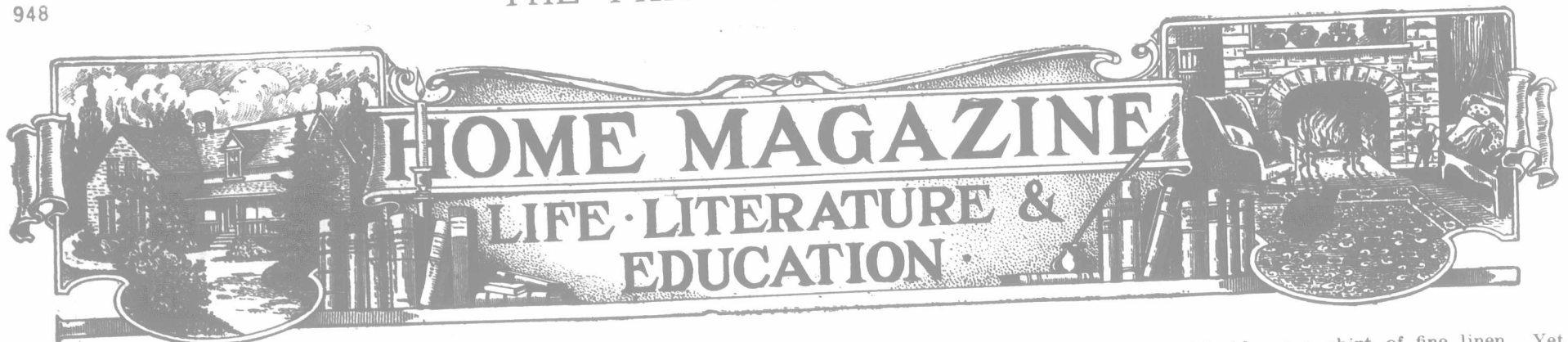
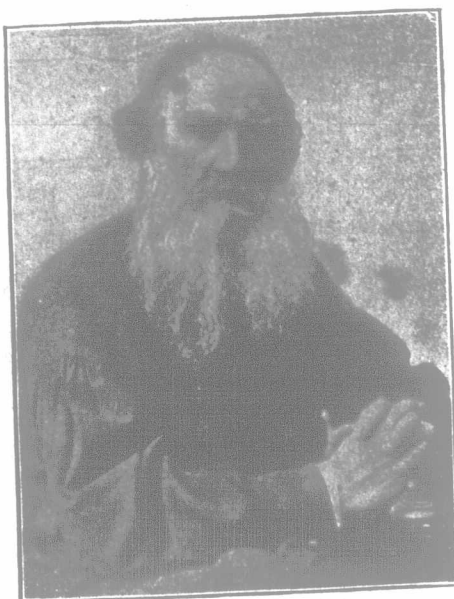




Little Trips Among Eminent Writers.

[For the present we will pass over the Canadian writers, as biographical sketches of them appeared in these pages about three years ago.]



Tolstoi.

Probably the most unique author of the past hundred years was Count Lyof Tolstoi, the great Russian, who died under such especially sad circumstances in the autumn of last year. Yes, the most unique figure of the past hundred years, one might say, for Tolstoi possessed a remarkable personality. To think of Russia, is to think of him rather than of the Czar, and yet it was not because of his patriotism or because he stands typical as a Russian that one thinks of Tolstoi. Above all men of his age, perhaps, he was a "Citizen of the World." Travelling but little outside of Russia, he loved simple and honest humanity in all the earth. With a magnificent daring he threw down all boundaries, and called on all men to be brothers, living to serve one another. A noted lecturer on art said recently: "Artists and literary people are not, as a rule, good patriots in the accepted sense of the term. They are seeking for excellence, and do not care at all where they find it." Of Tolstoi, if of anyone, might this be said. He could not understand why there should be different nations with thrones, and customs-duties and fabulous sums spent on standing armies and Dreadnoughts, and armed forces sent to do war one on another. All this, violence in any form, he considered contrary to the teaching of Christ, and upon the words of Christ as revealed in the New Testament he based his theory as to the conduct of life, individually and collectively.

"What is life, and what should we live for?" became the great question which occupied his philosophy. "Once when I sat alone," he says, in speaking of the beginning of his real life-work, "I asked myself what I should take up—and suddenly the feeling came upon me as strongly as never before, that I needed nothing, and that I was ready to carry out whatever was the will of God. This feeling came because I had asked myself the question: 'Who am I and why do I live?' And as plainly came the answer: 'No matter who I am and what my occupation, I have been sent to the world by God to perform certain duties, to fill a certain place.'"

And so he set about to settle questions first for himself, then to scatter his opinions broadcast over the world by means of his books, of which tens of thousands of volumes were published, yet for which, during the latter part of his life, he refused to accept payment or royalty. The world, he considered, had strayed far from the simple path of right. By his books he would try to turn it back to the example and precepts of Christ, particularly to the Beatitudes, the beautiful Sermon on the Mount, which he considered sufficient guidance for the life of man.

Briefly his ideas were these: He considered that people with modern luxurious notions, kings, nobility, people of wealth, are but barbarians. Every man should earn his living by the work of his hands, especially on the soil—for he considered the agricultural life, when carried on simply and not for mad chase of gain, the ideal one. If every man worked thus for part of the day, no man would be compelled to slave always at hard physical labor, and every man would have time for mental labor and for recreation. If rich people did not demand costly silks and velvets and all the accessories of wealth, there would be no necessity for factories and "sweat-shops," with long hours, poor air and an unnatural mode of life. People should one and all be satisfied to wear simple, hand-made peasants' clothes, and to eat simple, wholesome food. If the idle rich did enough physical labor they would enjoy such food. All men, then, should first cultivate enough land to supply themselves and their families with food. Afterwards, if a man possessed a talent for shoe-making, or carpentering, or book-writing, or printing, or any other profession or craft, he should work at such craft or profession for others, but in love of his work. So should work be divided along natural lines, and no man be a slave for others, as he believed the great majority of men to be under the present system. "I came to the following simple conclusion," he says, "that, in order to avoid causing the sufferings and depravity of men (he is writing of his early life as a wealthy nobleman) I ought to make other men work for me as little as possible, and to work myself as much as possible. . . . I came to that simple and natural conclusion, that if I pity the exhausted horse on whose back I ride, the first thing for me to do is to get off him and walk." And so, according to his vision, he would do away with riches, slavery, poverty. He disagrees, however, with those theorists who would recognize all the land as the property of the state. Every man should own his own plot of land, but if his tastes and wants were simple, as they should be, it need only be a small plot.

The blame for present conditions he places wholly upon the rich. If these did their share of physical work they would be more healthy, more moral, more bright mentally, and other men would recognize that this brings welfare and be more contented. In time there need be no rich, no poor, no caste; each might be interested in the others; all live in brotherly kindness.

Again, as referred to above, he would abolish all institutions that tend to keep men who should form a great human family, apart—boundaries, government's armies, warships, taxes, even police and constables, trusting work to the law

of love and service, and the education of the people along right lines.

A new conception of life should be given. We have always had a false doctrine, he says, which does not show men the true meaning of life. The churches, one and all, have failed in setting up the right ideal. The Christian must live to do good. If every man in a community lived for this end, what enemy could it have? What need for "protection"? St. Francis, of Assisi, he considered, accepted and lived the moral, social teaching of Christ.

In regard to art, music, literature, painting, the drama, he is most explicit. Most of the recognized art to-day, he considers, is not true art at all, and with the iconoclasm characteristic of him, he proceeds to pull down from their pedestals even such lofty figures as Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Wagner and Beethoven. After fifteen years' study on this question, he concludes that only that art is real which communicates the feeling—sweet, pure and high feeling—of the artist, so simply that it is communicated to all men, not merely to the cultured few. The "natural" man should appreciate it, because true art should convey the feeling of love to God and to our neighbor. It should tend to unite people in one universal brotherhood. And so he approves of Hugo's "Les Misérables," of most of the works of Dickens, of George Eliot's "Adam Bede," of "Uncle Tom's Cabin"; and, among painters, of Millet's "Angelus," and the pictures of Jules Breton. The teaching of Christ, he feels, should be the basis of all art as of all life. Art—music, literature, painting, the drama—should, in short, realize the "highest religious consciousness."

He is not, however, greatly in favor of expensive art schools. The arts, in elementary form, should be well taught in the public schools, and outstanding geniuses encouraged to "work out their own salvation," to express themselves in their own way. Thus genius buried among the people should have its opportunity. Artists, too, should live the common life of the people. Art is "transfer of feelings," whether in picture, book or aria, and "feelings can only have birth in a man when he is at all points living the natural life proper to all men."

Science, too, is only true science, when it is for the good of all people. Scientific effort that invents new means of destroying life, or of enslaving it, should be discouraged. At present much so-called "high art" appeals to the few. It should appeal to, be open to, and give pleasure to, the whole people.

TOLSTOI'S LIFE.

And with Tolstoi, to think was to live. Born a nobleman, wealthy, a land-owner, he came to hold the utmost horror of rank and wealth, and was with difficulty restrained by his wife and family, who were not in accord with his ideas, from giving away nearly all that he possessed. Indeed, upon one occasion the matter was brought into the courts by his wife.

Nevertheless, at his vast estate of Yasnaya Polyana he insisted on living the simple life of the peasant, working in the fields during part of his day, wearing the coarse peasant's blouse, and living on food severely simple when compared with the feasting of his earlier life.

He has been severely criticized by adverse critics (and these he has had a-plenty) because he wore inside of

his blouse a shirt of fine linen. Yet this criticism seems unreasonable. Why should he, with a sensitive skin, have submitted to a daily penance which might have interfered with his work? Realizing, like Carlyle, the power of external clothes, he no doubt felt that, with the wearing of the peasant's blouse his object was accomplished, and the surface distinctions, which he so detested, done away with.

Tolstoi was born in the Russian Province of Tula in 1828. He received a good home education, and studied in the University of Kasan, where his advancement in Oriental languages was very remarkable. At the age of twenty-three he entered the army, as an officer of artillery, and for some time (notwithstanding the fact that, as early as at the age of sixteen had burst upon him the conviction that it is "man's destiny to strive after moral perfection") lived the somewhat fast life of the fashionable and aristocratic young gentleman of his time, in St. Petersburg and Moscow. "He saw life, in country and city, in camp and court."

When the Crimean war broke out he went to Sebastopol, where he remained during the famous siege, displaying no little courage, and being at all times by his wit and cheeriness, the life of his regiment.

While here he got the material for his "War Sketches," which won a popularity for their author that, perhaps, apprised him of his power with the pen.

At once he began writing, with his characteristic rapidity. He had been thinking out the problems of life, and now in succession appeared "Childhood," "Boyhood," "Youth," "My Confession," "The Cossacks," "War and Peace" (1860)—a historical romance in several volumes, with three heroes, one of whom, Pierre Besushkof, has long been regarded as somewhat autobiographical. In these books, and also in his novel, "Anna Karenina," the same purpose seems to run, a determination to portray the vice and follies of the rich and aristocratic, and to hold up simplicity and unpretending virtue as the ideal.

In 1881 he went to Moscow to live for a time, and while here "contracted the habit," as he says, "of going to the Sparrow Hills and working there with two peasants who sawed wood." A rather unusual sight, truly—this nobleman, who still lived in magnificent apartments, with a retinue of servants, who was received at court and hobnobbed with nobility, out here sawing wood with two peasants!

Although the work was undertaken chiefly for exercise, Tolstoi, through these peasants, became interested in the poor of the city, and his investigations finally led him into its very slums, the dreadful Liapin's House and Rzhanoft Houses, which he describes so graphically in the book that grew out of these investigations, "What Can We Do Then?"—a book well worth reading by anyone who wishes to know Tolstoi's opinions on the social question.

Later he retired to his estates at Yasnaya Polyana, and adopted, so far as he could, the life of frugality and toil, which he now conceived to be the only right life. But he was by no means to live unto himself in this retirement. His denunciations of the church, brought upon his head excommunication from the Orthodox Greek Church in 1901. He was fiercely set out upon as an anarchist, a heretic, and the wonder