

IN 'WAR AND PEACE,' Count Tolstoi has spread for us another of those vast historical canvases which remind us of the multitudinous pink-and-gold canvases of Paul Veronese, with all their Babel of color and their Babylon of population. A circle as big as a dollar-disk is enough for Meissonier or for Björnstjerne Björnson : each microscopic detail is wrought in with exquisite delicacy and minuteness : each line within the illuminated periphery is as fine as a hair and as effective as a beauty-spot. But with Tolstoi or Thackeray it is different : they demand great moonlike surfaces on which they play the wonderful fountains of their imagery and experience ; circumferences with multiplying radii converging on a central incident ; canvases crowded with figures, instinct with life and motion ; whole populations and cities—Londons, Moscows, St. Petersburgs—turned loose in their novels : all alive, all ebullient. The Meissonier-like effect—the exquisite fineness of portraiture—is lost : the Chinese whorl-within-whorl, as of some small but flaming Ezekiel-wheel, spreads out into great watery circles with hazy horizons, indistinctness, and a sense of the edges of things rubbed off.

So in 'War and Peace,' an historical novel of the times of Napoleon the Great, with its axis of revolution in the years 1805 to 1807. As usual with Tolstoi, the characters dwell on Olympian heights, like the gods in Schiller's Tantalus-ballad : they are all princes and princesses, counts and countesses, barons and baronesses. For Tolstoi, apparently, plain Misters and Mistresses do not exist : all these appear as Monsieurs and Madames and Mam'selles. Whether this is a fault of the author, or is an imitative reflex from French-loving Russian society, or is due to the translators, we cannot say ; but its effect is that of a very odd affectation, and it is not at all agreeable. The book introduces us to the salon life of the times, and depicts with many realistic touches the terrors and tragedies of the Napoleonic campaigns. Young officers and officials with diamond orders abound ; princesses sit beside samovars and dish out inexhaustible tea ; young people make love in corners ; the plot flits from St. Petersburg to Moscow and from Moscow to the battle-fields ; there is a whirl of conversation, a buzz of gossip, a plague of small creatures nibbling at the plot and jerking this or that *marionnette* : be-

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\* War and Peace: An Historical Novel. By Léon Tolstoi. Tr. from the French by Clara Belj. Part II. 2 vols. \$1.75. New York: W. S. Gottaberger. Paper, 50 cts. New York: Harper's Franklin Square Library.

hind all mighty RUSSIA looming, full of vast cries, of unseen and unheard tragedies, of barbarism and serfdom, of inarticulate and as yet unuttered life, of intellectual potencies and physical suffering. One forgets all the shabby princes and princesses in this overmastering impression : a something in the author greater than he has expressed : a something in the people that transcends any calculus of possibilities yet applied to it.

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