

From the mural decoration by John Duncan in the Hull-House Theater

A VISIT TO TOLSTOY

BY

JANE ADDAMS

THE administration of charity in Chicago during the winter following the World's Fair had been of necessity most difficult; for, although large sums had been given to the temporary relief organization that endeavored to care for the thousands of destitute strangers stranded in the city, we all worked under a sense of desperate need and of a paralyzing consciousness that our best efforts were most inadequate to the situation. During the many relief visits I paid, that winter, in tenement-houses and miserable lodgings, I was constantly shadowed by a certain sense of shame that I should be comfortable in the midst of such distress. This resulted at times in a curious reaction against all the educational and philanthropic activities in which I had been engaged; in the face of such desperate hunger and need they could not but seem futile and superficial.

Evidently the experiences of this hard winter of 1893 and '94 threw other people into a similar state of mind. A young friend of mine who came daily to Hull-House gravely consulted me in regard to going into the paper warehouse belonging to her father, that she might sort rags there with the Polish women; another young girl took a place in a sweat-shop for a month, doing her work so simply and thoroughly that

the proprietor had no notion that she had not been driven there by need; two others worked in a shoe factory. And all this happened before such adventures were undertaken for literary material, for it was in the following winter that the pioneer effort in this direction, Walter Wyckoff's account of his vain attempt to find work in Chicago, was published, which compelled even the sternest business man to drop his assertion that "any man can find work if he wants it."

Tolstoy's Effort to Put Himself into 'Right Relations with the Poor'

Under these circumstances it was perhaps inevitable that I should have turned for counsel to Tolstoy's book, "What to Do Then," in which he records his efforts to relieve the unspeakable distress and want in the Moscow winter of 1881, and his definite conviction at the end of that time that only he who literally shares his shelter and food with the needy can claim to have served them, and that anything else is a mere travesty and pretense.

Doubtless it is much easier to see "what to do" in rural Russia, where all the conditions tend to make the contrast between peasant labor and noble idleness as broad as possible, than

it is to see what to do in the interdependencies of the modern industrial city. But, for that very reason, perhaps, Tolstoy's clear statement is valuable to us who live in the midst of involved industrial complications, where it is so hard not only to walk in the path of righteousness, but also to discover just where that path lies.

I had read the books of Tolstoy steadily all the years since "My Religion" had come into my hands immediately after I left college, and the reading of that book had once for all made clear to me that the Right will not accomplish itself spectacularly, but must be the sum of all men's poor little efforts to do right, accomplished, for the most part, in the chill of self-distrust. But I was most eager to know whether Tolstoy's undertaking to do his daily share of the physical labor of the world — that labor which is "so disproportionate to the un nourished strength" of those by whom it is ordinarily performed — had brought him peace.

Therefore, when the very next year a friend invited me to go to Russia with her, the prospect of seeing Tolstoy filled me, as nothing else could possibly have done, with the hope of finding a moral clue to the tangled affairs of city poverty. I was but one of thousands who were turning toward this Russian, not as to a seer, — his message is much too confused and contradictory for that, — but as to a man who has had the ability to lift his life to the level of his conscience.

Miss Addams' Meeting with Tolstoy

Our first view of Russia confirmed the impression that social affairs there were still uncomplicated, and that life was written in letters of black and white, with little shading. The fair of Nijni Novgorod seemed to take us to the very edge of barbarism, or rather to a civilization so remote and Eastern that the merchants brought their strange goods on the backs of camels or on curious craft riding at anchor on the broad Volga. But, even here, a letter to Korolenko, the novelist, brought us to a realization of that strange mingling of a remote past and a self-conscious present which Russia presents on every hand.

This same contrast was also shown by the pilgrims trudging on pious errands to monasteries, to tombs, and to the Holy Land itself, with their bleeding feet bound in rags and thrust into bast sandals, and, on the other hand, by the revolutionists, even then advocating a republic that should obtain not only in political but also in industrial affairs.

We had letters of introduction to Mr. and

Mrs. Aylmer Maude, of Moscow, since well known as the translators of "Resurrection" and other of Tolstoy's later works, who at that moment were on the eve of leaving Russia in order to form an agricultural colony in the south of England, where they might support themselves by the labor of their hands. Mr. Maude was giving up a lucrative partnership in one of the oldest English firms in Moscow, and he and his wife, who, happily, shared his views, were deciding upon the disposition of their property, which they felt they could no longer conscientiously retain.

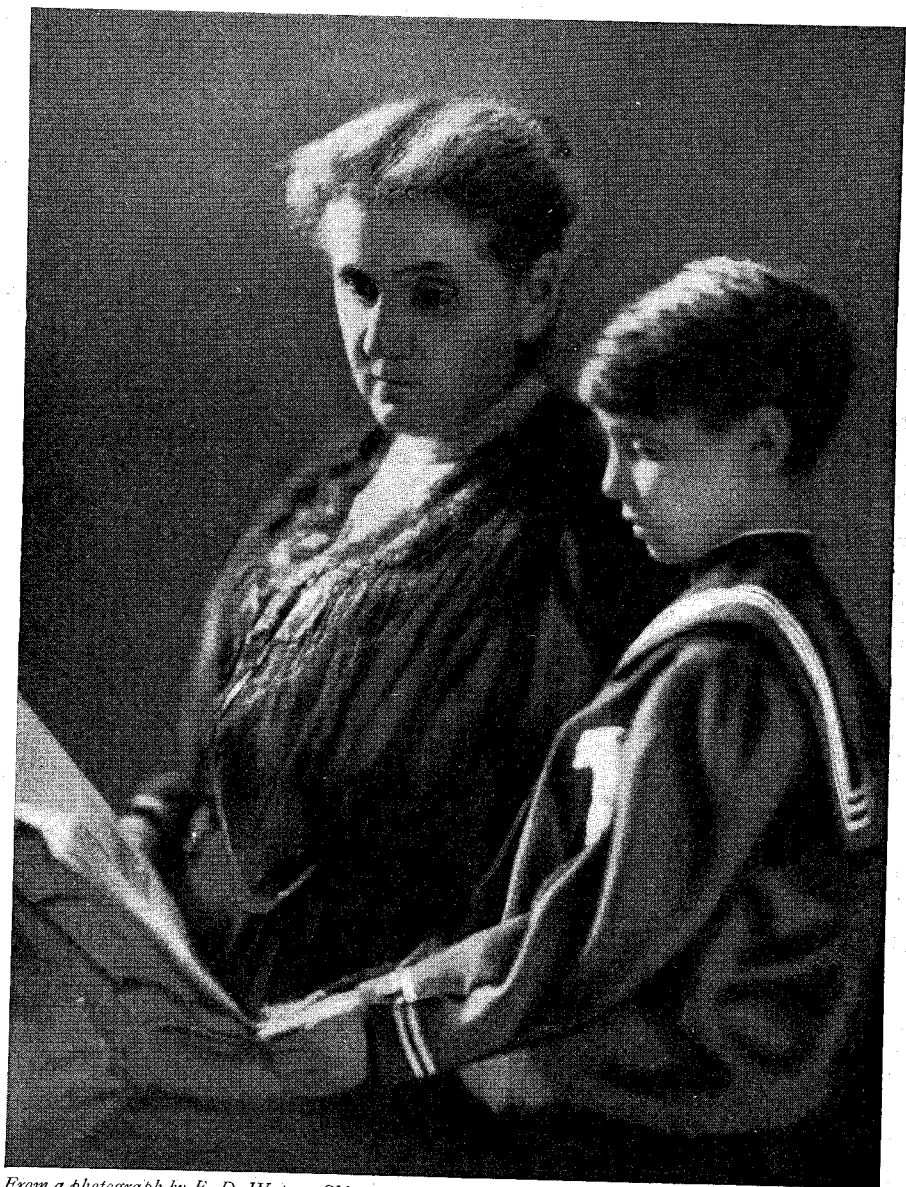
We gladly accepted Mr. Maude's offer to take us to Yasnaya Polyana and to introduce us to Count Tolstoy, and never did a disciple journey toward his master with more enthusiasm than did our guide. When, however, Mr. Maude actually presented my friend and me to Count Tolstoy, mindful of his master's attitude toward philanthropy, he endeavored to make Hull-House appear much more noble and unique, much more a "back to the people" effort, than I should have ventured to do.

Tolstoy Objects to Miss Addams' Sleeves

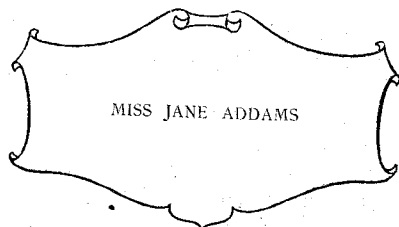
Tolstoy, standing by clad in peasant garb, listened gravely, but, glancing distrustfully at the sleeves of my traveling gown, which, unfortunately, at that season were monstrous in size, took hold of an edge and, pulling out one sleeve to an interminable breadth, said that there was enough stuff on one arm to make a frock for a little girl, and asked me directly if I did not find "such a dress a barrier to the people."

I was too disconcerted to make a very clear explanation, although I tried to say that, monstrous as my sleeves were, they did not compare in size with those of the working-girls in Chicago, and that nothing would more effectively separate me from "the people" than a cotton blouse following the simple lines of the human form; that even if I had wished to imitate him and "dress as a peasant," it would have been hard to choose which peasant among the thirty-six nationalities we had recently counted in the Hull-House neighborhood. Fortunately, Countess Tolstoy came to my rescue with a recital of her former attempt to clothe hypothetical little girls in yards of material cut from a train and other superfluous parts of her best gown, until she had been driven to a firm stand, which she advised me to take at once.

But neither the Countess nor any other friend was at hand to help me out of my predicament later, when I was sternly asked who "fed" me and how did I obtain "shelter"?



From a photograph by E. D. Waters, Chicago



Upon my reply that a farm a hundred miles from Chicago supplied me with the necessities of life, I fairly anticipated the next scathing question:

"So you are an absentee landlord? Do you think you will help the people more by adding yourself to the crowded city than you would by tilling your own soil?"

*Tolstoy's Daughter Works in the Fields
with the Peasants*

This new sense of discomfort over a failure to till my own soil was added to when Tolstoy's second daughter appeared at the five-o'clock tea-table, set under the trees, coming straight from the harvest field, where she had been working with a group of peasants since five o'clock in the morning — not pretending to work, but really taking the place of a peasant woman who had hurt her foot. She was plainly much exhausted, but neither expected nor received sympathy from the members of a family who were accustomed to see one another carry out convictions in spite of discomfort and fatigue. The martyrdom of discomfort, however, was obviously much easier to bear than that martyrdom to which Count Tolstoy daily subjected himself; for his shabby study in the basement of the conventional dwelling, with its short shelf of battered books, with its scythe and spade leaning against the wall, had many times lent itself to that ridicule which is perhaps the most difficult form of martyrdom.

That summer evening, as we sat in the garden with a group of visitors from Germany, England, and America, who had traveled to the remote Russian village that they might learn of this man, one could not forbear the constant inquiry to one's self as to why he was so universally regarded as sage and saint that this party of people should be repeated every day of the year. It seemed to me then that we were all attracted by this sermon of the Deed because Tolstoy had made the supreme personal effort — one might almost say the frantic personal effort — to put himself into right relations with the humblest people, with the men who tilled his soil, blacked his boots, and cleaned his stables.

Doubtless the heaviest burden of our contemporaries is a consciousness of a divergence between our democratic theory that working-people have a right to the intellectual resources of society, and the actual fact that thousands of them are so overburdened with toil that there is no leisure or energy left for the cultivation of the mind. We constantly suffer from the strain and indecision of believing this theory

and of acting as if we did not believe it; and this man, who years before had tried "to get off of the backs of the peasants," who had at least simplified his life and worked with his hands, had come to be a prototype to many of his generation.

"Bread Labor" and the Personal Effort

Doubtless all the visitors sitting in the Tolstoy garden that evening had excused themselves from laboring with their hands, as most people do, upon the theory that they are doing something more valuable for society in other ways. No one among our contemporaries has dissented from this point of view so violently as Tolstoy himself; and yet, no man might so easily have excused himself from hard and rough work on the basis of his genius and of his intellectual contributions to the world. So far, however, from considering his time too valuable to be spent in labor in the field or in the making of shoes, our great host felt himself too much a part of his fellows, too eager to know life, to be willing to give up the companionship of mutual labor.

One instinctively found reasons why it was easier for a Russian than for the rest of us to reach this conclusion. The Russian peasants have a proverb that says: "Labor is the house that love lives in"; by which they mean that no two people, or group of people, can come into affectionate relations with each other unless they carry on together a mutual task. And when the Russian peasant talks of labor he means labor on the soil, or, to use the phrase of the great peasant Bondereff, "bread labor." Those monastic orders founded upon agricultural labor, those philosophical experiments like Brook Farm, have attempted to put into action this same truth. Tolstoy himself had written many times of his own efforts in this direction, perhaps never more tellingly than in the description of Lavin's morning spent in the harvest field, when he lost his sense of grievance and isolation, and felt a strange new brotherhood for the peasants, as the rhythmic motion of his scythe became one with theirs.

Dinner with the Tolstoy Family

At the long dinner-table, laid in the garden, were the various traveling guests, the grown-up daughters, and the younger children with their governess. The Countess presided over the usual European dinner, served by men; but the Count and the daughter who had worked all day in the fields ate only porridge and black



COUNT AND COUNTESS TOLSTOY

bread, and drank only kvass, the fare of the hay-making peasants. Of course, we are all accustomed to the fact that those who perform the heaviest labor eat the coarsest and simplest fare at the end of the day; but it is not often that we sit at the same table with them, while we ourselves eat the more elaborate food prepared by some one else's labor. Tolstoy ate his simple meal without remark or comment upon the food his family and guests preferred to eat, assuming that they, as well as he, had settled the matter with their own consciences.

The Tolstoy household, that evening, was much interested in the fate of a young Russian spy, who had recently come to Tolstoy in the guise of a country schoolmaster, in order to obtain a copy of "Life," a book of Tolstoy's that had been interdicted by the censor of the press. After spending the night in talk with

Tolstoy, the spy had gone away with a copy of the forbidden manuscript; but, unfortunately for himself, having become converted to Tolstoy's views, he had later made a full confession to the authorities, and had been sent to Siberia.

Tolstoy, holding that it was most unjust to exile the disciple, while he, the author of the book, remained at large, had pointed out this inconsistency in an open letter to one of the Moscow newspapers. The discussion of this incident, of course, opened up the entire subject of non-resistance, and, curiously enough, I was disappointed in Tolstoy's position in the matter. It seemed to me that he made too great a distinction between the use of physical force and that moral ruthlessness which can override another's differences and scruples with equal relentlessness.

Is it not the spirit of antagonism that thrusts

men apart into isolation and brutality, as it is good will that binds them in human interdependence?

The conversation at dinner and afterward, although conducted with great animation and sincerity, for the moment stirred vague misgivings within me. Was Tolstoy more logical than life warrants? Could the wrongs of life be reduced to the terms of unrequited labor, and all made right if each person performed the amount necessary to satisfy his own wants? Was it not always easy to put up a strong case if one took the naturalistic view of life? But what about the historic view, the inevitable shadings and modifications which life itself brings to its own interpretation?

My friend and I took a night train back to Moscow in that tumult of feeling which is always produced by contact with a conscience making one more of those determined efforts to probe to the very foundations of the mysterious world in which we find ourselves. A horde of perplexing questions concerning those problems of existence of which in happier moments we catch but fleeting glimpses, and at which we even then stand aghast, pursued us relentlessly on the long journey through the great wheat plains



Lent by Miss Addams

TOLSTOY IN PEASANT COSTUME

This portrait is not allowed to be circulated in Russia

of South Russia, through the crowded Ghetto of Warsaw, and, finally, into the smiling fields of Germany, where the peasant men and women were harvesting the grain.

I remember that, at the sight of those toiling peasants, I made a curious connection between the bread labor advocated by Tolstoy and the comfort the harvest fields are said to have brought to Luther when, upon one of his journeys from Leipzig, much perturbed by many theological difficulties, he suddenly forgot them all in a gush of gratitude for mere bread, exclaiming:

"How it stands, that golden-yellow corn, on its fine, tapered stem! The meek earth, at God's kind bidding, has produced it once again."

At least, the toiling poor had this comfort of bread labor, and it did not matter that they gained it unknowingly and painfully, if they only walked in the path of labor. By that curious faculty of the theorist to inhibit all experiences which do not enhance his doctrines, my mind did not admit that exigent and unremitting labor grants the poor no leisure even in the supreme moments of human suffering, nor that "all griefs are lighter with bread."

*Miss Addams' Project of Baking Bread
at Hull-House*

I may have wished to secure this solace for myself, at the cost of the least possible expenditure of time and energy; for, during the next month in Germany, when I read everything of Tolstoy's that had been translated into English, German, or French, there grew up in my mind a conviction that what I ought to do, upon my return to Hull-House, was to spend at least two hours every morning in the little bakery that we had recently added to the equipment of our coffee-house. Two hours' work would be but a wretched compromise, but it was hard to see how I could take more time out of each day. I had been taught to bake bread in my childhood — not only as a household accomplishment, but because my father, true to his miller's tradition, had insisted that each one of his daughters on her twelfth birthday must present him with a satisfactory wheat loaf of her own baking; and he was most exigent as to the quality of this test loaf. What could be more in keeping with my training and tradition than baking bread? I did not quite see how my activity would fit in with that of the German union baker who presided over the Hull-House bakery, but all such matters were secondary and could, of course, be arranged.

It may be that I had thus to pacify my aroused conscience before I could settle down to hear Wagner's "Ring" at Bayreuth; it may be that I had fallen a victim to the phrase "bread labor": but, at any rate, I held to the belief that I should do this, through the entire journey homeward, on land and sea, until I actually arrived in Chicago, when, suddenly, the whole scheme seemed to me utterly preposterous, as it doubtless was; the half dozen people invariably waiting to see me after breakfast, the piles of letters to be opened and answered, the demand of actual and pressing human needs — were these all to be pushed aside and asked to wait while I saved my soul by two hours' work at baking bread?

Although my resolution was abandoned, it may be well to record the efforts of more doughty souls to carry out Tolstoy's conclusions. It was perhaps inevitable that Tolstoy colonies should be founded, although Tolstoy himself always insists that each man should live his life as nearly as possible in the place in which he was born. The visit I made a year or two later to a colony in one of the Southern States illustrated most vividly both the weakness and the strange, august dignity of the Tolstoy position. The colonists at Commonwealth held but a short creed. They claimed, in fact, that the

difficulty is not to state truth, but to make moral conviction operative upon actual life, and they announced it as their intention "to obey the teachings of Jesus in all matters of labor and the use of property." They would thus transfer the vindication of creed from the church to the open field — from dogma to experience.

Visit to a Tolstoy Colony

The day my friend and I visited the Commonwealth colony of threescore souls, they were erecting a house for the family of a one-legged man, consisting of a wife and nine children, who had come the week before in a forlorn prairie-schooner from Arkansas. As this was the largest family the little colony contained, their house was to be the largest yet erected. We expressed our surprise at this literal giving "to him that asketh," and inquired whether the policy of extending food and shelter to all who applied, without test of creed or ability, might not result in the migration of all the neighboring poorhouse population into the colony. We were told that this actually had happened during the winter, until the colony fare of corn meal and cow-peas had proved so unattractive that most of the paupers had gone back; for even the poorest of the Southern poorhouses occasionally supplied bacon with the pone, if only to prevent scurvy — from which the colonists themselves had suffered.

The difficulty of the poorhouse people had thus settled itself by the sheer poverty of the situation, a poverty so biting that the only ones willing to face it were those who were sustained by a conviction of the righteousness of the experiment. The fields and gardens were being worked by an editor, a professor, and a clergyman, as well as by artisans and laborers, the fruit thereof to be eaten by themselves and their families, or by any other families that might arrive from Arkansas. The colonists were very conventional in matters of family relationship, and had broken with society only in regard to conventions pertaining to labor and property.

We had a curious experience at the end of the day, when we were driven into the nearest town. We had taken with us as a guest the wife of the president of the colony, wishing to give her a dinner at the hotel, because she had girlishly exclaimed, during a conversation, that she had at times during the winter become so eager to hear good music that it had seemed to her as if she were actually hungry for it, almost as she was for a beefsteak. Yet, as we drove away, we had the curious sensation that, while the experiment was obviously coming to an end, — it did, in fact, terminate in six months from that

time,—in the midst of its privations it yet embodied the peace of mind that comes to him who insists upon the logic of life, whether it is reasonable or not—the fanatic's joy in seeing his own clear formula translated into action.

At any rate, as we reached the commonplace Southern town of workaday men and women, for one moment its substantial buildings, its solid brick churches, its ordered streets, divided into those of the rich and those of the poor, seemed much more unreal to us than the poor little struggling colony we had left behind. We repeated to each other that, in all the practical judgments and decisions of life, we must part company with logical demonstration: that, if we stop for it in each case, we can never go on at all; and yet, in spite of this, when conscience does become the dictator of the daily life of a group of people, it forces our admiration as no other modern spectacle has power to do, and it seems but a mere incident that the group should have lost sight of the facts of life in their

earnest endeavor to put to the test the things of the spirit.

I knew little about the colony started by Mr. Maude at Purleigh, containing several of Tolstoy's followers who were not permitted to live in Russia, and we did not see Mr. Maude again until he came to Chicago on his way from Manitoba, whither he had transported the second group of Doukhobors, a religious sect who had interested all of Tolstoy's followers because of their literal acceptance of non-resistance and other Christian doctrines which are so strenuously advocated by Tolstoy. It was for their benefit that Tolstoy had finished and published "Resurrection," breaking through his long-kept resolution against novel-writing. After the Doukhobors were considered settled in Canada, of the five hundred dollars left from the "Resurrection" fund, one half was given to Hull-House. It seemed possible to spend it only for the relief of those most primitive wants of food and shelter on the part of the neediest families.

KILLAIDEN

AN IRISH BALLAD

BY JAMES B. DOLLARD

IT'S here in ould Killaiden that I'd joyful live forever —
 Though I've been here eighty summers, I'm not wair of it yet;
 An' the little whitewashed cabin I'll be laivin' of it never,
 For its like the world over you might seek an' never get.

The people do be sayin' foreign lands are grand to see —
 The busy streets o' London an' the bridges of New York.
 What a fool they think ould Shemus! Sure the fairies come to me
 An' show me sights an' wondhers that make nothin' o' their talk!

Up here in ould Killaiden sure it's me that has the view!
 The five broad counties I can see on any day at all —
 Kilkinny, Carlow, Watherford, Tipp'rary's mountains blue,
 An' Wexford, where in ninety-eight the Sassenach got a fall!

Now, whisper till I tell ye — where in all the world over
 Would ye see the fields so pleasant or the heather bloom so sweet?
 And where could ye be baitin' the grand smell o' gorse an' clover,
 Or the singin' o' the lark that laives the shamrocks at your feet?

Och, the silly folks that wandher an' go off beyant the wather,
 Sure to hear 'em comin' home you'd think 'em millionaires or jooks!
 But I tell them, "I'm no omadhaun to heed your impty blather,
 And Killaiden's beauty bothers all was ever put in books!"