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NO attempt is made in the following lines to criticise or analyze the writings of Tolstoi. This article is purely a personal one, the writer having had, in virtue of certain hereditary friendships and family connections, rather exceptional opportunities of knowing many facts regarding Tolstoi which are usually withheld from the knowledge of the world at large, and are for that very reason the more interesting. A brief sketch of the main events of the great writer's life will not, however, be amiss as an introduction to the string of anecdotes which follows.

Count Leon Tolstoi was born on the 8th of August 1828 at Sossnais Poliana, a village near Toula, which forms part of the family estates. His mother was a Princess Volkoasky, and on both sides of his house he could boast — were he disposed to do so — some of the bluest blood in Russia. He was from earliest infancy a brilliant, dreamy, extraordinary child, as odd as it was possible for a boy to be, and neither years nor experience have modified his eccentricity in the least. His boyish education was acquired at home under the direction first of a governess and then of two resident preceptors, aided by various professors. An exact picture of his early years is given in Childhood and Youth.

His academic studies were made at the University of Kazan, where he did not fail to distinguish himself, particularly in the study of oriental languages, in which he attained a very remarkable proficiency. After graduation he began the study of law, but one of the sudden caprices which have all his life passed over him like gusts led him to throw aside his studies when on the road to distinction and to retire to his estate. Here he remained only long enough to change his mind again, and he went thence to Cauvase, where the regiment of his brother Nicholas (the Volodia of Childhood and Youth) was then stationed. This regiment he joined, and greatly distinguished himself in the war with Circassia, and again in the Crimean war. He passed through the siege of Sebastopol shut up in the famous fortress which was the scene of so much heroism and so much suffering, and many are the anecdotes told by his companions of his intrepid courage and incomparable eccentricity. At the close of the war he left the army and went to St. Petersburg. Here he devoted himself to literature, but also went to court occasionally and into society a great deal. He had immense success in society and especially with ladies at this period of his life. All the old friends of the family say that his brother Nicholas was more lovable, more fascinating, as he was also much handsomer, for Leon was never in his best days anything but ugly; but, as these same old friends never fail to add, "Leon, when he chose, was irresistible." And during the first part of his residence in St. Petersburg he generally did choose to be irresistible. All the scenes so admirably described in War and Peace, Anna Karenina and others of his novels — the wine parties, the sledging expeditions, the wild pranks of the young bucks, the tea parties of the aristocracy, the balls at court, and the jealousies and rivalries of the circle immediately surrounding the emperor and empress, are rendered with inimitable fidelity to nature because Tolstoi knew so thoroughly that world and those who live in it. "Magna pars fui" he might say with truth, for in youth he plunged deep into that very fashionable gayety which he now dislikes and despises.

Three years of life in St. Petersburg sufficed to weary him of society and of literature. He declared himself to be completely worn out, to have outlived all illusions and to have come to the dregs of life. In this state of mind he broke up his establishment and left not only St. Petersburg, but Russia, to travel far and wide; and when, after long wandering, he returned to his estates, it was to devote himself to agriculture, cattle raising and all the various duties and occupations of a great landed proprietor. This mode of life lasted for some time, and then was suddenly abandoned by Tolstoi for wanderings of many months over the steppes and a wild life with the Baschkirs.

In time he wearied of this also, and about twenty−eight years ago he married. His wife, once a celebrated beauty, belongs to a noble family of German origin, domiciled in Russia several generations ago. She was only sixteen when he married her, and just before their silver wedding was celebrated she gave birth to her fourteenth child. Last summer a fifteenth was born. Their house for many years has been full of nurses, governesses and

preceptors, as well as children. Among the nurses is an old woman who was in the service of Tolstoi's mother. She is very fond and proud of her illustrious master but not in the least in awe of him, and she frequently takes him to task for certain eccentric doings which she thinks quite incompatible with his dignity. Sometimes she can make him obey her a little; then she is very much pleased.

The Tolstois live in a very patriarchal fashion and exercise a truly patriarchal hospitality. Often some of their relatives and intimate friends arrive with their families, including tutors, governesses, nurses, maids and grooms. They are always made welcome, and when — as sometimes happens — as many as twenty−five or thirty children are racing about, pursued by their various attendants, the house is a perfect pandemonium. Just such hospitality — the genuine, large, liberal hospitality of the Russian aristocrat — is described in War and Peace and Anna Karenina. Apropos of Anna Karenina, a friend of mine, who is also an intimate friend of the Tolstois, was staying with them some years ago, just before the novel in question was finished. Tolstoi, who used to be a most agreeable host, was on this occasion absent, gloomy and preoccupied. He avoided everyone, and wandered about the house and grounds like an unquiet ghost. When asked what was the matter, he always replied: "Let me alone; let no one speak to me or look at me; I do not know what to do with my Anna." He had, in fact, come to a stand−still within a few pages of the end, yet not able to finish; a miserable condition, which every author will be able to pity. Into the depths of this gloom came a message on business, requiring his attendance at Toula on the following day. Two days later he returned, and coming with a light, alert step into the salon where Countess Tolstoi and Madame de — — −were sitting, he told them that an accident had taken place at the station at Toula, where a woman had thrown herself in front of an advancing train. He added: "I know now what to do with my Anna." And requesting that his meals be sent out to his study, and that no one disturb him, he locked himself up until the novel was finished.

His sketches of Sebastopol, which created a furor of admiration, were published in 1856 before the publication of The Cossacks, although there is no doubt that a part, at least, of that work was written before the appearance of the sketches in Le Contemporain. I do not know whether these sketches have been translated into English. If they have, it may amuse the American public to know that the military censor fell foul of them. According to this wise personage, pictures of life as it ought to be and not as it is are the proper thing in literature, and he took especial umbrage at the charming scene in which the soldiers amuse themselves in telling fairy tales. This, he averred, might indeed be true — indeed, was likely to be only too true; but it would have been far better to have represented them as employing their leisure hours in studying military tactics or something useful, and then would the book have been worth disseminating among the soldiers. As it was, it was forbidden. After the Sebastopol sketches Tolstoi published The Cossacks, then War and Peace, Katia — perhaps the most artistic of his books — and Anna Karenina. The books which were published later have not always been translated in their regular order, and I will not speak of them here further than to remark that Childhood and Youth is — like all Tolstoi's books — full of lifelike portraits, and is peculiarly interesting to all his old family friends on that account.

Tolstoi has strange ideas about education — ideas which shift and change like the pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope — and the result has been very curious, and by no means always to the advantage of his children. For example, he had for many years a French preceptor in his house, and a French lady who was staying there some years ago was so astonished at the blunders made by the children in conversation — blunders which the professor apparently never thought of correcting — that she one day took him to task for his negligence. "Ah, madame, what would you have?" he replied with a shrug. "It is true that I have been many years in the house. It is also true that the children blunder disgracefully. But what can I do when M. le Comte is continually saying that French is of no consequence; that Russians speak it too much and too well; and that the children are better without it. Of course they take advantage of what he says, and if I too fail in my duty it is M. le Comte's fault."

Instances of this sort are very common in the Tolstoi household, and many friends of the family would not take a tutor or governess from the Tolstois upon any account, so lax do they become in point of discipline and order while living in that house. A very dear friend of the family once told me that in one morning alone she witnessed two very singular and amusing illustrations of the working of Tolstoi's peculiar theories. She was sitting with Countess Tolstoi in the latter's boudoir — a place, by the way, which is the audience room of the family — when the head gardener appeared to entreat the countess to prevent his master from working in the garden. He knew, he said, that the count meant it for the best, and to be sure, he had been digging and toiling all the morning

until he was so heated and tired that it moved one's very heart to see him. But the worst of it all was that instead of pulling up weeds, as he supposed, he had destroyed all the young raspberry plants — a rare variety which the gardener had set out with infinite pains only a few days before. The gardener had hardly been disposed of before another knock came, and this time the door opened to admit one of the elder boys and his tutor. The boy was equipped for hunting and carried his gun. The tutor, a distinguished crammer from St. Petersburg, who had been engaged for the purpose of preparing his pupil for a difficult examination, began a complaint. His pupil was idle, devoted to hunting. No youth who neglected books for hunting could hope to pass an examination, etc. Madame Tolstoi — a lover of order, poor thing — was beginning to chide her son, when the door opened and in walked Tolstoi himself. He was appealed to and replied that all study was weariness and vexation of spirit, and that the life of a huntsman was much simpler, better, and more in accordance with the laws of nature. The boy thereupon seized his gun, jumped out of the window and made off. The tutor burst into indignant reproaches, but the mischief was done and his pupil was seen no more that day.

Once the Tolstoi boys took the family donkey on their shoulders, and carried him, in spite of brays and kicks, across the little bridge which leads to their father's al fresco writing room. Here they locked him in, and left him all night to do what damage he could. I forget whether they were or were not punished for this escapade. They are wild, merry fellows, full of courage and energy, a little spoiled because of the irregularity in their way of living and the lack of discipline in their education, but possessed of many excellent qualities. The eldest son passed his examination brilliantly, and is an accomplished and clever young fellow, very fashionable and elegant, and extremely conservative. He is fond of saying that he is "not anti−Russe, but anti−papa!" The eldest daughter lives with an aunt in Moscow. When she first went into society (some years ago) her father could not refuse to go out with her occasionally, and it was very amusing to see him depart with the air of a martyr, to hear him inveigh loudly, on the way, against the frivolity and stupidity of the entertainment, whatever it was, and then to see his hearty enjoyment of it — for he always ended by enjoying himself as thoroughly as did his little debutante. It was during this prolonged stay in Moscow that the police arrested him while he was helping some workmen to saw wood. He was dressed in roughest peasant costume, and imagined that he would pass as a peasant without any difficulty. He was much mortified and annoyed at being recognized as a noble, for he had hoped to converse with the peasants on their own footing. On another occasion he set out to walk from Moscow to Toula, accompanied only by one of his sons and by a young officer who was at that time one of his most enthusiastic disciples. The three were dressed in peasant costume and wore the peasant laptis, or straw sandals, and were to stop at the peasant inns along the route. After twenty−four hours of hard walking the disciple gave out completely. His feet were swollen and acutely painful, and he found it impossible to proceed on foot. In vain Tolstoi alternately encouraged him to try again, and taunted him with being a weakling, unfit to be "simplified." D — — 's burning and bleeding feet gave him courage to persist in having his own way, and even to propose that they should all travel to Toula by train. He averred, truly enough, that peasants did so and that they would not the less be "simplified" if they travelled peasant fashion, i.e., third−class. Tolstoi would not agree to this, so D — — took the train to Toula, and the Tolstois toiled along on foot. In due time they, too, reached Toula, weary, hungry, footsore, dusty and dirty. They walked at once to the principal hotel and demanded good rooms and baths. Both were refused, the landlord alleging that he did not keep a hotel for peasants. Tolstoi then told him who he was, and of course the best rooms and baths the hotel afforded were at once placed at his disposition. Tolstoi's detractors are fond of relating this story, as an evidence of what they call "half−and−half simplification." With every year, however, he becomes more and more extreme in his views and habits. He is beloved by the peasants and he has done a great deal for them in many ways, but it is very well known that the peasants on his own estate have not made as much real progress as those on one or two other estates where the masters have carried out Tolstoi's best ideas in a practical way, without flightiness or vacillation, and without attempting to become peasants themselves — a process the peasants really dislike extremely.

Meantime, while Tolstoi digs and plants and reaps and makes shoes (very poor ones, too, by−the−by), the framework and notes of the Decembristes lie in his desk, never, probably, to be completed. The few chapters already published give no idea of the power of the work as he originally conceived it, or of the vast amount of study bestowed upon its preparation. Those who have been fortunate enough to hear him read certain scenes taken from this unfinished novel cannot but think that it would have surpassed everything that he has hitherto achieved. Tolstoi is, however, deaf to all entreaties to resume it, and takes far more interest in the little stories and plays he

writes for the poor — works which, whatever their intrinsic merit, have so far signally failed to influence the class for which they are written. All the world knows the remark made by the peasant to whom Tolstoi read the play which he had written especially for the peasants — a play so coarse in language that only its high moral aim could justify an author in writing it. The actors in this drama wade knee−deep in crime, but finally, smitten in conscience, abandon the booty for which they have sinned, and resolve to repent and amend. When this climax was reached an old peasant remarked that it was a "pity, a very great pity that the booty had been abandoned after all the trouble they had taken." Such a reply would have cured many men of trying to write down to the peasant level, but it had no effect upon Tolstoi. Not long after this very scene he persuaded Madame Tolstoi to go and ask several of the young daughters of friends in the neighborhood to come and act in this same play! When the request was refused, he still had it produced in his own house by his children. All this is in the most perfect good faith; he really believes himself called to effect a regeneration in the human race — a regeneration only to be attained, in his opinion, by simplification. In his own household the work of simplification goes on apace. All refinements of speech and manner have of late become sinful in his eyes. Some months ago a party of enthusiasts travelled from St. Petersburg to Toula for the purpose of doing homage to Tolstoi. The party was composed of Princess — — −, considerably under thirty, unmarried, and lady−in−waiting to the empress; her brother, an officer of the imperial guard, and two other young people of equally high rank. All these persons were of unblemished respectability, and all were ready and eager to become Tolstoi's disciples, and to vow implicit obedience to his counsels. They stayed at the house of a venerable relative near Toula, who informed them pretty distinctly that she thought they were going on a fool's errand, that she knew of what she was pleased to call Tolstoi's vagaries, etc. It is needless to add that she was treated as a profane scoffer, and that they set off on their pilgrimage to Tolstoi's estate with undiminished eagerness. He was at home, as was also his wife, and the enthusiasts were kindly received and invited to dinner. To dinner then they stayed, and Princess — — −occupied the place of honor at Tolstoi's right hand. About twenty−five people sat down to dinner, including some ten or more of the Tolstoi children, with governesses, preceptors, etc. Scarcely were they all seated before Tolstoi turned to Princess — — −(who is extremely slender) and in an audible voice reproved her for wearing corsets and lacing. Princess — — −, not a little confused, faltered forth a reply to the effect that she did not lace, but it was of no use. A long tirade followed upon simplification, the mission of woman, her duties to posterity, the requirements of health and the absurdity of false modesty — all this in terms which might have been applied to a brood mare on a stock−raising farm. The dinner came to an end at last, and then the entire company defiled all through the ground floor of the house in a solemn procession. In the evening the enthusiasts bade an adieu, which is likely to be an eternal one, to their hosts, and returned to St. Petersburg, sadder, but wiser by the loss of an illusion.

This story got about, and caused a good deal of amusement. But it did not prevent another Tolstoi enthusiast from suggesting to the empress that she ought to read Tolstoi's play. Her majesty accordingly commanded the attendance of some of her particular friends and ordered one of her attendant gentlemen to read the play aloud. Now the empress has never learned to speak Russian fluently or to understand it perfectly; and it was very droll to see her making gracious perfunctory signs of admiration at phrases which made even the reader (by no means a modest man) stammer and blush, while the unfortunate ladies of honor sat, covered with confusion, and the attendant gentlemen, with rigidly expressionless countenances, looked hard at nothing.

Every morning Tolstoi arises with a new maggot in his brain. He announced, not very long ago, that as his works were intended to benefit mankind he thought that he ought no longer to take money for them. Madame Tolstoi thereupon took the advice of friends, who counselled her to undertake the charge of her husband's business affairs; and as far as it is possible, she does so. The loss of the payment accruing from Tolstoi's works would have been very serious in the case of a family like theirs, which appears to have no limits to its increase.

Tolstoi's disciples still come from far and wide, but every now and then there is a notable defection among them. His second son was one of his most devoted disciples, and married a young girl who was no less ardent a votary of simplification. When they were married a peasant hut was built for them on one corner of the estate. Here they were to live in peasant fashion, Adam to delve, and Eve to spin. Here, indeed, they did live for one month of enthusiasm; and the next six in a fast sliding scale of discomfort and disgust; until they both fell ill of typhoid fever, narrowly escaped dying, and abandoned their hut and simplification for Moscow and a life like other people.

Another of Tolstoi's disciples had a much more tragic experience. This gentleman resigned his commission in

his regiment, divided his estate — a small one — among his peasants, and, having thus despoiled himself of everything, set himself to gain his living as a day laborer. He failed signally and was attacked by a severe illness, which has undermined his constitution and has rendered him incapable of doing anything. This dispirited and broken−hearted man has also ceased to believe in simplification.

Yet all that Tolstoi counsels his votaries to do he is more than ready to undertake himself. In the early part of last winter one of his daughters was invited to stay with a relative at some distance from Toula. The journey was from four to five hours by rail, and three times as long in a sledge. But Tolstoi declared that a "simplified" one ought not to travel by rail, and that his daughter must travel in a peasant sledge. Expostulations were useless, and in a peasant sledge they departed, Tolstoi driving. A violent snow storm came on, and they reached their destination after a journey of fifteen hours. Mademoiselle Tolstoi was lifted out of the sledge in a deep swoon, and was literally almost frozen to death, so that she did not fully recover consciousness for hours, and was subsequently seriously ill. What her meditations upon simplification may be I know not; but I know that her visit has lengthened from weeks to months; and that her father bade her farewell with this curiously illogical speech: "Now, my child, I have brought you here as a simplified one ought to be brought. You may return home in your own way." And rumor says that she is decidedly likely to travel in future as one of the unsimplified.