

**WORK WHILE YE
HAVE THE LIGHT**

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Work while ye have the light by Lyof Tolstoi & E. J. Dillon

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LYOF TOLSTOI & E. J. DILLON

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HAVE THE LIGHT**

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BY
LYOF TOLSTOI

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

BY
E. J. DILLON, Ph.D.



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1891

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1891

MAIN

NOTE TO THE REVISED EDITION.



SINCE this work was originally published, it has been pointed out to the editor by Dr. W. Robertson Smith that the MS. which Julius reads on his sick bed, and which makes him resolve for the second time to be a Christian, is that of the first five chapters of the διδαχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων—*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*—that very curious early Christian work whose discovery by Bryennius at Constantinople created so great a sensation a few years ago. As these chapters are literally rendered with some trifling omissions, it seemed proper to compare our story with the Greek text, and Dr. Robertson Smith has been so kind as to do this. This has led to the making of a considerable number of alterations in the translation. For example, at p. 139, l. 9, the word originally given as "sermon" is now altered to "precept" (ἐντολή).

It has been necessary to make these changes with great caution, and they are offered with all reserve. This book exists under very peculiar conditions. The present translation is the only printed text, since the book has never appeared in Russian or in any other language. But we consider that we are doing no wrong in availing ourselves of the learned and judicious help of so distinguished a scholar and theologian as the friend to whom we owe these corrections.

E. G.

INTRODUCTION.

IT has been the misfortune of Count Tolstoi to become widely known in the West of Europe at the very moment when he was performing a complete change of dress. The legitimate enthusiasm which his works of the imagination might awaken has been confused with the perhaps equally legitimate, but certainly much more obvious and vulgar surprise at the amazing character of his new social and religious views. If the alteration had taken place sooner or later, it would have been pleasanter for us and juster to him. If he had always written in a language which we could understand, we should long ago have comprehended the nature of his literary genius, and should have been less startled by his moral transformation; if the presentation to Europe had been delayed, we should have taken his work as a whole. But in point of fact, we were constantly being assured

that behind the dyed curtains of that Scythian tent there sat a mysterious chieftain, arrayed in all the splendours of the Orient. We tear the veil aside at last, and discover a gentleman *in puris naturalibus*, selecting a new set of garments. It is true that this disturbing circumstance has enormously added to the fame and success of the Russian writer, and that a hundred persons are found to discuss his nakedness to one who cares to think of what he was when he was clothed. But this is little consolation to the student of pure literature, who feels inclined to drive out the social group, and to guard Count Tolstoi's doors till he has wrapped himself once more in raiment, whether civilised or savage.

Of the moral speculations of the great Russian novelist nothing shall here be said. Most of what has passed for recent criticism has occupied itself with a vain and capricious agitation of Tolstoi's views on marriage, on education, on non-resistance to authority, to the exclusion of all other considerations. It would be absurd to deny that some of these theories irresistibly invite discussion, or that the distinguished gravity of the author is not justly fascinating

to an age which has been exhausted and lacerated by the funniness of its funny men. But it is difficult not to see, also, that speculation of this kind has been pursued in one form or another by every generation, that it has never yet succeeded in solving the riddle of this painful earth, and that in contrast to its evasiveness and intangibility, the positive consideration of literature as literature has a great charm. In these few words, then, Tolstoi will not be treated as the prophet or saviour of society, but as the writer of novels. For this extremely unpopular mode of regarding him, a critic's best excuse is to recall those touching and noble words written by Tourgenieff in his last hours to his great successor:—

“Dearest Lyof Nikolaievitch, it is long since I wrote to you. I have been in bed, and it is my death-bed. I cannot get well; that is no longer to be thought of. I write to you expressly to tell you how happy I have been to be your contemporary, and to present to you a last, a most urgent request. Dear friend, come back to literary work! This gift came to you whence all gifts come to us. Ah! how happy

I should be if I could think that you would listen to my request. My friend, great writer of our land of Russia, grant me this request."

The author of *Anna Karenine* has granted it in some degree, but how rarely, how fitfully, with how little of the artist's fire and consecration! Let us hope that in a near future he will give us of the things of the spirit in less niggardly a fashion. Let him remember that at the present moment there is no man living from whom a sane and complete work of fiction, on a large scale, would be more universally welcomed.

I.

The life of the Russian novelist has often been narrated, but presents no features of very remarkable interest. Count Lyof Nikolaievitch Tolstoi was born on August 28 (O.S.), 1828, at Yasnaya Polyana, an estate on the road to Orel, a few miles out of Tula, in the centre of Russia. This place and its surroundings were described in a very charming paper contributed by Mr. Kennen to *The Century Magazine* for June 1887. Yasnaya Polyana has been the alpha and