

## COUNT TOLSTOY ON THE CRISIS IN RUSSIA.

In *The Times* of Saturday, March 11th, Count Tolstoy has a long article on the present crisis in Russia. In it he reiterates his oft-expressed conviction that "every coercive Government is in its essence a great and unnecessary evil." Needless to say that we do not share this view. On the contrary, we hold, to use Henry George's words, "that the advances in which civilisation consists are not secured in the constitution of man, but in the constitution of society."

However, this may be, the following extracts from Tolstoy's article seem to us to confirm this view, and will be read with special interest by our readers, as indicating the constant drift of his thoughts toward that question of questions, the Land Question.

Referring to the activities of Russian Liberals to reconstitute the Government of Russia on the model of other existing "Constitutional" Governments, he says—

"I regard this activity as not right, because those who are now fighting in Russia against the Government, Liberal representatives of the *Zemstvo*, doctors, advocates, writers, students, and a few thousand disaffected working men, torn from the people, and calling and regarding themselves as the representatives of the people, have no right to this claim. In the name of the people, these men present to the Government a demand for freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly, for the separation of Church and State, for an eight hours working day, representation, and so forth. But ask the people, the great mass, the hundred million of the peasantry, what they think about these demands, and the true people, the peasants, will be at a loss to answer, because these demands have no interest for the great mass of the peasantry.

"They need nothing of this, they need something else—that which they have long been expecting and desiring, of which they are incessantly thinking and talking, and about which there is not one single word in all the Liberal petitions and speeches, and which is only incidentally alluded to in the revolutionary socialistic programmes—they expect and desire one thing, the liberation of the land from the law of property, common ownership of the land. When they are no longer deprived of the land their children will no longer go to the factories, or if they do, they will themselves settle their hours and wages."

Tolstoy then continues, and we would commend the study of these words to every Liberal politician—

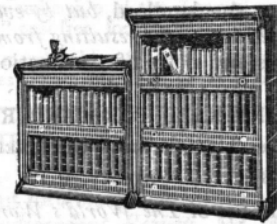
"It is said, grant liberty, and the people will express their demands. This is not true. In England, France, and America there exists complete freedom of the Press, but the liberation of the land is not mentioned in Parliaments, and is hardly mentioned in the Press, and the question about the common rights of the whole nation to the land remains completely in the background. Therefore the Liberals and revolutionary reformers who compose programmes of the demands of the people, have no right to regard themselves as the representatives of the people; they represent only themselves."

As it seems to us, here Tolstoy is entirely right. Again, to use Gerrard Winstanley's words—"True Commonwealth's freedom lies in the free enjoyment of the earth." This is the necessary basis of all other freedom; until this has been secured, all other "freedoms" are but a delusion and a snare. Hence it is that it is only those who pin their faith to the principles of justice, who stand, as our great Master stood, for the equal rights of all men, who, therefore, are struggling for the liberation of the land; it is only these, we agree with Tolstoy, who have any right to regard themselves as working, not for themselves, but for the masses of their disinherited fellow-citizens. We rejoice to know that the number of such men is to-day steadily increasing in every civilised country of the world. This is the hope for the future.

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