Count Tolstoy and His Philosophy of Life

Ernest Howard Crosby

1900

Contents

I wonder what Tolstoy would say if he could see us discussing his philosophy in evening clothes after a banquet like this. I wish he were here in my place to tell you. I can imagine what the effect would be of having him sitting in my chair. In fact, I do not see why you should not have him. If your enterprising Secretary can get Wu Ting Fang—isn't that his name!—and other people, from distant places, I do not see why you should not have Tolstoy himself. But, I can imagine him sitting here as I saw him when I visited him in Russia some six years ago. You know his picture very well,—a plain-looking Russian peasant, with a loose kind of a blouse on, a belt around his waist—you could hardly call it a belt; it looked like a very-much-damaged trunk-strap, I think, more than anything else,—as shabbily dressed as a man could be dressed, only distinguished from the peasant in the field by his scrupulous neatness and by something in his face, a twinkle in the eye, under its shaggy gray eye-brows, which showed that he was a man who had done a great deal of thinking in his time. It would be a rather dramatic thing, would it not, to have him here?—a subject worthy of some of the latest school of French artists. And I am inclined to think, in anything that he had to say, although a great deal of it you would not agree with, that there would not be a word that you would not receive with respect and I am sure when he sat down you would all feel that you had listened to a man, not only one of the most sincere men on earth to-day but actually one of the sanest men as well.

It is quite fitting that Tolstoy should be presented in a dramatic way because to my mind he is one of the most dramatic of men—the least theatrical, but the most dramatic. It is the secret of the wonderful power of his novels. He is a man whom argument affects little; he is a man who, I am inclined to think, would gain little from the reading of books; he is a man who sees things dramatically in figures; he is a man who always selects the practical side, the side of action rather than the side of thought. The very first incident in his life which we are told had the effect of drawing him away a little from the conventional view of things, was a dramatic incident. It is told of him when he was a student only eighteen years old at the University of *Kazan*, he was invited to a ball at the

house of a nobleman who lived in the country in the vicinity; it was a frightfully cold winter night; Tolstoy went out to this ball in a sleigh driven by one of the peasant coachmen that are so common in Russia. We must remember in Russia that there are only two classes. The middle class is only beginning to exist there. There are the rich and the nobility on the one side, and the peasants on the other—and the servant class, the coachman class. The other class that we are familiar with in our cities are really representatives of the peasant class. So Tolstoy was driven out to this ball by a peasant coachman. He went into the ball, passed the night in dancing, and finally, forgetting altogether the coachman in the sleigh that he had left outside, when he came out, at an early hour in the morning, he found his driver unconscious, very nearly frozen to death; it was necessary to rub him; chafe his hands and his feet for two or three hours before he was brought again to consciousness. That dramatic incident had a tremendous effect on Tolstoy's mind, although he was only eighteen years old. He thought, "Why is it? Here am I, a fellow eighteen years old, who has never been of use to anybody; nobody knows whether I am going to be of any use t anybody or not. Why should I be enjoying all these things in this warm house, this palace of this nobleman, feasting on the fat things of the earth in a warmly heated ball-room, and why should this man—representative of the great peasant class that does all the hard work of the country, be shut outside in the cold?" It seemed to him to be a picture of the state of the society that he lived in and he was so affected by it that he threw up his college course, went back to his estate, where I visited him, Yasnaya Polyana, south of Moscow,—his father and mother had died and he was the owner of it himself—and he tried to devote himself to the advantage and benefit of the serfs who were living then on his estate. He tried that two or three years and did not find it very successful. Those of you who have had any experience in trying to introduce new discoveries in the way of machinery and the management generally of agricultural property, know that it is not an easy thing, in this country, to change the habits of an agricultural population. Tolstoy found it in Russia even more difficult, and after two or three years he was discouraged; he gave it up as a bad job.

He went back to Moscow and applied for a commission in the army. We find him going down to serve the active service, first in the Caucasus and then shortly after that, as the captain of a battery of artillery in the great Crimean War, and he actually served in the defence of Sebastopol until the capitulation of that city; saw all there was to be seen in one of the greatest wars of the century. We must remember that when Tolstoy condemns war absolutely, when he says that it is a piece of barbarity that we have no right to countenance at the end of the nineteenth century, remember he is not speaking like many of us who have had no experience in it; he is a man who has seen service and who came out of the test honorably, promoted from a lieutenant to a captain, for his services in that way; and I have been told by very good authorities that as the result of his army experience he describes better than any other master of fiction what warfare really is, not only in his great novel "War and Peace" but in his military work called "Sebastopol" which gave an account of this very same war, which

was one of the first things he ever wrote. At the end of the war Tolstoy had already begun to write. His reputation began to spread throughout Russia and he found the career of a novelist open before him. So he resigned his commission, went for the first time to St. Petersburg and was received at once into the best literary and fashionable society of that city.

He tells us that for the next few years he passed his life in a great deal of dissipation. I often think that a great many of the very good men who are, you might say, freed from their sins rather late in life, take pleasure in picturing their sins as blacker than they really were, yet we know that the life of a fashionable man in Russia is very far from being what it should be. We know they are tremendous drinkers, they are tremendous gamblers. Tolstoy speaks of the large amount of money he lost in gambling. He also tells us of the number of duels he fought—a great many things which he would to-day totally disapprove of. Yet when we read his writings we were always impressed by the fact that there was a serious substratum in his character. He never was satisfied with the life he was leading; he was always looking for something as a guide in life, always feeling the want of a working theory of life. He tells us about his visiting the great European capitals, getting letters-of-introduction to the principal writers, trying to find out from them something about their opinions as to what the

life of man means, what the hereafter is to be, what the object of his life is, but he came back without any satisfactory answer. It was on that trip that another one of these dramatic pictures was presented to him that had a lasting influence upon his character. He was in Paris and he went to see a public execution by the guillotine. As you know, in Paris those executions are open, on the public square. He went. I don't know why. I suppose as a novelist he thought every experience he could have was a valuable one. He went to see the execution. It had a remarkable effect upon him. He tells us that as he heard the head and the body drop separately into the box that was prepared for them beneath, that he felt not only in his mind, in his heart, but through his whole person that that was a wrong act and that no theory of government or progress of civilization could possibly justify it. It was the first idea that came into his mind, the non-resistant, anti-government ideas which afterwards became so prominent in it, and you will see there, as in the case of the frozen coachman, it was not a matter of reasoning; it was the picture that was presented to him that brought him to that conviction. He came back from his foreign travels. Just at that time the serfs were freed; 1861, I think it was. Tolstoy, like a great many other good landlords, went back to his estates in the country to try to fit the new freedmen for their freedom. He started a village school in his own village; taught there as principal himself; he started an educational newspaper that was largely circulated among the landlords of Russia. Something of those papers have been collected in three volumes and translated into French. I have them in my library and they are most interesting as giving an example of Tolstoy's ideas on education way back forty years ago. It shows that many of his new ideas were really in his mind at that time. He started out with the principle in teaching the children in school in his village that no child should be taught anything that

it did not want to learn, and carried that out absolutely. They would take up a lesson in the morning; if the children did not like that lesson he would take up some other lesson until he got a lesson that they liked. The children were never obliged to study in the school. He tells us that about twice a week some boy would jump up and run over back and get his cap and start for home and all the other children would follow, and beyond a few calm words of invitation the teachers never interfered in any way whatever. He says that happened only about twice a week after they had already been in school some two hours and he thinks the advantage he obtained from knowing that the other five days of the week they stayed of their own accord, and even for those two days they stayed a couple of hours, was quite worth all they lost even by the absence of those children for a part of two days. I am not sure that that is altogether wrong. I do not suppose it could be applied very well in a city as large as Buffalo, but we have got to take Tolstoy's word about his educational experiments because we have no other witnesses to call, and he assures us that there were never any children in any part of the world so well educated as the children of his town during the time of his experiment, and I am sure we will have to take that point as proven. For a year or two he found this educational work sufficient to occupy his mind, but he tells us that at this time, when he was about thirty-four or thirty-five years old, that the great questions of life and death which came up before him and insisted upon an answer fifteen years later, that they would have presented themselves to him then if it had not been for the fact that just at that time he happened to meet a lady who became Madam Tolstoy. His mind was diverted from these deep questions of eternity to the questions of this world, and he fell in love, he married her, and in the writing of his two great novels and in the raising of a large family of children in the country, he found his mind so occupied for the coming fifteen years that he had very little time left for the questions which afterwards came up. Those of you who are familiar with the novel "Anna Karenina" will remember the courtship of Levin and Kitty. It is an actual transcript of Tolstoy's now life; the whale story of it wae the story of his relations with Madam Tolstoy. When I went to Yasnaya Polyana, after having read that book for the first time, and I actually met "Kitty"—Madam Tolstoy—it was very much as though you should happen to meet "Agnes Copperfield" or "Ethel Newcome" or some other favorite of yours that you should never imagine to have been a being on the surface of the earth at all. It was a very curious and interesting experience to make her acquaintance.

The next fifteen years passed. As I say, Tolstoy was busily occupied in writing his great novel. His family was growing up around him in the country. They very rarely went into town at all. Now take a look at Tolstoy at fifty: a man of very high rank; a man of very large landed estates; a man who had added very considerably to his wealth by the large income that he derived from his books; a man whose novels are being translated into all the civilized languages of the world, and who is recognized as one of the two or three literary leaders of the world; a man who is very happily married, who had a devoted wife who assisted him in his work, and a fine family of children growing up around him. I am sure

anyone would say that it would be impossible for any man at fifty years of age to have been more fortunate than Tolstoy was. And yet he tells us that as he came to be fifty years of age he was so dissatisfied with his life that he found it difficult to keep ideas of suicide out of his mind. He tells us that there was a rope lying about the house and he hid it away in the closet so that he might not see it and be tempted to use it. He was a great sportsman, very fond of shooting. He gave up shooting altogether, for fear that some day, in a fit of the blues, he might be tempted to blow out his own brains. Now, of course, that, we will all admit and agree, was a most abnormal and unhealthy and im- proper frame of mind for a man to be in. I certainly have not a word to say in its favor. And yet I am inclined to think that the state of mind of a man or a woman who reaches the age of fifty years without any working theory of life, without any dea of what he is living for, without any idea of what he is coming to, who does not give any attention to those subjects, who loses himself in the business or the amusement of the day,—I am not sure that the state of mind of such a man or such a woman is not really more abnormal and unhealthy than Tolstoy's was. And we must remember that Tolstoy did not give way to these temptations. He was not a coward. Suicide is the act of a coward. He determined to grapple with these great questions and for the space of five long years he grappled with them until, to his own satisfaction at any rate, he succeeded in overcoming them. I do not know whether you have noticed, but in all the great biographies, in all the great histories, you will find that the men who have been fitted to become leaders of their fellow men have been for a time led out to be tempted in the wilderness; to grapple with the great questions of life and death; to determine for themselves whether they are strong enough to answer them; that then they come back and give a message to the world. It seems to me that Tolstoy is one of those men and that this great struggle of his during the five years, of which I can only give you a very brief outline, shows that he is fitted to rank among those great historical characters.

The first thing he did was to apply himself to the members of his own circle of society. He went to the religious people in his own circle, and he tells us that there were very few of them; he tried to find out what their ideas were; he did not care so much about their dogmatic beliefs, but with that dramatic and practical turn of mind of his he wanted to find out from them what their idea of a Christian life was, and as he came into their answers it seemed to him that they were deceiving themselves. They talked a great deal about love for God and love for their neighbor but he couldn't see that they lived in their outward lives differently from anybody else, and he got no lasting satisfaction there. Then he begun to study the scientific works of the day,—Spencer and Huxley, and the German philosophers, and particularly the new biological school, as it was at that time, the scientific learning of the day. He found it all very interesting, but it seemed to him that the scientific people were beginning at the very wrong end; that they tried to get hold of life as far away from themselves as they could; if they could find it in a germ or microbe or protoplasm, then they were perfectly satisfied, but the life in their own souls they knew nothing about, had no advice

to give with reference to it, and he got no satisfaction at all. He determined to go out into the country and see what he could learn from the peasantry. He had always been very fond of the peasants. As a boy he had been brought up in the country in that strange patriarchal life of the old Russian nobility, and he had associated with the peasant children as a child; he had become acquainted with them again when he attempted to teach them after the emancipation of the serfs. Now he went back to them again, and it seemed to him that they had in their lives some kind of a practical answer to the question that he was putting. They worked very hard from morning to night; they did all the hard work of the Russian Empire; and yet they seemed to be more or less contented. One thing that struck him more than anything else was that they were not afraid of disease and death. In his own circle of society, even the most religious people, who talked about going to heaven when they died, the moment they got a serious symptom of any kind would travel all over the face of the earth to postpone their death and send for all the great doctors that were within reach and that could be obtained. To his surprise the peasants, when death came, seemed to think it was a natural thing. There was no rebellion against it. That seemed to him a very significant fact. He concluded that there was a kind of faith that the peasants had that the people of his own class of society did not have. He made up his mind to try to find out what that faith was. He began to go regularly to the little church, which was pointed out to me, near his home in the country,—one of those curious white stucco churches, with green cupolas,—you will find these in pictures of Russia. He had not been accustomed to attend church for many, many years before. He went regularly to that church for many months. There was a great deal of the services that he could not approve of; there were a great many of the professed beliefs of that church that he could not accept, but he was so anxious to find out what the peasants' faith was that he stuck to it as long as he could, and it shows you the practical character of the man's mind that the thing which finally turned him away from the church was not any difficulty with its dogmas, but was a practical mistake, as it seemed to him. The war had just broken out between Russia and Turkey. Tolstoy went to church. In the first part of the service the priest would read that we ought to love our enemies and do good to those that persecute us, and so on, and then, at the end of the service, there was a prayer offered by order of the Russian Synod asking God to help the Russian armies to blow up the Turks with bombshells; or words to that effect. It seemed to Tolstoy such a totally inconsistent thing that it shocked him. From the very day that that prayer was said the first time he gave up going to that church. It seemed to him that a church which taught such inconsistent things must have something radically wrong in it.

Now, what was he he todo? He was not baffled yet. He began to study the Gospels for himself. It is almost pathetic to see the earnestness with which he went into that work. He began to study Greek again so that he might go into the originals. He made a complete commentary of the Gospels from one end to the other; an English translation of some of that has been published. I have two volumes. You have the Greek text on one side, the translation

in English on the other. Of course, it was in Russian, in the original, and then a complete commentary underneath by Tolstoy. Now, I must admit that even with the little knowledge of Greek that I have I could see that it was by no means a learned commentary. There were some little defects in Tolstoy's method, but whenever he came across a verse that he did not like, he left it out,—a very simple method. I wonder commentators have not thought before of applying it;—entirely satisfactory to the commentator, at any rate. But even when you allow for such high-handed proceedings as that, it seems to me that that commentary of Tolstoy's is one of the best that I have ever looked at, and for that very reason, that he has this dramatic talent that I have been talking to you about. When Tolstoy reads the Gospels he thinks it over; he sees how Jesus said this and the Disciples said that and the whole thing is present before him as if it had happened today, in the streets in Buffalo and New York, for he seems to get the common sense meaning of it in a way that the most learned men have failed to get it, and this study of the Gospels led Tolstoy to a study of the Sermon on the Mount. He began to confine his attention to that. He read it over and over again, and every time those passages, those familiar passages which speak of loving our enemies, loving those who persecute us, loving our neighbor, loving God with all our heart and soul, loving everybody, letting our influence go out upon them equally to the good and the bad, as the sunshine, upon the just and upon the unjust,—those always seemed to go deeper into his mind, into his heart, than anything else.

Gradually he began, as he thought, to see what the secret of these Gospels is; that when Christ said we must love God with all our heart and our soul and our neighbor as ourselves, he really meant what he said. "Why," he thought, "I have heard those words read time and again for the last fifty years but it never entered my head before that anybody really meant them," and he began to make the experiment in his own mind of loving everybody more than himself as much as he possibly could, and as he gradually gave himself up to that mental exercise, the whole thing began to seem clear to him. This love for God and love for neighbor, taken as an actual experience and an exercise seemed like a new pair of spectacles with which to look out upon the world. He began to feel the most curious sensations in himself. He tells us that as he began really to let his soul go out in love to others, he began to feel that there was an immortal essence in himself that was not going to die. He had never believed in the immortality of the soul. He tells us that it is quite impossible, although so many books have been written on the subject, to prove the immortality of the soul to anybody, but, he says, "if you let your soul go out in love to others you will feel its immortality, and that is the only way to prove it." He satisfied himself of the immortality of the soul in that way. Now, what was Tolstoy to do? His first impulse was what would have been the impulse, I expect, of any of us under the same circumstances,—to undertake some great charitable work. He rushed into Moscow, where there were so many poor people; he made up his mind to do what he could to establish some great charitable society to collect the superfluous wealth of the rich and to distribute it among the poor. Somehow

or other he found it did not work. He expected the money that he gave to the poor people to unite them together in brotherly love. He found, instead of that, that as soon as he gave a rouble to a man that it seemed to be like a brick wall between them;—no unification, upon the basis of giving and taking, of that kind. By this time he got more ideas in his mind about manual labor—of which I will speak a little more later on—and he had got in the habit of going out into the suburbs of Moscow once or twice a week and sawing wood there for a certain length of time. One day he was walking into town between two wood-sawers, two peasants who had been engaged in sawing wood with him. They came across a beggar,—another one of those little dramatic incidents I have told you about. Each of them put his hand in his pocket, took out a small copper coin and put it into the beggar's hat. That set Tolstoy thinking. He said, "Now, it looks there as if we had done the same thing, but we haven't been doing the same thing at all." That copper coin represented so much labor, an hour or half an hour, or whatever it was, on the part of this peasant. He was giving himself; he was giving his own work. Besides that, he is a very poor man; he needs every penny that he can get; he will have to go without some—not luxury perhaps, some necessity to-night at supper because he has given that coin away; he has not only been giving himself and his own work but he has been depriving himself of something that he would have enjoyed. "Now, what have I been doing? In the first place I don't know whether I have got this coin or not; it is such a small coin it is absolutely of no importance to me one way or the other. Then, where did I get it? Why, let me see. That is a part of the rent that I got for some of my farms down at Yasnaya Polyana. What I have done with that coin is, I have taken it out of the pocket of a peasant in the country and I have put it into the hat of a peasant in the city. That is really all that I have had to do with it," And he began to see, according to his own ideas, at any rate, that charity, when it was based upon the superfluous wealth that comes in the way of unearned income, is not at all the same thing as the charity where a man gives the money that he actually earns himself and needs, and he began to think that this great society that he was going to found would not give the satisfaction that he expected it would, and just about that time he was filled with a feeling of revolt against the kind of life he had been living all his life long,—a life in which he had had every kind of luxury, in which everything had been done for him by others and in which he had done practically nothing for anybody else except writing very interesting and instructive novels but always simply for the benefit of the class that lived in the same way that he did. He had been doing absolutely nothing for the great working class to which he was indebted for so large a part of the things that he had been enjoying. He began to be filled with disgust for the fashionable life of Moscow, for the club life, for the social and the church life and all the rest of it, and he began from that time, not with any idea of theatrical effect, but because he could not help it, to dress as the peasants dressed; to go down into the country and live there as simply as he could; to get along without the luxuries for which he did not feel that he was giving a full return to society, and to remove all those differences which drew the line between him and the humble members of society in which he lived.

Now, in considering Tolstoy's behavior I think we ought to take into account the peculiarity of the Russian character. I believe that from my knowledge of Russians, which has not been obtained from the Russian language at all—I don't read a word of Russian—but from reading translations of Russian books, and from those that I have met, they are the most absolutely logical people that ever lived. You persuade a Russian that autocracy is a bad thing, fully persuade him, and you will probably find him before night trying to blow up the Czar. You persuade him that riches are a bad thing and the chances are you will find him around the corner before very long with his pockets inside out, giving away his last penny to the beggars in the street. Now, of course, that is not our way of behaving. We sometimes get new ideas into our minds. We are generally pretty cautious about them. We think them over for twenty or thirty or forty years and generally the ideas last longer than we do. You remember the story of the Irishman with the parrot. He had been told that parrots lived to be two hundred years old, so he bought a young parrot, to see whether it was true or not. That is often the way with us, with our new ideas, and generally we do not live long enough to find out. Now, there are advantages in both of those methods. The logic of the Russian is a very fine thing and the caution of the American and the European is, also, a very fine thing in its way. I suppose perhaps a medium between the two would be the best thing of all. But when we judge Tolstoy and say that he has gone too far, in this or that or the other thing, we must remember that he has that logical characteristic of the Russians and when he has once made up his mind for himself that a certain course of action is the proper course, he goes ahead and performs it, no matter what the results may be.

And now let us take up one or two of these peculiarities of his and see whether they are really so very peculiar after all. Take this matter of manual labor. It looks very funny for a man like Tolstoy to dress like a peasant and go out in the fields and plough and yet which is the desirable thing in the civilization, is it the production of all-round men, or merely the production of merchandise? Are we not making a far greater mistake, on the other hand? Are we not beginning to think that the real measure of civilization is the number of bicycles, automobiles, jimcracks of all kinds that we can turn out in a given period of time, no matter what effect the manufacture of them may have upon human beings? I do not believe men were made to spend ten hours a day in a factory making one very small and unimportant part of some object of use. I do not believe it. To come to our own class of society; I do not believe that men were made to spend the greater part of their lives scribbling at desks in offices. I do not believe they were made for any such kind of work as that. That is to say, I do not believe they were made to have that as their sole work. And I think that when Tolstoy says that it is ridiculous to think that one part of the human race should have all their muscles developed and let their minds atrophy and that another part should have their minds developed till you have the typical German professor,

ith nothing left except a beard and eye-glasses, with no chest, no health, nothing whatever but brains—it seems to me that the thing becomes a reductio ad

absurdum and that the very desirable division of labor is really at least run into the ground. It seems to me that although Tolstoy very likely does go too far in the other way, that he is teaching mankind a lesson that mankind really ought to learn; that when we go knocking golf balls about, playing tennis, lifting up iron weights and doing all sorts of things very often for the purpose of supplying that exercise which a healthy all-round life would supply of itself, that we are just proving to our own satisfaction, if we would only pay attention to our own behavior, that the kind of life which we lead is not the kind of life which a man ought to lead. I do believe if we are going to have anything in the nature of a Utopian life upon this world that every human being will be called upon to develop his arms and his legs and his brains, all three together. And I fail to see anything pertinent or suggesting lunacy in a man like Count Tolstoy, when he tries as hard as he can to give an example, you may say,—a very poor and lame example, I admit,—but an example of what he thinks the life of a human being ought to be. I know we are accustomed to think that our civilization is a kind of finality. I don't believe it is. No kind of civilization ever was. I am inclined to think that most of us, if we should ask ourselves, would think that things are going on as they are forever. Cities are going on and getting bigger and bigger and bigger, we think; lunatic asylums are going on and getting bigger and bigger and bigger, the number of lunatic asylums to the thousand increasing; prisons are going on, getting bigger and bigger, electrocution chairs are going to spread to all places all over the country; the number of tramps is going to get bigger, our millionaires are going to get bigger and we are going to have more of them; our slums are going to get worse and worse; I think that is the idea the average man has today. I was looking, at Niagara Falls, at the immense mills turning our forests into pulp,—and a good deal of it was lying about the streets of Niagara Falls when I was there,—that is really our idea of civilization,—and there is going to be more smoke in engines and more rushing up and down in trolley cars and up and down in elevators until the whole thing flies to pieces. I don't believe it. It is a mere episode.

I admire the energy. Energy is a magnificent thing. God forbid that it is always going to be devoted to the ends that it is now devoted to, and God forbid, and I don't believe it is going to be devoted to it, and if you study history you will find that it won't. Now, take this matter of education. I remember some years ago going into the University of El-Azhar in Cairo; there were a number of teachers sitting around the floor, and students, cross-legged, and they had some writing in their hands going "Wow-wow-wow" in this way, and I thought what a lot of consummate idiots they were. They had been studying the Quran for a number of years,—and it is a book, from my own knowledge, that is absolutely unworthy of study, and I thought "they'll never get a step farther," and I thought "what idiots they are—why are you not wise like me?" Then I began to think about myself. I spent eight years of my life studying two dead languages and when I had finished I couldn't read, write or speak either one of them. You know that is true. That is what our education amounts to. The monks of the middle ages have got most of our education. They have got their dead hand on it today as

much as they always had. I have a boy of thirteen; I help him a good deal in his lessons; but the one thing I try to impress on him most is that most of the stuff that he is learning is rubbish—and he is rather inclined to agree with me, too. Now, we have got an idea in our heads that learning languages is education—a perfectly idiotic idea. If you have lived in a city as I have, Alexandria in Egypt—which is a very polyglot city; everybody born there in the Levantine or foreign society knows about eleven languages just as well as their own; and they are the most uneducated people you ever met in your life. The knowledge of language has nothing to do with education. And I include in that the knowledge of your own language. Take spelling, for instance. We generally think a man is uneducated if he does not spell well. I would like to bet any man here present that it is much more essential to spell most English words wrong than it is right. The school boy who spells "dead" d-e-d is a much more sensible animal than you or I who spell it d-e-a-d. You cannot deny that. Yet our children spend hours learning such nonsense as that. Take grammar. What a purely artificial thing grammar is. The object of grammar is to convey your ideas. The man who says "them things" will convey his idea just as well as the man who says "these things." Perhaps, in a hundred years from now, "them things" will be right and "these things" will be wrong. I do not object to learning grammar, but I object to the thought that it constitutes an essential element in education. Where I live, at Dutchess County, I have a superintendent on my farm who cannot spell straight, cannot talk correct grammar, but he can do pretty much everything else under the sun. He can build a house, he can lay a wall, go through an orchard, look at the trees and tell you how many barrels to get for your apples; he knows the price of everything; he can tend to sheep or cattle or horses when they are sick; he knows what you ought to do for them; he knows what feed they require; he knows when to plant this, how it grows, and when to reap it. Those are things worth knowing. They have something to do with nature and with actual life, and I often think, I sometimes think, I will tell him when I see him mending a mowing machine, "My dear fellow, you're a thousand times better educated than I can ever dream of being." I have never said it, but I believe I shall. But that is the way I feel towards that man. I think our ideas have got to be overhauled in very much the same way that Tolstoy thinks they should be taught. He thinks that children should be taught to love their neighbors as themselves and then try to be useful to their neighbors. And I think if you carry that out you will see it covers pretty much the whole field of activity. Now take the matter of caste. My time is pretty near up, but I want to say a few words about that. Take the matter of caste, rank, standing in the community, which Tolstoy wants to throw overboard in his own case at any rate. The idea of any kind of pride being based upon one man lifting himself above his fellow men is a scientifically incorrect idea. You cannot lift water above its own level. If I raise myself or think or estimate myself above my fellow men I must push them down just to the degree I raise myself. If I am a constituent part of the human race, any idea of mine to raise myself, estimate myself in value as being superior to them, is really degrading all the rest of the human race if it is raising me at all. It is a total misconception of the real human pride. This whole idea of

"superior" persons I believe a thoroughly rotten, poisonous idea that we have got to get out of our minds; not that there are not superior persons, but that they are not generally the people who think they are superior persons. There is a pride, a pride of democracy, that I think most of us have very little idea of,—the pride by which a man feels that he is an elemental part not only of the human race, but of the universe, that he is a little microcosm of himself, that he is a brother not only of the king and the emperor, but of the tramp and the prostitute and that there is a little of everything in him and that the whole human race belongs to him and that he represents the whole human race. That is real pride. I believe there was some such idea of pride in the minds of the men who founded our republic and I believe we have got to keep true to that idea of pride if we are going to make this great democracy of ours a success and that we must resolutely resist the temptation to look upon ourselves as superior people who are to hand down benefits to the people who happen to be beneath us. Things do not grow from up down, they grow from down up. History shows that again and again and again.

Then this matter—there are two or three other points I might go into; I haven't got time—this matter of wealth. (Cries of "Go on!" "Go on!"). This matter of wealth I think is a thing that has got to be left to everybody's individual conscience, but I think it is a very good practice for any one of us to think over our own sources of wealth, whatever they may be; to think how far we are earning our own living; to think how far we are living on other people's earnings; we may perhaps be taking away from them that which they ought to have. I believe it is a salutary thing to think in that way; to think with reference to our own earnings, whether those earnings have been received for any real useful work to the community, and when I say community I mean not only to the wealthy, superior people of our own class but to the whole community, the community as a whole. And I think it is a salutary thing for us to think of the vast number of people who raise our food for us and our clothing and build our houses for us, and I do not think we ought to take it as a matter of course that whenever we want anything it has got to be ready and supplied. We ought to think about the processes by which those things come about and we ought to think whether it is not our duty to take a part—I do not say we are not doing it, but I expect a great many of us are not; I know I am not;—that we ought to take a part in supplying those things which are necessary for the life of mankind in this great question of land, and that alone we could spend a whole evening upon. Tolstoy thinks that either God or Nature, which ever way you please to put it, has supplied the human race with a globe to live on, and he thinks for one-tenth of the human race to charge the other nine-tenths rent for staying on that globe is an indefensible proceeding. I have never heard an argument raised on the other side and I do not think anybody agrees with Tolstoy except a few cranks like myself. I think that is a matter worth thinking about. I am not here in favor of any specific reform. Moses made an attempt to try to give every citizen of Israel a stake in the land. I think we have got to do something of the same kind if we want to have our legislation as just as the legislation of Moses was.

Then, to come to the last point of Tolstoy's, this matter of war. I feel pretty strongly on that subject, as on a good many others, as you have seen, but it does not seem to me that there is very much room for argument there. The idea, at the end of the nineteenth century, that people should suppose that it can in any way assist the righteous settlement of a question to have the people who happen to be on the other side try to cut each other's throats and blow each other up with bombshells! It is just as ridiculous and silly as those old tests we used to have a hundred years ago,—making people walk across red-hot irons, making them go through the fire or under water, to see whether they were injured or not, for the purpose of finding out whether they were on the right or wrong side of some controversy. I tell you, my friends, here at the beginning of the twentieth century we ought to have discovered some other way of settling our disputes than by fighting and taking each other's lives, and I believe with Tolstoy that the right way to stop war is to stop making war,—a simple method that I do not suppose anybody will adopt, but it seems to me the right way and the sensible one, and I do not think once in a thousand years we will have to submit to any injustice if we undertake to submit to that simple way of putting an end to,war. How does Tolstoy himself carry out these ideas? I admit, and I am sure he would be one of the first to admit, that he does it very imperfectly. In some ways I think he has done it very injudiciously. His house there at Yasnaya Polyana he has stripped of every kind of luxury. As I remember there was not a single mat on the floor; the service at the table was much simpler and plainer than I have ever seen in many a tenement house in New York. To be sure, his wife was not in the country when I was there; she was in the city; one or two of his daughters were there. Madam Tolstoy, to a considerable extent, has her own way. You must remember Tolstoy is a non- resistant, and that works very well in the domestic situation. (Laughter). Madam Tolstoy goes a good way with him, but when she puts her foot down, why he immediately yields. I do not know but it would be a very good thing to introduce into this country in the matter of marriages, always to have one of the parties a non-resistant. My own impression is that usually it would be the husband, so far as my own experience goes and as the experience of the Tolstoy household goes. (Laughter). At any rate, that is the way it works there. It seems to me that Tolstoy lacks a little, strange to say, of the exterior artistic sense. He certainly has it in literature; nobody can question that. He has become so disgusted with the life of the fashionable class that he belonged to that he cannot bear to have about him any of those refinements of life that we are accustomed to associate with agreeable living. It seems to me there he has gone a great deal too far. If he could have combined his ideas somewhat with those of William Morris, for instance; if he could have endeavored to show the village people about him now they could make their surroundings artistic, and yet in a cheap and simple way, it might perhaps have been a better thing. And yet I cannot be sorry that to this extent he is a one-sided man. You really need a one-sided man to be of very much use in this world. It seems to me that Tolstoy is a direct successor of the Prophets of old—the men who, in old times, would go about in sack-cloth and ashes crying upon the people to repent. It seems to me that, without any intention on his

part, that very dramatic instinct of his has made him a sort of a representation before men to attract their attention to the evils of the civilization they live in. All his books cannot have the influence that the knowledge has that there is one man there trying seriously, pathetically, to live what he thinks the life of a human being should be; that even where he fails and even where there is an element of sadness in admitting that he has failed, it is all the more a picture to draw our attention to him, to make us think what our own position is. And yet, though it is a dramatic picture of that kind, I do not want to leave the impression in your minds that he is in the slightest degree theatrical. He is a man who does not think in the least about what people think about him. I have often contrasted him in my mind with Victor Hugo, whose ideas were very much the same at Tolstoy's. Read "Les Miserables" and you will find in it again and again Tolstoy's ideas, in almost Tolstoy's words, and yet Victor Hugo had that element of the theatrical in him. Victor Hugo had all that love for his fellow men and especially for the French peasant. You may remember in that great funeral that Hugo had in Paris, he left special instructions in his will that he should be buried in a pauper's coffin, but he had the good sense to know that if he had tried to dress like a pauper during his life that he could not have carried it out; there always would have been the eye for the gallery, and he very wisely postponed it until after his death. Now, Tolstoy is a sort of a Hugo without that theatrical sense of playing to the gallery, absolutely devoid of it. Those things that he has done he has done because he cannot help it.

Now, in conclusion, I want to tell you just one little story—it will take me about three minutes and then I will be done—to show how Tolstoy carries out his non-resistant ideas in his own family. I spent a couple of days at his country house in 1894. There was a very interesting Swiss governess there. Of course, she was a concession to Madam Tolstoy. Iam quite sure Tolstoy does not approve of governesses. But she was there at any rate for the benefit of the younger children, and I had some very interesting talks with her, because of course I could ask her questions where I could not very well question members of the family—and she told me this story: Just two or three days before I arrived there his little daughter, who was then ten years old, had been out playing in front of the house with a village boy from the neighboring village; they got to quarreling about something or other; the boy had taken up a stick and given her a hard hit on the arm with it, so that her arm was quite black-and-blue. The little girl ran into the house crying. Evidently she had not read any of her father's books, because she rushed up to him and she said, "Papa, this naughty boy has hit me on the arm. Do come out and give him a whipping!" The governess, hearing what was going on listened to see how Tolstoy would take this very natural demand. He took the little girl on his lap. "Why," he said, "my dear, what good would it do if I went and whipped that boy? Your arm would hurt you just as much." "Yes," "yes,"—and she, as a little girl would, went on crying. "He's a naughty boy and you ought to whip him." "Why," he said, "my dear, what did that boy hit you for? He hit you because he was angry at you. That means that for a few moments there he hated you. Now, don't you think that

we ought to try to make him stop hating? If I go out there and give him a whipping he'll not only hate you but he'll hate me too and he may get into such a habit of hating that he may go on hating all the rest of his life. Now don't you think it will be a very much better thing if we can do something which will make him love us instead of hate us? Perhaps it will change that boy's character all the rest of his life." By that time the little girl's arm did not hurt her very much and she began to be rather amused; she wondered what her father was going to say; she was very fond of her father and wanted to please him. Well, he soothed her a little longer. He said, "Now I'll tell you what I'd do if I were you. That raspberry jam in the pantry there which we had for tea last night, if I were you I'd go and get a saucer and a spoon and some of that jam and take it out to that small boy. I'm inclined to think he'll begin to love us then and I think he would never think of such a thing as hitting a little girl again." Well, the little girl went. I do not know what her motives were. We will have to guess at it. The governess told me the story just a couple of days after she went to the country. She got the jam in a saucer and spoon and she took it out to the little boy. I am very sorry that all the rest I know of that story is that the boy ate the jam. I have never heard what his future history was. He may have committed all the crimes in the decalogue since that time. And I only tell the story as an example of Tolstoy's method at home. But I have often thought over that story. I know people have different opinions about it. I told it once to an audience down in New Jersey and an old man got up in the back of the house—they had a discussion afterwards—and said, "Mr. Crosby, I know what that boy would do," and I said "What?" "Why," he said, "he'd come up next day and hit her on the other arm." (Laughter). I have not found out to this day whether that old gentleman was in earnest or not, but I am quite sure he was mistaken. It seems to me that Tolstoy's argument there is perfectly sound. It is likely it would be impossible to turn that boy into a good boy; I am not sure; but I believe Tolstoy's way of going at him was the only possible way of really making a good boy out of him. You can imagine that boy, after he got the whipping,—probably he knew he deserved it, but he would have gone down cursing and swearing to himself at the whole Tolstoy family. I believe he would have got more or less of a habit of hating people. Then if you try to imagine his feelings on the other hand, when the door opened and this little girl came out with the raspberry jam, his resistance of his rising feelings of resentment, then when you think what a rare thing perhaps it was to a little peasant boy, how he could not resist the temptation, and in what a shame-faced way he must have come forward and gulped it down, and how he must have gone down to his house convinced that those people up there on the hill were a great deal better than he was and if he was ever going to be a good man he must behave a little more in the way that they did, it seems to me that Tolstoy there did right, and it opens up a very broad question of ethics and penology which I will leave with you.

After remarks by Mr. Taylor, Mr. Elmendorf, Mr. Larned, Mr. O'Brian,

Mr. Detmers, Rabbi Aaron and Mr. Monroe, the discussion was concluded by Mr. Crosby as follows:

I think almost all the points that have been made by gentlemen this evening are more or less well taken. I am very far from regarding Tolstoy as perfect and I know perfectly well that he is very far from regarding himself as such. My own view of what Tolstoy has done is this: he has taken that part of the Bible which appealed to his deepest self—and I am inclined to think that that is the only part of the Bible or any other book that any of us have any business to take—he has taken the part which appealed to his deepest self and that was the part which Christ said was the summing-up of the law and the prophets. So, certainly Tolstoy does not think that that is an invention of Christ's; he knows that it comes from the law and the prophets that you should love God with all your heart and your soul and your strength, and your neighbor as yourself. When Tolstoy began to take that thought seriously it seemed to open a new world to him, and I am inclined to think that any man, woman or child who, for the first time, takes that thought seriously, will find that it will have very much the same kind of influence upon him, simply because it is the truth, not because anybody in particular said it; and the effect that it has had upon Tolstoy I have already dwelt on to a certain degree. It has had the effect of convincing him of the immortality of his own soul, but it has had the still further effect, as is shown very beautifully in a book that has just been published by the Crowells, called "Miscellan-ies," I think, "of Tolstoy." There is one section of that, of twenty or thirty pages, which considers his thoughts upon God. Tolstoy used to be a complete agnostic; he did not believe in the existence of God at all; and yet, as you read those twenty or thirty pages, you begin to feel that he is what they used to call a god-intoxicated man; as much so as the Psalmist. Some of his writings in those Miscellanies are more like the Psalms than anything I have read since. They have convinced Tolstoy of the existence of a God who is in touch with his own soul and who is providentially arranging the affairs of this world, and the pessimism which Tolstoy was overwhelmed with has ended in the optimistic outlook. The gentleman on my right was perfectly correct in saying that in "War and Peace" the opinions of André were pessimistic, but that book was written long before Tolstoy had passed through the crisis of his own life. Now, the value of Tolstoy to civilization today seems to be this: that taking, in this intense sense, the desire to let his life go out in love to everything outside of him, he has brought that principle as a test for the institutions of the world as they are, and almost in every instance he has found that those institutions fail lamentably. Tolstoy never advises the overthrowing of those institutions; he would not lift his hand to overthrow them; but, he says, "When I think a thing is wrong I can't do it. I think war is wrong. I can't serve in the army. I think condemning men to death or prison is wrong. I can't act as a judge. There are other things of that kind that I cannot do. I do not call upon you to follow my example until you have adopted my opinion,"—and that brings in this whole question of non-resistance. I do not go as far as Tolstoy has in that, yet I believe at bottom he is right. I believe that most of the ills of the world are caused by

the use of force by sane men against sane men. There certainly is a point where a man is a lunatic, where he is in a delirium—as in the case of animals or a mad dog,—where it seems foolish to deny that force is a good thing to use. I am not at all quite clear as to whether Tolstoy would agree with me as to that. But when it comes to the management of sane people who can be reached by argument, I am fully of Tolstoy's belief that there are more crime and violence in the world today because we try to use force to stop them than there would be if we did not try to use it. But Tolstoy does not even take that ground. He comes back again. He is the chief novelist of the day, as I think, someone has said here this evening. He only argues what is right for him. He says, "I want to love everybody. I do, to the best of my ability, I do love everybody, and when I love a man it is impossible for me, I cannot bring myself up to using violence against him. It is as impossible for me to put a bayonet into an enemy of my country as it would be for me to skin a baby,"—and I expect most of us here have got far enough along in civilization to refuse to skin a baby,even if it were to save five million lives. That is the way Tolstoy feels about a bayonet charge; that is the way he feels about hanging a man; that is the way he feels about using force around him in any shape. That is a very big question. He has written volume upon volume on the question. It is impossible to go into it tonight but I confess at the bottom of my soul I have very much that same feeling. If I really love a man in all my heart I cannot find it in my heart to use violence against him. It seems to me the wonderful thing about the history of Jesus is that it shows he felt that way. There is just that one incident about the money-changers in the temple, on the other side, and it seems to me it has done a great deal more service in the history of biblical criticism than it was calculated to do. If you read the account in St. John it simply shows that he used the ordinary whip of the country for the purpose of driving the cattle out of the temple and that he upset a certain number of tables. There is absolutely no proof of any kind and I do not believe it for a moment, that Jesus ever struck one of the men there with the whip and if he used it even for the cattle, I should say it was merely as a matter of form and as the ordinary way of driving. When we come down there to the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane where Peter cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Christ tells him to put back the sword into the sheath, not on account of the individual peculiarities of that special occasion, but on the broad general principle that they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Peter was not only acting in self-defense, he was acting in the far nobler character of a man who was defending his best beloved friend, and Christ rebukes him, laying down the broadest principle. Like almost all—like all, I should say, of the sayings of Christ, it is founded on the deep philosophical truth; if you take up the sword you will perish by the sword; that is, if you exert violence, you are going to create violence in the future. We have been living here on the earth I don't know how many thousands of years, each of us with his own ideas, each of us with his own desires of what he wants done and each of us determined in one way or another to force people to do what he wants. Tolstoy says we are taking the wrong method. If you love other people, you would say that you are taking the wrong method. Let us stop the violence

which causes all these evils, and the best way for you and me to do it is to refrain from it and the little crime that will result from it will be far less than the crimes that are committed every day in the year. It does seem to me that that is a luminous thought. I do not expect everybody to accept it, but there is something in every man's heart that responds to that. It is a fact we are far too apt to rely upon force and violence as a means of attaining our ends; that sometimes it might be a good thing for us to forego the ends we have set our hearts upon if by so doing we could decrease the violence that exists in the world today. I believe that is a message that is worth preaching; I believe it is a message that is worth preaching outside of the boundaries of Russia; I believe that the great value of Tolstoy in preaching it has been the fact that he has done it with such sincerity that nobody can question his intention. He may be inconsistent in some small matters. They are such small matters that they are hardly worth talking about. Now, as to this matter of sanity, and I have done. I do not believe it is possible for a man to be ahead of the times to any degree without lacking a little in sanity. It is impossible. It is an abnormal position for a man to be in. And yet those are the men that are necessary to the world. We all remember that Christ's own family thought he was beside himself. That has been the criticism upon all men who have been ahead of their times. I believe it to a certain degree in the case of Tolstoy. It is a just criticism. He does these things too much from his own point of view. He criticises existing conditions a little too much without the sense of historical perspective, but I think that just for that reason his usefulness is increased; makes us criticise the institutions of the time, just as the abolitionists fifty years ago did their noble work in making us criticise the institutions of those times. Every age has had its barbarisms, and it is a strange thing that in every succeeding age people think they have got rid of all the barbarisms that there are. Slavery was a barbarism fifty years ago; hanging men and boys too, for stealing a shilling, was a barbarism fifty years before that; examining witnesses by torture was a barbarism fifty years before that; burning criminals at the stake was a barbarism, imprisonment for debt was a barbarism. But here we are in the year 1900 and you wish me to believe there are no barbarisms now, when the lesson of history is that there are always barbarisms, and you have got to have men like Tolstoy on ahead to show you what they are,—and one of them has been referred to this evening by Mr. Larned, and that is the barbarism of war, one of the most self-evident of all, and if we apply this same test of Tolstoy, love,—love your enemies,—to the question of war, I am inclined to think that the whole thing will melt away. I have never been in a position where I have had to wage war on anybody. I do not believe any of you ever have been, and I do not believe by reading the newspapers and hearing what people are doing ten thousand miles away that we can find out, to our advantage, that there is any danger of anybody waging war upon us. The things that cause the war are our armaments, the things that we are going to build now on this coast and on the Pacific coast, the ships,—are the things that are going to bring about war, and if we had no navy or army at all I believe we should have more influence in the world for the next hundred years than we are going to have with our army, and with our navy, and I am

perfectly sure that there is no nation on the face of the earth that will ever pick a quarrel with us. Those are my sentiments and beliefs. Of course, I do not expect many to agree with me but I do believe that Tolstoy, even if he lacks sanity, even if he does overdo things a little, is, by that very thing, doing a favor to the world, and by giving a dramatic expression to his criticism of institutions as they are, he is making us think in a way in which we all ought to think.