He now exchanged the offensive for the defensive. Shot and shell fell like hailstones on the bastions of Sebastopol. Courage, fortitude, presence of mind were at every moment demanded, while assault followed assault, until at last the overwhelming strength of the allies compelled the Russians to retreat. Through­out that trying time Tolstoy cheered his companions, whiling away many a weary hour with jest and story. Amid this “ wrackful siege of battering days ” he wrote those *Tales from Sebastopol* which earned him instant literary celebrity, and caused the emperor Nicholas to issue special orders that he should be removed from a post of danger. An official despatch recount­ing the events of the siege was next written by Tolstoy at the command of his superior officer, and with the charge of this document he was shortly afterwards sent to St Petersburg. He was never again on the field of battle.

Tolstoy returned home with new impressions. Sad at heart and sick of the horrors of war, he came back with a feeling of brotherly love for the common soldiers, whom he had seen day by day doing quiet deeds of courage and devotion, fighting for their country without hope of reward, without fear of death. He contrasted them with the more self-seeking nobles, and felt their supe­riority. The stirring scenes through which he had passed, the simple faith of his men, all had helped to renew his belief in God. Preceded by the fame of his descriptions of Sebastopol and the Caucasus, he arrived in St Petersburg to find himself the object of a general ovation. The *Sovrcmennik (Contem­porary),* in which Tolstoy’s first work, *Childhood,* had appeared, numbered among its contributors the foremost writers of the day. To be admitted to their ranks was considered by them an honour equivalent to the award of a *fauteuil* in the French Academy. They welcomed Tolstoy with open arms, the veteran novelist, Turgeniev, in particular hastening to greet him on his arrival, and begging him to make his house his home. Society was equally eager to open its doors to the young soldier-author. His vivid and dramatic pictures of the war had been widely read and had created a profound sensation. The great official world of St Petersburg proceeded to offer him a brilliant series of entertainments in which he found himself the central figure. It is not surprising that this combined adulation from literary men and society overcame for a time the growing asceticism of his character. Yet it also in a measure hastened its develop­ment. Even while borne swiftly on the current of pleasure, his strenuous nature gradually reasserted itself. In the pages of *My Confession* Tolstoy describes the phases of this mental unrest. The narrowness of a literary clique soon became irk­some to his dominant character. His passionate desire for truth brought him into frequent conflict with those who paid more regard to convention. With Turgeniev especially he found himself constantly at variance. A friendship between natures so diametrically opposite, between two men who might be described as leaders respectively of the old and the new school of thought, could not long subsist. Mutual admiration does not imply sympathy. Turgeniev presently wrote to a friend, “ I regret I cannot draw nearer to Tolstoy, our views are so opposed, the one to the other.” And these differences of opinion gradually led to a complete estrangement. On the other hand, in Fet, the poet, he found a lifelong friend. Others of his inti­mates were Nekrassov, the editor of the *Contemporary,* already mentioned; Katkov, the celebrated journalist; Droushinine, Grigorovitch, Fet, and Ostrovski, the dramatist.

While Tolstoy was thus waking to a sense of distaste for his environment, a great event was pending. With the accession of Alexander II. in 1855 a wave of progressive policy —set in motion by the tsar himself—stirred the bureaucratic circles of Russia, and while fiercely resisted by some of the nobility, met generally with cordial encouragement. The emancipation of the serfs became the burning question. “ The People ! ” and “ Progress I ” were the cries quickly caught up by the press of Russia and of Germany also. It was in Germany, indeed, that the novel of humble life sprang into being, Gotthelf leading the way with his tales, *Uli the Serf* and *Uli the Tenant.* Auerbach followed with his village stories, which opened a new world of thought; Stifter and a host of others brought up the rear. This new impulse in literature soon spread to Russia. Turgeniev in his *Sportsman’s Talcs,* Grigorovitch in *The Village* and *Anton Goremika,* showed their sympathy with the moujik. But above all others, Tolstoy was most deeply and lastingly affected. Awakened by this echo from without of his own inmost yearnings, he realized at last the true bent of his mind. “ The People ” became his watchword. One increasing purpose henceforth ruled his life, and gradually brought into harmony the inequalities and con­tradictions of his character. Roused from the inertia which had been caused by nerves and hypochondria, he wrote *Polikoushka,* a painful story dealing with the ills of serfdom. His active brain then turned to considering the meaning and scope of the catchword “ Progress,” and fully to do this he determined to go abroad and study the educational and municipal systems of other countries. He finally started for Germany in January 1857.

Tolstoy only three times crossed the Russian frontier, and these journeys were all between 1857 and 1861. On his first trip, Germany and Italy were hurriedly visited. He also made a short stay in Paris, which had attrac­tions for him in the society of several Russian friends, among whom were Nekrassov and Turgeniev. With the latter he had not yet come to open rupture. From Paris he went to Lucerne. An incident which occurred there, and is reproduced in his semi-autobiographical *Lucerne,* shows the workings of his spirit. He tells how a wandering musician stood one day in the hotel courtyard, and after his performance asked in vain for alms from the convivial crowd assembled. Tolstoy, in the person of the hero, then indignantly came to the rescue, brought the poor minstrel into the hotel, and, moved to wrath with the churlish waiters who were unwilling to serve him, ordered a private room where he himself supplied his guest’s wants, and sent him away happy with a double lining to his pockets. Of his successive journeys westwards, the third alone was of long duration and of corresponding importance in its results. Prior to this last visit to foreign parts, his time was spent between Yasnaya Polyana and Moscow, often in the company of his friend Fet. On a bear-hunt together, Tolstoy narrowly escaped death, an incident which he graphically describes in his *Fourth Reading-book for Children* (20th ed., 1900, &c.). Fet also mentions it in his *Reminiscences.* His departure was finally hastened by the serious illness of his brother Nicholas, who had gone to France to recruit his failing health. Tolstoy, after halt­ing in Berlin and Dresden, joined him, but only to endure the grief of witnessing his end. Nicholas died on the 20th of Sep­tember 1860, and Tolstoy’s letters of that period show how deeply he was affected by the death of his brother. It gave a yet more serious turn to his thoughts. In a letter to Fet he reverts to his old trouble, the enigma of life. “ In truth,” he writes, “ the position in which we stand is terrible.” This mental gloom probably still hung over him during his wanderings through Italy. There is no record of his impressions of Rome, Naples, Florence. Turning his footsteps northwards, however, he began to take renewed interest in social conditions, elementary and monastic education, and the general subject of his quest. From Paris (where his friend spoke of him as “ singular indeed, but subdued and kindly”) he went to London in 1861, no noteworthy incident marking his brief visit.

The spring of 1861 found him once more at Yasnaya Polyana, where some little time before he had forestalled the Emancipa­tion Act by freeing all the serfs on that estate. He now began digesting the mass of information he had acquired abroad, eager to put his ideas into practice. The feelings with which he reviewed his expe­riences were largely those of disappointment. Of the edu­cational systems of Italy, France and Germany, that of the last-named country alone earned his partial approval. While there he visited the universities, prisons and working-men’s clubs. He made the acquaintance of Auerbach, and was greatly influenced by his ideas on village schools. He was also much