

Tolstoi

By J. Morton

Who feared not Czar nor church's blade
Nor all the banded State's decree,
Was like a war-scarred veteran laid
In open field beneath a tree.
His grave by priestly rite unblessed—
Yet lies he like a saint at rest.

For lesser men cathedral domes
May echo like some murmuring bell;
His dirge is sung in peasant homes,
His altar where the lowly dwell;
His incense is their grateful prayers,
His holy water is their tears.

As Christ of old the orthodox
Pursued in blind and jealous pride,
And left unblest in Syrian rocks
The body of the Crucified,
So still the ruling church will jeer
And crown with thorns the latest Seer.

At Christ of old the Rabbis sneered,
But humble-hearted fishermen
The teaching of their Lord revered—
Became His tongue, His voice, His pen,
To flash to every coming age
The glory of His pilgrimage.

So Tolstoi, in the years to be,
The better hearts your life has made
Will say with your sad peasantry
Your love and goodness cannot fade;
Will greet you as a beacon light
That backward drove the ghosts of night.