

THE LIFE OF TOLSTOY

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The life of Tolstoy by Paul Biriukov

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PAUL BIRIUKOV

**THE LIFE
OF TOLSTOY**

THE LIFE OF TOLSTOY

UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA



Les Fabry.

THE
LIFE OF TOLSTOY

BY
PAUL BIRUKOFF

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

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and 16 Black-and-White Plates

UNIV. OF
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MAIN

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

AMONG the late Count Tolstoy's intimate friends it is a matter for regret that, in the English language, there is no reliable biography of the great Russian teacher. In their opinion all existing works are marred by the entirely wrong standpoint from which the authors regard, and try to expound, the important facts of Tolstoy's life and the tenets of his philosophy.

M. Paul Birukoff was one of Tolstoy's closest friends, and Tolstoy himself actually collaborated with him in the present work, and selected personally the letters and other documents from which extracts have been quoted. With remarkable knowledge of his great compatriot's private life, M. Birukoff has also brought to his task an understanding of Tolstoy's ideals and a peculiar gift for sober, unbiased criticism.

For this English edition M. Birukoff, with the approval of the executors, has written a prefatory note and a short account of Tolstoy's latter days.

PREFACE

THE newspapers of November 12, 1910, communicated the fact that Leo Tolstoy had definitely left his home at Yasnaya Polyana. From that moment the whole civilised world, with intense interest, began to follow all the movements of the "Grand Old Man." Not only had he left Yasnaya Polyana, but he had decided to isolate himself from the world. This act, unexpected by the public but long anticipated by intimate friends, revealed again the greatness of Tolstoy, and conquered even the hearts of the most indifferent sceptics, till then smiling superciliously at his "eccentricities."

Whatever may have been the determining private factor of his departure, the chief cause was the contradiction between his conception of life, growing more and more definite and distinct, and the mode of life which he was obliged to follow at home. Thus his departure was the act of a man energetically and sincerely true to his words—which many people were doubting him to be. It was owing to this fact that his action produced

so magical a change in public opinion, especially among the numerous people who, though admiring Tolstoy, never took him quite seriously, thinking that he would be unable himself to carry out the message he preached to others.

The events following his leaving Yasnaya Polyana, and his illness at Astapovo, only increased the deep public interest. His death came as the inevitable epilogue of an act for the continuation of which his strength was not sufficient. It was a majestic conclusion to a great life, which had been one incessant struggle for truth, reason, and love.

This short biographical sketch is an attempt to give the reader a simple enumeration of the chief events of Tolstoy's wonderful life, and an indication of the inner, spiritual development of his great soul.

P. BIRUKOFF.

ST. PETERSBURG, $\frac{15}{28}$ April, 1911.

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