

WITH TOLSTOY IN THE RUSSIAN FAMINE.



IN January, 1892, while living in Sweden, I received letters from the hunger-stricken provinces in Russia, describing especially those sufferers who from various causes were neglected by the official helpers. Small sums given for this cause by friends in Sweden were forwarded to Russia. Hopes of larger contributions having been held out by friends in Great Britain and America, it was proposed that I should go to Russia, and try to organize benevolent work among the more destitute and neglected. Fearing that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a foreigner to carry out such a plan on his own responsibility, I wrote to the Countess S. Tolstoy, asking her advice. In reply I received the following letter, written in English :

DEAR SIR : It is so difficult to give advice in such a matter as beneficence. Any help in such a distress is welcome, and an organization of relief for the famine-stricken in Russia could do very much good. But organizations (private) are not permitted in Russia ; every one does for the help of the people what he can.

If any one would like to send considerable sums of money, it could be sent either to the committee of the Grand Duke Cesarevitch in St. Petersburg, or to the committee of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth in Moscow ; or, if you prefer to direct money in private disposition, my husband and all my family would do our best to spend it as usefully to the profit of the national distress as possible.

I think that if you would come to Russia yourself, you could help very much, as personal help is wanted nearly as much as money-help. But the life in those famine-stricken villages is very hard ; one must bear very much inconvenience ; and if you have never been in Russia, and have no idea what a Russian village is, you will not endure life in it.

The famine is dreadful ! Though the Government is trying to do as much as possible, private help is very important. The horses are dying for want of food, the cows and all the cattle are either killed by the peasants, or are falling dead from starvation. A very small part of them will be left.

We were thinking, if we were to receive considerable sums of money, of buying horses when spring comes, in the south of Russia, so as to give our peasants the possibility of working. Our peasants can do nothing without cattle. But

those are only plans. At present we have so much to do to keep the people alive. How dreadfully sad it is to see our poor suffering peasants, so helpless, and looking for help, so full of hope when they meet any one who shows them pity and interest ! If you try, sir, to do anything, God will bless you. Yours very truly,

COUNTESS S. TOLSTOY.

January 20th (Old Style), 1892.

In the middle of February I received a cablegram from America settling the plan of my going to Russia. It was decided that all contributions from my friends should be sent either to Countess Tolstoy to be used in the work of her family, or to trustworthy persons in southern Russia to be used for the relief of families who were suffering from persecution as well as from famine.

When I was on the point of leaving Stockholm, there were reports that Count Tolstoy was a prisoner on his estate, and that he was to be banished from the country. I was recommended by a friend to the special help and protection of the Swedish ambassador in St. Petersburg, and was also provided with introductions to prominent Russian officials. As my instructions would not permit me to place one cent of the gifts for the starving in the hands of Russian officials, I had to avoid as much as possible all contact with them and with Russian committees.

I left Stockholm on February 24. In Berlin I was informed that the Slavophil press in Russia had expressed its disapproval of assistance from Germany, and my friends doubted if I would be permitted to visit the famine-stricken villages. Thus with rather gloomy prospects I left Berlin on the night train for Warsaw. At the border station of Alexandrovo, next morning, Russian officials searched our luggage. I traveled second class. On boarding the Russian train I observed that the passports were returned to my fellow-passengers but not to me, which caused me some anxiety. Finally a gendarme came in and handed me my passport. After a few minutes the same gendarme came again, accompanied by the conductor, and said to me in a commanding tone, "Vash passport!" ("Your passport!") I answered as politely as possible that my passport had already been examined and stamped, and asked why he wanted it a second time. Stepping up to me, the gendarme roared out as if he were drilling a fresh recruit from the village: "Eto nashe dielo! Vash passport!"

("That's our business! Your passport!") I produced it without further remark. My fellow-passengers looked at me, as it seemed, with suspicion, and my own feelings reminded me of the words of a Russian nobleman to me on a former visit, "Russia is a gigantic prison, where honest men must submit to be treated as criminals." Two years previously I had written a book on the religious movement in Russia, which had been forbidden by the Russian censor, but I did not think my name could be on the list of suspicious or dangerous foreigners. After about an hour the conductor handed me my passport. On examining it I could not discover that anything had been done to it beyond writing my name in Russian on it. An old German gentleman, who had observed my anxiety, said to me in a low and paternal tone, "In Russia you must never ask questions nor make objections, nor worry yourself, but quietly submit, and leave everything to God."

My sleeping-car ticket for the forty-eight hours' journey from Warsaw to Moscow cost five rubles. In the compartment where I had my "number" I found three men, whose appearance did not inspire me with confidence. One, who proved to be the keeper of a kind of hotel in Moscow, was of Jewish extraction. The second, an agent, was short and very stout, with thick lips, large mouth, double chin, and glossy pop-eyes. The third, a rich saloon-keeper from Smolensk, was tall and thin, with sharp looks and features. I had hardly entered the car before they assailed me with questions as to my errand in Russia. A letter of introduction to a Swedish resident in Russia saved me from disclosing the real object of my visit. There were seven other sleeping-car passengers. The men spent all their time till after midnight in drinking, gambling, boasting of their horses, dogs, wines, dinners, and adventures, and laughing over filthy stories. We had not traveled far into the country before we began to see crowds of emaciated and forlorn-looking muzhiks in rags, each with a bag of sackcloth thrown over his shoulder, and shivering from cold, standing at every station, with uncovered heads and outstretched hands, begging for bread. At some large stations I counted as many as seventy-five of them. One could see by their looks and their behavior that they were not habitual beggars. With trembling voices they called out, bowing and making the sign of the cross: "Our foster-fathers and benefactors, help us for Christ's sake!" "Give a little of holy alms for Christ's sake, for the salvation of your soul!" or, "Give us a little bread; we are dying of hunger!" Many of these poor people were horribly disfigured by disease.

The contrast between these starving muzhiks and the carousers on the train was painful in the extreme. I now had an opportunity of introducing the subject of the famine in conversation with my fellow-travelers. At one station I was told by two intelligent Russians, who came from the interior of the country, that a number of muzhiks had recently been found dead in the snow near the roadside. When I repeated this sad story, the fat man, wiping his brow with a handkerchief and heaving for breath after his exertions in the restaurant at the same station, exclaimed: "The muzhiks are cattle. Their condition is not so hard as some people think. They are not used to anything else, and they are contented and happy."

Among the passengers was a very intelligent old Russian gentleman who had spent over twenty years in western Europe. He said that the distress among the muzhiks was no doubt great, but the accounts in the foreign press were exaggerated. To my inquiry if he had visited any of the hunger-stricken villages, he replied in the negative; but he had conversed with governors and other high officials from those regions. In general I found that my fellow-passengers avoided as much as possible all conversation on the subject of the famine, but they were all exceedingly interested in horse-racing, dogs, hunting, balls, and dinners. Dressed in homespun woolen cloth, and refusing to take part in the drinking and gambling, I soon became an object of derision or suspicion.

When we were about half-way to Moscow, we began to see at almost every station piles of flour-sacks, and large numbers of peasants coming with loads of flour and grain. At many places the train was detained for an hour or more, on account of the immense transport of grain and flour to the famine-stricken provinces.

Arriving at Moscow, I took an *izvostchik*, and drove directly to the house of Count Tolstoy. After half an hour's ride the driver stopped before a plain two-storied wooden house in one of the suburbs. It was surrounded by a wooden fence. Over the fence gate was written, according to Russian regulation, the name of the owner of the house in large golden letters: "Dom Grafa L. N. Tolstova" ("the house of Count L. N. Tolstoy"). A few years ago the count, I was told, took away this inscription, putting in its place a shoemaker's sign with a painted boot and the following letters: "L. N. Tolstoy, Shoemaker." But the attention of the Czar having been directed to this sign-board during a visit to Moscow, the count was forthwith ordered to take it down, and to replace it by the usual inscription. I entered the gate, and rang the bell at the main entrance. A man-servant let me in. After waiting a few moments, a tall thin-looking young man, with

dark complexion, came into the reception-room, and saluted me in English. This was Count Tolstoy's second son, Count Lyeff Lvovitch, of whose work among the starving in Samara I shall have much to tell in another article. He told me that his mother was not at home, and invited me to dinner at 5 P. M., when she would be present. Meantime I found a suitable lodging-place.

On returning I was shown up-stairs into a large and plainly furnished hall. After a few moments the Countess Tolstoy entered, and saluted me very cordially in English. Countess Sophia Andreevna Tolstoy is a tall and stately-looking lady. She retains in a wonderful degree the freshness, beauty, and elasticity of youth. She speaks with great rapidity and fluency, and yet with precision. She asked me if I knew about the persecution that had been started against her husband by "The Moscow Gazette." I answered in the affirmative, declaring that I had heard so many contradictory rumors that it was impossible to make out what was true; but I had heard enough to entertain the gravest fears with regard both to the count and the object of my journey. By this time the dinner-bell rang. In the dining-room, down-stairs, I again met the young count, and was introduced to a few guests and to those of the family who were at home. The dinner consisted of four courses and *kvass*. The countess apologized for "the very plain dinner," adding, "We do not wish to encourage luxury in our family." During the conversation it was suggested that foreign publishers of the count's works who do not pay any royalty to the author ought to contribute something toward the count's work of relief; and I volunteered to remind some of them of their duty in this matter, and, I am glad to say, not in vain. On leaving the table the conversation about the persecution against the count was resumed. "You cannot imagine," said the countess, "how cruelly the motives and actions of my husband are distorted and wilfully misconstrued." I remarked that in doing good one can take comfort and be calm even in the most trying circumstances. "My husband," she continued,

"is no political revolutionist, as his enemies represent him to be. What he above all is aiming at, is a moral regeneration of the individual and of society, and it is a deep and strong moral indignation which lies at the bottom of his words and actions."

The latest attacks against the count had been very characteristic. He had written an interesting article on the distress among the peasants, and how to relieve it. This article he offered to Russian papers, but it was refused. According to his habit in such cases, he allowed the article to be translated and published in the foreign press, and after some time it appeared in the London "Daily Telegraph." In the article the count had said that it was not enough to provide the peasants with food, but they must be roused from their hopeless apathy and elevated from their deep debasement. This sentence in the Russian original had not been very faithfully rendered in English. Now "The Moscow Gazette," the principal organ of the fanatical and autocratical "obscurantism," pounced upon this sentence, distorting the words of the count to the extent of making them mean that "the peasants must be aroused against the authorities." Prince Stcherbatoff, the father-in-law of the late Mr. Katkoff,¹ the former editor of "The Moscow Gazette," published a cynical article in that paper against Count Tolstoy, urging the necessity of "exterminating this evil" (namely, Count Tolstoy and his work). These articles were the signal for other attacks. That this plan was not executed may probably be ascribed to the visit of the Countess Tolstoy to St. Petersburg, and her private audience with the Czar.

These attacks upon the count, and the rumors about his imprisonment or banishment, caused such a sensation that \$20 was offered for a single copy of "The Moscow Gazette" containing the article. A large number of letters came from friends and followers, from professors and students at universities down to simple people who could hardly write a legible hand, asking: "Is it possible that our dear count, who by word and deed has taught us to follow the teaching and example of Christ

¹ This Prince Stcherbatoff and his late son-in-law have gained notoriety through their treatment of the peasants in the village of Karbolati, on the estate of the prince in the government of Saratoff. Many years ago these peasants, numbering several thousands, appealed to the father of the present prince to buy in his name a large tract of land that was for sale, but on their account. The old prince gave his consent on condition that the peasants should pay him a certain sum in annual instalments. On these conditions over 300,000 acres of partly wood and grazing land and partly arable land were paid for by the peasants, whose rightful property the land then of course became. But these ignorant and simple peasants neglected to follow up all the formalities necessary to obtain indisputable legal pos-

session of it before the old prince died. The present Prince Stcherbatoff and his son-in-law withheld all this land from the poor peasants, who were reduced to the greatest misery, and in their despair appealed to the governor for help and protection. But this representative of Russian justice ordered that the peasants should be flogged "for their obstinacy." The matter was brought before the Russian bar, and the muzhiks, without influence or means, lost the case. During the winter of 1891-92 the most pitiable distress prevailed among those poor and plundered peasants of Karbolati. I have here only to add that in the Tolstoy family, or from any of its members, I have never heard even the name of Prince Stcherbatoff mentioned, much less the above incident.

in not resisting evil, but blessing those that curse us and doing good unto those that hate us—is it possible that he has, as it is stated in 'The Moscow Gazette,' fallen so deep as to proclaim the doctrines of hate and bloody revolt instead of the gospel of love, self-sacrifice, and patient endurance?"

The count himself paid no attention to these attacks, and continued his work among the starving. At last his friends prevailed upon him to use the right accorded him by law in such a case; namely, to have his defense published in the paper which had contained the attacks. He wrote a short and moderate reply for insertion in the paper, but this legal right was denied him. The house of Count Tolstoy was constantly surrounded by detectives, who went so far in their insolence as to look into the rooms through the windows. On one occasion the countess said, "I sometimes feel as if I would not take it too much to heart if our family were banished from Russia."

The well-known energy of the Countess Tolstoy, and her extraordinary capacity for work, were taxed to the utmost during the time of the famine. She showed me a pile of letters and telegrams which she had received on that day from almost all parts of the world. Some of them related to the work of relief, of which the countess herself has charge, buying up immense quantities of different articles of food and sending them to the headquarters of her husband in Ryazan, and to the similar work of her son in Samara. Many contained appeals for help for the starving; but the largest number were from friends of the suffering in different countries, containing money or promises of help, inquiries with regard to the famine, etc. She had no secretary. "It has grown to be a habit with me," she said, "to answer all letters myself. Otherwise I cannot feel perfectly at ease."

The majority of Russians of the upper class in Moscow with whom I conversed were not willing to own that the famine was so formidable as it had been represented, although the city was teeming with begging muzhiks. "Look here," said a jovial and well-fed Russian, "our cafés and restaurants and our pleasure-resorts are as much frequented as ever. This is certainly no sign of famine." To my question if they had visited any of the hunger-stricken villages, these people invariably answered, "No." An educated and prominent gentleman told me that the authorities had tried as long as possible to ignore the terrible distress in the famine districts, representing it only as a *golodovka*, a little hunger, which is chronic, and occurs every year. He also showed me extracts from a large number of Russian papers, containing descriptions of the famine

that were more incredible than those in the foreign press. According to these, not only chaff, chopped straw, goosefoot (*Chenopodium* L.), leaves, and bark from trees, but even sand and dried muck, formed the principal part in the "bread" used by the starving muzhiks. Carcasses of horses were lying in hundreds by the roadsides, polluting the air. People were dying by thousands from hunger. Children were found lying by the roadside struggling with death. Entire families were sometimes found dying of starvation without any one being able to render them the least help. Mothers had killed their children in despair, and then had committed suicide. Many of these shocking notices were taken from such papers as "The Moscow Gazette" and "Novoye Vremya," and could not therefore have been invented by any ill-disposed foreigner. Later on, however, the Russian papers were forbidden to publish similar reports from the field of the famine, the very word *golod*, famine, being prohibited, and *nieurashai*, failure of crops, and other circumlocutions being substituted. The gentleman I have mentioned estimated that about thirty millions of people were suffering. The immense sums at last voted by the Government, and the magnificent gifts from private persons in all countries, could, he said, render only partial relief. "Our muzhiks," he said, "possess an almost superhuman power of enduring hunger and privations, but this power has its limits. They cannot get used to living upon chaff and sand!"

To my question if there were not means to be found in the country toward relieving the distress, he answered that there were both money and large stores of grain, even in the hunger-stricken provinces; but they were in the hands of usurers, who profited by the distress. If the authorities had followed Count Tolstoy's advice, and had compelled the owners of the grain to sell it at a fair price, the distress might have been averted or materially lessened. As for the capitalists, very few of them gave any considerable sums for the relief of the starving. There were a few aristocratic families, as, for example, the Tolstoyes, the Bobrinskys, Countess Schouvaloff, Colonel Paschkoff, Lareff Pissareff, Professor Stebut, etc., who rendered the suffering people substantial aid. I was also informed, and had myself opportunity afterward to verify the statement, that a considerable number of private persons had offered to feed smaller or larger numbers of starving people, but had not been allowed to do so by the authorities! Thus a wealthy lady of Moscow, Madame Barbara Marosoff, went to the Minister of the Interior and asked him what would be the consequences if she sent a number of wagon-loads of food to a district where 10,000

people were suffering. "They would be confiscated," was the answer! She was advised to give money to the official committees, but, having no confidence in them, she did not give anything.

In Moscow it was decided that I should first go to Ryazan, and spend a couple of weeks at the headquarters of the old Count Tolstoy, and then accompany his son Lyeff Lvovitch to Samara, where he was to resume his work, and where the distress was said to be greater than elsewhere. On the day that I was to leave Moscow I happened to come to a house where there was a photographic exhibition. "Have you no photographs of the starving in the hunger districts?" I asked one of the men. "Zaprestcheno" ("It is prohibited"), was the laconic answer. "Why?" "Ne znaiu" ("Don't know"). Entering another room, I found a large variety of amateur apparatus, which a courteous German explained to me; and though more than one amateur photographer had been taken charge of by the police in the Russian villages, I resolved to buy a kodak. Many of my kodak pictures are imperfect in an art sense, but they at least possess the value of being direct from nature, and, so far as I know, are the only photographs taken in the hunger-stricken provinces.¹

Late on March 5 I left Moscow for Klekotki, where I hoped to arrive on the following day; but a snow-storm delayed us until eight o'clock the following night. With a burning headache, and a scanty store of Russian phrases, I stepped out into the penetrating cold, not without misgivings lest I should fall into the hands of detectives, who were said to be swarming in those quarters. On entering the second-class waiting-room, where a number of men and women were bowing and crossing themselves before the icons (the room being furnished as a chapel, with a large number of pictures of saints), I observed a distinguished-looking lady sitting alone. I spoke to her in French, and found, to my glad surprise, that she also was on her way to Count Tolstoy to take part in his work. Mme. B——, who belonged to a prominent family of Moscow, gave me medicine, and introduced me to Mr. F—— S——, a young man dressed in peasant garb, who invited me to spend the night with him. Making our way a couple of miles through the blinding snow-storm, my host and I stopped at a small one-storied wooden house with one somewhat spacious room provided with a number of benches, a large table, and a small closet, used as a bedroom. This room was used as a "court-house" by my host's uncle, who was a justice of the peace. My host proved to be one of Count Tolstoy's warmest admirers and

followers, who had left his property, and was following his master's example in living with the muzhiks. He was now coöperating with the count in his work of relief. The night had gone far into the small hours before we retired.

In spite of the storm, which continued on the following day, Mme. B—— resolved to start for the count's headquarters at Byegitchevka, twenty-six miles distant. Packing our luggage in one *rozvazny*, and embedding ourselves in another, we started on our way over the desolate plains. Here and there we observed a few trees surrounding some gentleman's house, or the gilded cupola of a church towering above rows of snow-covered huts. We had to rest the horses in villages on the way, where we warmed ourselves with a cup of tea. After a few hours' ride we reached the river Don, on the opposite side of which we saw the village of Byegitchevka. In a few minutes our *yamstchik* drew up in front of a plain wooden house, and called out, "Vot dom Tolstova!" A number of muzhiks with loads of grain, flour, wood, etc., were to be seen about the premises. Entering the house, we found the anteroom crowded with muzhiks, who were silently standing and waiting to see the count. We passed into a plainly furnished hall, but neither the count nor his daughter was in. I was told to step into the count's room, behind the hall. It was a small room, furnished with a sofa, a cot-bed, a few plain wooden chairs, and a large table covered with papers and account-books. After a few minutes a young lady came in, and saluted me in a cordial way. To my question if she was the count's daughter, she answered: "No; I am his niece. My name is Kuzminsky." As I was talking with her, another young lady, with lively, expressive eyes and energetic features, entered, and, like the former, saluted me in good English.

"Countess Tolstoy?" I asked.

"They call me so," she said.

At the same moment I heard a deep voice in the hall, and the count himself stood before me, dressed in a large *polushubok*, a fur coat of sheepskin used by the muzhiks. With a hearty shake of his strong hand he wished me welcome, inquired about the journey, admired my Lapp dress, and showed me into a small room, which I was to occupy. Then he told me to hold out my feet, and pulled off my Lapp boots. All this was done in a natural way which excluded all thought of the Russian aristocrat, or of affectation on the part of a man who not only preaches but lives the gospel of brotherly love and humility.

We immediately went in to dinner, where I was introduced to a number of the count's helpers, young persons of both sexes, of edu-

¹ An English newspaper correspondent took sixty kodak pictures, none of which could be reproduced.

cation, and belonging to prominent families. During the dinner, which consisted exclusively of vegetables, the count and his helpers all being strict vegetarians, the conversation was on the all-absorbing question of the famine. The count is no pessimist, and is very guarded in his statements, but he said that the distress was fearful. "You will now have an opportunity to see for yourself," he said. After dinner, in speaking about the immense sums of money voted by the Government for the stricken provinces, he said: "I will use an illustration to give you an idea of the state of things. Suppose this little round table placed in a distillery and covered with bottles of different sizes and all filled with spirits. Under the table there is an intense heat, which causes the contents of the bottles to evaporate, after which it is condensed in the cold air higher up into two streams of which one discharges itself into the great reservoir of the capitalists, and the other into that of the Government. Now all these bottles having been emptied, and therefore not being able to produce any more, they must of course be filled again to some extent, in some way or other. Then a large pail is taken, dipped in the great reservoir, and its contents poured over the bottles on the table; but most of it flows outside the bottles. We are now trying to put funnels in the bottles, so that the contents may not run outside."

In the afternoon the count and his helpers were all busy aiding the muzhiks, who crowded the premises all the time. I went with the ladies to visit the "eating-rooms." Later on in the evening a number of the count's helpers came home from their work in the villages, telling sad stories of suffering and distress. Every Saturday night a dozen or so of the helpers used to come together at the count's headquarters, to relate their experiences and to exchange opinions regarding the work of relief, or to listen to the views of the count upon different subjects. I need not say that these evenings with Count Tolstoy were deeply interesting. Sometimes the conversation, out of kindness to me, was held in English, French, or German, but when the speakers became animated it usually glided into Russian, of which I had an imperfect knowledge. But the count and the ladies had the kindness to tell me in English or French the substance of what was said.

I have already mentioned the fact that famine is chronic in Russia, a majority of the peasants being always kept on the border of starvation; but a famine affecting over twenty provinces, with a population of about thirty millions, is extraordinary even for Russia. This was not the first time that Count Tolstoy had engaged in the work of helping the peasants. As a young man he had an experience which he has de-

scribed in his novel "Utro Pomestchika" ("The Morning of a Country Gentleman"). Later on he expended much work and money on his educational schemes for the elevation of the peasantry; and finally it has become part of his religion, so to speak, to lead the life of a peasant in order to help the peasants both materially and spiritually. With his experience and thorough knowledge of the state of things in his country, he foresaw terrible famine, and warned the Government of it. His warnings were not only left unheeded, but were regarded as dangerous and published abroad as nihilistic plots.¹

In spite of the scoffings of such papers as "The Moscow Gazette," and the prohibition against private work of relief, Count Tolstoy and his family took up the work of benevolence, and their example was followed by other families. The help given by the Government consisted of the monthly distribution of flour according to certain rules. This gave rise to many difficulties of various kinds. It often happened that the muzhiks sold the flour received from the Government, and bought *vodka*, liquor, for the money, leaving their families to starve; or it was taken from them by heartless creditors. But even if it was not disposed of in this way, it lasted only from fifteen to twenty days; the rest of the month the family had to starve. The effect of this was seen in the fact that most cases of sickness and death occurred during the latter part of the month, the sickly and the feeble among the people then literally dying in large numbers from starvation. In many cases the muzhiks could not even prepare their food from the flour, having no fuel for cooking, and thus they had to eat their food raw. The consequence was that many were attacked with sickness, and died even from this cause. Another difficulty was that many of those who were most in need did not receive any help whatever. Thus no help was given by the Government to "laborers,"—that is, persons "who could work,"—or to families possessing a certain number of horses and cattle. Now, what were these people to do, there being no work for the "laborers" and no food for the horses and the cattle? It must also be remarked, with regard to the distribution of the official aid, that, besides the heavy expenses, immense quantities of flour were either stolen, or mixed with chaff and sand, or allowed to spoil. More than one case of this kind came under my personal observation, not to speak of the individuals and classes of persons who were overlooked

¹ It was "The Moscow Gazette" which discovered in the count's article on the famine "one of the links of a wide-spread conspiracy," and unsuspecting newspaper correspondents telegraphed to foreign countries that "a wide-spread nihilistic conspiracy" had been discovered in Moscow! It is the way many of the stories of "nihilistic conspiracies" originate.

and pushed aside as black sheep in the fold, such as sectarians, especially Stundists, people of non-Russian extraction, and others who were not looked upon with friendly eyes by the representatives of "the powers that be."

Count Tolstoy's plan was to render as efficient help as possible to those who were overlooked by the authorities. The first thing to do was to find out who were the most destitute and needy. This was by no means easy. A "Westerner" would have put all the muzhiks under the same head as destitute, but our Russian friends knew that there was a gradation downward. The easiest way would have been to apply to the village authorities, such as the *starosta* or the pope, to make out a list of the most needy; but alas! the *starosta* is not always a person in whom there is no guile, and the pope is not always a saint. Not even messengers sent by whole communities, who came and asked for help, could be trusted implicitly. Therefore the count and his helpers had to go themselves into the villages, visiting every house, making out a list of the names of each family, the number of its members, the number of children, of old and sick persons, of their belongings, and the help, if any, received from the Government or from other quarters. To verify the statements of the muzhiks, the whole *mir*, village community, was convened and the list gone through and discussed before its members, and measures resolved upon toward helping the most distressed. These tables were perhaps the most exact statistics in Russia. They showed that as early as March on an average two thirds of the horses and cattle had been killed or had died from starvation. In these regions, where people burn straw, there being no wood, the famine had deprived them of fuel; the suffering from this cause was terrible during the cold season. In many villages the straw roofs of more than half the houses had been pulled down and used for fuel, or as food for the cattle; groups of families, together with their cattle, crowded together in small and dirty *izbas* to keep themselves warm from the exhalations of their bodies, meantime inhaling poison and disease. Then there were the poor little children, whose starving mothers were not able to feed them, and the thousands who were carried off by disease, without hospitals, or nourishment, or medical care.

The principal branch of Count Tolstoy's work was the establishing of free eating-rooms, where the most needy were served with two meals every day. At the meeting of the *mir* a locality was selected for an eating-room; a suitable woman, who was in need of help, was appointed to prepare the food and to have charge of the kitchen; and the peasants themselves furnished the kitchen utensils, etc. When the guests came

to their meals, they brought with them bowls and spoons. So far as possible everything was done in conference and by coöperation with the peasants themselves. The guiding hand and watchful eye of the count and his efficient helpers were present everywhere. In some villages where there was a supply of flour only warm food was served to the guests; otherwise both bread and warm food were given to them. These "eating-rooms without bread" were established in March, because the Government then began to distribute thirty pounds of flour a month to each person. In these eating-rooms the following quantities of food were distributed for each ten persons per week: 5 lbs. of rye (for kvass); 2 lbs. wheat flour (for soup); 10 lbs. pease-meal, oatmeal, or corn-meal (for *kisel*, a kind of jelly, a Russian dish); 10 lbs. pease; 10 lbs. millet (for *kasha*, a kind of gruel, or *kulesh*, a kind of soup); 2 *meri* (about 72 pounds) of potatoes; 1 *mera* of beets; 1 quart of cabbage; ½ lb. of hemp-oil; 4 lbs. of salt; 1 lb. of onions. During the winter 1½ lbs. of kerosene oil and 60 of wood were consumed each month for every kitchen. This made per day for each individual: 2 lbs. of vegetables (potatoes, cabbage, and beets), and ½ lb. of farinaceous food of different kinds, which, when prepared, amounted to 4 lbs. per day for each person.

The count and his helpers told me that the peasants, in spite of their distress, were at first dissatisfied with the eating-rooms without bread, because to the muzhik sour black rye bread is almost the only thing which deserves the name of food. After some time, however, they learned their mistake, and came in large numbers, and asked to be received as guests. Some of the guests brought with them to their meals a few small pieces of bread, and often came entirely without bread. They were hale and strong the whole winter, their food costing between two and three cents a day; whereas, when their food had been principally of bread, the expenses per day were about double that amount.

Here is the bill of fare for a week, the dinner costing one cent. It will be observed that some of the dishes for supper are included, to give a full idea of the diet.

Monday: *Stchee* (a kind of cabbage soup) and *kasha* (gruel) both for dinner and supper. Tuesday: *Pokhlobka* (soup of potatoes, shelled barley, and mushrooms) and *kisel* of pease (mashed pease) both for dinner and supper. Wednesday: Pea-soup and boiled potatoes for dinner; pease with kvass (a favorite dish) for supper. Thursday: *Stchee* and *kisel* of pease for both dinner and supper. Friday: Potato soup and *kulesh* (a kind of millet soup) for both dinner and supper. Saturday: *Stchee* and boiled potatoes for dinner;

potatoes and kvass for supper. Sunday: Pea-soup and kasha for dinner; pease with kvass for supper.

In most of the eating-rooms, however, bread was used together with the above variety of vegetable food. In all the kitchens, which numbered at the time of my visit about 150, over 10,000 people were fed daily. Afterward this number was more than doubled, I was told.

Besides the eating-rooms for grown people, it was soon found necessary to establish special eating-rooms for little children. These were the particular care of the count. I shall describe later some of the difficulties he had to overcome in this work. In Russia, as a general thing, nearly half of all the children born die in infancy, and during the famine the mortality was terrible. The eating-rooms for children were provided with food made from milk, oat-meal, millet, buckwheat, etc. At the time of my departure the count had established about seventy-five such eating-rooms.

After the new year the count opened a new branch of his work, to provide fuel for the distressed population. About 400 cords of wood were distributed during the winter, either gratuitously or for a small compensation in the form of work.

A fourth branch of his work was to feed the horses of the peasants. For this purpose the count established a large stable in which 300 horses were fed; and through his agency a large number of horses were sent to parts of the country where there was plenty of fodder, to be fed until spring.

A fifth branch of his work was to distribute flax and bast among the muzhiks, to give them some work. The bast plays a very prominent part in the clothing of the muzhik, who rarely can afford to wear leather shoes. From this bast they make a kind of low shoes, and they use rags about their legs instead of stockings. Some of the peasants obtained these materials gratuitously, while others paid a trifle for them. All the shoes which were not needed by the muzhiks who had made them the count bought at full price, and distributed among the needy.

The sixth branch of his work consisted in buying sowing-seed — wheat, rye, potatoes, oats, millet, and hemp — for distribution among the most destitute. The need of this help was very pressing, not only from the fact that the majority of the peasants had no possible means of providing themselves with seed, but also because of the fact that about one third of the autumn sowing had been destroyed by ice, which covered the fields for thousands of versts.¹ The help voted by the Gov-

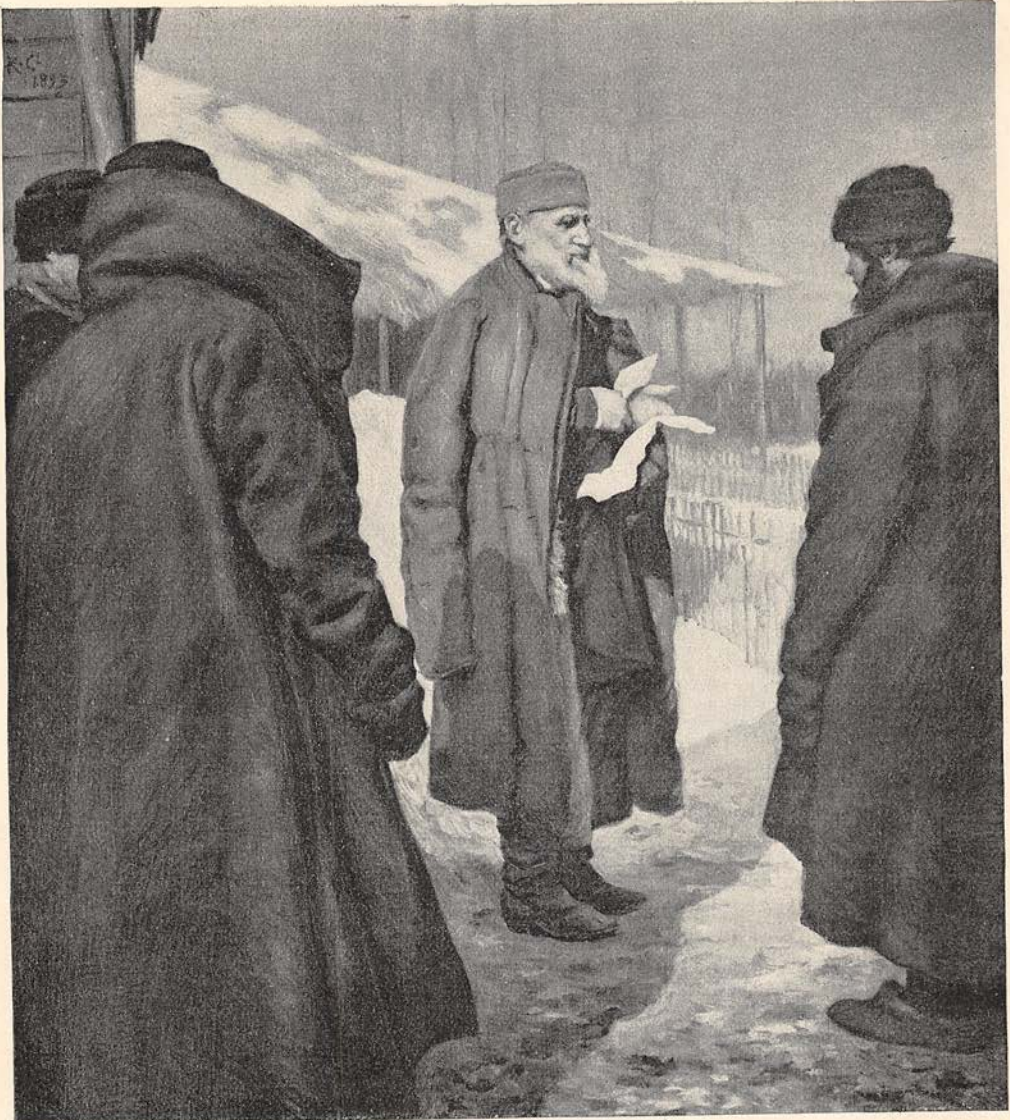
ernment toward providing seed was altogether insufficient, and often went to the *kulaks* ("fists"; *i. e.*, peasant usurers) instead of to the muzhiks. Of course a very small number of the destitute millions could be reached by this help. This seed was distributed on condition that it should be paid for at a moderate price after the next harvest. The income from this was to be used toward establishing homes for destitute children.

There was still another branch of the count's work, the buying of horses and distributing them to the very destitute. Besides the large number of muzhiks who had never had a horse, amounting in many villages to forty per cent., most of the remaining number had lost their horses or were losing them every day, and must of necessity be reduced to the greatest misery or complete slavery, if they were not helped. During my visit, arrangements were made to buy one hundred horses at an average price of thirteen dollars apiece; but many more were bought and distributed later on. The horses were given away on the following conditions: Every one who received a horse must till the soil for two other peasants who were without a horse, or for widows and orphans. The count and his family also helped the starvelings in other ways. Several bakeries were established, where bread was baked and sold at the cheap rate of 60 kopeks per *pozd* (40 lbs.). Small sums of money were also given for pressing needs like burial expenses. The count and his helpers did all in their power to render spiritual aid. In a kind and loving way they encouraged and counseled the people. They always had on hand a large store of suitable tracts, which they distributed among the muzhiks who could read. They also tried to establish schools for peasant children, which, under the circumstances, was exceedingly difficult.

On my arrival at Byegitchevka it was resolved that the following day I should accompany the young Countess Maria Tolstoy on her tour in the villages. As early as six in the morning the muzhiks began to crowd the count's premises, and between eight and nine o'clock not only the rooms inside were filled, but the house itself was fairly besieged by men with haggard looks and hollow eyes, miserable-looking women clothed in rags, and poor little children shivering from cold. A few of them looked strong and hale at a distance, but when you approached them, you found that their bodies were swollen, showing the symptoms of hunger-typhus. Some of these muzhiks had come from great distances, sent as deputies by entire communes to ask for help.

The count and his helpers were always cheerful and kind, and seemed to be indefatigable. The harrowing stories of these people

¹ A verst is nearly two thirds of an English mile.



DRAWN BY KENYON COX, FROM THE AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPH.

TOLSTOY RECEIVING APPEALS FROM THE PEASANTS.

were an infinite variation on the same theme—hunger, disease, death, and sorrow. Very often they had not come to the end of their stories before they broke out into sobbing, crying: "For Christ's sake, help us! Our horses and cattle have starved to death; we have pawned our land, our winter clothing, everything; we have nothing to eat." "We have not eaten anything for days. Our women and our children are dying from hunger." "My husband died last night, and I have no means of getting him buried." "The authorities have taken our last cow and our last flour in payment of the taxes." The authorities not only took all that could be taken in payment of the taxes, but also, when

there was nothing more to take, had the poor muzhiks flogged; and when this did not help, they were imprisoned.

The young countess was up very early looking after the household, and when the peasants began to come she took part in the work among them until the time for breakfast and the departure for the villages. At nine o'clock we had breakfast, consisting of vegetables, butter and bread, and tea or coffee, the count preferring coffee. The young countess acted as lady of the house, and in her absence, her cousin Miss Kuzminsky. Maria Lvovna, or "Masha," as the count calls her, is a devoted follower of her father. In the dress of a peas-



Kempen G. 1893.

After Photograph.

TOLSTOY'S DAUGHTER AND NIECE CONVERSING WITH PEASANTS.

ant girl she follows her father's example in living and working with the peasants. Dressed in a polushubok, felt boots, and a winter cap of Siberian sheepskin, she opened the door to my room and called out, "Ready!" I followed her into a *sani*, a primitive and unpainted sleigh, drawn by a little well-fed and lively Samara horse. Dressed in my Lapp costume, I had taken my place at her side, when I discovered that I had forgotten my gloves. "Here, take mine," said the count, who stood by the side of the sleigh. Off we started at a whirling speed, the countess holding the reins herself. I have often seen Russian ladies driving a troika at a breakneck speed. The young countess certainly knew how to handle her lively little horse. In a few minutes we had passed the Don, and were out on the desolate plains. The cold was sharp, and a blinding snow-storm swept over the steppes. The road not being marked out, we soon lost our way. After having driven for a while in the storm, the snow whirling about us so that we could not see farther than the length of the horse, she drew in the reins, saying: "I think we must turn back home. Soon we shall see nothing." "Do you know the direction of the village where we are going?" I asked. "Yes." "Then let us

try to get there." "All right. Get up, Maltchik!" (Little Boy) and off we sped again westward along a ridge covered with ice. After a little while we found the road again.

The countess, who speaks English fluently, told me that for a number of years she had been working among the peasants, trying to help them. She had conducted a school for peasant children on their estate, but as she did not teach them to cross themselves and to worship the images of the saints, the priests closed her school. Then she invited the peasant children to her home to tea, and thus continued to instruct them.

In speaking of their home at Yasnaya Polyana, she said that a great many foreigners visited them in summer-time. "Don't you think," I asked, "that some go to see your father out of mere curiosity?" "You have hit the mark," she said, laughing. "I have seen so many descriptions of my father,—his eyebrows, his nose, his muzhik costume, his boot-making,—that I know pretty well what every foreigner will write and tell about him." "Your father," I remarked, "is said to deny the immortality of man. This I have never been able to comprehend, as being incompatible with his views of life and his way of living." "My father deny

the immortality of man!" she exclaimed. "You should have heard him recently in a circle of friends. As our shadowy dreams, he said, are to our present life, so this shadowy life is to our future existence."

By this time we descried through the storm a long row of snow-covered mounds. On coming nearer we found that they were rows of huts, from the roofs of which the snow-drifts slanted down to the bottom of the street. This was the village of Piulsi. It looked desolate in the extreme. Almost every other hut was without a roof. No living being was seen about, no smoke rose from the huts; all seemed to be ruins and death. We stopped in front of an izba where the count had established a school and an eating-room. On entering the low hut we were at first unable to see any object distinctly, but the softness under our feet told us that the naked soil served as floor, and when our eyes got accustomed to the dim light, we discovered a number of benches and about thirty children standing silent between them and looking at us, while the teacher, an intelligent young man, came forward and saluted us. A couple of elderly people were standing in a corner. Heavy breathing and coughing were to be heard near the oven, on the top of which we saw three children lying covered with black smallpox. I suggested to the countess that they ought to be removed at once. She answered that it should be done as soon as possible, but she declared at the same time that it was not easy to isolate the sick, since there were no hospitals, and almost every home was infected with disease. These poor children had been brought to the school "because it was warm there."

While the countess attended to the business of the school and the eating-room, I went from house to house through parts of the village. In my diary concerning these visits I wrote: In izba no. 1 I found one cow, three elderly persons, of whom one was lying sick with typhus on top of the oven by the side of two children who were in the last stages of the black smallpox. In no. 2 I found a child with the black smallpox, an elderly man sick with typhus, and two women whose bodies were swollen. No cattle; all starved to death. No fuel, no food. In no. 3 my eyes met a most curious sight. When I entered the small hut, which was so cold that its earthen floor was frozen hard, I saluted, but received no reply, nor did I see anybody. As I was about to go, I heard heavy breathing and a sound as of sweeping coming from the oven, and all at once I saw a pair of feet, wrapped round with rags, sticking out of the oven, and in a moment a big muzhik came out

of the opening of the oven.¹ Then there came creeping from behind the oven a sickly-looking woman, shivering with cold and holding her right hand to her brow. To my question as to what was the matter with her, she answered, "Golova bolit" ("My head aches"). "Have you no children?" "Yes; look here," she said, bursting into tears, as she pointed to what looked like a heap of rags on top of the oven, and which proved to be two children, one of them evidently near death from consumption or hunger, the other one from the black smallpox. The tall and strongly built man, with drawn and stony face and hollow eyes, his uncombed hair standing out in all directions, was standing motionless on the frozen earthen floor, a picture of hopelessness and apathy. No cattle, no fuel, no food but what was received from outside. In no. 4 were two grown people and two children, both sick. Taking away the rags which covered the body of one of the children, the mother burst into tears, while I saw large drops rolling down the cheeks of the poor disfigured girl herself. Something stuck in my throat and made me unable to utter a word, as I handed a silver coin to the poor mother, and left. Passing a number of houses which were partly torn down and left empty, I entered izba no. 5, where I found a woman disfigured by a disease shockingly common among the peasants, and two sickly and forlorn-looking children. In no. 6 were three families, one cow, one horse, and two sheep crowded together to protect themselves against the intense cold. It was a strange sight to see the fine-looking *dyadushka*, grandfather, with hair and beard as white as snow, climbing out of a crib, to which the horse was tied. He came tottering on his old limbs up to me, and saluted me with a deep bow. "Where do you come from, *barin*, and what is your business?" he asked. On telling him that friends of the muzhiks in foreign countries had sent me with help to their suffering brethren in Russia, he said with a feeble and trembling voice: "What good people! May God bless you!"

I now returned to the school, which by this time had been changed into an eating-room, filled with young and old people to the number of forty, who, after having crossed themselves and said their prayers, sat down to eat. The dinner, consisting of black rye bread and pea-soup, tasted very good. After the countess had made arrangements for establishing an eating-room for little children, we started for home. "What impression did you get of your first village visit?" the countess asked me. "Terrible!" was the only word I could utter. "Are you not afraid of catching the smallpox and the typhus?" I asked her. "Afraid! It is immoral to be afraid. Are you afraid?" she replied. "No;

¹ Afterward I got used to similar sights. To protect themselves against the cold, the muzhiks, having no fuel, crept into the ovens.



DRAWN BY KENYON COX, FROM THE AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPH.

REGISTERING THE STARVING.

I have never been afraid of infectious diseases while visiting the poor," I answered. "It is terrible to see such hopeless misery. It makes me sick only to think of it!" I exclaimed. "And is it not shameful of us to allow ourselves so much luxury, while our brothers and sisters are perishing from want and nameless misery?" she added. "But you have sacrificed all the comforts and luxuries of your rank and position, and stepped down to the poor to help them," I rejoined. "Yes," she said; "but look at our warm clothes and all other comforts, which are unknown to our suffering brothers and sisters." "But what good would it do to them if we should dress in rags and live on the border of starvation?" "What right have we," she retorted, "to live better than they?" I made no reply, but threw a wondering look into the eyes of that remarkable girl, in which I saw a large tear trembling. I felt as if something was compressing my heart and threatening to choke me. "But how is it possible that the authorities permit such a terrible state of things?" I asked. "I don't know," was the short and significant answer.

When the count came home in the evening, tired and wearied, he was quite downcast. "I feel really ashamed of this work," he said. "We don't know what real help there is in it. We are prolonging for some time the existence of a number of the starving peasants, but their misery will continue all the same." "You are helping them materially and also spiritually. You are no doubt doing a good work," I said. "I don't preach," he said; "I am so bad myself that I cannot preach to others. And we don't know what is good or not. When we think we are doing something very good, we may be doing the very opposite. The real good is in the will and the motives of our actions."

Next morning I accompanied Miss Kuzminsky on a tour to two villages to make arrangements for the distribution of wood, which was done on the following plan: The most destitute got the wood gratuitously at their homes; the less destitute got it free of cost at the railroad station, and those who were better off paid a trifle for it, not in money, but in work. After a quick ride of two hours over the



DRAWN BY KENYON COX, FROM THE AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPH.

A DINNER IN ONE OF TOLSTOY'S EATING-ROOMS.

snow-covered plains in a sharp cold, we reached the first village, and stopped at the house of the starosta. Entering, we found the starosta, his wife, four children, the grandfather, one cow, one foal, and three sheep, all living together in one room, into which came a dim light through an aperture about eighteen inches in diameter. On the soft earthen floor stood a large table, and a wooden bench ran along one side of the room; no chairs were to be seen. Having made some house-to-house visits, the mir was called together at the house of the starosta, which, by the way, was very easily done, as nearly the whole population of the village was following us in a crowd. Soon the izba of the starosta was literally crammed with muzhiks. Miss Kuzminsky took her seat behind the table, and I was asked to sit beside her. Now the proceedings began. Miss Kuzminsky produced a list of the most needy. First a poor widow with four children was mentioned; all the muzhiks nodded their assent, crossing themselves. Then a certain

Alexis B—— was mentioned. A low murmur was heard through the room, and a muzhik said, "He is no doubt without fuel, but so are we all; but he has a horse." Ivan K—— was mentioned: "Otchen byednui!" ("Very poor"). So the whole list was gone through, the peasants expressing their opinions freely upon each case, the sheep and the cow now and then joining their bleating and bellowing with the buzz of the crowd. Miss Kuzminsky did her part well, now and then calling the speakers to order, when they spoke too many at a time, or went too far from the subject. The muzhiks behaved in a gentlemanly way, and when they became a little warm on the subject, they were by no means so boisterous as "Westerners" would be at a public meeting, if every one's honesty and character were canvassed as candidly as they are at these meetings. The air in that assembly-hall, partly owing to the cattle and vermin, was stifling, and I was astonished that Miss Kuzminsky could stand it for over an hour without the least complaint.



A MUZHIK.

We found a large number of sick people, mostly with black smallpox and typhus.

On an intensely cold Saturday morning, when a greenish-yellow stripe along the eastern horizon spread a dim light over the snowy plains, one of Tolstoy's helpers, a young nobleman, and I started for a distant village from which appeals had come for help. Our little shaggy horse quickly became white with frost. The sun soon gilded everything, but a feeling of sadness and desolation filled us as we ap-

proached the village. No smoke was ascending from the huts. The roofs of most of the izbas had been pulled down and used for fuel. No life was seen except two or three horses, looking like skeletons covered with skin, which were picking some old and rotten blades of grass in front of an izba, the roof of which had recently been pulled down; and a few shaggy and forlorn-looking dogs, which were so nearly starved that they could hardly move from their places on top of the piles of dirt in front

of the houses. Many of the izbas were deserted, the inmates either having died or left their homes. In almost every home we visited, one or more persons were sick with typhus, small-pox, etc. They had neither cattle nor food, the help received through the authorities having been already consumed, and cabbage, dried and powdered grass, leaves from trees, and chaff and straw were now used for food. The poor people whom we found huddled together and shivering from cold in those miserable hovels presented a most pitiable appearance. Besides those lying sick, many were so weakened by starvation that they could hardly move or speak.

Immediately after our return in the afternoon Count Tolstoy also came home. We were all tired and hungry, but the count was as happy and merry as a child. He talked and laughed, and his eyes, which at times are sharp and penetrating, fairly beamed with joy. He had at last succeeded in his endeavors to establish eating-rooms for little children. This had cost him many a weary day. He had had to overcome not only the great difficulty of procuring suitable food for children, but also the foolishness, ignorance, and superstition of the muzhiks, and, last but not least, the opposition of the clergy. The muzhiks insisted upon having the children's food brought to their homes; but this would not do, because they would consume the children's food themselves, leaving their children to starve. The priests had warned them not to send their children to Count Tolstoy, whom learned theologians had proved, according to the book of "Revelation," to be antichrist himself. The clergy played a prominent part in the attacks against Count Tolstoy, inveighing against him from the pulpit, and promulgating all kinds of absurd theories about him to excite the fanaticism of the masses. It was said that he paid the muzhiks eight rubles apiece for branding them on the forehead and on the hands in order to seal them to the power of darkness. A bishop had on the preceding Sunday in a special sermon delivered in the second-class waiting-room at the station of Klekotki, to a crowded audience, in the strongest terms referred to Count Tolstoy as antichrist, who was seducing the people with such worldly advantages as food, raiment, and fuel. He warned his hearers against having anything to do with such a person, and proclaimed that the Orthodox Church possessed power enough to "exterminate" antichrist and his work. No wonder the poor muzhiks got frightened, and did not know what to do. I heard that a certain muzhik solved the problem in the following very logical way: "If the Lord," he said, "resembles his servants, the popes and the officials who oppress and rack us, and if antichrist is such a person as Tolstoy, who gratuitously feeds us and our

children, then I prefer to belong to antichrist, and I will send my starving children to his eating-room." The muzhiks sent their little children by thousands to the children's homes.

After our late dinner, the count was as usual busy among the poor muzhiks who were crowding at his headquarters. Taking a walk to one of the eating-rooms in the neighborhood, I happened to meet an armed gendarme in the road, placed there to watch the movements of the count and his helpers. Besides the "visible" representative of "the powers that be" in St. Petersburg, there was an unseen cloud of detectives swarming about Byegitchevka. Sometimes they came to the count in the garb of a poor muzhik, asking for help and complaining of the authorities, etc., and sometimes as friends of the suffering muzhik, offering their services to the count, whose sharp eye, however, soon saw through them when he politely told them that they were not wanted.

Later on in the evening of that memorable Saturday a number of Tolstoy's friends and helpers arrived from different quarters, and spent the evening and part of the following Sunday together with their master in friendly intercourse and consultation. It was a highly interesting group of men, with two women. None of them were above middle age. All were educated persons, belonging to prominent families, and some possessed a high degree of learning. One of them had been fellow of the University of Moscow, and was on the point of being nominated to a professorial chair, when he suddenly left the university and went to the people. Dressed as a muzhik, he shares the life and the toil of peasants to aid them in every possible way, considering this to be a more worthy object in life than to beat Latin and Greek into the heads of upper-class Russian youth. This person was no dreamer, but a man possessing an imperturbable calmness of mind, an acute understanding, and a deep knowledge of human nature. Two years ago he traveled through nearly all the provinces of the vast empire, mostly on foot, visiting and studying all kinds of sectarians. In the dress of a muzhik he went from place to place, working as a day-laborer with the sectarians, receiving only food and lodging as remuneration.

In the middle of March I left the headquarters of Count Tolstoy for eastern Samara in company with his second son, Count Lyeff Lvovitch Tolstoy, and a young nobleman by the name of P. Birukoff, one of the count's most devoted followers and an energetic laborer in the work of relief. In another article I shall describe my experiences in that province during a sojourn of nearly three months.

Jonas Stadling.

THE FAMINE IN EASTERN RUSSIA.¹

RELIEF WORK OF THE YOUNGER TOLSTOY.



IN Moscow it was decided that I should accompany Lyeff Lvovitch, the second son of Count Tolstoy, on his return to eastern Samara. And at the count's headquarters, in Ryazan, it was further decided that one of his most efficient helpers, a young nobleman named Paul Birukoff, should go with us. As we started on an intensely cold morning early in March, 1892, Count Tolstoy said to me, "Where shall we meet next — perhaps in Sweden or beyond the Mississippi?" Off we sped in two sleighs over the desolate snow-steppes toward the railway station of Klekotki. On our way we met an *oboz*² of more than one hundred horses coming from the railway station with fuel and victuals for Count Tolstoy's work of relief.

It was late in the afternoon when the train, belated several hours as usual, finally arrived. We pushed our way into a third-class car (Count Tolstoy and his followers usually travel third class), bringing with us, according to Russian fashion, most of our luggage. Owing to the great distances and the slowness of the trains, Russians usually carry pillows, blankets, different kinds of food, and, above all, a tea-set, buying on the train only hot water. In consequence of this custom, all possible and impossible places in the cars are crowded with luggage and parcels of various kinds and dimensions. The cars are built after the American fashion; but in the third class, with regard to heating and cleanliness, there is yet room for improvement. My companions uttered no sound of complaint, but I found it hard to endure the smells and vermin, and the presence of diseased muzhiks. Often I had to go out on the platform because of nausea. Birukoff, who was provided with antiseptics and bandages, busied himself every day with washing and dressing the wounds of the muzhiks, and with encouraging them. One of the blessings of the famine was the general absence of intoxicated persons; the first one I observed was a priest.

Some of the passengers made themselves comfortable beds for the night, but I could not sleep. The muzhiks seemed to be able to

sleep in all possible and impossible positions. During the night a prison-car filled with Siberian convicts was attached to our train. Its small windows were provided with iron grating. On each platform stood two gendarmes in gray uniforms, with rifles on their shoulders, a large revolver, and a sword hanging by the side. Once I got a glimpse through the double doors, and observed comely maiden faces among the crowd of rough and shaggy muzhik heads. One of my traveling companions also observed young women among the prisoners. It is not unusual for young girls and even children to be banished to Siberia for religious or political reasons. I know personally a young Russian lady who became an "apostate" from the Greek Church, and escaped banishment to Siberia only by secretly leaving the country. Among the third-class passengers were, besides Russians proper, Mordvinians, Tcheremiss, Tatars, and Bashkirs. The Tatars made a very favorable impression by their cleanliness and politeness. "They are real gentlemen," the young count said, adding that they were the most sober and honest people in all Russia, and that consequently they were usually employed in posts of trust. "The Bashkirs are also good people," the count added; but I found later on that they were slyer and more cunning than the Tatars. Both these peoples are Mohammedans. The Mordvinians and Tcheremiss, who from time immemorial have had their homes in the forest regions of Kazan and neighboring provinces, belong to the Finnish tribes. They are nominally orthodox, but in reality pagans, still secretly sacrificing to the spirits of the forest. Their white caftans, made of coarse homespun woolen cloth, and their olive faces, black mustaches, and dark Mongolian eyes, gave them a very picturesque appearance. All these tribes, together with the Vobyaks and the Tchuvashi, who likewise occupy the same regions, have the reputation of being industrious, sober, and honest. These Mohammedan and half-pagan tribes stand on a very high level with regard to morals.

The second night that we spent on the train I could not get a moment's sleep. Besides the heat and the polluted air, there were a number of suspicious individuals in the car who kept me awake. Thieving on the trains was common. The train was more and more belated. At some stations we had to stop for hours because — as it was stated — of the transportation of victuals to the famine-stricken provinces.

¹ See also "With Tolstoy in the Russian Famine," THE CENTURY for June.

² Train of sledges or wagons.

Everywhere were to be seen crowds of emaciated men, women, and children, covered with rags, the traditional bag of coarse sackcloth thrown over their shoulders, and begging in piteous tones for bread. At certain places they were ushered on board the train in large crowds, to be sent to other places.

The third night of travel I was so tired that nothing could keep me awake. At five in the morning the count awoke me and told me to hurry out to see the Volga Bridge. After another hour's journey we arrived at the city of Samara. Situated on the elevated eastern shore of the Volga, at the mouth of the Samara river, its public buildings and churches give it an impressive look. Not very long ago it was destroyed by fire, but was soon rebuilt, and it counts at present a little more than 100,000 inhabitants. Having business to attend to, we stopped a day in Samara. The city was teeming with muzhiks walking about begging for bread during the day, and spending the night in hovels and cellars. Among these poor people spotted typhus, black smallpox, and scurvy were making terrible havoc. It is significant that the rich, with only a few exceptions, contributed nothing to relieve the distress, but fled to Paris and Nice. Private benevolence was supplied mainly by foreigners,¹ of whom two were Germans, Mr. Koenitzer and Mr. Wakano. The former daily fed fifty and the latter one hundred peasants; Mr. Besant, an Englishman, with means received from Great Britain, daily gave two meals to four hundred paupers. Among the Russians it was mainly sectarian people who aided the starving. A Molokan lady, a widow, quietly did much work among the poor, according to her means. Out in the province it was likewise mostly with foreign money that private relief was carried on. The English Friends distributed through their representatives much help, and supported Prince Dolgorukoff's sanitary expedition to eastern Samara; while the means for supporting the young Count L. L. Tolstoy's extensive work came mainly from foreign countries, and mostly from America.

During our day in Samara we unexpectedly met the governor of the province in a private family. He was dressed in a splendid uniform braided with gold; his figure was tall and symmetrical, his air magnificent; and he talked much and well.

That night my friends compelled me to sleep in the only bed in the room, the count himself sleeping on a thick blanket on the floor, and Birukoff on a small sofa. At one o'clock we

were on our feet, drank several glasses of tea, wrapped our furs about us, and drove to the railway station, where we found all as quiet as death. In the spacious second-class waiting-room a dim gas-light revealed a quarter of an acre of flooring covered with men, women, and children snoring in all keys, between immense piles of traveling-effects. Loaded with our parcels, we picked our way to an unoccupied spot. The count, who had gone to buy tickets and send an express-telegram to his headquarters after horses, returned to tell us that the train was belated seven hours, whereupon, with stoic calm, he spread his cloak on the floor and went to sleep. After a cup of tea, we followed his example. At nine o'clock we were informed that the train would not come before noon, which proved to be two o'clock. The cold was 30° below zero Réaumur when we left the city of Samara by the Orenburg train, which was to take us to eastern Samara. On the way over the barren snow-steppes we saw large numbers of begging muzhiks. A priest on the train told us that in his village, with a population of 1600, there was only one horse left, all the rest having been killed, or having died from hunger. It was dusk when we arrived at Bagatoye, where we left the train. Here we found that one of our boxes containing canned goods had been stolen. The count also found his express-telegram, sent twenty hours previous from Samara, not yet despatched.

We now had to send to the nearest village for horses and conveyances. From the plateau where the railway station was situated a vast view opened over the endless steppes eastward. No trees were seen except on the shores of the Samara river below, and a small grove near the horizon. It was dark when our conveyances arrived—two *sani*, to each of which were harnessed two small shaggy horses, one before the other. We soon sped along the snow-steppes, the small animals galloping all the time to the jingle of the large bells on their harness-bows. The stars twinkled in the cold winter night, and, as we drove along, the count told me many an interesting tale of the nomadic tribes roaming about on these steppes in former times, and of their heroic struggles for independence. About midnight we stopped in a village, and put up in the *izba* of a muzhik, an acquaintance of the count. He seemed to be unusually clever, and his *izba* was provided with a flooring of planks, and showed a higher degree of cleanliness than usual. After supping on tea and rye bread, we went to sleep on thick blankets spread on the floor, the lamp hanging from the ceiling over our heads, and burning all night. In the morning our hostess poured water over our hands, a custom of Russian hospitality.

¹ This was not the case everywhere. In an article in THE CENTURY for June, I mentioned many Russian families and individuals who were giving time and money to relief work.

After breakfasting on tea and bread we continued our way over the steppes, which grew more undulating as we journeyed toward the Ural Mountains. At one village there was a fortnightly bazaar, or fair. I have never seen such a desolate fair. In a yard were a number of horses more like bags filled with bones than living animals. They were sold, at about \$1.50 each, to Bashkirs and Tatars to be killed and eaten. Orthodox muzhiks would starve rather than eat horseflesh, which is considered "unclean." Better-fed horses were for sale by *ku-laks*, at unreasonable prices. An hour's ride brought us to the village of Petrovka, where the count has his headquarters in a small one-storied izba with one room partitioned into three small apartments, one serving as sleeping-room, another as entry, reception-room, and kitchen, and constantly crowded with muzhiks seeking help, and the third as dining-room, parlor, and office. We had scarcely time to get into the house before it was besieged by a large number of people. Immediately the young count went to work, and during the months I spent with him he allowed himself few hours of rest either night or day.

We arrived on a Saturday evening. Sunday morning Birukoff and I, on invitation, went to the Molokan meeting. Their place of worship was a roomy izba, which was crowded with about a hundred and fifty persons, the women and children sitting near the door, the men in front. They had been informed of our coming, and showed us much deference. Their general appearance indicated a higher degree of intelligence and polish than the average orthodox muzhiks. After we had taken our seats, the congregation joined in singing a peculiar chant. The text was taken from a chapter in the New Testament, which the leader read sentence by sentence, and which was sung afterward by the whole congregation. The melody was a kind of round after the pattern of the antique church canon, with the same motive running through a series of improvised variations suited to the words of the text. The motive of the melody was somewhat as follows:



Through it all there was a wild and weird strain, and, as in all Russian songs, the minor key predominated, with sad and impressive effect. After the singing, one of the elders read from

Matthew the parable of the ten virgins and of the talents, making a few practical remarks on each verse. Then several of the elders offered short comments on the text. Many of the muzhiks had been far advanced in life before they learned to read the Bible.

On March 21 the count and his assistant, Mr. Berger, started early for the famine-stricken villages. I visited several of the count's free kitchens, the bakery, and the provision magazines, and found everything in excellent order. The free kitchens were established on the same plan as those of Count Tolstoy in Ryazan. Deputations from villages far away arrived to appeal to the count for help, all of them having the impress of hunger and misery. When the count and his helper came home, they told of terrible ravages of the spotted typhus, scurvy, and other diseases caused by the famine.

From my diary the following record of events on March 24 is condensed: At six o'clock the church bells called the orthodox muzhiks to early service. It being Lent, early mass is held every day. Men, women, and children came in single file to the village church. When I came from the izba where I lodged to the count's headquarters, they were already besieged by a host of poor people. In most cases their timid manner showed that they were not professional beggars, who are known by their stereotyped prayers and blessings. Here are sample appeals: "Our food is all gone—long ago; we are starving. Help us!" "My wife and my children are sick, and I have got nothing to give them. Help us with a little tea and sugar, and something for *kasha* and soup!" "We have a horse and a cow, which are starving, and we are so sorry to lose them now that spring is so near. Help us with a little fodder!" A little girl was led up to the count, her trembling voice choked with tears as, when pressed to speak, she said, "Mother died last night, and I have nothing for my little brothers and sisters."

When the first throng had been sent away, we sat down to breakfast. Before we had finished there came new petitioners, among them Bashkirs and Tatars. They had come from great distances, and told of terrible misery in their villages from starvation and pestilence. "Our own provisions," they said, "were out long ago. What we have from the Government is insufficient to keep us alive. Almost all our cattle have succumbed. Our sick and our little ones are dying a slow death from want of suitable nourishment."

The horse was harnessed, and I and another went to a neighboring village to investigate sanitary conditions. We came first to a row of clay huts resembling the adobe huts in New Mexico, only much poorer. Many of their flat

roofs were buried under snow-drifts, through which smoke from *kisyak* (fuel made of dried manure and straw) curled through an aperture in the snow.

Through an opening in the snow-drift we gained admission. A dim light was supplied by a small window before which a hole was dug in the drift. Heavy breathing and moaning from the top of the oven in the corner told of sickness and suffering. When our eyes became accustomed to the dim light, we observed a middle-aged, emaciated woman lying on the oven afflicted with spotted typhus. She gave only incoherent answers to our questions. Before the oven sat a middle-aged man, dressed in a shirt of dirty sackcloth, with a rope around his waist. His uncombed hair covered his forehead, and a pair of glassy, sunken eyes met our look with an expression of despair. A little boy five years old lay on a wooden bench, covered with rags, and suffering from hunger and scurvy. There was no furniture except two wooden benches and a small rough table on the earthen floor.

"Have you any cattle?" "No; we had two cows, but we have had to kill them." "Any fuel?" "Only what we get from our neighbors." "Any food?" In answer to this question the man brought a hardened piece of black rye bread, all they had left from what they had received from the Government.

In another hut we found four persons: an old man of about seventy, a woman of about forty whose face was dreadfully scored with disease, and two emaciated children lying sick on the oven, dying the slow death of starvation. The father having been cut off by the spotted typhus, the old grandfather had come to take care of the mother and the children. It was the same story: no cattle, no fuel, two loaves of bread, a few peas in a wooden bowl.

In a third hut, considerably larger than the former, we found a calf, two sheep, and five persons, of whom two were lying ill with spotted typhus, the others suffering from scurvy. We visited several other huts in which the same misery was found with variations, such as a dying mother surrounded by a number of children, whose father had been cut off by the fever. I went to one of the free kitchens established by the count in the village. The guests were coming to dinner, each carrying a wooden bowl and spoon. On entering, most of them crossed themselves. When about fifty had taken their places at long tables, they arose and sang the table prayer, the first part a prayer to "God's mother," the second part extracts from the Lord's Prayer, and the last part a prayer for "the great Gosudar" (the Czar) and his numerous family. Then they sat down to a meal of bread, pea-soup, and *kasha* (boiled buckwheat). The village presented a de-

solate appearance. Besides the clay huts, there were rows of sheds, the straw roofs of which had been pulled down and used as fodder or fuel, the naked wooden frames, interlaced with branches of willow, giving the whole the appearance of nests of magpies. On our way home we passed a number of horses, miserable skeletons, plucking a few rotten straws here and there from thatch which had been pulled from the roofs.

On our return to Petrovka I was introduced to Prince Dolgorukoff, who had arrived during the night at the head of a sanitary expedition consisting of two physicians, two surgeons, and six sisters of charity. This expedition was in part supported by English Friends, who rendered noble aid in the famine-stricken provinces. The young prince, with his expedition, took dinner and supper with the count. The room was small, but the good feeling made it sufficient. We ate with wooden spoons out of the same dish, a large wooden bowl standing in the middle of the table. The dinner consisted of *sische* (soup of cabbage and meat), meat, and kasha. The supper consisted of bread and butter and tea. It was late when I returned to my "room," a small corner behind the oven in an izba which was swarming with vermin and otherwise sickening. These obstacles and the scenes of the day kept me from sleeping. The little lamp burning in front of the saints in the outer room spread a dim light, and through a crack in the board partition of my corner I could see an ugly saint looking at me with one eye. My host and hostess were snoring on top of the warm oven. I lighted the lamp and tried to read; then I tired myself in vain fighting the insects, and with the morning fresh air and light at last fell asleep. I learned afterward why no effort was made to rid the cottages of the ordinary sleeping-room vermin, which they call *klop*. My host at another place said to me: "Klop are healthy; they purge the blood."

On Saturday morning, March 27, a small good-natured muzhik arrived to take me to the village of Petrovka, where Birukoff had his headquarters. To the small sleigh was harnessed a shaggy and bony little horse. The wind was against us, and when we reached the steppe it was almost impossible to keep our eyes open in face of the drifting snow. The storm was so heavy that I could hardly see the horse in front of the sleigh. Having come up on a divide between two rivers, the horse could hardly walk against the wind. In the valley below we lost our way. The poor animal stumbled about, and at last was unable to move. The driver began to beat the poor creature, only the head and back of which were visible. It trembled, and turned its head to look at us. I called to the driver to stop the beating, and then jumped out and began to unharness the horse.

With the reins tied round the belly of the animal, and a rope tied about its feet, we at last pulled the little horse to where the drifts were harder. After several experiences of this kind the horse showed signs of exhaustion, and it seemed probable that we should have to spend the night on the steppe. At last we reached an elevation, where we found the road, which we were able to follow to our destination. Having passed a number of izbas with the roofs partly or entirely pulled down, we came to a small two-storied wooden house, where my friend Birukoff had his headquarters. I found a calf in a corner near the door, a number of muzhiks standing further in, and a woman sitting by the oven with a little child in her arms. After about half an hour Birukoff came home, tired and hungry. A late dinner was served, consisting of *pakhlobka* (soup of water, potatoes, grits, and mushrooms), kasha, and black rye bread. Birukoff, like his master Count Tolstoy, is a vegetarian, and was served with the fare issued at the free kitchens. While eating, a number of poor people seeking help congregated in the outer room. Having heard their cases and written down their names, we sent them away; then we went to a meeting to be held with a committee concerning a new free eating-room for the village. The members of this committee made a very favorable impression both by their appearance and their way of speaking. When I was introduced they all arose, and in chorus thanked me for my aid, asking me at the same time to convey their thanks to friends in foreign countries who had sent gifts through me. In the course of this meeting it was shown that many people had died directly of hunger. It was also shown that some families used considerable quantities of clay in their bread, of which I obtained samples. On coming from the meeting, a large crowd of people gathered to see "the first foreigner who had visited their village." I had become used to being an object of curiosity, as I thought on account of my Lapp dress; but in private my companion said to me: "The peasant women say, 'He is not dressed as a Christian, nor does he talk a Christian language [we spoke German]; therefore he must be *tchort* [the devil]!'"

Next morning, at early mass in the village church, I saw many poor people in ragged sheepskin coats who were deformed by disease, and emaciated beyond anything I had hitherto seen. Among the pale little children were some extraordinarily beautiful faces. In a corner I observed some poor women hiding morsels of bread and other eatables in different places, believing, as I have been informed, that thereby they would escape famine and other evils.

During the day there were several funerals of children and grown people who had died of hunger and typhus. The ceremony was performed in the church. First came a number of muzhiks, each carrying a little wooden box under his arm. Then there came groups of muzhiks, with uncovered heads, carrying the remains of grown persons in unpainted coffins made of coarse boards. I took kodak pictures of one of these groups as it left the church.

Soon after my visit to Petrovka the following incident took place: One day Birukoff visited the house of a well-to-do farmer in the village. There he met the village priest. The farmer set out tea and vodka. B. did not drink vodka, but the priest drank one glass after another. Then he began making allusions to strangers coming to those parts, spoiling the people with gratuitous food, and giving the orthodox people a bad example by not going to church, and so forth. "Speak out plainly what you mean," said B. "I mean that you and the rest are heathen, because you don't go to church and don't read God's word," answered the priest. "Have you a Bible?" B. asked. "Yes." "Where?" "In the church on the desk." "Yes, I know that; and there it lies. You do not read it, either you or your people. What good does your Bible do in the church? Neither your own life nor that of your people shows any of the fruits of the gospel." And B. took his New Testament out of his pocket, and read to the priest from the Sermon on the Mount and from other passages. Then the priest got into a rage, and took the New Testament lying on the table, and said: "Is it such fruits the gospel bears, then?" and he threw the book out of doors!

Early in April warm weather came suddenly, and the hot sun changed the village streets into canals flowing with dirty green water. Standing on an elevation, I saw vapors like smoke ascending from piles of refuse from people and animals, which is not placed on the land, but in midsummer is made into winter fuel. On one heap an emaciated dog lay outstretched in the sun; on another crows were scratching and croaking. From wells filled with the green water from the street peasant women fetched water for drinking and for other household purposes. Long rows of begging muzhiks in rags came wading through the dirt. Now and then one of the physicians belonging to Prince Dolgorukoff's expedition would ride by on horseback, or one of our "sisters of charity," wearing high boots, would be seen wading through the mud, holding up her skirts with one hand and carrying a basket of medicine or food for the sick with the other.

These sisters do not belong to any religious order; they are of prominent families and are



DRAWN BY JOHAN TIREN.

AN "OBOZ," OR TRAIN OF SLEDGES. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY THE AUTHOR.)

highly educated. These representatives of young Russia make great sacrifices in order to help their suffering fellow-men as the most natural thing in the world. I accompanied one of them on her tour of charity. Our first visit was to one of the temporary hospitals for spotted typhus. Over the door a paper was fastened with the inscription: "Entrance forbidden! Contagious diseases." A few men and women were waiting outside to hear about their sick relatives. Within we saw a row of beds along two of the walls of the room, accommodating about thirty patients, lying in different stages of the fearful spotted typhus. Short breathing, sighing, and moaning, mingled with exclamations and the babble of the delirious, met the ear. From the hospital we went to houses where there were sick people. In one part of the village we entered

izbas with earthen floors, where water had entered, making the floor like a puddle of clay. Naturally we found sick persons there. On our way home we visited a physician who was lying in an izba ill with the spotted typhus. In some villages fifty per cent. of the population were sick in bed. Within a few days the doctors reported 351 cases of sickness (155 of spotted typhus) in two villages. Prince Dolgorukoff found one family with nine members, all of whom were lying sick. Besides the above-mentioned doctor, two of our "sisters" fell ill with the spotted typhus.

One morning, when I came to the count's headquarters, I found one of the serving-women crying bitterly. She had put her husband's sheepskin coat in the heated oven to destroy the vermin; but the oven was too hot, and the coat was destroyed. When her husband dis-



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

ENGRAVED BY R. C. COLLINS.

STREET IN THE VILLAGE OF PETROVKA, SAMARA. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY THE AUTHOR.)



DRAWN BY KENYON COX.

A MEAL AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE YOUNGER COUNT TOLSTOY, SHOWING MR. BERGER, THE COUNT'S HELPER; THE STAROSTA; BIRUKOFF; COUNT TOLSTOY. THE GROUP ARE NAMED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT.
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY THE AUTHOR.)

covered what had been done, he beat her, and she was afraid to go home. I presented him with a new sheepskin coat on condition that he should not beat his wife.

One day the count received a couple of sacks, containing different articles of apparel, sent by ladies in Moscow. It was a sight to see how eagerly peasant women and girls sought these garments, and with what an air of satisfaction they returned to their homes.

One morning a poor woman came, and with tears threw herself on her knees before the count. After he had helped her to rise she took from her sheepskin cloak a long rag with a bow-knot at one end; this was untied, and found to contain a tattered and dirty piece of paper, which proved to be a ruble bill. She told the following story: "I am a widow from the village, . . . and have a small plot of land. My cow and my sheep having died from starvation, and we ourselves being threatened with the same fate, my only son went to Uralsk, where he got work. After several weeks of labor he sent me this ruble to buy sowing-seed. I tied it in a rag and went to buy the seed, but on the way I lost the rag, which was afterward

recovered. A calf had chewed the knot containing the ruble. Then I went to the magistrates and asked them what to do. They sent me to your Grace." The count took her one-ruble bill and gave her a five-ruble note instead, and besides helped her in other ways.

In a village out on the steppes I met a young muzhik who, besides knowing how to read and write, had a knowledge of geography and history. In speaking about America, and the aid it had sent for the starving, he said, with tears in his eyes, "I love the republic." He was born in Siberia, where he had received instruction from exiles; and it is more than probable that he will some day be sent back to Siberia. During the present régime it is almost a crime for a muzhik to acquire more knowledge than the class to which he belongs. "Peasants you have been, and peasants you will continue to be," declared the present Czar in a speech to the people immediately after his coronation. Shortly after he signed an ukase in which it is ordered that "the measure of instruction shall be in proportion to the rank and means of the person having children to educate." This principle is also carried out in

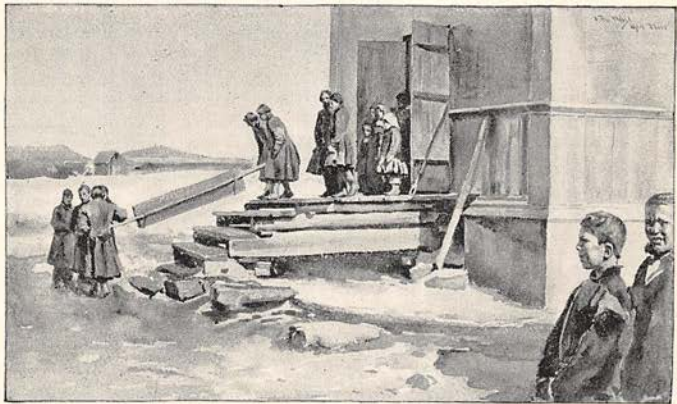
practice. In Saratoff and other places the boards of education have passed resolutions to the effect that "instruction in schools shall be restricted to protect the children of well-to-do people from the children of the poor, or of people with limited means." The zemstvo schools, established under the reign of Alexander II., have, during the reign of his son, been little by little suppressed, until through an imperial ukase of May 16, 1891, all public schools were placed in the hands of the clergy.

I visited some of the schools in the villages. Instead of geographical maps and counting- and spelling-tables, which formerly were to be seen hanging on the walls, I saw pictures of saints, with a picture of "the most high family" of the Czar in the most prominent place behind the teacher's desk. Only children very desirous to learn are taught how to read.

The muzhiks do not understand the connection between uncleanness and disease. But if you talk to them of the connection between famine or "the sickness" and the worship of the saints, they will cross themselves and ask the Lord to have mercy upon them. In order to avert these evils, they think the thing to do is to undertake "cross processions" out into the fields, and similar means, to conciliate God and his saints; and if this does not help, to conjure the evil powers, for which purpose professional sorcerers are kept, sometimes by entire villages. If this is of no avail, then there is nothing to do but to be resigned to the inevitable. That the authorities should have any share in such views seems impossible, but young people were forbidden to play in the streets or in the fields while the famine and the fever continued, in order not to offend the Deity. For the same reason parents were forbidden to give their children Jewish names, or to have anything to do with sectarians, the barbarous persecution of whom was said to be considered, not only by ignorant and fanatical priests, but by the very highest officials of the empire, as a pleasing act in the eyes of the Lord.

In order to get a correct understanding of how the peasants have been reduced to their present hopeless state, it is not sufficient to know that there has been a series of bad crops. The land is impoverished, and often the peasants sell their manure for many years ahead at ridiculously low prices. It has been shown that the recent droughts were caused by the cutting

down of the forests. When it rains, floods wash away the black soil, making the land as barren as a desert. A few estate-owners, who irrigate their land and carry on agriculture on a rational plan, have had good crops during these bad years. The intelligent and thrifty Mennonites, who likewise cultivate the soil in a rational way, also have had good crops, and none among them has suffered from famine. This alone is enough to prove that the terrible famine was *not* caused merely by the last failures of crops. When we consider the cruel way in which the authorities extort enormous taxes from the poor people, it is no wonder that the peasants live constantly on the verge of famine. I have myself seen the tax-gatherer take the cow of a poor widow because her taxes had not been paid. Informed of his coming, I went to the izba of the widow, and found her in the yard with her arm about the neck of her only cow. The tax-gatherers frequently have the muzhiks beaten with rods until they promise to produce money in some way or other for the payment of taxes. A prominent Russian lawyer told me of a newly invented (as yet not patented) "beating-machine." The use of this machine has many advantages over that of the knout and the rods. Among other things, there is no danger of the machine's feeling any forbidden sympathy with the victims, and the force of the blows can be regulated according to the strength of the patient and the will of the representatives of the Government. These cruel extortions on the part of the officers of the Government seem to breed the same heartless rapacity among the people. It is not only the nobles, but merchants, *kulaks*, and upstarts of different kinds who op-



DRAWN BY IRVING R. WILES.

A FUNERAL IN PETROVKA, SAMARA. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY THE AUTHOR.)

press the peasants. Most of the loans are taken in January, February, and March: in January because the taxes are then gathered; in February and March because then the provisions of the peasants run short, and all kinds of eata-



DRAWN BY JOHAN TIREN.

ENGRAVED BY E. H. DEL'ORME.

A FUNERAL IN SAMARA. (BASED ON A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY THE AUTHOR.)

bles used by peasants go up in price until they reach the climax in April. From April the peasants begin to earn a little, and the loans diminish until August. After that they rise again, because, after the crops have been gathered, the peasants begin to pay their debts with their harvest, so that they themselves soon are without provisions, and must take loans again. Sometimes the interest charged on peasant loans amounts to 300 per cent.

Shortly after our arrival in eastern Samara, news came from St. Petersburg that the count would receive a number of car-loads of American flour from the steamer *Indiana*, which had arrived in Libau. The warm weather I have described threatened to cut off for a number of weeks all communication with the railroad. This would have been disastrous, since the count, depending upon the arrival of this flour, had increased the number of free kitchens to nearly 200, besides establishing a number of depots for the distribution of victuals, so as to be able to feed daily about 20,000 who were in danger of starving. At last, on the 3d of April, notice came from the nearest railway station that part of the flour had arrived. Forthwith the count's helper, Mr. Berger, hurried away to the place to make arrangements for transporting it, if possible. Happily, at this juncture

there occurred a few cold nights in succession, stopping the floods, and making it possible to transport the flour during the night.

After two days and a half the first transport of the American flour arrived. When the long procession of carts was seen coming over the steppes, the young count's face fairly beamed. The muzhiks crowded together, and were overjoyed at sight of the flour; but most of them had no idea of America, or where it might be. One muzhik said to me, as he looked at the pile of flour-sacks, "America must be a very rich *barin*!" Perhaps one out of a hundred has a faint idea of a country somewhere far, far away called America. We opened one of the sacks; the muzhiks crowded about us to look at the flour and taste it. Their faces beamed with delight, and a general murmur of exultation was heard. Within a few days the six car-loads of American flour were transported to the count's headquarters and his different depots, and thus he was enabled to carry out his plan of daily feeding 20,000 of the most destitute.

The snow was still lying deep on the steppes when the count, his helper, and I, on the afternoon of April 15 (Russian Good Friday), started to visit a large farm which Mr. X. rents from the Government. On the opposite side of the little river Matcha we saw the roofs of a

group of houses buried in snow. Not a single face met our eyes. Approaching nearer, we observed a large number of horses and cattle about the houses looking for stalks of hay in the melting snow. Our host gave us a cordial welcome. We were told that the large number of horses were kept for making kumiss, half a hundred invalids coming to the farm in summer time for the "kumiss treatment." On the bare spots between the snow we found groups of miserable-looking cattle trying to find something to eat. In the evening people went to church in the next village, the service being continued till after midnight on Easter eve. During Easter night the orthodox muzhiks, in some places, go to the graveyards with food and vodka for the dead. Easter morning dawned clear and beautiful, and the traditional Russian Easter salutation, "Christ is arisen!" and the reply, "He is risen indeed!" were exchanged. This form of salutation is used during forty days after Easter, not only when persons meet, but in letters, at the top of certain documents, and when persons drink to each other's health. Besides the Tatars and Bashkirs, who reminded us that we were on the borders of Asia, there was at the farm another Asiatic, "Herr Feltvebel," a camel, on whose back we made short trips out on the steppe. "Herr Feltvebel" treated us to an extra amusement when, with Mr. X. on his back, he lay down on a bare spot and refused to rise again and continue wading through the snow.

The spring was late, but the time for sowing had come, and the peasants had neither seed for sowing nor horses for plowing. In the public storehouses there was seed provided by the Government equal to a third of the wants of the

peasants. The poor muzhiks sent to the authorities to inquire about it, but received no reply. In their despair they went to the count and asked for help. At first he had no means, but soon he received a considerable sum of money from America and elsewhere, through his mother. At once he and his helpers, procuring seed and horses, worked night and day, and within a few days about 200 of the poorest muzhiks were aided.

Many of the peasants left their homes in order to find work, which was not easy, there being only a few who could afford to hire laborers.

It was decided that, as soon as the traffic on the Volga opened, I should go to southern Samara and Saratoff in order to make arrangements for establishing free eating-rooms for the sick and convalescent. The time of my departure had come. The last evening of my stay in Petrovka I made farewell visits. On my way home I saw a poor muzhik with a shaggy little horse plowing his plot of land with a primitive plow made entirely of wood. I was afterward told that several peasants had pawned all their tools for money to pay the taxes, or to buy food for their families.

When I left eastern Samara in May, young Count Tolstoy was still busy feeding about 20,000 people every day, and, besides, helping the poor people in many other ways. He continued the work almost all of that summer. He received, later on, twelve additional car-loads of American flour, through the committee in St. Petersburg.

The governor of Samara had sent out a physician to examine into the sanitary conditions. On his return journey I got the doctor's permission to accompany him. We arranged to meet



DRAWN BY W. H. DRAKE.

OXEN ON MR. X.'S FARM. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR.)

ENGRAVED BY J. HELLAWELL.



DRAWN BY W. H. DRAKE.

ENGRAVED BY G. P. BARTLE.

THE CAMEL ON MR. X.'S FARM. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY THE AUTHOR.)

the next day at a village seven miles from our headquarters, where I found him enjoying a four-hour dinner with a government official. When they came out, in high spirits, they took seats in the official's carriage, and I followed in our tarantass. After eight miles of fast driving we stopped at the house of a priest, who invited the company to tea and wine. Finally the doctor and the official kissed each other three times, according to the Russian fashion, and we started on our drive of over thirty miles to the railroad, the doctor plying the driver with vodka so that we should not be too late for the train. Being very weary, I gave the doctor a ten-ruble bill to pay for my first-class ticket, which was to be six or seven rubles. When the train came the doctor said my ticket was all right. On the train I again composed myself for rest, but when the conductor appeared I overheard the doctor say to him, "This gentleman is sent from America with bread for the starving, and should have free passage." The conductor assented, and passed on. At Sania the doctor returned only my change, keeping the ticket-money for himself. He had asked me to get some of the American gifts sent to him for his work among the poor. I had felt inclined to recommend him, but of course changed my mind.

It will probably never fully come to light how many died from the famine and its immediate consequences during the terrible winter of 1892. But if we take into consideration the fact that mortality in Russia, taking the average figures for the whole empire, amounts to

36 in each 1000,—*i. e.*, 1000 per cent. more than what is considered the normal rate,—and among the country population in central Russia is 62 in each 1000; and that the mortality in the German Volga provinces, during the winter of 1892, amounted to five times the usual number, or about 200 in each 1000, it may be believed that the mortality among the thirty-five millions of famine-stricken subjects of Russia during the year 1892 was something frightful. Count L. N. Tolstoy, in his report of his work of benevolence in Ryazan during last summer, says:

In districts with good crops there have been three deaths against four births, whereas in districts with bad crops there have been five births against seven deaths. In 1892 the mortality in the district of Epiphan was 69 per cent., in the district of Bogoroditsk 112 per cent., in the district of Yephremovsk 116 per cent., greater than in common years.

The emaciated muzhik still sits in his cold izba, without warm clothes, without fuel, without suitable food, or he wanders about with a bag thrown over his shoulder begging bread for himself and his family. The muzhik boy still stands at the door shivering from cold and hunger, big tears dropping from his cheeks. Tolstoy and his friends are weary, and the representatives of the Government are telling the world that the muzhiks are happy. Persons who try to ameliorate the condition of the masses are suspected persons, and are lucky if they do not see the inside of a prison, or even Siberia.

Jonas Stadling.