A CONSIDERATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF CERTAIN WOMEN ON LEO TOLSTOY

by

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THE ARGUMENT

It is the purpose of this thesis to trace the influence on the development of Tolstoy as a literary genius of several women with whom he came in close contact during his long life.

The first woman considered is Countess Mary Tolstoy, the saintly mother who died when her son was less than two years old. All that he knew of her, he learned indirectly from her letters and diary, from old servants, friends, and relatives, and more especially from "Aunt" Tatyana Yergolskaya. However, her influence was so great, inspite of the fact that he never remembered her personally, that she must occupy a prominent place in this work. She became for her famous son an ideal, a seeker for truth, a mother-image and a standard of self-sacrificing womanhood against which, throughout his life all women were measured and fell short.

Another woman whose influence on Tolstoy was somewhat indirect was his "Aunt" Alexandra Andreievna Tolstoy, to whom he wrote and in whom he confided from his early manhood till her death in 1903, but whom he rarely met. His correspondence with her has been used in this thesis.

The woman who had the most direct influence on Tolstoy during his early formative years was Tatyana Yergolskaya. It was she who not only kept always before him the image of his saintly
mother, but who herself became its reflection. It was she who created the warm nest, protecting him from the cold realities of life and making his future adjustment so difficult; who through her loving self-sacrifice developed his egoism; and who first inspired him to write.

Amongst the women with whom Tolstoy fell in love, Valeria Arseniev held a unique position. It was not that she influenced him directly, but indirectly she contributed to his development, in that during his courtship, while weighing the advisability of marriage, Tolstoy crystallized his ideas of what a wife should be, and what role she should play in his life. Valeria fell short of his ideal of womanhood and his conception of a help-mate. He searched elsewhere.

The greatest influence on his genius was undoubtedly his wife, Sophia. Having found the woman who, he felt, measured up as closely as possible to his requirements of a self-sacrificing worker, an intellectual companion and literary helper, a loyal, dedicated loving mother, he married in haste. From 1862-1877 Sophia's influence was paramount. Believing in her mission, to be nurse to his genius, she created the atmosphere conducive to his writing; she gave him the stable home life with a large family that he wanted and needed as anchor; she encouraged him to write by her unflagging belief in his talent and her adroit use of flattery, cajolery, and gentle prodding; she made it possible
for him to devote all his powers to purely creative work by tirelessly transcribing and intelligently criticizing his work; and she cared for his physical and mental wellbeing by taking off his shoulders, as far as she was able, the weight of mundane matters to do with family, estate, business, and publishing. But even she fell short of the mother-image. In later life the moralist and the seeker transcended the creative artist. Here, Sophia would not, and indeed could not, follow her husband. She could not see the god for the feet of clay. With his last artistic work, *Resurrection*, her influence ceased and her work ended. She who had been his help-mate in his literary work became his cross in his moral labour.

Tolstoy owed a tremendous debt to the women who had influenced his life, but for once, the seer was blind — he could not see the forest for the trees. At seventy-one he said that his opinion of women had been falling for seventy years — this enigmatic statement can be explained. Each woman in his life fell short of his ideal mother-image.
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CHAPTER I

On the occasion of the marriage to Michael Sukhotin of Tatyana, the eldest daughter of Leo Tolstoy, he wrote in his diary, Nov. 14, 1899:

Tanya has gone off with Sukhotin, and why? It is sad and offensive. For seventy years I have been lowering and lowering my opinion of women and still have to lower it more. The woman question! How can there not be a women question? But it bears no relation to the fact that women should begin to direct life, but to the fact that they should stop ruining it.

One might ascribe this extraordinary outburst of Tolstoy’s to a passing bitterness generated by a combination of parental jealousy and grief at losing, not only a daughter but a faithful secretary, and even to some extent a disciple. But that this was not entirely the reason can be gathered from a conversation about women that Tolstoy had with V.I. Alexeiev who reported it in his Reminiscences:

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1 She was the most feminine of all Tolstoy's daughters and from her early youth had dreamt of marriage and prepared herself for motherhood. She recounts in her memoirs how she daily, as an adolescent, bathed her breasts in cold water to prepare herself for the arduous task of feeding a large family. Till the age of 35 she had devoted her life almost exclusively to the service of her father. After Sophia refused to transcribe Tolstoy's non-literary works, Tatyana took on the difficult work. No longer able to sublimate her maternal instincts she fell almost morbidly in love with Michael Sukhotin, a widower, with a growing family of six, and a notorious libertine.

2 This work was very important to Tolstoy because of his illegible scribbles, often devoid of punctuation which only a few people could decipher.
Married women are worthy of respect; as far as unmarried women are concerned they are not worthy of receiving equal rights with men because they are weaker and in general less developed -- more stupid than men and their mission in life is to tempt man, and then he added he was in complete agreement with Schopenhauer who compared women to a paper bag filled with air which is interesting only until it bursts with a loud report. Afterwards it no longer inspires any interest for it now is nothing but a bit of torn paper.

When Alexeiev\textsuperscript{4} indignantly protested, Tolstoy added,

\begin{quote}
Listening to you one might think that woman is a creation that resembles a human being to such an extent that at times one may make a mistake and actually take her for one.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{V.I. Alexeiev, \textit{Tolstoy\textsuperscript{án} Chronicles}, State Library Museum, USSR. P.354-561.}
\footnote{Alexeiev spent four years as tutor (1877-81) at Yasnaya Polyana. He was one of the most charming personalities amongst those close to Tolstoy. Son of a well-to-do Pskov landowner, he, after graduating brilliantly from the University of St.Petersburg and having come under the influence of Proudhon, set sail for America with some intellectuals with similar views, and established an agricultural Commune in Kansas. In his memoirs he truthfully analyzes the reasons for its failure. He returned to Russia but was disowned by his father and suffered great hardships until he obtained the position of tutor at Yasnaya Polyana. Disliking luxury, ceremony, and being waited on by servants, he lived in a peasant hut. He exercised a tremendous spiritual and moral influence on Tolstoy and contributed to his mental and spiritual development. Sophia sensed his influence, and feared his ideas concerning private property. She felt he might, through his spiritual influence, distract Tolstoy from his artistic literary work. Eventually she succeeded in getting him removed from Yasnaya Polyana but not before he had made a deep and permanent impression on Tolstoy.}
\end{footnotesize}
Tolstoy's attitude to women is summarized by Maxim Gorki, "I feel he is filled with an implacable hostility to women." The fact that Tolstoy was pathologically antipathetic to women can be seen from his attitude as revealed in The Power of Darkness, Kreutzer Sonata, and more especially, The Devil, and even though to a lesser extent in Anna Karenina.

In Anna Karenina it is, fundamentally, Anna who has ruined Vronsky's life; it is she who has outraged God by being unfaithful to her husband and abandoning her child; it is she who pays the final penalty -- "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." The reader cannot escape the feeling that Tolstoy also condemns her. In Kreutzer Sonata, Posnikov's detestation for his wife as a woman, is most obvious. In The Devil, a posthumous autobiographical story based on his last illicit pre-marital love affair and his successfully resisted post-marital temptation to start an affair with Domna, in 1881, the fault is not that the lascivious squire takes advantage of his position of power to satisfy his sexual appetites but with the seductive qualities of the women. Tolstoy's artistry befuddles the reader to such an extent that his sympathies are turned to the hapless squire who is the victim of this "diabolical" seductive power.

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6 An affair with a Yasnaya Polyana serf-girl, Aksinia, by whom he had a child, and whose husband was in the army.

7 A cook in the servants' kitchen at Yasnaya Polyana, whose husband was away in the army. So great was Tolstoy's temptation that he appealed to V.I. Alexeiev to accompany him on all his walks so as to help him resist this passionate urge.
The reason for Tolstoy's attitude to women is extraordinarily interesting and opens up a relatively unexplored avenue to one of the aspects of that complex figure, Tolstoy. It is also paradoxical. Any careful student of Tolstoy's life cannot fail to realize that women had a great influence on his development, both as a writer, and educator, and a moralist; in fact, they played a decisive role in his development.

It is significant that in War and Peace, and Anna Karenina and even in Resurrection Tolstoy shows himself to be a master in depicting female characters. In War and Peace, his genius has created such memorably diverse characters as Princess Mary, Natasha, Sonya -- he penetrated into their innermost souls and brought them living before the reader.

Strangely enough, possibly the greatest moral and spiritual influence exercised on Tolstoy was that of his mother who died, when Tolstoy was too young to remember her. Therein, possibly, lies the strength of her influence. She was a legend rather than a reality -- an abstraction for the sensitive child of all that was good, pure, and worthwhile. Tolstoy himself, seemed to realize the importance of the fact that he could not remember her. In his Reminiscences of Childhood written in 1903-06 he writes:

My mother I do not remember at all. For I was only one-and-a-half years old when she died. By a strange quirk of fate there remains not a single portrait of
her; so that I cannot think of her as a real physical being. I am somewhat glad of this for in my imagination survives only her spirituality and everything that I know of her is beautiful, and I think, not only because all those who spoke to me of my mother tried to say nothing but good of her but because, in reality, there was much of her that was good ... But her most precious quality -- was that, according to the servants, she, although very hot tempered, could always control herself. She would become red in the face, even burst into tears -- her maid told me -- but would never say a harsh word. She didn't know one.9

Fortunately, some of her early writings survive -- her diary of a trip which she made with her father to St. Petersburg in 1810; a special diary called, Diaries of the Conduct of Little Nicholas, which records her attempts to put into practice some of her advanced ideas on the upbringing of children;10 and her

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8 There is extant, a quaint little silhouette of her. Underneath is written in Tolstoy's handwriting, "My Mother -- Leo Tolstoy."


10 Mary had given a good deal of thought to education and in her Diary July 11, 1810, she wrote about a conversation she had had about educational theories, "Although there are many books written on the subject of education those who want to follow literally any one of these plans are mistaken. Only practical experience can be the true guide. Every child needs its own plan." (S.Tolstoy mother and Grandfather of L.Tolstoy. Federatsya Moscow 1928 p.90-91) It is curious to note that Tolstoy's revolutionary educational theory was primarily based on these premises and that the child must be the guide of the teacher and its inclinations must decide what is to be studied. The object of Mary's Diary of the Conduct of Little Nicholas was corrective. She entered everything he did that was praiseworthy but also his misdemeanours but, before the latter were entered, the child had to understand in what way he had misbehaved and agree to his ill conduct being recorded. An extraordinarily modern approach to corrective punishment.
correspondence with her husband and in-laws.\textsuperscript{11} The diary that she wrote about her trip, when she was twenty, provides the most valuable material for the study of this most interesting woman. Although Mary spent six weeks in the capital there is not a single reference to any social entertainment, except for seeing Corneille's \textit{Medea} performed. Her six weeks "holiday" seem to have been primarily devoted to intellectual improvement. She read carefully a historical dictionary, visited art galleries, museums, observatories, and even several factories. On all these things she made intelligent comments. These writings of his mother eventually reached Tolstoy. These, in addition to stories by relatives and servants helped to re-create her. What particularly struck Tolstoy was the simplicity and truthfulness of her letters especially those to her husband. Letters of that period were often fulsome in sentiment and this tendency is seen in his father's letters. Tolstoy, the seer, sensed the insincerity in contrast to the direct truthful replies written by Mary. She addresses her husband simply as "mon bon ami" and does not hesitate in one letter to write: "Time drags slowly without you, although, to be truthful, we do not enjoy much of your company when you are here."\textsuperscript{12}

Earlier in his life, Tolstoy noted his mother's qualities of simplicity and truthfulness, that he so much admired,

\textsuperscript{11} As some of her letters are written jointly with other members of the Tolstoy family one is struck by the superiority, beauty and especially the simplicity of her Russian compared with that of the other members of her husband's family. Her mother-in-law appears to be almost illiterate.

re-created in his elder brother Nicholas, who was six when Mary died. More than any of the other children he resembled her physically and spiritually.

They both possessed a characteristic which I sensed in my mother's letters but which I actually knew in my brother, that is, complete indifference to the opinions of others and modesty that sometimes compelled them to hide their mental, intellectual, and moral superiority over others. They seemed actually ashamed of this superiority.13

Tolstoy goes on to say that Turgeniev noted very early this quality in Nicholas. "He lacks defects of character which are necessary to the makeup of a great writer."14 To further illustrate this quality in both his mother and Nicholas that he admires so much, Tolstoy uses the story of a saint:

It is a short vita of a monk who as was well-known to the entire brotherhood, had many shortcomings. But, inspite of these, the Elder of the monastery saw him, in a dream, amongst the saints. The amazed Elder asked, "What enabled this imperfect monk to receive such a reward?" The answer came, "He never judged anyone." If such rewards exist I believe both my mother and my brother have received them.15

To what extent Tolstoy was moved by the spiritual vision of his mother can be seen from the following:

She appeared to me as such an exalted, pure, spiritual being that often during the middle period of my life, during the struggle against

14 loc.cit.
15 ibid, 257.
temptation that beset me, I prayed to her soul begging her for help. This prayer always helped me.  

But what is actually known about this woman to whose soul Tolstoy felt he could pray? She was the daughter of Prince Nicholas Sergeievitch Volkonsky whose family traced its pedigree to the martyr Prince St. Michael of Chernigov. In Holy Russia of that period this was most significant, for the martyr's crown was the highest honor. It is certain that all the servants at Yasnaya Polyana knew of this saintly ancestor and venerated Mary so much the more. Sergei Tolstoy remembers the icon of St. Michael hanging at Yasnaya Polyana.

But God scourges those whom he loves and indeed it is hard to imagine a less happy life than that of Mary Volkonsky. Little is known about her mother, Catherine Trubetskoi 1749-92, except that she married unusually late in life. In fact her late marriage was most extraordinary, for at that period, it was usual for girls to marry between the age of 16 and 18 and any girl unmarried by 21 was considered a confirmed old maid. Unfortunately the few details that Tolstoy gives in his Reminiscences are quite incorrect. He tells us his grandfather married after returning from military service during the reign of Paul I. But the facts

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16 Loc. cit.
17 St. Michael went to the Golden Horde and was ordered to pass between the purifying fires in a pagan rite. Rather than compromise his Christian faith he refused and died the death of a martyr.
18 There was also hanging at Yasnaya Polyana a woodcut of the family tree showing the family springing from the martyr. Tolstoy refers to this in War and Peace, and Sergei Tolstoy, in his book Mother and Grandfather of Leo Tolstoy, p. 7.
are that he retired in 1799, and his daughter was born in 1790, two years before his wife died. According to Tolstoy, his grandfather was 37 and his grandmother 41 when they were married. Actually, he was 26 and his bride 30. Believing that his grandfather had retired before marriage, Tolstoy assumed that his mother was brought up from her earliest years under the direct supervision of his grandfather, but in reality he was away from home on active service until the little girl was 9 and nothing is known as to who looked after her for the seven years after her mother's death till her father's return home.

Tolstoy most assiduously sought information about his mother not only from servants at Yasnaya Polyana, some of whom had been with her when she was a small child, but also from a cousin of hers, Barbara Volkonsky, 19 who had spent much of her life at Yasnaya Polyana and who retained until her old age extraordinarily vivid recollections of life there when Mary was alive. Tolstoy spent several weeks at Barbara's little estate at Klin in the province of Tver and writes about her:

19 How close was Barbara Volkonsky to Mary is shown by the fact that the extant silhouette of Mary originally was part of a pair framed together! The other was that of Barbara, the girls were framed facing each other. Tolstoy's friendship with Barbara Volkonsky throws light on Tolstoy's methods of artistic creation and to what extent he drew from life, for she had a most unusual hobby for an upper-class woman of that period -- wood turning on a lathe. The artistic objects that she made she used in her home or gave as gifts. Tolstoy in War and Peace ascribes this hobby to Prince Bolkonsky.
She embroidered on a frame, looked after her little household and treated me to some cabbage, cottage cheese and home-made marmalade, such good simple fare can be found only with mistresses of small estates. She would talk of old days, of my mother and grandfather and of the four coronations she had attended. It was at her place that I wrote my story, Three Deaths. This stay with her remains in my memory as one of the purest and brightest recollections of my life.

It seems that even a short stay with this woman who knew his mother had a beneficial effect on Tolstoy. Not only did he, during his stay, produce one of his artistic gems, Three Deaths, but he gathered many impressions later incorporated in War and Peace. His last remark seems to be in direct contradiction of his bitter theories on the influence of women.

Some of the impressions he received during this visit he utilized in his early work Childhood. It is impossible to doubt that what the old nurse, Natalia Savishna, tells so movingly about his dead mother is drawn from life:

It was for my sins that I was allowed to outlive her. It is His holy will. He took her to himself because she is worthy of it—He needs kind ones there ... How your late mother loved me! But to speak the truth, was there anyone she did not love? Yes, my young master, you must not forget your mother. She was no ordinary being but a heavenly angel.

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20 P. Biryukov, Biography of Leo Tolstoy, Moscow Posrednik Publishing House 1913, Vol.1. P.40. This last sentence was inserted in Tolstoy's own handwriting in Biryukov's manuscript, which he was reading about 1904.

It is significant that, in *Childhood*, the name of the nurse is Natalia Savishna and, in *War and Peace*, she is called Praskovia Savishna but in both cases she would usually be referred to as merely, Savishna. Both are drawn from life and are modelled on an old housekeeper at Yasnaya Polyana called Praskovia essayeva, his mother's former nurse. As Tolstoy says:

I have described fairly accurately Praskovia essayeva in *Childhood* (under the name of Natalia Savishna). All that I have written about her is based on actual fact.\(^2\)

There is an abundance of material in *War and Peace* that sheds a vivid light on Countess Mary's life. Of course one may argue that this book is fiction, however, Tolstoy was always at his best when he painted from life, from what he knew and whenever he could, he meticulously adhered to the actual facts. Such almost completely autobiographical works as *Childhood and Youth*, *Cossacks*, *Squire's Morning*, *Light that Shineth in Darkness*, *The Devil*, and many others bear witness to this fact. In the case of the character of Prince Nicholas Bolkonsky and Princess Mary this is especially true. The Tolstoy children were always filled with awe when looking at the portrait of their grandfather Volkonsky that hung in the dining room at Yasnaya Polyana. Anyone who has seen this portrait cannot help being struck by the meticulous realism of the description in *War and Peace* of Prince Bolkonsky that is based on this portrait of the prototype. The most striking features are

\(^2\) Ibid, p.276.
the shaggy gray eyebrows and harsh gray piercing eyes which appear again and again in War and Peace and are so skilfully emphasized by Tolstoy.

Whatever he may have been in his youth, of which we know very little, in his old age Prince Volkonsky was a warped and embittered man, probably because he was retired at the early age of 49 during the reign of Paul I, and thereafter was completely forgotten on his country estate. As one of his contemporaries said, "His fate was worse than disfavour -- he was forgotten." His early widowhood and the fact that his only surviving child was a sickly and physically most unattractive girl, could not help adding to his feeling of frustration. However, he attempted to defy fate by giving his daughter an education suited to a son, and personally instructed her in geometry and algebra. He saw to it that she learned not only excellent French, a usual accomplishment, but good literary Russian as well and that she became fluent in German, and Italian. There are two exercise books preserved at Yasnaya Polyana. One bears the inscription: "Some notes leading to the knowledge of grain farming at Yasnaya Polyana."23 The essay is carefully written, or rather printed, by Mary and shows some signs of having been dictated. It contains explanations of various standard measurements and weights and of various rotation crops. The second book, larger than the first, entitled "Notes on mathematical, physical and political geography." There is an

23

Mother and Grandfather of Leo Tolstoy. p.11
inscription possibly in the hand of her father, stating, "For Princess Volkonsky". It begins with general information on Geography of the earth and the planetary system. It contains an exposition of the systems of Pythagoras, Plato, Ptolomy, the Egyptians, and Copernicus. Explanations of various forms of government are also given and it is noted that in the democratic form, legislative power belongs to all the people.

It is quite obvious that Leo Tolstoy, although he admired his grandfather, considered him the worst imaginable teacher. He depicts him in War and Peace as Prince Bolkonsky. Extraordinarily brilliant himself, he attempts to endow his daughter with abilities she does not possess and becomes irritated and impatient when she fails to understand his mathematical expositions. At times he works himself into uncontrollable fits of rage with his hapless pupil. The daily "lessons" with her father are a source of terror for Mary — terror so vividly described in War and Peace.

In the morning as usual Princess Mary at the exact appointed hour entered the reception room to pay her respects — and fearfully crossing herself prayed inwardly that the daily encounter would pass without incident ... "Well my lady" the old man would begin, bending close to his daughter over the exercise book ... "Well, my lady, these triangles are alike; please kindly note the angle A B C ..." The terrified Princess was looking at the burning eyes of her father which were close to her. Red blotches broke out on her face. It was obvious she understood nothing and that she was so terrified that fear would prevent her from understanding any of her father's further explanations no matter how clear they might be. It is hard to know whose fault it was — teacher or pupil. But every day the same thing occurred.
Everything swam before her eyes. She could neither see nor hear anything. She was only conscious of the withered face of her father ... and thought only how she could escape as soon as possible from his presence to try to understand the problem in the quiet of her own room. The old man would be beside himself; he would noisily push his chair back and forth, make a tremendous effort to control himself, inevitably fail, lose his temper and hurl an exercise book. "What a fool!" he would yell ... "Mathematics is a subject of great importance, my lady, I cannot let you resemble our stupid society women."24

This daily ordeal was but a part of the well regulated routine of Princess Mary's day. After it she was expected to prepare her lessons for the next day and from 12-2 P.M. she was obliged to practise the clavichord while her father slept. In spite of her ugly appearance and clumsy movements her father was passionately fond of her but somehow the necessity to inflict moral torture on her became for him a pathological necessity. At times his behaviour reached quite grotesque, even repulsive proportions.

Knowing that she was deeply attached to her French governess, Prince Bolkonsky proceeded to flirt openly with her and even threatened to marry her. As was natural the penniless governess was only too eager and her head was completely turned by the prospect of marriage with the wealthy old Prince. This is, of course, fiction, found in War and Peace, but, in his Reminiscences, Tolstoy refers somewhat vaguely to his mother's

24 Collected Works. Vol. IV, p.84-85
passionate devotion to her French governess, Mademoiselle Louise Henissienne, who, he says, later married Mary's cousin Prince Michael Volkonsky. Here Tolstoy makes a serious mistake. It is not the governess but her sister, Mary Henissienne, who married the Prince and whose marriage was made possible by Princess Mary's extraordinary generosity; for it was she who supplied the dowry of 75,000 roubles, in spite of determined opposition by the whole Volkonsky family. Since Mary was unmarried they considered themselves as heirs to her fortune and denounced her for her unnatural and even shameless affection for her governess under whose influence, it appeared, she was prepared to rob her own kin of their rightful inheritance. After Mary's marriage to Nicholas Tolstoy, the latter disapproved of her past generosity at the expense of their future children and put a speedy end to her lifelong friendship with the governess by getting rid of Louise Henissienne.

In War and Peace there are conversations between Prince Andrei and Mary that must have been based on those between Mary Volkonsky and her cousin Barbara and which the latter recounted to Tolstoy:

Truthfully Mary, isn't it very hard for you sometimes to bear your father's temper?" Prince Andrei suddenly asked her. At first Princess Mary was taken aback, then afraid by the question, "me - me -

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Mother and Grandfather of Leo Tolstoy, p.48-53
The author, Tolstoy's son Sergei, draws his information on this subject from a diary of a cousin of Michael Volkonsky which was published in Prague 1925.
hard to live" she said. "Yes, has he been always irascible and now is he not becoming unbearable?"
"This is a great sin. Is it possible to judge one's father and even if it were possible what feeling except that of veneration could a man of my father's type provoke? I am completely happy with him and I wish others could be as happy as I am ... But one thought oppresses me -- I will tell you the truth Andrei, this is my father's attitude to religion. I can't understand how a man with such intelligence cannot see that which is as clear as day and how he can be so mistaken on this question. This is my only sorrow. However, lately, even in this respect I have received some consolation. His mocking has been less virulent and there is a monk whom he received and with whom he has had long conversations."26

Was Mary really sincere when she spoke of her happiness? How was it possible that she could be happy living under such conditions? Of course when she spoke of happiness she meant her inward spiritual happiness arising from her boundless faith in God from whom could come nothing but blessings. This enabled her not only to bear a life that others would find intolerable but to look upon it as a part of the Divine plan to purify and save her soul. She had moments of weakness when she exclaimed to Pierre:

O my God, there are minutes when I would marry anyone ... how hard it is to love a man that is close to you and feel that ... you can bring him nothing but sorrow; when you know you are completely helpless to change anything! Then there is but one escape -- to go away. But where could I go?27

But these moments were rare. In her heart of hearts she sensed that her father loved her deeply and painfully in his own

26 Collected Works, Vol.IV, p.101
27 ibid, p.248.
twisted way and she felt how wretchedly unhappy he was. She was sure she knew the reason for his misery. It lay in his rebellion against God. Even to herself she never admitted the possibility that he did not believe in God. She knew that, no matter how she was made to suffer, it was he that deserved pity. She could never seriously think of leaving him in his unhappiness. In her simple childlike faith she found not only strength to continue her life, but a source of happiness. Often her faith was severely tested and sometimes she was driven to despair, but it was always renewed and strengthened by direct contact with simple people who possessed faith to even a greater degree than she did, and, who like herself, sought to find redemption and salvation in suffering for Christ's sake.

These contacts were made much easier because the manor house of Lysye Gory (in reality, Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy, because he wanted the estate to be occupied by the French for the purpose of his story, transplanted Yasnaya Polyana intact to the Province of Smolensk. The Moscow-Kiev highway becomes the Moscow-Smolensk highway) lay but a short distance from Moscow-Smolensk highway. Summer and winter, in all kinds of weather, flowed along this road a continuous stream of pilgrims, known in Russia as "God's People". It is perhaps these streams of pilgrims travelling the highways of old Russia that gave foreign visitors the impression that there was a deep religious undercurrent in the Russian people. It was these people, "God's People" who symbolized
the spirit of Holy Russia. The pilgrims, armed with the traditional staff and carrying a coarse linen sack over their shoulder asked, in the name of Christ, for food and shelter as they trudged to some holy shrine, monastery or miraculous icon. Rarely did a peasant, even the poorest, refuse. Occasionally these pilgrims ventured to appear at a manor house, but that was a risky business for they usually had to run the gauntlet of packs of fierce watch-dogs, so that only large groups of them, moving in a solid phalanx guarding their flanks by swinging their staves in unison could hope to reach the kitchen door and ask for food. Even here their good reception was not certain for many landlords looked on them as loafers, ne'er-do-wells, even runaway serfs who preferred to make a nuisance of themselves rather than do an honest day's work. In many cases it was by the master's orders that fierce dogs were sicked upon the pilgrims.28

This picture of pilgrim Russia, painted so vividly by Tolstoy in War and Peace is, as we know, drawn from life. It was known to the pilgrims by their "grape-vine" that Princess Mary, at Yasnaya Polyana, would be charitable and kindly and that this saintly woman would give them welcome. Although in every other respect she was completely submissive to the least wish of her father, on this one point she steadfastly refused to bow to his peremptory order forbidding any loafer or tramp (as he called

28 Trespassers were known to have been torn to pieces by these dogs -- a sight which in some cases offered a welcome diversion for bored brutal squires and their guests.
Pilgrims) from setting foot on his property. It is true that, when 
the old Prince was at home, the pilgrims had to approach by a cir­
cuitous route the back door of the Manor house through which they 
were led to the young mistress's private quarters. But come they 
did in a never ending stream. It is even possible that the Prince 
might not have been entirely ignorant of his daughter's disobed­
ience, and that knowing of these stealthy visits, in his heart 
could not help admiring this only manifestation of the hereditary 
Volkonsky wilfulness shown by his otherwise submissive daughter. 
Even after her father's death, and her marriage to Nicholas Tolstoy, 
she was adamant in continuing this age-old custom. Quiet talk 
with these simple holy people, these "Fools for Christ's sake", 
gave Mary the spiritual food she craved. To help them gave her 
real happiness. She felt they represented all that was true and 
good in life.

To leave one's family, native land, all thought of 
worldly goods, in order to, without attaching one­ 
self to anything, wander in coarse rags under an 
assumed name, doing no harm to people and praying 
for them -- praying both for those who persecute 
them and those who are charitable to them; there is 
no higher truth and no higher life than this truth 
and this life.29

Did Mary herself dream of becoming a pilgrim? Whatever her dreams 
they were not realized for one year after her father died, in 1821, 
she married Count Nicholas Tolstoy, a marriage of convenience, 
as Tolstoy says in his Reminiscences arranged by relatives:

She was rich, no longer young, an orphan, My father, on the other hand, was a jolly brilliant young man of good family and connections but his fortune had been dissipated to such an extent by his father that he even found it expedient to renounce his inheritance as his father's liabilities exceeded his assets. I think that my mother loved my father, more as a husband and as the father of her children than as a man, himself.30

Actually Nicholas Tolstoy found himself in an utterly desperate situation. He was penniless for everything his family possessed was, upon the death of his father, seized by his numerous creditors. What made matters worse was that he was obliged to support a large family which were accustomed to a very high, not to say, luxurious way of living. To attempt to support such a family on the meagre salary of a government official was out of the question. He had no choice but to marry an heiress, and to marry quickly. Furthermore, this heiress must be prepared to accept not only him, but his entire family: - his mother, his eccentric aunt and her adopted daughter, his distant cousin (who had been his fiancee) and numerous retainers and old servants. Mary Volkonsky seemed the solution to the problem. Though rich she was thirty-two years old and very plain. Tolstoy has described her in War and Peace:

The mirror reflected an unattractive weak body and thin face. Her eyes, always sad, now looked hopelessly at herself in the mirror ... she returned to her room with a sad frightened expression on her face that seldom left her and made her unattractive sickly face even more unattractive.31

31 Ibid, Vol. IV, p.86
But often Tolstoy refers to her large radiant blue eyes -- eyes that appeared radiantly beautiful only on rare occasions when they reflected the emotions of her innermost soul. On these occasions her plainness was illuminated from within and she appeared almost beautiful. But she was unbelievably shy and it is highly unlikely that her prospective jolly bridegroom ever saw this illumination and even if he had he would not have appreciated it. This coarse squire appreciated his hunting dogs. "Spiritually she stood much higher than my father or his family with the possible exception of Tatyana Yergolskaya."  

After the marriage, Nicholas Tolstoy and his entire family moved in and literally took over Yasnaya Polyana without the shy bride having so much as a short honeymoon. To what extent the taking over was complete can be gathered from Reminiscences when Tolstoy says:

The life of my mother in father's family, as far as I am able to conclude from letters and what others told me was very good and very happy. Her life passed entirely occupied with her children, reading novels aloud to my grandmother, reading Rousseau's Emile to herself, discussing books that had been read, playing the piano, teaching Italian to one of the aunts, walking, and caring for household duties.  

How many women could be happy under these circumstances? True she complained in one of her letters that she

rarely saw her husband even when he was at home. One suspects that Nicholas avoided his unattractive wife as much as he could. An interesting light is thrown on Mary Tolstoy's married life by a section of Chapter IV of *Childhood* which Tolstoy omitted from the final version. Later this omitted portion was put in a supplement to the book:

One thing of which I was completely convinced was that father gave his cheek to be kissed, but the kissing was done by mother ... she was one of those women whose object in life was self-sacrifice and the happiness of others: therefore, although father was attentive and with another woman might have appeared an excellent husband, with mother he was rude. This, one could see when at times he allowed her to serve him, to sacrifice her pleasure for him. He so often interrupted her when she was speaking. This could be seen even more from the way the rooms in the house were divided between them -- whose rooms had more windows? Whose had the better view? Whose servants were better quartered? Whose entrance to the house was prettier and more convenient? Who had the entrance to the garden? Who had the fireplace? In whose rooms were guests received? ... To whose window was the tame bear brought? All the advantages lay in my father's part of the house.


35 There is an interesting comment by Mary on this subject which corroborates what Tolstoy had gathered. She wrote to Yergolshaya in October 1827: "Today we are going to finish reading the books of Maria Ivanovna, and since we have recently sent back the library books, our home will be, for the time being, without books. During your absence Alexandrine read aloud to us. Nicholas listened and, as is his wont, interrupted the reading with his absurdities at the most interesting moments. (Mother and Grandfather of Leo Tolstoy, p.146)
The situation at Yasnaya Polyana was not eased by the presence of Tatyana Yergolskaya (later often referred to as Aunt Tanya) the beautiful woman with whom Nicholas had been, and still was, in love. But, as during Mary's unmarried life, she again found her happiness in living for others and in contacts with God's People, who brought with them the atmosphere of other-worldliness that was so dear to her. For all that she had brought to Nicholas and his family she received little gratitude and from her mother-in-law very little affection:

My grandmother was passionately fond of my father and us grandchildren and enjoyed playing with us. She also loved my aunts but it seems to me she did not altogether love my mother, considering her unworthy of my father. She was jealous of her. My grandmother didn't have to be exacting with the household serfs and servants because everybody recognized the fact that she was the real mistress of the house and everyone tried to please her.36

It is small wonder that amongst her old household servants the feeling grew that Countess Mary, their dear old mistress, was indeed a saint to endure such a situation, and, moreover, to endure it with meekness and serenity. But if she completely submitted to the wishes of her husband and effaced herself before his family, she steadfastly refused to abandon her custom of keeping the doors of Yasnaya Polyana open to God's People. On this one point she asserted herself as mistress of the house by often inviting the pilgrims to eat in the dining-room at a special table set apart for them.

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In *Childhood*, Tolstoy describes a scene when the Count's hunting dogs had been deliberately sicked on to the pilgrims, and one of them, his clothing torn, is being given food in the dining-room and is incoherently telling his story. Nicholas Tolstoy impatiently remarks that he cannot understand a word of his jibberish to which Mary replies:

"I understand, he is telling me that some huntsmen deliberately set a pack of dogs on him, so that the dogs would tear him to pieces but that God protected him. He begs you not to punish them." "And how does he know that I intend to punish them? You know I am no lover of these gentry, who could deny I have had every opportunity to study this crew. Swarms of them come to see you and they are all of the same kidney... I am outraged when clever, educated people fall victim to such deceptions." "To this I must reply that it is hard to believe that a man who, inspite of his 60 years, goes barefoot winter and summer never takes off his chains weighing 80 lbs. that he wears under his clothing, and who repeatedly refuses offers of comfortable shelter and food -- it is hard to believe that such a man does all this because he is lazy... As to prophecies... I told you how Kiryusna foretold the very day and hour of my father's death."37

The whole struggle between Mary and Nicholas over the subject of God's People was made easier for her because she found an unexpected ally in a member of his family - his sister, Alexandra, usually known as Aunt Aline. From a portrait of her it appears she was an exceedingly beautiful girl with large blue eyes and a gentle expression on her pale face. Tolstoy tells us she was graceful, had a romantic imagination, and a great love.

for French poetry and playing the harp. It was this beautiful creature who, after a tragic life, and as an older and sadder woman kept alive the spiritual atmosphere at Yasnaya Polyana after Mary’s death. It was she who, trying to put her Christian principles into practice, sowed the seeds in the youthful Tolstoy that later bore such rich fruit.

My aunt, Alexandra Ilyinichna, was not only outwardly religious, that is to say she kept the fasts, prayed much, had constant associations with people of holy life such as the Elder at the Optina Pustin, at her time, Leonide, but she herself lived a truly Christian life trying not only to avoid every kind of luxury and service from others but endeavouring to serve others herself as much as possible. She never had any money because she gave away all that she had to anyone who asked her. Her maid, Gasha, who had served my grandmother until her death, related to me how Aunt Alexandra, during her life in Moscow, would tip-toe past the sleeping maid when going to early mass, and that she would do herself all those things which were customarily done by a maid. In her food and clothing she was simple and inexacting to an incredible degree. Although I am very reluctant to admit it I can remember from my earliest childhood a peculiar sour smell emanating from her, which was probably caused by neglect of her person.38

38 After Tolstoy’s “conversion”, he also neglected his person, and his wife found his condition offensive. She writes Feb.7,1891:”He kept me awake till 2 A.M. At first he remained downstairs washing himself. I began to think he was unwell. Washing for him is an event. He told me that his feet were so covered with dirt that there were sores under cakes of it. I shuddered from disgust.”(These 22 words are omitted by the editor, Sergei Tolstoy)“Then he lay down and read for a long time. I am in his way when I am not needed to satisfy his desires. These days of disgust at the physical side of my husband’s life oppress me frightfully, - but I cannot, cannot get accustomed - will never get accustomed to filth and stench (12 words omitted by the editor.) Diary of Sophia A. Tolstoy 1860-91, edited by S.L.Tolstoy, Leningrad, S. and M.Shashnikov 1928)

At the age of 17, when Alexandra came out at the capital, her beauty caused a social sensation and, as could be expected, led to a brilliant match with a wealthy Baltic noble, Count Osten-Saken, who took his young bride to his great estate in the province of Courland. Shortly afterwards strong symptoms of a mental disorder appeared in the Count which progressed so rapidly that when his young wife was nearing the end of her pregnancy, he developed a persecution mania. Dashing into her room, crying that his enemies were about to kill him, and that they must flee, he led her to a waiting carriage. As they drove away he forced a loaded pistol into her hand and, arming himself with another, told her that, should they be overtaken by his pursuers, they must kill each other. Seeing another carriage approaching from a side road, he fired at her point blank, the bullet passing through her chest. The bleeding young wife was taken to the nearby house of a Lutheran pastor and so carefully nursed that she was soon on the road to recovery. The mad count, feigning remorse, came to visit the invalid and under the pretext of solicitude for her health asked to see her tongue. No sooner had she complied that he seized her tongue, whipped out a razor and attempted to cut off her tongue. Once again she was rescued and when the count was confined to an asylum she returned to her parents' home where she gave birth prematurely to a dead child. By this time she was in such a nervous condition that her parents dared not tell her the child was dead. To save her reason they substituted a servant's newborn baby. The countess never recovered from these shocks and
became slightly odd and suffered from excessive religiosity. In her, Countess Mary found a kindred spirit and a staunch ally. After Mary's death it was Countess Osten-Saken who carried on the tradition of keeping Yasnaya Polyana as a haven for pilgrims. After Nicholas Tolstoy died suddenly while on a trip to Tula, Aunt Alexandra became legal guardian to the orphaned children and mistress of Yasnaya Polyana.

It was this period that Tolstoy so well remembered and that left such a vivid impression on his mind. He was twelve when she died. In his Reminiscences he writes:

This aunt was a truly religious woman. More than anything else she loved to read the lives of saints; to talk to pilgrims, Fools for Christ's sake, monks and nuns, some of whom always lived in our house, while others visited her constantly. Among the almost permanent dwellers was a nun, godmother to my sister, called Marya Gerasimovna who in her youth, assuming the name of Ivanuska, and wearing monk's clothing, went on pilgrimages disguised as a "Fool for Christ's sake." It is this period that Tolstoy has described so vividly in Childhood and War and Peace.

40 Tolstoy tells why she lived almost permanently at Yasnaya Polyana. After the birth of 4 sons Mary Tolstoy longed for a daughter. She promised Marya Gerasimovna that if she would pray to God for a girl baby for Mary, and if her prayer should be granted, she would be cared for for the rest of her life at Yasnaya Polyana. Alexandra Tolstoy in Father gives a slightly different version of the story.
However this may be, it is quite obvious that there was a most unusually religious atmosphere at Yasnaya Polyana, not only during the life of Tolstoy's mother, but even after her death, when perhaps it became intensified by the profoundly religious nature of his aunt Alexandra. That this atmosphere had a tremendous influence on Tolstoy can be seen in his masterly descriptions of the Yurodivy Grisha in *Childhood*. Although Tolstoy tells us that this character is fictional, it is undoubtedly a composite character based on many Yurodivys that Tolstoy had met as a child. The vivid picture of Grisha praying in the moonlight and falling in his chains in an ecstasy of devotion is drawn from life. The Tolstoy children used to listen to an undergardener at Yasnaya Polyana when he prayed. He, also was a Yurodivy who had been given employment either by Mary, or Countess Osten-Saken.

Possibly the fact that Tolstoy could not remember his mother personally intensified her influence over him for it cannot be disputed that she became for him a legendary saint, and a legend is always more potent than reality. Of course he remembered his religious aunt Alexandra much better, but he never speaks of praying to her soul during the stormy period of his life but he did pray to the soul of his mother. This influence became even stronger as time passed and affected not only his

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41 When she became ill she asked to be taken to the famous monastery Optina Pustin, where she died. This was the monastery that played such a big part in Tolstoy's own life.
42 A Fool for Christ's sake.
personal life and that of his family, but also his creative works. This influence, largely contributed to by Countes Osten-Saken, affected not only Tolstoy but to varying degrees all the other children.

Nicholas, Tolstoy's eldest brother, felt the influence before Tolstoy, for being six years older than Tolstoy he actually remembered his mother. He must have been an extraordinary child. Tolstoy tells us in Reminiscences that all the other children addressed him for some inexplicable reason as "you". He was an extraordinary boy and later an extraordinary man. Turgeniev said so truly about him that he was not endowed with the defects necessary to become a great writer. He was devoid of the most necessary defect: he completely lacked intellectual pride. He was indifferent to what people thought of him.

It was Nicholas who fascinated the other children with his endless stories of the "Ant Brothers" and who created the myth of the "Green Stick", according to which the secret which would make all human beings happy, eliminate all sickness, unpleasantness and quarrels, was known to him and was written on the green stick, which he buried along "the road at the edge of the precipice in the old wood" at Yasnaya Polyana. It is significant that all his life Tolstoy devoted most of his time to trying to discover this secret and expressed a wish to be buried at that spot in the old wood where Nicholas has buried the secret. As an old

43 "Thou" would be the customary address. "You" suggests profoundest respect, almost veneration.
man, Tolstoy wrote:

How I believed in the existence of this green stick on which was written that which would destroy all evil in human beings and give them the great blessing. And so I believe now that this truth does exist and it will be revealed to human beings and bring fulfilment of its promise.45

Tolstoy's second brother, Dmitri, also came under the same influence for Tolstoy says:

I don't know what prompted him to take such an early interest in religion, but from the first year at the University this life began. Religious aspirations naturally directed him towards the church and as with everything else he went to excess. He began to fast, attend the services and became very exacting towards himself. He possessed the precious quality of character which I suspected in my mother, and which I discovered in my brother Nicholas, and which I totally lacked -- the quality of being completely indifferent to the opinions of others... Throughout my entire life, and until this very day46 I could never get rid of the concern I had for other people's opinions of me.47

Tolstoy goes on to say that while he, and especially his brother Sergei were always anxious to be comme il faut, Dmitri was untidy and even dirty in appearance. He did not dance and refused even to learn; would pay no social visits, and wore only a student's uniform. Instead of attending the fashionable University Church he invariably attended the one attached to the Kazan gaol where there was an extraordinarily devout and strict priest with whom he struck up a strong friendship. But what was more

45 1906
46 loc. cit.
amazing was that he befriended a wretched young girl, a product of incest in a well-known family, who somehow found refuge at Yasnaya Polyana and later moved with the family to Kazan.

She was a pitiful cringing creature ... her face was swollen as if it had been stung by bees, her eyes were narrow slits under puffy shiny hairless brows; her yellowish cheeks, nose and lips were also swollen; she spoke with difficulty; in summer flies sat on her face unnoticed by her ... a revolting smell always emanated from her person. It was this girl that Dmitri befriended. He visited her, talked to her, read to her. But we were so morally insensitive that we laughed at him. But he was so morally superior, so heedless of our opinions, that he never by word or hint even suggested that what he was doing was good. He merely did it. And this was not a whim for he continued seeing her during our entire stay at Kazan.48

Although all the Tolstoy children found it hard to re-adjust themselves to life in the world after this intensely spiritual background at Yasnaya Polyana, Dmitri never managed and perished in the process.

I think it was when I was in the Caucasus that this sudden transformation occurred in Dmitri. He began to drink, smoke, and squander his money. How it happened I don't know for I had lost contact with him ... However, even in this life he remained as always the same serious religious man. He bought out of a brothel the prostitute Masha, the first woman he had known and lived with her. But he did not live long. I think it was not so much the unhealthy life he led for a few months in Moscow but rather the inner struggle, the pricks of conscience that suddenly destroyed his previous robust health.49

The early death of Dmitri was, of course, an extreme example of the difficulty of adjustment, but actually not one of the children completely escaped the somewhat shattering experience and not one adjusted normally. His sister, Mary, after an unhappy marriage with her cousin Valerian Tolstoy, and a turbulent love affair with a Swedish viscount with whom she spent several exotic years in Morocco, ended her life as a nun at the Shamardino Convent. Even the staid and until then utterly "comme il faut" Sergei, shocked Tula society and earned the lifelong detestation of his sister-in-law, Sophia Tolstoy, by breaking off his engagement with the fascinating 17 year old Tatyana Behrs rather than abandon the illiterate gypsy woman by whom he had had several children. Considering that Sergei was at that time 40 and completely infatuated with the attractive "besyonok", who had definitely set her cap at the Count, and considering that he was, even more than Tolstoy very proud and conscious of his aristocratic family background there is only one conclusion to be drawn -- the moral issue was decisive. Sophia Tolstoy writes in her diary June 9, 1865:

50 All the children, whom he adopted to make them legitimate, had tragic lives. The daughters brought both sorrow and social disgrace to their father.

51 The nickname Leo Tolstoy admiringly bestowed on Tatyana, meaning "little devil". Tatyana was the model for Natasha Rostov in War and Peace.

52 When he became engaged to Tatyana, the gypsy woman made not the slightest trouble. In fact she said that she had been happy with Sergei, she could now look after herself and she would take absolutely no financial assistance from him.
The other day everything was decided, Tanya and Seryozha are going to be married. It is a joy to look at them and her great happiness delights me ... they are walking in the garden and I played the role of go-between ... I love Seryozha for Tanya's sake ... The wedding is to be in twenty days.

On July 12, Sophia writes:

Seryozha has deceived Tanya. He has acted as a complete scoundrel. A whole month has passed in ceaseless anguish for Tanya. This charming, poetical, talented creature is perishing. She is showing symptoms of consumption and I am desolate ... My detestation for S. is boundless but I will try to have my revenge ... She loved him so ... The gypsy was more precious to him.53

But Sophia Tolstoy did not understand. Actually Sergei felt that his marriage with the gypsy was such degradation that for years he barely left his room and lived in complete isolation. His children brought him further humiliation and misery. He lived and died a desperate miserable man. Surely there is a strong parallel here with the actions of Dmitri. Only a sense of moral responsibility could have compelled him to make the decision and take the step that ruined his life. His liaison with the gypsy had been quite "comme il faut", but marriage to her meant social ostracism by local society. This he felt bitterly, for he had a passion for hunting which necessitated social gatherings, balls, meets etc. But after his marriage all this stopped, for his moral principles were as little appreciated by the local squirarchy as they were by Sophia Tolstoy.

53 Diary of Sophia Tolstoy 1860-1891, p.91
In the light of what has been said about the moral and religious atmosphere which prevailed at Yasnaya Polyana during the childhood of the Tolstoys -- the atmosphere which was so closely associated with that extraordinary personality --, Countess Mary, and which not only continued after her death but was actually intensified under Countess Osten-Saken, it is impossible to overestimate the influence of Countess Mary on all with whom she came in contact directly or, as in the case of her children, indirectly. Paradoxically, her influence was so great on Leo Tolstoy, who never had any personal memory of her, that he was never able to free himself from her influence. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that all that was best in him, not only as an artist but as a man and especially as a moralist and philosopher is traceable to her influence. Possibly it was because he could never free himself from it that he developed such an uncanny power to influence others. Tolstoy himself was well aware of this formative influence in his life.

Not only his own life was influenced one might even say inspired and directed by a woman but that of his brothers and sisters also. For Tolstoy to say that women "should stop ruining" life is tantamount to a complete negation of his own tremendous achievements for it is no exaggeration to say that, without this background and the influence exercised by his mother, he might never have become the moralist, the seer, and the living conscience of the world. That which in the case of Sergei and Dmitri involved their personal circumscribed relations and individual conscience
in the case of Tolstoy was expanded to embrace the eternal problems that confront mankind.

It is obvious that, all his life, Tolstoy was haunted by a vision of a mother image which he saw reflected in Aunt Tanya and in Nicholas and symbolized by the "green stick". The hatred for women that so many people noticed in Tolstoy and which he expressed clearly himself may be traced to the fact that all his life he attempted to measure every woman against the ideal picture of the mother he had never known. In this, perhaps, lies the explanation of his otherwise inexplicable remark at the age of 71 that, for the last 70 years, his opinion of women had been lowering. It also explains why he was so attracted to women and yet so ever increasingly antipathetic to them.
CHAPTER II

No discussion of the women who influenced Leo Tolstoy would be complete without the inclusion of his distant relative, Tatyana Alexandrovna Yergolskaya, who, after the marriage of Nicholas Tolstoy to Mary Volkonsky, moved to Yasnaya Polyana with the rest of his family.

After the death of Countess Osten-Saken in 1841, when Tolstoy was 13, his aunt Pelagea Yushkov became legal guardian of the children and this was the only period of her life that Yergolskaya spent away from them. As soon as Tolstoy came into possession of Yasnaya Polyana he invited her to return to the old house where she lived till her death in 1874.

"Aunt Tatyana Alexandrovna had the greatest influence on my life", wrote Tolstoy in his Reminiscences. Perhaps Tolstoy is right in saying this for in his mind the influence of his mother's legend had fused with that of Aunt Tanya, who brought him up and who was one of the main sources of information about his mother. Indeed, she was largely responsible for the legend of the saintly mother:

She taught me the spiritual delights of love. She taught this to me not in words but by her entire being -- she injected me with love. I saw how happy she was in loving others and I thus grasped the happiness of love ...

54 It must be noted that this description of Aunt Tanya seems to correspond to that of his mother, found not only in Reminiscences but in War and Peace. The two beings, the dead and the living, seem to merge in his mind.
taught me the delights of an unhurried solitary life. I remember the long autumn and winter evenings spent with her. These evenings will always remain the most marvelous memories. To these evenings I am indebted for my best thoughts, for the best impulses of my soul.56

Tolstoy himself acknowledges the tremendous influence that Aunt Tanya had on him. Not only did she bring him up and take the place of his mother but she was, for Tolstoy, a living proof that happiness can be found in utter self-abnegation and complete self-sacrifice to loved ones.

The story of her self-sacrifice is the story of her life. Her first great sacrifice was made when she was a young, vivacious, unusually attractive girl. Nicholas Tolstoy fell madly in love with her and, to the horror of his family, proposed to this penniless girl. Though desperately in love with him, in fact he was her beloved, one might almost say, her idol all her life, Tanya refused him because she could not bring him the dowry he needed. She stepped aside, making it possible for him to retrieve the family fortune through a marriage with the heiress, Princess Mary Volkonsky. But that was not the end of the story. Six years after Mary died and after Tanya had been lovingly caring for Nicholas' children, she wrote a laconic little memo (found after her death tucked away in a little old bead embroidered reticule):

57 Again the picture parallels that of his mother, Countess Mary.
Today (August 16, 1836) Nicholas made two extraordinary proposals to me; that I should marry him and care for his orphan children, never leaving them. The first I refused and the second I agreed to fulfil as long as I live.58

Where can one find a parallel to this? A still comparatively young woman proposed to by the man with whom she has been, and still is, madly in love, refuses him now when he is free, and, thanks to her first refusal, rich, simply because this marriage might spoil the sweet idyllic relationship which already exists between her and his children. What this sacrifice cost her is vividly revealed in another note written the year Nicholas died (1837):

There are wounds that never heal. I do not speak of the sorrows that filled my childhood. The loss of Nicholas caused me the most living, burning, painful sorrow -- it tore my heart.59

As a young penniless girl, living on the charity of distant relatives, the Tolstoys, Tanya Yergolskaya by her beauty and cleverness had attracted the attention of a wealthy Kazan noble, V.I. Yushkov. Inspite of the fact that there could be no dowry, an unheard-of thing in those days, he proposed. But Tanya, loving only Nicholas, sacrificed her whole brilliant future by refusing him. Though marrying Nicholas' sister Pelagea, he always remained in love with Tanya. For this Pelagea never forgave her rival60 and when she became the legal guardian of

Nicholas' children took her revenge by inflicting a wound where it would really hurt. Regardless of all that Tanya had done for the children, Aunt Pelagea (or Aunt Pauline as she was called) decided that the boys were to be removed from Moscow to Kazan to attend the new University there and to be under her personal supervision, which in fact amounted to complete neglect. Tolstoy throws some light on what this separation meant not only to Aunt Tanya but to himself:

I cry -- why do I cry thinking about you? These are the tears of joy. I am happy in the realization of your love for us. No matter what misfortunes will overtake me or befall me I shall never consider myself totally unhappy as long as you live.

(It is significant that the real crisis in Tolstoy's life came immediately after the death of Aunt Tanya, 1874):

Do you remember how we parted in the Iberian chapel when we were going to Kazan, then, as if through inspiration, at the very moment of separation I understood what you were for me and although I was still a child I managed to convey to you, by my tears and a few disjointed words what I felt for you. I have never ceased to love you but the feeling I experienced before the Iberian Virgin and that of today is quite different. The one today is stronger, more sublime than at any other time ... only now ... I understand you, your boundless love for us and your sublime soul.

Undoubtedly Aunt Tanya was Tolstoy's guardian angel. She gave him a deep feeling of the true nature of happiness; she gave him a truly happy childhood filled with love and security; she

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Collected Works, Vol.21, p.120.
inspired him and encouraged him in all his undertakings including his literary work. Aunt Tanya, through her unbounded faith in his genius and in his destiny, infected Tolstoy from his earliest childhood with her belief in him so that he became convinced of his special destiny. She did not at first think of him as becoming a great literary figure, she merely saw him with adjutant's epaulettes and a brilliant military career.

Yes my dear Aunt, Tolstoy writes, how I hoped that your prophecy should be fulfilled. I dream of nothing but becoming an adjutant to such a man as he, a man whom I love and respect from the depth of my heart.

At times, in her fondest dreams she even saw him as adjutant to the Emperor himself! Only, after Tolstoy became disillusioned with his military career and after it became plain even to Aunt Tanya that his very character, devoid of tact and aggressively argumentative, excluded him from the advancement she had envisaged for him, did she urge upon him a literary career and pressed him to try his hand at novels.

You remember, dearest Auntie, the advice you gave me to write novels --, so, I am following your advice and the occupation to which I referred in my letter was literary work. I do not know whether anything which I write will be published but this work fascinates me and I have got too involved in it to drop it.

62 Collected Works, Vol.21, p.120.
63 Prince Gorchakov.
64 Collected Works, Vol.21, p.135.
It is impossible to overestimate the practical help she gave him through engaging in a correspondence of such magnitude that his letters to her, alone, fill a small volume. The correspondence was, at her insistence carried on in French and he formed the habit of describing his moods and interpreting his experiences. When he was suffering from remorse after a spell of gambling, he eased his soul in his letters to her. When he was lonely in a strange hostile world and suffering from disillusionment and despair, he fled back to the warmth of her sympathy and understanding and bathed himself in her love and approbation, always so generously given, so lavishly bestowed. He confided to her his bitter disappointment at missing the George's Cross:

I am perpetually pursued by misfortune in everything I undertake. During this campaign I had twice the chance of being cited for the St. George's Cross and I couldn't get it because some accursed documents arrived a few days late ... I can tell you quite frankly, that of all military honours I was driven by my ambition to desire nothing but this little cross. You will understand that I hid the vexation that this loss caused me not only from strangers but from brother Nicholas. I hid it also from you for the same reason but now I am obliged to tell you this.65

But Aunt Tanya was not only his guardian angel but also, undoubtedly his evil genius, for she made him a supreme egoist, a man who in spite of his efforts to the contrary could love no-one but himself. Even when he appeared to love others

65 Collected Works, Vol.21, p.126.
he loved them through himself and for the sake of himself. Even his "dearest Aunt Tanya" for whom he professed the greatest love and of whom he writes: "I cannot recollect a single case when she hurt anyone and I never met anyone who did not love her",66 was unkindly treated by Tolstoy, the selfish egoist of her own making. To pay his gambling debts he sells to be wrecked her old home at Yasnaya Polyana. Her home, in which she is now alone with only her sweet memories of the past, of Mary and her beloved Nicholas, of her second supreme sacrifice, of the little orphans that she had lovingly brought up. To Tolstoy it is merely an old house with some cash value, salvage value, and of use to him at that time. He solved his conscience by remarking airily: "The guest house is big enough for me and my aunt." Again, while being extravagantly self-indulgent, he refuses her the little sums of pocket-money which she needed only for her charities or to keep her room stocked with such simple dainties as candy, dates or raisins -- dainties that she kept to treat him, to spoil him further, on the rare occasions when he visited her. But from her, only a sigh (as Tolstoy records in 1903): "Still I cannot remember without horror my refusal to her."67 Never a word of reproach, only boundless love, self-sacrifice and belief in him. Even when she is old, her whole life spent for him, and now, occupying a good room in the new Manor house at Yasnaya Polyana, and thinking only of him, she urges him with tears in her eyes to move her so that when she dies, which she fears will be soon, the good room will not be haunted by

66 ibid, p.173
67 ibid, p.172.
unpleasant memories for Tolstoy. What does he do? Whom does he consider? Events speak for themselves -- she was moved. But actually Aunt Tanya had no-one to blame but herself for her self-sacrificing love extended only to the Tolstoy family and she implicitly expected all others to sacrifice themselves also for the Tolstoys. What an effect this had on the children, and in particular on Leo!

Although the peasants loved her, and it is obvious that she was not unkind to them, we learn from Squire's Morning and also from Father that Tolstoy returning from the University of Kazan inspired with the desire to improve the lot of the peasants was utterly aghast when he discovered the poverty, misery and degradation existing in the village of Yasnaya Polyana. Aunt Tanya must have known of these conditions, but out of love for Leo never told him of them and was even strongly opposed to any minor reforms that he contemplated on the grounds that they might diminish her darling's income or, perish the thought, his patrimony!

To her, serfdom was serfdom, and the serfs were there to satisfy each and every whim of the master, including his sexual appetite. It is well-known how free was Sergei, the elder brother, with the serf girls and what an effect his example had on the young Leo. There is an entry in Tolstoy's diary, ironically enough made at the height of his reforming zeal, in which he mentions beckoning to "something in pink" which was admitted through the back door and which on intimate contact ultimately disgusted and disappointed him. Unfortunately the "something in
pink" was too busy earning her bread in the sweat of her brow to leave a record of her impressions of intimate contact with the master. And Aunt Tanya saw nothing wrong, in fact it was quite natural, a part of the serf's obligations. She would, however, have preferred, as Tolstoy records, that he should form a healthy liaison with a decent married woman of his own class. When, disgusted with the serf's distrust of him, he decamped to Moscow to resume his life of gambling and debauchery, (this time in no uncertainty as to the miserable condition of his serfs) he made some astounding resolutions recorded in his diary in 1850:

- to get into a circle of gamblers and gamble profitably, to gain admittance into the highest circles of society and under certain conditions to marry, to get a lucrative government post.

The loving and unselfish Aunt Tanya would certainly not reproach him for making or carrying out these resolutions.

Aunt Tanya was largely responsible not only for his egoism but also for his undoubtedly split personality. She instilled in him an almost pathological craving to be loved but at the same time deprived him, by her incredible spoiling, of the necessary qualities that would draw to him this love from others. Had Leo not been a genius, and had he not found an outlet in his creative work, he would probably have been crushed by the realities of life just as his brother Dmitri was, who perished unable to reconcile his desire to be loved and to do good with his utterly ungovernable temper and unbridled passions.
Aunt Tanya gave all the Tolstoy children a beautiful vision of the paradise, which she had entered through the magic key of unselfish love, but they were unable to follow her for each child was brought up to accept love, not to suppress selfish egoism. Often we see Leo attempting to use Aunt Tanya's 'key' but each time the effort is defeated by a resurgence of egoism. When Tolstoy left the warm love nest that Aunt Tanya had built for him at Yasnaya Polyana he felt like a 'featherless fledgling' fallen to the ground and the world into which he fell he found cold and heartless and peopled with selfish egoists similar to himself. Both Tolstoy's diary and correspondence during his period in Moscow and St. Petersburg (around 1849 to 1852) reveal the struggle of his split personality. He alternates periods of self-castigation, remorse and the singing of Moleben's before the ikon of our Lady of Iberia begging her help in fighting temptation, and resolutions to mend his ways and be good, with bouts of greater and greater dissipation and debauchery, until, hounded by creditors, Tolstoy escapes to the Caucasus, but, since he is unable to escape from himself, the inward struggle continues.

Yergolskaya's influence on Tolstoy was perhaps more far-reaching than that of any other woman except his wife, Sophia; for it was she who helped to mold both the man and the creative artist; the egoist and the moralist. It is significant that Tolstoy's greatest mental crisis followed close on the death of this extraordinary woman.
CHAPTER III

From the many women who played a significant role in the life of Tolstoy, it is impossible to omit Valeria Arsenyev. For some reason, most of his biographers dismiss this episode in his life as of little significance and treat it accordingly. It is usually thought of as a passing infatuation which subsided after a short separation occasioned by Tolstoy's trip to St. Petersburg, undertaken, ostensibly, to test his feelings. Yet his relationship with Valeria produced not only a fairly lengthy correspondence between them in the summer and fall of 1856, but also many letters about her to other people, particularly, Aunt Tatyana. These letters shed an extraordinarily interesting light on Tolstoy and his outlook on life and marriage at this period. They are particularly revealing on his attitude towards marriage and prove that his views were already formed by that time. So that, even admitting that Valeria did not influence Tolstoy to any great extent, she certainly must be credited with providing him with a marvellous opportunity for self-revelation -- revelation that can be described as more interesting than flattering.

But what were the facts of this relationship between Valeria and Tolstoy? The Arsenyev family, consisting of three daughters and a son, lived at their estate of Soudakovo which lay eight versts (about 5 miles) from Yasnaya Polyana on the road to Tula. Upon the death of the father in 1854, Tolstoy was
appointed guardian to the children in compliance with the terms of the will. On June 14, 1856, Tolstoy, who was visited by his childhood friend D.A. Dyakov, wrote in his diary: "my best friend -- he's so charming" and adds that Dyakov has advised him to marry his neighbour and ward Valeria Arsenyev, the eldest of the three daughters, a pretty twenty-year old girl. Tolstoy apparently took this advice seriously for the very next day, June 15, he paid a visit to Sudakovo and continued visiting frequently till August 12. How seriously he took this affair can be seen by the entries in his diary that summer. He records his observations meticulously -- observations which were carried out in a careful almost clinical study of her character so as to decide on her suitability for the role of his future wife. His recorded impressions, possibly influenced by his moods, are so contradictory that it is hard to reconcile them with the legend of Tolstoy the seer, who could penetrate into the inner recesses of the soul. He writes:

She is devoid of backbone and fire, resembling home made noodles. But she is kind and her smile is painfully submissive...V. is charming ... She played exceedingly well ... charming ... V. prattled about dresses and the coronation. She appears frivolous. It seems this is not a passing interest but a permanent passion ... I talked little to her, but the less I talked the more she impressed me ... V. was no good at all. I think no more of it ... V. in a white dress, very charming. I have spent one of the most delightful days of my life. Do I seriously love her? Can her love be permanent? These are the two questions which I would like to answer but cannot ... V. is rottenly brought up -- ignorant, if not stupid ... V. is a pleasant girl but doesn't appeal to me in the least ... V. exceedingly charming and our relations
are unconstrained and delightful. If only they could always remain thus ... V. is more attractive than ever but her frivolity and absence of interest in everything serious is appalling. I am afraid she had a character which precludes even the love of children.68

At this time Tolstoy was visited by his elder brother Sergei. On being told of the affair with Valeria he, with his usual scepticism, poured cold water on the whole thing, but this did not dampen Tolstoy’s enthusiasm. Two days later he paid another visit to Valeria and then writes in his diary: "She appears to possess an active loving nature. I spent a happy evening." But the next entry records opposite feelings:

V. displeased me exceedingly and spoke stupidly ... it seems she is utterly stupid... V. was in a state of confusion, highly affected and stupid ... V. inspired in me a feeling of curiosity and gratitude ... We talked of marriage. She is intelligent and extraordinarily kind.69

On August 12 Valeria went to Moscow to attend the coronation of Alexander II and Tolstoy went to see her off. On his return he wrote: "She was extraordinarily simple and charming".70

Most of his impressions as a result of his visits appear favourable and two days later on Aug.16, after four days of absence he wrote: "All these days I think more and more of dear little Valeria", and the next day he writes to her admit-

68 N.N. Gusev Leo N. Tolstoy-Materials 1855-1869, Moscow Academy of Sciences, 1957, p.79.
69 ibid, p.80
70 loc. cit.
ting that his sole object is to make her reply. This letter is permeated with gentle humour and light irony for he speaks in the same breath of the extreme importance of being "presented at court" and "buying some lace". However, to his chagrin, Valeria neglected to reply, but she wrote to Tatyana Yergolskaya about the whirl of excitement in Moscow with the balls and parades. What particularly hurt Tolstoy was her account of watching a review of troops with some other ladies and "two adjutants of the Emperor". This shaft went home, for earlier in his life it had been one of his cherished but unrealized ambitions to become an adjutant to Prince Gorchakov, but Tolstoy never aspired to the exalted position of adjutant to the Emperor. Valeria also complained that her gala dress, the "colour of red-currant", had suffered in the crush. Tolstoy promptly wrote to her again, a hurt and excited letter:

Is it possible that some "currants", forsooth, and the beau-monde, and Emperor's adjutants will forever remain for you the acme of contentment? ... Knowing me you must realize how your kind letter would hurt. Can you doubt that all this is most distasteful? ... To love high society but not the men is dishonest and even dangerous for in these circles one meets more reprobates than in any other ... As to Emperor's adjutants -- I believe there are about 40 of them and I know for a fact that only two are not scoundrels and these are fools.

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72 In the Tolstoy Museum in USSR, there are 10 unpublished letters, all written in French from Valeria to Tatyana Yergolskaya.

73 Throughout War and Peace Tolstoy is particularly bitter when he makes any reference to an adjutant.

74 Gusev - Materials p.81.
He then tries to shame her by contrasting the simple pleasures of country life such as hunting, with all the futile empty pleasures of courtiers. He concludes, "Wishing you all sorts of exalted pleasures, I remain your most obedient and most unpleasant servant."

It appears that for some time Tolstoy could not get over the unfavourable impression made by Valeria's letter to his aunt. For twelve days there are no entries in his diary but on Sept. 1 he writes "I am thinking of Valeria with great pleasure" and on Sept. 6, having visited Sudakovo while hunting he again thought of her with great pleasure and wrote to her:

I am tormented with the thought that I have written to you without permission and that what I wrote was stupid, rude, and bad.

He begs her to write a few words to assure him she is not angry. He urges her to enjoy herself and adds there is nothing ironical in this statement.

To this letter Valeria could not help replying. She assured him she was not annoyed with her "charming neighbour" for moralizing and that she always appreciated his advice. But she does resent that he misinterpreted her letter to Tatyana Yergolskaya and disliked his reprimand concerning her vanity. She continues that she is caught up in a whirl of social activities, is having piano lessons from Mortier, and is tremendously looking forward to the balls to be given by the Austrian and French Ambassadors. What impression this letter had on Tolstoy can be gathered from the fact that there is absolutely no reference to it in his diary.
On Sept. 21 Valeria returned home and Tolstoy paid her a visit. "V. is charming but, alas! utterly stupid" he records. On Sept. 25, he writes: "V. is charming but has a small mind -- altogether trivial." On Sept. 28, he spent the night at Sudakovo and notes that that evening Valeria appealed to him but the next morning comes this telling entry in his diary: "I woke up in an ill-humour. V. is not endowed for either practical or intellectual life." That day Valeria told him about her piano teacher in Moscow and playfully hinted that she was in love with him. This remark provoked the following entry in the diary: "I felt insulted. I was ashamed both for myself and for her. For the first time I experienced for her some sort of passion." When he got home he added: "V. fearfully empty. Devoid of principle and as cold as ice. Hence her endless infatuations."

This vacillation, blowing hot and cold on his infatuation continued until, unexpectedly on Oct. 24, Tolstoy using an allegorical story in which he is called Khrapovitski and she Mlle. Dembitsky, makes a veiled proposal of marriage to her. It is clear that Valeria understands the allegory and in the morning appeared "shyly flushed and happy". He records he felt "delighted and disgusted". The same evening he accompanies her to a ball at Tula and makes a laconic entry in his diary "I am almost in love with her" -- the next day this is changed and he writes "I love her". This last entry he shows to Valeria who tore out the page as a keepsake.

75 N. Gusev, Materials, p. 85
From now on they were considered an engaged couple and treated as such by the neighbourhood. On Oct. 28, Tolstoy writes in his diary, "Inspite of myself I have become some sort of a bridegroom. This enrages me." Then follows another long series of entries favourable and unfavourable to Valeria. "One cannot talk to her of anything. Her mental limitations terrify me." This clearly shows what importance Tolstoy attached to finding a wife, if not his mental equal, at least capable of being a helpmate in literary work.

On Oct. 31, Tolstoy again accompanies Valeria to a ball at Tula and again finds her charming. But after the ball he had supper with her family and at 3 A.M. suddenly left for Moscow. On Nov. 2nd he writes to Valeria, telling her he has no doubt of their happiness, but warns her of the tremendous effort at self-improvement that each must make and without which there can be no happiness. He makes it quite clear what he means by self-improvement: To learn to play well difficult music; to be able to appreciate poetry or an artistic production; and above all to do good to someone and thereby force this person to be grateful to God for the existence of the doer.

This will be a source of delight to you but now you know there is a man who will love you more and more, even to infinity, not only for yourself but for everything good that you may acquire. A man who loves you with the most powerful, tender, and eternal love ... God, himself, has prompted me to leave Yasnaya Polyena in order to test my feelings. I could not have done it. It was He who guided me for the sake of our personal happiness ... Christ be with you! May He help us to understand and love each other well.76

76 ibid, p.85.
Tolstoy remained in Moscow for only five days but just before his departure he heard from a distant relative, Prince Volkonsky, some current Moscow scandal about Valeria and the pianist, Mortier, with whom she corresponded and was head-over-heels in love. On Nov. 5th he records in his diary how horrified he is by the "flightiness, fickleness, and empty headedness" of the girl with whom he planned to join his life.

It is obvious that Tolstoy has a double standard of morality for men and women. He is shocked at a breath of scandal and a quite unfounded rumour about his fiancee, yet he, himself, throughout this period according to the entries in his diary was having illicit relations with the wife of one of his serfs who had been sent, presumably at his orders, into the army. And this is the man who talks of high morality, self-improvement, and doing good so that people will thank God for one's existence. What a distance between Tolstoy's theory and practice! To take advantage of the institution of serfdom and his power to send any man into the army and then to gratify his appetite with the wife of the serf he had sent safely out of his way for twenty-five years is hardly according to his moral sentiments. 77

In St. Petersburg he established himself more or less permanently for he rented a flat and carried on a lengthy correspondence with Valeria, which is extant, and which is a careful

77 It is interesting to note that the Tolstoy materials collected by N. Gusev for the period 1855-69, and covering some 900 pages of close print, published by the Soviet Academy, omit any mention of Tolstoy's numerous pecadillos with his serf girls or in the brothels of Moscow.
exposition of his views on marriage. The reader is left with no doubt that Tolstoy looked on himself as engaged to Valeria. He continues to use the names Khrapovitsky and Dembitsky and draws up detailed plans for their married life. He goes to great pains to calculate their combined incomes and warns her that it will not suffice for them to live all the year round in the capital, though he does concede that they could spend a few months of each year there. However, they will have to live in a simple way in a fifth floor four-room flat giving up all expensive entertainment. He paints a picture of simple conjugal bliss brightened by contacts with artists and literary friends. But always, in his letters, he is the moralist, the spiritual and intellectual uplifter, and he leaves no doubt as to who is to be uplifted and who is to be the model to be emulated. Here is deep irony for the well-informed reader who knows of the dissipated life that Tolstoy led at this time, with his gambling, drinking, and frequent visits to brothels. However, he seems to be still in love with Valeria for, on Nov.9 he writes a letter full of love and tenderness. Still he is tortured with doubts and asks her anxiously:

Do you not belong to those people who all their lives have no delights and sufferings -- moral, of course ... Often it seems to me you are such a person and this causes me great pain.

He begs her to tell him frankly if she is such a one, but concludes, "Whatever you are, you are a darling and you have a truly charming nature." 78 He continues rather pathetically:

Whenever something happens to me, whether it be serious or not -- some set-back, some prick to my self-esteem etc. I at the same second remember you and say to myself: "All this is nonsense -- up there is a girl, and nothing matters." Such a feeling I have never experienced for any other woman.  

He then exhorts her to work:

Because work is the first condition for a good moral life, and therefore, happiness ... I know this because I have not only felt this but reached this conclusion through suffering. I am convinced the only possible true, eternal, and highest form of happiness is acquired by three means: work, self-sacrifice, and love. This conviction I carry in my soul although I put it into practice perhaps for only two hours during a whole year. But if you would give yourself totally to this conviction, totally, completely ... imagine two beings joined together by this conviction -- but this is supreme happiness ... This feeling, however cannot be inspired by someone else one must arrive at it through independent inner struggle. Words are of no avail. The inspiration comes from God himself in due time.

Six times in one letter does Tolstoy appeal to his beloved to write to him -- "Write to me", "Write to me for God's sake every day", "Write to me for God's sake at once", etc.

During the night of Nov.12, he writes another long letter, again referring to himself as Khrapovitsky and his fiancee as Dembitsky, and describes himself as a "morally old man" who has perpetrated in his youth endless follies, but who now has found his true road and calling in literature. He has profoundest contempt for high society for in this dissipated life perish all good,
honest, and pure thoughts. What he truly loves is a quiet moral family life. "Her ideals are quite different: she finds her happiness in balls, naked shoulders, her own carriage, diamonds, acquaintance with chamberlains and adjutants generals etc." It follows that Khrapovitsky and Dembitsky have opposite inclinations, but they love each other. How, then, can they live together? They must make concessions to each other and he "whose inclinations are the least moral" must yield the more. Khrapovitsky is prepared to spend all his life in the country where he will have three occupations: loving Madam Dembitsky and caring for her happiness, literature, and managing the estate. This latter task will consist of "fulfilling his duty to human beings entrusted to him ... Mlle. Dembitsky, however, dreams otherwise." She dreams of life in St. Petersburg, attending thirty balls in a season, receiving her friends at home, and driving along Nevsky Prospect in her carriage. He concludes with a desperate appeal, "Whatever happens for the sake of the Living God, for the memory of your father, and for everything that you hold sacred, I entreat you, be frank with me, totally frank."

On Nov. 19, he writes a very significant letter in reply to a good letter from her. It seems to antedate some of the views associated with his conversion that occurred much later, in 1880:

My main characteristic is complete scepticism which is due to an inclination to doubt everything in this world, but I do not doubt that

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*Naked shoulders* exhibited particularly by married women were very obnoxious to Tolstoy. Later it proved to be a source of considerable friction between himself and his wife, Sophia.
good is good ... by this I mean the moral
good, i.e. love for one's neighbour, poetry,
beauty. This is the only thing that I have
never doubted and which I worship always
although I hardly ever practice it."

He adds that his attraction for his betrothed is mainly due to
the fact that she appears to him capable of being good in that
sense of the word.

On Nov. 20, after having received a somewhat empty
letter from Valeria, Tolstoy notes in his diary,

She betrays her undeveloped but loving
nature. But there is hope that under my
influence she will learn how to think.

He tries to impress upon her the importance of developing her
will-power. To do this she must strive against her bad habits
and do what she ought to do. He then proceeds to outline a whole
program of their future married life. Five months they will
spend in town and seven in the country. The winter months will
be spent alternatively at St. Petersburg and abroad, so that
neither one will feel out of the swim and become provincial, which
would be a misfortune. He explains what he means by being in the
swim -- being well-informed about all noteworthy new books,
keeping up with European politics, and knowing the most advanced
contemporary Russian ideas. When in St. Petersburg they will not
have fashionable friends but rather intellectual, enlightened,
and especially good people. While in the country Khrapovitsky's
main object will be to make his peasants happy. He closes:
... two o'clock in the morning! I am so happy in the thought that you exist and that you love me. I don't know what would happen if you should suddenly tell me you love me no longer.

On Nov. 23, having received a "marvellous, charming, and splendid" letter from Valeria, he writes:

I conclude from your letter that you not only love me but that you begin to understand the seriousness of life, to love the good, to delight in observing yourself, and to go forward along the road to perfection. The road is endless and continues even in the life to come. It is a charming road on which one can find happiness in this life.

Having concluded this dissertation on the true meaning of life he switches to the true meaning of motherhood, saying:

The true destiny of a woman is to be a mother but not a mere reproduction machine.81 Do you understand the difference in meaning? ... In order to be a true mother one needs development.

He concludes with words of tender endearment. In answer to this Tolstoy received two letters in quick succession which brought him grave doubts as to the depths of her feelings and resulted in the following entry in his diary: "She fools herself. I see this through and through. This is boring." He replies to her without any effort to hide his apprehension as to the consequence of their marriage:

81 Tolstoy uses the Russian word "matka" which is mother in the sense of dam or animal mother.
I fear marriage so much because I look upon it as a most serious step. Some people about to be married think: 'Well if I don't find happiness so what? my whole life is ahead of me.' This thought never crosses my mind. I stake everything upon this card. If I do not find complete happiness I will ruin everything, my talent, my heart. I will become an alcoholic, a gambler, a thief if I do not find courage to cut my throat.

This letter marked the turning point in his relations with Valeria. He himself is now completely convinced that marriage with her would lead to the consequences he enumerates. For the first time, in an entry in his diary, he uses, in reference to his fiancee, the contemptuous diminutive "Valka". His letters to her become progressively colder and are filled with pedantic moralising and finally provoke her to express her resentment and forbid him to write further, for his letters are nothing but "lectures" and "bore her to death". On Dec. 1 Tolstoy received a letter from Aunt Tanya82 in which she advises him to bring his affair with Valeria to a speedy conclusion. He replies on Dec. 5:

After I left, and for a week, it seemed to me I was in love as people say, but with my keen imagination this is not difficult. But now, especially when I began to work hard, I would like very much indeed to say, I am in love, but this is not so. The only feeling I still have for her is one of gratitude for her love.83

On Dec. 7 he writes to Valeria a letter which could leave no doubt in her mind as to his real feelings for her. It is pos-

82 This letter is lost.
83 Collected Works. Vol. 21, p. 147
sible that Tolstoy was actually seeking a way out of his predicament, he may even have been trying to provoke his fiancee into breaking off the engagement, for he wrote: "It is impossible to love each other when we have a different outlook upon life."

There followed a bitter outburst against her intention of appearing in society after marriage. He tells her that if she pursues her intention,

he would be obliged to associate with people whom he cannot respect, with whom it is not only boring but disgusting to meet ... he would be obliged to waste his time, change his mode of living, sacrifice that which is best in him -- his literary work ... There are only two choices, either you must make an effort to catch up with me or I must regress. But I cannot regress because I know that ahead of me lies that which is better, brighter, happier ... Go as fast as you can, I will help you as much as I can. It will be hard for you but with what satisfaction, with what happiness, and with what love (provided all this means anything to you) will we follow the road to the end.84

It is obvious that Tolstoy is neither hopeful nor enthusiastic about the prospects of following this road together. He is trying to sugar-coat the bitter pill. If his intention really was to provoke his betrothed into breaking the engagement, he succeeded. For even before receiving the last letter, Valeria told him his letters, consisting of nothing but "reprimanding lectures bored her to death!" Tolstoy's remarks in his diary seem to bear out the supposition that he was seeking to end the whole affair for he writes that he is pleased the tedious affair is ended.

84 N. Gusev, Materials, p.96.
On Dec. 12 he writes to Valeria for the last time:

I gathered from your letter how far we are apart from each other ... my tenderest and dearest thoughts that I write to you, almost with tears in my eyes, find no echo in your heart. If there is nothing in common between us, love and marriage would bring only suffering ... Try to forgive me and let us remain friends. 85

On Dec.13, he writes in his diary:

I am very sad. All night I had nightmares. Some people were killing each other on the floor. Some brown naked woman pressed on my chest and whispered in my ear.

It is clear that Tolstoy was not only disgusted with the whole affair but somewhat ashamed of his conduct. 86 He could not help realizing that he had compromised Valeria, who, to make matters worse, was his young ward. He could not escape being condemned by the staid Tula society, which had very definite views on the obligations of a legal guardian. His dual role as guardian and fiance placed him in a dubious position and made his conduct appear reprehensible. Tolstoy realized that his reputation had not emerged untarnished from this regrettable episode. What was worse he realized that he had deeply wounded his Aunt Tanya -- the being whom, in his own words, he loved "above everything else in the world", and who, living in the district, would be exposed to

85 ibid, p.97
86 Inspite of all the unpleasantness and humiliation that this affair caused Tolstoy, he managed to extract from it something of value. It gave him inspiration for his novelette, The Family Happiness. In it he imagines that his marriage had actually occurred and depicts all the wretched consequences.
the unpleasantness of the local society gossip. Being utterly unable herself to understand the inner workings of Tolstoy's mind, she would find it hard to defend her idol.

It is no wonder that Tolstoy sought a solution of all these unpleasant complications in a precipitous flight abroad. Indeed, his flight was so precipitous that he did not deem it advisable to return to Yasnaya Polyana to say goodbye to his aunt. In a letter dated Jan. 12, 1857, from Moscow, he writes:

My dear Aunt,

I have received my foreign passport. I have come to Moscow to spend a few days with Mashenka and then to go to Yasnaya Polyana to settle my affairs and say good-by to you. But now I have changed my mind, especially on the advice of Mashenka and have decided to spend a week or two with her, and then leave direct for Paris via Warsaw. You will perhaps understand, dear Aunt, why I do not want, or perhaps why I should not, come now to Yasnaya Polyana or rather to Soudakovo. It seems I have behaved very badly towards V. But if I should see her again, it would be even worse. As I have already written to you, I am completely indifferent to her and can no longer deceive either myself or her ... What worries me is that I have hurt this girl and that I won't be able to say goodbye to you before I leave.

On Feb. 22, 1857, writing from Paris, he again returns to this subject:

Judging from your letter, my dearest Aunt, we do not understand each other at all on the subject of Soudakovo. Although I admit I am guilty of inconstancy and that everything could have turned out differently, I still believe that I acted honourably. I never cease telling you I do not know what the feeling was that I felt for

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87 His sister Mary.
the young person, but I do know it was not love. I wanted to test myself. This test showed me that I was mistaken and I wrote this to V. as frankly as I could. Had M'lle V. who wrote to me such a ridiculous letter bothered to remember the whole tenor of my conduct to V., how I attempted to visit her as rarely as possible and how she always pressed me to come more often and to make our relations more intimate. I understand she is angry because that which she wished didn't come to pass (perhaps I regret this even more than she does) but this doesn't give her the right to tell a man, who tried to behave in the best possible way, and who sacrificed much out of fear of making others unhappy, that he is a swine and to persuade others that this is so. I am certain that everyone in Tula thinks that I am a dreadful monster."

This letter illustrates better than anything else what effort it cost Tolstoy to take the course he finally took. At that time he was fearfully sensitive to the opinion of others, especially to that of society. He tells us this himself. Nothing was so important to him as the necessity at all times to behave in a strictly comme il faut way. Especially when his

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39 This refers to Valeria's Italian governess M'lle Vergani who on this occasion had written him a furious letter.

90 In Biryukov's edition of the complete Works of Tolstoy containing this letter there is a footnote after the initial V. which reads: "Leo Nicholaivitch had a romantic affair with a girl called V.A. and relatives thought that he would marry her." This note is strange because in Biryukov's biography of Tolstoy Vol.I, he himself refers to Valeria as Tolstoy's fiancee.

91 This statement is in strange contrast to a passage found in a letter to Aunt Tanya written from Geneva April 17, 1857: "As far as Valeria is concerned I never loved her truly. I was carried away by a bad desire to arouse her love. This gave me a hitherto never experienced delight, but the time that I spent away from her proved to me that I have no desire even to see her, far less to marry her (Compl.Works, Vol.XXI, p.150)

92 Collected Works, Vol.21, p.143.
honor was in anyway involved. Only a year earlier, Tolstoy had challenged Longinov, the critic, to a duel for merely making some unfavourable reflections on Tolstoy as a writer. He also challenged Turgenev over a trifling quarrel. It is, therefore, clear that he suffered intensely from all the gossip, rumours, recriminations and insinuations about his behaviour.

He must, therefore, have had very weighty reasons for taking the course he did which led to such unpleasant consequences. When Tolstoy said,

If I do not find complete happiness, I will ruin everything, my talent, my heart. I will become an alcoholic, a gambler, a thief if I do not find courage to cut my own throat",

he was not merely indulging in rhetoric but was absolutely sincere. The fact that he speaks of "ruining his talent" suggests that in 1856, at the age of 28, he was completely aware of his latent creative powers and of his genius, and that he was aware that these powers must find expression or else he would perish. He was also aware that the problem confronting him was not merely of finding an attractive wife with suitable social standing, but of finding a life-long helpmate in every sense of the word. A woman capable of taking an active part in his intellectual life and of even assisting him in his creative work. The whole business was complicated by a number of exacting conditions that must be met by a prospective wife -- most of which were laid down in his correspondence with Valeria. The wife must be physically attractive, capable of inspiring lifelong passion and love, she
must herself be capable of an enduring love for him; she must be prepared after marriage to renounce all the usual upper-class society pleasures, above all balls involving "naked shoulders", for while striving always to arouse his passion she must avoid all temptation to inspire passion or even admiration, in other men. Thus she must give up the delightful society pastime -- flirtation. She must be, if not actually on the same moral and intellectual plane as himself, at least capable of striving under his guidance for self-improvement. However, he is quite ready to admit that these high moral principles are put into practice by himself perhaps "two hours" in the year. Above all she must be prepared to follow in his footsteps wherever he may choose to lead her, though he admits he believes in nothing, that he doubts everything, except that "good is good". She must be prepared for the rest of her life to look for happiness in "work, self-sacrifice, and love!" Fully understanding that his inclinations are always on a higher moral plane, she must be fully prepared to yield whenever their inclinations clash. Last, but not least, she must be a mother in the highest sense of the word, not a mere "brood-mare".

It is not astonishing that with these conditions in mind, Tolstoy found it difficult to find a suitable wife, although from numerous entries in his diaries and from his correspondence it is clear that for the next five years he is constantly on the lookout for the ideal wife. As fate would have it in 1862 he was actually faced with the necessity of making a choice between two
almost equally desirable, and certainly equally anxious, candidates for the high honour of becoming his wife -- the two elder daughters of Lyubov Behrs, his old childhood sweetheart, who, as Lyubochka Irteniev, he so charmingly depicted in *Childhood.*
CHAPTER IV

Lyubov Alexandrovna Islavin, (1826-86) was the illegitimate daughter of Alexander Islenyev, a wealthy Tula Landlord and a close friend of Nicholas Tolstoy. He was an inveterate gambler who almost ruined himself. Lyubov's mother, Princess Sophia Kozlovsky (nee Countess Zavadovsky) ran away from her drunken dissolute husband, to whom she had been married against her will, and formed a liaison with Alexander Islenyev to whom she bore six children, who being unable to bear their father's name were given the fictitious name of Islavin. At the age of sixteen Lyubov, was married to Andrei Evstafyevitch Behrs (1808-68) a dissolute man more than twice her age and socially her inferior. He was an extraordinarily difficult man and insanely jealous of his young wife. It is well known that when Tolstoy first began his frequent visits to the Behrs family, Dr. Behrs, knowing of Tolstoy's childhood infatuation for his wife, was convinced that these visits were prompted by the rebirth of this passion and a desire to seduce her. In Tolstoy's

93 The estate, Krasnoye, lay within about 20 miles of Yasnaya Polyana. This estate, Islenyev lost at cards.

94 As a young society doctor he had the reputation of a lady-killer and carried on numerous affairs with his patients. He had a serious affair with the mother of Turgeniev, the novelist, who bore him an illegitimate daughter, Barbara Bogdanovitch-Loutovin. She is chiefly known for her memoirs "The Family of I.S. Turgeniev."

95 He was ennobled later. Born the son of an apothecary, he became a doctor.
diary Dec. 8, 1862, we read, "Andrei Evstafyevitch is in his room and behaves as if I had stolen something"... How unpleasant was the atmosphere in the household one can gather from what Sophia Tolstoy writes in her autobiography:

What heavy memories I retain of the last years in my father's house. Father was not only physically ill but lived under tremendous nervous strain -- we lived in perpetual expectation of father's nocturnal visits to mother and of his shrieks -- these shattered our nerves and cast a gloom over our young souls. We loved mother much more than father and were very sad for her.96

Towards the end of his life, Tolstoy speaking of Dr. Behrs said:

'He was an extraordinarily frank honest and hot tempered man' and then, lowering his voice and pausing, added 'and a great Lovelace.' To this man Lyubov bore thirteen children of whom only seven grew up and she devoted her frustrated and unhappy life to their upbringing and future. She was determined that they should not sink to her husband's social level. She left not a stone unturned to advance their fortunes.97

96 Letters of S.A. Tolstoy to L. Tolstoy, p.27
97 ibid - From the Introduction by P. Popov, p.XV

A good idea of the surroundings in which Sophia Tolstoy was brought up is gained from Tolstoy's conversation with a teacher, Ivakin, which he recorded in his diary Aug. 11, 1885, (this manuscript has not been printed but is preserved in the "Literary Museum" in the U.S.S.R.):

The family Behrs lived as any simple clerk, under conditions that now would be intolerable. The whole flat consisted of some sort of a corridor, the door from the stairs led directly into the dining room. The study of the "Potentate" himself was so small there was no room to turn round. The girls slept on some kind of dusty sofas with broken springs. Such conditions would be inconceivable today. Impossible as it may sound, patients came to the doctor up rickety actually dangerous stairs. The centre lamp in the room was so low that even an average man would hit it when walking, so that if the patient negotiated the stairs safely he would certainly smash his head against the lamp.
She was eminently successful. All her sons, except one, Peter, made careers -- Alexander received a commission in the crack Guards regiment, the Prebrazhensky, and later became vice-governor of Orel; Stepan graduated from the Imperial School of law and made a successful legal career; Vyacheslav became a successful engineer and one of the builders of the Trans-Siberian railway; Vladimir received a commission in a crack Hussar regiment. But perhaps her most cherished hopes were centered on her three daughters, who, for that time, received a most thorough education under the guidance of carefully selected private tutors. She, herself, taught them perfect French, of course she hoped for brilliant matches for each but, as a form of re-insurance, she made the two eldest daughters take a special examination at the University of Moscow for a diploma that would give them the status of a qualified private teacher. Both Elizabeth and Sophia passed the examination brilliantly though Elizabeth was the more distinguished. But Sophia was highly commended by Professor Tikhonravov to whom she submitted her essay on music. To add to these accomplishments, the girls were carefully trained in housewifery. When Tolstoy visited Lyubov Behrs shortly after his return from the Crimean War she, making the excuse that the servants were out, made the two elder girls, aged 13 and 11, take complete charge of serving the dinner. That they acquitted themselves very successfully is proved by Tolstoy's favourable comments on the occasion. But Lyubov also saw to it that her daughters knew how to make the very most of their claims when they met any
eligible young man. To what extent she succeeded is shown by the impression the three girls made on Alexander Fet, the well-known poet and friend of Leo Tolstoy:

Having taken advantage of the invitation of the Count to introduce me to the Behrs family I met a hospitable well-mannered old man, the doctor, his wife, a beautiful stately brunette who obviously dominated the household. I refrain from describing the appearance of the three young girls, the youngest of whom had a charming contralto voice. All of them, in spite of the eagle-eyed supervision of the mother, and their faultless modesty, possessed that attractive quality which the French so aptly describe as "du chien". The stately hostess presided over a perfectly served and excellent dinner.98

There is no doubt that it was impressed on the daughters by their proud, ambitious, frustrated mother, that they must marry to improve themselves socially or not marry at all.99 How well they learned this lesson is shown in a letter written by Sophia to her favourite brother, Alexander, on Oct. 19, 1862:

This comment is particularly significant coming as it does from Fet, who was not only a lyrical poet, a cosmopolitan, and a connoisseur in such matters. Later, Fet wrote several lyrics dedicated to Sophia Tolstoy.

99 Sophia Tolstoy tells of an enlightening incident. A young tutor, a brilliant medical student, after giving her two passionate poems, fell on his knees, covered her hand with kisses and proposed. Sophia drew back, stared in amazement, burst into tears and dashed into her bedroom and, after carefully washing her hand with eau-de-Cologne, complained to her mother. Mrs.Behrs promptly fired the tutor. Sophia also received a proposal from the son of the Court apothecary, Zenger. This was delivered through her sister. She recounts in her memoirs, "I was so angry, some stupid aristocratic pride boiled up in me so that the only thing I could reply was: 'I do believe you have gone out of your mind.' (Letters from S. Tolstoy to Leo Tolstoy -- p.4.)
A silly thought passed through my head; do you remember how we used to say, 'nous autres aristocrates'? And you see what has happened? Just fancy this!100

So, although Tolstoy's frequent visits worried Dr. Behrs and provoked his jealousy, Lyubov Behrs was delighted, for from the very beginning she sensed the purpose of the visits. It is often thought that the Behrs, in thinking that Tolstoy was paying court to the elder daughter, Elizabeth, simply misunderstood his intentions and that, from the very beginning, he was attracted only by Sophia. It is hard to accept this point-of-view. For if Tolstoy was primarily looking for a helpmate in his creative literary work, it is impossible to deny that Elizabeth was infinitely better fitted for this role than her younger sister. That Tolstoy, himself, realized this, can be surmised from the following entry in his diary:

Sept. 22, 1861. Liza Behrs tempts me. But this cannot take place. Convenience is not enough if there is no feeling.

Sept. 8, 1862. Liza seems to have quietly taken possession of me. Oh, my God! how beautifully unhappy she would be if she were to become my wife.

Sept. 10, 1862. I am beginning to hate Liza with all my soul.

In spite of these entries, one can gather how strong was the temptation from the memoirs of Tatyana Kuzminskaya (nee Behrs)

100 Gusev, Materials, p.591.
Leo Nickolaivitch did not pay exclusive attention to any-one of us, treating us all equally. With Liza he always talked about literature and even induced her to contribute to his magazine, 'Yasnaya Polyana'. He commissioned her to write for his students two articles — one on Luther and the other on Mohammed. She wrote them both splendidly and they were both printed in their entirely in two separate booklets. 101

What sacrifice Tolstoy made from the point of view of giving up the chance of acquiring a first-class literary collaborator can be gathered from the fact that later, when preparing material for War and Peace in Sept. 1863, he appealed to Liza Behrs for help in collecting historical material. Her reply to this request is extant, and contains the historical material for which he asked. She also appended to this letter a bibliography, citing all the basic works on the period of 1812. B.M. Eichenbaum expresses the view that the contents of this letter prove that at that time Liza Behrs was better informed about the literature dealing with 1812 than was Tolstoy. He points out the thorough completeness of the bibliography.

However, to the distress of Tolstoy, Liza Behrs was convinced that it was she to whom Tolstoy was paying court. Their Moscow friends agreed. Tatyana writes:

The frequent visits of Leo Nickolaevitch provoked a good deal of gossip in Moscow to the effect that he is about to marry my elder sister Liza. There were hints made and rumours

spread which could not help reaching her.\textsuperscript{102}

At the beginning of August 1862, Lyubov Behrs and her daughters made a trip to Tula province, ostensibly to visit her father, but actually by visiting Yasnaya Polyana, on the pretext of visiting her old friend, Mary Tolstoy, who was staying there, to try to bring to a head the affair between Liza and Tolstoy who seemed to be dragging his feet. The impression that Tolstoy was courting Liza was still prevalent even after the visit to Yasnaya Polyana, and on their return to Moscow when Tolstoy, quite unexpectedly, announced he would accompany them in their carriage. Liza Behrs was so certain that she was the object of his attentions that she begged Sophia to allow her to share the outside seat with Tolstoy. Sophia, complied, — to Tolstoy's annoyance. He feared that the whole unpleasant episode with Valeria might be repeated, by compromising himself with Liza. He was doubly annoyed for during their stay at Ivitsi he had used a device which had a two-fold purpose of clearing up any misunderstanding in the Behrs' family and testing Sophia's intelligence. Taking advantage of being alone with her, he wrote with chalk on a card table the initial letters of the words composing the following two sentences:

'Your youth and your need for happiness remind me only too pointedly of my own old age and impossibility of happiness' and 'In your family there exists a misunderstanding concerning me and your sister Liza, but I hope that you and your sister Tanya will

\textsuperscript{102} ibid, p.75.
protect me.'

In her short memoir entitled, *The Marriage of L.N. Tolstoy*, Sophia tells us that she read this without a hitch:

My heart began to pound. There was a noise in my temples. My face was burning, -- I lost consciousness of time, I lost the realization of the material world, it seemed to me I was capable of anything, that I understood everything, that at the moment I embraced the boundless.

This, however, is not completely corroborated by her younger sister, Tanya, who, having been surprised by the entry of Sophia and Tolstoy into the room, hid herself and thus became an involuntary witness of this extraordinary scene. She tells us, in her *Memoirs*, that Tolstoy did have to prompt Sophia several times. However this may be, his somewhat unusual method of courtship is typical of Tolstoy. Apparently, as a result of this test, he was satisfied as to Sophia's intellectual ability. There may have been another important consideration in the light of his theories on marriage which played such an important role in considering the suitability of Valeria for his future wife -- the qualities for true motherhood. These the blue-stocking Liza obviously lacked and Sophia possessed to a very strong degree, for into

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103 Here again Tolstoy proved to be a true seer, for Liza after making a brilliant match, a match beyond her wildest hopes, for she married Pavlenko, adjutant to the Emperor, later divorced him to marry her cousin Behrs.
her teens she continued to play with dolls, and she went into raptures over children.

The numerous entries in his diary during this period indicate that, whereas there was no genuine feeling on his part for the otherwise eminently suitable blue stocking Liza, there was actually an intense outburst of passion for Sophia, which, however, was preceded by some hesitation. On Aug. 23, 1862, he resumed his diary and writes:

Spent the night at the Behrs! She is a mere child! It seems! Yet, what a mess. If only I could extract myself from it onto a clear and honest armchair ... I am afraid of myself: What if this also is a desire for love and not love itself? I am trying to see her weakest points; yet. A child! Perhaps.

On Aug. 24 he writes:

Got up. Hale and hearty with an exceptionally clear head. Writing went well but contents poor. Then sadness overtook me -- such sadness as I have not experienced for a long time. I have no friends, none! I am alone. I had friends when I served mammon. I have none when I serve truth.

Aug. 26, 1862. Went on foot to the Behrs,104 quiet

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At this time the Behrs were at their "dacha" at Streshnevo outside Moscow where Tolstoy was staying with a German shoe-maker. The novel referred to was written by Sophia when she was 16. Lyubov Behrs and her three daughters play a prominent part as well as Tolstoy under the name of Prince Douthlitsky. The uncomplimentary description of him is the "shaft" that went home. This novel was destroyed on her marriage, she wrote another short novel before her marriage, called "Natasha". Tolstoy read it with interest in 1862. T.A. Konzminshina refers to this novel in Vol. I, ch. 6 of her book, My Life at Home and at Yasnaya Polyana. She summarizes its contents. The main characters correspond to those in War and Peace, the heroine being Natasha. The first draft of War and Peace, then, tentatively called All's Well that Ends Well, resembles this novel of Sophia's, especially in the description of the Rostoved family and Natasha, who as in both novels was based on Sophia's younger sister Tanya. In his letter to Barteriev, Nov. 1, 1867, Tolstoy himself says that the whole structure of War and Peace was built around Natasha's character. One cannot escape the conclusion that Tolstoy is to some extent indebted to his wife for at least part of the plot and conception of some of the main characters in his great epic.
and cozy. Girls' laughter. S. was unattractive and vulgar yet she interests me. She gave me her novel to read. What energy! What truth! What simplicity! She is tortured by uncertainty. While I read my heart did not miss a beat. I experienced no jealousy or envy. But, 'extraordinary unattractive appearance' and 'apt constantly to change his opinions' -- The shaft went home. I am quite resigned. This is not for me. Work and the satisfaction of my immediate needs is all I can hope for.

On Aug. 28, 1862, Tolstoy writes in his diary:

Ugly mug.¹⁰⁵ It's not for you to think of marriage. You are destined for another calling and much is given to you in compensation.

Sept. 3, 1862. Was there. At first nothing. Then a walk. I am at peace. On the way home I thought: It's either all by chance or she has extraordinarily fine feelings, or it is the most vulgar coquetry -- today one, tomorrow another. Is it accidental or fine coquetry? But generally speaking 'nothing, nothing -- silence.' ¹⁰⁶ Never has my future with a wife appeared to me more clearly, more joyfully and more peacefully ... But what when the quiet deception of each other comes? ... The reckoning. Never forget 'Dublitsky', you old devil, Uncle Leo.

Sept. 4, 1862. Saw S. in a crowd of other girls. Walked with them and suddenly felt, 'It's not it, it's not it, ... and yesterday? I didn't sleep all night, I saw my happiness so clearly ... in the evening conversation about love. Still worse.

¹⁰⁵ Since his earliest childhood he had been sensitive about his looks.

¹⁰⁶ This phrase is taken direct from Gogol's "Notes of a Madman" and is also found in Anna Karenina. Tolstoy uses this phrase over and over again in his diary.
Sept. 6, 1862. I am too old, to get mixed up with this. Begone, or cut the knot ... have nothing now but the Behrs in my head.

At this time Tolstoy writes to Aunt Tanya that he will return to Yasnaya Polyana within a week. He says he is staying in Moscow to see to the printing of the two issues of his magazine. Not a word about the Behrs or any thoughts of marriage. On Sept. 7 he wrote in his diary:

Today I am alone at home and looking at all aspects of the situation. I must wait. Doubiltsky, do not put your nose where there is youth, poetry, beauty, love ... Nonsense: monastery, hard work, this is your calling, from the height of which you can quietly and joyfully contemplate the love of others, — and I was in this monastery and will return. Yes.

And then he suddenly concludes:

The diary insincere. An arrière pensée. But she is with me, she will sit next to me and read and ....... this is for her. 107

On the same day he wrote a letter to Alexandrine Tolstoy, his dearest friend and confidant, which reads in part as follows:

I don't know whether it is fortunate or unfortunate, I, an old toothless fool, have fallen in love ... I do not know myself

107 Upon their marriage Tolstoy made a pact (later broken by him) with his wife that for the rest of their lives each would have the right to read the other's letters and diaries.
whether this is true. Someday I will remember all this either with happiness or sorrow ... But now I am in a state of oppressive indecision for I am afraid that ... under the impression of a transitory feeling I might make a false step which could have fatal consequences for my whole life. I hope in the near future to extricate myself from this conjured, difficult, but happy situation.

On Sept. 9 he writes in his diary:

I tried to work but I can't. Instead I have written her a letter108 which I shall not send. Go away from Moscow? I can't. I can't ... It seems to me I have been in Moscow for a year. I could not sleep till three in the morning. I was dreaming of the future and at the same time tortured like a 16 year old boy.

Sept.10, Woke up at 10. Tired from a disturbed night. Worked lazily waiting for the evening like a school-boy waiting for Sunday. Went for a walk and found myself in the Kremlin. She returned stern and serious. I went away, disappointed and more than ever in love. 'Au fond'. There is hope. I must. I certainly must cut this knot ... Oh Lord! help me, teach me! Again a sleepless tortured night. I feel, -- I, who am in the habit of laughing at the suffering of lovers. He loves best who loves last. How many plans I have made to tell her, tell Tanichka all in vain ... Lord help me, teach me. Mother of God, help me!

108 This letter, Tolstoy gave to his wife after their marriage and it is preserved in her file. Strangely enough in this letter he gives her the key to the two sentences written by the initial letters only on the card table at Ivitsi. But why would he do this if, as Sophia says, she deciphered them then?
Sept. 11. My feeling is as strong as ever. I did not date to go to them ... no one can help me but God, I'm tired.

Sept. 12. I'm in love. I never believed one could love so. I am insane. I'll shoot myself if this is to continue. They gave an evening, she is altogether charming, and I repulsive Dublitsky! I went too far. Now I can't stop. Dublitsky -- so be it. But I am made handsome by love. Yes, tomorrow. In the morning I will go to them. There were opportunities but I missed them -- I was too timid ... God help me!

Sept. 13. Nothing happened ... Every day I think it is impossible to suffer more and be happier. Every day I become more insane. Tomorrow I will go as soon as I get up and will tell all or shoot myself. (At 4 A.M.) I've written to her, a letter I'll give it to her today. Oh! my God, how I am afraid to die. What happiness! My God, help me!

The letter that he refers to he did not have the courage to hand to Sophia till the 16th of Sept. To his great relief and joy his proposal was instantly accepted. But now in strange contrast to his prolonged indecision, having taken the plunge, Tolstoy mortified, outraged and scandalized the staid, bourgeois Behrs family by demanding that the wedding take place next day. Lyubov pleaded the importance of a trousseau, to which Tolstoy retorted, pointing to Sophia, "She's dressed, isn't she?" No matter how much Lyubov pleaded for delay she was only able to postpone the

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According to T. Kuzminsky, Dr. Behrs was at first outraged because the proposal had not been made to Elizabeth. He even refused to pay the dowry. As far as I can find out this is the only mention ever made of the dowry.
marriage for one week. But by the end of the week Tolstoy is once again assailed by tormenting doubts as to the wisdom of his decision. On the morning of the wedding day, contrary to tradition, Tolstoy arrived at the Behrs' house in a state of great agitation and tells Sophia he had spent a sleepless night worrying about the wisdom of their decision. He begs her by all that is holy to tell him honestly, frankly, whether she really loves him and whether she is capable of loving him for ever, to reassure him before it is too late and the irrevocable step is taken -- the step that can lead to happiness or horror.

Sophia was so upset by the almost insane look in her bridegroom's eyes that she was unable to speak and dissolved into a hysterical fit of sobbing. The situation was saved by the appearance of the resolute Lyubov Behrs, who knew Tolstoy too well to start any discussion on the subject. She firmly propelled him by main force out of the room and out of the flat.

After a simple marriage ceremony in the Kremlin Church, Tolstoy took Sophia to Yasnaya Polyana in a newly purchased Dormeuse. He was somewhat taken aback and annoyed that the whole Behrs family including Sophia, dissolved in tears at parting. Sophia tells us that, to the ill-disguised annoyance of the bridegroom, she continued crying most of the way to Yasnaya Polyana. It was in the Dormeuse that Sophia's married life began in every sense of the word. There is no doubt that the young girl was shocked and perhaps even outraged by Tolstoy's eagerness to
possess her and by the manner in which this possession was accomplished. Years later she was to give expression to this pent-up resentment in her novelette *Song without Words*. It is a direct answer to *Kreutzer Sonata*. The heroine is Anna, a pure, innocent girl who becomes the bride of a 35 year old prince, a handsome, rich roué, who loves philosophising and believes he is a profound thinker. She gives a vivid description of Anna's shock and disillusionment at the old roué's behaviour on the wedding night.

Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that no other married life was ever exposed to the same painstaking scrutiny and examination as that of Sophia Tolstoy. It is also hard to parallel the enormous amount of material available for studying this life. From the very beginning both she and her husband kept diaries, which were, as mentioned before, always read by each other. This had been mutually agreed upon. In the case of Tolstoy's diary, it was actually transcribed by his wife into a legible manuscript. By this time Tolstoy was quite conscious of his destiny as a great creative artist and fully aware that whatever he wrote would be of interest to posterity. Sophia shared his conviction and realized that she too, by merely being his wife, was destined to share his fame. The world is indebted to this early

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110 Both the manuscript and a typewritten copy are in the Yasnaya Polyana Library today. One more copy is in the Lenin Library, Moscow. As far as the writer is able to ascertain it has never been printed.

111 Tolstoy himself was before his marriage quite lax about preserving letters written to him. The vast number of letters written to him by Aunt Tanya are lost, though his to her are preserved.
realization of his future fame, for the preservation of a very ex-
tended correspondence between husband and wife. Sophia meticul-
ously preserved and made copies of the letters received, or sent
by her. There are extant over 600 of Sophia's letters to her
husband, of which 443 have been published. As to Tolstoy, he
wrote 656 letters to her.

As time went on the recording of impressions and events,
which were subjected to the minutest scrutiny, became an intense
occupation of almost everyone who came in contact with the family.
There were times when possibly a dozen diaries were being kept
simultaneously. It appears that the constant and often morbid
preoccupation of Sophia and her husband with each other's behaviour,
motives, impulses, and moods, coupled with the knowledge that what-
ever each of them wrote would be almost instantly read by the
other, often results in presenting to the reader a distorted
picture of their mutual relationship. The picture is, so to speak,
out of focus, and yet the reader is not always aware of this. This
is particularly true of Sophia's diary. The first impression pro-
duced is that it is an extraordinarily sincere, vivid and powerful
account of the deterioration in the relations between her and her

As could be expected much of the material in her letters deals
with trivial family matters and is of little interest to the read-
ing public, yet they contain much that is invaluable for the study
of these two people that is not to be found anywhere else. At
first glance, that which appears most trivial will on closer study
sometimes reward the reader by suddenly illuminating some hitherto
dark corner.
husband almost from the very beginnings of their married life. The same impression is, to a certain extent, produced by Tolstoy's diary though to a far lesser degree. So that the over-hasty reader may draw conclusions that are not altogether sound. The whole thing is complicated by the fact that the impression produced on friends and casual visitors to Yasnaya Polyana was on the whole one of complete marital bliss. This is particularly true of the impressions of the poet Fet, a fairly frequent visitor, who felt that a serene charm emanated from the love of these two beings for each other. Many other visitors had the same feeling, including the novelist Turgeniev, and especially Sophia's parents, who loudly proclaimed to all the Moscow friends that they could not even have dreamed of a happier marriage for their daughter. However, it is impossible to say that this was so, on the basis of all information available. The general impression obtained from a careful study of this material, in the light of all the known circumstances influencing its sources, is that one is dealing here, not so much with actual happiness but a constant and conscious effort, by no means always successful, on the part of both husband and wife to persuade themselves that they were, indeed, completely happy.

There is ample evidence in Tolstoy's diary to show that this torment of perpetual doubt as to the sincerity of his wife's love never ceased to cast a shadow on his life. He says himself in his diary that the very night before his wedding he was dis-

113 Tatyana, Sophia's sister, spent every summer at Yasnaya Polyana.
tracted with doubt to the point that he was seriously tempted to flee immediately from Moscow before it was too late. As he writes: "Fear, mistrust, and desire to flee". On the morning of the wedding Sophia writes in her Memoirs: "He began to torture me with his doubts as to my love for him. It seems to me he wants to flee, he is afraid of marriage. I burst into tears." She goes on to say in her Autobiography:

Before the wedding I felt sick and utterly distracted. I could eat nothing but salted cucumbers and black bread. The nights were disturbed and my state of mind sad ... I was afraid to lose Leo Nicolaivitch's love and that he would soon lose interest in me a silly insignificant girl. 114

The source of this morbid fear of losing her husband's love, which never left Sophia, can be found in entries in Tolstoy's

114 Quoted by N.N. Gusev in Materials 1855-69, p.574, from an unpublished manuscript in seven volumes of the autobiography of Sophia Tolstoy. He had access to this material which is kept at the Yasnaya Polyana Museum and a typewritten copy is also at the Lenin Library. It is most regrettable that not only much of the material dealing with this subject has never been published and even that which has been published is incomplete. Sophia's letters are only "in selection", about one-third being omitted; her diary, edited by her eldest son Sergei, has been expurgated, whole pages are omitted. Often one is forced to the conclusion that Tolstoy's relatives and followers are deliberately trying to shield him at the expense of Sophia. Tolstoy's diary fared even worse. As is well known it passed into the hands of Chertkov and although Tolstoy told him to delete all entries offensive to Sophia and Sergei, he complied, but took photostatic copies of the deletions so that later he was able to re-introduce them selectively at will. But Chertkov went even further and deliberately deleted all specially favourable references made by Tolstoy throughout the entire diary. However, all these difficulties that make the enquiry so difficult, are what make the effort to ascertain the truth so fascinating.
diary (all of which she eagerly read) such as the one made on Sept. 25, 1862, two days after her wedding:

The solemnity of the rites. She in tears. In the Dormeuse she knows everything. At Biryukov she is terrified. There is something morbid. Seryozha moved to tears. The Aunt is already all set for suffering. Night -- disturbing dream. It is not she ... At Yasnaya, -- morning coffee. Felt very awkward. Students completely taken aback ... Walked with Seryozha and her. She is too bold. After dinner slept. She wrote. Unbelievable happiness. Again she is writing near me.

On the same day she writes to Tatyana, her favourite sister. She tells of her life and happiness at Yasnaya and concludes:

I am terrified and ashamed he loves me so, -- Tanya, there is nothing to love me for. Do you think he will stop loving me? I am afraid to think of the future.

In an entry dated Sept. 30 (just one week after the wedding) Tolstoy writes in his diary:

115 A roadside Inn on the way from Moscow to Tula.
116 At Yasnaya Polyana they were met by Tolstoy's brother Sergei and Aunt Tanya.
117 Tolstoy is referring to the University students engaged by him to teach in schools he had organized, and who stayed at Yasnaya Polyana. They were taken aback because their idol, contrary to his expressed views on marriage, had married someone they considered to be a society girl. They remembered his dictum "To marry a society girl is to take a full dose of civilization".
118 T. Kuzminsky "My Life at Home and in Yasnaya Polyana", p. 143
At Yasnaya. I can't recognize myself. All my mistakes have become clear to me. I love her as before if not more. I can't work. We had a scene. I was sad that with us all is as it is with ordinary people. She hurt my feelings. I wept. She is delightful. I love her even more. But what if there is deception?"

Sophia did not start keeping her diary till Oct. 8, 1862. She begins it with:

Again the diary. It's boring that I should go back to the old habits that I gave up on getting married. In the past I wrote when my heart was heavy and now possibly for the same reason ... From yesterday, from the time he told me he doesn't believe my love I became really frightened. But I know why he doesn't believe me. It seems to me that I won't be able to relate or write what I think. Always from my earlier days I imagined the man I was going to love as a completely whole, new, and pure being. I imagined, these were childish dreams which even now it is hard for me to give up, that this man would be always an open book to me, that I would know his slightest thoughts and feelings, and that all my life he will love only me, and that unlike others, our first violent turbulences of love will not subside leaving us a humdrum existence. These dreams were so dear to me. Because of them, I thought I fell in love with P. In short loving my dreams I made P. their embodiment.119

How serious was her feeling for Polivanov is shown in what she writes in the first volume of her unpublished memoirs:

119

This is the first indication that Sophia told her husband about Polivanov to whom she was engaged to be married when Tolstoy proposed. In her excitement she forgot even to write her news to Polivanov who turned up unexpectedly at the Behrs' house in Moscow. There was a tense moment, for Tolstoy was there. Fortunately Sophia's brother, Alexander, took him aside and told him of the imminent marriage.
I had little what is called gaiety and
dancing in my life ... any flirting
frightened me and I never encouraged it,
especially since Polivanov and I decided
we were going to be married. I felt my­
self obligated.

It is fortunate that Tolstoy did not know before his
marriage of her engagement to Polivanov for it is more then
likely that, had he known, he would have fled Moscow. From his
correspondence with Valeria it is quite clear that what he ex­
pected from a wife was undisputed and undivided love. He was
too much of a seer into human souls to believe that Sophia had
suddenly thrown over her old sweetheart for whom she had had a
very deep and permanent feeling to fall in love with Tolstoy in
the same way. He must have realized she fell in love not so
much with him, Leo Tolstoy, but rather with Count Tolstoy and his
already considerable literary fame. Sophia herself tried to
console Polivenov by telling him she could not have given him
up for anyone except "Count Tolstoy". It is more than fortunate
that he did not know about it for he could not possibly have
found a woman more suited than Sophia to fill the exacting role
of being his wife. As to his fears about the permanency of her
affections for him, they were quite unjustified. Her whole up­
bringing -- the influence of her mother, endowed her with a
correct sense of values. If she did not love Leo Tolstoy in
the same sense as she once loved Polivanov, she certainly loved
much more all that which Tolstoy was able to give her. It was
she, who all her life suffered from a morbid fear of losing not
only her husband's love but all those things that she enjoyed
because of it.
It is significant that years earlier when Turgeniev replied to Tolstoy's letter announcing his coming marriage with Valeria, he had written:

God grant that everything will come to a happy and correct conclusion. This will give an anchor to your soul --- an anchor of which you are in need.120

It cannot be doubted that this desperate love for her position as wife of Count Leo Tolstoy, the mother of his children, the mistress of Yasnaya Polyana, this almost pathological fear to lose all this and her relentless determination to defend it, doubtless acted as such an anchor to which Tolstoy later in life referred as "his cross". Cross or anchor, it held him fast at Yasnaya Polyana in an atmosphere and surroundings outside of which one can hardly imagine the creations of his literary masterpieces. Works such as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* required not only stupendous mental effort but sustained concentration, which in the case of *War and Peace* lasted for 6 years. Before his marriage such sustained and undivided effort would have been impossible. His short novel *The Cossacks*, which he began probably in 1853 was still uncompleted when in 1862 he let the publisher Katkov have it in settlement of a gambling debt of 1000 roubles.121 Incidentally it was not till after his marriage that he succeeded in conquering one of his

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120 Correspondence of Tolstoy and Turgeniev, p.23. Moscow State Publishing House, 1928.

121 Tolstoy lost this sum to Katkov playing Chinese billiards -- his last fling before his marriage.
worst passions, gambling. In a letter dated Sept. 28, 1862, Tolstoy wrote to his aunt and constant confidant Alexandra Tolstoy: "I am now absolutely at peace and everything is clear to me as it has never been before in my life". On Oct. 3, he wrote again:

I have no idea where all this will lead me. With every day I feel myself more and more at peace and better. In the past I got tired of taking stock of myself and my doings, and perpetually starting my life all over again (do you remember?) For a time I got reconciled with my own foulness. I even began to look upon myself as if not completely, then at least relatively good; but now I have abjured, as never before, my entire past. At every second I am aware of everyone of my disgusting qualities, measured against Sonya as my yard-stick. But I cannot wash away the sad lines.\textsuperscript{122}

Tolstoy the dreamer, who in his past made so many new lives, that in his own words he "got tired of counting them", was in dead earnest when he wrote to Alexandra of his total transformation. He actually did undergo a complete change -- at least for the time being, not only in his habits, but what is much more significant in his outlook on life. Whether Sophia Tolstoy was aware of it or not, she was the main reason for the change. Nov. 23, 1862, she writes in her diary:

He is disgusting, with his common people. I feel that it is either I, that is to say, I as a temporary single representative of the family or the common people whom Lyova loves so warmly. Egoism? So be it. I live for him, I live in him. I expect the

\textsuperscript{122} Quotation from Pushkin's poem, \textit{Memories}. 
same in return otherwise I am cramped here, suffocated. I ran away today because everything suddenly disgusted me -- the aunt, the students, Natalia Petrovna, the walls and all this life and I could hardly retrain my joyous laughter when I quietly ran away from home ... I am afraid to live with him. Suppose he falls in love again with common people. Then I am lost.

Apparently, Tolstoy capitulated. The schools were promptly disbanded, the publication of the educational magazine Yasnaya Polyana discontinued, and the student-teachers departed. This sudden abandoning of his philanthropical and educational activities did not pass unnoticed by the liberal press. The newspaper, Golos, in conclusion of a column of Moscow news stated:

We have another item of news, though not altogether cheerful. We are informed from reliable sources, that the famous Yasnaya Polyana School of Count Tolstoy has fallen on evil times. It is said that since Count Leo Tolstoy has stopped personally instructing in the school, the majority of the students have stopped attending. Lately only a few have shown up. It is superfluous to say how unpleasant is this news. Leo Tolstoy, as is well known, is the founder of the new educational system and the advocate of a new pedagogical approach which has much in its favour and could have made a great contribution to science and life in

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123 This is the first recorded instance of the clever use made by Sophia of hysterical outbursts -- threats to run away, to drown herself etc. which she used so often later and with such success.

124 An impoverished noblewoman who was dependent on Aunt Tanya and lived on Yasnaya Polyana.
general. The only person capable of making this contribution was Leo Tolstoy. 125

Even the official organ of the Ministry of Education found it advisable to print an article by V. Zolotov:

I hope to make a trip to Yasnaya Polyana but to my great regret was informed that the school of Count Tolstoy is no longer in existence. I say, to my great regret, because, in spite of some over-enthusiasm on the part of the Count this school had great importance because of its practicality but specially because it was the living antitheses of pedantic pedagogy ... According to the testimony of those who were closely acquainted with the school at Yasnaya Polyana, the progress of the students was truly astounding. 126

On Dec. 23, Tolstoy took his wife to Moscow for a seven weeks' visit. Ostensibly he went to deliver the finished manuscript of his story Polikushka to the editor of the magazine, Russian Messenger. But the real object was to pacify and distract his wife who was in a state bordering on nervous collapse. Thanks to some gossiping busybody, Sophia discovered that the young woman Aksinia who usually came to wash floors at Yasnaya Polyana was the former mistress of Tolstoy and had born him a child. She was beside herself with jealousy and on Dec. 16, 1862, she wrote in her diary:

I think that someday I shall be driven to suicide by jealousy. 'In love as never before' 127 And a simple peasant woman --

125 N. Gusev, Materials, p.391
126 ibid, p.592.
127. This was an entry in Tolstoy's diary in May 10, -13, 1858. He had said then that he never loved anyone in his life as he loved Aksinia Anikanova (a serf at Yasnaya Polyana)
fat, white, hideous. I looked with such
delight at the dagger, the guns. One
stab, it's easy, as long as I have no
child. And she is here a few steps from
me. I am like one possessed. I take a
drive. I can meet her again at this very
moment. That's how he loved her. If I
could only burn his diaries,\textsuperscript{128} and with
them his entire past ... Read some of his
evory works and everywhere, there was
love, women, I felt disgust and my heart
was heavy. I would like to burn it all.
Let nothing remind me of his past. I
would not regret his works, for because
of jealousy I have become a fearful egoist.
If I could kill even him and then create
him anew the same as he is I would have
done this with pleasure.

Considering this outburst in her diary, it is no wonder
that Tolstoy deemed it expedient to take her to Moscow, but how
reluctant he was to go and what a sacrifice it was for him can
be judged from what he wrote in his diary on Dec. 27:

\begin{quote}
As always I paid the penalty for town
life in ill-health and ill-temper ...
I was most dissatisfied with my wife.
Compared her with others. I almost re-
pented. But then this feeling passed.
\end{quote}

On Jan.5th, 1863, he writes: "I am absorbed in family
happiness." But three days later he records a terrific row
about some dress and comments on the vulgarity of his wife's
explanations. He writes:

\begin{quote}
It is unpleasant to be at home with her.
Apparently without noticing it, much has
accumulated in our souls. I feel that
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{128} A few days after becoming engaged Tolstoy gave Sophia all
his diaries, containing a very frank account of all his pecad-
illos for Sophia to read.
she is suffering, but I am suffering even more. I have nothing to say to her —
Yes, nothing. I am simply cold towards her. That's why I so desperately try to find something to do ... She will cease to love me. I am almost certain of this ...
She says: I'm good. I hate to hear this. It is because of this she will cease to love me.

On Jan. 9, one day after the above entry, Sophia is full of penitence and contrition for her behaviour, whatever it was, in connection with the dress. She writes in her diary:

Never in my life was I made so wretched by the realization of my fault. I never imagined I could be in the wrong to such an extent. I am so oppressed that tears choke me. I am afraid to talk to him, afraid to look at him. Never has he been so attractive and dear to me. Never have I appeared to myself so insignificant and so evil. And he is not angry. He continues to love me. And his look is so meek and saintly. One can die from happiness and humiliation with such a man. I feel unwell. Because of my moral sufferings I have become physically ill. I suffered such pain that I was afraid of a miscarriage. I am almost insane. I pray all day as if this would lessen my fault or undo what I have done.

This entry continues in the same vein for another whole page. On Jan. 23, Tolstoy, fully mollified, makes the following entry:

We are on the best of terms, my wife and I. I am no longer surprised or frightened by our high and low tides ... Sometimes even now I am dominated by the fear that she is young and doesn't understand or love much in me and that she stifles, for my sake, much in herself, and all these sacrifices she instinctively holds against me ...

This seven weeks visit to Moscow was one of the very rare occasions when Sophia left Yasnaya Polyana, where she spent the
next eighteen years.

On Jan. 17, 1863, there appeared an advertisement in Moscow News, announcing the discontinuance of the magazine "Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy ascribed his decision to discontinue it to lack of support. At no time, he added, had the number of subscribers exceeded 400. However, it is not difficult to find the real cause -- his wife's influence, but above all a complete revolution in his own outlook on life after his marriage. One can hardly doubt that the final parting with his cherished dream of becoming a leading reformer of primary educational methods, one might even say the discoverer of a totally new approach to pedagogy, could not have helped causing him some twinges of conscience. These were greatly intensified by the reaction of the Russian press. Throughout Russia, newspapers and magazines of all shades of opinion, with barely a single exception, expressed profoundest regret and even dismay at the step taken by Tolstoy. Even the august and highly conservative magazine Sunday Reading, published by the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy, had the following to say:

In spite of the fact that we cannot agree with the ideas expressed in this magazine, we still consider it an extraordinary phenomenon in our primary pedagogy and regret its discontinuance. Especially when we bear in mind how narrow were the theories on which, till now, our pedagogy has been based.

129 The one exception was the Germanophile magazine, The Teacher, which after waiting for a whole year before commenting, expressed (1864) its gratification at the discontinuance of Yasnaya Polyana -- "All the theories expounded in the magazine were absurd" wrote the distinguished contributor to the paper, E. Kemnitz.

130 The oldest and highest Ecclesiastical institution of learning in the Russian Empire, actually an ecclesiastical University.

131 "Sunday Reading", 1863, No. 31, p. 733
That this abandonment of the beloved child of his fancy was not due to lack of support or financial difficulties can be gathered from the following entry in Tolstoy's diary, Feb.3, 1863:

I am so happy, so happy. I love her so ... Subconsciously she is re-educating me ... The student-teachers are nothing but a burden to me because of the falseness of the whole situation ... How clear everything is to me now. This was the result of youthful enthusiasm -- I was almost showing off. This I can no longer continue, having grown up.

However, Tolstoy has moments when he is fearful that the family life, for which he gave up all other activities, is built on sand:

Mar 1, 1863. Recently we both felt how terrifyingly transitory is our happiness! Death -- and everything is at an end. Mar.3, We almost had two quarrels on successive evenings. Barely avoided. Now she is bored. She feels hemmed in. Insane searches a storm 132. Young but not insane. And I fear this mood more than anything else in this world.

And then Tolstoy attempts to justify his giving up his former activities, and his changed outlook on life which led to the complete abandonment of his selfless efforts to improve the lot of the common people:

Mar 3, 1863. The so-called self-abnegation and goodness are merely efforts to

132 A badly misquoted passage from Lermontov's poem "The Sail". It should read "But he, rebellious, is yearning for a storm."
satisfy morbidly developed predilections. The ideal is harmony. This is realized only in art. And only that is true, which adopts as its motto: there are no guilty ones in this world. He who is happy is in the right! A self-sacrificing man is blinder and more cruel than others.

To this period belongs a mysterious relationship between Sophia and her husband, which he designated as that of the "Porcelain Doll". Writing to his sister-in-law on March 23, he jokingly informs her that of late his wife transforms herself while in his presence into a cold china doll. He underlines this by repeating that she becomes "such a doll only when we are alone, when others are present she is her natural self." The fact that on Mar. 27, Sophia writing to her sister says: "Now I am no longer made of china" proves that this reference to Sophia was not made jokingly but reflects Tolstoy's realization of a certain state of mind in his wife, a certain attitude towards him. This period, which preceded the birth of his first child, Sergei, is marked by the last rebellion of Tolstoy, the untamed idealist, who is about to become a sedate pater-familias. On April 1, Easter day, Tolstoy contrasts this Easter with the preceding one. He recalls his conversation with the student teacher Serdobolsky, and notes:

133 N. Gusev. Materials, p. 604
134 Loc. Cit. quoted from an unpublished letter in the manuscript division of the State Tolstoy Museum, USSR.
That was quite a different Easter. Now I am occupied with the dreary business of running the estate and am disgusted with myself -- I am a flabby egoist and yet I am happy. A lot of self-improvement is needed.

June 2, 1863, he writes:

All this time was a sad period of heavy mental and physical lethargy. I thought I was growing old, that I was dying. I thought how frightful it is that I do not love. I was horrified that my interests are confined to money and vulgar material well-being. This was a periodic hibernation. I think I am awake now. I love her, the future, myself, and my life ... One cannot fight against one's fate.

He tries to find consolation in the thought: "That which is weakness may become the source of power."

Here Tolstoy is quite prophetic for he was just about to embark on his monumental work, War and Peace. The abandonment of his idealistic endeavours enabled him to turn wholeheartedly to his real vocation -- art. But the period of rebellion is not yet over. In his diary of June 18, 1863, we find a heart rending lament for his inability to reconcile his ideals with the realities of married life:

Where am I? -- he whom I loved and knew so well. He who would suddenly emerge out of me and both delight and frighten me. I am small. I am insignificant. I have become like this since I got married. Married to a woman whom I love -- Almost everything written in this book is false -- pretence. The thought that she is here, reading over my shoulder, dwarfs and corrupts my truth.
To this period belongs almost incomprehensible outbursts of mad jealousy provoked by the fact that Sophia, who was in the ninth month of her pregnancy, found pleasure in chatting to the school teacher, Erlenvein, and that she seemed to enjoy the attentions of this most "insignificant of men". Under the influence of this mood, Tolstoy continues in his diary but showing how over-wrought he is, the entry is almost incoherent:

Anyone who reads this will say, 'Yes, I know jealousy! But one must try to quieten me, do something to quieten me, in order to rid me of the vulgarity of life which I detested since my youth. And I have lived in it for nine months. Hideous. I am a gambler and a drunkard, Blind drunk with estate management. I have irrevocably lost nine months which could have been the best and which I made the worst in my life ... How many times have I written, 'Now I have put an end to all this!' But now I do not write this. Oh! My God, help me! Let me live always in the realization of thee and of my power.

Then addressing his wife he continues:

I involuntarily try to hurt you. This is bad and will pass. Do not be angry, I can't help loving you ... This last nine months I was the most worthless, weak, absurd, and vulgar man. But now the moon-lit night has uplifted me.

Sophia's diary also reflects what a trying time she had during these first nine months of her married life, the period of her first pregnancy. Inspite of having most unorthodox, not to say iconoclastic views on every other subject, Tolstoy entertained
most conservative, most bourgeois views on the question of marriage. To Tolstoy the state of marriage once entered into was sacred and permanent, he took the vow 'till death do us part' literally. He was equally orthodox in his insistence on conjugal fidelity. Curiously enough, this is one, if not the only one, of his ideals which Tolstoy succeeded in putting into practice. Although he was often sorely tempted to commit adultery, and on one occasion almost fell, once married to Sophia Tolstoy he remained faithful to her for the forty-eight years of their married life, in spite of his unusual sexual virility. It is small wonder that Tolstoy who was accustomed to freely gratify his sexual appetites, found his enforced abstinence, during the last stages of her pregnancy, extraordinarily irksome and at times unendurable. No doubt the tremendous struggle to remain chaste made him both irritable and difficult to live with. It is quite clear from Sophia's diary that at no time did she understand what was going on in his mind nor did she appreciate the stupendous effort Tolstoy's enforced chastity cost him. She deeply resented his attentions and later, when intercourse became impossible, she failed to give him the sympathy he needed during his struggle and fearful crises. Instead she poured out her pent-up bitterness in her diary, which he, of course, read. What effects these unrestrained outpourings had on Tolstoy can only be imagined, when she wrote:

135 According to his wife's diary he continued having sexual relations with her till the age of 78, when she underwent an extremely serious operation after which, in the opinion of her doctors, any further intercourse might actually endanger her life.
April 24, 1863. Lyova is either old or unhappy. Is it possible that besides money affairs, management of the estate, management of the distillery, nothing and nobody interests him? He doesn't eat, sleep, or talk. He prowls about the estate. He walks and walks always alone. But I am alone. I am bored. Completely alone. His love takes the form of mechanical kissing of my hand and of doing me good instead of evil.

May 8. It is all the fault of my pregnancy. I feel unbearably rotten, both physically and morally. Physically I am always ill in one way or another. Morally -- fearful boredom, emptiness, despondency. For Lyova, I do not exist. I feel that I am repulsive to him and now I have one single purpose -- to try to remove myself from his life as much as possible. I cannot bring any joy to him because I am pregnant. What a bitter truth, a woman only finds out if her husband loves her, when she is pregnant.

Though one can deeply sympathise with Sophia's misery at this time, it is, perhaps, not altogether just to ascribe all Tolstoy's moods and gloom to his self-imposed abstinence from sex. No doubt it played an important role. But it is also true that Tolstoy's mind was pregnant with a teeming multitude of unexpressed ideas -- a host of half-formed living characters, already conceived in his mind, struggling to be born.

The state of his distress at not creating something truly artistic, something worthwhile, something big enough for his immense latent powers of which he is so keenly aware is reflected in his letter to Fet, April 1863:

I live in a world so far removed from literature and critics that upon receiving a letter such as yours, I was filled with astonishment. Who is that fellow who wrote The Cossacks and Polikoushka? But they are not
even worth talking about. The writing paper can stand anything and the editor pays and prints anything. But this is only the first impression ... When one begins to dig in one's mind one finds, somewhere in the corner, amongst the old forgotten rubbish, something indefinite called art ... and one begins to yearn to write ... How can I write now? I am up to my ears in farming and Sonya ... There are bees, sheep, the new orchard, the distillery -- everything is inching along, though naturally badly in comparison to ideals.

And then in an utter outburst of despair, a sudden thought, run away from it all -- but where? To war; as in his youth, to the Caucasus.

What do you think of the Polish affair? It does look bad. Perhaps you, I, and Borisov will have to take down again our swords from the rusty nail.

It is hard to believe that Tolstoy was serious about this last suggestion for he was far too absorbed with the inner mental struggle which preceded the birth of his epic novel, *War and Peace* to allow the Polish rebellion or anything else to interfere with it.

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136 This refers to the Polish uprising of 1863 and the possibility of intervention by France and other powers which would have led to a general war.

137 A neighbour of Tolstoy's, a retired officer, who had had a tragic love affair with Fet's sister.

138 There was no conscription in Russia in 1863 so that Tolstoy was considering volunteering for active service.
On the 28th of June, 1863, Sophia gave birth to a son who was named Sergei, in honour of Tolstoy's brother. One can get some idea of Tolstoy's attitude to the birth of his first-born from the fact that he actually considered it important enough to warrant a special diary which he called *Mother's Diary*, and which he began on Aug. 5, with a detailed description of the delivery, concluding:

Darling, how earnest, pure, touching and striking was her beauty ... She didn't think about me. There was something earnest, something stern about her. Her eyes were burning quietly and ecstatically.

However, this feeling of exaltation was short lived. For Sophia developed inflammation of the breasts and the doctors forbade her to feed the child and recommended that a wet nurse should be engaged. But this ran contrary to Tolstoy's theories of true motherhood and he felt that by not feeding her child his wife was desecrating the ideal of motherhood. He would not hear of engaging a wet nurse, and insisted that the doctors were ignoramuses about such matters and steadfastly claimed that suckling the child was the best cure for the trouble. He held it monstrous for a mother under any circumstances to abandon a child. Lyubov Behrs, unable to make her refractory son-in-law see reason, summoned her husband who finally succeeded in persuading him to allow them to engage a wet-nurse. But according to Tatyana Behrs, Tolstoy never
overcame his abhorrence of what he considered Sophia's utterly unnatural behaviour. She writes:

Leo Nicholaevich never succeeded in subduing his dislike of a nursery in which there was both nurse and wet-nurse ... whenever he entered the nursery his face bore an expression of both disgust and resentment.139

How much he resented this failing on the part of his wife to fulfil her primary duty as a mother can be gathered by the fact that on Aug. 6 he brings his Mother's Diary to an abrupt end with the following:

I haven't finished this and can no longer continue it. To speak of the present time is torture to me ... Her character is worsening with every day and I recognize in her both Pauline and Mary140 with their grumbling and angry sounding little bells.141 It is true that this happens to her when she is unwell. But this injustice and quiet egoism frighten me ... Is it possible that she never loved me but deceived herself? I read through her diary -- subdued hate towards me breathes through the tender words. In life it is frequently so also. If this is true, and if all this is a mistake on her part -- it is horrible. To give up everything ... all the

139 My Life at Home and in Yasnaya Polyana, p.94.
140 His aunt Pelagea and his sister, Mary.
141 Only one who has travelled home for hours in a sleigh or carriage behind a troika with cacophonous bells (fortunately a rare occurrence) can understand what Tolstoy means by this. The writer, travelling in a troika in the Urals had the misfortune to experience the effect of this unpleasant sound and had to ask the coachman to silence the main bell on the "douga", after which the side bells sounded pleasant.
poetry of the family hearth, egoism towards everything except one's own family and in exchange for all this get saddled with the care of the retail vodka-shop (Kabak)\textsuperscript{142} baby-powder, jam, and grumbling, devoid of everything which brightens family life, without love and without serene and dignified family happiness. Nothing but outburst of tenderness -- kisses etc: Oh! how heavy is my heart ... I come in the morning, happy and in a good mood and I behold the Countess, who is annoyed and whose aristocratic hair is being combed by the maid, Dushka.\textsuperscript{143} And the picture of Mashenka at her worst comes before my eyes. Everything goes to pieces. And I? Like one scalded I am afraid of everything I see and realize that only when I am alone my good poetic mood returns to me. I am kissed, by habit, tenderly and then begins snarling at Dushka, at Aunt, at Tanya, at me, at everybody and I cannot quietly stand this because all this is not only evil but horrible in comparison to that which I crave ... and then the tiniest glimmer of understanding and feeling and I am again all happiness and I believe her outlook is the same as mine. One believes

\textsuperscript{142} In 1863, Tolstoy was carried away by a grandiose vision of quick wealth which he could acquire from engaging in the distilling industry. At one time he seriously contemplated building two distilleries, one at Yasnaya Polyana and the other at Nikolskoye. Like most of his other business enterprises it boiled down to one very small rather primitive distillery which he built on half shares with his neighbour, Bibikov, at the latter's little estate, Teliatinky. It existed for about a year and a half. Hoping to make the business more profitable, Tolstoy tried to start the retail sale of vodka and built a "kabak" on the highway near Yasnaya Polyana. In 1933 there were still people at Yasnaya Polyana who remembered the Kabak. Apparently owing to poor management even this enterprise, usually so profitable, failed and had to be discontinued. But in an account book at Yasnaya Polyana there is an entry, June 1869, "Received, 55 roubles from Gretsovski Kabak".

\textsuperscript{143} Here Tolstoy refers to Dunya Bannikov, a twelve year old child from Yasnaya Polyana, at that time assistant maid to Sophia Tolstoy.
that which one wishes desperately to believe. I am content that it is only I who am tortured ... no, she neither loved me nor loves me. Now I am reconciled, somewhat. But why was it necessary to deceive me so painfully?

How Sophia felt about the same time, and how desperately unhappy she was at this time, a time that should have been so happy, can be seen from entry after entry in her diary:

July 23, 1863. Ten months married. My spirits low -- horrible. I mechanically seek solace as a child seeks the breast. My mental pain is unendurable. Lyova is murderous. He is incapable of managing the estate -- not for that, brother, have you been created! He futilely dashes from place to place. He is not satisfied with that which he has; I know what he wants; and that I won't give him. Nothing pleases him. Like a dog I have got used to his caresses. He has grown cold. I console myself that such days will pass, but how frequent they are. Patience.144

On July 31, 1863, she makes another entry that is even more desperate, more poignant:

The truth is, it is killing me. He is angry, but what for? Whose fault is it? Our relations are ghastly. And this, when misfortune befell us. He says 'I am going to sleep, I am going for a swim' and I think good riddance. I sit over my little boy -- how heavy is my soul! God has deprived me of my husband and my child.145 I have just

144 Diary of Sophia Tolstoy, 1869-91, p.74
145 She is here referring to the fact that she is unable to feed the child.
read his diary ... these nine months, possibly the worst in life. And what of the tenth. How many times he thought, why did I marry? And how many times has he said, 'Where is the I, I used to be?'

The ghastly relations between Tolstoy and his young wife were made even worse by the fact that the child of the wet-nurse, Natalia Kazakov, died in great pain. Tolstoy made no efforts to conceal his feelings on the matter and his looks plainly told Sophia that he blamed her for the tragedy for callously depriving the other child of its mother. Actually there was much to be said for Tolstoy's feelings on the matter, only he should not have blamed his sick wife, who was more than anxious to feed her baby, but the heartless conditions that were imposed on the wet-nurse. It was understood that in return for good pay, special clothes and excellent food, the peasant mother was to leave her own child to the tender care either of other children or relatives; not see her husband or child; and to live secluded for about a year at the manor house.

However it may be, Tolstoy was fearfully shaken by the death of Natalia's child, and under the impact of this stark tragedy, his social conscience reawakened with all its old intensity, and on their wedding anniversary he was driven to a cruel decision -- he would escape from the horror of it all, horror which

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As the peasants had no knowledge of hygiene, or bottle formulae, and in fact often could obtain no milk, it was quite usual for the wet-nurse's child to die, as it was often fed on previously masticated black bread.
he could not help ascribing to his matrimonial entanglements, by joining the army on active service in Poland. With his usual impetuosity and without considering the shattering effect such an announcement, made on the eve of their wedding anniversary, would have on his sick and overwrought wife, he informed her of his decision. What effect this had on the young wife whose nerves were already at the breaking point can be seen from the entry in her diary on Sept. 22:

Tomorrow is our wedding anniversary. Then, hopes for happiness, today -- wretchedness. I thought until now it was a joke; but now he possibly means it. To war! What absurdity! Muddle-headedness? No, that is not it. Simply inconstancy. I don't know whether he does it intentionally or unintentionally but he is trying to arrange our life so as to make me absolutely miserable. He has placed me in such a situation that I have to live under constant threat that if not today, then tomorrow, I would be left alone with the child, and perhaps with another as well. With them it's all a joke, a moment's fancy. Today married, because it suited him, begot children. Tomorrow, wants to go to war and to abandon. I must expect the death of the child. I will never survive this. I do not believe in his love for fatherland. This strange enthusiasm at the age of 35!

But Sophia did not have to worry so much, for Tolstoy actually went to war without leaving her or his child. But he did not take part in the Polish War but in the War of 1812. Out of his mental crisis emerged one of the most memorable characters in War and Peace, Prince Andrei, who goes to war leaving his
pregnant wife (the little princess) with his father and sister at Lyesye Gorye. In creating Prince Andrei, he made a safety-valve for his own unbearable, pent-up emotions. In his novel, Tolstoy makes it clear that Prince Andrei goes to was because he is unhappily married. He says to Pierre Bezoukhov:

I go because the life that I lead here, this life -- is not my cup of tea ... Never, never marry until you can tell yourself that you have accomplished everything that you were capable of; until, and only until you have ceased to love the woman you have selected, until you understand her completely; otherwise you will be disappointed and will make a fearful and irrevocable mistake. Marry when you are a totally useless old man ... otherwise all that is good and sublime in you, everything will be wasted on trifles. If you expect to accomplish something in the future, at every step you will feel everything is finished -- all doors are closed. Oh! God, what I would not have given in order to have remained unmarried.147

Can one seriously believe that this creative genius who was already so absorbed in his titanic effort to produce his epic War and Peace, could possibly tear himself away from this task? Moreover, there is ample evidence, not only in his diary but in his correspondence, that he himself in his heart of hearts knew that nothing could give better scope, better opportunity for artistic self-expression than a healthy married life in a quiet, unhurried and, on the whole, peaceful atmosphere of Yasnaya Polyana. At timed he was horrified at his more than inconsiderate behaviour towards his young wife. He writes in his diary:

147 Collected Works, Vol. P.
Sonya, forgive me! I know it only now that I am guilty (one word illegible) and to what extent I am at fault. There are days when one lives as it were not by one's own volition but obeying some strange irresistible law. Such was I, during these days, in my behaviour towards you; and who -- I. And yet I always thought that, although I have many failings I still have one-tenth of a feeling of magnanimity. I was rude and cruel -- and towards whom? To that only being who gave me the best happiness of my life, the only being that loved me. Sonya, I know such things cannot be forgotten or forgiven; but I know and understand better than you do, my own base-ness, Sonya, darling, I am guilty, repulsive (illegible word). In me there lives an excellent man who, at times, sleeps. Love him Sonya! and do not bear a grudge against him.148

That Tolstoy crossed out this entry in a fit of rage becomes evident from what he says only a few weeks later on Oct. 6:

All this is gone, and all is untrue. I am happy in her but dissatisfied fearfully with myself. I am rolling rolling downhill towards death and have barely the strength to stop. I don't want death -- I want, I love immortality ... the die is cast long ago: literature, art, pedagogy, family.

The reader has no doubt as to what Tolstoy means by literature and art for already on Aug. 2nd Sophia had written in

148 This entry is quoted by Sophia in her diary Aug. 3, 1863, but its authenticity is verified by the Editor, Sergei Tolstoy, as coming from his diary. The entry was written in Tolstoy's own hand and was later crossed out by him, but except for the two illegible words, was readable. Apparently, in another fit of rage against his wife he decided to withdraw this entry, but in such a way that it could be still read. Did he mean to half cancel the entry -- and yet to leave it for Sonya and posterity?
her diary, "He suffers and writes". That Tolstoy was by now completely immersed in his literary work is corroborated by a letter from his sister-in-law, Tatyana¹⁴⁹ to Michael Polyvanov (Sophia's former fiance), "Lyovochka, most of the time, sits in his study. He is working on his new novel which he recently began." What novel she is referring to can be gathered from the fact that at the beginning of September he asked his clever sister-in-law, Elizabeth, to help him locate historical sources for his work. He wants books dealing with the War of 1812, he is particularly interested in memoirs, letters of contemporaries especially throwing light on social habits of that period. On Sept.15, Elizabeth Behrs wrote to him sending a list of Russian books covering this period, and she adds that there is hardly any material dealing with the social life of that period because people were so interested in political events, which were so momentous at that time, that few people wrote of family life and day-to-day events. Soon the entire Behrs family¹⁵⁰ was pressed into service to gather materials. In a letter, Sept. 5, 1863, his father-in-law, Dr. Behrs, writes: "Last night we talked much about 1812 in connection with your intention to write a novel on that period." Behrs goes on to relate his own and his friend's recollections of that year. He also managed to arrange an interview for Tolstoy with the imperial physician, Marcus, who, in 1812, was regimental surgeon and as such took part in the entire campaign:

¹⁴⁹ My Life at Home and at Yasnaya Polyana, p. 82.
¹⁵⁰ Not only the Behrs family, but also Alexandra Tolstoy, for in her letter to Tolstoy, Mar. 5, 1864, she writes, "I cannot get for you any letters or memoirs of the year 1812."
What effect this family life, against which Tolstoy complains so much and so bitterly, had on his creative ability -- can be gathered from his letter Oct.17, 1863, to his aunt, Alexandra Tolstoy:

Never have I felt my mental abilities, and even my moral powers, so free and so capable of work. And this work I have. This work -- a novel dealing with the period of 1810-20, in which I have been totally absorbed all autumn ... Now I am an author with all my soul. I write and meditate as never before, I am a happy and peaceful husband and father, without mysteries for anybody and without desire for change.

This feeling did not weaken, but grew and intensified with time, for on Jan.23, 1865, he writes again to his aunt:

Do you remember that I once wrote to you that people are mistaken to expect happiness devoid of labour, deception and sorrow, when everything goes smoothly and happily? I was mistaken then, such happiness exists and I have experienced it for three years and every day it becomes more serene and deeper ... I have fearfully changed since my marriage and much of what I accepted as gospel truth is now incomprehensible to me and vice-versa.

Later, on July 5, unable to express adequately the complete transformation that married life wrought in him, he resorts to an extraordinarily happily chosen and vivid simile:

I feel myself like an apple tree which was growing with low branches in all directions and which life now has pruned, clipped, tied, and propped so that it would not hinder others and itself would develop a strong root system
and would grow in a single stem. Thus
I grow: I know not whether the fruit will
be good or whether I will wither altogether.
I do know that I grow correctly.

How constantly Tolstoy was preoccupied with the process
of his inward change and with what care and interest of a creative
artist he observed it, is shown in his letter to his aunt and con-
idant, Alexandra, Nov.14, 1865:

I got into the rut of family life which
inspite of any pride whatsoever, inspite
of any necessity of self-realization, will
force one to stay in this deep rut and
will drive one along this rutted road of
moderation, duty, and model calmness. So
be it! Never have I been so conscious of
my entire self and of my soul as I am now
when a limit has been set to my aspirations
and passions.

It is interesting to note the opinion of Tolstoy held
in the past, before his marriage, by two keen observers of human
character: S. Turgenev and V.P. Botkin. The former said: "A
pack of hounds is chasing about and about to exhaustion under
Tolstoy's skull", and the latter described him as a most diffi-
cult man to live with because "his head is full of projected
writings, theories, and schemes which are changing almost daily."

However, to what extent Tolstoy's whole outlook on life
had been transformed by his marriage to Sophia and by his conscious
realization of fatherhood, can be well realized from a further
quotation from his letter of Nov.14:
I have completely lost interest in all social questions, and I am in sympathy neither with the reactionary tendencies of Katkov's magazine nor with the political theories contrary to that tendency. I do not approve the fact that the Poles are forbidden to speak Polish but I am not angry with those who forbid them, and I do not accuse the Movravyevs and the Cherkasskys, it is a matter of indifference to me who is strangling the Poles or whether Schleswig-Holstein is taken or not or who delivered a speech at a Zemstvo meeting. Butchers slaughter bulls which we eat and I am not obliged to either accuse them or feel compassion.

Who can recognize the moralizing and idealistic Tolstoy of the days of Valeria's courtship, or of the Yasnaya Polyana magazine and school days, or even of the conscious-striken landlord in Squire's Morning? However, the apple tree is not completely pruned and tied. It still occasionally shoots forth a stray rebellious branch. Contrary to what he writes to his aunt, he can still feel compassion for others. He has not completely stifled his social conscience. On May 16 he writes to A.A. Fet:

Lately I have been delighted with my own affairs, however, the general situation, that is the coming disaster of hunger which confronts our people tortures me more and more every day. How strange it is ... that our table there are pink radishes, yellow butter, golden crusted soft bread on a clean table-cloth, in the garden greenery, our young ladies in their muslin dresses and delighted that they have shade, there this devil hunger is already doing his work. He is covering fields with pig-weed, producing cracks in the parched earth, making sores on the peasants' feet, cracking the cattle's hoofs and he will so inflame and arouse them that perhaps even we under our shady lime trees, in our muslin dresses, with our yellow
Ordinarily speaking one might pass this by as the desire to write an interesting and provoking letter with the wish to impress and to shock, something that all his life Tolstoy was fond of doing. But this is not so, for Tolstoy, with his keen perception and ability to analyse a particular situation and his desire to discover the cause or root of things, his habit of "grubeln" to which he himself often refers, was deeply worried about the famine and could not escape the feeling that he, as a landowner, was partially responsible. There is a lengthy entry in his notebook dated Aug. 13, 1865, which substantiates his feelings. This entry was made three months after his letter to Fet and after the magnitude of the disaster had become apparent to him:

The world-wide problem that confronts Russia is to give to the world the idea of a social order not based on private ownership of land, "la propriete c'est le vol" remains a greater truth than that of the English constitution as long as mankind persists. -- This is an absolute truth. There are, however, other truths, subordinate, that can be deduced from it. The first of these relative truths is the outlook of the Russian people upon private property. The Russian people reject the form of property which is the most stable and the most independent of labour, the form which is more restrictive as to the right of acquisition by others, i.e. landed property. This truth is not a mere fancy, it is a fact which finds embodiment in the communal ownership of land by peasants and some Cossacks. This truth is equally well understood by the Russian

151 In this letter Tolstoy refers to the terrible drought in the province of Tula in the summer of 1865. Collected Works, Vol.21, p.179.
scientist and the muzhik who says, 'Let them inscribe us amongst the Cossacks and the land will be free'. This idea has a future. Russian revolution cannot be based only upon it. Russian revolution will not be against the Czar or despotism, but against landed property.

Prophetic, yes! And yet how incongruous coming from the lips of a fairly large land owner, soon to acquire other lands in the province of Tula and some 20,000 acres of virgin land in the Samara steppes. But it is not incongruous when it is realized that Tolstoy is a well-pruned, clipped, and tied apple tree, growing correctly as it must. It may strain at times, it may try to break its bonds but, for the time being, it is completely constrained and knows it.

Though Tolstoy settled down to the lot of the pruned tree, he did not do it without grumbling or even rebellion at times. As always, these rebellions were promoted by a gnawing subconscious feeling that his efforts to find the goal of his life (for which he searched so desperately before marriage) in quiet egoistical family atmosphere were ultimately doomed to failure. This mood was well reflected in a letter he wrote to his sister-in-law, Tanya:

Yes, I am arguing with myself now for the second day. It is very sad but this world is composed only of egoists -- amongst whom I am the first. I do not reproach anyone but I think that this is a very bad feature and that egoism is absent only from the relationship of husband and wife when they love each other. For two months we have been living in complete solitude with children who
are the greatest egoists of all. Nobody bothers about us. We have been forgotten in Pirogovo. In Moscow, probably also. And I myself gradually begin to forget. I am incapable of expressing what I really want to say, but you are very young and that is why, perhaps, you will understand. But for the last two days one thought haunts me. The Fets, especially, brought on this mood. How good is the life of two people when both know how to love. Please write (it does not matter whether it is true or not) that you love us for our own sakes. I got to love Dorka very much because she is not an egoist ... Read this letter to no-one -- they will think I have gone out of my head.

That Tolstoy must have once again been passing through a spiritual crisis is indicated by another entry in his note book dated Nov.27, 1866:

The poet takes the best out of his life and puts it into his creative work. That is why his work is beautiful and his life evil.

The fact that Tolstoy should share with Tanya these innermost thoughts, which he did not confide to his diary, or share with his wife, indicates some very special mental or spiritual relationship existing between him and his young sister-in-law. His son, Ilya, throws some very interesting light on this relationship in his Memoirs when he writes:

152 The estate of his brother Sergei.
153 His Hunting dog.
154 Collected Works, Vol.21, p.177
Later, when I was already grown up, I often asked myself the question, Was father in love with Aunt Tanya? I think now that he was. I ask the reader to understand me, however, I do not mean being vulgarly in love ... the feeling which, as it seems to me, father entertained for Aunt Tanya, the French call, "Amitie amoureuse" ... To the question whether Tolstoy was jealous of Aunt Tanya I shall answer; if one can be jealous of a dream, then of course, yes. Outwardly, however, the relationship of father and Aunt Tanya was that of brother and sister. They always were to each other "Lyovotchka" and "Tanya", and so they remained till the end. The dream has wilted but wasn't shattered.156

It is impossible to doubt that most of these grumblings and rebellions and even at times periods of seemingly hopeless despair during Tolstoy's first years of marriage can be attributed mainly to the exhausting process of inner preparation for his first truly great literary work -- War and Peace. A work which inspite of its intensity often left Tolstoy completely mentally exhausted bore no visible fruit and this exasperated him. Already, on Nov.17, 1864, he writes to A.A. Fet:

I am in a state of utter dejection but write nothing. And yet I work till it hurts. You can't imagine how hard I find this preliminary work of deep ploughing of the field I must sow.157

Tolstoy must be exaggerating his lack of progress for towards the end of the same month he writes again to his friend:

156 Ilya Tolstoy, My Reminiscences, Moscow, 1933, p.63.
157 Collected Works, Vol.21, p.175
I have written quite a bit of my novel this autumn. 'Ars longa, vita brevis', I say to myself every day. If one could succeed in doing one hundredth of that which one conceives but actually only one ten-thousandth materializes. Yet the realization that I can, -- is a source of real happiness to the writer. You know this feeling. This year I experienced it with particular force.

And in another letter to Fet, he writes triumphantly on Jan. 23, 1865:

You know, I have a surprise for you: when a horse threw me and I broke my arm, upon regaining consciousness I said to myself, 'I'm a writer! And I am a writer. Living isolated and quietly, but a writer. In a few days, will appear the first part of "1805" (the first title of War and Peace) Please let me know your opinion of it in detail. Your opinion, as well as the opinion of a man I love less and less as I grow up, -- is dear to me -- Turgeniev. He will understand. That which I have printed prior to this I consider now a mere trial of pen.

Then, rather significantly he ends, "I am glad you love my wife, although I love her less than my novel. Yet she is my wife, you know."

From all that is known of Tolstoy's past life before he was married, especially on the bases of observations made about him by people who knew him closely, particularly his literary friends such as Turgeniev, Botkin, Nekrasov, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that Tolstoy, as he was then, was utterly incapable of sustained, unremitting effort which this breaking of the virgin land cost him and which eventually led to War and Peace.
All that he had produced and published hitherto were actually sketches, mere trifles in comparison to this work -- he himself realized this when he referred to them as "trials of the pen". His only other work of some length, The Cossacks, although he worked on it, on and off, for ten years, remained unfinished till after his marriage, although pledged as payment for a gambling debt to Katkov. It is significant that he completely reworked it during the first winter of his married life. Nobody realized this change, this rapid growth, better than Tolstoy, and for all his lamentations for his lost idealism, his lost self, for all his recriminations against his wife, he well realized it was she who supplied the atmosphere necessary for this mental growing up, and it was her loving hands that carefully and persistently pruned, clipped, tied, and propped the rebellious apple tree.

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158 In Tolstoy's diary, Dec. 19, 1862, he writes: "Another month of happiness ... I am working steadily and everything seems easy to me. Finished the first part of The Cossacks.

(Leon Tolstoy's Journal Intime -- inedit) Paris, Trianon, 1926,
CHAPTER VI

On August 10, 1866, Sophia Tolstoy made a very significant entry in her diary:

We had guests ... The fat Sologub with two young sons. He kept telling me that I am an ideal wife for a writer. That a wife must be a nurse of talent. I am grateful to him, and will try my very best to be a nurse to Lyovochka's talent.

To what extent is this statement, made by Sologub, true? And to what extent did Tolstoy need a nurse? What are the facts?

When Leo Tolstoy began his extraordinary courtship of Sophia in the late summer of 1862, he was in an over-excited state of mind, perhaps one could even say he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The reasons for this mental condition are so complex and involved that they cannot all be discussed in detail. However, the most significant amongst them was undoubtedly an intense dissatisfaction with himself and his life resulting from utter inability to reconcile his extraordinarily high, and undoubtedly genuine, ideals with the life he led -- a life he was pathologically incapable of changing. Another of the reasons was his distress at the relative lack of progress in his literary output, which was even intensified by an intuitive realization of his latent genius. The effect produced by these emotions was completely distorted and greatly magnified by his haunting fear.

A well-known writer (1813-82) who had known Tolstoy as a young man.
of dying young — a fear which was, as a matter of fact, not un­founded. For in the short space of a few years two of his brothers died of T.B, and he was suspected by doctors of having it incip­iently. Preceding his courtship he was living under constant dread of an early and painful death which was made vivid by the recent death at Hyères of his favourite brother, Nicholas, whom he nursed alone and who literally died in his arms. He was driven to the breaking point of nervous endurance by these con­flicting mental stresses: the realization of his genius, a des­perate desire to write, and fear that he would die before accomplishing anything. His distress was increased by his in­ability to settle down or indeed to find an atmosphere conducive

160 To what extent this death affected him can be gathered from one of the most brilliant and poignant chapters in Anna Karenina, describing the death of Levin's brother Nicholas. There are two significant details: This is the only chapter, in the long novel, that bears a title -- "Death", and the name of the man who dies is "Nicholas". It is here, in describing Nicholas Levin's death, that Tolstoy drew on his memories of the death of both his brothers, Nicholas and Dmitri. For instance, the death in the novel occurs in a Russian provincial hotel, as did Dmitri's, and the bringing of the miraculous ikon is also associated with Dmitri's death. But inspite of this, it cannot be doubted that in describing Levin's inner emotions at the death of his brother, Tolstoy is describing hour by hour, day by day, his own fearful experience when alone at Hyères with his dying brother who was not only his favourite brother but had been an object of profoundest veneration from his childhood.

161 "I still live and I still love you. I didn't write to you for so long for the following reason: I passed a hard and bad summer. I cough and I thought -- I was nearly sure -- that I was going to die soon. I drag on my last days, it was no life." (Letters of Tolstoy and His Cousin Alexandra Tolstoy 1859-93 London, Methuen, 1929, p.59)
to work. After the death of Nicholas, he practically gave up creative literature and threw himself with abandoned desperation into teaching children at Yasnaya Polyana and formulating new educational theories in his magazine. It is hard to doubt that he gave up literary work only because, in his state of mind, he found it impossible to create.

When this is remembered, his entire behaviour during the courtship, his distraught entries in his diary, his intention of shooting himself should she refuse, the incredible demand that the wedding should take place the very next day, become more or less comprehensible.

This unseemly haste to burn his bridges is in great contrast to the extraordinary caution and procrastination that he exhibited during his engagement to Valeria, and can be explained by his physical inability to endure longer the indecision. He realized that had the marriage been delayed for any length of time he would probably have broken off the engagement. Yet his instinct told him he was right in marrying Sophia Behrs, and that in this marriage lay his only escape from the horror of his present situation which, if allowed to continue, might destroy him.

Much has been said and written, especially by so-called Tolstoyans, about Sophia's unsuitability as a wife for Tolstoy.

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Tolstoy's condition was made even more unbearable by financial difficulties. He was still unable to cure himself of a life-long habit of gambling and only a few months before his courtship of Sophia, lost 1000 roubles. Unable to pay this sum, he managed to escape from this embarrassing and distasteful situation, which was a great blow to his pride, by selling the as yet unfinished Cossacks to Katkov.
Tolstoy, himself, helped to create this impression by repeatedly stating in his diary and elsewhere that he actually never loved her and that the marriage was in the nature of a cross to be borne patiently. However, this was not the impression produced on those privileged few who knew the Tolstoys' intimately at this period of their life, and Sologub was not alone in considering Sophia the ideal wife for Tolstoy, the writer. His opinion was fully shared by the novelist, Turgeniev, and the poet, Fet. That they were not mistaken is fully borne out by Sophia's behaviour from the very beginning. In spite of her youth, she was not unaware of the disturbed state of Tolstoy's mind and that in marrying him she was not undertaking an altogether easy task. In understanding the man she may have been helped by her mother who knew Tolstoy intimately in her childhood and knew that he was capable of most extreme and violent emotions. Sophia from the very beginning seemed to realize her role vis-a-vis her husband, that of the nurse of his talent. How otherwise could be explained the decision of a girl of 18, who had never travelled any further than her grandfather's estate in the province of Tula, and who like any normal girl of her age wanted to enjoy her life, to forego a honeymoon abroad, (which Tolstoy gallantly offered her) and to resolutely choose to go to Yasnaya Polyana immediately after the wedding ceremony? This was indeed a sacrifice in view of the fact

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When Tolstoy was 9 and she 11, he had a violent crush on her, quite unusually intense for a child of that age. In a fit of mad jealousy he had violently pushed her off the verandah. The fall resulted in quite severe injury to her ankle, making her lame for some time.
that Sophia had no illusions as to the conditions that awaited her. Before marriage she, with her mother and sisters, had visited Tolstoy and spent a night at Yasnaya Polyana. In her reminiscences she tells of the crude homemade furniture and the lack of such simple amenities as beds, for she had to sleep on a chair. She, herself, was by no means spoiled by any luxury in the Kremlin flat, yet she commented on the conditions at Yasnaya Polyana:

We were given the large room with the arched ceiling, not only simply but poorly furnished. Round the room stood padded benches painted white, with hard cushions instead of backs and the same kind of seats, all covered in blue and white striped ticking. Here also was a large long white painted armchair, padded to match. The table was homemade of rough unpainted birch. In the ceiling were iron rings, formerly used for saddles, hams, etc. when the room was used as a store house at the time of Leo Nikolaevich's grandfather, Prince Volkonsky. We and Dunyasha (Yergolskaya's maid) began to prepare for the night when suddenly Leo Nikolaevich entered and Dunyasha informed him she had made three beds on the padded benches but for the fourth guest there was no bed. "What about the armchair?" said Leo Nikolaevich pushing up the armchair and placing a footstool by it. "I will sleep on the chair." I exclaimed.

164
As was previously mentioned, Tolstoy had sold the original manor house to be wrecked while he was serving at Sebastopol. All that remained were two small annexes. This room was a basement of one of them. Later this room became world famous for, because of its quietness and coolness, Tolstoy used it as his summer study. There is a famous picture by Repin of Tolstoy writing at his desk in this room with his scythe and spade leaning against the wall. It shows the arched ceiling and the plain board floor.

165 Tolstoy, in a letter to Dr. Behrs, gives his own picture of Yasnaya Polyana soon after the marriage, "the need to count every penny, and to be afraid that we will not have enough money for this or that. The desire to try and the inability to do so, and worst of all the feeling of shame for everything in our house is shabby and run down." (Tolstoy and his Wife - Tikhon Polner, New York, W.W. Norton & Co. 1945. p.73.)
No doubt this readiness to rough it favourably impressed Tolstoy as had, previously, Lyubov Behrs' remarks about the extraordinary parsimony of her second daughter, Sophia. And he was completely right; for few Moscow society girls would have been willing to live under conditions existing at Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy's brother Sergei could not even attend the wedding in Moscow for he had to dash off to Yasnaya Polyana to clean up the almost incredible mess there, and in spite of his frantic efforts, only succeeded in getting Tolstoy's bedroom redecorated. Later, Sophia described the deplorable state of the grounds surrounding the house — overgrown with weeds into which servants threw household refuse.

There seems to exist an impression among Tolstoyan scholars that there was a period in Tolstoy's life when he was an exemplary landlord, dating from the time of his marriage in 1862 to roughly 1877, the year which signalized his intense interest in religious matters and his short-lived return to strict Orthodoxy. His biographers, both Russian and foreign, are almost unanimous in this respect, and in fairness it must be said that his brother-in-law, Behrs, seemed to share this view. But a careful study of source materials dealing with this period, such as Tolstoy's and his wife's diaries and their correspondence, as well as the testimony of some of his immediate neighbours, will dispel this notion. This myth about Tolstoy being able to find time to attend to the minutest details of estate management at the time that he was grappling with the stupendous task of writing War and Peace and Anna Karenina, possibly stems from the extraordinary, enthusiastic
impulsiveness with which he plunged into new projects such as the distillery; the establishment of a large apiary; the buying of new lines of pure bred stock, Suffolk sheep, Yorkshire and Japanese pigs, or draught stallions, and the planting of an immense apple orchard. He wrote numerous letters bubbling with enthusiasm for these projects. Even such an unlikely person as Dr. Behrs was enlisted into procuring young pigs of a special Japanese breed from a piggery situated in, of all unlikely places, the town of Moscow. The myth of his success as an estate manager was further strengthened by the fact that the value of his estate rose to over half a million roubles by the time he divided it amongst his family in 1891. Actually, this was largely due to a lucky investment in land. At various times in the '70's he bought large tracts of virgin land in the Bashkir steppes. This land appreciated incredibly in value, rising by 1000% in twenty years. However, after Tolstoy's marriage there was a steady improvement in the management of his property, but this was undoubtedly due to the keen eye, inborn parsimony, and business aptitude of the new mistress of Yasnaya Polyana. There is ample evidence that Tolstoy paid very little attention, not only to the main administration, but even to the new projects he launched with such enthusiasm. In a letter dated May 16, 1865, he writes to Fet: 167

166 Supposed to be the largest in Europe at the time.
167 Fet was not only a lyrical poet but an extremely practical businesslike estate manager.
The affairs on my estate are progressing favourably i.e. they bother me very little and that is all I ask ... The situation of a landlord these days is very like that of a shareholder whose shares have lost all value and are no longer quoted on the stock exchange. Yes, the whole business is bad. For my part, I settle the whole business in such a way so it will require from me the least participation and care and not disturb my peace of mind.

Again he writes to Fet, Aug. 30, 1869, from Yasnaya Polyana, throwing an interesting light on his activities that summer and leaving no doubt whatsoever as to the interests that dominated his mind to the exclusion of all thoughts of such mundane matters as breeding, crops, management in general. Furthermore, this letter was written at the height of the harvesting following the intense activity of haymaking. For it is the two months of July and August that witness the period of activity most vital to the success of the estate:

I have been making plans to pay you a visit and still hope to do so but the sixth volume which I hoped to finish a month ago is not yet ready ... Can you imagine what this summer brought me? -- a boundless admiration for Schopenhauer and one spiritual delight after another, delights such as I had never previously experienced. I have ordered all his works and keep on reading them (I have also read Kant) and I can assure you that not a single University student during his course studied as much, or discovers as much, as I have done this summer. I do not know whether I will ever change my opinion but at present I am convinced Schopenhauer is the greatest of geniuses. You say that he is so-so and has written something about philosophy. Written something! It is a whole world in itself in
an amazingly clear and beautiful reflection.
I began to translate him.\textsuperscript{168}

It is curious that Sophia Tolstoy says very little in the first volume of her diary of her activities connected with the management of the estate. Here, she records mostly her emotional experiences in connection with her somewhat uneven and always complicated relationship with her husband, and a detailed account of her children's and her own illnesses, of which there seems to be no end. But her correspondence with her husband contains a most interesting record of her activities as a tireless transcriber of his works, as a sympathetic, though at all times thoughtful and penetrating critic,\textsuperscript{169} and as an inspirer of his often flagging belief in his genius. It also contains evidence of her gradual taking over of the administration of the estate and of his other affairs such as the publishing of his work. Her letters leave the reader in no doubt whatsoever that the taking over of the management of his affairs was not the result of a domineering character or a love of such work, for her real interest lay in her children, the nursery, the household, and his literary works; but this other activity was forced upon her for, no matter where she went, she saw neglect, mismanagement, and appalling waste against which her orderly and methodical nature rebelled. This desire to prevent the conditions she saw was prompted by the fact that she was constantly in want of money for the immediate needs of the

\textsuperscript{168} Collected Works, Vol.21, p.184.

\textsuperscript{169} As a result of much of her criticism Tolstoy actually rewrote portions of War and Peace.
household and was always worried about the future material well-being and security of her rapidly increasing family. It is quite obvious that Sophia's maternal instinct was developed far above average, and at no time could she separate her intense love for her children from her equally intense desire to see them well provided for. The following entry in her diary illustrates this point:

I love my children passionately. I love them until it hurts. The slightest pain experienced by any of them drives me into despair, their slightest smile, even a loving look from them brings tears of joy to my eyes ... what an effort it costs me to suckle them, it often exhausts me. If I loved them less how much easier would have been my life.170

In Sophia's third letter171 to her husband we see her almost pathetically urgent desire to help her husband with the estate management:

It is a pity you arrived late for the hunt, it would have been so jolly. I am feeding the pups all they can eat and the white one is growing bigger and bigger. I tried to do my very best to impress on Ivan Ivanovitch the importance of finishing seeding. He assured me he has already given all necessary orders and that they are already seeding. He told me proudly that he was short of workers and that he went during the night to catch horses and then in lieu of fines172 he forced some men to bind the sheaves on one desiatina and some on two.173

170 Diary of Sophia Tolstoy - Aug.27, 1866. She has already three children.
172 What Sophia meant was that their steward, being short of labour, rounded up at night some of the peasants' horses that had strayed by accident or design into the Tolstoy meadows. Under Russian law, landlords could impound trespassing animals and impose fines at their discretion on the peasants.
173 A little less than three acres.
On Nov. 22, 1864, she writes again to Tolstoy who was staying in Moscow while his arm, which had been injured when he was hunting and thrown from his horse, was mending:

Today, I spent the whole day copying and I hope to finish soon and I am taking advantage of every spare second to do what I can -- it's coming along. As soon as I finish I will not fail to forward it to you. I would like to remind you what you, yourself, told me. Do not read to anyone your novel, especially not to anyone who may criticise it. Remember, it is not the first time you are confused and now what you write is so frightfully important. Somebody will tell you something foolish and you will take it to heart. Should you require some copying done give it to mother -- she is an excellent copyist and would be delighted to do it for you.

This letter throws a most interesting light on Sophia's intensely jealous nature -- jealous of her husband, jealous of the wet-nurse for her first child, and particularly jealous of his works. She felt she had an exclusive role as nursemaid to his talent, she could not bear the thought of anyone usurping her role, even temporarily. Three days later, after recounting the endless petty troubles with children, the steward, the cook, etc., all the dreary details of house and estate management, of which she, as yet, knows so little, she tells him with enthusiasm of the one thing that lies close to her heart:

How beautiful is everything you left me to copy! Princess Mary, especially, appeals to me. It is as if I see her living before my eyes. What a lovable, sympathetic character. However, I can't stop
criticizing you -- your Prince Andrei is, in my opinion, still vague. One does not know what sort of man he is. If he's clever how is it he doesn't understand and cannot explain to himself his relations to his wife? The old Prince is excellent. However, the first version, which you did not like, I prefer. Already, I have formed an ideal which doesn't suit the present Prince. The scene of Prince Andrei's departure is marvellous. Also Princess Mary with the little icon is charming. What a delight it was for me to copy all this!

Then obviously worried that Moscow distractions may prevent her husband from working on the novel so dear to her heart, she tactfully prods him, "do you write in Moscow?" Then she abruptly turns to business and money matters and becomes direct, explicit, and almost peremptory in her advice in relation to the publication of War and Peace, which seems strange considering she was barely 20 and quite inexperienced in such matters:

Have you seen Katkov? As far as money matters are concerned let me tell you, do not publish in serial form. All those who subscribe to the Russian Messenger won't buy the book, and most of these subscribers are well-to-do. Better wait. Perhaps you can print it yourself! 174

Suddenly realizing that perhaps she has been too forward and forthright, she tactfully adds: "This is, of course, none of my business, but it just occurred to me."

174 For all his experience with publishing, Tolstoy followed her advice, indicating his appreciation of her business acumen. He withdrew War and Peace from publication in serial form and published it himself. The financial returns from this first venture exceeded their wildest hopes.
Her letter of Dec. 6, 1864, records her first active entry into the management of Yasnaya Polyana, but she is driven into it by sheer necessity for Tolstoy is still in Moscow and things at Yasnaya have come to such a pass that something had to be done. There is abundant evidence that, after his marriage, Tolstoy made desperate efforts to improve his financial situation by more efficient management of his estates and threw himself often with more enthusiasm than caution into all sorts of projects which ranged from the establishment of distilleries and the breeding of Japanese hogs to such fantastic projects as establishing a coffee plantation at Yasnaya Polyana. To complicate matters he suddenly decided that:

Managers, foremen, and overseers are merely burdens on the estate. You can prove this by firing all the overseers and sleeping till 10 o'clock. You will see for yourself there will be no change for the worse. I have made this experiment and am completely convinced.

Tolstoy proceeded to divide the estate management between himself and his wife. Sophia was to look after the estate office, household affairs, the cattle and the payment of wages. Tolstoy was to look after fieldwork, vegetables, bees and forests. This experiment was a complete failure. Tikhon Polner says:

The plans seem sound but in practice everything went wrong. The Japanese hogs died one after another, and the reason for this came to light much too late. To look after the hogs, Tolstoy had hired an old overseer, who had lost his previous job on account of drunkenness. His new occupation did not appeal to him. Later he confessed, 'I would
give the hogs as little food as possible to make them weak. It worked! If the next time I saw them, they were still squeaking, I gave them just a little food. Whenever they became quiet I knew the end had come! The hams they sent to sell in Moscow were not properly salted or cured. In warm weather they spoiled and had to be given away. The butter went bad, and green mold appeared around the edges of the wooden cask. The field work fared no better. A fourteen-year old boy could not see that his master's orders were carried out on hundreds of acres. Only the young orchard and the pine woods thrived.  

But what Sophia did was done with efficiency and firmness, and showed a degree of practical commonsense quite remarkable considering her background. After commenting on the excellent condition of sheep and Yorkshire pigs under the care of a German overseer, she tells her husband:

I told the German that he must try to do his very best and he answered me he was doing his utmost to please us, and it does seem that everything is in splendid order.

She then describes her impressions of the cattle barns:

There, the conditions are frightful. The calves, especially, the three bull calves are so thin one can see their ribs. The bull calves which should receive nothing but milk are munching hay which is scattered on the ground and trodden under foot. I blew her up and she was fearfully embarrassed and lost her ability to talk fast. I ordered her to tie up the bull calves and keep them away from the hay. I told her to give them more milk and to pick up the hay. However,

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Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife* New York, W.W.Norton & Co. 1945, p.78
I fear the calves are spoiled, their meat will not be white and tender as it should be. Then I inspected the pigs. It seems to me they are well fed and fat. However, I found no feed before them. Anna Petrovna assured me she fed them and said it was impossible to have food always before them. The young bull we bought from Kopyelov is also in poor shape. She gave him some oats while I was there but hay was scattered and tramped under hoof. I blew her up for that.

After further details about a sick cow she adds:

The cows have had no "barda"176 for four days as the distillery is not working and Anna Petrovna assures me this is why the animals are so thin ... Everything is clean in the cow-shed except oat straw was scattered about and I ordered it raked together.

Her perspicacity, and realization of the necessity of thrift, would do credit to an experienced farm woman, but considering this is her first attempt at practical management, was truly remarkable. Then, she proudly adds in her letter:

After this I went to look after my poultry. This, of course, does not interest you; still I must tell you that two of my hens have been already laying for a week. Come home, to eat fresh eggs! Generally speaking, I can tell you I have assumed the role of a true mistress and no longer feel myself shy or influenced by the double-talk of any Anna Petrovnas. I forgot to tell you that Anna Petrovna assured me they were thin because they had diarrhoea but that is her fault."177 Why should they

176 Liquid residue from the distillery which is excellent cattle food.  
177 Here Sophia seems to be inconsistent as almost every letter to her husband informs him that either one or all of her children have diarrhoea which lasts for weeks. This evidently so impressed Tolstoy that he ended his epic War and Peace on a triumphant note of the happy arrest of a prolonged attack of diarrhoea suffered by the first-born son of Pierre.
have diarrhoea if they are in a warm place and fed warm milk? Anna Petrovna also told me that the cows do not drink water because it is taken from the pond and has an evil stench. I do not know whether I have done right or wrong but I have ordered water to be carted from the Voronka (a river near the estate) ... Probably on reading this chatter of mine about the management of the estate you will laugh at me and say: "She is making a show of activity." I must confess that I do pride myself a little on my importance as a mistress.

She then returns to the importance of his literary work:

Why don't you feel like writing? What a pity. It's all the fault of this foul chloroform. Your nerves were also upset the other time. Do you remember? And then you too lost confidence in yourself and were at times morose and assailed by doubts of your own ability. Do not give in to your nerves, my darling Lyovochka, they are fooling you. You are quite incapable of appreciating your own talent. How could you possibly think it could disappear all of a sudden. It's all the fault of this chloroform. Have patience. It will all come right. And if you don't feel like writing we will look after our little pigs, sheep, cows and the Brahmapootra fowl that you are thinking of getting; we will walk over the fresh snow, enjoy nature, read aloud, and play with the children.

This is in reply to a very long letter from Tolstoy dated Dec.17, 1864. After giving news of the Behrs family he suddenly gives way to despondency to which he was so subject:

I am always susceptible to praise and your praise of the character of Princess Mary gave me much joy. But today I re-read everything you sent me (fair copy) and it all appeared to me very disgusting and I felt the lack of my arm. I wanted to do
some corrections, to mess it all up --
and I couldn't; anyhow, I have lost faith
in my talent so much more so because yest-
erday I dictated to Liza fearful rubbish.
I know that all this is the result of a
transitory state of mind that will pass.
Perhaps the chloroform affected my nerves.
Possibly all this is due to the tight
bandage on my chest.178

Although Tolstoy says he knows this is temporary and
will pass, Sophia hastens to write to reassure him and to say how
much she believes in his talent. Inspite of her desire to cheer up
her husband, she has her hands full with the many difficulties of
the estate management, to solve which she has to make decisions
of which she hopes her husband will not disapprove, and which she
tries to justify to him, and so she concludes with almost a note
of desperation:

Lyova! At present I am occupied all day
with giving day labourers orders for rations
of vodka.179 Tomorrow is a holiday and I am
going out to see to the farm. I am paying
out money. I borrowed 100 roubles from
Mashenka.180 Where else could I borrow it?
I pay because I simply can't refuse! After
all it doesn't matter to whom we owe the
money, your sister or the workmen, still we
owe it.

This certainly gives an idea of her difficulties. In neither of
his letters does Tolstoy even mention money, and does not seem to
realize the difficult position in which he places her by expecting

178 Referring to the fact his arm was strapped tight to his body.
179 Apparently Tolstoy, like most Russian landlords who had dis-
tilleries, followed the practice of paying part of the wages in
vodka.
180 Tolstoy's sister who lived near.
her to run the estate with none. She, ever resourceful, found a temporary way out of the difficulty. And then she received a letter from him dated Dec. 6. He is once again in a state of despondency and writes:

I have another sorrow. I am beginning to lose interest in my writing. Can you imagine, you stupid creature, with your un-intellectual interests, you have told me the real truth. Whenever I start writing anything historical it doesn't work, it goes haltingly. I try to excuse myself by the condition of my arm which is again subject to doubt ... I am your completely useless husband when I am without you and the children -- now I know this.181

But in spite of all her troubles with her children, the farm, and the workers, she hastens to write to him, and is most repentant that she wrote her last letter in an ill humour (for which Tolstoy had chided her).

I am not complaining, but often I have only five hours sleep at night and sometimes less. All day my head swims, especially when the children have chicken pox and Seryozha diarrhoea ... Lyova darling, how sad I am about your novel. How is it you have gone so completely to pieces? Wherever you are, you are sad and nothing comes right. Why do you despair? Why do you lose courage? Is it possible you lack moral strength to rise above it all? Have you forgotten how your novel delighted you, how you used to think it all out? And now you don't like it any longer. Nonsense, Lyovochka! You will see, when you come back to us and instead of the filthy stone house in the Kremlin you will see our grove of trees lit with bright sun and the currant bushes

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Letters of L. Tolstoy to his Wife, 1862-1910, p.33.
and raspberries, and will remember all our happy life and we will walk together on the freshly fallen snow and fondle our little ones, and you again will start telling me, with a happy face, of your literary plans. You will get rid of your hypochondria ... You will start again dictating to me, your thoughts will come.

Apparently Tolstoy returns to Yasnaya Polyana in mid-winter but is still despondent and unable to write. Hoping to regain his spirits, he decides to go on a long hunting trip that summer in the province of Orel. He took Sophia and the children with him, but left them at Pokrovskoe, with his sister Mary. Here Sophia stayed under extraordinarily primitive conditions, for the main house was not large enough to accommodate them all. They lived in, of all places, a Russian bath-house. But Sophia takes it all in her stride.

On July 29, disturbed by the contents of her husband's letter, written on his hunting trip, in which he again complains of ill-health and depression, she senses the reasons for his condition -- his desperate desire to write but the lack of that atmosphere which would make it possible. She realizes that the distraction of hunting is no cure for his malady. Tactfully, she writes:

How nice it would be if you could return sooner but I am afraid to urge you. Perhaps it is more entertaining for you -- I must not be an egoist.

Gently she tries to rekindle his interest in his work for she knows
that only writing will release the tension produced by the unsatisfied gnawing, creative urge.

Before bathing, I was copying, but it is progressing slowly. I have hardly begun when I am disturbed by the children or the flies that are biting fearfully. Then I would become absorbed in what you have written, I read ahead and begin to think, to debate with myself all your characters and the general plot of your novel. I particularly like Dolokhov. Yet, alas, I can't help feeling I am but one of the vulgar reading public.

What oblique flattery! What intellectual coquetry!

What an effort to seduce the reluctant and despondent Tolstoy back to creative writing, his real love, even at the cost of belittling her own critical abilities of which, not without good reason, she was always so proud. But then, fearful that her contrary husband may resent her gentle prodding she adds:

Lizanka is amazed I can write so much to you. If she could only read what nonsense I write she would laugh at me. But it is so hard for me to end the letter, I hardly think what I am writing.

But she keeps returning to the attack again and again.

On July 31 she writes another letter in the same vein:

Today I was copying and read a bit ahead the part that is new to me. You know the part where the wretched bandaged-up old Mack¹⁸² arrives almost sobbing to tell Kutuzov how he was defeated ... I liked it immensely, that's why I write to you.¹⁸³

¹⁸² The Supreme Commander of the Austrian troops.
¹⁸³ Letters of Sophia Tolstoy to Leo Tolstoy, p.63
This persistent but gentle prodding obviously produced the desired results, for in the autumn of 1366 we find Tolstoy in Moscow where he has gone to arrange for his own illustrated edition of the first volume of his great novel. He is obviously so absorbed with his affairs that he seems to have forgotten the very existence of Yasnaya Polyana where things are going from bad to worse. Sophia, overwhelmed by the day-to-day problem, both of estate and family, sends an almost desperate letter184 to Tolstoy:

Imagine, today, before dinner, without the slightest warning arrived the lanky English governess of the Lvovs with her sister who is to be our governess.185 I was besides myself -- even now all my thoughts are in confusion and I have a fearful headache from excitement ... our total inability to understand each other is terrifying.

However, this trouble with the governess is minor compared to the difficulties she has to cope with in trying to manage the estate.

Please do not laugh at me ... all I am going to tell you is absolutely true. Lyovochka, I am afraid what I write will not please you, but what am I to do? The fact is you left me 50 roubles and it is almost all gone -- ropes, sleighs, wages, trip to Moscow etc. Everyone is telling me, 'The Count has ordered it' -- it must be got.' So that I have nothing to live on. I am told that the Count has ordered the wheat to be shipped when new workmen arrive, and none of them, of course, arrive. I don't know how I can cope with all this.

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184 Letters of Sophia Tolstoy to Leo Tolstoy, p.67
185 Apparently Tolstoy had arranged this but forgotten to inform his wife, who was always terribly agitated by anything unexpected. The governess apparently knew not a word of Russian.
Do please try to hurry and return home as soon as possible. I am all mixed up -- management, children, the English governess and all the rest of it. Lyovochka my darling! How are all of you? What I would not give to tear myself away from these cares and fly to the Kremlin.

But inspite of all these troubles that would overwhelm a woman with stronger nerves than Sophia, she does not neglect to nurse his genius, for she adds:

For sometime I have been greatly uplifted morally by your novel. As soon as I sit down to copy I am carried away into some poetic world and I even imagine that it is not because your novel is so good (of course it is only imagination), but that I am clever myself. Please don't laugh at me. My head is splitting and because of this I am incapable of lying.

Tolstoy's reply to this cry of despair is very characteristic, and his equanimity incredible:

I have received a kind letter from you but it was also disappointing because I had to blame myself, and with reason. Firstly, it is my fault I did not write to the governess or to Lvov; secondly because I didn't leave you enough money. But everything will come right -- I am sure it will come right ... I feel that while you were writing you were tired and ill-humoured, but I like you most in an ill-humour ... Everything will straighten out.

The reason for this state of equanimity is not hard to find. The future of his novel is assured, even the shrewd Katkov

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186 Letters of Leo Tolstoy to Sophia his Wife 1862-1910, p.61
had been willing to pay him 300 roubles a sheet for serial publica-
tion. The tension has gone temporarily, for the first volume
is complete, and he can afford to relax. This release from pent-
up tension is immediately reflected in improved relations with his
wife. On Nov. 12, 1866, she writes in her diary:

We are terribly happy in everything --
in our mutual relations, our children,
and all things. I am ceaselessly occupied
with copying (without reading ahead)
Lyova's novel. To me it is a source of
great delight. I experience, inwardly,
a whole world of impressions and thoughts
... nothing has a greater effect on me
than his thoughts and his talent ... We
often talk about the novel and he, for
some reason or other believes in the
correctness of my judgement and in in-
fluenced by it. This is a source of
great pride to me.

Two days later she writes to him in Moscow:

What are you doing in Moscow? How are you
spending your time? What have you decided
about our Holy of Holies -- your novel.
Now I am beginning to feel that it is your,
therefore my child, and when I sent away
this bundle of sheets to Moscow I felt as
if I had sent away my own child. I am in
a panic that some harm may come to it. I
have grown to love your creation so much.
I doubt that I ever will love anything else,
you may write, as much as this novel.

Anyone knowing Tolstoy's methods of writing will realize what she
meant when Sophia said the novel was her child as well as his.
Sometimes, he dictated directly to her; this was usually done when
he was writing a part that flowed easily with the least effort and
when he consequently was in a good mood. These were the happiest
moments in her life. But such times were rare. As a rule Tolstoy spent hours in his study, leaving as he said "a bit of his flesh in the ink-well" and creating literally out of his own flesh and blood the living characters in his novels, trying to live through their thoughts and emotions and recreate their easy, seemingly unconstrained natural dialogue. This work required such tremendous concentration that he was unable to pay any attention to the legibility of his writing, and when ideas came quickly, tumbling out of his mind like a cataract, his pen could not keep up. Afraid to interrupt his train of thoughts he left many words unfinished and had no time to bother with punctuation. To make matters worse, when he ran out of paper he wrote on any scraps available. The decyphering and piecing together of all this material in the raw was much easier for Sophia to manage when he passed it daily to her and was at home to help. But he had another peculiarity. He would write for weeks on end, suffering from excruciating headaches, till he was in a state of exhaustion and then leave Yasnaya Polyana and go hunting or visiting in Moscow. He would leave behind a great pile of material for her to copy and Sophia was left to her own devices to straighten out what he, himself, called "all this mess". How well she acquitted herself in this stupendous task, comparable to a gigantic jig-saw puzzle, can be gathered from the fact that from the very beginning of their married life she and Tolstoy had made a pact to write to each other every day when either was absent, a pact that was, with rare and usually justifiable omissions, kept at this time; and although all her letters to her husband are extant, there is
not a single one in which she asks for clarification or makes a complaint about her difficulties in copying. Without fail, the fair copy, made in her neat, precise, legible hand, is either ready for him on return or sent off by mail. But this was only the beginning of her herculean task. For Tolstoy's hands were again itching, in his own words, "to mess it all up". What this amounted to can only be understood by one who has seen the manuscript or a photostatic copy of it. Passage after passage, often a whole page, is crossed out and re-written on the margin in a small, cramped, impatient hand. Few artists were more dissatisfied with their work or more critical than Tolstoy, who would repeat this process again and again. His brother-in-law and biographer, S.A. Behrs, speaks of his sister having copied *War and Peace* seven times. This is, of course, an exaggeration as can be seen from a careful examination of the copies which she kept. However, many of the most important parts give evidence of this painstaking and patient revision which was made possible by the labour of his devoted and, what is more important, ever enthusiastic wife, who was proudly aware of her important, though subordinate, role in this creative work. When the proofs returned from the printers, Tolstoy once again started "messing up" and the whole process began again. That the novel finally appeared in Dec. 1869 was due to the fact that the printer F.F. Rice, having heard of Tolstoy's propensities for "messing up", included in the contract a heavy fine for any delays that might occur after actual printing had begun. This can be seen from a letter dated Aug. 12, 1867, in which P.I. Bartenev, Tolstoy's business agent, wrote:
God only knows what you are doing. If you continue in the same fashion we will never finish printing proofs, all of which you return corrected. And I can tell you that more than half of your "messing up" is totally unnecessary. Anyone will back me up on this. In the mean time the cost of printing is skyrocketing. I have told the printers to send you a bill for proofs ... For God's sake stop your scratching.187

To this Tolstoy replied:

Not to "mess up" as I "mess up" I cannot, and I am firmly convinced that this messing up is of the greatest possible value. For this reason I am not afraid of the printing bills although I hope they will not be too hard on me. And that which you like so much would be far inferior if it had not been messed up five times before.188

From these letters it can be gathered what Sophia's labour amounted to, for she was in no position to impose fines for "messing up". From all this one can get some idea of the contribution made by Sophia to War and Peace, and the not inconsiderable amount of her flesh that was left in the ink-well. She played a far more important role in this tremendous creative drama than that of a mere scribe. What all this cost her in nervous equilibrium, can be realized from the fact that, apart from her work of looking after her household and trying to manage the estate she bore three live children (and had one miscarriage) in a space of five years.

The publication of War and Peace can be considered the

187 Material, N.N. Gwsev, p.674
188 Loc. cit.
most important milestone in the Tolstoy couple's life. Its success exceeded their wildest dreams.\textsuperscript{189} The first edition, which Tolstoy published himself, in spite of the high cost of printing and all his inexperience, netted them 30,000 roubles. From now on their financial worries are at an end and the problem of how to make the estate pay becomes of secondary importance. Gradually, there came a complete transformation in life at Yasnaya Polyana. They were able to build a new house, acquire suitable furniture, and arrange for governesses and tutors for their children. However, although Sophia did not realize it at the time, the novel \textit{War and Peace} contained evidence of a slowly brewing inner rebellion against the staid conventional and on the whole selfish life which Tolstoy led after his marriage.\textsuperscript{180} Although this straining was barely perceptible and passed unnoticed by Sophia the "pruned, clipped, and tied apple tree" was tugging at his bonds. The pattern of the future rebellion is completely discernable in the character of Pierre Bezoukhov and it is very significant that Pierre, the seeker, gets a glimpse of what he seeks, and is partially redeemed through physical suffering and privation.

\textsuperscript{189} It is interesting to recall that when Tolstoy went to the trouble of calculating the combined income on which he and his fiancee, Valeria, would have to live, he estimated his income from literary work at a maximum of 1000 roubles a year.

\textsuperscript{180} On Oct. 15, 1862, Tolstoy wrote in his diary: "All this time I was preoccupied with so-called practical affairs. But this idleness begins to oppress me. I can no longer respect myself and thus I am dissatisfied with myself and uncertain about my relation to others, decided to put an end to the magazine. The same with schools. I feel contempt for my life and even for her. It is imperative that I should work."
during his captivity and especially through his intimate contact with the sublime soul of the simple Russian people, as symbolized by Platon Karatayev -- possibly the most lovable character in *War and Peace*, and certainly the character that Tolstoy described with the greatest feeling and in which he rose to the greatest heights of artistic simplicity.

Where *War and Peace* does not deal with war, it is essentially a novel of family life and marriage relationships. Tolstoy dwells minutely and with the greatest possible care on his views on marriage and the role of the family, upon which unit rests the whole structure of human society and which, in the final analysis, develops the course of history. That this was Tolstoy's own conception of the actual moral purpose of *War and Peace* is shown in the Epilogue which gives a lengthy and somewhat involved exposition of his views. It is significant that the epic begins with the inner family life of the Bolkonskis and the Rostovs, and ends on a note of elation that the wellbeing of the child born of the union of these families is assured. Tolstoy dwells on the essential egoism of the family unit which determines the course of human history. In the Epilogue he emphasises the position of the Woman-mother as the corner stone of human society and its main propelling force. The whole scene is dominated by the image of two mothers, Mary Rostov and Natasha Bezukhov (who is now drawn completely from his wife Sophia) who has become the "female of the species" ("samka").
Natasha marries in 1813 and she had by 1820 three daughters and a son whom she had passionately desired and fed herself. She got fatter and broadened so that it was hard to recognize in this powerful mother the former svelte, lively Natasha. The features of her face became more defined and bore the expression of inner serenity and tenderness. One could no longer find on her face the fire of excited animation which had given her her charm. Now, one could often see, merely her face and body, but her soul could not be seen at all. All that one could see was a powerful, beautiful, and fecund 'Samka'.

It is significant that, in his letter (already quoted) to Valeria Arseniev, Tolstoy should have dwelt on the distinction between this ideal mother and "samka", and that he should have warned her that he expected her to be the former and not the latter. One can conclude then that Sophia fell short of his ideal of motherhood which in his opinion evidently consisted in not only being able to give birth but to guide, nurture and inspire spiritually. Having failed to find this ideal in his wife, Tolstoy falls back on the mother-image of his own childhood, which he himself created out of the legend of his mother which existed at Yasnaya Polyana. With painstaking accuracy, he proceeds to re-create this legend in Countess Mary Rostov, complete, even to the Diary of Little Nicholas' Behaviour, kept in a little blue exercise book. It is the image of a mother capable of creating, not merely the physical man, but, what is more important, the spiritual man, the man who will resemble his beloved brother Nicholas of the Green-Stick, who died early, so full of promise. In short, a man

capable of creating a human society free from suffering, sorrow, and tears. In this clash of the two mothers, the samka and the ideal mother-image, never to be found, though always sought desperately by him, lies the reason for his ever-increasing hostility to the women he knew, especially his wife. But paradoxically enough, had he ever met the sickly, unattractive Princess Mary Bolkonsky, with her blotched red face and heavy awkward gait, who can doubt that he would have rejected her with scorn, as his future wife?

Sophia must have been deeply affected by the underlying ideas in the epic. In fact, it is hard to overemphasize the effect that her constant careful reading and copying of War and Peace had on her, whom Tolstoy had carefully picked especially for her strongly developed maternal instincts. Tolstoy, possibly without realizing it, was working at cross purposes: he was sowing the seeds for his own later rebellion, and at the same time equipping his young wife with the moral strength and determination to defend her position as a protective mother and to fight for the material well-being of her brood.192 Ironically it was her defense of his early theories which earned her Tolstoy's bitter condemnation in later life.

If marriage and family is the main underlying idea in

192 Tolstoy seems to be vaguely aware of this for in the Epilogue he says: "Often during moments of irritation it happened that husband and wife would engage in an argument. Long after the argument Pierre would discover to his joy and amazement that not only in words, but in the actions of his wife, the very thought against which she argued. But he would discover it purified of everything extraneous resulting from his enthusiasm."

(Collected Works, Vol.VII, p.218)
War and Peace it is even more so in respect of his other great novel, Anna Karenina, which is completely dominated by the compelling necessity for Tolstoy to express his views on this, for him, all important subject. It rests essentially on a painstaking, psychological analysis of the mental, and especially spiritual processes determining the actions of the characters mainly involved in the life of three families: that of Stiva Oblonsky, Alexey Alexandrovich Karenin, and Constantine Levin. There is not the slightest doubt why Tolstoy chose these three families -- they enabled him to approach and discuss the relations between a husband and wife from every point of view. In the case of Stiva Oblonsky, with whom the novel actually begins, Tolstoy succeeds in establishing his main thesis: the absolute sacredness of the marriage, the sole purpose of which is propagation of children, must be maintained at whatever the cost. Oblonsky is a despicable, albeit at times loveable, character who, while dissipating his wife's fortune, is unfaithful to her at every step. His wife, Dolly, once vivacious and beautiful, is reduced to a sickly nervous shadow of her former self by the cares of her huge family and well-grounded jealousy. In the opening chapter, she, having discovered proof of another of her husband's peccadillos, decides to leave him and is in the process of packing. Anna Karenina, her sister-in-law, comes from St. Petersburg to plead with her. She begs her to forgive her brother for the sake of their children and to preserve the family intact. Dolly finally agrees, (though she knows that her husband's repentence is utterly insincere and that
at the first opportunity he will deceive her again) because in her heart of hearts she believes that nothing whatsoever can justify the destruction of a family unit which is sacred.

In choosing Anna as the pleader for the preservation of the marriage, whatever the provocation and however great the injury, Tolstoy rises to extraordinary heights of irony, for Anna, herself married to a man whom she has till now respected but never loved, a man much older than herself who is completely faithful to her and the father of her son, is soon to be driven by an illicit passion for Vronsky not only into destroying her own family life but also that of Kitty Scherbatsky to whom Vronsky is engaged.

Although Tolstoy, the supreme artist, was incapable of withholding his own pity and sympathy in depicting the stark tragedy of Anna's life, the reader is left in no doubt that he considers her behaviour as the gravest of moral crimes. The very epigraph, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay", sounds Anna's inexorable doom provoked by God's vengeance. The tragedy of her fate becomes even more poignant, for, even by her self-inflicted death, she cannot expiate her sin or escape divine punishment. For by committing suicide and depriving her child of his mother she commits a greater sin even than adultery. When one realizes that the whole plot of the novel is based on the actual suicide of the mistress of Tolstoy's closest neighbour, Bibikov, and that Tolstoy knew intimately the unhappy woman who, like Anna, threw herself
under a train, and whose ghastly autopsy Tolstoy was driven by artistic curiosity to attend, the significance of the whole novel becomes more poignant.

However, as usual Tolstoy, — the inconstant genius — having created this whole gripping novel to emphasize the sacredness of marriage and the family, takes an uncanny delight in, at the end of the novel, shaking the whole edifice so carefully constructed by him. After having created the most idyllic picture of a happy married life, Tolstoy makes Levin193 who is a prosperous landlord, happily married to an adoring wife, father of several children but driven by a pathological and ever-pursuing realization of the transitoriness of his happiness which he feels all must end in the stark horror of death and dissolution, turn to persistent thoughts of suicide. So near does he come to putting these thoughts into effect, that he does not dare wear braces or carry a shot gun. Like his predecessor, Pierre Bezoukhov of War and Peace, Levin finds an escape from the ever increasing horror of anticipating death in the simple faith of a Russian peasant, who tells him that release is to be found in living for one's soul — for God, and not for the belly. Levin muses:

No, I understood him. I understood his meaning completely and more clearly than

193 Levin's life is in almost every detail a reproduction of Tolstoy's life during his period of courtship and marriage. There are some minor embellishments such as the ennoblement of the middle-class Behrs family into the highly aristocratic Scherbatowskys and there is one major omission — Levin is not an author.
ever I understood anything else in life
and never in my life did I doubt it and
I cannot doubt it now ... It's bad to live
for one's belly. One must live for truth,
for God. I understood him from his first
hint.194

And then this final and inexorable conclusion dawns on Levin:

If good has a cause it ceases to be good;
if good has a result -- reward, it is no
longer good. Therefore good must be with­
out the chain of causes and consequences.195

In neither her diary nor her correspondence is there any
evidence that Sophia ascribed any particular significance to the
last chapter of Anna Karenina which she must have recopied many
times, for Tolstoy "messed it up" a great deal before he was sat­
isfied with the final draft. No doubt she looked upon Levin as
a particularly happy fictional creation of her husband's genius.
Although she must have been aware of the striking resemblance
between herself and Kitty and her husband and Levin. Tolstoy's
heavy moods during this period (1874-77) she probably ascribed to
his usual mental travail which accompanied his artistic creations.
She also felt that he was deeply affected by the death of Aunt
Tanya Yergolski which occurred in 1874. What she did not realize
was that the spiritual crisis that Levin experienced was metic­
ulously drawn from life. At every step Tolstoy was merely des­
cribing his own experiences and emotions. She had no idea that
the once wild apple tree that she had so successfully clipped and

194 Collected Works, Vol.IX, p.304
195 ibid, p.305.
tied and which had borne such delectable fruit as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* was outgrowing its bonds and was about to break them once and for all. Perhaps it is just as well that she did not realize what was going on, for it would have been a source of great and immediate worry to her, for this spiritual crisis that occurred in her husband was to have far-reaching effects on her and her family. Tolstoy's keen and analytical mind having once reached the conclusion that happiness and peace of mind is not the lot of those who live for the belly, could not long delay identification of living "for the belly" (individual selfishness) with living for the family (collective selfishness).

Fortunately for Sophia, her husband passed through a period lasting roughly from 1877 to 1881 during which his desire to identify himself spiritually with the deeply Orthodox Russian peasantry led to his return to strict conformity to Orthodox beliefs and practices. This return to the Church, apart from his complete unwillingness to continue his artistic writing, which had by now become so profitable, met with Sophia's complete approval. She thought that, in his fasts and pilgrimages, his talks with holy men and recluses, Tolstoy would find release from his pent-up tensions and she was sure that, after a well-earned rest, he would return again to his true vocation, literature. However, Tolstoy, the seer of human hearts, was soon to discover that the Orthodox Church itself lived for the belly and not for God, and that he could not find God's truth within the Church.
About this time the whole trend of Tolstoy's thinking received a new turn from contact with an extraordinary man, V.I. Alexeyev, who came to Yasnaya Polyana in the autumn of 1877 as a tutor in mathematics and science to Tolstoy's elder children, Sergei and Tatyana. This remarkable man, son of a small Pskov landowner, after brilliantly graduating from the physico-mathematical faculty of the University of St. Petersburg, came to the conclusion that the happiness of man could only be found in the complete rejection of the principle of private property. With fifteen other intellectuals of similar persuasion, he attempted to establish in Kansas, U.S.A., a communal farm on which all were to work and share equally the fruits of their labour. Like many such projects, this attempt at communal living failed, and Alexeyev returned almost destitute to Russia and was completely disowned by his father. Somehow he found temporary refuge with Tolstoy's neighbour, Bibikov. Hearing of his plight, Tolstoy offered him the position of tutor. Tolstoy was deeply impressed by the fact that, though Alexeyev was destitute, he refused the position because he did not care to work for a Count. Tolstoy's curiosity was aroused and he suggested that Alexeyev could find quarters in the village and come only to teach the children so that he would not have to live or eat at the Manor house. It was on these conditions that he agreed to come. From the beginning a friendship grew up between Tolstoy and the tutor. Tolstoy was very impressed by Alexeyev's ability, common to many people who have lived in America, to be Jack-of-all-trades. He was a fair carpenter and cabinet maker and could even make his own shoes.
Tolstoy envied his handiness and ability to do things for himself rather than exploit others. Another thing that influenced Tolstoy was Alexeyev's admission that when he left Russia for America he was an avowed atheist, but his experience with the communal farm in Kansas convinced him that its ultimate failure was due to the fact that these intellectuals were not bound together by some moral force or religious belief which would give them faith to persevere in the face of all difficulties. He based this opinion on his observations of the successful communal farming carried on by sectarians, especially Hutterites.

Although Tolstoy later denied that Alexeyev had had any particular influence on him, Sophia maintained that it was he who was the evil genius of her family, for he had befuddled the impractical artistic mind of her husband to such a degree that he began to engage in greater and greater eccentricities which might have reduced her children to destitution, had she not taken measures to protect them. Whether he really was decisively influenced by Alexeyev is doubtful, but the fact remains that Tolstoy announced to his shocked and almost unbelieving wife that he now considered all forms of property, especially landed property, as immoral and, in the final analysis, a blatant form of theft. He considered, therefore, that the lands of Yasnaya Polyana and his other estates were stolen from the peasants by his ancestors and that he now was resolved to return all this loot to its rightful owners. But worse was to come. After all, neither Yasnaya Polyana, nor Nikolskoe, nor even the Samara estate, returned any profit
to speak of, but when he announced that it was equally immoral for him to derive any profit from his writing which was the result of his talent, a free gift of God, (therefore the fruit of his talent must be given freely to all to enjoy), Sophia was certain that her husband was out of his senses, and she told him bluntly that if he persisted she would not hesitate to ask the Emperor to appoint a trusteeship over his affairs to prevent her children and grandchildren from being deprived of their daily bread.

Tolstoy has thrown a very interesting light on this period in his life and on his relations with his family, particularly with his wife, in his Confession and particularly in his autobiographical Notes of a Madman and his play The Light that Shineth in Darkness. Both these latter works remained unfinished, for the struggle between himself and his family, mainly represented by his sons and his wife, continued till his flight from Yasnaya Polyana and death.

Sophia Tolstoy on the whole emerged from this struggle in a very unfavourable light with the unenviable reputation of a Xanthippe to the new sage, Tolstoy. This reputation is largely due to the fact that, towards the end of his life, Tolstoy surrounded himself more and more with his disciples, the so-called Tolstoyans. There was a strong antipathy between these and Sophia, an antipathy which, particularly in the case of Chertkov, reached almost pathological hatred. It was quite natural for most of these people, many of whom kept diaries, to create an impression that Sophia was a mill-stone round Tolstoy's neck -- a heavy cross that he bore
almost to the very end, and from which he finally tried to free himself by fleeing in the autumn of 1910. Sophia Tolstoy, herself, was painfully aware that posterity might think of her as an Xanthippe on the basis of evidence existing against her — evidence to which Tolstoy himself contributed not a little, and evidence that her detractors, even during her life, deliberately distorted and magnified. She made desperate efforts to present her own case and to plead her own defence by publishing her correspondence with her husband and especially by preparing her diaries for posthumous publication. It is indeed extraordinary that out of her seven children, for the sake of whose material well-being she fought so desperately and on whom she lavished so much care (though often misguided) prompted by her strong maternal love, not one, with the exception of Leo, came to her defence, and he did it in such a clumsy way in his book *The Truth About My Father* that he did her cause more harm than good. It is true that Sergei and Tatyana after Sophia's death did express some oblique criticism of Chertkov, but these voices were too weak and uncertain of themselves to change the general impression implanted in the minds of posterity.

But what were the facts? It is true that Sophia resolutely refused to follow her husband as he himself so frequently expressed it. But what did he actually mean by following him? Is there any evidence that Tolstoy himself knew with any degree of certainty where he wished to go? Was he ready to implement
literally the injunction of the Master, "Give all thou hast to the poor and follow me"? Did he clearly understand the implications of this injunction? Was he, himself, capable of putting it into practice? It is difficult to answer these questions with any degree of certainty but considering the fact that even during the much discussed flight from Yasnaya Polyana, his so-called "going away", he departed in his own carriage with an outrider lighting the way with a torch and, at first, was accompanied by his private physician, Dushan Makovitsky, and later, was joined by his younger daughter and literary heiress Alexandra, both of whom were amply provided with ready cash. His first destination was no more startling a place than the hotel for gentry at Optina Pustin where he had often stayed before. When he fell ill in the train at Astapovo, he was on his way to visit his relatives at Rostov. Since he himself had not the vaguest notion of what he wanted to do, how could he possibly expect his wife to understand? Had he not carefully, and painstakingly selected her for qualities of sensibility and thrift, qualities so necessary in a woman to enable her to fulfill the true mission of motherhood as he, at that time, conceived it and which he made such great efforts to strengthen and develop over the first fifteen years of their married life? Ironically enough, when he had first spoken to her, in the early years of their married life, of his plan to start a distillery, it was she who was horrified and thought that the idea of producing more vodka was sinful -- vodka which would undoubtedly increase the already appalling drunkeness of the peasantry. After all, Tolstoy
freely admits in his confession that he wrote both *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* mainly for money:

I tasted the tempting fruit of authorship, the hope of a gigantic monetary reward and applause for my insignificant labour and I continued writing as a means of improving my material situation and of the stifling in my soul of questions dealing with life, mine and life in general. \(^{196}\)

This is of course an exaggeration, typical of Tolstoy, for it is impossible to admit that great art, such as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* undoubtedly are, can result from a mere desire to make money. It is even more ridiculous for Tolstoy to speak of his labour in writing these works as trifling. However, it is equally impossible to deny that throughout his literary career Tolstoy had an eye on the monetary rewards. He was extremely annoyed at Nekrasov's refusal to pay him for his first published work, *Childhood*, and one cannot easily forget Tolstoy's endless haggling with Katkov over the price to be paid for each sheet of *1805*, as well as his tireless efforts to undertake his own publication of *War and Peace* so as to make more profits. Extremely significant is the cryptic entry he made in his diary just before his wedding, "My wedding day -- fear, doubt, desire for riches!" \(^{197}\)

There were also the almost frantic efforts to make the estates pay, efforts with which his wife, at his own desire, was actively associated. Again, there is further evidence of his constant search for profitable investments for the surplus money realized

\(^{196}\) Collected Works, Vol. IV, p.12

\(^{197}\) Leon Tolstoy - *Journal Intime*, Sept. 19, 1862
from his publications. Ironically enough, his first attack of inexplicable despair, which at the time drove him almost insane, occurred in 1869 in the remote provincial town of Arzamas, where he was spending the night, while on the way to look at an estate in the province of Penza, which was going at a bargain. While unable to sleep in the wretched room of a provincial hotel, Tolstoy was suddenly overcome by the folly of it all, and asked himself why should he, who already had several estates he was unable to manage, drag himself into the remote wilderness of Penza to buy property simply because it was cheap. The whole project seemed even more futile as that night Tolstoy had a violent premonition of imminent death. He describes this vividly in an undated letter to his wife:198

The other day I spent the night at Arzamas and something quite extraordinary happened to me. It was two o'clock in the morning. I was fearfully tired and very sleepy and nothing hurt me, but suddenly I was assailed by such sadness, fear, and terror the like of which I have never experienced. I will describe to you the feeling in detail later; but such torture I have never experienced and God preserve anyone else from experiencing it.

Evidently he did describe this night later and so vividly that "Arzamas" became a by-word in the Tolstoy household — signifying extreme depression. He again returns to this terrible night in The Notes of A Madman:199

198 In a letter to his wife (undated) he vividly describes this terrible night 1896 (Letters of Count Tolstoy to his Wife, Text in Russian, letter 63, p.74
Neatly whitewashed little square room. I remember that this very fact, that it was square, was a source of torture to me. One window with a red curtain. A table of Karelian birch. A settee with bent arms. We entered. Sergei fixed up the Samovar and made tea. I took a pillow and lay down on the settee, I wasn't asleep. I heard Sergei drink tea and offer it to me. I was afraid to get up and wake myself; completely, to sit in that room terrified me. I didn't get up and began to doze, probably I fell asleep for when I woke there was no-one in the room and it was dark. I was wide awake ... I knew it was impossible to sleep again. Why have I come here? Where am I dragging myself? From what am I fleeing? Where? I am fleeing from something terrifying and I cannot escape. I am always with myself and it is I who tortures myself. I -- there he is -- In his entirety. Neither Penza estate nor any other can add anything to me or take anything away from myself. It is I who am boring, insupportable, annoying to myself.

I went into the corridor. Sergei was sleeping on a narrow bench with his hand hanging down. The watchman with the red spot on his face was also sleeping. I went into the corridor thinking I might escape from that which tortured me but it followed me like a dark cloud. I became even more terrified! What nonsense! I said to myself 'Why am I upset? What am I afraid of --?' Me -- almost inaudibly answered the voice of Death -- I am here.

For another page Tolstoy goes on with this soul-searing description of the harrowing experience. The fact that he wrote describing this to his wife proves that it was real. Arzamas signalized the turning point in his life. Yet, so strong was his acquisitive instinct that for years after this he continued to acquire landed property, including the huge tracts of land that he bought at a bargain in the Bashkir steppes of Samara province and which
he well knew were virtually stolen by the rapacious courtiers from the hapless Bashkir nomads, whom he so admired.

From a letter of Tolstoy's, June 23, 1871, to his wife, it is clear that even two years after Arzamas he was still hunting for good bargains, and while drinking koumiss with the Bashkirs he writes:

I am constantly inquiring about land. I was offered some at 15 roubles per desiatina (about $3 an acre) which would bring in 6% without any care on our part; but today I received a letter from a priest who tells me there are 2700 desiatina for sale at 7 roubles per desiatina (about $1.25 an acre). This seems to be a good bargain. Tomorrow I am going to look at it. Since it is more than likely I shall buy this land or some other, please send me a draft on the Merchant's bank so I can make a deposit.

The whole question of the dispossession of these nomads of their potentially fertile tribal lands became a notorious scandal in Russia and is parallel to the acquisition of Indian lands in U.S.A. or Canada. In 1871 Tolstoy bought from the Adjutant to the Emperor, Colonel N.P. Touchkov, about 6500 acres at $1.25 an acre, this was situated in the Bouzoulouk County of Samara province. In 1878 he bought over 10,000 acres at $3.50 an acre in the same county from Adjutant General to the Emperor Baron Rodrigue Bistrom. It should be noted this last purchase was made one year after his so-called conversion.

This indicates that as early as 1871, Sophia was already taking an active part in Tolstoy's financial affairs, and their surplus cash was held either in her name or she had a power of attorney from Tolstoy. This fact is very interesting, for it suggests that Tolstoy, long before his "conversion" was gradually relinquishing control of his affairs to his wife. His final withdrawal from administration of all his affairs in 1883 was only a legalization of what had been in actual effect for some time.
If Tolstoy, who, in spite of the fact that all his life he had had a guilty conscience as a landlord, and who, as a young man expressed in his note-book complete agreement with Proudhon that private property is theft, and who lived through the experience of Arzamas, could be driven by his cupidity and acquisitive instinct to enrich himself by buying land, virtually stolen from the Bashkirs, how could he expect his wife, only a few years later (circa 1878) without going through the inward struggle he had undergone, and burdened with a family of 7 growing children, being accustomed to luxury and extravagance, to suddenly follow him by renouncing all the family property rights? But what prompted Tolstoy to make such a request? From the very beginning he had believed the only purpose of marriage was the propagation of the species, the raising of the family which in itself is the mainstay of society and civilization. His entire behaviour after his marriage demonstrates that he possessed to a very strong degree the sense of his economic responsibility for his family, which he intended to be large. His wife, knowing very little about the terrific inner struggle — punctuated by periodic crises — which was going on in his soul, and which abated but never actually ceased even during the first busy years of his marriage, was completely unprepared for his so-called "sudden conversion". For her, it seemed a form of mental derangement. That she actually considered him deranged is clear, not only from her letters to her sister, Tatyana, but it is indicated in Tolstoy's autobiographical

202 Sophia had every reason to expect many more children as she was only 34 and her husband remarkably virile.
works, Notes of a Madman and Light That Shineth In Darkness. The former actually begins:

Oct. 20, 1883. Today, I was taken into the chancellery of the Provincial Governor. There was much disputation but they finally decided that I am not mad. But they came to this decision only because I made every effort to control myself during psychiatric examination, and not to say all that was on my mind. I didn't tell all, simply because I am afraid of the mad-house, I am afraid that there they would prevent me from carrying on my insane work. They decided that I was subject to aberrations and something or other, but actually in my right mind. The doctor prescribed a treatment, assuring me that if I faithfully follow his cure it will soon pass. All that bothers me will pass! Oh! What would I not give that it might pass -- the torture is unbearable. 203

Although neither Sophia nor the doctors could possibly imagine the real source of his mental crisis, it is not difficult to discover: the phenomenal success of War and Peace followed by the equal success of Anna Karenina coupled with the fact that Sophia soon saw to it that these works were re-published on ever more favourable terms, produced a complete revolution in their way of life. From poverty-striken landlords commanding at best an extremely small and uncertain income from their down-at-heel estates, and being deprived of such simple amenities of life as comfortable furniture or spare beds for their guests, they suddenly

203 Collected Works, Vol. 20, p. 5. There is absolutely no evidence, as he suggests, that Tolstoy was ever forcibly subjected to this examination, but there is evidence that Sophia was desperately worried about his state of mind and feared real insanity. There is no doubt that she arranged for his examination under some pretext of illness.
became one of the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest family in the province, with the added distinction that their income was not affected by the vagaries of nature or fluctuating prices for agricultural products, but was not only absolutely assured but snowballing. Sophia, who only a few years earlier had been thrown into a panic by the arrival of an English governess when she could not even find money to pay the pitiful wages of the day labourers, was now able to engage the most highly qualified and expensive tutors, governesses, instructors, etc.

Whatever faults may be ascribed to Tolstoy, and in justice to him it must be said he was the first to acknowledge them, he could never, at any period of his life, be accused of lack of perspicacity. This gift he possessed in an extraordinary measure. Even as a youth he was a keen observer of human character. Not a single emotion, not a foible, not an impulse could escape his keen penetrating eye. This quality of observation became so developed, through continued practice, that many people, who came into contact with him, amongst them some who, themselves, like Chekhov and Gorki, had this quality, were made uncomfortable when exposed to the long penetrating gaze of his deeply-set steel gray eyes. Is it possible then that this seer failed to subject his own family,

204 Tatyena tells in her Memoirs of as many as five tutors living in their Moscow home, and five others coming to the house to give lessons.

205 Tchaikovsky admitted to his brother that he feared to meet Tolstoy, lest by merely looking at him, the seer would discover his dread secret.
particularly his children, to this same scrutiny? At this time (circa 1879) his family was beginning to grow up (Sergei was 16, Tatyana, 15) and Tolstoy, who had fully agreed with his wife that the best possible education that money could buy should be given their children, and who took an active part in selecting the most suitable tutors, governesses and pedagogues for this work, and who, like his wife, had been anxious to provide the very best for his children in sports, music, cultural entertainment, companionship etc. would by now be keenly anticipating the results of all these material advantages. It is only natural that he expected his children, who had had all these advantages together with their quite unique hereditary intellectual background, to be at least above average, both morally and intellectually. That this was not the case is clearly borne out, not only by entries in his, but Sophia's diary and correspondence as well. She makes numerous pathetic and often bitter complaints about the behaviour of her sons and more particularly about their general attitude to life. In the light of all this, is it surprising that Tolstoy, who was not only a seer but "a digger" for ultimate causes (he often referred to his passion for "grübeln") should try to discover why all these extraordinary material advantages, which his numerous children had enjoyed, failed to produce the desired results? Tolstoy was staggered by this conclusion. He makes numerous entries in his diary, especially in reference to his eldest son, Sergei, which were so offensive to the latter that Tolstoy later requested Chertkov to delete them. His request was possibly prompted by the fact that as the other sons began to grow up their profligacy,
drunkenness, gambling propensities, lechery, cupidity, and selfishness so overshadowed the faults of Sergei, which were mainly those of idleness and weakness of character, that the latter actually became his favourite son. He could not escape the conclusion that, the more money that he was able to expend on his family, the more did their moral and intellectual qualities deteriorate. Tolstoy might have drawn an imaginary graph of the precipitous downward deterioration of his children, from the eldest to the youngest, contrasted with the rising graph of the material advantages they enjoyed, and which he provided for them. In trying to do them good he had done them harm. He also noticed the same deterioration in his wife, who became ever more absorbed with business agents and in haggling with book sellers, and her life seemed to centre more and more on the material advantages she craved so much for her family.

And so he experienced a sense of intense guilt. Tolstoy, who all his life was accustomed to project his observations from the individual to the general, began gradually to realize that not only landed property is evil, but also money. Both the desire for it and its possession bring nothing but misfortune and unhappiness. If the desire for money and all that it can buy is so detrimental to the individual, he reasoned, it must be even more evil and destructive to human beings collectively. An individual may commit murder for the sake of acquiring money but, no matter how atrocious his crime, it would pale into insignificance before the collective crimes committed by human society organized into nations. As a
young man he had witnessed this useless, senseless, evil, mass murder at Sebastopol. Now, suddenly, everything seemed crystal clear to him. Money, or rather the desire to appropriate it for personal use, that is restricted use, either by an individual or a nation, is the source of all evil, of unhappiness, of strife, of war. He now felt he had a divine mission to expose this vile thing money for what it is, to save not only individuals from unhappiness but mankind from self-destruction. With all the impetuous enthusiasm of his youth he threw himself into this self-imposed task to make others see what to him was so clear, so self-evident, and so logical. He naturally expected his own family to agree with him and joyously follow him on this newly discovered road to happiness. Henceforth he would not write a single line which directly or indirectly would not propagate this profoundest of all truths. But, in order to be convincing, the first step must be a complete and radical change not only in his own life but in that of his family.

In fairness to Tolstoy it must be stated that he did not ask his wife or family to literally accept Christ's injunction to give all to the poor and follow me. He did not ask them to divest themselves of all their possessions and take the beggar's staff and bowl, although he did consider this the ultimate ideal. He realized this was impossible for either his wife or children. Possibly he, himself, was not prepared for this. He was prepared to compromise, and confronted his wife and elder children (about 1883) with a plan for their future common life. This plan he
incorporated into the play, *Light that Shineth in Darkness*. The plan was for him and his family to keep the house of Yasnaya Polyana, part of the orchard and enough land for himself and the future families of his children to work with their own hands. All the rest of their lands must be given to the peasants to whom it rightfully belonged. What horrified Sophia even more was Tolstoy's avowed intention to renounce all his literary rights to anything written in the past or that might be written in the future.

As is well known, Tolstoy failed to convince Sophia or his sons of the validity of his theory or the practicality of his plans for their future. In fairness to Sophia it must be said, that she had considerable knowledge of Tolstoy's weaknesses as a farm manager and she was firmly convinced that his true calling was not the cultivation of the land but writing, whether artistic or philosophic. From experience she knew he could never be happy except when occupied with creative artistic work. What was more important from her own point of view and what she made quite clear to her husband was that when she married him she married a gentleman, in fact a Count and not a muzhik, and that she would rather die than see her children reduced to the level of peasants. Her ejaculation to her sons who under their father's influence began to effect bad manners is well known -- "Counts you were born and I will see to it that you die Counts."

The conflict between husband and wife became almost unendurable till it was finally resolved by a compromise. Tolstoy
simply washed his hands of the whole matter and refused to have anything to do with his property which, as far as he was concerned, he renounced. He gave his wife complete power of attorney and freedom to make all decisions regarding this property. On one point, however, he remained adamant. The publishing rights to all his artistic writings published prior to 1881 he allowed his wife to enjoy and exploit, but everything written after that date was to be not subject to copyright, and free for anyone to publish and in the case of plays, to perform. Sophia announced that in future she would be only too happy to continue transcribing and editing anything he might write of an artistic nature, but she would have absolutely nothing to do with his "didactic religious rubbish." This agreement was made verbally and was by accident or intention vague. To the end of his life Sophia insisted she had a right to publish under copyright all his artistic works including those written after 1881. This question of definition as to what was artistic and what was didactic gave rise to endless controversy and ill feeling. For instance she literally forced Tolstoy to give her Kreutzer Sonata and The Death of Ivan Illych.

Tolstoy did not announce his renunciation of the copyrights of his works openly till 1891 when he put notices in the press to the effect that anyone who wished might publish in Russia or abroad his works or perform any of his plays which were written after 1881. Tolstoy himself was confused on this subject for when he decided to give all the proceeds of the sale of his novel Resurrection to the Doukhobors it never occurred to him that he had morally no right to sell the book to Marx in 1901 when he was negotiating the sale. Evidently, neither Tolstoy nor, what is more significant, Marx considered his renunciation of his rights as legally binding. What is even more confusing was that in 1910 he left all the copyrights for anything he ever wrote, by a legal will to his youngest daughter, Alexandra.
which, although highly artistic, had undoubtedly deep moral significance. This constant wrangling became so distasteful that, although Tolstoy did write some purely artistic works such as *Hadjy Mured* and *The Devil*, he refused to publish them during his lifetime.

Paradoxically enough all these efforts of Tolstoy to save his family, and especially his sons, from the fearful evil of having too much money, were frustrated by fate which seemed to mock him. From the fatal year 1883 and onward, he became not only the greatest literary figure in Russia but acquired world-wide fame. What is more, he became both at home and abroad a curiosity. Everyone talked about him. This new notoriety proved a tremendous factor in the sales appeal of his works. A steady stream of gold flowed into the voluminous pockets of Sophia Tolstoy, the sole publisher of all his artistic works. A new edition was no sooner published than it was sold out and a reprint had to be made. Even the most expensive luxury editions were quickly sold out. The more controversial he became, the more people wanted to read everything that he had written. In the meantime Sophia was indefatigable in discovering better, more economical ways of publication and more profitable ways of distribution. While at St. Petersburg where she had gone to beg the Emperor for permission to publish the banned *Kreutzer Sonata*, she wrote, Feb. 24, 1885, to Tolstoy:

_I went on business to Mrs. Dostoievsky ... She was delighted to see me for some reason or other but I came to see her only because she prints herself her husband's books and in two years had cleared 67,000 roubles. She gave me most useful advice and amazed me by telling me she gives only 5% to retail booksellers._

207 *Letters of S.A. Tolstoy to L.N. Tolstoy.*
It is quite certain that the practical Sophia acted promptly on this information and even more gold streamed into her pockets which had such large holes that they emptied quickly so that she had to exercise greater and greater ingenuity to keep the stream flowing!

A few excerpts from her letters and diaries will explain the holes through which the money disappeared:

March 27, 1891. I am walking along Kiev street and suddenly meet Ilya (her son) ... , he came to inquire about an estate which is for sale at auction. He asked me to give him 35,000 roubles. I refused. For a time there was an unpleasant atmosphere ... suddenly Ilya tells me: "I won't give you mares to make koumiss from." I flushed and said, "I won't ask you, I will ask the manager." He also flushed and shouted, "I am the manager" -- "I am mistress" ... I was fearfully angry and said "Is this how low you have sunk, you grudge mares to make koumiss for your father. Why do you come here? Go to the devil ..." painful, shameful, shocking -- generally speaking disgusting.

July 30, 1897. No, I can no longer bear the whole responsibility of bringing up weak bad sons, they torture me. I was also upset by the behaviour of Sasha (Alexandra). She studies badly, I ordered her to re-study the lesson. Again she knew nothing. I wouldn't let her go riding with Tanya. I hate to punish children but all the governesses have lost patience with Sasha.

Aug. 31, 1897. Ilyusha came to see me. There was a fire on his estate. He obviously expected me to help him but I am overwhelmed with payments. Just recently I paid 1300 to the bank for his mortgage and in the winter, I will have to pay the same amount again. He didn't actually ask for money but continuously hinted he was in a bad way. He said to Lyova, "I asked Mama for 1000 roubles (during the winter I gave him 2500 roubles) She didn't give it me and I couldn't insure and now everything is burnt down and I can get nothing."
To which Lyova retorted, "You had a bad fire but why blame mother -- that's unfair"... It's so shameful, so painful, so sad to quarrel about money which I do not grudge but at present do not have.

Nov. 18, 1897. Misha didn't return till 3 A.M. I waited for him and afterwards couldn't sleep for worry... I went to see the principal of his school and begged him to take him as a boarder. "Nous jouons gros jeu", he replied, meaning in that case Misha would then disappear altogether.

Nov. 22, 1897. If this diary were capable of recording groans, it would repeat groans, groans. Misha (youngest son) the other day stayed out all night hanging around with gipsies, and didn't return till 7 A.M. ... today he has gone again. Where is he? With whom? I can find out nothing.

Dec. 19, 1897. Ilyusha and Andryusha arrived. Andryusha very subdued. In the summer in the Caucasus he thoughtlessly proposed to Princess Guryely, and then wrote a letter retracting it. The Princess shot herself and now the relatives have taken up her cause, and Andryusha is in terror of a duel or being murdered. I have nothing but misery from my sons!

Dec. 10, 1898. Went to the bank with Andryusha... gave him a fur coat and 2000 roubles. Ordered a dozen silver cutlery for the bride. -- For all these troubles and gifts he not only did not thank me, but actually appeared dissatisfied.

Jan. 8, 1899. All morning in a room at the Petersburg hotel at Tula... I am sad and upset about Andryusha's marriage. Sons arrived. Wretchedly thin Lyova. Artificially gay Ilya. Excited Andryusha and totally wild Misha... he is senseless, noisy and egoistical. I and Ilya blessed the bridal pair right here in this hotel room. Andryusha appears like a sleep-walker. He is moved but doesn't understand why he is
getting married and what will happen later ... All the time I was on the verge of tears. \textsuperscript{208}

All these sad excerpts are taken from Sophia's diary, but the same tragic note is found throughout her letters:

Oct. 28, 1898. My trip was uneventful but at home I was at once plunged into a heavy atmosphere -- morally. Andryusha was fearfully rude because I refused him 1000 roubles which I haven't got. He said, "I was born from a monstrosity and that's why I am a monstrosity." Mishka stared at me guiltily and then made himself scarce ... Oh! my God! -- that's all I can say.

Nov. 25, 1897. They (the boys) have disappeared for the whole night and didn't return till 8.30 A.M. I sat up all night waiting for them, anxious and indignant, and then after a scene with them I was sick in bed all day. This undermined my remaining strength and nerves. \textsuperscript{209}

The boys in question are her younger sons, Andrei and Michael, who were both attending the Gymnasium. Her letter shows to what a pass things had come in Moscow. Since the decision for the whole family to spend the winters in Moscow so as to give the children an opportunity to continue their education (Sergei was entering University), was made primarily by Sophia, and since Tolstoy vehemently opposed it, she felt very responsible for the fact that her sons, far from benefiting from better educational facilities, were running amuck. What made her feel even more

\textsuperscript{208} Sophia's unhappiness proved justified, for Andrei abandoned his young wife, Olga, with two children, to elope with the wife of the Vice-Governor of Tula who abandoned her six children. It was left to Sophia to look after Olga Tolstoy and the two children.

\textsuperscript{209} Correspondence, S.Tolstoy to L. Tolstoy, p.690.
desperate was that her husband seemed to be completely unconcerned and at every opportunity assumed the attitude of "I told you so". He seemed to have washed his hands of his children, just as he had of his business affairs in 1883.

However, in reality his responsibility for the whole fiasco cannot be denied, and the behaviour of his children at school can be traced to his continued expressions of contempt for formal education. What effect his ill-understood views had on his children can be seen from the Reminiscences of his daughter, Alexandra, covering this period:

Mother believed that children must be taught. For this reason we lived in Moscow. Father insisted that children must not be forced to study, but must be brought up to a life of simple labour, and that if the children want to acquire knowledge, they could do it themselves. Huge sums of money were spent on teachers and schooling, but nobody wanted to study. The youngsters felt the disagreement between their parents and took from each what was most pleasant for them. That father considered education essential and that he, himself, all his life continued to learn, was lost on us. All we remembered was what he said against schooling. What mother told us about the necessity of having much money in order to dress well, hold receptions, have horses, give balls, and eat tasty food appealed to us. But we hated her insistence on the necessity of working and graduating from Gymnasium.210

Apart from her troubles with her difficult and rapacious sons, who never hesitated to demand more and more money, her second daughter, Mary, ever since her marriage to Prince Obolensky, was

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not only the cause of constant anxiety but of never-ending expense. Sophia's detractors, who never ceased accusing her of excessive love of money and miserliness, should bear in mind that although the patient self-sacrificing Masha kept all her troubles to herself and never asked her mother for help, Sophia always seemed to know the true state of affairs in Mary's wretched home, and constantly gave her financial help.

July 12, 1898. Paid visits. The first to Masha. My heart bled when I looked at her, bent over, weak, thin like a skeleton. Nervous, always ready to burst into tears. Living in extreme poverty. Food abominable.

Dec. 23, 1898. At home, Masha. Thin, weak. It makes me cry to look at her. Kolya with her, also wretched.

In the light of all these troubles with her children, it would be difficult to condemn Sophia for refusing to acquiesce to Tolstoy's desires to relinquish all property and copyrights, even if her children were her sole liabilities; but what of her husband? Was Tolstoy himself capable, either physically or psychologically, of adjusting himself to a totally different way of life, which becoming a peasant would involve -- earning his daily bread in the sweat of his brow (this is actually what he

211 She was the only daughter who consciously tried to follow Tolstoy. When the family property was divided in 1891, she refused to take her share. Over strenuous objections of her sons, Sophia kept Masha's share in trust, in case she married and would then change her mind. She married Prince Obolenski, a penniless ne'er-do-well, who, although he had a degree in law, stated he had no intention of working. Mary accepted her share of the property on her marriage, but it was soon spent and it was Sophia who looked after her unhappy daughter.
proposed) and producing by his own labour everything required? It is extremely doubtful. Sophia had no illusions on that score. She was convinced that either "going peasant", or "going away" (by which Tolstoy probably meant becoming a homeless wanderer) would end in his death, and certainly put an end to his self-imposed mission of saving mankind. So much has been said by Tolstoy's biographers and by himself about his extraordinary physical endurance, strength, and agility even in old age, that at first glance these apprehensions of Sophia's seem unfounded. One might even object that surely a man capable of long walks, and horse-back riding at the age of 81 and one who in his prime could, according to his own claims, out-scythe a most expert peasant, could have taken all the changes in his stride. Had he not, on several occasions, walked from Moscow to Yasnaya Polyana, and from Yasnaya Polyana to Optina Pustin? All this is true, but carefully considering the biographic sources and particularly his and his wife's diaries, one must conclude that not only did he not enjoy robust health, but throughout his life his health was, at best, precarious. Even his earliest letters from Caucasus are full of complaints about perpetual sickness:

Besides pleasure this sport (hunting) is very good for my health which, inspite of the water cure, is not in a very good state. Not that I am actually ill but I often suffer from chills, sore throats, ... which drag on. On top of that my rheumatism troubles me, and on the whole I am confined to my room on an average at least two days a week. Do not think that I am hiding anything from you. I have always been strongly built but of
weak health. Next summer I shall again take the waters. If they have not cured me they have at least helped me.212

This state of affairs is reflected perpetually in his diaries. Throughout his life he had trouble with liver complaints, several attacks of jaundice, chronic constipation which progressively became more acute necessitating special diet, massage, laxatives, and enemas. During his life his lungs caused trouble, on several occasions T.B. was feared, and Tolstoy often took Koumисs cures before, and especially after, his marriage. He underwent several severe illnesses and was on more than one occasion near death. When he was in the Crimea, 1901-2, he was under the care of several specialists. From 1904 on, he was under the constant supervision of his private physician, Doushan Makovitsky, and his health was considered so precarious that a doctor accompanied him on his walks or when he went riding.

Almost from the first day of her marriage Sophia was conscious of a special mission: that of devoting herself to the care of her husband's health and well-being. From her diary and her correspondence, we learn that she was in constant fear of his early death. Her fear was intensified to a state of panic by Tolstoy's hypochondria, for in the slightest illness, even a boil, he would see signs of his impending death:

He has a boil on his cheek. He is so wretched, tied up with a kerchief. He is terribly subject to hypochondria.
During my absence he went twice to see a doctor, and the third time the doctor came here. He keeps on saying he has cancer and soon he will die. He was morose and slept badly. Now he feels better. How I pity him. How hard it will be for him to part with his life and to stand suffering. God help him! 213

Five months later, Feb. 8, 1897, there is the following entry:

Again L.N. is complaining of ill-health. His back hurts from his neck down. All day he feels nausea. What food he eats, it's horrible! Today he was eating salt mushrooms and pickled mushrooms and dried fruit twice-boiled. All this produces fermentation in his stomach but gives no nourishment. He is growing thinner. In the evening he asked me to give him some mint tea, and he took a little. All this made him frightfully depressed. He kept saying his life was coming to an end, that the machine is worn out, that it is time; and yet I can see he hates the thought of death; today he somewhat reminded me of his Aunt Pelagea Yushkov who died at our home. She also did not want to die, and looked on death with desperate hostility. ... The thought of death oppresses him. 214

Again on June 11, of the same year, Sophia writes:

L.N. can't shake off his sickness. He is apathetic, lethargic, and is very quiet ... this last sickness frightened him and he, having realized the possibility of dying, is terrified. 215

On June 17 she records:

214 Ibid, p.27
215 Ibid, p.60
Again, today and yesterday enemas, fermentations, compresses, carrying out of night-pots and care of sick L.N. ... the whole day he has refused to eat and has groaned for the last 24 hours. He is very impatient.

Sophia, later in the month, on the 27th, writes:

He complains of pain in the pit of his stomach. He keeps me informed constantly about the quality of his excreta. OH my God! Help me not to complain and to help me do my duty worthily and patiently.

The entire diary of Sophia Tolstoy is filled with constant references to care of an ailing husband and the haunting fear of his death. Her problems were later complicated by Tolstoy's complete vegetarianism, for he refused to eat even eggs or milk products. But vegetarian food eaten in large quantities, for Tolstoy had a tremendous appetite, resulted in excess gases which caused him to groan for hours from pain. To what extent Sophia was preoccupied with the care of her husband and his diet can be seen from My Reminiscences by Alexandra Tolstoy:

Mother always fussed that father's food should be light, and elevated the question of his nourishment to the level of a cult. Every evening our cook, Semyon Nikolaeovich, would come to her and they would endlessly discuss and consider the next day's menus ... determined by the condition of L.N.'s stomach ... If he, for some reason or other, felt weak, mother and Semyon Nikolaeovich, assuming the role of conspirators, would decide secretly to add some broth to the mushroom soup. When mother was too busy, she would leave written instructions, for example: cook some thin Smolensk gruel in mushroom...
broth for L.N.'s lunch, he is complaining of pain in his stomach.\textsuperscript{217}

Sophia cared for her husband's health in countless other ways. When the whole family had to move to Moscow, so as ostensibly to obtain the best education for the children, she realized that Tolstoy's constipation was aggravated by the absence of his daily ride, so she arranged for a saddle-horse to be brought from Yasnaya Polyena to Moscow. Though Tolstoy accused her of extravagance, he made use of the horse and his condition improved. In view of all this, it is hard to dispute Sophia's assertion that her husband was utterly incapable of standing the hardships of peasant life or, even less so, that of a wanderer. She was the only person who knew how to care for him properly. The facts bear her out. One can imagine how sad it was for her to hear, and frequently read insinuations, often in the press, that she was driving her famous husband into the grave. These insinuations were doubly bitter for her when they were made by Tolstoy himself, not only in his diary, but in his letters and conversations. How hurt she was can be seen from her letter from Moscow to her husband, Nov.25, 1897:

I thought, Lyovochka, that you would come with Tanya, but it appears to me you are so reluctant to come that you are delaying your arrival as much as possible. Tanya even told me that you supposedly said to her that your life in Moscow amounts to suicide. As you also state that you are coming solely for my sake, it follows that it is not suicide but that I am killing you.

\footnote{A.L. Tolstoy -- \textit{Gleanings from Recollections}, Vol.XLV, p.8 & 9.}
Therefore, I hasten to write to you and to beg you for God's sake do not come. Your torture as a result of coming will deprive both of us of peace of mind and freedom. You will feel you are being slowly killed, and I will feel a murder-ess. What a beautiful life, solely dedicated to love!218

What a tragic cry of despair coming from a tortured soul!

It is generally assumed that this move to Moscow was particularly distasteful to Tolstoy, and that the decision was made over his strong objections. This assumption seems justified by the innumerable references in Tolstoy's diary and correspondence to his positive detestation of Moscow life. That his intense dislike for town life was not just a passing whim is shown by the fact that after a series of sicknesses in Crimea that almost cost Tolstoy his life, his doctors advised Sophia that continued life in Moscow would affect his frail health. Since Moscow is only a short distance from Yasnaya Polyana, and has much the same climate, and since it was not, in those days, a smoky industrial town, the doctors must have had in mind the moral and psychological effects. What actually prompted Sophia to insist so vehemently on this move? Surely, not solely the problem of educating the children, for both Sergei and Tatyana had been well-educated at Yasnaya, in fact these were the two best educated of the children (Sergei was the only child to complete his University course). Sophia, herself, gives another reason. She said she was bored and wanted to take a more active part in social life. It is doubtful if

218 Correspondence, S.Tolstoy to L. Tolstoy, p.690.
this could have been a decisive factor, for there was considerable opportunity for social life in Tula, (a provincial capital of some size) in which, in spite of its proximity to Yasnaya Polyana, she hardly took any part during her eighteen year's sojourn in the country. She was too devoted and loyal a wife to risk provoking resentment from her husband, which this decision to move to Moscow undoubtedly produced, without having some good and weighty reason. It is also not at all likely that Sophia, who as a young girl of 18 was willing to bury herself in Yasnaya Polyana (she hardly ever left home for 18 years), would now risk a rift with her husband for such trivial reasons. The initial move cost her a fearful effort, and she could hardly expect any assistance from her reluctant and resentful husband.

One of her letters to Tolstoy, written from Moscow while she was searching for a suitable place to rent or buy, will show her difficulties:

July 2, 1881. I write to you, dear Lyovochka, exhausted after running about looking at houses and flats. I can't describe everything in detail. I lost courage and hope to find something ... I found two suitable houses ... This one can be bought furnished for 26,000 roubles which is fabulously cheap, for it has everything we need ... nothing better could be imagined ... But I am sure there is something wrong. Its price is much too low ... Tomorrow I will try to find out about it from small local stores, from tenants, and other round-a-bout ways ... How I would love to talk it over with you, I feel so helpless and am afraid to make decisions alone ... I feel very sad, but I am taking every possible care of myself.219

219 She is referring to the fact that she is pregnant.
July 3, 1881. Today I found in Prechistensk, in Money Lane, a house belonging to Prince Volkonsky. It is in my opinion most comfortable and well situated. I want to everything so I can have tomorrow evening. I get very tired and am afraid because of my pregnancy.

Is it possible to ascribe all these troubles and risks to a desire to shine at Moscow balls, or even to educate her children who could be quite well educated at Yasnaya? There is a very weighty and important reason, and from Sophia's point-of-view a very pressing one, which lies in the fact that not only had Tolstoy written nothing artistic after Anna Karenina in 1877, but he was going through an acute phase of depression bordering on melancholia (with suicidal tendencies), and that he was beginning to search for some release from his tension in occupations similar to those he had given up on marriage. He was actually proposing to establish a teacher's seminary at Yasnaya Polyana and was writing articles on pedagogical methods, and on purely religious subjects. All such she considered a wasteful expenditure of his talent. She was also worried by his extraordinary, almost pathological, study of Greek and Hebrew which he undertook so intensely that he impaired his health and had to go, at her suggestion, to Samara for a Koumiss cure. Sophia, being unaware of the depth of spiritual crisis through which Tolstoy was passing, ascribed all his moods to his inability, in spite of all efforts, to write artistic literature. Searching for the cause of his inability,

220 This house they rented for two years.
Sophia, very much aware of her husband's tendency to write from life and his inability to produce fiction in the true sense of the word, must have come to the conclusion that he had written himself out, had run out of impressions. What he needed was a change of atmosphere, new intellectual contacts, new impressions -- new materials so that he could write from life.

However this may be, the fact remains that his first artistic work, in every sense a masterpiece, was written in the winter of 1881-82 -- the first winter in Moscow. It is very unusual that Tolstoy dates this work, The Death of Ivan Ilyich, in the very beginning:

A black-bordered obituary notice read, 'Praskovia Fyodorowna Golovin' regretfully announces to all relatives and friends, the death of her beloved husband, a judge of the Assize Court, Ivan Ilyich Golovin, which occurred Feb. 4, 1882.

This year must have had some special significance for Tolstoy. This gem was followed by Power of Darkness, 1886, Kreutzer Sonata, 1887-9, Resurrection 1883-9, and Hadji Murad 1896. In all justice to Sophia it must be said that far from killing her famous husband, she was able to kindle a rebirth of his artistic activity. But apart from

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Tolstoy had often attempted to write a long novel in the period of Peter the Great. The founder of his family, the head of Peter's secret police, Peter Tolstoy, was to play a big role. In spite of much preliminary work, he could not continue, and told Sophia he could not imagine the people or situations in that remote period that he did not know.

his artistic writings, even his philosophical and religious works received a new turn and a powerful impetus from Tolstoy's intimate contact with urban life, and the wealth of new impressions he gathered in Moscow. It is undeniable that the beginning of his world-wide fame as a moralist and religious reformer is bound up with What Then Must We Do? which he started in Feb. 1882. Those who are inclined to accuse Sophia of having ruined his life and interfered with his mission to such a point that she became a stone round his neck, must be reminded that had he not, at her insistence, come to live in Moscow in the autumn of 1881 he would never have participated in the taking of the census that winter, and would not have come face to face with the ghastly poverty and degradation resulting from urban life. It was these terrible new impressions that gave rise to What Then Must We Do? Had he not come to Moscow he might never have been irrevocably launched on the rebellion against not only autocracy and Orthodoxy, but also against western civilization itself. He might never have developed his personal sense of responsibility, provoked by the obvious contrast between the way in which his own family lived in Moscow and the terrible degradation and poverty he saw in the slums — the like of which he had never encountered in Yasnaya Polyana.

This thesis has primarily to do with the influence of Sophia on her husband's genius, and any thought of directing him into the sphere of social and moral speculation was far from her desires. What she was mainly concerned with was to bring her beloved Lyovochka back to the only work that could make him happy
-- his writing of literature. It is to her credit that she was prepared to assist him to the best of her ability, even when she found herself the prototype for some of his more unpleasant characters. This is true of Ivan Ilyich, where the wife and daughters are depicted as utterly heartless creatures, interested only in balls, social events, and money. Creatures unable, or possibly unwilling, to give sympathy or even understanding to Ivan, who finds it in a young moujik, Gerasim. Death of Ivan Ilyich speaks for itself, and gives a picture of his strained or even hostile attitude to his immediate family. But it is hard to imagine any man who actually received more tender and solicitous care from his wife and daughters that did Tolstoy during his many illnesses. If The Death of Ivan Ilyich reflected hostility, the Kreutzer Sonata breathes active hatred, and Tolstoy injudiciously drew Mrs. Poznyeshov so realistically from his wife as model, that all Moscow society instantly recognized her and the book became the talk of the town even before it was published, for Tolstoy many times read it to gatherings of friends. Malicious tongues wagged so hard that a joke was going the rounds of Moscow salons in anticipation of Sophia's next inevitable pregnancy -- "Voila le vrai finale de Kreutzer Sonata." This epigram became more stinging

223 The wife is based on Sophia, the daughter is Tatyana, and the bridegroom possibly Michael Stakhovich.

224 Tolstoy even endowed Mrs. Poznyeshov with Sophia's mannerisms: eating soup rather loudly, drumming with her foot, etc.
in the light of Tolstoy's extraordinary views on sex, or rather abstinence from it, expressed not only in the novel but especially in the epilogue. In spite of the unkind picture of her, Sophia worked tirelessly transcribing the manuscript and correcting galley-proofs, brooding on its implications affecting her, particularly as the wife of the author:

Jan. 25, 1891. Corrected Kreutzer Sonata (galley-proof). In the evening it occurred to me that a woman loves from the depths of her heart when she is young and gladly gives herself to the man she loves, for she sees what delight he finds in this. A mature woman is suddenly driven to realize by her past experience that the man loves her always only when he needed her, and suddenly changed his attitude from kindness to moroseness or even to that of aversion, immediately after his passion is satisfied.

There can be no doubt that Sophia was fully aware that she was Mrs. Poznyeshov, for she writes in her diary:

Feb. 11, 1891. I know how and why everyone has connected Kreutzer Sonata with my married life, but this is a fact and everyone, beginning with the Emperor and ending with L.N.'s brother and his best friend Dyakov were all sorry for me. And why must I look for confirmation of this view in others -- I, myself, in the depth of my heart felt that this novelette is an attack against me, for it wounded me, disgraced me in the eyes of the whole world and destroyed the last vestiges of love between us. And all this without ever being guilty of a fault towards him, not even by the slightest movement, not even by a look at anyone during our entire married life!
But, in view of her feelings, it is amazing that Sophia left not a stone unturned in her efforts to get the censor's ban on Kreutzer Sonata lifted. She even went to St. Petersburg personally to petition the Emperor to lift the ban. Is it possible that she would labour so tirelessly to have a work published that would only humiliate her further in the eyes of society, for the sake of money only? Or was she primarily devoted to furthering by every means whatsoever the development of her husband's literary genius? From the very beginning she knew that the book was a masterpiece:

March 12. Received information from Moscow censor's office that Volume XIII\(^\text{225}\) banned. I am going to St. Petersburg to see what I can do. All this has terribly upset me. I feel that I will not succeed. I feel that I have lost both belief in myself and faith in my powers. However, perhaps God will help me ...

Mar. 20. Nothing whatsoever interests me and I can think of nothing until the fate of Vol. XIII is decided. I keep composing letters and speeches to the Emperor. I ponder and weigh everything in my mind. I only await a letter from A.A. Tolstoy (Alexandra) who will inform me, and, if so, when.

It is quite possible that, owing to the ever-increasing need for money to satisfy the demands of her growing family (there are many grandchildren now) money was of some consideration, but undoubtedly she was actuated by other motives, the most important being her fear that the banning of *Kreutzer Sonata* might discourage her husband from continuing to write literary works. She realized

\(^{225}\text{Containing } \text{*Kreutzer Sonata*.}\)
that, in his present mood, any discouragement of his literary works would lead him to say, "What is the use of writing literature? It will not be printed in Russia." It was this argument that she used with such success when pleading with the Emperor to lift the ban. What a note of anguish in the following!

Lyovochka keeps on correcting his Non Resistance to Evil, Masha is transcribing for him. These heavy articles come hard to the artist and his truly artistic work he neglects.226

That it was not money alone that prompted Sophia to fight for Kreutzer Sonata is shown by the fact that she assisted Tolstoy in every way with Resurrection. She not only transcribed the novel, to assist the overworked Masha, but she keenly and sometimes mercilessly criticized it. It is remarkable that in spite of his increasingly strained relations with his wife, Tolstoy yielded to her criticism and actually altered the plot of the novel, although he steadfastly refused to listen to her pleas begging him to moderate his blasphemous attacks on the Orthodox Church.227

How critical Sophia was of his latest novel, and how distasteful

226 Diary of Sophia Tolstoy, Mar. 10, 1891.

227 In the original version, Tolstoy intended that Nekhlyudov should marry Katyuasha Maslova. Sophia was very critical of this plan, considering it forced, strained and inartistic. Tolstoy changed the plot. "Oct. 27, 1897. Our relationship with each other is again friendly and simple. I asked many questions about Resurrection and welcomed changes at the end of the novel and in other places. It is becoming less false. (Diary of Sophia Tolstoy)
this work was to her personally, can be gathered from an entry in her diary -- after describing the wonderful soothing effect that music has on her nerves, she writes:

Sept. 13, 1897. Quite a different impression is made upon me by the reading of L.N.'s novel. Everything in it ruffles me and creates discord ... I am distressed that L.N., an old man of 70, describes with gusto, savouring as a gastronome tastes delectable food, scenes of fornication between an officer and a maid. I know, for he himself told me this, that L.N. in this scene depicts his liaison with a maid of his sister's at Pirogovo. I have seen this Gasha who is now almost 70. He himself pointed her out to me, to my deepest despair and disgust. I am also tortured by the thought that the hero, Nekhlyudov, is described as one passing from moral degradation to spiritual elevation. I see in him Lyev Nikolaëvich himself, who thinks precisely in this way of himself, but who could always describe so well in books these spiritual upsurges, but who could never put them into practice. In depicting these splendid feelings he becomes sentimental about himself, yet continues his own way of life, loving good food, his bicycle, his saddle horse, his sexual activities ... Generally speaking, this novel contains, as I have always thought, passages and some details that reveal the hand of a genius, and yet the situation of the hero and heroine is full of false sentiment -- soured. This novel brought upon me a most painful mood, and I suddenly decided to leave Moscow for even this work of my husband I can no longer love. Between us there is less and less in common. He noticed my mood and began to reproach me, saying that I love nothing that he loves or that interests him. I replied that I love his art, that his Father Sergius moved me to ecstasy, that I take keen interest in Hadji Murad, that I greatly admired Master and Workman, that I always cry when re-reading Childhood, but that Resurrection disgusts me.
Resurrection was the last work by Tolstoy that can be described as art. The fact that Sophia could not enjoy or love it was a source of anguish for her. It was, so to speak, a sad swan song to her life-long mission as literary helper to her husband. Although on many occasions Tolstoy expressed in his diary and letters a desperate desire to return to art, he never did. Even in the last year of his life he writes with nostalgia of his desire to return to art, which his religious beliefs compelled him to condemn and abandon.

April 14, 1910. During the night I felt physically ill, the condition which always affects my spiritual wellbeing. Re-read some of my books. I must not write any more. I think I have written all I could in this field, but I have such a desire, such a terrible desire.  

A.B. Goldenweiser, in his book, With Tolstoy, quotes Tolstoy as saying to him on April 13, 1910:

If I were young I would write a beautiful novel which I would call, There Are No Guilty Ones in This World ... How I would love to write a purely artistic work! I feel that my inability to write is only temporary. At present I haven't the necessary strength, but I hope that this will pass.  

On Oct. 2, 1910, Tolstoy again writes in his diary:

I got up ill. Went for a walk. A disagreeable north wind. Nothing of note, but during the night I thought so well and so clearly. How good it would be to

228 Journaux Intimes 1910 Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p.37
229 loc. cit.
write an artistic novel about the trivia-
lities of life of the propertied class, of
bureaucrats, as well as of peasants and
workers -- and in each group there should
be one man spiritually alive. Once could
choose a woman and a man. Oh! How beau-
tiful it could be! And how it allures me!
What a great work this could become. Yes,
how beautiful it could be ... Perhaps I
may even carry this out.

But there was not the remotest possibility of his carry-
ing this out, for by now he was sick and worn out and completely
deprived of peace of mind and the atmosphere which enabled him to
write his great works of art, War and Peace, and Anna Karenina.
Sophia, the nurse of his genius, was now herself in desperate need
of nursing for she had been brought to the brink of insanity by
a tragic and sordid struggle for Tolstoy's literary inheritance,
that raged in her family for the last two years with ever-increas-
ing bitterness and intensity. A struggle that divided the family
into two hostile camps. The tension built up by this sordid
struggle that had been raging at Yasnaya Polyana for years has now
become unendurable. The drama is moving to its inevitable close
at Astapovo. What supreme irony! Sophia, the nurse of his genius,
the guardian of his frail health, desolate, is standing on tip-
toe, hour after hour, peering through the window, hoping for a
glimpse of her dying husband.
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