

TOLSTOI AND IRELAND

Mr. Davitt Visits the Great Russian Novelist—His Views on the War, the Irish Land Question, and Irish Nationalism.

Toula is the capital of the government of that name, and lies about one hundred and fifty miles south-east of Moscow, in the centre of a well-cultivated country. It has four or five large foundries, a vodka distillery, and some other industries, which give employment to the workers of a population of some 20,000 people.

Several trains conveying troops pass through Toula every day, and so accustomed have the residents here become to this traffic that I was the only person on the platform to whom "the military special" was an interesting novelty. The men and horses looked very fit; the animals being under cover and well provided with provender. I was permitted to distribute some cigarettes among the soldiers before the signal for starting was given.

My purpose in coming here from Moscow was to visit Count Tolstol, who resides at Yasnia, beyond the little town of Poliana, a distance of some ten or twelve miles from here. It is a cross-country drive, and this is the nearest railway station at which fast trains stop.

The Russian izvoschek, or driver, seldom used his whip. He has the Russian love of a horse too strong in his nature for any such treatment of the best of all animals. In fact there is no country I have travelled in where domestic animals are more kindly dealt with than in Russia.

Between Poliana and Yasnia, at the edge of a wood, my attention was called to a school attended by about seventy children. The structure was of timber, substantially built, and painted in deep yellow color, with an exercise room in the centre, flanked by a refectory and dormitory.

The pupils were the children of the business community of Toula, and of the better-paid workers of this town. They boarded at this school during two months each summer, combining a most healthy residence in a beautiful situation with continued studies. The majority of the children were girls, averaging an age of ten years, and in noticing their healthy and happy looks it was impossible not to admire the enlightened spirit which had devised this "village-school" life for these little ones.

Parents and friends come out on Sundays and holidays to spend the day with the children at their retreat in the woods, and they turn the visit into an occasion for a family picnic. On my return, in the afternoon, I found some of the boys engaged in fishing at a little river close by, while the girls were wandering about in couples, picking wild flowers and otherwise enjoying themselves in ways which made me wish that in countries less autocratic than this we could have such summer schools away from the centres of factory and other industrial life for the combined recreation and training of children.

Count Tolstol's residence at Yasnia has been described and photographed so often by admiring visitors that its appearance and features are widely known. The house resembles that of a gentleman farmer in Ireland or England, and stands in grounds in keeping with the modest pretensions of the mansion. Hospitality is so general in this country, and is so natural a trait in Russian character, that no ceremony stands in the way of a stranger, and my horses were taken charge of at once, and attended to just as if I had alighted at a country hotel.

I was informed that "the Graf" was out in the woods, with his dogs, enjoying the lovely day, and that if I went along a certain path I would be sure to meet him. In a few moments the illustrious novelist and reformer was met, in his usual simple garb, walking slowly towards the house. He received me very graciously, but had evidently not opened the letters sent on from Moscow, which contained my introductions from friends abroad. He had not learned of my coming, and his first question was: "You are English?"

"Oh, no. I am Irish, not English, in any sense." "But," he added, stopping in his walk, "why do you say that in such a tone? Surely it is a privilege to be English?" "Not in my view, sir. I know nothing in English character, and, certainly, nothing in English methods of Government, that should make me wish to be of that nationality."

All mankind are of one human family, and the higher patriotism exists in that belief and in the actions which ought to sustain it.

Here we were interrupted by two young peasants, who had been waiting near the house to see the Count on some personal business. He greeted them very graciously, and after a few moments rejoined me, and said:

"These young men came to consult me about the war. They say they have an objection to fight, and they want my advice on the matter. They are religious men, and it is on that ground they desired to consult me. I told them that if they really felt in their inmost consciences a repugnance to the shedding of blood in warfare they would be doing right in refusing to go to the front. This, however, would bring severe punishment upon them, and unless they would inflict a greater suffering on their souls by acting contrary to their consciences they would be wise in avoiding this greater penalty by obeying the law and consenting to go."

We entered the house and I was invited to take a cup of coffee in the dining room, where I was introduced to lady relatives. The Count searched for my letters from Moscow, and while thus employed I had an opportunity of studying at very close quarters the man who, probably, possesses a wider circle of readers than any man in the world of literature or politics.

Tolstol is not as large in body as he has generally been represented in pictures, though allowance must be made for the wear and tear of age. I observed that he read his letters without the aid of glasses, notwithstanding his 75 years. He is about five feet ten in height, and very little stooped in the shoulders. The build of the body is strong and athletic and in fine proportion. The head is large, the forehead broad and deep, the eyes deep-set and over-arched with brows which impart strong character to the face.

The eyes are very small, but here again age has asserted its contracting effects, and takes away some of the strength of former years. They are a light blue in color, and possess a keenly penetrating power, which, however, is held in the control of a most kindly and humane nature. They are eyes such as one rarely meets with anywhere—full of faith and devotion to a great ideal; eyes that suggest a kind of daily faith

gone at the hands of the paragon English ruler. All this was manifestly new and unexpected to my illustrious auditor, and the author of "Resurrection" began to comprehend why I was so wanting in racial taste as to decline the intended compliment conveyed in the first greeting. "Ah! All governments are alike in their legal cruelties," he observed, after listening to the recital he had invited.

"Yes, sir, and in most other respects, too. What essential difference is there, for instance, between the rule of the British Empire by some five hundred Englishmen of the autocratic and capitalist orders, for the advantage of a class through the forms but in mockery of the principles of democracy, and a rule by a recognized autocracy in Russia for a somewhat similar end?"

"Well," he said, "my reply is this: There is a better chance of finding a more just and good man among the five hundred than in one man, is there not?"

"Granted. But is there not also the chance of finding 499 per cent. more of qualities that are not honest? It is an open question as to how much, if any, virtue there is in a form of government. The essential thing is the happiness and welfare of the people, and how far these can be promoted or secured under a rule peculiar to or evolved from themselves is more of an experiment to-day than of a fixed doctrine or conviction."

Englishmen boast of their liberties, their free speech, and all the rest. But one out of every three English workmen dies a pauper. A feudal land system, a State Church, and a House of Lords still proclaim the ascendancy of class interests and power.

In India English rule is as autocratic as Russian rule is here, and the source of widespread pauperism and ignorance. In Ireland it is government by officials and Jenationalized Irishmen independent of the people, with discontent and poverty as results. There is no governing democracy in Great Britain. You find it in Canada and in the Australias, where Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotchmen, and others borrowed its principles from the United States, and not from England. The democracy of England is privileged to shoot for freedom, to get drunk, and to die as paupers, but not to govern their own country or to take part in ruling the British Empire."

and against four millions of an unarmed people? "That is, of course, true," he rejoined. "A policy is necessarily opportunistic, if reforms such as these are to be won in that way; but George's doctrine remains morally unassailable all the same. Compensation to any class for the use of what rightly belongs to all is a sanction of the law of force, and a premium upon its application to the working out of injustice. George's doctrine should be affirmed and proclaimed in every European country and in America, for it contains the gospel of the delivery of the people from poverty and discontent."

A reference to the Boer war elicited a strong condemnation of "that great crime." He spoke of the British expedition to Tibet as "another crime," and expressed astonishment that Englishmen should sanction it. "I know many Englishmen, and they impress me very much with their love of freedom and sympathy with oppressed peoples. But acts like this are a disgrace. It is making war on a peaceful people, who are not capable of doing injury to the English. When the war with Japan broke out a New York paper sent me a proposal for thirty words, in which message I was asked to say with which side I sympathized. I replied that my sympathies were with both the Russians and Japanese people, who would be the sufferers, and not with either of the Governments responsible for the war."

It was easy to note in his speech and manner how intensely interested he was in the conflict now proceeding in the Far East, and though the above sentiment voices his opinions as a consistent opponent of wars and of the coercion of autocratic and class laws, his Russian nature must influence his feelings in favor of his own race and country. He rides into Toula frequently to learn the latest news from the front, and the contest between his philosophy and his racial patriotism for the mastery of his views must incline him to wish success for the Russian arms.

This, however, is only my own deduction, and may possibly be erroneous. I cannot conceive a nature so fine as his being turned by any philosophic leanings into siding with the Anglo-Japanese policy which provoked this war against Russia. He has been a Russian soldier in his youth, and he is the greatest living Russian of to-day. He dislikes Russia's gov-

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sentiment of the millions of Irish in the United States. He appeared to be unaware of the extent to which the Celtic race had asserted itself in America. The number of millions of our people in the great Republic as founded him, and on learning how the New England States were now more the large families reared by Irish mothers, he exclaimed, "You are a strong race, and you are bound to win your right position in the world!"

I then sketched for him the struggle we had made for National freedom in Ireland for several hundred years, and the steady perseverance of the conflict until the present time, pointing out that we were over twenty millions of a distinct race in America and with-in the British Empire, and ended by appealing to him, as one who held the world's claim to nationhood whenever an opportunity should offer. "I am an old man now," he answered, "and not able for much more work, but I shall willingly do what you ask of me when I find an opportunity. Your case is a just one, and your people have bravely upheld it for many generations. Englishmen will come round to the views of your leaders on Home Rule, as they did on the land question, for it seems to me that what the Irish people are asking for would relieve England of all her difficulties in Ireland."

He was not acquainted with Ireland's past history, and was greatly surprised on hearing of the Celtic Ireland of the early centuries, and of its civilizations, laws and culture. He expressed a wish to read Professor Joyce's Social History of Ancient Ireland, and I feel sure that

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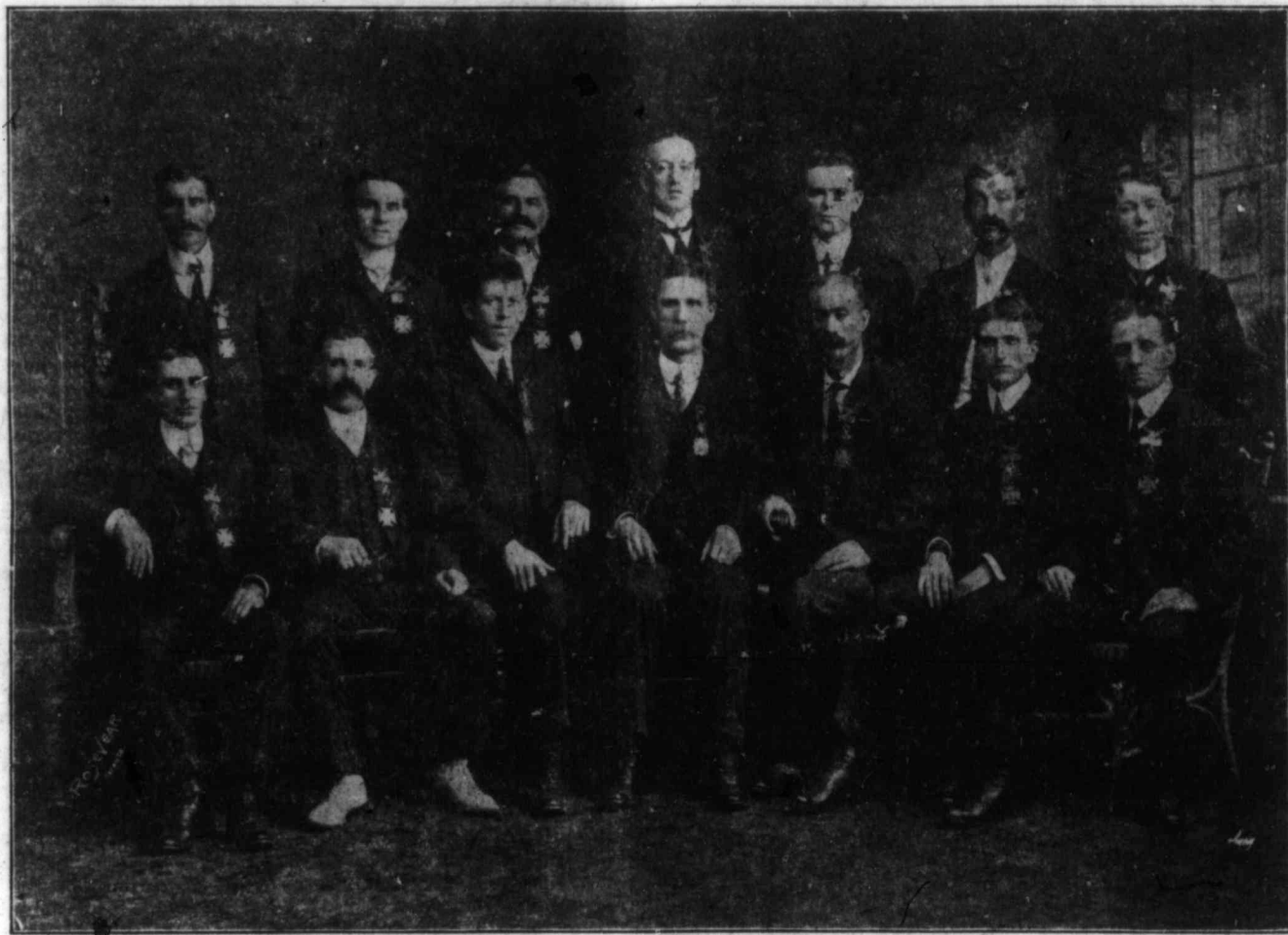
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confesses (issue of December 31, 1903) that, despite its most earnest warnings, the Catholic women of New South Wales "failed lamentably when their day of power came."

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therly concern for a wrong-headed humanity whose innate goodness might, if rightly directed, redeem the world from wars and suffering and poverty—the evil trinity of Tolstolain philosophy — but whose moral weakness and unreasoning mental apathy make manking the tools of governments and the victims of exploiting systems and laws.

The nose is strong and regular, the mouth large, and the lower face very narrow, thus bringing into prominence the disproportionate expansiveness of the upper part, with its massive forehead towering over the strange, searching, pitying eyes that win your confidence at once, while acting with the power of an X-rays in probing your nature in search of your character, purpose, and aim.

He wore a white linen tunic, strapped round the waist with a leather belt, in the manner of the ordinary moujik, but beyond this there was nothing in his dress or manner or attitude that bore the remotest resemblance to the average Russian peasant. He has all the courteous manner and ease of the educated Russian noble; above all that incomparable faculty of making you feel at home which is so marked a feature of the social life of the educated classes in this country. It is the spirit of racial hospitality born in an Eastern people and developed in an education which carefully conserves this habit and equips it with all the qualities of cultured amiability.

The hair and beard of the venerable author are dark grey, and are not as bushy in quantity or arrangement as most of the Tolstol pictures would suggest. The portrait by Kramnoi in the Tretiakoff Gallery in Moscow, though painted some thirty years ago, is the truest likeness I have seen of the greatest living Russian. After reading the letters, he held out his hand and welcomed me anew, adding, "I congratulate you on having been in prison for the cause of the people. It is a great privilege to suffer and to make sacrifice in a struggle against injustice."

He then asked me to give him some account of how England treated political prisoners, and remembering all the cant of English Pharisaism about Russian prison tortures, I related what others and myself had under-

This was listened to with more surprise than assent. Like many cultured Russians I have met, Tolstol has a very favorable estimate of England and Englishmen, believing that the English authors read by most Russians who learn that language give an impartial view of their country's political institutions, and of its rule of subject races. He appeared somewhat reluctant to concur in my opinions, and being too courteous to contend for his preconceived notions, he smilingly selected a common ground of agreement by saying:

"Henry George's proposals would remedy the evil of property among the English working classes had they been adopted by British statesmen. I am glad you knew him so intimately. His 'Progress and Poverty' was a truly great work. It impressed me so much with its convincing force and fine religious and humane spirit that I wrote a letter to the late Emperor urging him to apply the plan advocated by George to the social and economic advantage of the Russian laboring people. It would, in my belief, abolish poverty and discontent and create a new Russia. George wrote me some beautiful letters. I regret I did not meet him. He was an eloquent apostle of humanity."

He then requested information about the Irish land question, the condition of Ireland generally, its population, and industries, and asked if the peasantry were not very poor. I gave him a brief account of the land movement since Parnell's time, and of the reforms that have been won from the reluctant assent of the British Parliament.

"That is a great work," he exclaimed; "80,000 peasants—or, as you say, one-fifth of the whole—rescued from the conditions you have described, and placed in their present state of security, is a very hopeful prospect for the future of your country. But they have paid too much for their deliverance. How will they and the others bear the burden of such payments for the long years to come? Henry George was right. Compensation to landlords is morally wrong. It is rewarding a class for the successful robbery of the people."

Yes, I urged. But how were we to enforce that theory of abstract justice with forty millions of British at the back of the Irish landlords

and laws, but he would be incapable of taking sides with the enemies of the Russian nation, who are actuated solely by the sordid selfishness of commercial rivalry in forcing Russia into the present conflict.

He asked numerous questions about America, its industries and problems, politics and statesmen, and was specially interested in the part which Mr. W. J. Bryan was likely to play in the Presidential contest. A visit to the United States would give him much satisfaction, he observed, "but I am too old now, and the journey would be very long." I ventured to say that he would receive an unprecedented welcome, owing to his universal popularity, when he remarked, "L'agree with Marcus Aurelius that to be popular is not the way to be happy."

Referring to the Australians and to the advent into office of the Commonwealth Labor Party, he spoke of New Zealand as being the best ruled state in the matter of progressive laws that he was acquainted with in his studies of other nations. He praised its land system, and when I told him that it was an Irishman, James Balcanquhall, who began the reform which led to the adoption of the existing land laws, he smiled, and said, "You Irishmen appear to be everywhere."

He then added, half in inquiry and half in retort upon my introduction of Ireland so often into our talk, "Is it not true that the majority of Irishmen are reconciled to English rule in Ireland? I would infer this from the fact that a large number of Irish soldiers fought against the Boers, while none fought on their side."

This last thrust was difficult to parry, for the everlasting shame of the fact that thousands of mere mercenaries bearing Irish names had shared in the crime and disgrace of that infamous war is impossible to deny. I tried to explain how it was that this had occurred, and how contrary to the mass of Irish feeling all over the world was the action of the wretched elements of Irish life that are fit only for the moral level of the British army. I instanced the action of the Irish Party in the House of Commons as against this conduct of hired soldiers, and made him acquainted with the universal pro-Boer

this wish will be gratified by the able author of that splendidly worked up letter should come under his attention.

He pressed me strongly and kindly to stay at Yasnia for the night, when we could talk more about Ireland and other topics, but his doctor's face looked averse to the proposition, and it was regretfully declined. The Count's health has been a matter of great anxiety to his family for some time, and a resident medical attendant has been deemed necessary. This gentleman cares much more about his illustrious patient than about the Irish and all the other questions of the day, and he rightly watches over his precious charge with a rigid fidelity which offers no encouragement to visitors, Pressmen or others, who may come to talk with, and to excite, the aged literary leader of all the Russians.

A warm shake of the hand, a kindly spoken good-bye, and one of the world's finest characters and greatest thought-moulders disappeared from my view. The short space of time I was permitted to spend in conversation with him will always remain in my memory as a most precious recollection.

Women's Vote in Australia

In Australia, some time ago, when the Orange societies began to organize to prosecute that anti-Catholic campaign which has disgraced the whole state of New South Wales, the organ of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Sidney, the Catholic Press, earnestly exhorted the Catholic women to use their electoral privileges to the full and stand beside the friends of communal concord at the ballot boxes, to defeat the "handits who in the press and on the platform shamelessly confessed that they were engaged in a religious persecution, and that they would never rest until Catholics disappeared from public life and public offices." The women in sympathy with the sectarian organizations would not fail to vote solidly with their men, but Catholics had nothing to fear, provided Catholic women did their duty at the polls. Now the Catholic press sorrowfully