

SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF TOLSTOY.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THEODORE STANTON.

A number of heretofore unpublished letters of Count Leo Tolstoy have recently been placed in my hands for publication. They are addressed to two physicians,—Dr. Makhovitzky, a Hungarian, and Dr. Skarvan, an Austrian. The first left his own country in order to sit at the feet of the Russian philosopher, whose private physician he finally became. The second is a young man, who refused to perform his military service, was punished therefor by the Austrian authorities and thus won the sympathy and then the friendship of Count Tolstoy.

The letters given below are addressed to the first of these gentlemen, except where Dr. Skarvan's name in the opening lines of a letter shows that it is addressed to him.

Dr. Schmitt, who is frequently mentioned in this correspondence, is the advocate in Germany of so-called "passive Christian anarchy." He is known to be a talented and prolific writer.

The Nazarenes, who also receive considerable attention, are a religious sect widely spread throughout Hungary and Servia. Their chief tenets are that they recognize no spiritual authority and are rigidly opposed to military service, which naturally brings down upon them the severities of the Austrian government.

The opening paragraph of the letter of February, 22, 1895, mentions two pamphlets. The first of these, entitled *Tolstoi, Poet and Prophet*, is by a Slovak writer named Hurban Vajansky. The second is in German, *Die Sekte der Nazarener in Ungarn*, and is by the Slovak priest Szebering.

Professor Massarik, whose name appears in the final paragraph of the letter of September 11, 1895, fills the chair of sociology at Prague University and is a very patriotic Tchech. He has often visited Tolstoy.

The article by Dr. Makhovitzky, which is referred to at the opening of the letter of February 22, 1896, is entitled "The Nazarenes in Hungary." The censor will not permit its publication in Russia, where it is known only in its manuscript form.

The Servian novel—see the letter of October 19, 1896—by Pierre Tomitch, is "The Nazarenes," and is published at Belgrade. While the author was in prison for political acts, he met there some Nazarenes who were undergoing punishment because of their religion. Hence the inspiration of the story.

The Ivan Ivanovitch, whose name appears in this same letter, is M. Gor-

bounoff, the well-known Moscow publisher of popular editions. In order to study close at hand the Slovaks, who are partizans of Tolstoy's views, he journeyed to Hungary in the summer of 1896.

Mr. Kenworthy, also mentioned in this same letter, is a London merchant who gave up his business in order to devote himself to the spreading of Tolstoy's ideas in England.

M. Tchertkoff, who appears in the last paragraph of the last letter, is Tolstoy's friend and confidential literary agent, who went to Christ Church, England, several years ago and established in that town a printing office where Tolstoy's works are printed regardless of the Russian censor. Tchertkoff now resides in Russia with Tolstoy, but the printing establishment still goes on in England.

THEODORE STANTON.

NEW YORK, September, 1910.

October 5, 1894.

Do you know anything about E. H. Schmitt of Budapest? He belongs to a group that practices the Religion of the Spirit and writes in their review very good articles. I am in correspondence with him. If you don't know anything about this body, try and see what you can learn and send me whatever information you are able to obtain. His articles and his letters please me very much.

I am also expecting you to give me more details concerning the Nazarenes,—not in the form of a private letter to me but in the shape of an article, by means of which the general public can learn something about this sect.

I earnestly hope you will make greater and greater advance in the cause of conscience in which you are engaged and in the accomplishment of truth; and that this good work will give you more and more joy.

I myself continue to go on just as you saw me. I pursue my labors and do so with joy, trusting that it will be useful to men.

* * *

February 22, 1895.

I have received the two pamphlets. The one about me is not good. The author attributes to the artistic sense a false significance. He places it above everything else, and so does not at all understand the rôle of religion in general and of Christianity in particular.

I found very interesting the pamphlet about the Nazarenes. I perceive that in your regular clergy, too, exists that terrible spirit of bad faith, and that they also place human interests, those of the state, before those of God. It is extraordinary, this fear which the clergy have of the truth, some of which truth is found in the doctrines of the Nazarenes. I find also in your orthodox clergy a consciousness of their febleness. They do not persecute the Nazarenes

because persecution is disgraceful; public opinion demands that they be liberal. A fair interpretation of the doctrine demonstrates the truth of the Nazarenes and the falsehood of the churches. What is to be done, then? Lying is all that is left, and this is what is done in this vain effort to defend their Establishment. I have now fully grasped the tenets of the Nazarenes and I continue to study this very important religious phenomenon. I still believe that a union with them of all thoughtful people would be a blessing. I beg of you to write me often about them.

* * *

September 11, 1895.

I have heard from you in a round-about way; but I am sorry not to have direct news. We all have the deepest affection for you, and would be glad to have a letter.

Don't lament over the fact that your life is not what you would have wished it to be. That is the condition of all those who aspire to Christian perfection. What is terrible is not *not* to attain what one desires for oneself, for one's soul, but, having attained it, to cease to wish for it,—this is what is terrible.

If you see Massarik, tell him I have not forgotten him, and that he is dear to me. As regards Ruskin, tell him *Unto this Last* and several other things I have known for the past ten years and have even translated them into Russian. Say also that I read with interest this summer Kidd's *Social Evolution*.

* * *

February 22, 1896.

I received a long time ago your article on the Nazarenes. It is already recopied and corrected. We have substituted for the expressions which sounded rather odd here their Russian equivalents, and we are going to try and get it published. The article is very good. We have read it aloud several times and each time it produces a strong and excellent impression.

The same thing must happen among the Nazarenes that happens among our Molokhans, Doukhobors and similar sects, viz., the adult faithful, who have reached their present convictions after much trouble, are inclined to stand up for every article of their faith and will neither advance nor go backwards. But the young generation who have grown up under these conditions cannot endure this stagnation; for life is movement, and it is through movement that one gets nearer and nearer the truth and all that is gained thereby. Hence it is that these youths must be helped and shown the way towards progress. If this is not done or if they do not find it themselves, it

is probable that they will go backwards, that is, throw in their lot with the old beliefs, or rather abandon all religion in order to be able to live in peace.

Schmitt has sent me the latest number of his review. The article entitled "Without a Country" pleased me very much. Tell me all about Schmitt and his periodical. Who are his friends and what is thought of him in your country?

* * *

April, 1906.

What you write me about Schmitt, my dear Skarvan, I felt but did not pay much attention to, though in the letters which I wrote him I made allusions thereto apropos of his "Catechism" of the Religion of the Spirit, and of his articles on this same subject, which I do not approve of. There is in his writings that mixing up of expressions peculiar, it seems to me, to all German writers. They do not perceive it and naively take it for profoundness of thought. In this connection Goethe has said that if the thought is lacking, put a word in its place. This fault is found even among their best thinkers, in Kant, Hegel and the others. Schopenhauer appears to be the only one who is free from it. This lack of clearness becomes still more pronounced when they wish to be eloquent and ornament their speeches with the flowers of rhetoric. This is the weak side of Schmitt. He thinks he has discovered something new, when, in a very muddled and vague fashion, he repeats the fundamental idea of the gospel and especially the teachings of St. John, that in man is the manifestation of God the Father, the Son of Man, who is the same in all men. There is no reason why he should be afraid to speak to the working classes of the true doctrine of Christ and prefer to present in a very bad and vague form Christ's doctrine without calling it Christian. All that he says and can say is but a poor paraphrase of what is so well said by Christ himself.

How do the Nazarenes get on? Our Doukhobors, notwithstanding the persecution of them, or rather because of this persecution, simply grow in the spirit.

A few days ago I received from Stuttgart African Spir's *Denken und Wirklichkeit*. It is one of the best philosophical works I ever read. Do you know the author?

* * *

October, 19, 1896.

The most important portion of your letter is that where you speak of the Nazarenes. It will be interesting to know what impression your book will make on them and what they will say of it.

It would be a good idea to translate and publish the novel of the Servian writer on the life of the Nazarenes. But would the Russian censor authorize it? Anyway, it is useless to send the book here, for no one in my circle knows the Servian tongue.

The trip of Ivan Ivanovitch, his account of you and your friends in general, taken in connection with your letters to me, give me a very exact idea of your country and of the persons there who are very near to me, and awaken in me the agreeable feelings of my intimacy with you all.

At the same time that I sent my article, "The Approach of the End," to Schmitt, I also sent it to Kenworthy and to France. Does Schmitt know this? I always do this way, and I hope the publisher will not be vexed if the article appears before or at the same time as his own does, and in another tongue.

Through Skarvan, I also sent to Schmitt some lines on the subject of the incompatibility between Christianity and the serving of the state; and the "Letter to Liberals," in which the same question is treated.

Thanks for your letters. May God send you all possible good fortune and give you greater firmness. It seems to me that this is what you lack. But it is well known that lack of firmness is always compensated by variety and gentleness in the character.

* * *

May 2, 1900.

I have been very busy of late, dear friend Skarvan. I have written two articles,—“Patriotism and Government” and “The New Slavery.” The latter treats the labor question.

* * *

June, 11, 1900.

Write me how you are and what you are doing; how you are working for yourself, for men and for God,—and for whom besides? Of course, I hope you are serving God the most and yourself the least. Knowing you as I do, I feel sure that such is the case. I embrace you fraternally.

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Moscow, December 28, 1900.

One of the important events of these last few days, dear Skarvan, was the freeing of Pierre Véréguine. He is now in England. He was with me for two days. I am so glad that I took an interest in him.

Little by little, I am again getting back to work. A few days ago, I sent Tschertkoff my "Letter to the Clergy."