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Joseph Krauskopf**

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"My Visit to Tolstoy"

Five Discourses

By

Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf, D. D.



Philadelphia
1911

My Visit to Tolstoy.

A DISCOURSE, AT TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL

BY

RABBI JOSEPH KRAUSKOFF, D. D.

Philadelphia, December 11th, 1910.

My visit to Russia and its purpose.

In the summer of 1894 I visited Russia for the purpose of proposing to the Czar a plan that might end or lessen the terrible persecution of the Jews in his realm. The plan intended was a removal of the persecuted Jews to unoccupied lands in the interior, there to be colonized on farms, and to be maintained, until self-supporting, by their correligionists of other parts of the world.

Refused admission by Russian government.

Learning that, because a Jew, I would not be admitted into Russia, I conferred with President Cleveland and Secretary Gresham, both of whom heartily endorsed my plan and resolved to intervene. The Russian Minister at Washington declaring his powerlessness to *visé* my passport, our Secretary of State cabled to the American Minister at St. Petersburg to obtain the desired permission from the foreign office, only to receive as reply the words "*Russian government deeply regrets its inability to accede to request in behalf of Reverend Jewish divine.*"

Determined to test my citizenship right.

The injustice of the reply determined me more than ever to enter Russia, if only to make a test case of my citizenship rights. The treaty between the United States and Russia guarantees to every American citizen the right of entry on Russian soil, and as an American citizen that right was mine; my religion being my private affair and no concern of Russia's. The determination to test the supremacy of international law over national prejudice aroused a large part of the American press to a vigorous endorsement of my position. A bill was introduced in Congress to the effect that the treaty between the two countries be declared abrogated if an American citizen be turned back from the gates of Russia by reason of his religion. [2]

Was admitted.

In the height of the agitation I departed for Russia, knocked at the gates of St. Petersburg—and was admitted. Russia had evidently come to the conclusion that it was better policy to admit me and to keep her eyes on me than to allow the agitation and the indignation to continue in our country.

Met distinguished Russians.

While within the Russian borders, I was privileged to come in contact with many prominent Russians, one of them M. Witte, who at that time was Minister of Finance and practically at the head of the empire, the Czar, Alexander III, being critically ill in the Crimea, where he shortly after died.

Tolstoy most distinguished of all.

But of all the men I met none made the impression that was left upon me by my visit to Count Leo Tolstoy. It was made possible by Mr. Andrew D. White, the distinguished scholar and statesman, who at that time represented our country at St. Petersburg. He had written and asked the count to meet me and to learn of the mission that brought me to Russia. The count's daughter, Tatiana, replied that her father would be pleased to have me visit him, adding that he was just then

engaged in hay-making, and, therefore, had not much leisure. To take as little of his time as possible I arranged to arrive in the court-yard of his manor-house at Yasnaya Polyana, late in the afternoon. Approaching a group of peasants that stood at a well drinking water and mopping their brows, my travelling-companion, a young Russian lawyer, asked them where we might find the count. One of them stepped out of the group, and, lifting his cap, said most courteously that he was Tolstoy, and, learning my name, he bade me a hearty welcome.

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Held me captive from first meeting.

From the moment I first gazed upon him he held me captive, and, by a strange psychic power, he has held me enthralled ever since. No wish of mine has been more fondly cherished in the sixteen years that have since passed by than that of some day visiting Russia again, and only for the purpose of seeing once more that strangely fascinating personality, of listening again to his marvelous flow of wisdom.

His personality.

I had often wondered how a Moses, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, a Socrates, looked and talked, denounced and dreamed, the moment I saw and heard Tolstoy I knew. One hour's talk with him seemed equal to a whole university course in political and social science; one walk with him on his estate stored up in the listener more knowledge of moral philosophy than could be crowded into a year's seminary instruction. Great as was the power of his pen, immeasurably greater was the power of his living word. In some mysterious way the flow of his speech seemed to exercise an hypnotic spell upon the speaker as much as upon the listener. The speaker seemed at times translated into a super-human being, seemed inspired, seemed to speak words not his own, as one of the ancient prophets of Israel must have spoken when he said the words: "Thus saith the Lord," while the listener seemed scarcely capable of thought or speech, felt his being almost lose its identity and become merged with that of the speaker.

At times his voice would sound as Elijah's voice must have sounded when he said to Ahab, the king, "Thou art he who troubleth Israel," and at times it would seem as sweet as the voice of one of Russia's nightingales. At times his strong, rugged, bearded face would resemble that of the pictured Jupiter in wrath, and then it would rival in serenity one of Raphael's saints. At times he would seem to carry on his shoulders all the woe of the world, resembling one of the mediaeval pictures of the martyr of Nazareth, and then again he would seem as care-free and happy as a little babe. He had never learned the art of concealing his thoughts and emotions. His face and voice were as a mirror that revealed with microscopic exactness his innermost self. What he felt moved to speak he spoke; what he felt urged to do he did; he never stopped to consider whether it will please or displease, whether it will bring praise or censure upon him. Like a piece of living, weather-beaten New England granite he looked in his home-spun crash blouse, his jean trousers girded at the waist with a rope, his coarse woolen shirt open at the neck, his well-worn bast shoes. He seemed, indeed, a composite of the looks and traits and thoughts that characterized the Puritans in the early history of the New England states.

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He lived his life according to his own light. Excepting God, he bowed to no master. His conscience was his sole rule of right. His law was his own. His creed was his own. His style of dress, his mode of living were of his own choosing. His was above all else himself, not an echo of another. He was the freest man in the most enslaved of lands. His was the brightest mind in darkest Russia, the most democratic spirit in the most autocratic of realms. His peasant garb could not hide the noble man, ennobled by exalted thought and achievement and not by the will of potentate. His peasant labor could not hide the man born to command, not by means of knout or sword or prison but by the law of love and right and truth.

As severe with the world so gentle with his own.

As fearless as he was in his denunciations of the wrong-doings of government and church and society, and as bold as he was in his reform propositions, so gentle and simple-minded was he at his family table. I had read that two kinds of meals were served at his table, a frugal one for himself and a sumptuous one for the rest of his family. The meal of which I partook was a frugal one for all. I was, however, little conscious of what I ate. I was held spell-bound by the count's conversation which dominated the table, and which was carried on in English, occasionally passing into German or French or Russian.

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A table incident.

He was in an especially happy mood that evening. In the mail that had been brought to the table there were a number of papers. Opening one of these, the London *Standard*, I believe, he observed that an article of his had been severely censored by the Russian government. Large parts of it had been smeared over with black ink. What amused him was that the parts that were

left uncensored were worse than those that had been blackened out, revealing the stupidity of the censor. Turning to me, who sat at his right, he said that had the article been a panegyric on the Czar, it would probably have received the same treatment, for no matter what he writes, it is daubed over, here and there, on the general principle that, having been written by Tolstoy, it must of necessity be revolutionary. Continuing, he told me that that particular article was one of a series on the subject of "*Christianity and Patriotism*," which, not being permitted to be published in Russia, appeared in translation in England. In it he endeavored to show that Christianity and patriotism were incompatible, that the latter was an artificial creation, skilfully nourished by rulers for selfish purposes. On account of it wars are waged, evils are wrought, sufferings are inflicted by Christians upon Christians, who are *religiously* taught to love one another, to forgive one another, to do good to each other, and who are *patriotically* trained to hate and overreach each other. Humanity, he said, must be put in the place of patriotism. The latter is both stupid and unmoral, *stupid* because it leads each nation to regard itself the superior of all others, and *unmoral* because it lures nations to possess themselves of advantages at the cost of others, thus violating the fundamental law of morality, that of not doing to others what they would not have others do to them. Humanity makes the whole world every man's country, and every man each man's brother.

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His home over-run by
visitors.

When first introduced to the family I felt that their welcome was not quite as hearty as was that of the count. I could easily understand the reason. The presence of guests was almost a daily occurrence, and quite a burden on the household. The count denied himself to none who had a genuine purpose for seeking him. But he was out of patience with mere curiosity seekers or newspaper writers, who sought to rob him of his valuable time in order to fill a column or two with sensational matter. One such writer, a lady journalist, came one day for the sole purpose of having him give her the menu of his vegetarian diet, to tell her whether his undergarments were of as coarse a fabric as were his outer clothes, and whether an equally picturesque peasant-garb might not be designed for women.

Special incident wins for me
family's special welcome.

My first impression that I was classed with the other afflictions of the count's universal popularity soon wore off, however, by reason of a letter to the family which I brought with me from a distinguished professor. This gentleman had, a short time before, been dismissed from the university of St. Petersburg because he had published an essay on *The Ethics of the Talmud*, in which he had endeavored to show the lofty moral teachings of the Jews. I had made his acquaintance while in St. Petersburg, and before leaving that city he called on me, and asked me whether I would not take a letter from him, of an entirely uncompromising nature, to Tolstoy, inasmuch, as at that particular time, a letter mailed to the count did not, for easily accountable reasons, always reach him. I readily consented, and that little service, the professor having been a great favorite of the count, made me a welcome guest also to the family.

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Approves of stand taken to
gain admission.

Supper over, the count invited my companion and myself to join him on a walk and to tell him of what service he could be to me. I told him of the mission that brought me to Russia and of the difficulties that were placed in the way of my admission. He approved of the stand I had taken, but asked me to blame the governments for it, mine as well as his, and not the Russians, who are a kindly people.

If United States would take
bolder stand Russia would
yield.

He entered at length upon an exposition showing that if the United States would refuse to countenance discriminations between her citizens on account of religious belief, Russia would be obliged to yield. I told him of the audience which Mr. White and myself had had with M. Witte, and that the latter had said that, the Czar being sick, nothing could be done without his consent, that I should state my request in the form of a petition, written in English and Russian, and that he would present it to the Czar with his approval upon the latter's return, and that I had complied with the advice given. The count had little faith that my petition would ever reach the eyes of the Czar—and it never did, for the Czar never returned alive. And he had little faith in all official promises. The men in power at that time he believed to be either fanatics or cowards. The former sought to secure for themselves a soft berth in heaven, the latter sought it on earth. These were afraid to speak out their honest thought and to deal an honest blow for right and justice. They were afraid of losing caste or position or of being condemned to penal servitude, as if better

persons than they had not suffered martyrdom before, or were not now paying in Siberia the price for exercising their right to liberty of thought and speech.

Approves of my mission but has little hope.

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He warmly approved of my mission but saw no present possibility of its realization. Even if the Czar were to feel kindly disposed toward my plan, Pobiedonostzeff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, would interpose his objections to permitting Jews rooting themselves on Russian soil.

The policy of the Procurator, he said, was to root out the Jews, to drive them either into the Greek Catholic Church or into exile or starvation, stupidly attributing the evils of Russia to her tolerance of non-orthodox-Christian faiths and seeing relief only in their extinction within the empire. And that miscreant considered himself the official head of the Russian church, and the administrator of its creed in the name of Jesus, of him who bade man to love even his enemy, to do good even to those who do evil, to forgive even those who offend, to bless even those who curse.

Asks my attitude toward Jesus, and defines his.

Stopping suddenly, and turning his face full upon me, he asked "What is your belief respecting Jesus?" I answered that I regard the Rabbi of Nazareth as one of the greatest of Israel's teachers and leaders and reformers, not as a divine being who lived and taught humanly but as a human being who lived and taught divinely. "Such is my belief," said he, and he continued "Your belief, however, is not that of the Jews in Russia. Many of them have little knowledge of Jesus, and more of them, I fear, have little love for him. And who can blame them?" he continued, "they have been made to suffer so much in his name that it would be little short of a miracle if they loved him. Mohamed was more honest, he gave to people the choice between the Koran and the sword. Christians profess love, and practice hatred." I told the count that through the mediation of Mr. White, the Procurator had consented to grant me an audience, but not till after the lapse of seven weeks, after his return from some monastery to which he had retired for prayer, penance and meditation. "Well may he meditate," said the count, "on the wrongs he has committed, and even were he to do penance seven times seven weeks or seven times seven months or seven years, he could not blot out the guilt that stains his soul, and that has darkened and cursed the lives of tens of thousands of innocent human beings."

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Tells why he escaped Siberia.

Amazed at the freedom with which he exposed his condemnation of the most powerful officials of the realm, and convinced that as he spoke to me he must have spoken often to others, and that the government could not possibly be ignorant of it, I asked how it was that he had escaped seizure, exile or imprisonment, to which he replied: "I am not yet sure that I shall not end my days in Siberia. That I have escaped thus far is due to the government's sensitiveness of the world's opinion. It knows of the hold my publications have gained for me on civilized people. It fears the cry of outrage that would be raised at the banishment or imprisonment of a man as old as I."

He was at that time sixty-six years old. I have since read, that when the Czar was one day approached by one of the grand dukes with a request for the banishment of Tolstoy on the ground that he incited rebellion against the government and the church, the Czar is said to have replied, "*Je ne veux pas ajouter a sa gloire une couronne d' un martyr*"—*I do not wish to add to his glory the martyr's crown*—words used by Louis XIV of France, when a similar request was made of him.

Under the Poverty Tree.

After that statement, he walked silently, lost in deep thought, perhaps picturing to himself his declining days among fellow martyrs in far-away Siberia, perhaps thinking of the agonies and tortures and untimely deaths that had been inflicted by a cruel or misguided government on thousands of Russia's noblest sons and daughters.

Silently he led the way toward a tree that stood near the house, upon a slight eminence. It was the *Poverty Tree* that was destined to afford him beneath its wide spreading branches his last resting place. It derived its name from the custom of poor peasants laying there their troubles before the count. Seating himself on a bench beneath the tree he beckoned to us to seat ourselves along side of him. He continued silent for some time, while the setting sun bathed his lionine face and hair in crimson and golden light, and gave him an appearance not unlike one of the old Norse gods or vikings which the artist's brush has made familiar to us. At last he resumed his speech.

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My Visit to Tolstoy.

(Continued.)

A DISCOURSE, AT TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL,

BY

RABBI JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF, D. D.

Philadelphia, December 18th, 1910.

[RESUMÉ—Discourse I: Reason for my visit to Russia and for my calling on Tolstoy. Description of his appearance and personality. Some of his views on Russia, its statesmen, its religion, its misgovernment. A pause under *Poverty Tree* beneath which he now lies buried.]

Tolstoy recalled aid sent from Philadelphia to famine-stricken in Russia.

The first question count Tolstoy put to me, after his long silence, was from what part of the United States I hailed. Upon my telling him that Philadelphia was my home, he expressed himself as much pleased. He recalled the two shiploads of food we sent from our port, two years earlier, for the relief of the famine-stricken of Russia, and of the distribution of which he had had personal charge, and he spoke with pleasure and appreciation of Mr. Francis B. Reeves, our fellow-townsmen, who had accompanied the food-relief.

Said first aid came from Sacramento synagogue.

With even keener delight he recalled that the first aid received from the United States was from the Jewish congregation of Sacramento, California, which to him was all the more remarkable from the fact that the district stricken was, through governmental restriction, uninhabited by Jews. The expression of pleasure turned to one of sorrow when he remarked that Russia had little deserved such generous treatment at the hands of Jews,—and he lived to see the manner in which it was repaid in Kishineff and other places.

Was fond of Quakers.

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Reverting to our city, he said that the name of Philadelphia had always had a pleasant sound for him, partly because of its meaning "*Brotherly Love*," and partly because it was founded by William Penn. He expressed a high admiration for Quakers, and asked how strong they were numerically and whether they are still as opposed to war and resistance as their founders were. Upon answering his question to the best of my ability, he asked: "Why is it that war, which is the greatest curse of mankind, has so many advocates, and peace, the greatest of all blessings, so few?" After some discussion we both agreed that it was due to that strange perversity of human nature that sees the right and approves of it, and yet often willfully chooses the wrong.

Blamed school for many of present-day wrongs.

He blamed the schools for many of the errors that obtain in society, and claimed that there was too much education of the wrong kind, and too little of the right. In discussing this statement of his, I chanced to mention that education in the lower grades was compulsory with us. To this he strongly objected. All compulsion, he said, was wrong. Man must be gotten to do right by the law of love and not by the rule of force. Upon my telling him that but for compulsory education some parents would never send their children to school, he said: "What of it? The children would probably be no less moral and no less happy than those of highest education. I have associated with the learned and the ignorant, and I have found more honor and honesty, more fear of the Lord and more true happiness, among the unlettered than among the lettered. The more of education we cram into the heads of the people the more of the fear of God is crowded out of them. The world lives by the love of God and not by the primer or the multiplication table." "What, if you had had no education?" I ventured to ask. Quickly and feelingly came the answer "The world would have been none the worse, and I would have been the happier." "What if Jesus

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and the other prophets had had no schooling?" I asked. To which he replied "It was not what they got out of their schools that made them the spiritual and moral powers they became, but what they got out of their hearts. God puts more education into the human heart than man has ever been able to put into the head. Some of the wisest and best people hereabouts are peasants who have never seen the inside of a school, and who do not know one letter from another." "What of Paul," I asked, "who certainly enjoyed the benefits of the Greek schools of his day?" To which he replied "The schools made of Paul a theologian, and Christianity would have been the better without the theology of Paul."

Warped by unfavorable surroundings.

Other objections to some of his paradoxical views on education suggested themselves to me, but I left them unsaid. I perceived that while tolerant of objections, his opinions were fixed. He apparently judged of world-conditions from the view-point of his limited and unfavorable horizon. Under different conditions, some of his opinions on education, and on a number of other subjects which we discussed, would probably have been quite different.

Well informed of political and social conditions in United States.

The conversation turned to social conditions in the United States, and on these matters he displayed an amount of knowledge that was amazing. The more I listened the more I wondered, till finally I could not but ask him how he who wrote and worked so much could find time to keep himself so well informed of a country so far away as the United States. To which he replied "Your country has interested me even more than mine. I have lost hope in mine; all my hope was, at one time, centered in yours. But yours is a disappointment as much as mine. You call yourselves a Republic; you are worse than an autocracy. I say worse because you are ruled by gold, and gold is more conscienceless, and therefore, more tyrannical than any human tyrant. Your intentions are good; your execution is lamentable. Were yours the free and representative government you pretend to have, you would not allow it to be controlled by the money powers and their hirelings, the bosses and machines, as you do. I have read *Progress and Poverty* by Henry George, and I know what Mr. Bryce says about you in his *The American Commonwealth*, and I have read and heard even worse things about your misgovernment than what they say."

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Deplored rule of gold and growth of cities.

We were all right, he continued, as long as we were an agricultural people. Our modes of life, then, were simple, and our ideals were high. Politics then was a religion with us and not a matter of barter and sale. We became prosperous; prosperity brought luxury, and luxury, as always, brings corruption. The thirst of gold is upon us, and, in our eagerness to quench it and to gratify our lust of luxury, our one-time lofty principles and aspirations are dragged down and trampled in the mire. We build city upon city, and pride ourselves in making one greater than the other, and, in the mean time, we wipe out village after village, whence have come our strength and moral fibre. The price of real estate in the cities is soaring to the skies, while farms are deserted and farm-houses decay. We tempt the farmer's son and daughter from field to factory, and when we have exhausted them of their health and morals we think ourselves charitable when we prolong their miserable existence in hospitals or reformatories. We forget that our greatness lay in the pursuit of husbandry, and we seek our salvation in commerce and in the industries.

Prophesied war of classes.

With all our stupendous wealth, our slums are as bad, if not worse, as those of European cities, and we are building up a proletariat class which will some day prove our undoing. Our rich become degenerates, and our poor become desperates, and in the struggle to come the desperate will rise up and slay the degenerate. We keep things quiet by throwing crumbs of charity to those who are in need of justice more yet than they are in need of bread. Some day they will tire of crumbs, and will ask their full share of what the rich eat and have, and, if denied, they will make short work of it. Our origin and our destiny should have warned us against repeating the fatal errors of the past. But for our colossal resources, we would long since have been dashed against the rocks. We may yet save ourselves by going back to the farm, and taking up anew the life and labors of our fathers.

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Disagreed, yet kept silent.

In this strain he continued for quite awhile, and the longer he spoke the sadder grew his speech and the more prophetic became his look. At length he ceased speaking, and an oppressive quiet

ensued. I recognized that he was deeply moved, and I therefore did not care to contradict some of his statements which were obviously based on error. In other of his statements I fully agreed with him, yet, loyalty to my country forbade my seconding the gloomy prospect he held out for us.

Description of his relationship with wife and family.

A fortunate interruption relieved the situation. His wife approached with a letter or manuscript in hand. He arose, proceeded toward her, and, for a while, the two conferred together. In all probability it was a manuscript of his which she was translating or revising. I was told that she was always doing something of that sort. She was his consultant, his reviser, his translator, while his daughter, Tatiana, was his correspondent in a number of different languages. It is said that his wife copied twenty-one times the four large volumes of his novel *War and Peace*, and that there has been no novel nor little else of his writing, since their marriage in 1862, that did not pass through her hands. He found in her, in the fullest sense of the word, his help-mate, a woman of great culture as well of great practical sense, who looked after his literary interests no less than after those of the household, and who often found it no easy task to be, as has been well said, "the patient wife of an impatient genius." She bore him thirteen children, six of whom passed away in their early youth. She fairly idolized him and skilfully managed to slip, unknown to him, those little comforts into his life which he required for his well-being and which he had renounced. Neither she nor the children shared his view respecting the distribution among the peasantry of his estate and other property, and keeping for himself no more than an equal share with all the others. The family believed in availing themselves of the benefits of civilization, and for that they required the income of the farm and the royalty of his books. There was quite a wrangle, for a time, between the family and its head, but it was amicably disposed of in the end, the count agreeing to their living as they chose, on the condition that they permitted him to live as he pleased. And so in his Moscow home as well as in that at Yasnaya Polyana, while the family rooms are said to be comfortably furnished, his own were poorly fitted out, and while they have servants and butlers and footmen, he attended to his own wants, fetched his own water, cobbled his own shoes, and, in summer time, labored in the field, from morn to night, alongside the commonest peasant.

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Description of his working room.

Stopping suddenly in his conversation with his wife, and begging us to excuse him for leaving us, I asked him whether he knew where my bag was put, as I wanted to get to my writing material for the purpose of dropping a line to the American Minister. Mr. White had feared that, not being wanted in Russia, I might get into trouble soon after leaving the protection of our embassy in St. Petersburg, and he had enjoined upon me that I keep in constant touch with him, as well as with the American consuls, while in the interior. The count informing me that my bag had been placed into his working-room, on the ground floor of the house, I had a glimpse of the room in which some of the greatest writings of our time, of all times, first saw the light of day. It was a small room with an ordinary, bare floor somewhat the worse for wear, with a vaulted ceiling, and with very thick walls that gave it the aspect of a mediaeval cloister cell. I have since read that at one time it was a storeroom, and that from the hooks in the ceiling were formerly suspended the ham supply for the family. Besides a crude writing-desk and a few chairs, there seemed to be no other furniture in the room, and its only ornaments, as far as I can recall, were some farm implements, tools, and seed bags. The desk was littered over with books and papers, and showed the kind of disorder one would expect of a genius like Tolstoy.

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Favored suppression of lawyers.

Upon my return to the tree, I found the count in conversation with my companion, who told me later that upon Tolstoy's asking him what his occupation was, and upon his replying that he had graduated from the law-school of the University of Moscow, and that, owing to restrictive laws against Jews, he was not permitted to practice, the count had remarked that the government had done at least one good thing, it had diminished the number of lawyers.

Amazed at the amount of poverty in New York.

Resuming my seat alongside of him, he asked me whether it was true that New York expended as much as one hundred thousand dollars daily in public charity. I told him that it probably was true. He then returned to his discussion on the appalling contrast between the very rich and the very poor of the large cities in Europe and America. The rich, he said, would never be as rich as they are nor the poor as poor if the latter were scattered as farmers over the land. It is their congregating in large numbers in the cities, he said, that makes possible the extensive industries

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and commercial enterprises which enslave them, and which build up the great fortunes of the rich.

Belittled his own novels.

"Have you read my book *What To Do*?" he suddenly asked me. I was obliged to answer "No." I have read it since, and several times, and profitably, too, but, though I had read quite a number of his books before I met him, it was exceedingly embarrassing to be questioned concerning the particular book which I had not read. Not to appear altogether ignorant of his writings, I proceeded to tell him that I had read his "War and Peace," "Anna Karénina," etc., etc., and started telling him how much I admired them, when, with an impatient look and gesture, he interrupted me, saying "These works are all chaff, chaff, play-toys, amusing gilded youth and idle women. It is my serious writings which I want the world to read. I have ceased publishing novels because readers do not know the meaning of them. They look for entertainment and not instruction, and even though I write only for the uplift of man, for the purification of society, they, like the hawk, seek out only the carrion. They neither recognize themselves under the fictitious name I adopt, nor do they see their share in the wrongs and vices and injustices depicted, neither do they perceive that it is for their co-operation that the novelist appeals when he pleads for the kingdom of heaven on earth."

Spoke of his book *What To Do*.

Returning to his book *What To Do*, he said, "even if you have not read it, you have read the Prophets, and having read them, you know my teachings. The book is an appeal for pity for the submerged, for justice for the wronged, for liberation of the oppressed and persecuted, and for the application of the only remedy—a return to the simple life and labor on the soil. As our subsistence comes from the soil so can justice and right and happiness come from it alone. Help can never come from wealth, for wealth is the creator of poverty and inequality and injustice. It can not come from the government for that exists largely for the purpose of keeping up inequality and injustice. It cannot come from the church, for she fears the Czar more than she fears God. It cannot even come from the schools which tend to train a class of people who think themselves too good for manual labor." [19]

Saw solution of Jewish problem only in agriculture.

"Your plan to lead your people back to the soil," he continued, "back to the occupation which your fathers followed with honor in Palestinian lands, is of some encouragement to me. It shows that the light is dawning. It is the only solution of the Jewish problem. Persecution, refusal of the right to own or to till the soil, exclusion from the artisan guilds, made traders of the Jew. And the world hates the trader. Make bread-producers of your people, and the world will honor those who give it bread to it."

Made a request of me.

"There is little chance at present," he continued, "for a Jewish colonization scheme in Russia. The government does not want to see the Jews rooting themselves on Russian soil, and spreads the report that they are unfit for agricultural labor, though I have been reliably informed that in the few Jewish agricultural colonies that have been tolerated on the steppes from the time of Alexander I they are as successful farmers as are the best." And he asked me as a favor that I make a special trip to those colonies and report to him, preferably in person, the result of my observations. I was only too anxious to consent to his request.

And yet another promise he asked of me, and which I gave no less cheerfully. But of this I shall speak in my next discourse.

My Visit to Tolstoy.

(Continued.)

Philadelphia, December 25th, 1910.

RESUMÉ—*Discourse I:* Reasons for my visit to Russia and for my calling on Tolstoy. His appearance and personality. Some of his views on Russia, its statesmen, religion, misgovernment. A pause under the Poverty Tree—his burial place.

Discourse II: Recalled food-relief for famine-stricken in Russia from Philadelphia and from Jewish congregation in California. Admired Quakers for their opposition to war. Blamed schools for many social wrongs. Severely criticised political and economical evils of our country. Ascribed them to growth of cities and to farm-desertions. His relationship with wife and family. His working-room. Against lawyers. Belittled his novels. Spoke of his book *What To Do?* Saw solution of Jewish problem in agriculture only.

Tolstoy suggests school for training American lads in agriculture.

At the conclusion of my last discourse I made mention of yet another request count Tolstoy made of me. It was in connection with his prediction that the Russian government would not look favorably upon my proposition to colonize Russian Jews upon unoccupied farm-lands in the interior. "If the plan cannot be entered upon in Russia," he asked, "why can it not be made successful in the United States? What are you, Americans, doing to prevent a Jewish problem in your own country? How long before the evils that are harrowing your people in the old world may be harrowing them in the new? Your people are crowding into your large cities by the thousands and tens of thousands. You have built up Ghettoes worse than those of Europe. There is excuse for it in Russia; there is no excuse for it in the United States. Yours is the right to own land and the best of it, and to till as much of it as you please. Granted that ages of enforced abstention from agricultural labor have weaned the elder generation from a love of country life and farm-labor, why may not a love for it be instilled in the young? Lead your young people to the country and to the farm. Start agricultural schools for them. Teach them to exchange the yard-stick for the hoe, the peddler's pack for the seed-bag, and you will solve the problem while it may yet be solved. You will see the lands tilled by them overflow, as of old, with milk and honey. You will see them give of their plenty to the people of the land, and receive in return goodly profit and esteem. And once again there will arise from among Jewish husbandmen prophets, lawgivers, inspired bards and teachers to whom the civilized world will do homage."

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At yet greater length he spoke on this subject, and the more he spoke the more he quickened within me the resolve to do as he wished it to be done.

Founding of Farm School promised.

And there, under *The Poverty Tree*, it was where I gave Tolstoy the solemn promise that upon my return home the earliest task I would enter upon would be the establishment of an agricultural school for Jewish lads, and other lads. And the existence of the *National Farm School*, near Doylestown in this state, is testimony that I kept my promise. I had gone to Russia to see the Czar, and I saw a greater man instead. I had gone with a plan for colonizing Russian Jews in Russia, and I returned with a plan for teaching agriculture chiefly to Russian Jewish lads in the United States. Verily, "man proposes and God disposes." And the hundreds of young men who have received their agricultural training at the National Farm School, and the hundreds of others, young and old, who, directly and indirectly, have been encouraged by that school to forsake the congested cities and to take up the farmer's life, owe their escape from the miseries of the Ghetto, and their enjoyment of health and happiness, to the promise asked of me by that noblest of all farmers, count Tolstoy.

Promise kept under difficulties.

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The establishment of the school was not an easy task, nor is its maintenance easy even now, notwithstanding the excellent record it has made. The bulk of our people have not yet acquired that profound grasp of the seriousness of our problem, and of its only possible solution, that Tolstoy had, sixteen years ago. Therefore is the support of that school still so meagre. Therefore has it still less than a hundred students in attendance when it easily could have a thousand, and more, if it had the means. And, therefore, are our Ghettoes more crowded than ever, and a greater drain than ever on our charities. That despite indifference and even hostility the school has persevered is due, to a very large extent, to the determination to keep sacred a promise solemnly given to one of the best of men.

It was late that night when I took leave of the count and of some of the members of his family. Before departing, it was agreed that I enter at once upon my journey to the Jewish agricultural colonies in the interior, that I might see them at work during the height of their harvesting, and a peasant and his wagon were engaged to take me on that trip. The count bade me a hearty God-speed, and repeatedly urged me to make my report personally to him, and I promised that I would avail myself a second time of his proffered hospitality, if my way should lead me back again to Moscow or St. Petersburg.

Never heard from him again.

Unfortunately, after my inspection of the Jewish agricultural colonies, which fully confirmed the favorable reports the count had received of them, my investigations led me to the Southern and Polish provinces, and consumed so much of my limited time that a return North was impossible. And so I never got to see the count again. And I never heard from him. Neither my report, which I sent to him in writing, nor my other communications to him, written in Russia and outside of it, have brought from him a reply. Never a line from him even in answer to the information sent him that the National Farm School, which he had so strongly urged, had been founded. Never an acknowledgment from him of the early annual reports of the School that were sent him to show the headway it was making. [24]

Probable reason of silence.

The heartiness of his reception of me, his almost affectionate farewell, his deep interest in my mission and his earnest invitation that I repeat my visit to him, preclude the thought that I was forgotten by him or became indifferent to him after my departure. There is but one explanation—an explanation strengthened by similar experiences of others in connection with him—none of my communications ever reached him. I was not wanted in Russia. I was a *persona non grata* to the government; my name was blacklisted, and my mail fell under the ban of the censor.

With him in spirit under
Poverty Tree.

But, if my mail has never reached him, my thoughts have been with him often. Many a time have I sat with him, in spirit, under that *Poverty Tree*. And yet more often will I sit with him there in the future, now that that site has become *Holy Ground*.

Has become his grave.

Gladly do I forgive the church of Russia many an outrage or blunder she has perpetrated or permitted to be perpetrated, for the one good act she has performed—that of refusing Tolstoy sepulture in what she is pleased to call "consecrated ground." She thus obliged him to designate as his last resting-place a spot that was one of the dearest on earth to him, a spot that was intimately associated with his life's philosophy, a spot located within a confine wherein he ruled more mightily and more exaltedly than any Czar that ever wielded scepter in vast Russia, where he wrote those epochal books of his which are destined some day to become of the basal elements of the religion of the future.

No Czarian funeral more
solemn than Tolstoy's. [25]

And even though no priest was nigh when the last rites over his remains were performed, there were present, besides his family, those who were more sacred in his eyes than priests or metropolitan, more honorable than even the Procurator of the Holy Synod—his dearly beloved peasants. It was these who followed him to his last resting place. It was these who sang the mortuary hymn *Everlasting Memory*, at his open grave. It was these, the "orphaned peasantry," as they called themselves because of his death, who gave his burial a distinction such as no Czarian funeral procession had ever enjoyed, notwithstanding ecclesiastical pomp or military display. It was these whose labors and outlook he had sought to soften and to brighten, who delivered the briefest and most eloquent eulogy that has, perhaps, ever been spoken: "*His heart has burst because of his unbounded love for humanity. The light of the world is extinguished.*"

In spite of herself church has
made a saint of him.

In refusing religious sepulture to the holiest man in Russia, the Greek orthodox church performed the crowning feat in her long series of stupidities. And yet, by that act she did, in

despite of herself, the very thing she did not wish to see done. Like Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust* who, in response to the question who he is, says: "*Ich bin ein Theil von jener Kraft, die stets das Böse will, und stets das Gute schafft,*" so did she prove herself the power that sought the evil and yet performed the good. By her act of intolerance she gave a new saint to Russia, and perhaps the only one she has. By it she furnished a sanctuary to that country, one that may be destined to make a Mecca of Yasnaya Polyana, one that may be more piously sought in the future, and by larger numbers, than any shrine or sanctuary of her own creation. By that act she shed a halo of immortal glory around the head of him whom she sought to cover with infamy.

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Has two ways of making saints.

The church has two ways of conferring saintships, a lesser and a higher one. The lesser distinction she confers upon lesser luminaries, generally upon those made famous by myth or legend for great endurance in fasting or penance, or for conquering imaginary devils, for working fancied miracles, or for displaying fiendish cruelty in persecuting and exterminating heretics. The higher distinction she confers generally at the stake or on the gallows, within prison walls or in the torture chamber, upon men of great minds or great hearts, upon lovers of truth and fearless enunciators of it, upon men who because of their love of humanity defy the power that interdicts God's greatest gift to man: the right to think and the right to believe and speak in accordance with the canons of reason and with the dictates of conscience.

Still makes of intolerance an act of piety.

In asking me the difference between reform and orthodox Judaism in America, and between American Reform Jews and Russian Karaitic Jews, and in replying that the difference exists mainly in the synagogue, that outside of it there is little or no difference in life and in social relationship, Tolstoy replied: "Our church has not yet arrived at the stage of tolerance of different religious beliefs. That is the reason why such people as the Jews and Doukhobors and Stundists are persecuted, and such men as I are in ill repute. Our church still makes of religious hatred an act of piety. It still measures God by the passions of man. Had the church the power in our days which it at one time had, and were the age of martyrdom not past, she would long since have silenced me for rebelling against her irrational teaching and for denouncing her craven supineness in the midst of outrageous wrongs and injustices, as now they silence men in our country for rebelling against unjust enactments of the government."

Tolstoy hoped for the reign of universal good-will.

Upon my saying that it was fortunate for us of the present day that all churches have been deprived of their one-time all-controlling power, since no church has yet been known to have possessed power and not to have abused it, he replied: "That is true of all power, temporal as well as of ecclesiastic, and it would be more fortunate still if governments were as restricted in their power as is the church, if all power, all authority, were to cease, if the good that is inherent in every human being were to be given a chance to germinate and to flourish, and every man learn to live in complete harmony with the highest of all laws, the law of peace and good-will, which God has written into the human heart. There would then be no need of armies and armaments, of courts and police, of prisons and jails, no need of impoverishing the masses through heavy taxation for the support of millions of soldiers and officers in idleness, who ought to raise their own bread by their own handiwork."

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Believed that the Messiah is still to come.

"On that day," said I, "the Messianic Age, for which the Jews have hoped and prayed, will surely have dawned." To which he answered: "You, Jews, are right, the Messiah is still to come, or, if he has come, his message has not yet entered the hearts of men."

Recalling this remark of Tolstoy, on this Christmas morn, suggests the question: How many Christmas days will yet have to come and go before its gospel of peace and good-will will govern the hearts of all who call themselves Christians as it governed that of the Russian peasant-saint.

Lessening of church power shown by failure of Tolstoy's excommunication.

And vividly I recalled his remarks on the shorn power of the church, when, six years later, the papers brought the news that Tolstoy had been excommunicated by the Russian church. I could

picture to myself the expression of sorrow or disgust on his face when that church decree was conveyed to him. Its ecclesiastical wrath, could have meant only hollow sounds to him. None knew better than he that the metropolitans who issued this excommunication merely grasped at a shadow, that the substance was gone, that that age was happily passed when the pronouncement of the ecclesiastical *anathema* deprived its victim of all association with friend or foe, deprived him of intercourse even with the closest members of his family, prevented them, under the penalty of like punishment, from providing him even with food, shelter and raiment. When during his flight from home, shortly before his death, he knocked at the doors of a monastery, and said "I am the excommunicated and anathematized Leo Tolstoy," the reply was "It is a duty and a pleasure to offer you shelter." The life of Tolstoy passed on as serenely, in the midst of his family and friends, after his excommunication as before. And the world's esteem of him grew even greater than it had been, by reason of the charges upon which the excommunication was based, namely:

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"In his writings on religious questions he clearly shows himself an enemy of the Russian Orthodox Church. He does not recognize God in three persons (or three persons in one God), and he calls the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, a mortal human being. He scoffs at the idea of Incarnation. He perverts the text of the Gospel. He censures the Holy Church and calls it a human institution. He denies the Church Hierarchy and ridicules the Holy Sacraments and the rites of the Holy Orthodox Church. Therefore, the Holy Synod has decreed that no priest is to absolve Count Tolstoy, or give him communion. Nor is he to be given burial ground, unless, before departing this life he shall repent, acknowledge the Orthodox Church, believe in it, and return to it."

Died unreconciled with church.

He never recanted. He never changed his attitude towards the errors and wrongs of the Russian orthodox church. And no one who ever stood and talked with him, face to face, could ever have believed that that modern Prometheus, that stern and fearless personality, that re-incarnation of Mattathias of old, and of his valiant sons, the Maccabees, could ever swerve from a position once taken by him. When upon his death-bed, he was frequently importuned to return as a penitent to the mother-church; he spurned every mention of it. He was still in the possession of his senses, he said, he still knew and believed that twice two equals four, and as long as he knew and believed this so long would he continue to know and to believe that what he had said and written concerning the errors and wrongs of the church was the truth.

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Never a truer follower of Jesus than he.

It is noteworthy, and quite in keeping with the general tenor of the Russian orthodox church, that no cognizance was taken by the church of the many noble things Tolstoy had said and written and done; no cognizance of the self-sacrificing efforts he had made to live the life which Jesus had lived and had enjoined upon his followers; no cognizance of his having conscientiously endeavored to square his life with the teachings of the *Sermon on the Mount*; no cognizance of his having brought light to those in darkness and comfort to those in sorrow, of his having consorted and labored with the poor and lightened their burden, of his having thirsted and hungered after righteousness, of his having sought peace and protested against war, and preached the gospel of the wrongfulness of all physical resistance, of his having, though of the oldest nobility, spurned luxury and ease and even money, having regarded these the source of corruption and the root of many of the evils in society.

Yet refused Christian burial.

Such a person, and one even but half as good as this, should have been entitled to sepulture in the most sacred of Christian cemeteries, and the most eminent of priests should have deemed it a privilege to have been permitted to perform the last rites over his mortal remains. So would it have happened among rational people, but so could it not have happened in Russia. There, because he could not subscribe to doctrines and rites and ceremonies for which he found neither scriptural nor rational warrant, priests felt themselves disgraced, and in danger of eternal damnation, even when their names were associated with that of Tolstoy.

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Priest objected to his name being associated with Tolstoy's.

A striking illustration of this was given, seven years ago, at the university of Dorpat, at the occasion of the celebration of its hundredth anniversary. In commemoration of that event the institution elected as honorary members of the corporation a number of Russians distinguished in literature, science and art, one of these was Tolstoy, another was Ivan, the miracle-working priest

of Cronstadt, elected to allay the church's indignation at the choice of Tolstoy. Ivan, the priest, refused the honor, and in the following letter to the Rector of the University:

"YOUR EXCELLENCY—I have read your estimable and respectful letter to me, which is so full of subtle delicacy—I decline absolutely the honor of the membership to which I have been elected. I do not wish to become connected, in any way, with a corporation—however respectable and learned—which, by some lamentable misunderstanding, has put me side by side with that atheist Leo Tolstoy—the most malignant heretic of our unfortunate age—who, in presumption and arrogance, surpasses all previous heretics of any age. I do not wish to stand beside Antichrist. I am surprised furthermore, to see with what indifference the University Council regards that satanic author, and with what slavishness it burns incense to him."

IVAN SERGIEIEF,
Prior and Archpriest of the Cronstadt Cathedral.

This letter tells of the attitude of the church towards Tolstoy better than any words of mine can tell. And this same Ivan, it is said, approved of the massacre of the petitioners of St. Petersburg on that memorable White Sunday, and when petitioned to protect the Jews against threatening massacres, treated the appeal with silent contempt.

Government hatred back of
that of the church.

It is to be remembered, however, that over and back of the Church of Russia stands the government. The Czar is the head of the church. Whom the government favors the church favors; whom the government hates, the church hates. The church hated Tolstoy because the government hated him, and why it hated him we shall be told in the next discourse of this series.

My Visit to Tolstoy.

(*Continued.*)

A DISCOURSE, AT TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL,

BY

RABBI JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF, D. D.

Philadelphia, January 1st, 1911.

Government used church for
discrediting Tolstoy.

Speaking in our last discourse of the church's excommunication of Tolstoy, and of its refusing a resting place to his remains in what she calls "consecrated ground," we said that the Czar is the spiritual as well as the temporal head of the Church of Russia, and that the hated of the church is yet more the hated of the government. This statement explains what otherwise is difficult to understand, namely, how so good a man as Tolstoy, who, for more than two score years, strove to square his life with the teachings of the *Sermon on the Mount*, could have incurred the hatred of the Russian orthodox Church. The government had far more reason to hate Tolstoy than had the church. Finding it impolitic to proceed directly against him, it availed itself of the church for discrediting Tolstoy in the eyes of the credulous populace.

Before giving reason why.

Before entering upon a discussion as to why the government feared Tolstoy, we must first have a glimpse of his earlier years, and briefly follow his heroic self-extrication from the corruption of the aristocratic society into which he was born, and his gradual rise to the exalted station of greatest reformer in the history of Russia.

Must hear story of his life.

He was born eighty-two years ago of an ancient noble family. His childhood years were spent in the midst of the gay military life of Moscow. Yet more gay and more corrupt was the society that

surrounded him during his university life. Experiencing a revulsion of feeling against the kind of life he was leading, he fled from the university before graduation, returned to his family estate at Yasnaya Polyana and took up the life of a farmer. [32]

This impetuous flight, and a later one of which we shall hear presently, may throw some light upon his last flight, a few weeks ago, which came to a pathetic end, and of which we shall speak in our next discourse.

His early glory and shame.

Five years long he lived the life of a peasant, when a call to arms landed him on the battlefields of the Crimea, where he soon won distinction for heroic service. But the dissoluteness of campaign-life soon disclosed that the Tartar in him was not yet dead. He returned to the debaucheries of his former years, and, according to his own confession, with all the greater zest, because of the double glory that had come to him, that of a distinguished soldier and of a brilliant author. He had taken to story-writing, and displayed in it a talent that made success instantaneous. He became the lion of his day, and was courted by high and low. And the greater his glory the more unrestrained grew his libertinism. [1]

His reform.

But there were lucid intervals, now and then, during which he held up to himself the lofty ideals of his former peasant life, and bitterly he denounced himself, and even portrayed himself unsparingly in the character-sketches of some of his novels. His better self acquired mastery at last; he threw off the yoke that had held him fast to the corrupt society of his day, and for the second time he fled to his estate.

He himself told of the circumstance that led to that flight. He had attended a ball at the home of a prominent nobleman, and passed the night in dancing and feasting, leaving his peasant-coachman waiting for him outside, in an open sleigh, in a bitter cold night. When at four in the morning he wished to return home, he found the coachman seemingly frozen dead, and it required several hours of strenuous effort to restore him to consciousness and to save his life. "Why," he asked himself, "should I, a rich, young aristocrat, who has done nothing for society, spend the night amid warmth and luxuries and feasting, while this peasant who represents the class that has built our cities, given us our food and clothing and other necessities, be kept outside to freeze?" He resolved, then and there, to dedicate the remainder of his life to the righting of this and other wrongs. And he kept his promise. [33]

How strong an impression this incident made upon him may be gathered from an indirect allusion to it, in his novel "*Master and Man*," published some two score years later.

Consecrates life to peasant.

It was discouraging work at first. The people whom he desired to benefit had no faith in him. They could not conceive of an aristocrat, to whom the serfs had been no more than worms to be trod upon, becoming suddenly interested in their welfare. There were long spells of utter disheartenment. A number of times he found himself at the brink of suicide. He sought relief and diversion in travel, but returned more convinced than ever of the corruptions and evils of society, of the tyranny of the classes and of the sufferings of the masses.

Marriage opened at last a new vista of life to him. Aided and stimulated by his cultured and companionable wife he entered upon his reform work by directing a powerful search-light on the goings-on among the high and the low, in a series of novels that secured for him at once rank among the greatest novelists of his age.

Aided by his writings.

In the second discourse of this series, I spoke of his having deprecated his novels, and of his having expressed his preference for his ethical and religious and sociological and economical and political writings. I ventured to say to him that but for his novels he would have gotten but comparatively few people to look into his other writings, that his fiction had secured a world-wide audience, that they contained many of the teachings of his other books, and that the public swallows a moral pill easiest when offered in the form of a novel. To which he replied "Most readers swallow the sugar-coating and leave the pill untouched, or, if they swallow it, it remains unassimilated." [34]

His novels criticized.

And he was right. I have heard much criticism of Tolstoy's novels. Some find him too realistic, too plain spoken, even coarse. A certain magazine that had begun publishing his "*Resurrection*" was

obliged to discontinue the story, because of complaints by many of its readers. It was a sad commentary, not on the morals of the writer but on the lack of morals, or on the false modesty, of the readers, for that novel has been declared by eminent critics to be "the greatest and most moral novel ever written." Others again value his realism for whatever spice they might find therein, little heeding the serious purpose for which the story was written.

Few know meaning of novel
in Russia.

At best, few people understand the meaning of a novel in such a country as Russia, where free press, free pulpit, free platform and free speech are unknown, where the novelist attempts to do the work of all of these, under the guise of fiction, the only form of literature that has a chance to pass the eye of the censor. Whole systems of political and social and moral reform are crowded between the covers of a novel, which, if published in any other form of literature, would condemn the author to life-long imprisonment in the Siberian mines. The novelist in Russia does not look upon himself as an entertainer nor as a money-maker, neither is he looked upon as such. He is the prophet, the leader, the teacher, the tribune of the people, the liberator—the emancipation of the Russian serfs, for instance, was entirely due to the novel. He has serious work to do, and he does it seriously. His eye is not upon rhetoric nor upon aesthetics, but upon the evil he has to uproot, on the corruption he has to expose, on the reform he has to institute, on the philosophy of life he has to unfold, and to do that means the production of a novel like "*Anna Karénina*" or of a play like "*The Power of Darkness*." He speaks not to English or American puritans, but to Russians, whose receptivity of strong, plain speech is healthier than ours.

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Spoke as a prophet and
reformer.

Such a novelist was Tolstoy. His fiction is as powerful as is the art of the Pre-Raphaelites. It is all sincerity. Nothing escapes him. What the X-Ray does in the physical world that his penetrating eye does in the field of morals. He sees the sin through a thousand layers of pretense and hypocrisy, and he describes it as he sees it. Disagreeable as are some of the subjects of which he treats, there is not a line that may not be read without a blush by the pure-minded. Like a surgeon, who cuts into the sore for the purpose of letting out the poison, he lays bare the wrongs and rottenness of church and government for the purpose of affecting the needed cure. As a prophet he speaks the language of prophets. As a reformer he tells the truth as reformers tell it, unvarnished and ungarnished. He spares others as little as he spared himself in his book "*My Confession*." He wants others to do as he has done, to subject the lusts and appetites and greeds to the rule of conscience, if the kingdom of God is ever to be established on earth.

Opposed by government.

Radical in his reform propositions from the first, he attracted attention at once. The world was amazed at the daring of his thought and at the plainness of his speech, and hailed him as a new prophet. The government, however, looked upon him as a revolutionist, and gave him clearly to understand that he would be silenced if he did not change his views and style of writing. Instead of complying with its wish, he became all the more daring in thought and all the plainer in speech. The humblest peasant could understand as clearly as the shrewdest diplomat what he was after. And it was not long before the government was after him. The publication and sale of certain of his books were prohibited. They were read all the more outside of Russia, and by the thousands of copies within Russia. And the more they were read the larger loomed his world-fame, till he became too large for banishment or prison, for fortress or Siberian mine.

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Challenged government to
do its worst.

With all the fiery zeal of an ancient Jewish prophet, he challenged the government to do its worst, "to tighten the well-soaped noose about his throat" as it tightened it about the throats of thousands of better men than any that are in the service of the autocrat or of his hirelings, the bureaucrats. Theirs was a government, he said, by might not by right, by gallows and knout, not by law.

His political demands.

He demanded the abolition of the throne and of capital punishment, the disbanding of the army, and the discontinuance of trial by court-martial. He demanded liberty of speech and freedom of conscience. He demanded the surrender to the people of lands and rights that justly belonged to them, and scathingly he denounced those who wasted in riotousness what had been painfully gotten together with the heart's blood of the laboring-people. He denounced the government for its cruelty toward the Jews, and charged it with having instigated the massacres of them. He held

the government responsible for every misfortune that befell the country—war, famine, pestilence, intense poverty, hopeless misery, appalling ignorance. In burning words he charged the slaughter of tens of thousands of husbands and fathers and sons, in the Japanese war, to the greed of the mighty. He depicted the Duma as the laughing stock of the world, as composed of people so stupid as not even to recognize what fools they were making of themselves. In his "*Resurrection*" he held up to the view of the world Russia's courts of law, and her iniquitous prison-system, the blocking of justice, the shocking judicial indifference and laxities in cases involving life-long sentences to penal servitude, the "lives that are shed like water upon the ground" during the transport to Siberia, and the crimes and rebellions that are systematically bred by such crying injustice.

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Little wonder that the government had no love for Tolstoy, and that it suppressed publication after publication of his, and maintained a special corps of censors and spies to watch him. Little wonder that it prohibited demonstrations of sorrow at the announcement of his death, and made use of the church as a cat's paw for holding him up as the Anti-Christ, and arch-fiend, as the enemy of the Czar, Church and people.^[2]

His demands of the people.

Plain and fearless as was his speech to the government it was yet more so to the people. Not a wrong in society, public or private, which he did not know, and which he did not castigate as only he knew how to castigate. Louder and louder, as he grew older, he preached the Law of God against the law of degenerate society. Art and science, commerce and industry were to him as nothing in comparison with the Moral Law, without which he saw no future for mankind.

His views respecting marriage and society.

The sanctity of the marriage tie, the sobriety and industry of the husband, the domesticity of the wife, were among the most constant of his themes. He loathed the self-exhibiting society woman; in his eyes she was no better than the street-woman. Great to him was the womanly woman, greater the domestic wife, greatest of all the mother, and so many more times greater the more times she was mother.^[3]

His views respecting labor and capital.

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The sad lot of the poor and the riotous extravagances of the rich were constantly recurrent subjects of discussion with him. "We speak of the abolition of slavery," said he, "but we have abolished only the word, the poor are enslaved as much as ever. We need a new emancipation, the emancipation of the rich from the tyranny of their money, from the thralldom of the false view of themselves and of society. With what right do men speak of the abolition of slavery, when every time they look into the mirror they see a slave-driver, when they live in idleness, and fatten on the heart's blood of the down-trodden, when they indulge their stomachs with the choicest of dainties, and wrap their bodies in silks and broad cloths and furs, while those, whose slavish toil provides these luxuries and comforts, have not enough food to keep body and soul together, nor enough of raiment and shelter to keep from freezing?"

In an article, published a few years ago in the *North American Review*, Tolstoy spoke of a group of peasants standing aside to let a picknicking party of rich folks drive by. One of the ladies' hats "has cost more than the horse with which the peasant plows the field," and for the gentleman's riding stick has been paid a week's wages of an underground workman. "Everywhere, two or three men in a thousand live so that, doing nothing for themselves, they eat and drink in one week what would have fed hundreds for a year; they wear garments costing thousands of dollars; they live in palaces, where thousands of workmen could have been housed; and they spend upon their caprices the fruits of thousands and tens of thousands of working days. The others, sleepless and unfed, labor beyond their strength, ruining their moral and physical health for the benefit of these few chosen ones." It is natural that the rich should not object to this arrangement, said he, the surprising thing is that the poor take it so complacently. "Why do all these men, strong in physical vigor, and in the habit of labor—the enormous majority of humanity—why do they submit to and obey a handful of feeble men, generally incapable of anything?" Tolstoy finds the answer very simple. It is because the minority have money, and the workingmen need the money to feed their families. Millions of workingmen submit "because one man has usurped the factory, another the land, and a third the taxes collected from the workmen." Were the millions, who now slave for the rich, to get their food from the soil, the rich, to keep alive, would be obliged to raise their own food, and the double redemption would have begun. It is because the number of workers who produce the prime necessities of life is diminishing that the number of those who use luxuries is increasing. Under such conditions, the health of society, wrote he, is as little possible as is the health of that person, whose body is continually growing heavier in weight, and his legs are continually growing thinner and weaker. When the support vanishes the body must fall.^[4]

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As a bitter opponent of violent measures, he saw but one way for righting the wrongs of society, and that is in the well-to-do descending to the lowly and starting life anew with them on a common level, and rising with them step by step to the higher planes. And to prevent a relapse to the old iniquitous state, he advocated the eradication of capital, which he held responsible for many of the inequalities and tyrannies and miseries of society. Let the rich, said he, convert their money into land and parcel it out among the poor, and claim for themselves no more than an equal share with the others. Merely wishing the poor well, and yet continuing the old state of affairs, is like sitting on a man's neck and crushing him down, yet all the time assuring him and others that we are sorry for him, and wish to ease his condition by every means in our power except by getting off his back. Or it is like entering an orchard, and barring the door behind, and gathering its fruit for ourselves, and wishing others might have as much yet continuing to keep the door barred and gathering for ourselves alone.^[5]

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If we really wish to see the lot of the poor improved, said he, we must not look for a miracle to effect it nor trust to some future age to bring it about. We must do it ourselves, and we must do it now. And we must do it at the cost of self-sacrifice. If people really wish to improve the condition of their brother men, and not merely their own, they must be ready not only to alter the way of life to which they are accustomed, but they must be ready for an intense struggle with themselves and their families.^[6]

Society will never be at peace, said he, until man will have learned the service of sacrifice. And man will never be happy until he will have learned to find his happiness in making others happy.^[7]

My Visit to Tolstoy

(*Concluded.*)

A DISCOURSE, AT TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL,
BY
RABBI JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF, D. D.
Philadelphia, January 8th, 1911.

Tolstoy's fatal flight.

The world was amazed, a few weeks ago, at the news that Tolstoy had fled from his family and home, with the resolve to retire to some wilderness, there to await his end. Guesses as to the cause were many, and the opinion was quite general that extreme old age had affected his reason.

Explained in light of last article of his.

I could not subscribe to this conclusion, neither could I see anything strange in his sudden departure. I knew of a number of similar flights in his life, and the reasons for them, and, therefore, I was little surprised. And as to suspecting him of failing mentality, I had but a short time before read the latest of his writings, entitled "*Three Days in a Village*," in which I had seen no sign of a lessening of his power of mind and heart and soul. And it is obvious that the Russian government, likewise, saw no lessening of his mentality, for it promptly suppressed the publication of it. An enterprising newspaper man, however, succeeded in forwarding a copy to our country, which enterprise not only rescued for us the last of Tolstoy's writings but also furnished us an explanation of his sudden and fatal flight.

Divided into three parts.

The article, a comparatively short one, was divided into three parts, each a heart-rending recital of miseries in villages neighboring the count's estate.

First part described peasant

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poverty.

The first part deals with wayfaring men. From six to twelve of them visit these villages daily in search of bread and clothes, of work and shelter. Some are blind or lame, some sick or feeble, some are very old or very young, some are maimed or crippled, dragging with them hideous memories of the recent Japanese war. Many of them are ignorant and filthy, but some of them are intelligent and revolutionary, who look upon the prosperous as thieves, and ask for their share of the coined blood pressed from the hearts of the poor and down-trodden. To keep these unceasing streams of wayfaring paupers from becoming a government charge, they are parcelled out by the authorities among the poor and helpless peasantry, good care being taken that they are not loaded upon the landlords, merchants or priests. The wickedness of this course is fully intelligible only to those who have some conception of the indescribable poverty and misery of Russian peasants. Stripped of almost all by taxation and by landlord oppression and by priest and constable extortion, many of them have scarcely food and room enough for themselves and cattle, scarcely clothes enough to cover their nakedness, no money with which to buy the absolutely necessary farming-implements, or to keep their wretched hovels from toppling over their heads. And yet, notwithstanding their appalling misery, Tolstoy saw their hearts go out in pity to these wandering paupers, and religiously dividing their crust with those yet more unfortunate than they, not knowing how soon they themselves might be in a similarly wretched plight.

Second part described
peasant misery.

The second part of the article bears the sub-title "*Living and Dying*." Upon entering the village accompanied by his physician, the count was entreated for aid by a woman. Upon inquiry he learned that her husband had been drafted into the army, and that the family was starving. Upon asking the village authority why the law had been violated in taking from a family its sole supporter, he was told that the husband's brother was quite capable of supporting the family. Next he met a little orphan girl twelve years old, who was the head of a family of five children. Her father had been killed in a mine; her mother had dropped dead from exhaustion, a few weeks after; poor but kind-hearted neighbors kept their eyes on the children, whilst the oldest went about begging the means for their support. In another hovel he found a man in his death-throes with pneumonia. The room was damp and cold; there was no fuel for the stove; no food, no medicine, no mattress, no pillow, for the dying man.

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Contrasted with
extravagance in his own
family.

Saddened by what he had seen and heard the count drove home. In front of his house he saw a carpeted sleigh, drawn by magnificent horses, driven by a coachman attired in heavy fur-coat and cap. It was the conveyance of the count's son, who had come on a visit to his father. There were ten at the table, who partook of a dinner of four courses, spiced by two kinds of wine. Two butlers were in attendance, and costly flowers were on the table. "Whence came these orchids?" asked the son, to which the mother replied that they had come all the way from St. Petersburg. "They cost a ruble and a half a piece," said the son, adding that at a recent concert the whole stage was smothered with orchids. Another at the table talked of a little recreation trip to Italy, but thought it troublesome to be obliged to spend thirty-nine hours in an express train, and regretted that aviation had not proceeded far enough to make possible a trip to Italy in shorter time. The count contrasted these table sights and sounds with those he had seen and heard in the village in the course of the day, and he left the table even sadder than he was when he came to it.

Third part described peasant
oppression.

The third part of the article deals with the taxation of the villagers. From one old peasant the tax collectors took his samovar—the brass kettle for making tea—as indispensable to a Russian as a stove is to us. From another, a widow, they took a sheep; from another they took a cow, and so on. One poor woman offered him some linen at the price of two rubles, the amount she needed for taxes, saying that, if she failed to make the sale, they will seize not only the linen but also her chickens, her only means of support. That women play so large a part in these taxations is due to so many of the men having been killed in the Japanese war, or serving in the army. Upon remonstrating with the village authorities, he was told that they were sorry for the poor people, but helpless, that they had received instructions from headquarters to be unsparing in the discharge of their duty. Upon visiting the district chief he was made clearly to recognize that back of his severity lay his ambition for promotion as a reliable, immovable government official.

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Felt that all his labors had
been in vain.

Little wonder, that the government suppressed the publication of this last of Tolstoy's writings. Little wonder, that the three days spent amid the miseries of the villagers saddened his heart beyond endurance. And still less wonder, that the government's responsibility for it, and the world's indifference to it, even his own family's, drove him to despair, ripened in him the resolve to retire to some wilderness, where the soul would no longer be harrowed by the sight of human outrages and sufferings.

In the midst of such miseries as he saw, he must have felt that the more than half a century of unceasing labors in behalf of the poor and down-trodden, all his renunciations and sacrifices had all been in vain. He must have felt that the lot of the peasant was as bad as ever, that the government was as cruel as before, that all his writings and all his pleadings for a more equitable division of God's gifts had failed to make the slightest impression upon the people, judging by the extravagances within his own family, seeing four courses of delicacies on his own table, at a single meal, two kinds of wine, costly orchids, when, at but a short distance away, men and women, even children, working infinitely harder than any of his own family, deserving infinitely more than any who lord it over them, were literally starving for the want of the necessities of life, were dying in agony for the want of medical care and ordinary comforts, had their last possession taken from them by pitiless tax-collectors for the support of a vast army of soldiers and officials, for the maintenance of a costly and an oppressive autocracy.

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Noted his discontent when in conversation with him.

Even as far back as 1894, when he was sixteen years younger than he was at the time of his flight, even then I noted in my conversations with him an undercurrent of deep sorrow when dwelling on the sufferings of the people, an occasional outburst of impatience at the slowness of progress, and now and then a cry of despair, an utter hopelessness of ever seeing a state of society different from what it was.

Those responsible for wrongs charged him with irreligion.

What seemed to vex him most was seeing the very people who were responsible for these wrongs and outrages considering themselves religious, and branding as infamous such a man as he whose sole cry was for justice and right. "Because they mumble so many prayers a day," said he to me, when speaking of Pobjedonostzief, "and cross themselves so many times, and fast so many days in the year, they consider themselves Christian, as for the rest of their conduct, one finds it difficult to believe that they had ever heard of the *Sermon on the Mount*, of the *Golden Rule* or of the *Mosaic command*" "*Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Asking me for an explanation of Reform Judaism, and telling him that it was founded upon an emphasis on the spirit of religion rather than on its forms, he replied that it would not be tolerated in Russia, that the mere words Reform and Spirit were quite sufficient to condemn it. The government knows that they who seek the Spirit also seek the Truth, and it is afraid that Truth will overthrow autocracy and hierarchy, blind obedience and stupid ceremony, and will set men free.

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Few men had studied religion as much as he.

There are many things in connection with Tolstoy which Russia of the future will wish to see expunged from the pages of its history, and chief of these will be its having branded him as infamously irreligious. Few men have been as genuinely religious as he. Few men have given religion as much thought as he. Few men have written on religious subjects as much as he.

Rebelled against adulteration of religion.

He studied the Scriptures in the original languages, and carefully he read Church doctrine and dogmatic theology, and the more he read the firmer became his conviction that *Christ's Christianity* was quite a different thing from *Church Christianity*. He rejected the latter, and fervently he espoused the former. Three-fourth of what passes for Christianity, he said, has no historical nor logical nor spiritual warrant. He saw how its fundamental principle, the equality of all men as sons of God, had been perverted to give the classes the right to enslave the masses. He saw how a divine being had been made of Jesus, and how this enabled the church to say that living the life he lived, and practicing the precepts he preached was impossible for human beings. He had read in the Scriptures not to resist evil, and yet had been taught the soldier's trade, the art of killing. The army to which he had belonged was called "The Christophile Army," and it was sent forth with a Christian benediction. One day, he said, he was reading in Hebrew, with a Rabbi, the fifth chapter of Matthew. After nearly every verse the Rabbi said "This is in the Old Testament or in the Talmud," and showed me the corresponding passages. When we reached the

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words "Resist no evil," the Rabbi did not say "This is in the Talmud," but he asked "Do the Christians obey this command? Do they turn the other cheek?" "I had nothing to say in reply," said Tolstoy, "for at that particular time, Christians, far from turning the other cheek, were smiting the Jews upon both cheeks. I saw the support the church gave to persecutions and to the death penalty, and my soul cried out against it."

And his mind rebelled, he said and wrote, against the mythology which was paraded as theology, such teachings as the immaculate conception, the heaven opening and the angels singing, Christ's flying through the air and into the sky, and seating himself at the right hand of God. He denounced as blasphemous such teachings as that by partaking of the Sacrament God's body becomes assimilated with that of man, or that of God being three Gods in one, being still angry at man for the sin of Adam, and sending His only son on earth to be crucified so that by the son's blood the father's wrath may be appeased. He regarded as unworthy even of heathens such teachings as that salvation for sin depended on being baptized, and that God will visit eternal punishment on those who do not believe in His divinely begotten son. He professed a sincere belief in God as the author of all existence, and as the source of all love. He believed that death meant a new and higher birth. He believed that God's will was most clearly expressed in the teachings of the man Jesus, whom to consider and pray to as God he regarded as blasphemous.

Compressed religion into five commandments.

He compressed the teachings of Jesus into the following commandments: I. "Do not be angry. II. Do not lust. III. Do not give away the control of your future actions by taking oaths. IV. Do not resist evil. V. Do not withhold love from any one." These five commandments he developed into a comprehensive moral philosophy, and by it he conscientiously endeavored to guide his life and thought.^[8]

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Was indebted for his faith to peasants.

And for that strong and simple faith of his, which is destined, in the not distant future, to inaugurate an era in the religious world similar to that which Luther inaugurated four centuries earlier in Germany, he was indebted to the peasants. During the libertine life of his early years, he had lost the little faith that had been taught him in his childhood. He had returned to his estate an avowed atheist, and as such had he continued for some time, until, one day, he inquired into what it was that made the wretchedly poor and ignorant and hard-working peasants contented with their lot, resigned to their fate, bearing hardships and sufferings uncomplainingly, and looking happily forward to the end. He found it in their faith. "Surely," said he, "a state of mind that can do so much for the poor is worth having by all." And he devoted himself to a diligent study of their religion. He found it burdened with foreign accretions, contaminated with a putrid mass that had been gathered during centuries of darkness and superstition, adulterated with all kinds of conscious and unconscious inventions. Stripping away the foreign and putrid and false, he alighted upon a rational, satisfying faith, the faith which he believed to have been that of the Rabbi of Nazareth, and, henceforth, consecrated his life to the propagation of it.

Gave them his life and labor in return.

And more yet than what the peasants gave to him he gave to them in return. He gave them himself, and, in the end, he sacrificed even his life for them. He found them down-trodden serfs, he endeavored to make free men of them. He found them cowed and bowed, he taught them to walk and stand erect. He found them unbefriended, he became a brother to them. He found them wretchedly poor, he renounced pleasure and treasure, luxury and ease, to lessen as much as he could the distance between them and himself. He dressed as they dressed, and labored as they labored, and, as far as permitted, ate the kind of food they ate. He found them stalking in darkness, he brightened their way for them. He found them ignorant and at the mercy of priest and government official, he became their advocate, dared to brave an all-powerful autocracy in the defense of their rights. He started schools for them. He gave up writing for the thousands of select readers that he might write for the millions of illiterate peasants and other laborers. He wrote special booklets for them, and sold them at a loss, at one-half cent a copy, stories, legends, symbolical tales, moral plays and religious tracts, all fitted for their minds and stations, and intended to deepen in them the law of love and right.

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Died believing he had failed.

To have sacrificed and renounced and dared as much and as long as he had, and, in the end, to find what he found, in his three days observation of village miseries and outrages, was more than his great heart could stand. It broke. He was eighty-two years old. He could no longer continue the fight. He could no longer look upon the suffering of the unfortunates, nor upon the wrongs of

the world, nor upon the extravagances even within his own family. He regarded his whole life-work a dismal failure. He knew of no other balm for his bleeding heart than flight from the world to some secluded spot, there, as a hermit, to await the end, which he knew was not far distant. Truly pathetic were his farewell lines to his wife:

"I cannot continue longer to live a life of ease and luxury while others starve and suffer. Like many other old men, I retire from the world to await my end in solitude. I ask that you do not seek my place of sojourn, and that you do not come to it if it be discovered. I beg forgiveness for the grief that I may cause you."

Characteristic of great reformers.

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He was not the first of the world's great reformers and lovers of humanity to lose heart and to experience spells of despair. Moses and Elijah and Jesus and others had their hours of agony, and prayed that the end might come, and deliver them from their hopeless labors. And many who, like Tolstoy, closed their eyes in the belief that they had utterly failed loomed large in subsequent ages among the greatest of the world's benefactors.

Succeeded better than he knew.

Tolstoy has not failed. He succeeded better than he knew. His pathetic death revealed the vast number of followers he had in his own country and in all parts of the world. And had he cared to inquire, he might have known it before his death. He could have seen it from the fact that more books of his were sold than of all other Russian authors combined. He could have seen it in the vast crowds that gathered all along the line, to catch a glimpse of him, when on his journey, a few years ago, to the Crimea, in search of health. He could have seen it in the deputations of sympathizers that waited upon him, and in the streams of congratulatory letters and telegrams that rushed in upon him—till suppressed—after his excommunication. He could have seen it in the Tolstoyan societies among the students of almost all the Russian universities and among other bodies. He could have seen it among the considerable number of landlords, who made conscientious efforts at following his life, and at adopting his mode of dealing with peasants and laborers. Were the yoke of autocracy removed, there would arise in Russia an army of Tolstoyans as vast and mighty as the host which Ezekiel in his vision saw in the valley of dry bones.

Religion of future will be largely Tolstoyan.

The religion of Russia of the future will be largely that which Tolstoy lived and taught, and it will be the religion of a large part of the rest of the world. Time's sifting process will eliminate whatever is untenable in his system of moral and social and economic philosophy, which sprang more from a flaming heart than from a cool, calculating mind. He had neither the time nor the inclination to work out a synthetic philosophy. He wrote as the spirit moved him, and whenever it moved him, the keynote of all his writing having been, as he said to me, "the hastening of the day when men will dwell together in the bonds of love, and sin and suffering will be no more."

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There are in the Tolstoyan system of religion the elements of the long-dreamed of universal creed. It will take time for the rooting of it. Mormonism and Dowieism spring up, like Jonah's gourd, and pass away as speedily as they came. A system as rational and radical as that of Tolstoy requires an age for germination. But, once it takes root, it takes root forever; once it blossoms, it blossoms for eternity.

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] See his book "*My Confession*."
- [2] See his essay "*Church and State*."
- [3] See his essays "*Man and Woman, Their Respective Functions*," and "*The Mother*," and his book "*What To Do?*"
- [4] See also his book "*What To Do?*" and his essay "*The Russian Revolution*."
- [5] See his book "*What To Do?*" and his essay "*Money*."
- [6] "*The Slavery of Our Times*."
- [7] "*Cossacks*." "*Christ's Christianity*."

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