

The Banishment of Tolstoi

ONCE or twice in a century some great soul arises who shakes civilization to its center. In custom, mankind are like the waters of a great sea. They are subject to their calms and storms. For awhile the currents will flow smoothly, swept by calm zephyrs, till anon some furious storm will beat upon them and lash the surface into unwonted anger. Unless some heroic Neptune arises who smites the stagnant waters with his trident of authority and agitates them to their very center they become foul and stenchful, resulting in social degradation and moral deformity. The same law prevails in religion, society and politics. The tendency of all usage is to become stereotyped and unelastic, so that when one arises who undertakes to inject a new force into the body politic or the religious order he must needs shatter the entire system before the truth can manifest itself.

As political governments from their primitive stages of despotism and autocratic power have again and again been shattered in order to introduce the freer principles of liberal monarchies and republics founded on the principle of human justice, so have the institutions of religion been time and again smitten by the power of the reformer, who has sought to deliver them from the enthrallment of bigotry and traditional dogma.

'Tis but a few hundred years since England had her Wicliff, Germany her Luther and Italy her Savonarola. And today Russia, that modern political nightmare which tantalizes the dreams of oppressed multitudes, has heard the voice of one who threatens her age-long stagnation with the fury of a shattering tempest. What Luther and Savonarola were to the reformation of the sixteenth century, Count Leo Tolstoi promises to be that of the twentieth century.

This modern and ardent reformer is endowed with all the qualities of those giants of the reformation which enabled them to seize the monster of spiritual deformity and ecclesiastical corruption and cast him from his seat of power. The tyranny of ecclesiastical Rome could not prevail before the uncouth thunders of Martin Luther or the far-seeing prophecies of Savonarola. Neither shall the perverted power, the political usurpation or the ecclesiastical autocracy of the Czar of Russia be able to withstand the keen criticism, the logical acumen, the literary finesse and the religious enthusiasm of Tolstoi, the evangelist of the religion of humanity and the restorer of the true Christ of Christianity.

Tolstoi has been banished, but of what avail is that? Was not Martin Luther anathematized and excommunicated? Savonarola, Melancthon, Erasmus and all the brave souls whose eloquence thundered against the Vatican, were not these unconsciously excommunicated? And yet, when was their voice silenced, their power destroyed? Against the fury of their onslaught, political and ecclesiastical Rome, of four centuries ago, fell groaning and defeated, praying for mercy and restoration. And likewise, before the determined opposition and serious criticism of Count Leo Tolstoi and his coadjutors, the benighted power of all the Russias will fall, tottering to the ground, till from the grave of a buried despotism shall be erected the superstructure of a liberal monarchy, whose humane tendencies shall prophecy that final republic whose blessings shall glorify the world.

Tolstoi is the only one among the royalist reformers of the age whose voice is heard behind the closed doors of secret conclaves and startles the ears of the half-crazed Czar, whose throne is trembling on the mouth of an intermittent crater. That Russia has banished Tolstoi is the beginning of the end of her political despotism. Tolstoi clearly sees that not only his own accursed country but the whole modern world cries for a reformation which shall be comprehensive and complete, affecting not only political institutions, but social, moral and religious, till all mankind shall be uplifted by its beneficent consequences. Tolstoi sees that the accursed political system which binds men as serfs to the soil, as galley slaves to the wheels of whirling machinery, and treats them as worse than cowering beasts of burden, to be scourged and abused by the whims and passions of aristocrats and heartless overseers, cannot be reformed and readjusted to principles of justice and humanity, until that other abusive system which is associated with it—the religious—shall be relieved of its incubus of theological superstition and ecclesiastical despotism. Tolstoi sees that the people will never again enjoy their just rights to the soil until the power of the priest has been destroyed, and men shall learn to think right before they can hope to live right. Tolstoi understands that the craft of the landlord is like that of the priest-craft, dependent upon the authority which traditional ignorance affords it and fearful of the light of that knowledge which shall brighten the paths of men and bless them with the benedictions of peace.

Tolstoi knows that you cannot destroy political injustice until you overcome religious ignorance and dogmatic bigotry. He knows that if men are to be permitted to fraternize in social and industrial relations, to live in such conditions as shall honor the golden rule and prevent avarice and injustice from depriving them of their rightful earnings and the fruits of honorable ambition, then first the autocratic powers of priests must be annihilated;

the insult to their intelligence which a medieval and barbarous religious creed presents must be forever abrogated. He knows that religion must be made free before political conditions can be exalted, and first of all reformations must needs be the enlightenment of the human mind in order that neither priest nor potentate, creed nor code, shall consign the human race to industrial degradation or religious enslavement. Hence, all mankind must today hail Tolstoi, novelist, litterateur, political agitator, religious reformer and social inspirer, as a universal leader, who, himself deprived of the luxuries of inherited wealth, excommunicated for the sake of his ideas, is the true deliverer that points the way to the Pisgah heights of religious liberty and mankind's social enfranchisement.

Henry Frank,
Editor The Independent Thinker.

New York City.

The Charity Girl

By Caroline H. Pemberton, Author of "Stephen the Black," "Your Little Brother James," Etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning Julian rose early and took a train that carried him into the interior of Pennsylvania. On the way he looked squarely in the face his determination of the night before. When he shrank from it as quixotic he argued with himself that the unhallowed infatuation from which he now believed himself free demanded this act of expiation. His repentance would be insincere without a more positive result than mere freedom from a sense of guilt; he wanted to punish himself and make his escape into a forbidden paradise an impossibility. He would therefore deliberately assume the highest of moral obligations and make of them a wall of Troy to surround his soul. He believed that he needed such a wall and he planned the building of it with a melancholy satisfaction.

While in the train his thoughts returned to the illusive personality of Marian, for no longer could there be danger in such reflections. The image that he contemplated was an inglorious one; its brightness had fled, and its halo was wanting. Julian had once visited the interior of a Catholic reformatory, and as he recalled the procession which he had witnessed of heavy-eyed, down-cast young women, all wearing the garb of the penitent and the hopeless look of those whom the world has forgotten, he seemed to see Marian standing in the ranks with the Magdalen's coarse white cap covering her bright hair. It was a distressing fancy, but less repulsive than the image of the street woman with whom she had seemed permanently associated the night before. Feeling himself at last free from the spell of Marian's loveliness, and removed to the safe hill-top of a philanthropist's attitude of benevolent contemplation, as far as the street woman was concerned, the vague aspirations of the courtesan now appealed to him as deeply pathetic. Her appeal for more just social conditions stirred within him much uneasiness and dissatisfaction. He regretted that he had made no effort to aid or advise her.

His reflections were cut short by his arrival at a wayside station, where he engaged a buggy and driver and was soon far from the dust and noise of the railroad. The part of Pennsylvania which