

TOLSTOÏ: A LEADER OF MEN.

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TOLSTOÏ.

MEN, according to the author of "Sartor Resartus," can be divided into three great classes: those who consider the eternal inferior to the perishable, the soul to matter; in whom is extinguished the light of moral consciousness; those, and they are in the majority, who, slaves of what is apparent to the senses, yet preserve some confused recollection of the Divine Idea; for whom life is a species of magic-lantern with a succession of ephemeral scenes; who, without ever contemplating nature or interrogating their own souls, pass their brief and irreparable days among conventionalities, pretences, and social hypocrisies; mere human phantoms rather than divine realities: and finally those, very few in number, for whom life is a serious thing, of intense and tragic importance—like a bridge suspended between two eternities; those who suffer and enjoy with a deep consciousness of an invisible Divine Presence, with their thoughts constantly engrossed with duty and their responsibility for their acts to a supreme and infallible Judge. These last are the true salt of the world, and the sole

legitimate leaders of the nations. Prophets, legislators, apostles, kings, captains, philosophers, poets, men of science, artists, inventors, they all resemble each other, despite so great a variety in their purposes and means of reaching those purposes; by their profound feeling of the reality of life; by their hatred of, and war on, everything which is vain, monstrous, equivocal, unsubstantial, and false—things which are called Machiavellism, Jesuitism, parliamentarism, or dilettanteism. Universal history is at bottom naught but biographies of these *herbes*.

Among contemporaneous writers three, very specially, appear to me to belong to this small and sacred band: Carlyle, Browning, and Tolstôï. In these three, as in so many of their predecessors, from Dante to Schiller, from Shakespeare to Burns, from Milton to Shelley, the man and the writer are one and the same thing—their art for them was and is their life.

The author of "War and Peace," was, a few years ago, the writer who was most read and discussed. His readers belonged to all social classes, from the prince to the workingman, from the duchess to the peasant woman. His volumes were sold by the hundred thousand copies, were translated into all languages. Gustave Flaubert said he was comparable to Shakespeare alone; Matthew Arnold declared that he was a writer of the most healthy and robust mind.

All at once, abandoning novel-writing and the literary career, converted, or rather restored, to evangelical doctrines, leading a life of manual labour, of apostleship and charity among the poorest classes, Tolstôï wrote a book to explain the origin and the progress of his conversion—"My Confession"—and another to explain the essential characteristics of his