

Count Leo Tolstoy: A Tragedy of the Times

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No Date

"I am now suffering the torments of hell: I am calling to mind the infamies of my former life, these reminiscences do not pass away, and they poison my existence. Generally people regret that individuality does not retain memory after death. What a happiness that it does not!" In his diary under the date of January 6, 1903, Tolstoy made the foregoing entry. As the passage itself indicates, and as other information confirms, the state of mind thus revealed was not infrequent even in the later years of his life. One would expect such a man to have many misgivings for his early life, but why such a deep-seated remorse? Why did he not recognize it as the evil of his heritage and not the fruits of his corrupt personality? Such talk might well be expected in the diary of the histrionic Cotton Mather, saturated with his Calvinism, but it hardly sounds natural and spontaneous in a great prophet of social regeneration in a world of modern thought. Yet, as I have read with ever deepening interest the record of his life, I have come to see that only in such a clue as we find here, do we get an approach to his life that is satisfactory in explaining what some have called the inconsistencies, and others, the hypocrisies of his life. His entire life was a conflict. From his youth until the last tragic episode of his death, there was a constant struggle between the standards of the world into which he was born, and a social order of justice and peace for which the humanity of the man longed. That which he sought he never found; and that from which he struggled to free himself he never escaped. There was in him a spirit akin to that which was in Jesus of Nazareth. But unfortunately he was not the son of a poor carpenter. He was the son of a wealthy and powerful nobleman. The heavy burden of his class inheritance he never could cast off. His life was a tragedy. When seen in relation to the times in which he lived, he becomes an incarnation of the rationalistic developments of the nineteenth century.

Objectively viewed we have, in Count Leo Tolstoy, a man born to wealth, who gives up that wealth for a life of poverty; a man of social standing who leaves the cultured class of his birth to share in the life of the lowly; a man

who could have wielded great power, but who adopts, as the rule of his life, the doctrine of non-resistance; a man of literary genius and culture who directs the wealth of his talents to the service of his peasant friends. Subjectively viewed, we have a strong personality born within the prison walls of wealth and caste, who fights a losing fight for social and spiritual freedom. It is from this latter point of view that I write. While the externals of his life might lend themselves to dramatic presentation, they are far less interesting and significant than the psychological development.

Tolstoy's life divides itself into four rather clearly defined periods. The first period carries him through his school and university days to 1849 when at the age of twenty-one he departs for the Caucasus. The second period covers the years from 1849 to 1863. This time is taken up with his military experiences, the beginnings of his literary work, travels in Europe, and his first experiments with educational matters. It ends with his marriage in 1863. With his married life begins the third period devoted to literary work and the care of his country estates, but constantly clouded by the desperate inner struggle to which I have referred. "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," products of this period, are quite as much the revelations of his own conflicts as they are pictures of Russian life. All this culminates in "The Great Moral Crisis" of his life in 1884, when, at the age of 56, he sees light through the cloud of doubt and depression that had hung like a pall over him for more than twenty-five years. From 1884 until his death in 1910 is the fourth period, marked by his life of simplicity and his efforts in furthering the ends for which his new life values called. "My Confession," "My Religion," "What To Do," and "The Resurrection" are among the important literary products of this period.

This rough outline serves to assist in considering the process through which he passed. Tolstoy was born in 1828 at Yasnaya Polyana, a family estate some two hundred miles from Moscow. Birth into a family, which for many generations had been influential in Russian life, gave him at once an environment of tradition, customs, and morals common to his class. His immediate family was not unlike others of the nobility, unless it be noted that in some generations there had appeared in it a taint of heresy. We may depend upon Tolstoy himself for a description of the atmosphere into which he was born. In Russia no attempt is

made to conceal the fact that society is divided into two classes. The nobility through the machinery of the State and the Church constitute the ruling class, and they lord it right vigorously over the peasants and the working people. Of the existing relations between these two classes Tolstoy speaks in his confessions. "It seemed to me," he says, "that the narrow circle of learned, rich and idle people, to which I belonged, formed the whole of humanity, and that the milliards living outside it were animals, not men." Except for the purposes of supporting their rulers and obeying them, the laboring man did not exist to Tolstoy and such as he. They had few human rights that he was bound to respect, and none that his class ethics compelled him to espouse. Such a social order is essentially static, and offers little inducement to either class for development. Custom, tradition, and religion, even, tabooed all forms of labor for the upper class. Opportunities for an active life were confined to political affairs, the military life, the care of one's estate, and literature. Aside from these possibilities, sports and pleasure offered the only avenues of activity. Having no real responsibility, no constructive task in the social order, life became essentially a life of idleness. Sports and low pleasures dominated it. Hence low and vicious standards of morals obtained. After making due allowance for Tolstoy's ascetic point of view, the following from his confession is still illuminating on this point. "I desired with all my soul to be good, but I was young. I had passions, and I was alone, wholly alone, in my search after goodness. Every time I tried to express the longings of my heart to be morally good, I was met with contempt and ridicule, but as soon as I gave way to low passions, I was praised and encouraged. ... As I gave way to these passions I became like my elders, and I felt that they were satisfied with me. A kind-hearted aunt of mine, a really good woman with whom I lived, used to say that there was one thing above all others which she wished for me—an intrigue with a married woman. 'Nothing so develops a young man as a liaison with a woman who is comme il faut.'" That he should be an adjutant to the Czar, and marry a very wealthy woman who should bring him a dowry of many slaves was her hope for Tolstoy. He continues, "I put men to death in war, I fought duels to slay others, I lost at cards, wasted my substance wrung from the sweat of peasants, punished the latter cruelly, rioted with loose women, and deceived men. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder... there was not one crime which I did not commit, and yet I was nonetheless

considered by my equals a comparatively moral man." This catalog of sins to which Tolstoy confesses but gives an impressionistic outline of the conventional standards of his class. Politics of a very low marketable order, military life stripped of all moral heroism, gambling, drunkenness, and licentiousness determined the social environment in which he grew to manhood. In all this he shared with those among whom he grew to manhood. It was a part of his heritage and he entered into it.

In the matter of religion Tolstoy was also in harmony with his environment. He was christened and educated in the Orthodox Christian Faith. He was taught the catechism, the creeds, the meaning of the sacraments and the Church services. He was instructed in the value of fasts, the significance of relics, symbols, and images. He was taught above all else that in matters of religion he must submit to the wisdom of the Church. But he says also in his confessions, "I was taught it (The Orthodox Faith) in my childhood, and in my boyhood and youth. Nevertheless ... at eighteen years of age I had discarded all belief in everything that I had ever been taught." Organized religion in Russia then as now was but a lifeless form. Outwardly they held to the old faith, in fact they worshipped only the Established Order. The influence of organized religion on Tolstoy was positively bad.

To grow up as one of such a class, with its wealth, its authority, its idleness, its low morals, its decadent religion was the birthright of the man who has been characterized as the greatest man of the times.

He received the conventional education. Was at the University of Kasan for three years. Following this he spent a year at home, then went to the Caucasus where he entered the army, and gave himself up to the usual debaucheries of army life. This period was relieved only by his literary efforts which won for him a place in the literary circles of Russia.

Such was the life of Tolstoy, the scion of a wealthy Russian Family. But meanwhile there was another Tolstoy trying to break free from his heritage. The Tolstoy, who felt keenest remorse for his excesses; who hated his life; who cast aside the Orthodox Faith; who read, with ethical insight, the Sermon on the Mount, Rousseau, Schiller, Turgeneff, Dickens and others; who cherished ideals of

personal integrity and moral honor: this man was not the child of the Russian Nobility, not the child, even, of his family, but rather the child of his times, the child of the nineteenth century. He did for himself and his following what the nineteenth century, with its science, its philosophy, its economics, and its searching doubt has done for humanity. The conventional life values which were his heritage he examined, measured, and cast aside. Into the most respectable institutions of society he probed with a fearlessness that is little less than genius. One after another they came up for his searching criticism, and his unflinching judgement.

His retirement from the military life marks the first victory of Tolstoy, the man, over Tolstoy, the nobleman. His literary interests, through which he had already won recognition, determined his new line of activity. With this change in his life begins the long persistent fight for his freedom. It is a period not altogether satisfactory either to Tolstoy or to those who follow his life. It is a conflict between the two men who inhabit his body. Now Tolstoy, the pleasure seeker, gambler, and tippling libertine, is master. Again Tolstoy whom the world has come to honor is in control. At other times both are sulking in bitter remorse and defeat, or again he is passing through periods of darkest doubt and depression. He questioned not only superficial forms, but ultimate principles. No alone the dogmas of religion, but the very principle of religion he doubted. He questioned not only the values of life, but the value of living. The tragic death of his brother at this time but served to stimulate his gloomy and most pessimistic attitude towards everything. Only a dogged human persistency kept him going.

Over against this heavy black cloud of conflict, there was the light reflected from his travels, his interests in educational problems, and, above all else, the light of a new hope in the thought of his coming marriage. His love for the woman who was to become his wife was a pure noble love. The romance of the betrothal appears in the book, "Anna Karenina" in that delightfully simple, human and childlike episode, the betrothal of Levin and Kitty. But even this happiness was seriously threatened for a time when Tolstoy insisted that his betrothed should read the portions of his diary which contained the records of his dissipations and debaucheries. Great as was the shock of this to her, the difficulty was overcome, and he approached

his marriage day with wholesome seriousness, but with utter incapacity to understand it as the world did. The marriage occurred in 1863, and the newly wedded couple took up the interests of the new life at the old estate where Tolstoy was born.

Tolstoy had hoped that the great change resulting from his marriage would bring him that faith and grip on life for which he craved so desperately. But the clouds lifted only for a moment. Soon he was even more completely enveloped in his doubts than ever before. Even the birth of their first child, so often the beginning of a new faith, failed to rouse him. Neither these events, nor the management of his estate, nor his writings were able to kindle the spark of hope that smoldered in his soul. So frequently did his mind turn to suicide that he took precautions against it, not daring to leave a rope or a weapon exposed, fearing lest it might prove the determining suggestion in an unguarded moment. The writings of this period disclose the character of his struggle. "Anna Karenina," the best known of his early writings, and regarded by many as the best of all his work, takes one into the secrets of his inner life. As a description of social conditions, not a surface description, but a delineation of motives, and ethical values the book is a masterpiece. But one must feel as he reads it that there is a fundamental lack in it. Not that Tolstoy has omitted anything deliberately, not that he has failed to draw the thing as he saw it, but the story lacks something which Tolstoy did not have to give. In "Anna Karenina" there is a wonderful exposition and delineation of the worthlessness of the conventional life, not only its worthlessness but its essential sordidness. He does not make virtues out of vices. Vices are as vicious as the most prudish could desire. But conventional virtues become loathsome shams. The legal husband of Anna Karenina, good as conventional piety goes, becomes a loathsome beast under the microscopic examination of Tolstoy. You quite agree with Anna Karenina when she declares that she despises his goodness. All this is very well. Tolstoy sees what is going on. He pictures it as he sees it. He takes the mask of conventionality and hypocrisy from the blotched and hideous face of society. So far so good. But he does not see that, even in the most hideous of forms, there is a pulsating life which, if it is not good itself, at least is responsive to human affection. Take the career of Anna Karenina herself as an illustration. She was married at an early age to a man whom

she did not love. The basis of her marriage was purely social and economic. At last however she meets the man whom she does love, and who loves her. For him she gives up all, her family, her boy—the only real thing in her life—and her standing in society. The lover, on his part, abandons all his ambitions, all his possibilities in the world of affairs for this woman. Society of course turns against her, while it still extends a cordial hand to her lover, and quietly urges him to abandon her. With terrible graphicness Tolstoy tells the tale of her sufferings, her inability to find the happiness which she sought and hungered for. The description which brings out the contrast between the growth of her inner wretchedness and the increasing luxury of her circumstances; the gradual disintegration of her personal integrity; and the accumulating poison of fear and jealousy, up to the very moment when she throws herself under the train in the railroad station, all this is a powerful piece of psychological delineation. Yet there is something lacking. You recognize the horror of the whole story. In spite of the acumen with which he portrays the evil conditions, the decay of her moral fibre [sic] he does not give that touch which would make the whole tale human. He does not see that Anna Karenina is more wronged than she is evil. He does not see in her a soul of goodness crying in despair for an environment that will nourish it. He does not see the real human ethics of the case, that Anna Karenina was the victim of a vicious combination of ethical standards. Society, her friends, and her family had said to her while she was yet young that she should marry for social standing and for wealth. From this point of view she had acted, and the Church with all its ceremony had sanctioned that marriage. But even while sanctioning it, the church through its ceremonial form had also said that marriage is holy, and that the marriage tie cannot be broken. But this particular marriage which the Church had sanctioned was not holy, never had been, and no church could ever make it so. At best it was but a legalized immorality of the commercial sort. But when Anna Karenina did love, and loved with all the intensity of her personality, a personality that gave her power to sacrifice everything for her love, society and the Church were defied. Had society and the Church the first faint glimmer of ethical integrity, they would have frowned on the first alliance as unholy and immoral, and they would have sanctioned the love which grew out of a fellowship tinged with the light of spirituality. But both society and the Church had upheld the immoral marriage, and

were the guilty parties in the ruination of Anna Karenina. I do not find this in the story. For Anna Karenina he could see only the oblivion and ignominy of suicide, and for her lover, only the escape into exile. Ethics and experience of human life demand the triumph of a spiritual love over the conventional sordid bargain. But the story not only pictures the conditions in which he lived, but it mirrors the condition of his own inner life. He questions, he analyzes, he dissects. He lays bare the whole organism of society for us to gaze upon. Its vicious and abused values stand out clear, but he does not show the essential integrity that is in and beneath it all. He does not show it because he does not see it. He presents the conditions, the anguish, the environment of Anna Karenina, but he does not present her soul of goodness that is buried beneath the false values of her environment. He does not present it because he does not know it any more than he knows his own soul. Up to this point in his life he had bored his way down through the surface of things, but he had not touched the heart life that makes the forms, and, when they are outgrown, casts them aside and makes new ones. He could see no good in living. Even the sight of his family brought to him only the most desperate thoughts. "My family," I said to myself, 'but a family, a wife and children, are also human beings, and subject to the same conditions as myself: they must either be living in a lie, or they must see the terrible truth. Why should they live? Why should I love them, care for them, bring them up and watch over them? To bring them to the despair which fills myself, or to make dolts of them? As I love them, I cannot conceal from them the truth—every step they take in knowledge leads them to it, and the truth is death.'"

Such is Tolstoy during this period. It takes a man of courage to follow the lead of his doubting mind to the very limit of doubt, to the doubting the value of life itself. Such was he as he approached the great crisis of his life, when the light of hope broke through the clouds of his despair.

During the year 1884, when Tolstoy was 56 years old, came the change which introduces us to the last period of his life. This great change came upon him in such a way as to effect, as he says, an instantaneous removal of all that had hidden the meaning of the teaching of Christ from him, an instantaneous illumination of life with a light of truth. The illuminating idea which came to him in this

turbid state, and precipitated the cloudy doubt, was the doctrine of non-resistance. "Resist not Evil." To the writers of the Gospels, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at Hand," had been the slogan. To Tolstoy the slogan of truth became, "Resist not evil." "It hath been said unto you, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say unto you 'Resist not evil.'" This passage Tolstoy took in its bald, literal meaning. He did not attempt to explain it away as a figure of speech as do many today who wish to be called Christians, but have not the moral courage to live the Christian life. To him it became the master key that explained not only the teachings of Christ, but also the problem of life. For him it was the light that lighted the world. The darkness and the gloom disappeared. Tolstoy entered upon a new life, and with apostolic enthusiasm he proceeded to "Resist not evil." He dons the dress of the peasant, eats the peasant food, lives the life of poverty, and in all sincerity consecrates himself to that which his new truth demanded.

At this point it is worthwhile to recall just how far he had progressed in his process of emancipation. The social privileges of his class he had cast aside just as far as he could without injustice to the personal freedom of his family. He is often condemned for the inconsistency of his life at this point. He is not inconsistent. Had he given away all his property (part of which belonged to his wife and children) he would have been using a power which privilege had given him. He would have been using force to compel his family to adopt his mode of life. It was their prerogative to do as they wished. It is unjust to charge him with insincerity. So far as he had the power, he cast aside his class privileges. Also he had won his fight for a clean wholesome standard of personal morals. He had cast aside the authority of the Church and all ideas of supernatural religion. All the old dogmas of the Church, the dogma of the divinity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the atonement, all that goes with the old interpretation of life, were gone. He had discarded the idea of force not only in personal life, but in the state. War had become to him the very incarnation of evil. Freed, then, from all these old world values which had been his heritage, at the age of 56 he begins his new life, a period of definite, constructive work. He is now armed with a purpose. He knows where he stands. The spark of spiritual vigor which had been buried beneath his heritage now bursts into flame. Life takes the place of suicide as the end of

things. He becomes the apostle of a new movement. He sets himself to the task of propaganda and education. In response people come to him, and ally themselves with him and with his ideals. The cult of Tolstoy develops. His life is organized to conform to his fundamental principles of non-resistance. Simplicity becomes the watchword. That power so conspicuously absent in the period when he wrote "Anna Karenina," asserts itself. No longer does he look upon life as hopeless viciousness. He finds natural dignity and worth in man. He sees inherent goodness struggling to free itself from its bondage to condition, and to express itself in life. All this changed point of view appears clearly in the great novel written under the impulse of this period, "The Resurrection." In this book he is as clear, as merciless, as keen in presenting the limitations of the social order as he was in his former period. His description of the courts and the workings of official Russia, the prison system, and the great Siberian world, simply burns as with fire all the hypocrisy about the sanctity of the courts, and the divine right of the government. But in addition to that one feels the working of a force which might purge the nature of its evils. This is new, the product of the crisis.

"The Resurrection" is the story of a man and a woman. The girl, Maslova, has been left an orphan, and is brought up by two kind-hearted maiden ladies of wealth. She is trained to be half noble, and half working-girl. She is filled with ideas that make it impossible for her to live the life of a laboring girl with any contentment. She has not enough prestige or training to enter fully into the life of those who had trained her. Withal she is a most charming, whole-souled sort of a girl. To the house of these maiden ladies with whom Maslova lives, there comes for a visit a nephew, a young army student. The two fall in love, each touched by the first pure love of youth. After the visit is ended, each goes his own way; the youth to his army life; the girl to the long years in which the memory of this soul-awakening experience is the one great and sacred thing of life. Years pass. The young man returns, but he is no longer the same. The intervening years have destroyed his values of life. He comes now as a thoughtless passionate sensualist. He betrays the innocent girl, and goes his way to the army.

Still other years pass. The young man has retired from the army service, and settled down to the conventional life

of men of his class. He is drawn to serve on the jury. On the very first day of his service a woman appears before the court, charged with murder. She presents on the one hand traces of refinement and nobility, and on the other hand the unmistakable characteristics of a prostitute. Nekhludoff, the nobleman in the jury box, recognizes the woman as the girl whom he had betrayed years before. Not a thought of the incident had occurred to him in years. Now it all flashes before his mind like a panorama. He is stirred by remorse. Through a clumsy accident in the court proceedings Maslova is condemned to Siberia for a crime of which she is innocent.

It is a critical moment in Nekhludoff's life. He resolves to give up all and make amends for the injury done this girl. He will follow her to Siberia. He will care for her and marry her. Thus he acts. During the long months when the prisoners are tramping the weary miles to the Hell of Russia, he meets a new kind of people. The prisoners, the political prisoners, the revolutionists he comes to know, and gains an insight into their purposes and hopes. He feels the moral dynamic of their work. At last the journey is ended. With it comes a pardon for Maslova from St. Petersburg. The sentence has been partly commuted. She is free to marry Nekhludoff, if she will.

But the climax of the story is not be reached without a revival for Nekhludoff of the atmosphere and charm of the old cultured life which he had left behind. He has to visit the house of the Governor of the Province, is invited to dinner. Here he finds all the beauty, charm, grace, and smoothness of wealth and privilege. Longings for the old life values, purified as he finds them here, rush through him. It is a serious situation for him. Under the impulse of his first great remorse he had determined to marry Maslova. During the intervening time he had been living under the subtle influence of the caravan of prisoners, he had been buoyed up by the thought that at last he was doing a noble deed, was able to make a great sacrifice. To him the marriage was to be a great sacrifice, an atonement for a great wrong to an innocent woman. Just at the very moment when the realization of the sacrifice was possible, comes this dinner with its atmosphere of culture, refinement, its soothing music, its stimulating conversation. To make the situation even more alluring he is touched by the bright, wholesome, domestic spirit in the person of the Governor's daughter. She and her two children in the little goodnight

scene stir in him the longing for a home and family. Purified by his troubles he sees it all in a new light, and is stirred to the very depths of his nature.

From this home of refinement and privilege he is called to an appointment with Maslova at the prison. There he finds dirt, confusion, poverty, ugliness, hideous disease, and death. Such a marked contrast strikes home. So Nekhludoff is not wholly disappointed when he learns from Maslova that she will not marry him even though he wishes it. This is the great scene in the book. The great soul of Maslova, brutally wronged by the man whom she loves, and has loved since their first meeting in the innocence of youth, rises to the height of the sublime when she refuses to marry him because she does not wish to bring to him the shame of her former life, a shame for which he was responsible.

Their paths divide again. Maslova goes on to share in the life of the exiled revolutionists, while Nekhludoff returns to his comfortable hotel for a long final struggle with himself and the world. He is in the midst of perplexity and mental confusion. As is indicated by the incident that might almost be termed a "special dispensation," fortune favors him. It happened that during his visit at the prison a religious fanatic had given him a copy of the New Testament. At this moment of despair in the face of his problems, he casually picks up the book and begins to read at random. In this chance act comes the light and relief that he sought. He sees the meaning of life now, and the panacea for all his perplexities. The key to the situation is "Non-Resistance of Evil." The great crisis has come, and he enters the peace of a new hope, and the joy of a new task.

One feels here a force that was lacking in "Anna Karenina." Instead of suicide for the woman, we have exile with the revolutionists, and a great work opening up for her in the hope of the emancipation of mankind. Instead of oblivion in exile for the man we see the clear cut outline of a new ideal revealed to him. Death has given way to life, and despair to hope. Conviction and faith have taken the place of doubt. Life is not only worth living but it calls to a great duty.

Of course this is the picture of Tolstoy's own development. That is the very process which he himself had

been through. It is the fruit of the crisis in his life and the dynamic of the work for education, the agitation for peace, the motive of his picturesque life, and the secret of his tragic death.

Why in the face of such a glorious consummation should his life be called a tragedy? What more could be asked? Had he not conquered in all his conflicts? Had he not risen victorious over all his temptations? Had he not purchased freedom with a great price? The story of "The Resurrection" ends with this searching remark, "How this new period of his life will end time alone will tell." Time has told. One must feel that the tragic episode of Tolstoy's death was but a last desperate attempt, perhaps the attempt of delirium, to emancipate himself from the tradition into which he had been born, and into the purified forms of which he had settled down in the last period of his life. Like the century in which he lived, he did not know the profoundly revolutionary character of the changes that were going on within and about him. In spite of the effort to free himself from the bondage of his birth and times, he had succeeded only in changing the forms of his life. The fundamental principles remained the same. In his political ideals he changed from the brutal aristocracy of his country, to a sort of aethereal oligarchy of great souls. "The Government in which I believe is that which is based on the mere moral sanction of men. Buddha, Moses, Plato, Socrates, Christ, Schopenhauer are to me the real sovereigns, for they rule not by force of armies and money, but by moral authority. Just as I hate a hereditary potentate, so do I hate a cheap parliament." He discarded the sovereignty of the Czar only to swear his allegiance to the sovereignty of a dead Moses, Plato, Socrates, or Christ. His ideal is a purified aristocracy. There is no change in principle. In his social relations he cast away as evil the distinguishing marks of his caste, but with unconscious adherence to the very principle which gave him the forms, he adopts the outward marks of the peasant class. Yet in spite of the clothing he wore, the food he ate, and the poverty he adopted, Tolstoy was not a peasant, and the clothing could not make him one. Generations of privilege stood between them. Here again was a change in forms, not in fundamental principles. In precisely the same way he discarded the dogmas of the Orthodox Church only to replace them with the dogma of non-resistance. This new dogma he accepted not as the living fruit of his experience, but as the authoritative utterance of another.

He changed the forms of his religious thought system, but clung to the principle of authority.

In the closing chapter of "The Resurrection" Nekhludoff faces two possibilities. On the one side he might revert to the life of privilege with its charm, its culture and refinement. To be sure it would be a purified privilege, made beautiful and alluring by the living faith in a new dogma, but privilege nevertheless, whose very existence, whose very advantages rested on the old principle of class and authority. On the other side he might cast all that behind him, and go forward to the rough, tumultuous life of the revolutionists, strong in the faith that the universe honors their dream of justice, and will reward their faith. Tolstoy faced the same possibilities. He turned to a purified, and, in many ways, satisfactory form of the life of privilege. This new life was sufficiently unconventional to give it the charm of romance, and throw about it the coloring of the heroic, but it was still within the pale of the principle of external authority. He did not see that a vast chasm of difference in fundamental principles divided these two possibilities. The impulse of Nekhludoff, the human, responded to the ethical dynamic of the revolutionists, but the subtle influence of the class values and principles, into which he had been born held him in its grip. So also with Tolstoy. Even when Tolstoy saw the light of hope shining for him in the doctrine of non-resistance, he was still in bondage, though the binding chains were covered by the soft soothing wrappings of a new dogma. But the universal life spirit is not incarnated eternally in any system of dogma. It lives rather in the daring faith of the eternally revolutionary spirit of man. The greatness of Tolstoy is not in his doctrine of non-resistance, not in his wearing the peasant's garb, or living on peasant food. His greatness is in his courage as a doubter, in the relentless probing of the life values which he found in his world. It is in the ethical dynamic of his life. The tragedy of his life is in the fact that the freedom for which he sought, he never found. Even the price of all his acute sufferings could not break the bondage of his heritage, and purchase for him immunity from the lurking fear hidden beneath the closing sentence of "The Resurrection." "How this new period of his life will end time alone will tell." Always the subtle suspicion that these new forms, which he had adopted, could not command his final allegiance, hovered about him, bringing him those days of remorse. He never reached the solid

ground of a whole-souled faith, unless perchance it was in the last few hours before his death.

But the tragedy of his life is the tragedy of the century in which he lived. I wonder if we begin to realize the extent to which we are actors in that same tragedy. We live in the midst of the turmoil and stress of changing values. Do we realize what the issues are? It is not a question of a new political platform to supplant the outworn ones; it is not a question of new religious doctrines to replace the old dogmas; it is not a question of new social customs, of new forms of philanthropy, or a more just distribution of wealth, or an increasing wage, or greater respect for the law. We are in the midst of a great revolution which not merely touches the forms, the institutions, the customs and habits of men, but is reaching to the very depths of human life. It is working at the foundation principles of the social order. Old values are disappearing. New values are coming into being. With a faith in the integrity of the Universe that is infinitely greater than the faith that man has ever had in his gods, we are trusting to the great adventure of a new heaven and a new earth. The tragedy of Tolstoy may also be ours. This is a great adventure.