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municating were punished by temporary excommunication." It is to be regretted that some amongst ourselves are disposed to encourage this practice.

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ART. III.—COUNT TOLSTOI ON CHRIST'S CHRISTIANITY.

I SHALL make no attempt to criticise the literary work of Tolstoi as a whole. I am too slightly acquainted with his performances in fiction to warrant any such attempt. I have read him only in translations; but even through this disguise it is possible to discern the brilliancy, animation, and variety of his writing, and the audacious extensiveness of his speculative ideas. I propose to myself a more restricted task. Even here I shall not offer an exhaustive account of the single book before me.

It is scarcely possible to judge of the real merits of a book when read in a translation. Contrary to the absurdly shallow doctrine that you can read any author as well in your own tongue as in his, I freely avow myself disqualified through not knowing Russian from criticising a Russian work.

But the ideas which this book embodies for the English public ought not to circulate without a challenge. Tolstoi's is a name to conjure with. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, imbibe his spirit and his ideas, and feel that in doing so they are putting themselves in touch with what is quite the thing. Some, moreover, proclaim him with ostentatious clamour as one of the prophets. The old question has returned to my mind in reading this book, and in reflecting upon the many who run after Tolstoi, "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?" Merely to raise such a question will in some quarters be regarded as a token of obstinate inability to discern the signs of the times. The reader must judge as to the propriety of the question, and as to the answer which is conveyed in this article.

Russia shows signs of awakening. The Stundists are a living force; they thrive under the blessing of persecution. Though their form of piety lacks strength and definition, they plainly possess both life and godliness. The agitation is hopeful; it may portend the awakening from slumber of an empire and a Church. What Evangelical Christian can forbear to pray that these Russian Lollards may initiate a rich but regulated Reformation?

The vast and sluggish Oriental Church must surely have a

destiny of blessing; but without a regeneration like that which renewed the West in the sixteenth century this future is impossible. Yet the hope of it is not an illusion. Last year Russia received or bought from the Bible Society Scriptures in whole or in part numbering half a million. This startling fact is an augury of blessing. What the Bible has done in Germany and England it can do in Russia. It can emancipate the soul, and pave the way for freedom and self-government; it can draw together classes long and widely estranged; it can teach rulers to be good, and subjects to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, while rendering to God the things that are God's.

Whether Count Tolstoi is a leader in religion is uncertain. If he wishes for the title, let him have it. He is earnest, he is original, he is consistent with his doctrines in his own practice. Those doctrines have a strong tincture of some sort of Christianity. At any rate, no one who watches the movements of religion with a wide and sympathetic eye ought to disdain the noble enthusiast of the North. He at least repeats the proof that Russia is awaking. If she wakes only to a pietist Socialism, it may be better than what now is. But the hostility of the Czar and the rigours of the Synod may, alas! be too strong both for the Count and for the Stundists, and Russia may yet have to wait for a Luther or a Huss who shall break her bonds asunder.

The system of Count Tolstoi resembles that of the Socialists in some things; in others he is a Quaker; in others, again, a higher critic. Yet he ought to be heard with candour, because of his sincerity; and with respect, because he knows that of which he speaks.

The book before us is entitled "Christ's Christianity," and is in quite the modern vogue. It is an autobiography in two parts: the first part entitled "How I came to Believe"; the second, "What I Believe." Books of this kind have undoubtedly a place of their own. In some famous instances they are classics beyond price. Augustine's "Confessions" or Scott's 'Force of Truth," the "Confessions" of Rousseau or Newman's "Apologia," are books the loss of which would impoverish the world. But writers who write about themselves must always feel tempted to morbid disclosure or morbid reticence. Perhaps the Count has felt the force of each temptation in writing the story of his inner life. I would therefore inspect the record of his soul's wanderings with the delicate reverence of charity.

Tolstoi is of noble birth. He had great possessions. He was reared amid the luxury of Russia, sumptuous and semi-barbaric. He was bred a soldier, but, forsaking the sword for

the pen, he turned man of letters, journalist, or novelist in his early prime. At St. Petersburg he lived the life that owns no law; he describes it in words (p. 9) too terrible for isolated quotation. At length, weary of loose living and loose thinking, he withdrew to his estates, married, and applied himself to the duties of a rural magnate.

But he could find no satisfaction for his soul. The question haunted him, What was the meaning of life? Tormented by this inquiry, he travelled in search of the answer to various lands. He read French books, he studied modern science; all was alike in vain. Amid prosperity, domestic ease, and literary renown, he was miserable still. Even suicide seemed at one time a refuge to be desired.

At length in the teaching of Christ, as he conceived it, he found repose.

Such, in brief, is the story of Count Tolstoi as told by himself. It is a melancholy and not wholesome record. Many devour it with a morbid alacrity; the picture of unrest and endless disappointment entertains them. It is Solomon over again; it is Ecclesiastes in a Russian dress.

Others, we believe, really think that such a narrative as that of Tolstoi's is healthful reading. They study the strange psychology with a curious eye. Science is served by such disclosures, and humanity is enriched by fresh knowledge of itself.

But to me these pages present a spectacle of frailty, vacillation, and unrest, which edifies and pleases in the least possible degree. They forcibly recall the pertinent aphorism of Voltaire, that a man should not wash his dirty linen in public.

Without the first part of the book it was impossible to render the second part intelligible. The Count was impelled to publish a religious manifesto; the story of his life seemed both to justify and elucidate this manifesto, and accordingly the world has had his biography. The two are closely connected: like creature, like creed. From the man who had tried and had exhausted the resources of Russian culture, such a version of Christianity might naturally be expected. On the other hand, the creed furnishes a lucid and telling comment on the religion prevalent in Russia. The Count was baptized and confirmed into the Greek Church. His education was orthodox. He belonged to that social class which everywhere, from one motive or another, upholds the established Church. But the Christianity which Tolstoi saw dominant in Russia was a Christianity of pomp and legal proscription, tinged with idolatry, grossly superstitious, persecuting,[1] ex-

[1] P. 102.

clusive, and behind the times. From such a Church he has, not unnaturally, recoiled into the pale and meagre system explained and defended in the second part of his book.

Tolstoi's creed may be summed up in three articles: I believe that it is wrong to revenge myself; I believe that it is wrong to take an oath; I believe that it is wrong to lay up money.

No force, no adjuration, no capital. These positions he maintains and emphasizes with great earnestness, for he shows that violence, perjury, and avarice are the vices peculiarly favoured by the autocracy of Russia in Church and State.

No one can be surprised if this be so. Let us grant that the Count writes with the fervid exuberance distinctive of those who propound new notions in religion; still, we can readily believe that violence is a vice in a country where the profession of arms is enormously prominent; that perjury is common where transactions the most trivial are watched with suspicion by priests and magistrates; and that the inordinate love of money goes hand-in-hand with a state of things in which the mass of the people live habitually within sight of starvation.

A social and religious system like that of Russia bristles with points repugnant to the New Testament. Count Tolstoi has assaulted what on his testimony we may well believe are the worst of these blemishes. Against them he sets the Sermon on the Mount in its austere and splendid purity. Look on this picture and on that, says he in effect. Try by Christ's standard our practices sanctioned by Czars and blessed by patriarchs, and then say whether of the two is more like Christ's Christianity—the established order of all the Russias, or the little and poor community which follows the leading of Tolstoi.

Thus far it is easy to agree with him. However eccentric may be his views, however capricious and defective his interpretations of the New Testament, we may at least rejoice that he has the courage and ability to deliver a protest so needful and so direct.

None can impeach Tolstoi of insincerity or half-heartedness. He has forfeited much in obedience to his convictions; he may not improbably have to forfeit more. Many who know him personally testify to the simplicity and blamelessness of his life. He is poor, when he might have been rich; and without power, when he might have been distinguished and influential.

Yet those who render him the most willing homage must regret that the cause which he has espoused with such ardour

and self-denial is not more worthy to be called the cause of Christ. It lacks the vital reality of religion; its doctrine is indefinite;[1] its spirit is mainly ethical, its relations mainly social. It is dubious when it touches what is supernatural; it hesitates feebly about the history, the person, and the work of the Lord Jesus. It treats the New Testament with libertine criticism, and brings inspired Apostles to the bar of a modern mystic.

We regret all this for its own sake, and also because we feel sure that such a movement can never endure. It is only fleeting remonstrance, not an abiding protest. It gives nothing to the heart and soul. If it could succeed in displacing the ancient and massive system of Russian superstitions, it would not, as Evangelical Christianity did when it expelled from half Western Christendom the falsehood of a thousand years, fill up the void with new and living principles of faith and practice.

I am tempted to treat a little more in detail some few of Tolstoi's peculiar tenets.

There are many persons at the present day who profess themselves believers in the Sermon on the Mount. Those Socialists who retain from custom or connection some belief in religion generally applaud these three chapters of St. Matthew. Even the anti-Christian Socialists are fond of citing them: not to prove that Socialists ought to be Christians, but that Christians ought to be Socialists. Tolstoi is undoubtedly pious in his own way, and he insists that the teaching of Christ is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount.[2] With this we have no quarrel. We heartily believe that the Sermon on the Mount is truly and thoroughly the teaching of Christ—an integral and vital part of Christianity.

The late Archbishop Magee, I think, said on one occasion that to attempt to regulate society by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount was absurd. May I, with deference, dispute his Grace's dictum? What is absurd is this: to attempt to regulate society by parts of the Sermon on the Mount. That Sermon is something more than a mere code of ideal ethics. It is a revelation of grace and truth. In order to carry out its precepts, it supplies new motives and a Divine power. It not only teaches that men ought to be meek and forbearing, unworldly and perfect, but it also discloses the power which can make them so. To attempt to regulate society by its precepts without first bringing the individual members of society under the influence of this life and these motives is not only absurd; it is also profane. But to offer to

[1] Pp. 103, 105. [2] P. 104.

men the precepts coupled with the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount, and to persuade them to recast the whole of life in agreement with the Divine model, so far from being absurd, is the purpose and the plan of the wisdom which cometh down from above.

Here, then, I submit my first objection against Tolstoi's version of Christianity. I adopt the Count's own standpoint; I take the Sermon on the Mount as he takes it, and I maintain that he deals unfairly with it.

Should these lines ever come under his eye, I respectfully invite him to consider how much there is in these three chapters beyond what he almost exclusively insists upon. Are not the Beatitudes deeper and wider in their scope than any social precept? Does not the "light of the world"[1] imply darkness, and the salt of the earth corruption? Is not prayer in its simplicity, secrecy, and patient assiduity, revealed here as the power with God?[2] Is not the Great Teacher something more than a teacher? Does He not call Himself the end and the subject of the law and the prophets?[3] Does He not solemnly anticipate the day when He will judge and reject men for unfaithfulness to Himself? Does He not claim lordship in the kingdom of heaven? And are not His words[4] the foundation on which the wise man, having built an eternal habitation, shall calmly defy the dissolution of all things?

Such is the self-portrait which the Sermon on the Mount contains of its wonderful Author. We cannot refuse Him and retain His teaching, yet this is what Tolstoi is in danger of doing. Fascinated by the moral beauty, simplicity, and salubrity of certain precepts, he relegates the weightier matters of the new law to the regions of theological obscurity. This is what I mean in saying that his treatment of the Sermon on the Mount is unfair.

My second objection must take the form of a protest against the ruthless fashion in which Tolstoi handles the Greek original. He has no scruple about altering a word or two according to taste. In a like vein he forces a meaning out of "the law and the prophets"[5] which it is certain the words cannot bear, and never have borne. A yet sadder feature in Tolstoi's religion is the almost fierce contemptuousness with which he handles the Old Testament.[6] In a word, the Count displays the form and features of the Rationalist. While he glows with ethical fervour, he has but slender belief in spiritual realities. While he admires Christ as a Teacher, he hesitates

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[1] Matt. v. 14.
[2] Matt. vi. 6 *et seq.*
[3] Matt. v. 17; vii. 21-23.
[4] Matt. vii. 24, 25.
[5] P. 148.
[6] Pp. 146, 147.

to own Him as the Divine Saviour and Supreme Judge. If the text of Scripture obstructs his theory, he removes it; if the Old Testament displeases his taste, he rejects it with scorn.

My third and final criticism conducts me to a kindly parting from Count Tolstoi. Why is the Sermon on the Mount to be regarded as supremely, as almost exclusively, the teaching of Christ? It has no more authority than any other part of St. Matthew's Gospel. The great parables of chapter xiii., the great prophecy of chapters xxiv. and xxv., are just as much the teaching of Christ as is the Sermon on the Mount. They were penned by the same sacred author; they were spoken by the same august lips. Further, the Sermon on the Mount is not more the teaching of Christ than are the discourses in chapters xiv., xv., xvi. of St. John, or than the parable of the Prodigal Son, or than those innumerable and scattered words of Christ which shine in every page of the Evangelists.

To leave these out of account, and to fasten the eyes of the mind exclusively upon the wonderful exordium to Christ's teaching, is to do violence to the truth, injustice to history, and irreparable damage to the Christian religion. I know that it is the fashion in certain quarters to hail the Count as the prophet of the new era. I have attempted to show that, if he does inaugurate a new era at all, there are reasons to fear that it will not be marked by a development strongly and vitally Christian.

While wishing to recognise every element of good contained within his movement, I cannot fail to note with regret germs of a tendency which, if not corrected, must lead men's souls away from the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ—a tendency which, from its intrinsic weakness and shallowness, can never satisfy the soul or yield the peaceable and imperishable fruits of righteousness. That this defect may be remedied should be our earnest desire, so that Count Tolstoi may not lose the fruits of his toil, his sorrow, and his noble sacrifices for Russia.

But it is time to draw to a close these reflections upon the Russian mystic, and to turn our thoughts from the vast and snowy tracts where the Czars hold sway to the land of the olive and the vine. In Italy another Count is endeavouring to bring about a spiritual revolution. His aims and his methods differ widely from those of his Russian contemporary. It will be the object of the second part of this paper to describe the life and work of Count Campello, and thus to complete a contrast picturesque in itself, and not without important and instructive lessons.

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