form, colour, sound or words he must communicate his experience to others, in such a way that they understand what he wishes to convey in a manner possible only through his medium. Thus, the recipient of a truly artistic impression will not only be so united to the artist that he will feel that this impression is his own, and what he had himself long desired to express; but he will be united also with all others who receive the same impression. But the value of the impression will depend upon the inner quality of the artist who transmits it, and his work will be necessary and valuable to the extent that he reveals his soul.

Technical competence taken for granted, the quality and value of art is relative to the state of consciousness from which it proceeds. If it proceeds from the animal-personal level of consciousness, it may be, at best, harmless; at worst, definitely harmful, inciting to evil by inflaming the passions and clouding the reason: while if it proceeds from the reasonable-Christian level of consciousness it can unite men in the highest state of understanding and love. Until our own day, this fact was fully realized by all the great thinkers and sages of the world. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; Hebrew prophets and ancient Christians: Buddhists and Mohammedans, and religious people of every period have always recognized this, and considered that art can be valued only in relation to the level of the experience that it transmits.

But since the cultured classes of civilization gradually lost faith in organized religions, and so came to ignore religious perception altogether, the whole meaning and function of art has gradually become lost, and that which has significance only when it increases the understanding and enriches the emotions has come to be considered as a diversion or a game. And while it is true that amongst primitive people, art is a form of play; when it becomes so amongst a civilized race, then it is simply a measure of the corruption and decadence into which that race has fallen.

Thus, in Europe, since the Renaissance, the art of the cultured has separated itself completely from the art of the people; so that two forms of art exist side by side: peasant art and "genteel" art. And this genteel art, when considered from a universal point of view, is not only provincial, in the sense that it is extremely limited in its appeal, but is also debased since its sole function is to provide amusement rather than to transmit those experiences which alone can elevate and unify mankind. To the majority of working people, the art of the educated is inaccessible both on account of its expense and on account

of the experiences which it transmits, these being confined entirely to those of a comparatively small number of trivial and idle people. From Boccaccio until Marcel Prevost, the one favourite theme of art has been sexual love and adultery, subjects which are in their nature very far removed from the toiling masses *of* humanity.

An art which appeals only to a small clique is necessarily restricted in value; and the more restricted it becomes, the more useless it is, until with such "schools" as symbolism or surrealism it ceases to be provincial, and becomes simply parochial.

All art that is deliberately limited in its appeal is a low form of art, even when it is not altogether spurious. For just as all men who have not been emotionally corrupted are swayed by similar feelings and can be moved by similar influences, so a high work of art will appeal to that universal spirit *of* man which is independent *of* time, space and artificial conditions, breaking down all superficial barriers of class or race as do fairy tales and Bible stories. Tolstoy never held (as is so often written) that either the peasant or the "plain man" was the one true judge of art. What he believed was that great art will always awaken a response in a man who has not already been corrupted by habit, wrong education or wrong training, as are most men in periods when civilization is in a state of decadence.

But true art has ceased to be valued in our time on account of the widespread popularity of those counterfeits which have usurped its name. Pseudo-art and provincial art between them have so corrupted the general taste that educated people are no longer capable of reacting spontaneously to great art; with the result that they have cut themselves off from experiencing the highest feelings which mankind has attained, and which can be alone transmitted through the medium of art.

Pseudo-art, in fact, is one of the greatest menaces of society, corrupting public taste and deadening all true artistic receptivity. Springing from vanity, imitation, commercialism, or the desire to interest or surprise, it begins where inspiration ends, and deals exclusively in lies. It seeks to transmit feelings which have never been experienced, to convey ideas which have never been understood, to reproduce the inner essence of what has never been. Its father *is* professionalism, the necessity to produce without inspiration; its mother the desire for fame, money, position. In our time it is the fatal snare which beguiles nearly every artist, causing him continually to exploit his talent for the amusement of others, when his soul is empty, and he has no feeling to express.

Art is the result of a combination of forces, of which the two most important are an inner compulsion and an essential capacity, Pseudo-art is the product of a combination of forces, of which the two most important are the desire for public approbation and a talent cultivated to suit existing demands. The one inevitably excludes thejothex; and

since, in a society which considersart as a form of entertainment, pseudo-art inevitably, flourishes, then true art must inevitably decline.

The sociological implication to Tolstoy's theory of art is, once more, not unlike that of Ruskin; save in the fact that it is rather more precise. Good art can flourish only in a healthy society; that is to say, a society which has not yet stopped its ears and closed its heart to the demands of reasonable-Christian consciousness: and true taste is a moral, no less than an aesthetic, faculty. Moreover, high art is a language, and it is the language of those who inhabit, or who, at least, are approaching that extra-temporal level of consciousness which in the gospels is called *The Kingdom of God.*

A passage from his diary written during the last year of his life will show how this, for Tolstoy, was no matter of abstract theory, but of practical understanding. "Exquisite passage of Pascal," he recorded. "I could not prevent myself from being moved to tears when I read it, and realized my complete accord with this man who died a hundred years ago. What other miracles should there be, when there is such a miracle?"[550]

4

What is Art ? was followed, in 1900, by the publication of Tolstoy's last great novel *Resurrection,* in which he attempted to embody in artistic form many of the ideas which he had already formulated elsewhere. It is a fine novel, and the only reason that it is usually underrated is that *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenin* are better. *Resurrection,* though written mostly during the year 1899, was begun in the autumn of 1895. Probably even then Tolstoy had made attempts to write in the form of a novel a record of the inner change which had taken place within him towards the end of the 'seventies. At the beginning of 1897 we find in his diary: "Began to read *Resurrection.* It is all untrue, invented, weak. It is hard to put right a spoiled thing." And his principal motive in progressing with the work seems to have been his intense desire to raise money in order to help the Dukhobors emigrate to Canada. As an exception to his general rule, for once he permitted himself to accept royalties, and as a result, with the practical help of Maude, Chertkov, Prince Khilkov and his own eldest son Sergey, this curious migration was duly effected.

It is most probable that the earliest scheme of *Resurrection* was similar to that of *The Devil;* and centred about his personal interpretation of Christ's teaching of divorce: that when a man once puts away the woman with whom he has first had intercourse, then he also becomes responsible for all the evil into which she falls. Certainly the origin of Katerina Maslov was the unfortunate servant maid whom he had seduced during his youth at Kazan. But later his friend Koni told him all the circumstances of a recent law case in which an innocent

woman had been convicted of murder (for which reason Tolstoy always used to refer to *Resurrection* in his diary as *Konevsky),* and this gave him the starting-point he needed for the development of his story, which in its first version had been mainly concerned with Nekhlyudov.

The power of *Resurrection* resides chiefly in the figure of Nekhlyudov—the last of Tolstoy's great self-portraits. When the novel begins, Nicholas Irtenev is dead, and the Nekhlyudov who in *Youth* was based largely upon Dmitri Diakov, has simply become transformed into Nicholas Irtenev grown older. He is now the Tolstoy of 1859, upon whom has been grafted many of the author's later ideas.

Recognizing, while serving on a jury, in the prostitute charged with a particularly sordid murder, the charming and innocent young girl he had seduced ten years before, his dormant conscience is reawakened and so leads him to a spiritual regeneration. Many of the earlier scenes in the novel, which depict the enchantment of his first youthful love for her during his student days, when visiting in the country the two maiden aunts whose ward she was, with all their poetry of Easter ceremonial (how perfectly they recapture the mood of 1859 when he "kissed the peasants' beards—how wonderfully they smelt of spring!") are amongst the most moving that he ever wrote. But their sureness is not maintained in any of the later chapters dealing with Nekhlyudov and Katerina Maslov. The reason for this is, probably, that Tolstoy had no model to work from; and that Katerina is almost entirely a fictitious character. As we already know, Tolstoy's genius lay in the possession of an imagination which reflected without distortion; and not in one which worked independently of nature.

Not only is Katerina Maslov but half-realized physically; but, for the first time in a novel by Tolstoy, there seems to be something too familiar in the process of her spiritual regeneration, in which the influence of the perfect selflessness of Mary Pavlovna, during the terrible journey to Siberia, corresponds exactly to the influence of Karataev upon Pierre while he is a prisoner in *War and Peace,*

Her motive in finally refusing to marry Nekhlyudov is never made fully clear, simply because Tolstoy could not himself come to a conclusion as to how she should act. For so difficult did he find it to decide whether at last she should marry Nekhlyudov or not, that eventually he determined to settle the matter by a game of patience. The patience did not come out, and therefore she decided instead to follow the young revolutionary Simonson, who loves her, and whom she respects, to his imprisonment. When saying good-bye, Nekhlyudov is supposed to understand that "she loved him, and thought that by uniting herself to him she would be spoiling his life. By going with Simonson she thought she would be setting Nekhlyudov free, and she felt glad that she had done what she meant to do, and yet she suffered at parting from him." [16] But the reader remains unconvinced. Beside Natasha, Sonia, the Princess **Mary,** Kitty or **Anna, Katerina is a very**

shadowy figure. But great as this defect may be, it by no means spoils the book.

For just as Levin is really the most interesting character in *Anna Karenin,* so is Nekhlyudov the most interesting character in *Resurrection,* and everything that he thinks, feels and does not only holds the attention, but illuminates more clearly the character of the author. How firmly is here delineated the complex and ardent Tolstoy of the 'fifties! " More than once in Nekhlyudov's life there had been what he called a 'cleansing of the soul.' By cleansing of the soul he meant a state of mind in which, after a long period of sluggish inner life, a total cessation of its activity, he began to clear out all the rubbish that he had accumulated in his soul and caused the cessation of true life. After such an awakening Nekhlyudov always made some rules for himself which he meant to follow for ever after, wrote his diary, and began afresh a life which he hoped never to change again.. . . But each time the temptation of the world entrapped him, and without noticing, he fell again, often lower than before." [16]

In Nekhlyudov, as in Nicholas Irtenev, there is very clearly revealed that psychological phenomenon which, when we are honest, each of us can observe in himself; and which Tolstoy always perceived with so extraordinary a clarity that unless this is fully understood, and due allowance is made for his own penetrating and impartial insight, may very easily lead to a grave misunderstanding of the relative power and importance of two contradictory aspects of his being, and of the intrinsic value of many of his public actions. That is, the propensity of the peacock always to rush in and spread his tail at the slightest manifestation of virtue or of feeling in the deeply buried, uncorrupted inner man. To those with insufficient perception, such as the Countess Tolstoy, who was chiefly antagonistic to his ideas because she felt them to be a continual threat to her own way of life, it seems that all that existed was the peacock; and even his most disinterested actions are attributed to a constant desire for notoriety and admiration: whereas, in fact, the second reaction was a form of reflex of the first, of which Tolstoy was always fully aware, and which, in his later life, he always struggled to curb.

"He felt himself one with God, and therefore felt not only the freedom, fullness and joy of life, but all the power of righteousness. All, all the best that a man can do, he felt capable of doing. His eyes filled with tears as he was saying all this to himself; good and bad tears: good because they were tears of joy at the awakening of the spiritual being within him, the being that had been asleep all these years—and bad because they were also tears of tenderness to himself at his own tenderness,"[16] And again later: "Are you really acting according to your conscience, or are you doing it simply in order to show off? " Nekhlyudov asked himself, and had to acknowledge that he was influenced by the thought of what people would say about

him."[16] Clearly two quite different things are involved: an elevated state of mind, and the genuine desire to do good; followed by a subsequent self-complacency and desire for approbation. No matter how insidious the second of these may be in its action, so long as it is clearly observed and curbed, it in no way invalidates the authenticity of the first.

Nekhlyudov's desire to cure all existing social evils; to give his own land to the peasants to be used according to the principles of Henry George; to "do the Master's will that is written in his heart": his arguments with his brother-in-law that "the law is simply an instrument for upholding the existing order of things to die advantage of our class"; his reflection that all the evils that result from social life are the effect of not understanding that" mutual love is the fundamental law of life, and we cannot deal with men without love, and expect successful results, any more than we can deal with bees widiout caution": and his final realization that the laws which, in his best moments, govern his own heart are simply those which were revealed to mankind in the Sermon on the Mount—all this is as strictly copied from the verities of his own life, as are the many varied, charming and convincing sketches of sectarians, peasants and workmen with whom Tolstoy himself so much delighted in conversation.

Probably the most interesting and true words written of *Resurrection* are those to be found in a letter from Chekov to M. O. Menshikov. "It is a remarkable work of art. The most uninteresting is all that is said about the relations of Nekhlyudov and Katyusha, and the most interesting, the princes, generals, 'aunties,' peasants, prisoners and inspectors. The scene at the house of the general and spiritualist, the commandant of the Peter and Paul fortress, I read with a thrill in my soul, so good it is. And Mme. Korchagin in her chair; and the peasant, Theodosia's husband. The peasant calls his grandmodier 'gripping.' But it is Tolstoy's pen that is gripping. The novel has no end, and what is there cannot be called an end. To write and write, and then to take and throw it all on a text from the Gospels—diat is too theological. To solve everything with a text from the Gospels is just as arbitrary as to divide convicts into five categories. Why five and not ten? You should first make people bejieve in the Gospels, because they are indeed the truth, and only then solve all things by texts."[121]

In order that *Resurrection* should be ready in time to raise the funds required for the emigration of the Dukhobors, not only Tolstoy's wife and daughters, but his intimate friends, all helped in the work of copying and proof correcting. "I am working with N. N. Gay on the proofs of *Resurrection"* Goldenweiser recorded on July 31st, 1899. "The corrections are to be inserted in the proof sheets from L. N.'s draft copy, and two copies of the same are made. The draft copy

remains here, and the fair copies are sent, one to Marx for the weekly *Niva*, and the other to Chertkov in England for the English edition. It is an interesting, but worrying and difficult work. Throughout, instead of the one printed proof sheet, one has to copy out afresh three or four long pages. Often L. N.'s corrections are written so closely that a magnifying glass has to be used to read them. Unless one has seen L. N.'s incredible work, the numerous passages that are re-written, the additions and alterations, the same incident sometimes being written dozens of times over, one can have not the remotest idea of this labour." [78]

Indeed, such was Tolstoy's zeal, that regularly, as soon as he saw the proof sheets from Marx, he felt sick and had pain, and, going to his study, would spend his whole strength on changing everything once more. As it was not possible to make many of these alterations in the English edition, and the Russian edition, as usual, was heavily censored, for a long time there was no authorized and complete edition of the novel in print.

Despite the fact that, in England, *Resurrection* was banned both by Mudie's and Smith's, it had far larger sales than any of Tolstoy's previous works, and the royalties of the English edition alone amounted to over £3000. Later, when a dramatic version was produced at His Majesty's Theatre, the demand for the book became so great that the circulating libraries were forced to change their attitude.

It had originally been intended by Tolstoy that the English translation of *Resurrection* should be made by Mme. Chertkov; but as she had very delicate health, and felt unequal to the task, it was given instead to Mrs. Maude; thus, with Maude's translation of *What is Art?*, becoming the basis of the standard English translations *of* Tolstoy's works.

5

Apart from *Resurrection*, Tolstoy's most important work of fiction of the 'nineties is *Father Sergius*, which was first planned in June 1898, but was not published until after his death. As *The Cossacks* reveals die highest peak of his talent for the first period which it completed; and *War and Peace* for the second; so *Father Sergius* is the highest achievement in the artistic productions of the later years, which was to conclude, in 1901, with *Hadji Murad.* The central figure, from which the tale derives its name, was modelled partly on the famous Father Ambrose (who also entered very considerably into Dos toe v-sky's Father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov),* partly upon the monk Antoine who had formerly been an officer in the Horse Guards, and is also a partial self-portrait which reveals very powerfully and clearly Tolstoy's long and painful inner struggle with vanity and lust.

The whole of Father Sergius's story, from the time when, as a hand-

some officer in the Guards, he first becomes a monk from subtle pride; through all his different temptations—the heroic cutting off of a ringer, while a hermit, in order not to succumb to the charms of the frivolous beauty who has made a bet that she will seduce him; the more insidious temptation when he becomes famous as a saint able to work miraculous cures; the tragedy of his fall with the unattractive girl brought to him by her father to be cured; his going out into the world as a beggar to learn true charity and humility from the meek and timid playmate of his youth, and his final settlement in Siberia as the servant of a peasant —is told with a compassionate understanding and an economy of detail that place it amongst the great short stories of the world.

Nor was Tolstoy himself unaware of the merits of the work; and Gorki tells the charming incident how, one day, having read a variant of one of the scenes to a group of friends, the author raised his head, shut his eyes, and said quite distinctly: "'The old man wrote it well.' It came out with such amazing simplicity, his pleasure in its beauty was so sincere, that I shall never forget the delight which it gave me at the time. ... My heart stopped beating for a moment, and then everything around me seemed to become fresh and revivified."[77]

Chapter VI

I. *Religious education: influence of the* Philokalia: *diary extracts on inner development: religious experiences and prayer,* 2. *Failing physical powers: excommunication: the reply to the Synod,* 3. *Illness: the first struggle over the will: departure for the Crimea,* 4. *Yalta: Tolstoys relations with Chekov and Gorki: his second illness,* 5. *Convalescence, third illness, and return home.*

THE 'nineties, however, were not only for Tolstoy a period of deep personal griefs and of intense literary activity; they were also a period of great inner struggle and re-orientation. " The thoughts and feelings that agitate you," he wrote to a friend in March 1891, "those new horizons you see before you, are just what agitate me, they are those in which I live____Do not imagine that I defend the point of view which I formerly expressed in *What I Believe,* Not only do I not defend it, but I am glad we have outlived it. When starting on a new road one cannot help rejoicing at what one first sees before one, and it is excusable to mistake what is at the beginning of the road for the journey's aim." [2]

A decade before, still full of physical vigour and the passionate enthusiasm which had accompanied his re-valuation of life, he had set out to change, not only his personal life, but the lives of those about him. But now, slowly and steadily, it began to be borne in on him that "you will have lived your life, and everything will remain exactly as it was": and experience—experience dearly bought—had taught him that the way to the Kingdom of God lies within. The resistance which his ideas had encountered, not only from many of his own family and personal friends, but from the authorities of Church and State; the failure of the colonies which had tried to organize and guide their activities by the light of his principles; the backsliding and even revulsion that had occurred amongst many who had at first tried to follow him; the suppression of newspapers by the Minister of the Interior merely because they sympathized with his views; the bad fate of certain disciples who had settled down with peasant girls in obscure villages, and worked themselves to death or perished wretchedly from poverty and disease; the exile and imprisonment of friends; and such tragedies as the suicide of a young girl he had met at Chertkov's, who was later arrested and confined in the fortress of Peter and Paul because the police suspected her of bringing back from England the proofs of an article prohibited by the censor, and had there put an end to her life by setting herself on fire: all this had served to make it fully clear to him that the ultimate

concern of each individual man was not to change the world, **but** to change himself; and that if external conditions were ever. to improve, they could improve only as the result of an inner change in man.

As he wrote to Maude at the end of a decade of a disciple in England who sought his advice: "Ask him to excuse me not replying to him, and convey to him that what I wish most for my young friends is thai they should devote their energies more to the ordering of their inner lives than to propaganda." [2]

As early as 1885 he had translated and written a preface to the *Didake* but now he began to study one of the greatest of all early Christian works—the *Philokalia,* a collection of the writings of the Fathers of the Eastern Church in six volumes, which contains descriptions of monastic rules and of mystical states, together with practical methods of prayer and contemplation. At the same time he was also sent by a Hindu admirer an "exquisite book of Hindu wisdom"—*Raja Yoga, or Conquering Internal Nature,* by Swami Vivekanenda, and this, too, no doubt exerted a considerable influence upon his thoughts.

His sister Mary had now, in the tradition of the women of the family, retired to the Shamardin Convent; and hither he went sometimes to have long talks with her. The old tenderness of his family affection had never altered; and when he visited Sergey at Pirogovo he received "a most joyful impression that my brother Seriosha has undoubtedly had a spiritual transformation. He himself has formulated the essence of my belief (and he evidently recognizes it as being true for himself) to raise in oneself the spiritual essence and subject the animal self to it."

To raise in himself the spiritual essence—the formulation now is almost Pauline—was henceforward to be the task to which Tolstoy more and more frequently returned. At last he realized that "it is; impossible for a living man to be quite pure and saintly: he can only steadily approach the ideal, making his progress towards perfection the meaning of his life."

Thus he saw now perfectly clearly that while "manual labour as the result of the renunciation of independent means and of the desire to serve others, is a lawful thing, when it becomes an end in itself it will inevitably lead to evil." Similarly with prayer, which, as a result of one's aspiration towards God, is a "most lawful act," but when it becomes an aim in itself, destroys the moral life. As in his Caucasian days, Tolstoy had now returned to prayer, even when he decided: "I cannot pray. The language of God is different from mine. But He will understand and translate in His own way when I say 'Help me. Come to me. Don't abandon me.'" Indeed, now as then, "I address my prayers to a personal God, not because God is personal (I know that if He is illimitable He cannot be that) but because I myself am personal and limited. If I wear green spectacles I see everything green, although I know perfectly well that the world is not green." [54]

In order to live, he realized now more than ever, it is absolutely

necessary to advance in a work in which there is no end; and this can be achieved only by continual effort. "One must make the efforts of which the Gospel speaks when it says: 'The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' All that is good in life, all that is right, every real action is accomplished by effort. Renounce effort and you let yourself drift with the current, you do not live. Nevertheless, the Church teaches that all effort is a sin of pride—confidence in one's own powers; and lay organization repeats that personal effort is vain, and that organization and environment do everything. What a mistake! Personal effort, no matter how small, is the essential thing. To conquer laziness, gluttony, envy, anger and depression—this is the most important thing in the world; it is the testimony of the divine in life, it is Karma, the development of the self." [M]

His diary of these years is full of these incessant struggles—the isolated victories, the frequent failures. And many times he recorded the most useful methods of help in times of particular inner stress. "In moments of passion, the only means of self-conquest is to destroy the illusion that it is the self who suffers and desires: to separate the true self from the turbulent waves of passion." " When one shffers, it is necessary to enter into oneself, not to seek some external diversion which can only prevent one from seeing one's"true self. "When one comes back to oneself, everything becomes clear, and sufferings such as are hot physical cease. The true self neither knows how to, nor can, be angry; nor can it hate, but can only love with compassion."[54]

'"Or again: "Here are some"methods of help against the sufferings of passion. Remember how often you have suffered through having identified yourself in thought with your passions—your jealousy, greed, lust, how quickly and how often it all vanished afterwards from your mind, until there came a time when you could not even recall the ' I ' which suffered. Again it is the same thing: it is not you who suffer, but passion in you, and through error you confuse that passion with yourself.

"Also remind yourself, when you suffer, that this suffering is not an evil which you must be rid of, but the work of your life which you must accept. In wishing to evade your suffering you resemble a man who fails to push the plough just where the ground is hardest." [54]

Or again: "It is essential to separate your true self from that which is offended and angry: to remember that this is neither an obstacle nor a casual misfortune which is thrust upon you, but is one of the problems of your life; and above all to realize that if you feel animosity towards anyone, or anyone feels animosity towards you, that you alone are to blame. And as soon as you recognize your fault, you become calm." [54]

It was less that there was anything new for him in these principles than that they had approached from the realm of theory to the realm of practice. At last he fully understood that self-consciousness exists in man only at those rare moments when he is completely detached from

transitory external phenomena and the inner workings of involuntary imagination and associative thought. "Only when you live without consideration of past or future time do you live a real free life in which there are no obstacles. As soon as you remember the past (the offences, the contradictions, even your own weaknesses) or you think of the future (will something happen or not happen) you become dissatisfied or anxious. Only at one point, in the present alone, can you fuse with God and live in your divine essence. When you use reason to consider what will be, you are insignificant and weak; but when you use it to do the will of Him that sent you, you are powerful and free. This can easily be seen in the way you immediately weaken and become deprived of strength when you consider the results of your actions."

Thus, in his actual struggle with himself, the metaphysical aspect of Christianity which at first he had been inclined to ignore grew steadily more important for him, until in time it very largely supplanted the "practical Christianity" which was to transform life upon earth. "Not long ago, in the summer, I felt God clearly for the first time," he recorded on October 14th, 1897. "I knew that He existed and that I existed in Him, that outside that there was nothing. I was in Him, a limited being in the illimitable, and He in me, the illimitable within the limited."

And a few months later: "Old as I am, I have discovered a new state of consciousness, that of the eternal Goodness. It is not imagination; it is a state of consciousness to reach which one clearly feels the changes as one passes from confusion and suffering to clarity and calm, just as one experiences heat and cold. And this change depends only upon us. . . . It is this alone which is the state of prayer. One has something to hide, one torments oneself, one lacks something, or one is afraid; and suddenly—and this is the essential thing—one abandons the values of man for the values of God. If only I can keep this light within me until my death. . . ."[53]

But presently "I am entirely alone, and I weaken. I often tell myself diat I must live serving, but when I enter life, though I do not exactly forget, yet I scatter myself." Indeed, in Tolstoy we see the extraordinary phenomena of a man seriously trying to lead a religious life in its true sense without the help of any spiritual director, or without connection with any specific organization. This was one of the causes of the tragedy of his life. Without the possibility of personal guidance from one more experienced than himself, and having no sure knowledge of the weight that he could bear, he was compelled to accept the impossible burden of himself determining every important action of his life. Alone in surroundings which steadily became more difficult, he came to the conclusion that "there is peace neither for him who lives for worldly ends among men, nor for him who lives for spiritual ends alone. There is peace only when a man lives among others in order to serve God."

By now Tolstoy had long since "formed the habit of praying every morning in solitude.... But besides that prayer... I read the thoughts of the Saints and Sages, not Christians only, nor the ancients only; and I meditate, seeking out what in God's sight there is of evil in my heart and trying to rid myself of it. I also try to pray in active life, when I am among other people and passions assail me. Then I try to remember what went on in my soul when I prayed in solitude, and the more sincere my prayer was the more easily do I refrain from evil."[2] It was a practice that he continued until the end of his life.

2

Towards the end of the century Tolstoy's magnificent physical powers began to fail him. Although a visitor, meeting him for the first time, found that "every fibre of the old man glowed with a spirit of youth, of youthful searching and aspiration," the man who, only a few years before, had taught Maude to bicycle without holding the handle-bars, played tennis with vigour, raced healthy young men for half a mile without falling behind, and executed difficult gymnastic feats better than the youngest of his sons, was forced at last to record a few months before his seventieth birthday that "thanks to my gymnastic exercises, I have become convinced for the first time that I am old and weak."

When visiting his doctor in Moscow one morning in February 1901, accompanied by a friend, he was suddenly recognized by a crowd in Lubiansky Square, who acclaimed him with unprecedented excitement. With much shouting and waving of hats, they threw themselves upon him in an uproar of enthusiasm, so that Tolstoy, confused and bewildered, could only walk away as fast as he could to look for a sledge. Even when he had found one, the crowd, who had followed him, held on to it with such determination that it was impossible for him to escape; and eventually mounted police had to be summoned in order to make it possible for him to depart.

The reason for this demonstration was that the Most Holy Synod of the Russo-Greek Orthodox Church had that morning formally issued a proclamation excommunicating Tolstoy with solemn pomp. *' In our days God has permitted a new false teacher to appear: Count Leo Tolstoy. A writer well known to the world, Russian by birth, Orthodox by baptism and education, Count Tolstoy, seduced by his intellectual pride, has insolently risen against the Lord and His Christ and against his holy heritage, and has publicly in the sight of all men repudiated the Orthodox Mother Church which reared and educated him, and has devoted the literary activity and the talent given him by God to disseminating among the people teachings repugnant to Christ and the Church, and to destroying in the minds and hearts of men their national faith, the orthodox faith which has been confirmed by the

universe and in which our forefathers lived and were saved, and to which, until now, Holy Russia has held, and in which she has been strong. Therefore the Church does not reckon him as its member, and cannot so reckon him until he repents and resumes his communion with her." [2]

It seems somewhat extravagant that the Church should have suddenly decided to excommunicate a man for beliefs that he had been publicly professing for over twenty years; although already, the previous April, a private circular had been sent out by the Most Holy Synod to all the clergy stating him to be an enemy of the Orthodox Christian Church who, in the event of his death, was to be forbidden, unless he repented at last, all requiems, masses and liturgies for the peace of his soul.

But Pobedonostsev had his reasons. He objected very strongly (and quite understandably) to the description of the celebration of the Mass in *Resurrection,* in which the ceremony is deliberately reduced to the level of a monstrous farce, and he objected even more to the fact that in that novel he had himself been portrayed as the "dull and morally obtuse" Toporov, with whom Nekhlyudov regrets that he has shaken hands. Nevertheless, Pobedonostsev would have been better advised, in the interests of the Church, to follow the more diplomatic example of Alexander III, and not to "make a martyr of Tolstoy"; for the result of his excommunication was that Tolstoy's popularity suddenly increased to an unprecedented extent, while two months later a public attempt was made upon Pobedonostsev's life.

True, as a result of the slanderous pamphlets with which the Church sought to justify its action to the people (it had always tried to foment public opinion against him, to the extent that, after the decree passed in the Kazan Missionary Congress of 1897, Tolstoy had received several letters containing threats upon his life), there were unpleasant moments in public places when he would suddenly find himself being insulted by indignant strangers, or obliged to listen to such malicious or ironic remarks as " There goes the Devil in human form"; but, for the most part, the publication of this edict had a result quite opposite to what had been intended.

Masses of enthusiastic students congregated before Tolstoy's Moscow house; a deputation of women came to express their sympathy; admirers and sympathizers sent him letters, telegrams and even gifts; the famous portrait of him by Repin which was on exhibition in Petersburg was spontaneously decorated by the public with masses of flowers; while for months two fables called *The Lion and the Asses* and *The Victorious Pigeons,* which held the Government and, in particular, Pobedonostsev up to ridicule, caused much amusement as they circulated secretly from hand to hand.

Such a sensation did Tolstoy's excommunication cause that even the civil authorities considered it necessary to intervene. The flower-

bedecked portrait was removed by official command from the gallery where it was being displayed; many of his books were removed from the public libraries; the press was forbidden either to publish his photograph or to mention the demonstrations in his honour; post offices were instructed to refuse acceptance of all messages of congratulation, and the secret police busied itself with abstracting many of his letters from the post. While the Countess Tolstoy felt deeply humiliated and affronted by these proceedings, and even wrote a vigorous letter of protest to the Metropolitan Anthony, which she later had lithographed and distributed both in Russia and abroad, Tolstoy himself was at first merely benignantly amused, and informed his friends that he positively refused to accept congratulations.

Nevertheless, the following month he published an eloquent and dignified reply to the Most Holy Synod in which he expressed his attitude to their decree: "Whether or not these beliefs of mine offend, grieve or prove a stumbling-block to anyone," he concluded, "I can as little change them as I can change my body. I must myself live my own life, and I must myself meet death (and that very soon) and therefore I cannot believe otherwise than as I, preparing to go to that God from whom I came, do believe. I do not believe my faith to be the one indubitable belief of all time; but I see no other that is plainer, clearer or answers better to all the demands of my reason and my heart. Should I find such an one, I shall at once accept it, for God requires nothing but the truth. But I can no more return to that from which with such suffering I have escaped, than a flying bird can re-enter the eggshell from which it has emerged.

"'He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself (his own peace) better than all/ said Coleridge. I travelled the contrary way. I began by loving the Orthodox faith more than my peace, then I loved Christianity more than my Church, and now I love truth better than anything in the world. And, until now, truth for me corresponds with Christianity as I understand it. And I cling to this Christianity, and, to the degree in which I cling to it, I live peacefully and happily, and peacefully and happily approach death." [9]

3

It seemed at this period that Tolstoy had but a short time left to live. The digestive weakness from which he had suffered since his youth, but which was never clearly diagnosed, became steadily worse, and, accompanied by some grave disorder of the intestines, forced him towards the middle of the summer to retire to bed. It was that July that there occurred one of those terrible scenes in the Tolstoy household which it is necessary to record, since upon it hinges much of the tragedy of the future.

As Tolstoy lay ill, and possibly dying, there brooded over the house the tense and sinister atmosphere of a domestic drama by Gerhardt Hauptmann. One of the younger sons had learned of the existence of Tolstoy's will and communicated the information to his mother. The contents of this will we have already seen: it was the one which he had written shortly after the death of little Vanya. Since then, his daughter Mary had made three copies, one of which she had kept herself, and the two others of which she had given for safe keeping, one to Chertkov and the other to her eldest brother Sergey.

Fearing that her father might die and, in that event, his wishes be overridden, Mary took him her copy of the will for him to sign. At this, the Countess Tolstoy, who had only been waiting an opportunity to intervene, fell upon her daughter in hysterical rage. While Mary tried to explain that the paper was of doubtful legal value, and that anyhow the whole family were perfectly aware of her father's wishes, the Countess shouted at her furiously, taunted her with having been well content to accept her own portion of the property "in order to keep a beggar husband"; and accused her of being a pharisee and a hypocrite.

She then rushed into Tolstoy's room and demanded that he should give her the document to destroy. Tolstoy refused; whereupon his wife, surrendering herself completely to the hysteria that was gradually becoming more pronounced in her, raged, wept, supplicated and threatened to kill herself, until Tolstoy was seized with a dangerous fit of palpitations of the heart, and in order to prevent his further sufferings, which she knew would only be prolonged until her mother had gained her ends, Mary herself gave up her copy of the will, which the Countess thereupon destroyed. Nevertheless, both she and her husband warned the Countess that the whole family was perfectly aware of Tolstoy's wishes, and that if, in the event of his death, she deliberately tried to circumvent them, they themselves would publish in the newspapers a copy of the last wishes which she had ignored.

The account of this affair, which the Countess later recorded in her diary, is clearly not wholly truthful: " When, in July of last year, 1901, Leo Nikolaevich was dangerously ill, Masha, without anyone's knowledge, gave the paper she had copied from his diary to him to sign; which, being ill, he did. When I accidentally learned of this I found it extremely annoying. I believe that it would be wrong and senseless to make the works of Leo Nikolaevich common property. I love my family and wish it the best of fortunes; but by surrendering the writings to common possession, we would only have given a prize to wealthy publishing houses like Marx, Zeitlin (Jews) and others. I told L. N. that if he died before me I should *not* renounce the rights of his works, and that, had I believed this a good and just act, I should have given him the joy of relinquishing the rights *during* his *life* time, and that after his death it would no longer have any meaning for him.

And so now, having undertaken the publication of Leo Nikolaevich's works according to his wishes, having retained the rights of publication and having refused to sell this right [she could not anyhow have done so since legally she possessed only a power of attorney to conduct the publishing business] to anyone in spite of large sums being offered me for it, I began to resent—as I had before—Masha's having in her hands a paper to the effect that he did not wish to have his works sold after his death. I did not know precisely the contents of this paper and asked Leo Nikolaevich to take it from Masha and give it to me. This he willingly did." [78]

This passage, written by the Countess Tolstoy quite spontaneously before anyone had ever accused her of anything, is more revealing than the most powerful indictment that could be penned against her; but it is particularly interesting because it clearly shows that there was always in her a deep inner discord, so that, despite every attempt at self-justification, she was fully aware of the implication of her actions.

The following month, medical opinion decided that it would be beneficial to Tolstoy's health to winter in the Crimea. The Countess Panin lent him her luxuriously furnished but oppressive villa near Yalta; the Minister of Railways placed at his disposal a special travelling carriage, so that he need be disturbed as little as possible on the journey; and towards the end of August, accompanied by his wife and his youngest daughter Alexandra, who had now begun to take her sisters' place as his secretary, besides various other members of the family, the old man set out.

4

At Yalta, where Tolstoy was visited by the Grand Duke Nicholas, who showed him the greatest friendliness and begged him to make use of his estate; and, at the same time, whenever he ventured abroad, was assiduously followed by an agent of the secret police whose surveillance was so clumsy that it was impossible not to be aware of it; Tolstoy was frequently visited by both Chekov and by Gorki.

After his continual misunderstandings and quarrels with Turgenev, it is very pleasant to consider Tolstoy's relations with Chekov, who, next to himself, was now the greatest living writer in Russia. As we have already seen, everything that Tolstoy wrote and did had always been ofthe greatest interest to the younger man. "*Of* all authors, my favourite is Tolstoy," Chekov invariably declared when his literary tastes were questioned; yet, curiously enough, when he first met the "superman" in August 1895 his long enthusiasm for him had already begun to wane.

"Perhaps because I am not smoking, Tolstoy's morality has ceased to touch me," Chekov had written to Souvorin in the spring of the previous year; "at the bottom of my heart I take up a hostile attitude

to it, and that, of course, is unjust. I have peasant blood in my veins [Chekov's grandfather, indeed, had been a serf on one of Chertkov's ancestor's estates] and you won't astonish me with peasant virtues. From my childhood I have believed in progress, and I could not help believing in it since the difference between the time when I used to be thrashed and when they gave up thrashing me was tremendous. . . . But Tolstoy's philosophy touched me profoundly and took possession of me for six or seven years, and what affected me was not its general propositions, with which I was familiar beforehand, but Tolstoy's manner of expressing it, his reasonableness, and probably a sort of hypnotism. Now something in me protests, reason and justice tell me that in the electricity and heat of love for man there is something greater than chastity and abstinence from meat. War is an evil and legal justice is an evil; but it does not follow from that that I ought to wear bark shoes and sleep on the stove with the labourer, and so on and so on. But the point is, that it is not a matter of pro and con: the thing is that in one way or another Tolstoy has passed for me, he is not in my soul, and he has departed from me saying: 'I leave your house empty.' I am untenanted." [12]

Probably it was the realization, when he met him, that Tolstoy's philosophy did not consist in wearing bark shoes and sleeping on the stove with the labourer, that recharged Chekov with all his former enthusiasm; for after two days at Yasnaya Polyana (as we have seen in his letter about Tolstoy's daughters) he was evidently reconverted. It was inevitable that the man who was already the greatest novelist of his time, and the man who was shortly to become the greatest dramatist, could not but have a deep appreciation of each other; though it was less this than a certain quality of warmth and tenderness that existed in them both, which was the basis of their mutual affection. Each possessed to an extraordinary degree that deep-rooted veneration for life which is an essential quality of the artistic temperament; and just as, when Yasnaya Polyana was infested with rats, Tolstoy could never bring himself to kill them, but would himself take all that he caught to some remote part of the estate and there set them free, so Chekov, when his house at Yalta was plagued with mice, would arrange the most elaborate traps, only to release his victims later over the fence of his back garden.

To Mme. L. A. Avilov, Chekov wrote later: "I know Tolstoy: I believe I know him well, and understand every movement of his eyebrows, and yet I love him"; and when Tolstoy had been seriously ill, he confided to Menshikov: "I am afraid of Tolstoy's death. If he were to die, there would be a big vacuum in my life. Firstly, I have never loved anyone as I love him; I am not a believing man, but of all faiths, I consider his faith the nearest and most akin to me. Secondly, while Tolstoy is in literature it is easy and pleasant to be a writer; even to be aware that one has done nothing and is doing nothing is not

so terrible, since Tolstoy does enough for all. His work serves as a justification for all the hopes and anticipations built on literature. Thirdly, Tolstoy stands firmly, his authority is immense, and while he lives bad taste in literature, banality of every kind, impudent or lachrymose, all the bristling, exasperated vanities will remain far away, deep in the shade. His moral authority alone is capable of maintaining on a certain height the so-called literary moods and currents. Without him they would all be a shepherdless flock, or a hotchpotch in which it would be difficult to make out anything. . . ." [121]

To Tolstoy, Chekov was a "beautiful, magnificent man; modest and quiet like a girl." Gorki has recorded that his love for him was paternal and, when he looked at him, "his eyes were tender and seemed almost to stroke Anton Pavlovich's face." In lighter mood, he would chaff him affectionately by saying, "You know, my dear fellow, I don't think very much of Shakespeare; but he wrote better plays than you!" or ask him with the utmost gravity "Is it really worth while writing if you have no serious ideas of your own?"—a remark which must have been somewhat irritating to a man who when his wife asked him "What is life?" replied, "That is just the same as asking what is a carrot. A carrot is a carrot, and nothing more is known about it."

But when speaking of Chekov to others, Tolstoy would say: " Chekov is very talented. And sometimes, in his short stories, you can see that his artistic perception enables him to see the truth more clearly than his reasoning powers would have done. He is a strange writer: he throws words about as if at random, and yet everything is alive. And what understanding! He never has any superfluous details; every one of them is either necessary or beautiful." [78] What higher praise could he have accorded to the Chekov who had once confided to a friend: "I am not a liberal, not a conservative, not a believer in gradual progress, not a monk, not an indifferentist. I should like to be a free artist, and nothing more."

In fact, Tolstoy understood of Chekov exactly what Katherine Mansfield understood later—that his extraordinary purity of vision could only emanate from a similar purity of heart. And it was just this essential goodness which made her write (although she had never met him) " Ach Chekov! why are you dead ? Why can't I talk to you, in a big, darkish room, at late evening—where the light is green from the waving of trees outside? I'd like to write a series of *Heavens:* that would be one," that drew Tolstoy so powerfully to the younger man.

Of all the talented writers near to us in time the figure of Chekov is one of the most appealing. His extraordinarily sensitive and powerful artistic gifts, allied to a simplicity of nature in which egotism was almost negligible, and a tolerance and sympathy for mankind fully equalled by patience and courage in the face of his personal adversities, make it fully understandable why the gifted Katherine Mansfield, wishing only to live, "and to leave life on this earth as Chekov left it,

and Tolstoy," considered him one of the two good men she had ever known.

Of Gorki—who, to Chekov, was a "nice fellow, a very simple-hearted man," but who himself felt that Tolstoy's interest in him was "ethnological. In his eyes I belong to a species not familiar to him—only that!"—he was far less appreciative. It was of him that Tolstoy made that highly significant remark: "You can invent anything you like, but you can't invent psychology, and in Gorki one comes across just such psychological inventions: he describes what he has never felt."

It is said to have been on Tolstoy's advice that Marx had bought the copyright of Chekov's stories, which enabled him at last to build the house at Yalta where it was so necessary that he should winter in order to combat the tuberculosis that in so few more years was to put an end to his gentle and gifted life.

Having at last renounced his old intention to remain a bachelor in order that he might become a "little bald old man sitting at a big table in a fine study," Chekov had recently married Olga Knipper, a talented and beautiful young actress who had played the part of Irina in the most sensitive and moving of all his plays: *The Three Sisters.* And to her he communicated the fluctuating state of Tolstoy's health.

"Well, my joy," he wrote her on November 6th, "I went to see Tolstoy yesterday. I found him in bed. He had hurt himself a little and now he was lying up. He is better in health than he was, but these are only the warm days at the end of October, yet winter is, nevertheless, very, very near. He seemed to be pleased at my coming. And for some reason or other I was particularly glad to see him this time. His expression was friendly and kind, though elderly, or, rather, aged; he listens with pleasure and speaks readily. He still likes the Crimea." [122]

A few days later, he was promising to send her a snapshot which the Countess Tolstoy had taken of "Tolstoy and me together; I will ask her for a copy of it and send it to you, but don't let anyone copy it, God forbid!" while on the 17th he assured her that all the rumours which had reached her of Tolstoy being ill were quite without foundation. "It is true that he is weak and looks decrepit, but he has not a single symptom which could be alarming, nt)t one except old age. Don't believe a word of it; if—which God forbid—anything should happen, I'll let you know by telegram. I'll call him grandfather, or perhaps the telegram won't reach you." [122] A week later, he sent her the precious photo, which was "unique. After my death and yours, it will have to go to the Taganrog town library, where my archives are being kept."

For the next six weeks Chekov himself was too ill to go out, but on December 29th he wrote to P. A. Sergeyenko: "I know very well how Tolstoy is. He is well. The doctor who treats him often comes to me and tells me all I wish to know. Tolstoy became seriously ill

some time ago, but he recovered and is now quite well. But old age perceptibly takes hold of him; that means that he may live another twenty years or may die from the least trifle any day. In his condition any illness now is terrible, any trifle dangerous. Except for old age he has no disease, and probably never has had. He continues to like the Crimea, and is quite happy." [121]

But less than four weeks later Tolstoy had caught pneumonia. His temperature soared, his pulse increased rapidly, he suffered from palpitations of the heart, and so grave was his condition that it was thought he could not live. His various children and their wives arrived, as did several intimate friends. Every night Tolstoy was watched by two of the women of his family, who sat devotedly by his bedside: the Countess until 4 o'clock in the morning, when two of her daughters took her place. Finally, he took leave of all his relations and dictated a letter, which was said to have been deeply moving, to his one absent son, Leo. Leo, of whom once Tolstoy had been wont to say with joy was the nearest to him of all his children, had long since turned against him. Having fallen ill on his return from Samara after the famine, he had not only bitterly rejected all his father's ideas but flouted them as violently as he could in print. Tigr Tigrovich some newspaper critic had called him when he had published a story called *Chopin*s Prelude* in refutation to the *Kreut^er Sonata. "* Nothing can be worse than being the son of a great man. Whatever you do, people compare you with your father," complained the son who later remembered how,, in his letters to him, Tolstoy had always taken pains to sign himself "Leo Tolstoy *aini"* thus recognizing that he, too, was a writer. But Tolstoy thought very little of his abilities, and even once remarked that his son Leo was the exact opposite of his brother Nicholas, in that he had all the vanity but none of the talent required to make a writer.

Before this letter could be sent, the family received a telegram to say that Leo was on his way to Gaspra. By the time he arrived Tolstoy was so weak that he could scarcely articulate; but telling his son that he had expressed all that he would like to say to him in writing, handed him the letter. Having read it through, Leo walked out of the room without a word and, in the presence of the fully-assembled family, who were now expecting the end at any moment, tore the letter into shreds and threw them into the wastepaper basket.

News that Tolstoy was dying had reached the ears of the Most Holy Synod, who wanted now to be able to announce to an astonished world that the great writer had recanted on his death-bed and died in the arms of the Mother Church. A priest was despatched to the house, who begged to be admitted to the dying man. When Tolstoy was told of this by his son Sergey, he merely gave a wry smile, and remarked: " Can't these gentlemen understand that even in the presence of death two and two still make four?'

5

But with a physical resilience which matched his intellectual vigour Tolstoy did not die; and on February 9th Chekov reported to his wife: "Yesterday I was told over the telephone that Tolstoy is quite well again. There has been a crisis, but now his temperature is normal." Gorki, to whom we are indebted for many vivid pictures of Tolstoy at this period (though he wore coloured spectacles and some of his reminiscences should be regarded with circumspection) has said that this "illness dried him up still more, burnt something out of him. Inwardly he seemed to become lighter, more transparent, more resigned." We can see the old man, during his convalescence, being wheeled about in a bath-chair by his son Sergey, who tended him with a clumsy solicitude that was deeply touching; handing the manuscript of *Hadji Murad*, which was near completion, to his youngest daughter to be copied; playing cards of an evening "seriously, passionately"; taking a stroll in a "grey crumpled ragged suit and crumpled hat"; sitting on a couch with his legs drawn up under him and discoursing with his "wonderful, eloquent hands—not beautiful, but knotted with swollen veins, and yet full of a singular expressiveness and creative power" on contemporary literature; at times "giving the impression of having just arrived from some different country, where people think and feel differently, and their relations and language are different"; then suddenly smiling a broad smile so that "even his cheekbones beamed."

But scarcely had he recovered completely from this pneumonia than he was once more taken ill, this time with enteric fever; once more his children were summoned, and a period of anxiety gave way at last to a fresh period of hope.

Then, when at last he had recovered, his youngest daughter Alexandra became ill, It seemed that, as a health resort, Yalta had been a singularly unfortunate choice, and the following June the family returned home to Yasnaya Polyana. It was the first time that Tolstoy had been away for so long for thirty years; as it was the last, until he went to his final rest.

Chapter VII

I. *The protests of the last decade: arrest of Gusev.* 2. *Continued efforts at self-perfection: the anthologies of wise sayings: the inner estrangement between husband and wife: the Countess Tolstoy's open antagonism: the police guard at Yasnaya Polyana: the peasants' insults: the desire to go away.* 3. *The Jubilee.*

HADJI MURAD, a simply written tale of "the first horseman and hero of all Chechenia" who committed a base act and surrendered himself to the Russian Government, as Tolstoy had written to his brother Sergey from the Caucasus fifty years ago, is the last of his artistic works and one of the very few which has no particular biographical significance. The last decade of his life is most notable for the vigorous and prophetic protests which he made unceasingly against public scandals which it was clear to him, if persisted in, could only lead to disaster for the whole of the West. From the present moment of time many of these have so great a significance that it is rewarding to give them a brief study. " Perhaps it is because I am unwell," he once cried out to a friend, "but at moments to-day I am simply driven to despair by everything that is going on in the world: the new form of oath, the revolting proclamation about enlisting university students in the army, the Dreyfus affair, the situation in Serbia, the horrors of the diseases and deaths at the Auerbach quicksilver works ... I cannot make out how mankind can go on living like this, with the sight of all this horror around them." [78]

Already in *Thou Shalt Not Kill!,* written at the beginning of the new century, Tolstoy had stated that" the misery of nations is caused not by particular persons, but by the particular order of society under which the people are so tied up together that they find themselves all in the power of a few men, or more often in the power of one single man: a man so perverted by his unnatural position as the arbiter of the fate of the lives of millions, that he is always in an unhealthy state, and always suffers more or less from a mania of self-aggrandisement, which only his exceptional position conceals from general notice. What indeed must be going on in the head of some William of Germany—a narrow-minded, ill-educated, vain man, with the ideals of a German Junker, when he can say nothing so stupid or vile that it will not be met by an enthusiastic * Hurrah* and be commented on by the press of the world as though it were something important? When he says that, at his word, soldiers should be ready to kill their own fathers, people shout * Hurrah/ When he says the army is to take no prisoners in China, but

to slaughter everybody, he is not put in a lunatic asylum, but people shout 'Hurrah!' and set sail for China to execute his commands/'[18]

As Turgenev, when aware that he was about to die, had felt that it was his duty to write personally to Alexander III, explaining to him the absolute necessity of his granting his people a liberal constitution, so Tolstoy, when, in 1901,he felt his end to be near, considered it incumbent upon him before he died to tell Nicholas II " what I think of your present activity, of what it might be, what good it might bring to millions of people and to yourself, and what evil it can bring to millions of people and yourself if it continues in the same direction as now. Autocracy is an outmoded form of government which may suit the requirements of a people somewhere in central Africa, far removed from the rest of the world, but not the requirements of the Russian people, who increasingly participate in the enlightenment common to the whole world; therefore it is only possible to uphold this form of government by all manner of violence, reinforced guards, exile by police decree, executions, religious persecutions, censorship of books and newspapers, perversion of education, and, in general, by various evil acts.

" These have so far been the fruits of your reign: beginning with your answer to the deputation from Tver, when you applied the name of * senseless dreams' to the people's most legitimate wishes; all your orders concerning Finland; the encroachments in China; your plan for the Hague Conference, accompanied by an increase of armaments; the weakening of self-government and the strengthening of arbitrary police rule; the support you have given to the persecution of peoples for their religion; your consent to the establishment of an alcohol monopoly, that is, to the Government trading in poison that ruins the people; and finally your obstinacy in keeping in force corporal punishment in disregard of all representations that have been made to you to abolish this blot on the Russian people, a measure which is as senseless as it is completely ineffective. All these are acts which you could not have committed unless you had decided not only to prevent the life of the people from progressing, but to force it back into a state that it has long outgrown. . . ."[78] But Nicholas II remained deaf, in the usual manner of monarchs, to the voice of this prophet who was no prophet in his own country, and deliberately continued to pursue a policy which could culminate only in his own destruction.

Nevertheless, Tolstoy was fully aware that no mere change of Government could benefit the people, as is made perfectly clear in his essay *To the Government, the Revolutionaries and the People*^ which again goes straight to the roots of the evils of our time. " If the living conditions of the people are to improve, it is essential that the people themselves should improve. This is as much a truism as to say that, in order to warm a certain quantity of water, every molecule of that water must become warm. And for the people to improve, it is necessary that they pay more and more attention to themselves and their inner

life. As to the external public activity, especially the social struggle, it always diverts people from their inner life, and therefore always inevitably corrupting people, it lowers the level of public morals, as has always been the case everywhere and as we see manifested so flagrantly at present in Russia. Lowering of public morals causes the lowest social elements to come more and more to the top; and a moral public opinion becomes established which permits, and even approves, crime. And thus a vicious circle of falsehood is created: the inferior elements of society, being called to the top, take up with fervour public activity which corresponds to their own low moral level; and this activity, in turn, attracts to itself still lower social elements." [73]

Nor did the Church escape an indictment from his penetrating mind and incisive pen, and in *An Appeal to the Clergy* (1902) he protested again that "the Christianity preached by you is an inoculation of false Christianity resembling the inoculation for small-pox or diphtheria, and has the effect of making those inoculated immune to true Christianity. People having for many generations built their lives on principles irreconcilable with true Christianity, feel fully persuaded that they are living Christian lives, and are thus unable to return to true Christianity." [9]

In April 1903 he composed a stern protest against pogroms," a direct consequence of the propaganda of lies and violence carried on with such intensity by the Russian Government," of which Chekov wrote to Souvorin, "One feels a warm sympathy, of course, for Gorki's letter about the Kishinev pogrom, as one does for everything he writes; but the letter is not written, but put together, there is neither youthfulness nor confidence in it as there is in Tolstoy's," [12o] and also contributed three short stories to help in the relief of the victims: while thirteen months later he published *Bethink Yourselves/,* a powerful condemnation of the Russo-Japanese War.

These were followed by *The One Thing Needful* (1905), which was immediately seized by the police; and his most impassioned protest of all, I *Cannot be Silent,* for the publication of which, on July 9th, 1908, newspapers were fined and an editor arrested. This was directed against the field courts martial introduced by the Prime Minister Stolypin, which convicted and hanged dozens of people accused of being revolutionaries. "Seven more death sentences to-day," he would exclaim, during the period when these were in force. "One cannot live and know that this is going on. We must cry out! Shout!" "I have written," he concluded this protest, "in order that one of two things may happen: either that these inhuman deeds may be stopped or that my connection with them may be severed, and I be put in prison where I can be clearly conscious that these horrors are not committed on my behalf; or better still... that they may put on me as on those twelve or twenty peasants, a shroud and a cap, and may push me also off a bench, so that by my own weight I may tighten the well-soaped noose around my old throat."

As usual, his protest did not have the desired result. A hysterical woman who signed herself "a Russian Mother" sent him a piece of rope packed in a box together with a note: "This is an answer to your article—without troubling the Government, you may do it yourself. It isn't difficult. Thereby you will benefit both our country and our youdi"; while his friend and secretary N. N. Gusev, who had come to live at Yasnaya Polyana the previous year, was arrested by the police for the second time and sentenced to exile for propagating revolutionary ideas.

On the first occasion that Gusev had been arrested Tolstoy had himself written to the Prime Minister requesting that he should be imprisoned in his place. Now he addressed to the Government a second signed statement, again asking those "who object to the spreading of my thoughts and to my activity, if they cannot hold their peace about it and wish at any cost to use violence against anyone, that they use it against me, and in no case against my friends, as I am the only one guilty of originating, and the chief culprit in disseminating, the thoughts that displease them/'

But the Government ignored the request. Like Alexander III, it realized too well the universal opprobrium it would bring upon itself if it made a martyr of Tolstoy.

2

Written in unfinished words, without punctuation, with frequent mis-spellings, grammatical errors and misplaced commas, Tolstoy's later writings were copied and recopied for him by his youngest daughter Alexandra, who had renounced all idea of marriage in order to devote herself completely to his declining years. More than any other member of his family, she understood his increasing loneliness and isolation. With the death of his much-loved daughter Mary in 1906, it often seemed to him as though he were a lonely survivor in an alien world. Diakov was dead; N. N. Strakhov was dead; Gay was dead; Chekov was dead; the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy was dead; his brother Sergey was dead—the brother who, "latterly, in his old age, loved me more, valued my attachment to him, was proud of me, wished to agree with me, but could not do so. He remained what he had always been: himself, quite singular, handsome, thoroughbred, proud, and above all such a truthful and sincere man as I have never met elsewhere"[18];—most of his close remaining friends were in exile and many of his family were hostile to him.

"This life," he wrote to a friend, "is nothing else than a process by which the immortal and divine essence which is the soul is freed from the insidious illusion of the self. The inner struggle which we experience is the way to freedom, and we can only rejoice that life consists, as we must suppose, in this process of liberation. Do not consider loneli-

ness a burden! The more remote we are from men, the nearer we are to communion with God! Seek, then, for such communion in the depths of your soul. Only thus do we find ourselves in contact with God and with our neighbour. Any other form of communion does but separate us from each other. . • ." [2]

But not always could Tolstoy be so philosophic; and there is something deeply touching in the fact that, only a few years before, this man with a wife and eight children, who was renowned throughout die world as being the greatest writer of his time, had scribbled on a piece of paper: "Dull, miserable state the whole day. Towards evening this mood passed into tenderness—a desire for affection, for love, and I longed to press up to a loving, pitying creature, and to be comforted. But what creature is there to whom I could come close like that? I go over all the people I have loved; and there is not one that I can come really close to. . . ." [84]

Nevertheless, more and more he applied himself to the study of comparative religion, writing prefaces for books of Eastern scripture which were published by the *Intermediary,* and assimilating, collecting and arranging for publication extracts from all such works as he encountered which proceeded from that higher level of consciousness which it was his greatest desire to attain.

This collection of extracts, which were published as *The Sayings of the Wise* and *A Circle of Reading,* is a revelation, not only of erudition and wide knowledge, but of the extraordinary range of his appreciations and the true catholicity of his understanding. Passages from the scriptures of all the major religions: Hebrew, Christian, Brahmin, Buddhist, Mohammedan; from the Christian Fathers; from a Kempis, St. Francis and Pascal; from Confucius and Lao-tse; from the classical philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus; from modern European philosophers and moralists such as Schopenhauer, Kant, La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyere; and from modern European and American writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, Ruskin and Carlyle: all these are arranged in different categories to illustrate various aspects of that state of reasonable consciousness which alone is man's true life.

And the nearer death approached the more he struggled to achieve for himself the life of detachment, serenity and self-consciousness by the conquering of his personal passions.

The passing of the years and the growth of his understanding had by now served to bring most of the contradictory aspects of his complex nature under control. "The surrender of Port Arthur grieved me, I feel sorrow," he had recorded on December 31st, 1904. "This is patriotism. I have been brought up in it and I am not yet free from it, as I am not yet free from a personal egoism, a family egoism, even an aristocratic egoism and from patriotism. All these egoisms live in me; but I also have in me a consciousness of the divine law, and this con-

sciousness holds in check all these egoisms so that I manage to live without serving them. And little by little these egoisms become transformed." [73]

This inner work, usually undertaken only by monks in the special conditions of an ordered retreat, Tolstoy had to try to accomplish in the atmosphere of increasing dissension of his home. Now that her children were all grown up, the Countess Tolstoy, still vigorous and despotic, her temper, as she aged, becoming increasingly violent and uncontrolled, found herself more than ever with insufficient to occupy her superabundance of emotional energy. She took to practising the piano and playing over incessantly all the pieces which had been favoured by her dear Taneyev; she took to dabbling with photography; to painting the furniture; to making a collection of documents relating to her husband's life and work; to writing an immense *Story of my Life* compiled from her voluminous and, during these later years, not always very accurate diaries. She had even published an essay upon Andreyev, which elicited from Chekov the question to his wife: "Have you seen S. A. Tolstoy's article on Andreyev? I have seen it and it threw me into a fever, the absurdity of it was so glaring. It is positively incredible. If you had written anything like that I would have kept you on bread and water and beaten you every day for a week ... but I fancy it was not the genuine thing but a fake. Someone has imitated her style for a joke!" [122]

"It was Mother's conviction that her principal task in life was to take care of Fadier," her daughter Alexandra wrote later of this period. "Suffering from the inner discord between him and herself she emphasized the external care for his well-being. She was proud of the cap she had knitted for him, the blouse which she had neatly cut out and sewn with her own hands. Thus she comforted herself, failing to understand that no care could atone for Father's moral suffering. She sincerely believed that Fadier would be lost if she did not pour some meat broth into his vegetable soup when he felt weak, if she did not stay regularly on duty at his bedside during his illness, if she did not devote so much time and thought to the matter of his clothing and his food." [73]

And undoubtedly the Countess Tolstoy was greatly attached to her husband and very proud of him. Moreover, at periods of crisis, they were still very near to each other. When the Countess Tolstoy had to undergo a serious operation early in 1906 Tolstoy was profoundly moved; and two months later, when their daughter Mary died, she wrote in her diary: "This terrible grief weighs heavily upon our two old hearts. The old mutual reproaches and disagreements have ceased and we are both resigned before the blows of fate." [100]

Yet side by side with this ostentatious, though no doubt quite genuine, devotion she displayed an insensibility to his deepest feelings which amounted to more than callousness. When, in 1907, he once

more turned to teaching Scripture to the peasant children, she would declare to visitors: " Father has a new hobby. He drills some Christian truths into children's heads. They repeat them by heart like parrots and he feels assured that something will remain in their heads. It won't make any difference. They will grow up thieves and drunkards just the same." And when students visited the house with the express purpose of hearing Tolstoy's ideas from his own lips, she would herself interrupt his replies to their questions in order to forestall him with perverted interpretations of her own which could not fail to make his teaching appear ridiculous.

Now that the elder sons were occupied with their own affairs, Yasnaya Polyana, managed by incompetent and illiterate stewards, was beginning to fall into neglect and disrepair, and neighbouring peasants seized the opportunity of stealing timber from the woods. This was an offence which Tolstoy himself always deliberately ignored. Sometimes, when he went out riding alone in the almost deserted and impassable forests of the estate, he would come upon a group of peasants engaged in sawing down some of the oldest and most valuable trees; in which case, pretending to have noticed nothing, he would turn and gallop away rather than reprimand them. But the Countess Tolstoy had very different methods, and, supported by her three younger sons, all of whom were antagonistic to their father's views (Leo had even written a series of articles in favour of the Russo-Japanese War, while a second had joined the notorious Black Hundreds), she sent to the Governor of Tula asking him to send police to Yasnaya Polyana to guard the estate. This he did, to the accompaniment of great publicity; which was, of course, used by Tolstoy's enemies to pour slander and contempt both upon him personally and upon his teaching.

But hard enough as this was for him to bear, it became even harder when, after some further attempt at theft, the police guard arrested the guilty peasants and threw them into prison. When Tolstoy, deeply outraged that such a thing could happen to his own villagers, protested to his wife, she was, as usual, full of excuses and self-justification. "Enough, enough, Sonia," he cried at last. " If you cannot understand that life with police guards, who seize peasants and arrest them and throw them into prison, is intolerable to me, there is no use talking." "Then what do you want? To have all of us shot?" she replied excitedly. " Yesterday they shot at the gardener, to-morrow they will shoot at us. They will steal everything."

" I f I had heard of myself as an outsider," Tolstoy recorded on July **2nd, 1908,** "as a man living in luxury, wringing all he can get out of the peasants, locking them up in prison, while preaching and professing Christianity and giving away coppers, **and** for all his loathsome actions sheltering behind his dear wife, I should not hesitate to call him **a** blackguard. . . . And that is just what I need that I may be set free

from the praise of men and live for my soul." Nevertheless, this made his burden very little less easy to bear. "Doubts have come into my mind whether it would be better for me to go away, to disappear. I refrain from doing so principally because it would be for my own sake, in order to escape from a life poisoned on every side. I believe that the endurance of this life is necessary for me." [78]

But two guards continued to live in the house and Tolstoy continued to suffer. Once, when he himself forgave a peasant who stole timber, both his own family and the police guards protested vigorously. On a further occasion, when Alexandra interfered with a guard who was arresting a peasant for some quite trifling offence, a police captain was sent specially from Tula to demand an apology. Finally, when the Governor himself wished to withdraw the guards, the Countess Tolstoy insisted that they should remain.

"Abakoumov overtook me with a petition and a complaint at having been sentenced to prison on account of the oak trees," Tolstoy recorded during this period. "It was very painful. He cannot understand that I, the husband, cannot do as I like, and looks upon me as an evil doer and a Pharisee hiding behind my wife. I had not the strengdi to bear it lovingly, and said that I could not go on living there. And that was wrong." [M]

This was a situation which the Countess Tolstoy deliberately exploited. By refusing to rent the forest land to the peasants, or even to sell them the timber, she provoked them into theft, and when they pleaded for mercy, unscrupulously asserted that she could not do otherwise and was only acting on the instructions of her husband. This, together with the continual slanders deliberately disseminated amongst the peasants by the Church, finally led the peasantry into adopting a very hostile attitude towards the man whose dearest wish throughout his whole life had been to try to improve their conditions.

It must have been a situation that required considerable endurance. The painter Repin, who was staying at Yasnaya Polyana a few months later, has told how one day Tolstoy returned from his solitary ride pale and in terrible agitation. "Burying his face in his trembling hands, he groaned aloud, while the tears came into his eyes. 'Ah, the things I have just seen—the words I have just heard. . . . As I was riding along I overtook some peasants in a cart and spoke to them. They looked me up and down and scowled. Then one of them stood up and shouted at me: 'What, are you still alive, you old swine? Hasn't the devil got you yet? You ought *to* have died long ago. You have lived far too long as it is. Just look at his mangy old horse.' 'What has come over you?' I asked in astonishment. 'What can you mean? I am Tolstoy from Yasnaya Polyana.' 'Oh, we know you well enough, you old blood-sucker. You ought to be done away with——'" [43]

Small wonder that Tolstoy thought more and more of going away.

3

On August 28th, 1908, Tolstoy was eighty years old. By now, his rugged and furrowed face, with its deep-set, penetrating eyes, its wide nose with the flaring nostrils, its white locks and beard, was as famous as his writings throughout the world. Eminent men had come, not only from England, France, Italy and Germany, to visit him; but from America, from India and from Japan. Writers as different as Romain Rolland, Shaw and Rilke had expressed their admiration or sought his advice; as had men later to become famous as widely separated in education and tradition as Gandhi and T. G. Masaryk. From all parts of Russia, in these later years, visitors had flocked to Yasnaya Polyana in increasing numbers: those who wished to consult him about how best to disencumber themselves of their property, how to educate their children, how to overcome their sexual difficulties; those who wished to play music for his pleasure, to paint his portrait, to sculpt his head, or to take his photograph; those who demanded charity, who wished to learn the best method of popularizing esperanto or of increasing the demand for their own literary works; those who wished to gain his approbation for a new brand of cigarettes, or even to sell him voluminous dictionaries or tooth-paste. Some came to accuse and to abuse him; others came to entreat him to return to the Orthodox Church. Many came simply out of vulgar curiosity. One girl arrived who had been offered by her father, as a reward for passing her examination, a gold watch, a bicycle, or a trip to see Tolstoy; and thinking that the two first might possibly be acquired later, whilst Tolstoy would soon be dead, chose as her prize a visit to Yasnaya to see " the greatest writer of the Russian land."

Like Ruskin, though to an even greater degree, he had "enjoyed renown and felt the breath of high reputation in every possible form, in the highest possible perfection, and with the highest desert"; like Ruskin, in the words of die same English newspaper, he had "been famous while young" . . . one of the "best abused men" in Russia, and also "one of the best praised, and that in all forms—critically and passionately, wisely and fanatically—for his merits and for his frailties."

And now, although he had written to the friend who was organizing the celebrations for his jubilee "I beg of you, do what you can to cancel the jubilee and set me free. I shall for ever be very, very grateful to you," and the Government also took such precautions as it could to suppress all public demonstrations in his honour, from an early hour in the morning visitors and postmen began to arrive at Yasnaya Polyana in unprecedented numbers. There were over two thousand telegrams, enormous bundles of letters and many parcels containing valuable gifts. The principal newspapers devoted much space to his

praises; and an Englishman, Hagberg Wright, arrived with an address of congratulation from England which had been signed, amongst others, by Edward Carpenter, H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw.

Venerable and full of years, surrounded by his wife and family, by enthusiastic acquaintances, admirers and friends, it may well have seemed to the world that the Grand Old Man of Europe, the prophet of our time, would at last be able to live out the few years which remained to him in serenity and peace. Not even then could anyone have dreamed of the tragedy implicit in the last lines of this unhappy story which now can never be effaced.

PART V

...Ifwe consider a man alone, apart from his relation to everything around him, each action of his seems to us free. But ifwe see his relation to anything around him, ifwe see his connection with anything whatever—with a man who speaks to him, a book he reads, the work on which he is engaged, even with the air he breathes or the light that falls on things about him—we see that each of these circumstances has an influence on him and controls at least some side of his activity. And the more we perceive of these influences the more our conception of his freedom diminishes and the more our conception of the necessity that weighs on him increases.

TOLSTOY: *War and Peace,* Epilogue II, Chap. c>.[6]

Chapter I

i. *The testament of friends: the scenes made by the Countess Tolstoy: her increasing hysteria: her desire to sell the copyright of her husband's works.* 2. *The visit to Chertkov: the Countess Tolstoy s dislike of him: the question of the diaries: cause of the struggle between Chertkov and the Countess Tolstoy: the new will.* 3. *The signing of the will.*

GOETHE'S words were all recorded but Tolstoy's thoughts are all being lost in the air. That, my dear fellow, is intolerably Russian. After his death they will bestir themselves, will begin to write reminiscences, and will lie."[7] So Chekov complained one day to Gorki, evidently unaware of the fact that in his last years Tolstoy was to be surrounded with people all feverishly committing to paper minute records of every action, every word, that was spoken at Yasnaya Polyana. And while it is fortunate for posterity that such records make it possible to come very near to the truth of a complicated and painful drama which otherwise never could have been understood, such a situation was scarcely conducive to the comfort of the family. "We were deprived of the common human satisfaction of living unobserved by outsiders, of talking nonsense, joking, singing, being ourselves, since we knew that every word and act was immediately fixed on paper." So wrote later Tolstoy's daughter Alexandra, herself one of the most reliable authorities for the events of these last years.

The drama which played itself out at Yasnaya Polyana during the last two years of Tolstoy's life was directly heightened by this terrible

sense of being the focus of the eyes of the entire world. What people would say, what people would think: these fears supplied one of the chief motives of the Countess Tolstoy's actions. "The private lives of famous men are always distorted in their biographies. They are sure to make me out a Xantippe. You must take my side," she would cry distractedly to anyone willing to listen to her, particularly when she had herself occasioned some scandalous public scene.

But with an extraordinary impartiality (for in many cases scenes which were noted by several witnesses coincide in all respects) those who considered it their duty to testify made records as objective as they could. Chief amongst these, besides Tolstoy, his wife, and his daughter Alexandra, who all kept diaries, were Tolstoy's disciple, friend and doctor, P. D. Makovitsky, who had come to live at Yasnaya Polyana, in 1904, to look after Tolstoy's health on condition that he should also attend any sick peasants in the village; his secretary, N. N. Gusev, and, after his exile, the secretary V. F. Bulgakov, who was sent to him by Chertkov; the friends A. B. Goldenweiser and P. A. Sergeyenko, who were both intimate with Chertkov; and Varvara Feokritov, a young woman who lived at Yasnaya Polyana ostensibly as the Countess Tolstoy's secretary, and who was also a close friend of her daughter Alexandra.

As we already know, the Countess Tolstoy had from the first, despite the fact that the whole family was adequately (if not lavishly) provided for, fought her husband on every possible occasion over the question of his copyrights. Shortly after he had published his first notice of repudiation, she had caused a considerable scandal by herself going to the manager of the Imperial Theatre, where they were playing *The Fruits of Enlightenment*^ and demanding that the royalties on this play should be handed over to her. But the manager had refused to make payment without first appealing to the Czar. When the Czar eventually decreed that if royalties had been demanded then they must be paid, the manager sent the Countess an official receipt *to* be signed before he despatched the cheque. This the Countess Tolstoy signed herself; but it was subsequently returned to her as being invalid and Tolstoy's signature was demanded in its place. Eventually, Tolstoy's signature was supplied. Naturally, this incident gave Tolstoy's enemies the precise evidence they desired with which to accuse him of hypocrisy. It is true that he submitted principally because he was informed that if he did not take his royalties they would simply be swallowed up in the subsidy of the Imperial Ballet; but the Countess Tolstoy nevertheless must have been as coercive as she dared; and even if, as has been asserted, she devoted the proceeds to charity (which is not improbable, since she usually contributed generously to public subscriptions), in so doing she had deliberately disregarded Tolstoy's wishes.

This source of contention—which, even from the first, had occa-

sioned tears, recriminations and threats of suicide; **and had later** resulted in bitter quarrels over the body of a supposedly dying man—swollen, now, to the dimensions of a mania, was the source of a second agony to Tolstoy no less bitter than the wanton imprisonment of the peasants. Goldenweiser has recorded a typical scene which happened only one month before Tolstoy's eightieth birthday. "We arrived at Yasnaya about 8 o'clock. Tolstoy sat in a chair in the dining-room. He played chess with S. Then he played chess with me. S. looked on at our game for a time, and then, sitting near the round table, he began to talk with Sofia Andreyevna about the children's anthology to be chosen from Tolstoy's works which he wishes to publish for his jubilee. The conversation was terrible. Sofia Andreyevna said in the sharpest way that she was not going to be cheated out of her rights, that she would go to a lawyer and would write to the papers about it. S. behaved rather well and asked her to point out what she would permit to be published; but she would not listen to reason. At last she said that it was the same as if he stole her silver spoons. It was intolerably humiliating and painful.

"Sofia Andreyevna tried to draw Tolstoy into the dispute. Poor Tolstoy! He suffered, frowned, shook his head in horror, but kept silent——Then it became even worse. S. left the room for a time, and, when he returned, sat down near us watching the chess. Sofia Andreyevna did not see him and began talking about something, and, as usual, complaining of the worries of managing the household, and said: [4]When I get rid of the steward, of the thieving, of S. and of something else.. . .'

"Everyone was overcome with shame. Tolstoy even uttered a groan. S. turned deadly white. Someone whispered to Sofia Andreyevna that he—S.—was in the room. She was not in the least put out, and only began saying how much she regretted that she had not died under her operation.

"Tolstoy glanced at S. S. said: 'Did you want to say something, Leo Nikolaevich?' Tolstoy was silent for a time and then said: *You understand me.' Then he added: *Whom God loves, He chastens.'

"It was intolerable. S. left the room quickly and went away without saying good-bye to anyone." [78]

About a year later the position was even worse. I. V. Denisenko, a young solicitor married to one of the Countess Mary Tolstoy's children, who was now staying at Yasnaya Polyana, one day sought out Alexandra in a great state of agitation, to say that the Countess Tolstoy had just shown him her power of attorney and asked his opinion as to whether, on the strength of the rights which it gave her, she could sell her husband's works.

"What do you mean—sell? Without his consent?"

"'Why, yes.' I told her it was impossible. 'And how about

prosecuting others in court on the strength of this paper.' I was revolted. 'Are you really going to prosecute people for publishing his works, knowing that Leo Nikolaevich would be against such an action?' 'Yes/ she said. 'My rights are constantly infringed. . . . Tell me, can I, on the basis of this power of attorney, complain to the court?' I told her no. She was much upset by this and decided to appeal to Leo Nikolaevich."

"Last night I felt wretched after talking to Sofia Andreyevna about j publishing my works and prosecuting," Tolstoy recorded. "I f only < she knew and understood how she alone poisons the last hours, days, months of my life. I do not know how to tell her this and have no hope that anything I could say would produce the slightest effect upon her."

A few days later Denisenko was approached again, this time by one of Tolstoy's younger sons. "But this is awful," he told Alexandra. "Now Misha has just asked me whether it is possible to sell your father's works during his lifetime. He knows Leo Nikolaevich's wishes perfectly well. It is revolting, revolting."

At the same time, the Countess Tolstoy was professing for her husband a devotion so great that she could not possibly consent to the idea of his going to Stockholm to the International Peace Congress, although a special invitation had been sent to him which he much desired to accept.

"It was maddening. I am exhausted. I cannot stand it any more," Tolstoy recorded, after a prolonged scene in which she voiced her objections. "I feel altogether ill. I feel unable to face it simply and lovingly—simply unable. For the time being, all I wish is to retire and take no part in anything. I cannot do anything else. Otherwise, I had already thought of running away. Well, now, show your Christianity—*cest le moment ou jamais.* And yet I wish so much to go away. I doubt that my presence here is necessary to anyone or anything. A hard sacrifice and harmful to everyone. Help me, God. Teach me. One thing I want: to do Thy will and not mine." [78]

A few days later, when he spoke of the Peace Congress again, the Countess Tolstoy once more became hysterical, produced poison, and threatened to take it if Tolstoy went. "I tore if out of her hands. I struggled," Tolstoy recorded. "But when I went to bed and thought it over calmly I decided not to go. She is pitiful. I am really sorry for her. But how instructive it is. I did nothing except inwardly work on myself. And as soon as I started on my own self, everything was solved." [84]

The Countess had won another victory over him; but poor, deluded, pathetic woman, this did not prevent her from continuing to harass her husband beyond endurance. "Painful feeling and desire to run away," he recorded at the end of August. "Am uncertain what is my duty to God. In calm moments, as now, I know that what is

necessary above all is to do nothing; to bear everything and to remain in love." [84]

2

By now Chertkov had been permitted by the Government to return to Russia; and as he was prohibited from living at his little estate at Teliatinki, but two miles from Yasnaya Polyana, in order to escape from the intolerable atmosphere of his home, Tolstoy set off with Dr. Makovitsky and his daughter Alexandra to visit him at Krekshino, a comfortable house in the English taste with a large park and a pond which he had rented not far from Moscow.

At Chertkov's, where the estate was run on principles that accorded as closely as possible with Tolstoy's teaching, everyone, masters, servants and landworkers alike, sat down to meals together; and so extreme a simplicity of life was observed that, much to Chertkov's annoyance, his son Dima frequently went about unwashed, maintaining that if one professed the simple life then one should simplify to the end.

Nevertheless, when the Countess Tolstoy arrived a few days later, although it was strictly contrary to the usual custom, a special gala dinner was prepared in honour of her name day and everything was done to make her comfortable.

Since future events were affected very greatly by the attitude adopted to Chertkov by the Countess Tolstoy, it is necessary to understand something of their present relations and the latent, if not overt, conflict which had for long existed between them. As we have already seen, the Countess Tolstoy had feared the influence which she imagined Chertkov might exert over Tolstoy from the beginning. There are several subsequent passages in her diary referring to the same subject, no less significant than the first. "L. N. went to Tula to send Chertkov a wire to England," she recorded in June 1893. " He was apparently worried about L. N.'s *feelings* towards him. And yet L. N. simply loves him." Six months later she added: "I have just learned from Chertkov that he and Col. Trepov in Petersburg hold many of L. N.'s manuscripts between them. I must tell the children 1"

During 1894 this attitude of hostility had crystallized to such an extent that, although Tolstoy had gone to stay with the Chertkovs early in March, whence he wrote to his wife: "We are spiritually so close, we have so many common interests and we see each other so seldom that we both feel in excellent spirits," when he wished Chertkov to return the visit during the summer the Countess Tolstoy refused to permit it. "She fears you because you support in me everything of which she has a horror," Tolstoy wrote to his friend. "... If you were to ask me: Does she want you to come, I should

tell you no. But if you were to ask my advice about the necessity of your coming, I should say: Yes, it is necessary. I say to you what I have already said to her: If there is bad feeling between you, one must make every effort to dispel it, in order that true love should exist between you." [100] But although Chertkov was willing to try the experiment, the Countess Tolstoy remained adamant. Tolstoy, who understood her attitude, was nevertheless at first greatly vexed, though presently he became reconciled to the situation and bore his frustration without complaint. Three years later, we find in her diary the comment: "L. N. lost his temper and said that Chertkov had asked him not to publish any book before it had appeared in English. Chertkov again! Even living in England he is able to keep a hold **on L. N."** [57]

That, after his return, her dislike of him and her fear of his influence increased, is clear from another episode recorded by Goldenweiser. "Once in the winter Sofia Andreyevna in Tolstoy's presence criticized Chertkov bitterly, which, as usual, pained him very much. In the middle of the conversation he got up and went out of the room. Some time later he came into the dining-room, stood at the door, and said in an agitated voice: *There is an old nurse in our house. I scarcely know her, but I love her because she loves Sasha, and when there is nothing like that in a house, there is no real love.'" [78] Moreover, she bitterly resented the fact that Chertkov had sent some of Tolstoy's manuscripts to his headquarters in England; but even more bitterly she resented the fact that he had access to Tolstoy's private diaries. ^

As we have already seen, from his earliest youth Tolstoy had been in the habit of keeping a record, not only of the personal aspects of his life, but of the various passing ideas and feelings which had importance in his inner development. Sometimes these were later deliberately incorporated in his work; at others, they supplied a starting-point upon which he eventually elaborated a whole construction of ideas. To him this diary was a necessity. And the fact that in it were to be found many interesting and significant entries, some of which, despite their obvious value, Tolstoy did not immediately develop in his published writings, had long since led Chertkov to request that he should be allowed to read these diaries; and later, that he should be permitted to copy them. That Tolstoy submitted to this with reluctance is evident from several entries. "I don't know why I no longer experience the religious joy which I generally used to have when I wrote this diary for myself alone," he recorded at the end of the 'nineties. "The fact that others have read it and will read it again probably dispels this precious feeling which helped me in my daily life. From to-day I shall begin to write as I used to, and I wish no one to read it as long as I live. I can copy and send to Chertkov any important points." [64] And on another occasion: "They have spoiled for me even my diary, which I write with the

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point of view that it may be read by the living.** The fact was that his wife, no matter how she persistently contradicted his views and even tried in public to hold them up to ridicule, still considered it her right to read everything he wrote, no matter how private or how disagreeable it was to her husband that she did so; and in these circumstances Tolstoy did not consider it would be fair to withhold his most intimate thoughts from the one man that it seemed ro him really understood and appreciated them. To his daughter Alexandra, who in the last years of his life copied these diaries for him, he said: "Take it when I am not there, so that I will not think about its being typed, because that would interfere with my writing it." And as late as September 1907 he recorded: "I feel my hands tied again over writing this diary by the knowledge that Sonia and Chertkov will read it. Nevertheless, I will try and forget about them."[78]

It has been suggested by several writers (particularly those personally hostile to Chertkov) that this friend exerted a very baneful influence over Tolstoy, and domineered over him unmercifully. There are said to have been frequent occasions when Chertkov would confront Tolstoy with some manuscript and say: "You know my wife and I have considered it carefully, and it would be better if you change this part here," to which Tolstoy would reply: "You really think so? It seems to me that I meant it just as it is"; but would nevertheless give way. And that once, when Chertkov had been particularly insistent that the title of *A Circle of Reading* should be changed to *For Every Day,* the distracted author finally cried out: "Really, it is time for me to die."

But such statements, while probably containing an element of truth, should nevertheless be regarded with considerable circumspection. In particular, Maude's view of Chertkov, illuminating though it may be, can scarcely be taken as a complete or impartial portrait. "If anyone was authorized to say what our principles were, it was Chertkov, but within a few months we found him ardently collecting money, refusing to handle money, desiring to obtain money from *Resurrection,* and even . . . neglecting to account for sums that passed through his hands. . . . Chertkov had indeed a talent for obtaining strenuous and free or cheap services from Tolstoy's sympathizers.... I never knew anyone with such a capacity for enforcing his will on others. Everybody connected with him became his instrument, quarrelled with him, or had to escape. To resist him was difficult. It was fortunate that he cherished non-resistant principles, for his physical as well as his mental powers were redoubtable. But discarding physical violence seemed to leave him the freer to employ mental coercion, and he was expert in its use."[2]

Indeed, although, after Maude had elicited a friendly but by no means uncertain rebuke from Tolstoy for annoying Chertkov by publishing "more fully than was perhaps necessary, a history of the

publication and accounts of *Resurrection,"* he replied that such was Chertkov's conduct to him that he considered it "too strange to be offensive"; on another occasion Tolstoy was obliged to write to him: "In general, I much regret your unkindly relations to Chertkov, as for a biographer such a relation is both unnatural and incorrect and must mislead the reader." This letter, Maude declares, he suspects to have been written either at Chertkov's instigation, or else not^to be genuine; but there is little evidence of an objective nature to support either of these suppositions. That Tolstoy himself thought vefy highly of Chertkov is clearly indicated in the few diary entries in which he curtly recorded such facts as "Went to Chertkov's, it was joyful there": or "Letter from Chertkov. I value him very much. And how not value him?" Although he was now over eighty and rapidly weakening in health, Tolstoy's mind, save for short lapses, was fully alert and vigorous until the last day of his life; and, as we shall see later, he was rarely deceived by the motives and actions of those who engaged in so merciless a struggle over his last wishes.

This struggle, which in a few months was to break out with an unprecedented fierceness, was far more than a struggle for the possession of a very valuable literary property, though it was that: far more, even, than a struggle between two people of powerful and determined wills to impose their personal desires upon a dying man, though it was that too. It was, above all, the final struggle of a mentally distraught woman to preserve the life-illusion without which she could not live. Though there were times when the Countess Tolstoy displayed a touching pride in her husband's achievements, and showed the greatest affability towards visitors who came to see him, for many years she had persuaded herself (and tried to persuade others) that her life—that all her struggles—had been one long sacrifice and martyrdom on behalf of her husband and her family. If Tolstoy was the greatest living writer in Russia, at least she had been the "devoted nurse of his talent"; and she had the right to be acknowledged as such in the eyes of the world. But sometimes, in the lucid intervals which grew rarer as her lust for domination waxed, there were moments when her certainty deserted her; when this illusion suddenly assumed a precarious aspect so dreadful that it could not be admitted. There must be no possibility that she had not been right. But for her to be right, Tolstoy must be wrong. Any other solution meant the sudden crumbling to nothing of her whole life. For if Tolstoy were right, after all, then, like Pirandello's tragic Ersilia Drei, she would not even have a decent dress to die in, she would be stripped naked both in her own eyes and in the eyes of the world.

The Countess Tolstoy was not an unduly mercenary woman: but it was absolutely necessary to her that she should triumph; that it should be clear to herself, to Tolstoy, to all about her, that it was she, and she alone, who was, and always had been, indispensable to her

husband. With Chertkov, essentially, the question was but little different. With him there is less question of mercenary motives than with the Countess Tolstoy, who was really deeply concerned for the material well-being of her " twenty-three grandchildren," in which number she included her sons and daughters. He was already (despite the fact of being Tolstoy's chief disciple) a man of substantial means; and at his mother's death, presumably, he would inherit all her wealth. But for him, too, the loss of the struggle implied the destruction of all that he had lived for. At bottom, he had for the last thirty years based his life, not upon Christ, but upon Tolstoy. His whole work had been to spread Tolstoy's ideas and Tolstoy's teaching; therefore if, by any act of his own, Tolstoy caused his most cherished principles to be publicly discredited, then his life too would have lost all meaning. There is, perhaps, no tragedy greater than that of those who have reposed all their hopes of salvation, of regeneration, upon the influence and activities of a single man who has failed them. The more sincere the devotion and the greater the self-sacrifice, the greater and the more destructive the subsequent disillusionment. For those who have worshipped a man, no matter how lofty his teaching, rather than the light of understanding in themselves which that teaching existed only to kindle, and subsequently seen their teacher fail, the shock is so great that often it results in suicide or insanity.

Thus, for Chertkov, too, it was more important than life itself that the Countess Tolstoy should not triumph. If she succeeded (as now it was clear she was trying to do) in selling Tolstoy's works, then Tolstoy's teaching would so stink of hypocrisy, would have failed so disastrously in the eyes of all men, that his whole life would have been wasted. Triumph for the Countess Tolstoy to him meant the death of everything he valued most; the degradation and defamation of the Tolstoyism which Tolstoy himself had never been able to make clear to those who followed him did not exist in the world of realities at all. *

Therefore Chertkov now deemed it absolutely imperative that Tolstoy should make a new will which would proclaim his last wishes to the whole world; and, with Tolstoy, drew up a tentative draft which, in accordance with Tolstoy's wishes, bequeathed "the whole of my works to the public," and "all my manuscripts, notes and diaries to V. G. Chertkov, that after my decease he may dispose of them as heretofore, and that they may be freely accessible to all who wish to make use of them."

Possibly sensing something of this in the atmosphere, the Countess Tolstoy suddenly became restive, and although the date fixed for their departure had not yet arrived, declared that they must leave. Determined that they should go first to Moscow, though Tolstoy wished to go straight home, she even wrote to the newspapers to announce the time of their departure, her object being, apparendy, to publicize as far as possible the fact that she was still Tolstoy's exemplary and

devoted wife. **In** consequence, when they reached the station a huge crowd had assembled, the more energetic of which broke through the barriers of the platform and even climbed on to the roofs *of* the carriages in order to get a better view. So great was the crush, that by the time they reached their carriage Tolstoy was nearly suffocated. Scarcely had he taken his seat than he sank into unconsciousness, and remained unconscious for most of the journey.

No sooner had they reached home, and Dr. Makovitsky and his daughter had begun to put him to bed, than the Countess began to ask him repeatedly for his keys.

Tolstoy, who had been muttering incomprehensibly and begging to be left alone, suddenly looked up. "I don't understand. What for?"

"The keys. The keys to the drawer where you keep your manuscripts," the Countess urged distractedly.

"Mother, please leave him alone. Don't make him strain his memory," Alexandra begged.

"But I must have the keys," the Countess insisted. "He will die and all the manuscripts will be stolen."

"Nobody will steal them, leave him alone, I beg you."

At last the Countess Tolstoy went away, leaving Alexandra and the doctor to put her husband to bed.[73]

3

Uncertain as to the validity of Tolstoy's last will, when they passed through Moscow, Alexandra had taken it to a solicitor. As she (or one of the Chertkov party) had surmised, its formulation proved to be ineffective. It was not possible to leave literary possessions legally to the world at large.

Therefore, upon the suggestion of F. A. Strakhov, Chertkov and Goldenweiser, the solicitor drew up the rough draft of a new will which nominated Alexandra as Tolstoy's sole heir. To nominate Chertkov, they agreed, would naturally cause a public scandal of the precise nature that they most wished to avoid; but Alexandra was now her father's most devoted helper, and could execute his bequest in accordance with directions previously arranged. This draft was brought to Yasnaya Polyana for Tolstoy's approval a few weeks later.

Clearly Tolstoy was much displeased. "The whole affair oppresses me," he remarked when he had read it over. "There is no need to safeguard the dissemination of one's works by various legalities."

To this Strakhov replied that it would be a terrible disappointment for all his disciples if they were to discover, after his death, that he had left his literary property to his family. It would not only weaken, but render completely false, in the world's eyes, the whole of the ethical doctrine expressed in his later works.

After dinner, however, Tolstoy consented to the final preparation of such a will; adding that he would himself give Alexandra exact instructions as to what he wished to be done, his great desire being that the first profits from his unpublished works should be used to buy the Yasnaya Polyana estates from the Countess Tolstoy, so that, after her death, they might be finally settled upon the peasants.

A few days later Strakhov returned again with the formal will. Goldenweiser had come with him to act as a witness, and it was finally signed in secret behind locked doors. Apparently the Countess Tolstoy was completely unaware of what was going on, and, being in an amiable mood, treated her guests with so much cordiality, that although Strakhov was " pleasantly conscious of the careful accomplishment of a task that was destined to have historic consequences," he could not, at the same time, prevent himself from feeling faintly guilty at the deception which was being practised upon her.

Soon after this Alexandra was taken ill, first with measles and then with pneumonia. Blood appeared in her sputum, and it was discovered that she had contracted tuberculosis. A warmer climate being necessary for her restoration, it was decided that she should go for a cure to the Crimea, while her sister Tania came to take her place at Yasnaya Polyana. Chertkov also sent V. F. Bulgakov to act as Tolstoy's secretary should she require help.

Chapter II

I. *Experiences of consciousness: torments of his way of life: return of Alexandra: lapse of memory: arrival of Chertkov: the Countess Tolstoy*sjealousyv her struggle for the diaries : her violent scenes : Tolstoys letter to her.* 2. *The last will: the suggested separation between Tolstoy and his wife: her deterioration: differences over the will: Tolstoy agrees not to see Chertkov: the growing scandal.* 3. *Visit to their eldest daughter: the Countess Tolstoy turns out her daughter Alexandra: Tolstoy*s fit: Chertkov's visit: the Countess learns of the new will: conversation with Novikov: the Countess threatens to sell the copyright of her husband's works: Tolstoy leaves home.* 4. *Visit to Shamordin: the Countess attempts suicide: letters from the family.* 5. *Flight to Novocherkaask: Tolstoy falls ill: last days at Astapovo.* 6. *Burial at Yasnaya Polyana.*

DURING the last months of his life, Tolstoy kept a very detailed record both of external events and of his inner state. " What I wish to do, he had told Birukov some time before," is to try to note everything I think and feel, every hour, every moment of my life. People will read it later and refuse to believe that Tolstoy thought of such trifles. And yet I catch myself often, along with serious philosophic thoughts, suddenly thinking: 'Hope somebody will not take and eat my orange.'"

"I have keenly experienced consciousness of myself to-day, at 81 years, exactly as I was conscious of myself at 5 or 6 years," he recorded on January 15th. "Consciousness is motionless. And it is only because of its motionlessness that we are able to see the motion of that which we call time. If time passes, it is necessary that there should be something which remains static. And it is consciousness of self which is static/'

But such reflections were soon interrupted by domestic strife. For each man there are certain ills which affect him so profoundly that, no matter how frequently or how sincerely he determines to suffer them with fortitude and patience, he can never prevent himself at last from reacting to them in his characteristic manner. So it was now with Tolstoy. The vexations and the sufferings which he still endured were precisely the same as those from which he had suffered thirty years ago.

Towards the middle of February, when the house was full of guests, he again recorded: " Tormenting pangs caused by consciousness of the vileness of my life, surrounded as I am by working people scarcely able to keep themselves and their families from starvation. In our dining-room fifteen people are gorging themselves on pancakes, while five or six servants who have families are running about hardly able to serve up

what we devour." "Awoke at five, and kept wondering how to get away, or what to do, and I do not know," he continued the following day. "I thought of writing, but to write while remaining in this kind of life seems repellent. Talk to her about it? Go away? Change things gradually? It seems that I shall, and can, only do the latter."[76]

"This morning I thought this," he recorded on April 4th. "It must be one of two things. Either to live in time and space with one's actions guided by thoughts of the future and by external material conditions, and to fear, hope and always be deceived and suffer; or else to live only in the present moment in one's spiritual self, in the soul, and to let oneself be guided by its activity—knowing neither fear, nor deception, nor error, nor suffering—by love, that law of the spiritual principle of the soul. Life does not entirely permit either of one or the other. But life is only life when the spiritual principle triumphs over the material principle, and it is in this victory alone that life consists."[75]

Towards the end of May, Alexandra, with Varvara Feokritov who had been her companion, returned from the Crimea very much better in health; and at her homecoming Tolstoy was overjoyed. But the Countess Tolstoy, weighed down as usual with household cares, and probably suffering from latent jealousy of her daughter, whom she professed to believe had usurped her position in her husband's life, began to load him with reproaches at all the burdens that were continually thrust upon her shoulders. When Tolstoy seized this opportunity to point out to her that they were not maintaining their aristocratic way of life to suit his wishes, and that it would be perfectly possible for them to go away and live quietly in some small town, or even abroad, she then accused him even more bitterly of "driving her away to live at Odoveo, Paris or somewhere else."

At the same time, while out riding with Dr. Makovitsky, he came upon an old peasant who had been one of the pupils of his school being taken to the house by the guard hired by the Countess, for stealing a tree. "I do really desire death very much and cannot refrain from doing so," he recorded the following day; and his depression was presently increased when, on walking in the woods, he was timidly approached by a peasant boy who asked for permission to walk there too, as the Circassian guard beat people. When, after his return home, Tolstoy spoke to his wife about it, she made one of her customary hysterical scenes, which affected him so gravely that the following morning he woke up suffering from complete loss of memory.

With his natural resilience of constitution, he soon recovered; and on June 7th he noted in his diary: "Great joy. Chertkov has arrived." A few days later, accompanied by his daughter Alexandra, Dr. Makovitsky, Bulgakov and his man, Tolstoy set out to visit him where he was now living, at Mescherskoye. The house, as usual at Chertkov's, was full of "disciples"; there was much singing and animated conversation, and even the usually so grave Chertkov permitted himself to

make one or two heavy jokes, in his pleasure at having Tolstoy amongst them again. " How time flies!" Tolstoy wrote to his wife on the 19th. "I have not had time to look round, and a week has already gone by—only five days more. We have decided to leave on the 2 5 th. It is good to be on a visit, but better at home. . . ."

During his absence, however, the Countess had slowly worked herself up into a crisis of hysterical jealousy. That her sufferings were very real, there can be no doubt; but it was impossible that anyone other than herself could cure them. And while they possessed a terribly Proustian quality, in the sense that they were based upon an insatiable lust for possession which can never be satisfied, together with the bitter and implacable realization that there existed in her husband chords which could be sounded only by others and not by her; doubtless there was in them too an element of the masochism which was inherent in her nature, and she derived a morbid satisfaction from her theatrical outbursts. On June 22nd, in order to exert her power and to force Tolstoy to return home, she ordered Varvara Feokritov to telegraph to him: "Violent nervous attack. Insomnia, weeping, pulse 100." But it happened that a famous musician had already been invited that night to Mescherskoye especially to play for Tolstoy, who, not wishing to disorganize all the arrangements of his host, wired back: "More convenient to come to-morrow."

In this reply the Countess Tolstoy affected to see the sinister hand of Chertkov, and the thought that he had prevented Tolstoy from complying with her summons aroused her to a further excess of passion. She sobbed wildly, flung herself upon her bed shrieking that they wished to kill her, and finally rushed to a cupboard and, producing opium and spirits of ammonia, threatened to poison herself if Tolstoy did not return at once. "Implore you to come on 23rd, quickly," she wrote; and forcing her secretary to add: "Think it essential," and her signature, sent this message by express and then sat down to pour out pages of distracted ravings into her diary.

After a further exchange of telegrams, Tolstoy arrived the same evening, to find his wife in bed moaning and screaming reproaches as soon as he entered her room. " Found things worse than I expected," he wrote in his diary that night. "Hysteria and exasperation beyond description. Restrained myself pretty well, but was not gentle enough." [75]

There followed days of torture for the whole household, during which the Countess Tolstoy continued to rave, to threaten to kill herself, to pour out her deranged suspicions into her diary, and to persecute her husband, whom she was slowly reducing to such a state of anxiety that her daughter Alexandra declared that, if she did not control herself, she would be forced to send for Tarda and Sergey.

Unfortunately Chertkov, hoping that a visit from him might have a conciliatory effect, arrived at the house while this was taking place, with

the express intention of trying to restore peace to the household. But Chertkov was a man of notoriously hasty temper, and, though doubtless under considerable provocation, suddenly indulged himself in that "fatal fluency of speech which resembled nothing so much as a mountain torrent, and allowed himself to say whatever anger or contempt suggested to him." Having begun by answering the Countess's reproaches with a reminder that he had been her friend and the friend of her family for many years, and that if he had wished to smirch her reputation in any way he had had plenty of opportunities in which to do it, but he never had; he finally concluded by telling her that had he himself had such a wife he would have shot himself or run away to America long ago, and that if she wished to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of killing her husband, he would close the conversation.

This merely exacerbated the Countess anew. Although the threat of sending for her elder children had quietened her for a few days, her hysteria now burst forth again with increased violence. Threatening once more to take opium if he refused her, she demanded to see her husband's diary. But when, fearing to thwart her, Tolstoy quietly acceded to her demands, she rushed from the house into the pouring rain, and walked about drenched for the rest of the day.

No sooner had she returned than she flew to her journal, filled several pages with reproaches against her husband, and, tapping her heel nervously against the floor as she did so, complained loudly: "He has no heart. He loves nobody. He is as cold as ice.... People will read his diaries and will say that I am a wicked woman. And what have I done?" Then, going in search of Tolstoy, she announced that she knew perfectly well that Chertkov had stolen his diaries in order to preserve such passages as were detrimental to her. In actual fact Tolstoy had long since extracted a promise from Chertkov not to publish anything that might cause offence to his family. "I have just come across my diary for 1866," he had written to him on October 18th, 1894, "and reading it has given me a very depressing feeling of shame, remorse and fear that the reading of it may cause distress to those of whom it speaks so badly and harshly in many places. It is disagreeable —more than disagreeable—it is painful for me to know that these diaries have been read by others besides yourself—if only by whoever copied them. It is painful because it was all written on the impulse of the moment, and is often terribly cruel and unfair." [75]

Early in 1897 he made another illuminating and expressive diary entry: "On my advice Sonia has read my diary, and she was very upset at the fact that later people may think that she was a bad wife. I tried to calm her. Our whole life together and my last attitude will show what a wife she has been to me. If she looks over this diary again, let her make what she likes of it. As for myself, I cannot write, having in mind either her or future readers. I only know that to-night I imagined that she might die before myself, and I was filled with terror.

Three days ago I wrote her that, by slow degrees, we have begun to draw nearer to each other, particularly during the last four or five years, and it is greatly to be desired that this will continue more and more, until death takes one of us. .. ." [100]

But no assurances he could give his wife, then or ever, could stop her from goading and worrying. "It is not important to me, but it is important to Chertkov, isn't it ? Why is it less important to me than to this friend Chertkov?"

" Because he has devoted his whole life to me, because he is working on my manuscripts, because he is the person nearest to me in understanding/*

" Then kill me! Give me opium!"

" I am ready to beg you on my knees, and with tears, to calm yourself. I shall say nothing more to you. I shall not utter a single reproach."

Refusing to be calmed, the Countess continued to rave until 5 o'clock in the morning, offering to do anything in the world that he wished, even to live in a peasant's hut if need be, if only he would promise not to see Chertkov; while Tolstoy, by now utterly exhausted, had to be protected from her fresh assaults by his daughter Alexandra, who kept guard at his door.

"I am played out. I have no strength left," he said in the morning. Nevertheless, he fully realized the motive which prompted these prolonged scenes. Having refused to see Chertkov when he called, he confided to Goldenweiser, who was staying in the house: " She has an *idee fixe*—vanity. She is afraid that people will say that she spoilt my life, and with all her might she wishes to prove the opposite—that she alone is good, and all the rest are scoundrels and liars." In his diary he recorded: "I did not sleep all night and am very tired. Went for a walk and thought all the time of one and the same thing. There are duties to God and to man that I ought to perform during these last days and hours of my life, and so I must be firm." [76]

The following day Chertkov tried once more to effect a reconciliation with the Countess Tolstoy, by bringing her in person a letter in which he thanked her for having sent horses for his mother, who was visiting him, and expressed the wish that the two ladies should meet. "She has not the defects which I have, and good relations between you and her will, I am sure, serve as a new bond between you and me, apart from the bond that has drawn us together, namely Leo Nikolaevich. In this connection I feel it my duty to tell you that I have heard that you have lately expressed hostile feelings towards me. I cannot believe that such feelings can be other than a temporary irritation evoked by some misunderstanding which a personal meeting would very quickly dispel as an extraneous, superficial obsession. There is too much, in the person of Leo Nikolaevich—that is to say, the very best that either of us has in life—that forms a deep and inseparable bond

between us. We may be angry with one another at times, but it is impossible for us to become enemies. . . ."[75] And much more in similar vein.

"A good letter," Tolstoy remarked in his diary, "but all the same she is still angry with him."

And she was even more angry when later the news was announced that Chertkov was no longer prohibited from visiting, the province of Tula, and that he intended to stay at his little estate at Teliatinki barely two miles away. "How miserable I am," she recorded. "I want to read Leo Nikolaevich's diary. But now everything of his is locked up and handed to Chertkov. All our life we never concealed anything from one another before. ... No one can understand what I endure. My sufferings are so acute and tormenting that death alone can end them."

There followed another period of scenes, recriminations and reconciliations, during which the Countess Tolstoy begged Bulgakov with tears to go to Chertkov and demand the diaries, again threatened suicide, rushed out of the house, lay for hours in the wet grass, or walked about raving half the night on the balcony outside her husband's room. On July nth, Tolstoy was himself woken up in the middle of the night by his son Leo, who told him that the Countess was wandering about the garden and refused to come in unless Tolstoy himself fetched her. "It is revolting. He, with his forgiveness and non-resistance, sits quietly in his arm-chair while Mother lies on the ground and is ready to kill herself!"

" Scarcely alive," Tolstoy entered in his diary next day. " A terrible night till four o'clock. And worst of all was Leo. He scolded me as though I were a child, and ordered me to go into the garden to fetch Sofia Andreyevna in."

Like most hysterical women, the Countess Tolstoy now exulted in such scenes, and once she had secured her ends, even if they were limited for the time to the forcing of her husband into some demonstration of emotion, very quickly recovered her physical strength. But each trivial success was immediately followed by fresh demands; and the following day she prevented her husband from going riding with Chertkov by another attack. "She suffers very much, poor thing," Tolstoy recorded, "and it needs no effort on my part to give her my loving pity."

Even this did not satisfy the Countess. "Having turned away Chertkov yesterday on my account," she recorded next day, "Leo Nikolaevich awaited his arrival in the evening so that he might explain the reason, but Chertkov was long in coming. . . . Sitting on the verandah downstairs he kept looking along the road, and at last he wrote a letter. I asked him to show it to me, and Sasha brought it. Of course it was 'Dear Friend,' and all sorts of tenderness, and I was again plunged in wild despair. He gave the letter to Chertkov, who

arrived after all. I took it on the pretext of reading it, and burnt it." And later: "What is necessary for everyone to be happy again and to do away with all my sufferings? To take from Chertkov the diaries —those few black leather cloth notebooks—and to put them back on the table, letting him have one at a time to take extracts."[75] This entry was followed by further threats of suicide, and threats to kill Chertkov, subsequently struck out.

At length her exhibitions of passion gained her will.

"My present diaries I shall not give to anyone, but shall keep myself. The old diaries I shall take from Chertkov, and also keep myself, probably in a bank," Tolstoy finally wrote toiler. "If the thought worries you that those passages in the diaries, where, under the immediate stress, I write of our differences and our conflicts, might be used by future biographers unfavourably disposed to you, then apart from the fact that such expressions of passing feelings as there are in my, and also in your own, diaries, cannot give any true idea of our true relations — if you are afraid of that, I am glad of this opportunity to express in my diary, or simply in a letter, my attitude to you and my valuation of your life. It is this. Just as I have loved you from my youth, so have I never ceased, regardless of various causes of estrangement, to love you still. The causes of coolness—I am not speaking of the cessation of marital relations, as this could only eliminate the deceptive expressions of true love—these causes have been, first, my increasing estrangement from the interests of worldly life and my aversion to them, while you did not wish to and could not give them up since you did not have in your soul that understanding which brought me to my conviction—a very natural thing for which I do not reproach you.

"Forgive me if I say what is unpleasant to you; but what is now passing between us is so important that we must not be afraid either to tell or to hear the whole truth. Second, your temper in late years has become increasingly irritable, despotic and uncontrolled. The appearance of these traits could not help cooling—not the real feeling, but its manifestations. This was second.

"Third, the chief cause, and the one of which we are both equally guiltless, was a matter of fate—our completely opposite understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. Everything in our understanding of life has been exactly opposite; way of life, attitude towards people and towards the means of living; towards property, which I considered an evil and you thought to be an indispensable condition of life. With regard to our way of life, I have submitted to conditions which were painful to me in order not to part from you; but you thought that this meant a concession to your opinions, and so the misunderstandings between us deepened. There were other causes of estrangement of which we were both guilty, but of these I shall not speak, for they have no bearing on the question. The important thing is that, despite all the misunderstandings that there have been, I have never ceased to

love and to appreciate you. My appraisal of your life with me is as follows:

" I , a debauched man, deeply corrupted sexually, no longer in my first youth, married you, a fresh, good, intelligent eighteen-year-old girl; and regardless of my corrupt and vicious past, you have lived with me and loved me for nearly fifty years; lived a laborious, difficult life, a working life, bearing, nursing, rearing children and caring for me, resisting those temptations which could so easily overcome any woman in your position. Strong, healthy, handsome—you have lived in such a way that I dare not reproach you with anything. As to your not following me in my strictly spiritual development, I cannot reproach you with that because each person's spiritual life is a secret between that person and God, and other people have no right to demand anything in that sphere. If I demanded anything of you, then I erred and am guilty.

"This is the true expression of my attitude to you, and of my estimate of you; and as to the things that may be found in the diaries, I only know that there is nothing crude there and nothing that would contradict what I am writing now. So this is the third point, which may, but should not, upset you with regard to the diaries.

"Fourth. If at the present moment my relations with Chertkov distress you, then I am ready to give up seeing him, although I will say that this will be more disagreeable for him than for me. I know how painful it will be for him. But if you wish it, I will do it.

"But if you do not accept these conditions for a peaceful and amicable life, than I shall retract my promise not to leave you, and shall go away. But I shall certainly not go to Chertkov, and will even make it an absolute condition that he should not come to live near me. For to go on living as we are now is clearly impossible... .

"I could continue to live at Yasnaya Polyana only if I could bear your sufferings with equanimity, but that I cannot. Yesterday you left me agitated and grief-stricken. I wanted to sleep, but I began not so much to think of you as to feel you, and I could not rest. I listened until one o'clock and two, and then again woke up to listen. And after this I saw you in my dreams.

"Try to think quietly, dear friend, listen to the response of your own heart, and then you will come to a right decision. For myself, I can only say that I have made my decision, and I cannot act otherwise. I simply cannot. My dear one, stop torturing not others, but yourself—for you yourself are suffering a hundred times more than everyone else." [78]

Next day Tolstoy sent Alexandra to Teliatinki to collect the diaries herself. It is said that Chertkov and his friends, before handing them back, all set to work in a great hurry to copy out any passages they could find which were unfavourable to the Countess Tolstoy, as they feared that once she laid hands on them, she would destroy them. It is

also said that while, in accordance with his promise to Tolstoy, Chertkov had destroyed the passages in the earlier diaries in which he had referred to his family in anger, he had nevertheless had such passages photographed for his private archives. Dishonourable as this may seem, it must be remembered that Chertkov knew perfectly well that the Countess Tolstoy was herself writing a diary in which she openly exulted that she was "pulling down her husband from his pedestal"; and that if posterity received only her version of the family discord, Tolstoy's reputation would be irretrievably sullied both by her mendacity and her lack of understanding. It is due to Tolstoy's eldest son Sergey and to his youngest daughter Alexandra that we are able to come near the truth of this unhappy story; but Chertkov was not to know of the books that they were to publish, and he feared very much lest this woman, who stopped at nothing in slandering her husband while he was alive, would slander him even more mercilessly once he was dead, and she felt that there were no records to defend him.

Although when Alexandra returned she tried to hide the diaries from her mother, the Countess Tolstoy nevertheless rushed in and read them. The following day, on Tolstoy's instructions, they were wrapped up, sealed and deposited in the bank at Tula. But even this did not satisfy the Countess. " The diaries have been returned, but at what a cost," she recorded the following day; "I have been agitated all day because Leo Nikolaevich has refused to give me the key or the receipt from the bank, and I shall always be afraid now that he will give his diaries back to Chertkov." [76] She also deposited a letter upon Tolstoy's desk. "I write to you because it is difficult for me to speak after a sleepless night. I am too agitated. During the night I thought it all over; how you caressed me with one hand, and held a knife in the other. Even yesterday I realized obscurely that this knife has already entered my heart. This knife is the threat that you will leave me secretly if I remain what I am now, that is, a woman who is unquestionably ill. It means that every night I shall be listening to hear whether you are going away, and that at every prolonged absence I shall be tortured.... Won't you perhaps take pity on me and give me the key and the receipt to keep? Let me have them, my dear one. You know that I cannot do anything with them, and it would relieve me of those two torturing suspicions: that you will go away from me secretly, and that you will secretly give back the diaries to Chertkov. You know that I am really ill, and must admit—as I do—that I am insane. Forgive me and help me!" [73]

When Tolstoy would not agree to this demand, the Countess once more resorted to her old threat of taking opium. " I odiously deceived Leo Nikolaevich into thinking I had taken it, but immediately confessed the deception and sobbed bitterly, and then made an effort to control myself. It is so disgraceful and painful, but ... no 1 I will say no more. I am ill and worn out." [76]

2

Scarcely had the diaries been lodged safely in the bank at Tula than Tolstoy was again afflicted with the signing of a new will. Although Alexandra's illness had been successfully arrested, Chertkov and his friends felt that it would be unsafe for her now to be left the sole legatee of Tolstoy's literary estate, lest some accident should befall her and the property therefore revert to the whole family. A new will was accordingly drafted by Chertkov's solicitor, Muraviov, to the effect that, should Alexandra die before her father, then his eldest daughter Tatiana should be the sole legatee in her stead. Tolstoy rode over to Teliatinki to sign this on July 18th, and having copied it out himself at Goldenweiser's dictation, it was duly witnessed by three of Chertkov's friends who happened to be in the house.

No sooner had this been done than it was discovered that the formal clause "being of sound mind and firm memory" had been omitted, and the whole performance had to be gone through again. This final will was rewritten and signed by Tolstoy in a glade at Yasnaya Polyana on July 24th. "How disagreeable all these formalities are," he observed once more when it was finished. Nevertheless, he himself insisted upon two important alterations in the text. To the clause that all his unpublished manuscripts were to be first submitted to Chertkov for him to decide what to publish, he added, "On the same basis as hitherto"—"otherwise his enemies will say that he has pushed everyone to one side, and taken everything for himself"; and to the clause that everything written before 1881 (with the exception of the Yasnaya Polyana Magazine, the ABC books and the stories for the people) was to remain the property of his wife for her lifetime, he said: "Why? That is unnecessary. Sasha knows how it should be done, but to say so here is quite needless."

It is impossible to interpret this ambiguous remark exacdy; but it seems unlikely that at this late date Tolstoy wished to deprive his wife of the royalties on these works during her lifetime; and that he meant that since Alexandra knew perfectly well that he wished her to retain them, it was superfluous to restate this in his will. Nevertheless, there is also the possibility that he felt that the Countess Tolstoy had become so unbalanced, and that she used this income to so little advantage, that, knowing that she was otherwise provided for, he preferred that she should no longer be in control of this money.

The conduct of the Countess Tolstoy had, in fact, become so outrageous during the last few days, that at last her elder children insisted that she should see a psychiatrist. Her latest delusion, in addition to fits of ungovernable hatred towards Chertkov, was that Tolstoy had been unfaithful to her, and that this was the reason that he did not wish her to see his private diaries. After twenty-four hours' continual

observation, the doctor diagnosed that she was suffering both from paranoia and from acute hysteria and that at the present moment there was an "episodic exacerbation." He emphasized the desirability of isolating her from her husband, at least for the present, and it was suggested that either she or he should go to stay with one of her children. But at this proposal the Countess wept so pitifully that no effective solution could be devised.

It is difficult to know the exact state of the Countess Tolstoy's mental condition. That this diagnosis was not wholly correct seems very probable, in view of the fact that a second psychiatrist summoned a few months later reported that she was suffering from "psychopathic nervo-psychic hysteria" (a condition that to-day would probably be described as hysteria with a psychotic background), and might, under the influence of certain conditions, suffer so acutely that her condition could be referred to as a temporary and transient mental disorder. That she was an ill woman there can be no doubt; nevertheless, though some of her symptoms were involuntary, there were others which were deliberately self-induced and which she exploited with the intention of securing her own ends. As we have seen, tendencies to melancholia, suicide and the morbid enjoyment of suffering had existed in her while she was still a girl; and there was undoubtedly a streak of insanity in her family, since only the previous year her brother Stephen had died tragically in a lunatic asylum. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the fact that, a few months later, when Tolstoy was dead, and there was no longer any possibility of gaining anything from her outbursts, she soon became comparatively normal.

For the present, however, even if she were not, she behaved as if she were completely insane. It is probable that her condition deteriorated on account of the fact that she sensed that something of importance was being withheld from her, and that already she began to suspect the existence of the new will.

From this time she became completely shameless. "Accidentally reading the passage of an old diary [it was the one in which, in 1851, Tolstoy confided that he 'had so often been in love with men*] has aroused indignation in my soul, upset my tranquillity, revealed to me the meaning of his present partiality for Chertkovand for ever poisoned my heart."[7B] It is incredible that this woman who for years had worked herself up into fits of mad jealousy over her husband's bachelor affairs widi women, who had complained of his sensuality incessantly in her own diaries, and who never failed to remind him, when she was annoyed, that, as against her own virgin purity, he had been, to use his own words, "an indefatigable whoremonger" before their marriage, could really believe that now, in his 82nd year, his relations with another elderly man were of a homosexual nature; but so she pretended that she believed; and, not content with filling her

diary with her suspicions, so she openly declared to anyone that she could persuade to listen to her.

Henceforward her manner to Chertkov was brusque to the point of rudeness. "It looks as though we were seeing enough of each other. I believe it is about twice a day," she remarked when he called; and the following afternoon, when Tolstoy was himself too ill to walk over to Teliatinki, she sat in the room the whole time that the two men were together with the deliberate intention of preventing their talking privately. The next time she heard that he was coming she burst into loud sobs. "What brazenness," she cried, "to know that the mistress of the house hates him, and still to come."

"Things are very depressing," Tolstoy recorded the same day. "I am far from well, but my illness is nothing compared to my mental state——Help me, God, to act according to Thy will. But it seems to me that I am harming both myself and her by my compliance. I want to try a different method." To his daughter Alexandra, who suffered at this continual persecution of her father, he wrote a note: " For God's sake, none of you reproach Mother, but be good and gentle with her."[75]

But neither patience nor forbearance had power to affect the Countess Tolstoy. Suddenly packing up her belongings, she procured a further supply of opium and persuaded herself that she intended to leave home. Having written an insane letter to her husband, and an even more insane article of self-justification entitled *The Facts can be Verified on the Spot*, she even drove away to the station; but encountering her son Andrew, as on similar occasions in the past, she consented to return to the house, and there went through a tearful reconciliation with Tolstoy, who was deeply affected. This was precisely what she had desired. "God be thanked that I have felt his heart and his love once more," she recorded. "Let the children, and not me, defend my rights after my husband's death." [75]

Understanding that his wife was suffering on account of her suspicions about the new will, Tolstoy now considered telling her of it himself; but both Alexandra and Goldenweiser dissuaded him, the latter because he considered that "the satisfaction of any demand does not end the matter, but new demands are immediately advanced," and also because it would "injure Chertkov by increasing her hatred of him still further and, above all, would give her some basis for her hatred." But Tolstoy had no illusions about his wife's condition. "She is pitiful," he said later. "In her present condition there is neither truthfulness, nor shame, nor pity—only vanity, that she should not be spoken of badly." Nevertheless, he decided that he would try the effect upon her of temporarily refraining from seeing Chertkov.

"I think I need not tell you how painful it is for me, both on your account and my own ...," he wrote to Chertkov, "but it is necessary. I do not have to **tell** you either that this is demanded of me by that for which we both live. I console myself, and I think not vainly, with

the thought that this sickly condition will pass off, and that the cessation of our personal intercourse is only temporary.... It is unpleasant to use the customary termination in letters to you, and therefore I simply sign myself L. T."[75]

To Bulgakov, who was to take this letter, he said: "Tell him that I experience the most painful feelings in thinking of him. . . . Besides, the more difficult conditions are externally, the more they provide material for inner work. Tell him that."

"There can be no question of my personal feelings in the matter," Chertkov replied. "I am fully prepared, if it is necessary for your tranquillity, or simply because you think it necessary, not to see you for a day, for a whole period, or even until death takes one of us. But at the same time, I will, as always, be quite frank with you, and, whether I am right or wrong, will inform you of my for lest, from a wish to pacify Sofia Andreyevna, you may go too far, and abandon that freedom which should always be preserved by one who wishes to accomplish, not his own will, but the will of Him who sent him____"[75]

By now, the whole family circle had been drawn into this conflict. Alexandra, passionately devoted to her father, had unfortunately but little sympathy for her mother; Leo and Andrew, out of sympathy for their mother, and probably from some degree of self-interest also, became increasingly antagonistic to their father; while Tania and Sergey, who were devoted to both their parents, could do little but try to bring their mother to reason—an impossible task when she was in a state in which she babbled incessantly about her twenty-three grandchildren who would starve and her diaries which were to justify her in the eyes of future generations.

Instead of being rendered more tranquil by Tolstoy's sacrifice, the Countess Tolstoy merely used it as an excuse for unseemly jubilations. "No, Mr. Chertkov, I will not let Leo Nikolaevich out of my hands again, and I will not yield him up. Rather, I will do everything to make him revolted by Chertkov and to ensure that Chertkov shall never enter my house again!"

At the end of July, Tolstoy began a new dia/y headed "For Myself Alone," and in the hope that it should remain completely secret, kept it hidden in the leg of his boot. "To-day I must note one thing," he recorded the same day. "I f the suspicions of some of my friends are correct, then an attempt has now begun to secure her aims by endearment. For some days now she has kissed my hand, which has never happened before, and there are no scenes and no exhibitions of despair. May God and all good people forgive me if I am mistaken. I do not easily misunderstand kindness and affection. I can love her quite sincerely. But I cannot love Leo. Andrew is simply one of those in whom it is difficult to think that the spirit of God exists (but remember that it does). I will try not to get irritated. . . . The most important

thing is to be silent. I cannot deprive millions of people of what they perhaps need for the good of their souls.. . ." [76]

"Chertkov has drawn me into strife," he recorded the following day, "and this strife is very repulsive to me and very hard for me to bear." Indeed the Countess Tolstoy was becoming daily more excessive in her behaviour. She continued to make scenes, keeping Tolstoy up half the night; she drove after him when he went out riding to make sure that he was not meeting Chertkov in secret; she continually searched amongst his private papers, tried to read all his correspondence, and loudly justified her hatred of Chertkov by voicing her pretended suspicions even to visitors who came to the house. Sometimes Tolstoy was reduced to locking himself into his own rooms in order to escape from her, while she ran frantically from one door to another begging him to admit her or she would kill herself.

So great a scandal had the Countess Tolstoy now created in the neighbourhood that, early in August, Chertkov's mother sent her a stern letter of protest. "I cannot leave this place," she declared; "without expressing my astonishment and indignation at the odious accusations you are spreading about my son. The possibility of hearing such slanders from your lips never entered my head. I am only astonished that your own sons have not told you that you are disgracing your whole family by befouling their father...." To this the Countess Tolstoy replied in a long letter pleading alternately innocence, mystification and self-justification; but she could not refrain from admitting that "she was indeed insanely jealous of Leo Nikolaevich, and would not yield him up even if the struggle killed her," as she considered that "Vladimir Grigorievich had a baneful influence on their whole life." [76]

Nevertheless, there were times when she seems really to have struggled to control herself; and her diary, as always, is full of pitiful entries in which she seems to be fully aware of the implications of her conduct and longs to behave differently. "I considered whether I could possibly make peace with Chertkov," she wrote on August 4th. "I want to evoke good feelings in myself—'as we forgive them that trespass against us.' . . . And perhaps in thought I shall cease to hate him. But when I think of *seeing* that figure, and watching the pleasure at his visit in Leo Nikolaevich's face, suffering seizes me again...." [75]

And Tolstoy fully understood this. "Sofia Andreyevna is ill," he repeated to his secretary at this time. "Vladimir Grigorievich should see her as she is to-day. ... It is impossible not to feel sorry for her, and impossible to be as hard on her as he and many others are, and as I am too often myself.... And she has no reason for her behaviour. If she had, she could not refrain from expressing it. It is simply that she feels stifled here and cannot breathe. I cannot help pitying her and am glad when I feel able to do so." But he was far from satisfied with the situation. "Have thought rather more clearly," he recorded on

August 6th. " My letting myself be cut off from Chertkov is ridiculous, humiliating, shameful and sad." Unfortunately, the Countess Tolstoy now gave way to a new access of jealousy and followed Tolstoy on foot wherever he went. When Tolstoy discovered this he "began to pity her less. There is malice here, and I have never been able to remain indifferent to malice, or to prevent it from affecting my love. I think of going away and leaving her a letter, but am afraid to do so, though it would probably be better for her." [75]

A few days later, the Countess was again making it impossible for either of them to sleep. "I cannot but feel joy at the approach of death," he recorded. "The separation from Chertkov grows more humiliating. I am clearly to blame." Violent agitation now had the disastrous effect of bringing on another attack of amnesia. But observing himself, as always, with integrity and detachment, he recorded yet another important psychological truth. "I have lost my memory completely, and strangely, not only have I not lost, but have gained enormously in strength and clearness of consciousness. I even think that one always possesses the one at the expense of the other." [76]

And now, to add to all the dissension round him, Birukov arrived on a visit and, when informed of the new will, declared to Tolstoy quite frankly that he considered that he had done wrong to act secretly, and that he should have called all his family together, announced his wishes to them all and relied upon their sense of honour to ensure that they were carried out. (Apparently he did not know that the Countess Tolstoy had already declared that she had no intention of carrying them out.) Seized with sudden qualms, Tolstoy at once wrote to Chertkov to say that he was uncertain as to whether he had acted rightly in the matter of the will; eliciting in reply a long and carefully composed official document in which Chertkov enumerated methodically and in order all the circumstances and events which had led him to the conclusion that such a will was imperative; the main gist of it being that without such a will certain members of Tolstoy's family, who were admittedly hostile to his views, would unquestionably enforce their legal rights to his writings after his death, and would not only threaten but would even prosecute those who had published works of the pre-1881 period, or who even wished to do so. Thus, "not only would your nearest and most intimate friends suffer, but around your writings, preaching love and harmony, a scandal unprecedented in literary history would flare up."

Tolstoy could perfectly appreciate both points of view. In his reply to this letter, he said that he felt that it would have been possible to act more wisely, although he himself did not know how; and two days later, in answer to another letter from Chertkov, who was beginning to find the situation as trying as did Tolstoy, he added: "I agree that one should not give a promise to anyone, especially not to anyone in the state she is in now. But what binds me at the moment is not my

promise (I do not consider myself bound to fulfil that either before her or before my conscience), I am bound simply by compassion and sympathy which I have felt particularly strongly to-day, and about which I have written you. Her condition is very distressing. No one can see it and refrain from sympathizing as I do myself." But this continual tension of which he was the centre was slowly beginning to wear him down. "It is difficult with everybody," he recorded on August nth. "I cannot but desire death."[76]

The following day he wrote to Chertkov again: "I realize that her present particularly abnormal condition may seem to you to be put on or intentionally induced (and to a certain extent this is true), but all the same it is due chiefly to illness—quite obvious physical illness which deprives her of will and of self-control. .. . And it is quite impossible for me, at any rate, to thwart her and thereby obviously increase her sufferings. Nor do I believe that to insist upon my own decisions contrary to her wishes would be beneficial to her. And even if I did believe it, I could not do it. . . . But it is hard for poor Sasha, who is young and more passionate, and whom she constantly attacks with the venom peculiar to people in her condition. . . ."[76]

3

Once again Tolstoy found consolation in his daughters. Tania, who had been staying in the house, and was perfectly well aware what disastrous effects the Countess Tolstoy's behaviour was having upon her father, appeared to agree with him as to its necessity when he confided to her the contents of the new will, and a few days later persuaded both her parents to return home with her on a visit.

From her commodious and well-appointed house Tania herself wrote to Chertkov, suggesting to him that if he would now send her mother a letter of apology (she had never ceased to brood upon the phrase that he could have smirched her had he wished, or that had he himself had such a wife he would have long since have run away to America) she might even seize the opportunity to welcome a reconciliation. "I do not for a moment imagine that Sofia Andreyevna is cured," she concluded, "or that the purpose of her illness will change, but I think that there may now be a temporary calm, and that the pretext of any new outburst will be something new, and not you. Perhaps I am mistaken, but that is how it seems to me, and it will depend to a certain extent on whether you make allowances for her sickly suspicions and ... try to remain more in view of everyone, so that she may not suspect intrigues. I realize that what I am proposing is very difficult, but you could do it for Leo Nikolaevich's sake, and things would then be easier for you. . . ."[75]

At first this stay at Kotchety seemed to produce the desired result. Tolstoy relaxed, played bridge, read a light French novel and made up

stories for his grandchildren (activities in which his wife professed to read an inordinate desire to seek relief from his "role of religious thinker and teacher") and the Countess spent much of her time with her "two beloved Tanias." But, occupied as usual with innumerable self-imposed duties, and fearful at the thought that Tolstoy might remain there without her when she returned to Yasnaya Polyana, she soon threw herself into a new struggle to impose her will upon him. ("I won't go away on any account," she recorded two days after their arrival, when no one had suggested that she should. "I will throw everything up and let it all be lost. Who will master whom?") Then, to put her into a renewed frenzy, she read in the newspapers next morning that the Government had officially permitted Chertkov to remain at Teliatinki. ("It is the hand of God. His will has sent me this cross, and Chertkov and Leo Nikolaevich are the appointed instruments of my death.")

"Sofia Andreyevna fell ill when she learnt that Chertkov has received permission to live at Teliatinki," Tolstoy recorded. "I will kill him!" she cried out. I begged her not to talk and was myself silent, and that seemed to act well. Something will happen. Help me, O God, to be with Thee and do Thy will. . . ." So frantic was the Countess Tolstoy's behaviour that her son-in-law now informed her bluntly that if she did not control herself better her whole family would have to insist upon Tolstoy living apart from her. "If he does," she retorted, "I will print a death letter in the newspapers about all he has done and then poison myself and disgrace him all over Russia."

The following day the Countess persuaded her husband to confirm his promise that he would neither see Chertkov, nor permit him to take any photographs of him (a thing that Chertkov was inordinately fond of doing), nor give either to him or to anyone else the diary he was writing. But no sooner had he done so than she was exulting "the Emperor has allowed Chertkov to return, but Tolstoy's *wife* has dismissed him"; apd openly boasting that she would find some means of getting him expelled once more from the province.

On August 25th Tolstoy wrote to Chertkov, who had recently sent him a letter containing advice from a psychiatrist as to the best method of treating paranoiacs, that his holiday had done him much good. "Even my health, on which mental disturbances had an effect, has very greatly improved. I try to treat Sofia Andreyevna as mildly and firmly as possible, and it seems that I am more or less able to calm her, though the chief trouble—her attitude to you—remains the same____"[76] But four days later, during which her condition had once more grown worse, he recorded: "Continually harder and harder with Sofia Andreyevna. Not love, but a demand for love that resembles hate and changes into hate. Yes, such egotism is insanity. What saved her before was having children." In this *Dance of Death*, more violent and more sinister even than the play by Strindberg, the Countess Tolstoy

had now reduced to its logical conclusion Tolstoy's contention that to live only for the satisfaction of the personal desires must inevitably result in frustration, suffering and death. The whole of life had narrowed steadily for her until now nothing existed but the necessity that her will should triumph, no matter at what cost to others; and so insatiable were her demands that no power in the world could have fulfilled them.

Next day "Sofia Andreyevna was greatly agitated. She was out walking until past twelve. I waited up to have another explanation. I found it very hard, but restrained myself, and she became calmer. She decided to leave to-day. She said good-bye very touchingly and asked everyone's forgiveness. I am very lovingly sorry for her." [75]

Meanwhile Chertkov, in accordance with Tania's suggestion, had himself tried to ease the situation by writing the Countess a long letter (he was much addicted to writing long letters: ponderous, conscientious and of formidable logic) in which he did his best to remove all cause of misgivings from her mind and apologized once more for the offensive remarks he had made to her. But she was not to be softened and, in a reply almost as lengthy, recapitulated all her former grievances and exulted openly in the fact that Tolstoy had promised not to see him again.

Back at Yasnaya Polyana the Countess Tolstoy once more yielded herself to her mania without restraint. Announcing to the household that Tolstoy's study was haunted by Chertkov's evil spirit, she removed Chertkov's photograph, substituted one of her own in its place and sent for a priest to perform a service of exorcism. "When I am alone," Tolstoy recorded when Alexandra brought him this news, "I prepare to be firm with her and feel as if it were possible, but when I am with her I weaken. I shall try to remember that she is an invalid...."

The following day, still overwrought and trying to find some excuse with which to justify her violent feelings, the Countess Tolstoy arrived again at her daughter's house. The reason she gave for her present frenzy was that Tolstoy would not tell her when he intended to leave. After making some "terrible scenes," however, she again returned home, this time sending her husband a series of painful letters. " As I have said, I don't wish to discuss our relations with one another," Tolstoy replied to one of these on September 14th. " I will try only to improve them, and I feel quite certain that with your help I shall succeed. . . . Yesterday I was weak and in a bad state both physically and spiritually. But having slept well, to-day I am vigorous. How did you get home? Please let me know, dear Sonia. I kiss you. *Au revoir*" [75]

But in his diary he wrote: "I cannot accustom myself to regard her words as raving. This is the cause of all my troubles. It is impossible to talk to her, for she is bound neither by logic, nor conscience, nor truth, nor by; what she herself has said. This is terrible. Not to speak

of **any** love for me—of which there is not a trace—she does not **even need my** love. She needs only one thing—that people should **think I** love her. This is what is so dreadful."[75]

The Countess had now reached the stage when, at every available opportunity, she would show relations and friends passages from Tolstoy's earlier diaries with the deliberate intention of scandalizing them; or else lapse into long diatribes about his behaviour which were excessively painful to everyone but herself. After listening to her for some time, a young Pole who had travelled a long way to Yasnaya to see the man whom he so much admired left the house in tears to think that Tolstoy was fated to spend his last years in such an atmosphere of malignant strife.

When Tolstoy returned home on September 22nd his wife met him with evident hostility. "Terror seizes me at the thought of what awaits me there," he had recorded that morning. "Only *fais ce que dois,* and above all keep silence and remember that in her too the spirit of God dwells."

The next day proved particularly difficult. He had arrived home to find that the Countess had not only removed Chertkov's photograph from his room but also another of himself and his daughter Alexandra; and when, it being the anniversary of their wedding day, his wife insisted that he be photographed with her, Alexandra, who was now beginning to break under the strain of the last few weeks, could not conceal her own resentment. It was not right, she declared, that Tolstoy should permit himself to be photographed with the Countess when she had made him promise not to be photographed at Chertkov's. It was inconsistent and unkind to sacrifice both his daughter and his friend for the whims of a madwoman.

"You are growing like her," Tolstoy said sadly and sought refuge in his study. Shortly afterwards, when he rang for Alexandra, she refused to go to him. But later, when he had sent Bulgakov *to* find her, she had regained control of herself. Tolstoy asked her to take down a letter, but scarcely had she seated herself than his head fell forward on the arm of his chair and he began to sob. "I don't need your stenography," he said at last. He intended t© add: "but only your love"; but his sobs prevented him. Alexandra flew to his side and begged his forgiveness, and they both wept.

Then came a long letter from Chertkov full of accusations and reproaches. "The whole matter seems to me more complicated and harder to solve than it can possibly appear even to a close friend such as yourself," Tolstoy replied. "I must solve it alone, in my soul, before God, and I am trying to do so, but. every attempt to help me only makes my task more difficult"[76]: a rebuke which elicited from his friend a very earnest plea for forgiveness.

"They tear me to pieces," Tolstoy recorded on September **25th.** "Sometimes the idea occurs to me to go away from them all." **Yet** no

matter how difficult for him the situation became he never lost his comprehensive understanding. "Certain people, like Sasha," he told Bulgakov the same day, "wish to explain everything by greed. But the matter is far more complex. Those forty years of married life in common. . . . Here there are habit, vanity, *amour-propre*, jealousy, illness. In her state she is very much to be pitied. I try to detach myself from the situation."

A few days later, before going out for his accustomed ride, Tolstoy rearranged his study as he liked it and replaced the photographs in their former positions. On the same day, Alexandra and Varvara Feokritov left the house on a short visit. During their absence the Countess Tolstoy went into her husband's study, tore down Chertkov's photograph again, and rushed wildly about the house crying out first that she had burnt it, then that she would burn it and, finally, that she had torn it into shreds preparatory to burning it. After which she retired into her bedroom and started to shoot with some sort of toy pistol of which she had possessed herself. At this, old Mary Schmidt, who was staying in the house, fearing that she was trying to kill herself, at once sent a messenger after the two girls.

When Tolstoy had returned and heard the whole story, exhausted by two incoherent scenes with his wife, he finally shut himself into his room and tried to sleep. At midnight he was reawakened by a terrible scene in the next room. Alexandra and her companion had returned, and the Countess Tolstoy was not only screaming abuse at them but also at Mary Schmidt, who wept with despair and begged to be forgiven. Finally, frantic with rage, the Countess told Varvara Feokritov to pack her bags and leave the house next morning, and then, turning upon her daughter, boasted that she would now "get rid of her as she had got rid of Chertkov."

Next morning the two girls decided to go away together to Alexandra's little house at Teliatinki. When Alexandra told her father, he said: "It all leads to one end."

"How absurd is the contradiction in which I live," Tolstoy recorded the next day. "Without false modesty I may say that I express very important truths, and yet at the same time I am involved in feminine caprices and devote a large part of my time to struggling with them. As regards moral improvement I feel myself to be but a child—a pupil, and a poor pupil of little zeal." Two days later he wrote: "It is very hard. These expressions of love, this garrulousness and continual interference. It is possible, I know, to love despite it all. But I cannot. I am no good." [76]

Now that Alexandra had removed her various pets and possessions from the house and Tolstoy still continued to treat her with the greatest consideration, the Countess softened for a few days and recorded complacently: "How pleased he was when I began to eat lunch. And with how much love he brought me a pear!" But this improved

condition lasted but a short time, and very soon she was filling the house with renewed demands, reproaches and lamentations.

On October 3rd, when the whole household were seated at table—the party included Birukov, Bulgakov, Makovitsky, and both Tania and Sergey, who, alarmed at their mother's most recent excesses, had come to stay for a few days in the house—Tolstoy did not appear, and the Countess herself went to his room to see if anything was amiss. She found him apparently well but sitting on his bed gazing vacantly into space. Returning to the dining-room, she drank a few spoonfuls of soup; then, as Tolstoy did not follow her, went back to him. He was now lying on his bed unconscious and muttering incoherently. Terrified, she rushed back to the others to tell them; and the next moment they had all run to Tolstoy's little room. His eyes were closed, his brows frowning, his lips moving as though he were chewing something; and he kept passing his hand, held as though it contained a pen, from side to side of the blanket.

Dr. Makovitsky now set Birukov to watch in an arm-chair and insisted that the rest of them should return to dinner. But a few minutes later he, too, appeared in the dining-room announcing in an agitated voice that now Tolstoy was in convulsions. Again there was a concerted movement towards his bedroom, but by the time they reached it he had grown quiet again. Dr. Makovitsky sent for medical necessities, and the Countess, pale, silent and suffering, arranged hot-water bottles about her husband's legs and made all the necessary preparations to act as nurse. While he was still unconscious, Makovitsky and Bulgakov together put Tolstoy to bed. By now he was delirious.

" To write," he cried out presently. Birukov brought him a pencil and writing-pad. Tolstoy covered this with a handkerchief and began to scribble over it. "It must be read," he announced; and then muttered: "Reasonableness ... reasonableness . .. reasonableness."

A few minutes later he was again seized with convulsions. He writhed and shook and flung his legs about with such violence that it was difficult for three of the men together to hold him still. Attack followed attack, while the Countess, apparently grief-stricken, wandered pathetically from room to room murmuring prayers. Presently Alexandra arrived; and her mother, seeing her pale, compressed lips and tense expression, said to her: "I am suffering more than you. You are losing a father, but I am losing a husband for whose death I am responsible...." Nevertheless, she went back to the bedroom and managed to take away a portfolio of papers from Tolstoy's desk. Noticing this, Sergey and Tania hid both his diary and his keys, and later insisted that she return the portfolio to its usual place.

Later in the evening Tolstoy recovered consciousness. He slept soundly that night and the following morning appeared to be quite normal. But this seizure had been such a shock to the Countess Tolstoy that she became reconciled with Alexandra, and, promising

that she would no longer interfere with her husband, begged her to return home. At the same time Sergey warned his mother that if her conduct did not quickly improve it would be necessary for her children to summon a family council and place her under control.

It was probably as a result of this that, a few days later, the Countess permitted Chertkov to come to the house. "Chertkov was here," Tolstoy recorded on October 7th. "Very simple and lucid. We talked a great deal about everything except the difficult position in which we are placed. It was better so. Sonia had another hysterical seizure which was very distressing." And three days later: "She is quieter, but is preparing to talk about herself. . . . Everybody is to blame except herself. Have not ridden over to Chertkov's and will not do so. Serenity is the most precious thing. The state of my soul is serious and strict." [76]

But the Countess still imagined that there were secret meetings between them and still tried to "open her husband's eyes" to his friend's "falseness" in devious ways. A worse crisis than any before was suddenly precipitated by her discovering the new will from the references to it which Tolstoy had made in his diary. Her story is that this diary fell out of the linen cupboard when she was sorting linen. That this was true is most unlikely. It is, of course, possible that Tolstoy had himself put it there for safety in some moment of aberration; but it is far more probable that she herself stole it from his room during one of her frequent and systematic searches. Anyhow, on October 12th everything began again. Tolstoy's recent seizure, the solemn promises she had made to her children, her protestations of sorrow and repentance—all were forgotten: and once more nothing in the world had the slightest significance for her but that she should force her husband to destroy this will. She sobbed, shouted, raved; flung herself at his feet, knelt before him and kissed his hands; then, when this proved ineffective, openly declared to everybody that when Tolstoy died she would herself go to the courts, cite his recent fits, and declare that the will had been made when he was obviously of unsound mind.

Finally, she wrote him a letter: "Every day you ask me, as though with concern, about my health, and how I have slept; and every day new blows fall which tear my heart out, shorten my life, torment me beyond endurance, so that there is no end to my sufferings. The latest blow is this malicious act depriving your numerous descendants of your author's rights. It was the will of fate that I should discover it although your accomplice in the matter had ordered you to keep it from your family.... The Government which you . . . have denied in every way in all your writings will, under the law, take the last piece of bread from the mouths of your heirs and give it to different rich printers and swindlers, whilst Tolstoy's grandchildren will be dying of hunger because of his vicious and vainglorious wishes.. .." [78]

"A reproachful letter on account of some document about rights, as if the question of money was the most important thing.. .. When she speaks exaggeratedly of her love for me and goes on her knees and kisses my hand I find it very hard. I am still unable to announce resolutely that I intend to ride over to Chertkov's." [76] The situation was rapidly becoming more than he could endure.

About a week later Tolstoy was visited by Novikov, a peasant sectarian from a neighbouring village, with whom he had long been friendly and who shared many of his ideas. To him he confided something of the difficulties of his position. "I shall not die in this house," he told him. "I have decided to go away to some lonely place where I shall be quite unknown. Perhaps I really will come to die in your hut." Shortly afterwards he wrote to him: "Regarding what I told you before you left, I want to ask you whether, should I really come to you, you could find me a separate and warm hut in your village, so that I should inconvenience you and your family only for a very short time? I also want to let you know that should I have to telegraph you, I should do so not in my own name, but in that of T. Nikolaev. I await your answer, and press your hand in friendship." [75] But this letter was delayed in the post and Tolstoy never received any reply.

Meanwhile, a woman representative from a famous publishing house had arrived at Yasnaya Polyana with the intention of finding out whether there was any possibility of buying the copyright of Tolstoy's complete works, for which her firm were prepared to offer a million roubles. For long it had been a topic of scandal that the Countess Tolstoy had hinted that she would find some means of effecting a satisfactory sale. Over eight years ago Chekov, in reply to a letter on the subject from his wife, had written: "As for Marx and his 300,000 roubles, he talks nonsense. The Countess Tolstoy never thought of bargaining with Marx. It is all a lie." But Chekov was the last man capable of thinking that Tolstoy's wife would publicly flout his wishes; and he certainly knew nothing of the Countess Tolstoy's own admission in her diary that, in the event of her husband's death, she had no intention of renouncing his copyrights. Now, once again, she declared openly that she would never permit Tolstoy's works to become public property, and would assuredly find some means of gaining his consent. When Tolstoy heard of this he felt unutterably sick at heart; and though, at Chertkov's advice, he wrote a statement to the press warning publishers from buying his works, it was probably this, rather than anything else, which shaped his final resolve.

On October 23rd Tolstoy had another attack of amnesia. "I have lost memory of almost all the past, all my writings, all that brought me to the state of consciousness in which I now live. Formerly I could never even imagine the condition of thinking constantly of my spiritual

self and its demands—the condition in which I now live continually. And this condition could not exist if I lived in the past or was even conscious of it or remembered i t . . . . How can I help rejoicing at such a loss of memory ?" [76]

But two days later the incessant conflict with external difficulties weighed heavily upon him once more. "Always the same oppression. Suspicion and prying; and on my side a sinful wish that she should give me cause to go away. Then I think of her position, and am sorry for her and cannot. . . . All night I was aware of my painful struggle with her. . . . It is unendurable—horrible." And next day: "I feel more and more oppressed by this life we are leading. Mary Alexandrovna advises me not to go away and my conscience also restrains me. To bear with her, not altering the external position, but working upon the internal. God help me!" Yet even as he struggled he felt, as he wrote to Chertkov, that there was "something shameful, something unfitting" in his position.

It was a counsel of perfection. Only a saint could have achieved it, and admittedly Tolstoy was far from being that. To-day, just as twenty years ago, he might have written to a friend: "No, I am not a saint. I am a man, often carried away, and sometimes, nay rather always, unable to say exactly what I think and feel.. . because I often exaggerate or simply blunder. . . . In deeds, the case is even worse, for I am only a weak man of evil habits, who desires to serve the God of Truth but continually goes astray." [2]

The final event which broke down his noble resolutions was but little different from innumerable others that had gone before. On October 28th he was awakened at three o'clock in the morning by the Countess searching amongst his papers. At first he tried to ignore it and to go to sleep again, but could not; then, sitting up to light a candle, he was presently confronted by his wife herself, who, in the same manner that she had done during the past few evenings, showed a sudden over-sweet anxiety at his sleeplessness. It was the final realization of the utter falsity of this recent solicitude—that it had all been deliberately assumed to prevent him from realizing that each night she was still searching, searching with the ultimate object of defying his wishes—that ultimately outraged his feelings more than anything that had gone before. Probably, too, he felt at last that all his terrible efforts at forbearance had been simply regarded as weakness; that, ill though she was, she was not too ill to devise one stratagem after another with the deliberate intent of imposing her own will; that mad though she might be, there was nevertheless a formidable method in this madness.

Such was his indignation that he could scarcely breathe. His pulse began to quicken. Nevertheless, he contrived to hide his feelings; and, when she had left him, even attempted to continue with *The Brothers Karama^ov^* which he had been reading before he fell asleep.

But it was no use. The constant struggle had broken down his last resistance, and this time he decided that at all costs he must escape from this madhouse. Very quietly he got up, dressed, roused Alexandra and Makovitsky and, while they and Varvara Feokritov put a few necessities together for him, sat down to write a farewell letter to his wife.

"I know that my going away will grieve you, and I am sorry for it; but please believe and understand that there was nothing else for me to do. My position in the house is becoming, and has become, unbearable. And apart from everything else I can no longer live in the luxurious conditions in which I have lived until now. I am simply doing what old men of my age often do—withdrawing from the world in order to lead the last days of my life in peace and solitude. Please try to understand this, and, even should you learn where I am, do not follow me. Your coming would not alter my decision, and could only make the position worse for both of us. I thank you for your honourable forty-eight years of life with me, and I beg you to forgive me for everything in which I have been to blame towards you, as I from my whole soul forgive you for everything in which you may have been to blame towards me. My advice is that you should reconcile yourself to this new situation in which my leaving places you and not harbour any unkind feelings towards me. If you wish to send me anything, give it to Sasha. She will know where I am and forward what is necessary. But she cannot tell you where I am, because she has promised me not to tell anyone." [76]

All this time Tolstoy was in an inner turmoil lest at any moment his wife should appear and make a hysterical scene. But by six o'clock everything was ready and he went himself to the stables to have the horses harnessed. It was still dark, and on the way back to the house in his agitation he missed the path, stumbled into a thicket, fell and lost his cap. At last there was nothing further to wait for, and, tenderly taking leave of the two girls, whom he promised should come to him as soon as he was settled, he drove away from Yasnaya Polyana with Makovitsky for the last time.

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His decision to leave home having been quite spontaneous, he had made no plans where to go; but now he determined first of all to visit his sister at the convent where she was living in retirement. Shivering with the intense cold, and also with nervousness lest his wife should overtake him before they were able to escape, for a long time he wandered up and down the platform waiting impatiently for the train. Seized alternately with pity and remorse, his one consolation was that he had perhaps saved himself—"not Leo Nikolaevich, but that something of which sometimes there is a spark in me."

At last the train arrived. During the first stage of the journey they travelled second class; during the second stage, third. The carriage was overheated, full of smoke and so crowded that Tolstoy spent most of the time on the open platform at the end of it. But his identity was soon discovered; a crowd collected about him, and presently he was involved in an animated discussion which moved from Henry George's single-tax system to the use of violence; and from the principle of non-resistance to modern science and education. They reached their destination at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and hired a cab to drive them to the Shamordin Monastery Hostel.

"I am Tolstoy," the fugitive said to the monk who opened the door to them. "Will you let me in for the night?"

"We let anyone in," the monk replied.

The same evening Tolstoy wrote to Alexandra asking her to send him news as to how his departure had been taken; and instructing her to tell Chertkov that, if he did not alter his arrangements within a week, he could send to the newspapers his announcement that he had never sold the copyrights of his works nor had authorized their sale by others.

Next morning the younger Sergeyenko arrived with the distressing news that, no sooner had she read Tolstoy's letter, than the Countess tried to drown herself; and afterwards had made her son Andrew promise that he would find him no matter what happened. "I cannot express in words the joy I feel on hearing that you have gone away," Chertkov wrote. "I am conscious with my whole being that it was right for you to do so, and that it would have been wrong for you to have continued to live at Yasnaya Polyana under the conditions which had arisen. I believe that you had delayed long—fearing to do it for your own sake—and that now there was no personal egotism in your fundamental impulse. It is inevitable that at times you will be conscious that it is far quieter, pleasanter, and easier in your new conditions—but do not let that distress you. It is impossible to live without some spiritual respite. I am sure your action will make things better for everyone, and most of all for poor Sofia Andreyevna, however she may react to it outwardly." [75]

Later Tolstoy went to the convent to see his sister and her daughter who was living with her. They both seemed to understand the situation and expressed great sympathy. After a long conversation, he made enquiries to see if he could find a small hut in the neighbourhood where he could settle down. Then he wrote again to his daughter Alexandra.... "It is hard, and I cannot help feeling greatly oppressed. The great thing is not to sin, and in that lies the difficulty. Of course I have sinned, and do sin, but if only I could manage to sin less. . . . I have not decided anything, and do not wish to decide anything. I am trying to do only what I cannot avoid, and not to do anything unnecessary. I am hoping for much from the good influence of Tanja

and Sergey ... they might suggest to her that all her actions in regard to me not only express no love, but seem to be done with the definite purpose of killing me—which purpose she is achieving, for I hope that the third stroke which threatens me will free us both from the horrible situation in which we have been living, and which I do not wish to renew. . . ." [75]

Next day, while he was again visiting his sister at the convent, Alexandra arrived with Varvara Feokritov, bearing letters from his children and news of all that had happened at Yasnaya since his departure.

When she had made certain that Tolstoy had left the house, the Countess had cried out: "He has gone. Gone. Good-bye. I cannot continue to live without him. I will drown myself"; and rushed distraught towards the pond, on the platform of which she had slipped and fallen into the water before Alexandra and Bulgakov, who were both pursuing her, could stop her. Having dragged her out and brought her back to the house, no sooner was Alexandra dried and changed before she saw her mother once more running towards the pond. This time Bulgakov and one of the servants had to bring her home by force, where, quite frantic, she wept unceasingly, beat her breast, pricked herself with anything sharp that she could lay hands on. Then she sent to the station to find what destination Tolstoy's tickets had been taken for, and wired to the train: "Return at once," adding her daughter Alexandra's signature.

That night, while Mary Schmidt and Bulgakov sat up with her in order to see that she did herself no harm, the Countess had wandered distractedly from room to room muttering and sobbing, and crying out: "I will find him. I will escape., How will you stop me? I will jump out of the window and go to the station. If only I knew where he is! Then I would never let him go again. \ would watch him night and day. I would sleep at his door."

Next day, still wandering from room to room clutching to her breast his special little pillow, she alternately kissed it passionately, and called it a savage fiend determined to kill her; gave interviews to the journalists who had already arrived, in which[4] she explained that Tolstoy had left home in order to advertise himself; sent for Chertkov, and, when he refused to come, wrote out another telegram in which she pretended that she had taken communion, been reconciled with Chertkov, and was now dying.

Apart from the letters of his younger children, who, with the exception of Leo who was abroad, were now gathered at Yasnaya Polyana and all urged him to return, Tolstoy received two from his eldest son and daughter which touched him deeply. "Dear Father," Sergey had written, "I write because Sasha says you would like to know our opinion. I think Mother is nervously ill and in*many

respects irresponsible, and that it was necessary for you to separate (perhaps you should have done it long ago), however painful it is for you both. I also think that if anything should happen to Mother—which I do not anticipate—you should not reproach yourself. The position was desperate, and I think you chose the right way out of it. Forgive me for writing so frankly." [75] AndTania: " Dear, precious Papenka,—You have always suffered from a great deal of advice, so I will not give you any. Like everyone else you have to act as best you can and as you consider necessary. I shall never condemn you. Of Mother, I will only say that she is pitiable and touching. She is unable to live otherwise than she does live, and probably she will never change essentially. For her either fear or power is necessary. We all try to calm her, and I think this will be beneficial. I am tired and stupid. Forgive me. Good-bye, my friend." [75]

Having read his letters, Tolstoy said: "No matter how alarmed I may be, I cannot and will not return to her." When Alexandra asked him if he regretted anything, he replied: "How can one regret an action when one could not have acted otherwise? Nevertheless, if anything should happen to her I shall suffer very much."

His sister Mary now advised him to leave without delay, as it was quite probable that the Countess would find out where he was and follow him. She also promised that were she to do so, she herself would see her, and try to bring her to understanding.

After he had returned to the Hostel, Tolstoy at once wrote a letter to all his children. " Thank you very much, kind friends—true friends, Sergey and Tania—for your sympathy in my grief and for your letters. . . . I cannot help being anxious about everything, nor can I free myself from a sense of responsibility, but I had not the strength to act otherwise.... Forgive me for causing you to suffer—especially you, my darling Tania.... I am hurrying away from here in order to avoid what I fear most, that Mother should overtake me. A meeting with her now would be terrible. . .." [75]

Meanwhile a letter had arrived from the distraught Countess. "Liovochka, my dear one, my darling, return home! Save me from a second suicide, Liovochka, my life-long friend. I will do everything, everything that you wish! I will give up all luxury, and your friends shall be mine. I will undergo a cure, and I will be mild, tender and kind. Do come back to me. You must save me. You know it is said in the Gospels that a man must never abandon his wife for any reason. My dear, my darling, friend of my soul, save me! Return if only to say farewell to me before our inevitable separation. ..." [75] And more to the same effect.

Agitated, exhausted, trembling, Tolstoy wrote her a long and patient letter in reply. "... If you—I do not say love me, but at least do not hate me, you should understand my position at least to some

extent. And if you do that, then not only will you not condemn me, but you will try to help me to find peace and the possibility of living some sort of human life. Help me by controlling yourself, **and then** you will not wish me to return now. But your present mood, your desire and attempt to commit suicide, show more than anything else your loss of self-control and make my return unthinkable at present. No one but you can free me, can free all those near to you, and, above all, yourself, from the sufferings we are experiencing.... Do not think I have left home because I do not love you. I love and pity you with all my heart, but I cannot do otherwise than I am doing. Your letter was written sincerely, I know, but you are not capable of carrying out what you wish to.... Farewell, dear Sonia, may God help you! Life is not a joke, and we have no right to throw it away at our own whim. And to measure it by length of days is also unreasonable. Perhaps the months which remain to us are more important than all the years we have yet lived, and they should be lived well. . . ."[75]

The further pathetic, distracted letters which the Countess sent him he never received.

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It was impossible now that he should stay any longer at Shamordin; and after a long talk with his daughter, they decided to go to his nephew Denisenko at Novocherkaask, who would probably be able to obtain a passport for them to go abroad. Then they might settle in Bulgaria, or, should this prove impossible, with some sympathizers in the Caucasus. So agitated was Tolstoy now that he could not sleep, and fearful lest they should be overtaken, roused his daughter at four o'clock the next morning in order not to miss the first train to Rostov-on-Don. He had promised to see his sister once more before his departure; but as this would entail a delay that might prove disastrous, he sent her instead a letter of farewell.

"Dear Friends, Mashenka and Lizanka,—Do not wonder and do not condemn us, and me, for leaving without saying good-bye to you as we should. I cannot express to you both, and especially to you, my dear Mashenka, my gratitude for your love and your help in my ordeal. I cannot remember a time, although I have always loved you, when I felt such tenderness for you as I have felt these days and as I carry with me. We are leaving thus unexpectedly because I fear that Sofia Andreyevna will overtake me here. And there is only one train, between seven and eight o'clock.... I kiss you, dear friends, and love you with such joy. ..."[78]

Alexandra, who had brought with her a spirit stove and some simple provisions, cooked him some porridge for breakfast; and immediately afterwards he set out with Makovitsky for the station. The two girls

had to wait behind for fresh horses. In order to confuse anyone who might try to follow them, tickets were taken for each separate stage of the journey; a precaution completely useless, since by now Tolstoy's home-leaving had become public news, and both journalists and police agents were already following him. As usual, it was impossible for him for long to avoid recognition, and from the first the journey was fraught with embarrassments. One acquaintance who recognized him,[1] and had already read in the morning paper of his departure from Yasnaya, courteously offered him the loan of his house; while two young men in the same carriage, apparently unaware of who he was, were discussing the topic of the day with complacent and impertinent frivolity. Presently strangers began to enter the carriage on the most trivial pretexts, simply in order to look at him. At Gorbachev, a police detective boarded the train, and, now in uniform, now in plain clothes, kept the party under ostentatious surveillance.

At four o'clock next morning (it was November ist) Tolstoy began to shiver incessantly. Makovitsky took his temperature, found it to be 104^0, and decided that it would be dangerous to travel further. At Astapovo, therefore, the next station, they left the train. "Well, it's checkmate," Tolstoy said to Alexandra as she helped him from the carriage. "Don't be vexed."

As there was no other suitable accommodation of any kind, Makovitsky was now obliged to go in search of the station-master and ask him to give him a room for his patient in his cottage; while Tolstoy sat in the waiting-room with his daughter, and strange women, under the pretence of adjusting their hats, came in to stare at him with impudent curiosity.

By the time Makovitsky returned, Tolstoy was very near a state of collapse. Nevertheless, as he tottered outside, he still tried to acknowledge politely the salutations of those on the platform who recognized him, though it seemed that at any moment he might faint. While he was being undressed, his left leg and side began to twitch involuntarily; and no sooner was he in bed than Makovitsky went to find the station doctor, who was himself ill. Nevertheless he returned with him at once, and after an exhaustive examination, diagnosed inflammation of the lungs. By now Tolstoy was coughing up phlegm heavily mixed with blood. "Shall we be able to travel again to-morrow?" he asked anxiously while this was going on. But soon afterwards he seemed to have lost his memory again; for when Varvara Feokritov went to him, he mistook her for his dead daughter Mary.

Alexandra now telegraphed to Sergey asking him to send Dr. Nikitin at once, and adding that she thought her father would be pleased to see his elder children. Meanwhile, Tolstoy's condition seemed to be growing steadily more serious. That evening he had another seizure of convulsions. When this was over, he began to cry out: "We must get away ... we must get away ... or they will overtake us."

Alexandra went to him at once, and he begged her to telegraph to Chertkov: "Yesterday I fell ill. Passengers saw me. Having become weak, I left train. Fear publicity. To-day am better and am going further. Take steps. Inform me."

Then he dictated messages to Tania and Sergey which he wished to be given to them only after his death. "... I hope and trust you will not reproach me for not sending for you. But to send for you alone, without Mother, would be a great sorrow for her, and also for your other brothers. You will both understand that Chertkov, whom I did send for, is in a special position with regard to me. He has devoted his life to the cause which I have served for the last forty years of my life. This cause is one that I consider—whether mistakenly or not—to be of importance for all people, including yourselves. ...

"Also I wanted to add this advice for you, Seriosha, that you should consider your life, who you are, what you are, what the meaning of human life is, and how every sensible, reasoning man should spend it. . . . Loving you, and probably on the eve of my death, I say this to you. . . ."[73]

But it was already too late. News of his illness and of where he was had already reached the newspapers; and the following morning a special train left Tula carrying the Countess Tolstoy and four of her children. Chertkov and Sergeyenko had already arrived.

Meanwhile Sergey, who had been travelling on business, had received his sister's telegram on the train; and at seven o'clock in the evening he arrived at Astapovo with Dr. Nikitin to find his father unconscious.

By now this tiny village had become the chief centre of public interest. The district doctor arrived: two famous specialists were summoned from Moscow: and in order that Tolstoy and his attendants should be accommodated more suitably, the station-master and his family moved out of their house.

One after another there arrived relations, friends, newspaper men, photographers and cinema camera men. Tolstoy, who had desired so earnestly to spend the short time remaining to him in peace and solitude, was dying in a blaze of unprecedented publicity, with bulletins of his state continually being telegraphed to every great city of Europe and America.

In order not to agitate him unnecessarily, it had been decided to admit to his bedside, in addition to those already with him, only Sergey and Tatiana; so that Tolstoy himself had no idea that the Countess and her three other sons (Leo was still abroad) were walking about miserably outside. The special carriage in which they had arrived had been run into a siding, and the authorities had given permission for them to live in it until the crisis was over.

On the night of November 3rd, Tolstoy slept but little. His

temperature had fallen considerably, but he was terribly agitated by the fact that everyone now knew where he was. Tania had managed to avoid telling him that the Countess was at Astapovo; and although he asked about her with the greatest concern, when she told him that her mother was longing to be summoned to his bedside, he made no reply. Shordy afterwards, he asked Alexandra to wire to his younger sons begging them to prevent his wife from following him, because his heart was so weak that he knew that a meeting with her now would be fatal. This telegram was delivered to the railway carriage.

The following days were spent by all those about him in a state of alternate hope and fear, as his condition oscillated from hour to hour. Makovitsky and Alexandra watched at his bedside day and night; Sergey and Tania came to see him every day; and when he was fully conscious, Chertkov sat at his side and read him extracts from *A Circle of Reading,*

Meanwhile the Countess Tolstoy, accompanied by two nurses bidden at all costs to prevent her from breaking in, wandered about outside, pathetic, garrulous, distraught; now trying to look through the windows, now pouring out her lamentations to anyone who would listen, now getting herself photographed as though she had just left her husband's side. "At least," she said to her daughter Alexandra, who had reproached her for the presence of two cameramen who had stationed themselves outside the house, "at least let people think that I have been widi him."

With five doctors in attendance, Tolstoy's condition nevertheless grew steadily worse. The action of his heart became very weak, and terrible fits of coughing and hiccuping were succeeded by acute heart-burn. When it seemed that recovery was no longer possible, the Metropolitan Anthony sent him a telegram begging him to return to the Church before he died; and on the instructions of the Most Holy Synod an abbot came from the Optin Monastery to see him. But [knowing her father's views, Alexandra refused to admit him.

By November 5th, Tolstoy could scarcely speak. "Much is falling on Sonia.... We have arranged badly," he murmured to Tania; and to Sergey his.last words were: "The truth ... I love much.... How are they?" By now there was no hope.

The next day, Saturday, he sat up at two o'clock in the afternoon, and cried out loudly: "The end has come. ... I give you only this advice. There are many people besides Leo Tolstoy in this world; and you attend only to Leo. . ."

After this his state deteriorated rapidly. He was seized with another terrible fit of hiccuping, moved his fingers ceaselessly across his breast, plucked at the blankets, or drew his fingers across the sheets as though he were writing. Towards evening his heart failed, his pulse almost ceased, blue spots appeared on ears, lips, nose and fingernails, and his feet and hands grew cold.

The doctors resorted to artificial respiration and, although Tolstoy had previously announced his objection to such methods, gave him injections of camphor, caffeine, codeine and morphia. After this he seemed a little better and managed to drink some milk and to take a few spoonfuls of gruel. Then he became delirious once more and kept on repeating that last pathetic and significant phrase: "I do not understand what I have to do."

The doctors now gave him another injection of morphia, but his pulse grew steadily weaker, and it was apparent that he was dying. At four o'clock next morning it was decided to admit the Countess. She fell on her knees by his bedside, whispered "Forgive me," and kissed his hand. Tolstoy sighed deeply, but remained unconscious, and presently she was led away.

For two hours he lay quite still, his face calm. But he breathed loudly, and eventually this changed to a painful whistling sound. By a quarter to six, however, his breath was scarcely audible; and a few minutes later, after three separate cessations and a slight rattle, he was dead.

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He was buried at Yasnaya Polyana two days later. The Most Holy Synod had forbidden all memorial services, and the Minister of the Interior would not permit any special trains; but throughout Russia it was a day of public mourning. The Petersburg University suspended lectures, the theatres were closed, the leading newspapers were heavily edged with black, and the Czar, the Duma and the Council of State all sent official messages of condolence.

From early morning the station nearest to Yasnaya Polyana was crowded with students, peasants, journalists and public deputations which had come from all parts. The coffin, carried by his four sons, and attended by the Countess and her daughters, who now bore herself with dignity and restraint, was followed by a procession nearly a mile long, amongst whom were the local villagers who carried a banner which bore the words: " Leo Nikolaevich, the memory of your goodness will never be forgotten amongst us orphaned peasants."

There was no religious service, but two choirs of students sang a chorale. As the coffin was lowered into the grave, everyone knelt in solemn silence. His last resting-place was a secluded glade that he had himself chosen long before. Here mushrooms grew abundantly in summer, and forget-me-nots carpeted the ground in spring. It was the place where, over three-quarters of a century ago, Nicholas had buried the green twig upon which was written the secret that would bring happiness to all mankind.

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Edition definitive des (Euvres Completes du Cte. L£on Tolstoi, traduite du russe par M. J.-W. Bienstock. La traduction litte>ale et integrate est revised et annot£e par P. Birukov, d'apres les manuscrits originaux de l'auteur, conserves dans les archives de V. Chertkov. Paris, P.-V. Stock, 1902-13.

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