

out a break—just about the clearest expository utterance I have ever heard on any subject. He used not a word too much, nor yet a word too few. By the time he had finished I had come to realize, not only the importance of his contentions, but, what was more to the point, the practicability of granting his request. So I did the only thing possible under the circumstances—told him I had never understood the question before, thanked him for helping me to understand it, and saw to it that things were arranged as he wanted them.' ”

On April tenth, 1915, a submarine torpedoed one of the food ships chartered by the Commission; a week later a German hydro-aeroplane tried to drop bombs on the deck of another Commission ship, so Hoover paid a flying visit to Berlin. He was at once assured that no more incidents of the sort would occur.

“Thanks,” said Hoover. “Your Excellency, have you heard the story of the man who was nipped by a bad-tempered dog? He went to the owner to have the dog muzzled.

“‘But the dog won’t bite you,’ insisted the owner.

“‘You know he won’t bite me, and I know he won’t bite me,’ said the injured party doubtfully, ‘but the question is, does the dog know?’ ” . . .

“Herr Hoover,” said the high official, “pardon me if I leave you for a moment. I am going at once to ‘let the dog know.’ ”

Hoover has a habit of going straight to the highest authority with anything he has on hand. He never wastes time on the titled office boys who administer so much of the machinery of this world of ours. When he meets a new problem, he takes it to an expert. When he wants an obstacle removed from his path, he goes to the man who can remove it, or he removes it himself. He gives no small coin of flattery or favors to figure-head officials.

Of course he makes enemies. The wonder is that they are so few. He uses men, throws them aside and forgets them, as every world architect must, for he has, along with his amazing diplomatic skill, as frank a way in dealing with men as with conditions. I have known a word or a phrase of his to reveal a man to himself as naked and as startled as a patient under psychoanalysis. Hoover is a diplomat in the high, not in the trivial sense of the word; a constructive artist in human destiny; a leader who is too busy to waste time flattering the petty pride of those he leads.

He appeals to the imagination and to the dreams of men. But he too is a slave to dreams. To-day the Commission for Relief in Belgium—the “C. R. B.” as the Belgians have nicknamed it—is his great dream. He wants the names of all

who serve in it to be swallowed up in the organization, to be forgotten in service to Belgium. He would like his own name to be forgotten in the same way; but that is not to be. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I know that the public service of Herbert C. Hoover has just begun. He belongs not only to Belgium, but to America, and as soon as the war is over and Belgium is free, his own country will have need of him.

EDWARD EYRE HUNT.

From “War Bread,” to be published by Henry Holt and Co.

## “The Greatest Novel”

THERE is a conspiracy among people who have read great books to make the account of them dismally impressive. People urge you to read a masterpiece in the same way that they urge you to join the City Club or subscribe to the *Survey*. They want to do you good. For years people have told me to read “War and Peace.” “By Tolstoy.” “It’s stupendous,” they’ve said, “it takes you a month to read it—three large volumes. It has more characters in it than you can possibly remember. It’s immense. It is a panorama of the Napoleonic wars, of the invasion of Russia and the retreat from Moscow. It explodes Napoleon. It’s the greatest novel ever written.”

This to me is the bare and glistening hook. I want bait. There may be voracious natures that crave three-volume panoramic novels. I envy such, but do not seek to emulate them. And I avoid their suggestions.

But this tone is exactly the official tone adopted by Vicomte de Vogüé about “War and Peace.” It “presents us,” he says solemnly, “with a complete tableau of Russian society during the great Napoleonic wars from 1805 to 1815. The stage is immense and the actors are innumerable; among them are three emperors with their ministers, their marshals, and their generals, and a countless retinue of minor officers, soldiers, nobles and peasants. We are transported by turns from the salons of St. Petersburg to the camps of war, from Moscow to the country districts. And all these diverse and varied scenes are joined together with a controlling purpose that brings everything into harmony. Each one of the prolonged series of constantly changing tableaux is of remarkable beauty and palpitating with life. The interminable series of incidents, of portraits, of reflections which the author presents to us, unrolls itself around a few fictitious personages; but the true hero of the story is Russia in her desperate struggle against the foreigner, and the real personages, Alexander,

Napoleon, Koutouzof, Speransky, occupy almost as prominent a position as the imaginary ones."

The pivot is indeed Russia. That is a grave and genuine observation. But now that I have read "War and Peace" my heart rebels against the whole tone in which this novel is discussed. Emperors, marshals, ministers, generals! It is not for these that Tolstoy wrote this great, humane, wise, tender book. Somewhere near the middle of it these words about his War occur: "It happened because it was bound to happen; and so it came to pass that some millions of men, ignoring all common sense and human feeling, started to march eastward to slaughter their fellow-creatures, just as, some centuries before, unnumbered swarms had rushed down on the west, killing all in their way." It is of this vast untoward flood of war that Tolstoy was thinking, this torrent in which the men and women of his story are caught, some to ride, some to spin, some to struggle, some to drown. And although he stands for Russia, his country, in the invasion, no military genius is the hero of his story. There are no heroes, only human beings, giving their impress to events or taking their impress from them; and "the heart of kings is in the hand of God."

The tumult of Austerlitz, Friedland, Borodino, is to be found in "War and Peace." Tolstoy has dramatized each battle by focussing it at one point after another, and in one person after another—persons we already know. We stand on the bridge as it is being shelled. We see the army stream by. We charge with young Rostow's squadron across "the gulf of terror." We run with him on foot from the vicious hook-nosed Frenchman, run in fear. With Bolkonsky we rage at the moment of retreat, seize the standard and advance, fall, open eyes on "the deep, far away sky above." With Nicholas we attack without orders, wince at killing and are decorated. With Tonchine we are so insane as not to fall back, we save the day with our battery, and are reprimanded for losing two guns. With Peter we are civilians wandering aimlessly on the battlefield, ending up behind the breastwork where the fighting is thickest. With Bolkonsky again we stand under fire on that fatal day when the French got the range of the reserve.

"Good God! what has happened? In the stomach? Then he is done for!" said the officers.

"It actually grazed my ear!" said the aide-de-camp."

And with Petia, too, the youngster, we spend that last wonderful night on which he listens to his orchestra playing an unknown beautiful hymn.

But it is not this multiplicity of impressions, this incredible resource and diversity, which stands out as the boon of "War and Peace." Other titanic

novelists have assembled details with energy and piled up effects only a little less tremendous. Zola could do it, Balzac, Dostoevsky. It is something else which distinguishes "War and Peace" and gives it its indisputable glory. As one's mind roams back over the thronging events, one is for the moment bewildered. There is no order in them and no end to them. But whether one begins to reflect on Natacha or Bolkonsky or Maria or Peter; whether it is the death of Peter's sire or the dreadful affair between Natacha and Anatole, or Maria's relations with her tyrannical father, or the sad unearthly estrangements of Bolkonsky before he died; whether it is the grand barbaric hunt or the magnificent sleigh-ride or Natacha's ball or Peter's initiation into freemasonry or his duel or his imprisonment and imminent execution—whatever one of these ramified scenes comes to mind, it is instinct with the great spirit of Tolstoy. Like a full and equable light he reveals every inflection and contour. Keen to expose as well as to display, he has for peace as well as war the same heightened faculties, the same depths of sympathy, the same psychological zeal. When he philosophizes fatalistically about war one may decline to follow him. When he passes judgment on Napoleon one may hesitate to accept him. But when he sets afoot any encounter between man and man, or man and woman, or man and nature, he is a master in dramatic intensity, in beauty, in understanding, in that cleanness and firmness and economy of line which comes only with a genius for sincerity.

Natacha is the most vibrant creature in "War and Peace." It is the triumph of Tolstoy's art that she is carried from saucy childhood to maternal amplitude and successfully identified in every process of that change. No torrent that ever ran from high hills to a smooth union with the sea was more perfectly defined in its movements. The same is true of Maria, perhaps, a stream that rises on a plateau, but the person of Natacha is so charming that she arrests one for her own sake. Take her at sixteen, cajoling her mother:

"Come, mamma, do not laugh so; the bed shakes! You are just like me; you laugh as easily as I do. Wait a minute,' and taking her mother's hand again she went on with her fortune-telling: 'June, July and August—mamma, he is desperately in love; do you not think so?—was any one ever so much in love with you? And he is nice—very nice! Only not quite to my taste; straight and narrow like the tall clock in the dining room. Do you not understand? quite narrow and pale grey. . .'

"What nonsense!"

"Why don't you understand? Nicholas would

understand exactly. Now Besoukhow is blue, dark blue and red; and he makes me think of a square thing. . . .

"I believe you are flirting with him too . . . and again the countess could not help laughing."

And then see her with Prince Andrew Bolkonsky. He had kept their marriage waiting, in deference to his father. On the eve of his return she had fallen in love with an adventurer. Bolkonsky never saw her again until he was dying.

"Forgive me," she murmured, looking up. 'Forgive me.'

"I love you," he said.

"Forgive me."

"What have I to forgive?"

"Forgive me for what I did," said Natacha, in a low voice, and with a painful effort.

"I love you better than I did before," replied Prince Andrew, lifting her head to look in her eyes, which were timidly fixed on his, swimming with tears of joy, but luminous with love and pity. Her pale, thin features, and lips swollen with crying, had, at this moment, no trace of beauty; but Prince Andrew saw nothing but her beautiful eyes radiant through tears."

In one sense it is the story which makes a novel worth reading, meaning by the story the calculated

progress of events. There is that famous formula, the good story well told. But it is forlorn to seek in the story all by itself, no matter how thrilling, the explanation of the peculiar joy which is bestowed by a work of art. What a man has to tell is significant. How well he tells it, is also significant. More significant than either is the spirit with which he is endowed. By what sensitive and mysterious process this spirit of the creator steals into a narrative, gives it his livingness, no one has yet defined. But it is this subtle presence, this communication through narrative of a being that has conceived the world afresh, which makes the novel an artistic form. Persons who tell you that "War and Peace" has for its subject-matter the fate of Russia in the wars a hundred years ago are sticking to an important fact. But there is more in it than their honest reports can tell you. There is a great testimony to life generously and deeply experienced; to mankind's emotions in peace or strife; to the vast variety of human nature that this one man has embraced and transmuted. There is in this miraculous imaginative organism, as in any other organism, life and the impulse of life. There is something that belongs only to life itself. There is a beauty and a reality indefinable.

FRANCIS HACKETT.

## England and Free Trade

IN a recent issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC it was stated, as one of the evidences of the impetus of the protection movement in England, that even the *Daily News* had surrendered the free-trade position. I do not know upon what authority this statement was made; but it is without an atom of foundation, as any careful study of the columns of the *Daily News* during the past few months will show. And while it would seem, on a superficial survey of the facts, that public opinion has swung round violently from free trade, we must take care not to mistake the movement of a whirlpool for a change of current. English politics and thought are under the dominion of the war, and antagonism to Germany has, in the popular mind, submerged every consideration of industry, economics and international relationship. The advocates of tariff reform have naturally taken advantage of the wind with which the war has filled their sails. The intense feeling provoked by Germany's methods has created a powerful body of opinion, not so much in favor of a tariff against Germany after the war as against any sort of trade intercourse with her. The protectionists have hitched their chariot to the popular passion,

and for the time being the cause of free trade would seem to be imperilled. But England will not settle this great question in a frenzy of passion. It will be settled in cold blood and in the light, not of the red glare of war, but of the permanent facts and necessities of our existence. The temper that prevails to-day will not be the temper that will prevail when Germany is beaten, when punishment has been exacted and when the nation, sickened with war, turns to the task of preventing a recurrence of the tragedy that has overwhelmed Europe.

What are the considerations that will govern opinion on the subject then? The first, I think, will be the desire for peace. "War after the war" is an effective phrase for sensational journalists now, but it will not be so popular when the war is over and the question for the world is whether it is going to set about preparing for a new war on a still greater scale or for a permanent condition of peace. Hostility to Germany will remain, but it will be qualified by many things: the fact of her defeat, the discredit of her military caste, the crushing demands of war taxation, the fact that economic and trade interests do not fol-