SOME NEW BOOKS.

Tolstoi's Views of Art.

Messrs. T. Y. Crowell & Co. have published a praiseworthy English translation of the book entitled *What Is Art*, by Count Leo Tolstoi. This work the author himself considers one of his most important contributions to contemporary thought. He has been employed upon the subject for fifteen years, by which he means that he began to write upon it fifteen years ago, thinking that he should be able to accomplish it without a break. It proved, however, that his views upon the matter were so far from clear that he could not, for a long time, arrange them in a satisfactory way. When the book was finally finished, it was published in Russia, but was so mutilated by the censor that the author requests all who are interested in his ideas of art to judge of them only by the present English translation, which has been revised by him. We may say at once that the purpose of the work is to demolish the theory of art for art, the theory that the exclusive aim of art is to please and that all art is legitimate which is effective for the purpose of producing beauty. The gist of the essay will be found in chapters III., IV. and V., the first two of which contain a summary and criticism of the various æsthetic theories and definitions, while the third sets forth the author's own definition of art. Especially interesting, also, is the final chapter, the twentieth, in which an attempt is made to trace the connection between science and art, and the thesis is maintained that science should deal with the great problems of human life, and thus serve as a basis for artistic delineations of the right kind.

I.

Tolstoi does not deem it worth while to quote the definitions of beauty attributed to the ancients—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, &c., down to Plotinus—because, in reality, the ancients had not that conception of beauty sharply separated from goodness which forms the basis and aim of æsthetics in our time. To a Greek, if a thing was beautiful, it was good, and if it was good, it was beautiful; that was, at least, the prevailing attitude of the Hellenic mind. Our author, therefore, begins with Baumgarten (1714-1762), according to whom the object of logical knowledge is truth, the object of æsthetics, that is, sensuous knowledge, is beauty. Beauty is the perfect recognized through the senses. It is also defined by Baumgarten as a correspondence, that is, an order of the parts in their mutual relations to each other and in their relation to the whole. The aim of beauty itself, he said, is to please and excite a desire. Some succeeding German writers contradicted Baumgarten's main position, and recognized as the aim of art not beauty but goodness. Mendelssohn, for example, maintained that the aim of art is moral perfection. On the other hand, the æsthetic doctrine of Winckelmann divided the mission of art from the aim of goodness in the sharpest and most positive manner, making external beauty the aim of art, and even limiting it to visible beauty. There are, he said, three kinds of beauty, all recognizable by the eye: First, beauty of form; secondly, beauty of idea, exhibiting itself in the position of the figure—that is to say, in plastic art—and, thirdly, beauty of expression, attainable only when the first two conditions are present. This beauty of expression he pronounced the highest aim of art, and as it was attained in antique art, modern art should aim at imitating the ancient. Art was similarly understood by Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and all the distinguished æstheticians of Germany till Kant, from whose day a different conception of art acquired currency. Beauty, according to Kant, in its subjective meaning, is that which, in general and necessarily, without reasoning and without practical advantage, pleases. In its objective meaning, it is the form of an object suitable to please in so far as that object is perceived without any conception of its utility. According to Schiller, who was one of Kant's followers, the aim of art is beauty, the source of which is pleasure without practical advantage. According to Fichte, beauty exists not in the external world, but in the beautiful soul. Art is the manifestation of this beautiful soul, and its aim is the education not only of the mind, which is the business of the savant; nor only of the heart, which is the affair of the homilist, but of the whole man. Schelling held that beauty is the conception of the infinite in the finite, and that the chief characteristic of works of art is unconscious infinity. When we contemplate beauty, we contemplate things in themselves as they exist in the prototype. After Schelling and his followers came the new æsthetic doctrine of Hegel, which is accepted to this day, consciously or unconsciously, by many. According to Hegel, God manifests Himself in nature and in art in the form of beauty. He expresses himself in two ways; in the object and in the subject, in nature and in spirit. Beauty is the shining of the Idea through matter. The beauty of nature is only the reflection of the innate beauty of the spirit, but the spiritual entity must appear in sensuous forms. Art is the production of this sensuous appearance of the Idea, and is a means, together with religion and philosophy, of bringing to consciousness and of expressing the deepest problems of humanity and the highest truths of the spirit. Simultaneously with the Hegelian theory, there were circulated in Germany definitions of beauty that were directly opposed to them. According to Herbart, for instance, there is not and cannot be any such thing as beauty existing in itself. What does exist is only our opinion, and it is necessary to find the bases of this opinion. Such bases are connected with our impressions. There are certain relations which we term beautiful; and art consists in finding these relations, which are simultaneous in painting, the plastic art and architecture; successive and simultaneous in music; purely successive in poetry. In contradiction to the former æstheticians, Herbart held that objects are often beautiful which express nothing at all, as, for instance, the rainbow, which is beautiful for its lines and colors, and not for its mythological connection with Iris or with the promise given to Noah.

Of the definitions quoted from French writers, three are especially noteworthy. According to Taine, beauty is the manifestation of the essential characteristic of any important idea more completely than it is expressed in reality. According to Cherbuliez, art is an activity satisfying our innate love of forms, endowing these forms with ideas and affording pleasure alike to our senses, heart, and reason. Beauty, he contended, is not inherent in objects, but is attributed to them by our souls. Beauty is a delusion; there is no absolute beauty, but what we consider characteristic and harmonious appears beautiful to us. According to Veron, art is the manifestation of emotion transmitted externally by a combination of lines, forms, colors, or by a succession of movements, sounds, or words subjected to certain rhythms. In England during the present century the best known writers on æsthetics have been Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen. According to Darwin, the feeling for beauty is natural not only to man but also to animals, and, consequently, to the ancestors of man. Birds adorn their nests, and esteem beauty in their mates. Beauty has an influence on mating. Darwin recognizes a variety of diverse conceptions of beauty. He points out that the origin of the art of music is the call of the male to the female. According to Herbert Spencer the origin of art is play. In man, unlike most of the animals, there remains some superfluous energy after the ordinary needs of life are satisfied. This surplus is used in play, which passes over into art. Play is an imitation of real activity; so is art. The sources of æsthetic pleasure are three-fold: first, that which exercises the faculties affected in the most complete ways, with the fewest drawbacks from excess of exercise; secondly, the application of a stimulus in large amount, which awakens a glow of agreeable feeling; lastly, the partial revival of the same with special combinations. Grant Allen, who is a follower of Spencer, holds that beauty has a physical origin. Æsthetic pleasures come, he says, from the contemplation of the beautiful, but the conception of beauty is attained by a physiological process. The beautiful is that which affords the maximum of stimulation with the minimum of waste. Differences in the estimate of beauty proceed from taste. Taste can be educated.

II.

We have given only a few of the opinions concerning beauty and art which are quoted by Tolstoi, and these themselves are far from exhausting what has been written on the subject. To what, asks the author, do these definitions amount? Leaving out the unsatisfactory attempts to formulate definite notions, all of them lead to two fundamental conceptions. The first is that beauty is something having an independent existence, that it is one of the manifestations of the absolutely perfect, of the idea, of the spirit, of the will, or of God; the other conception is that beauty is a kind of pleasure received by us not having personal advantage for its object. On the one hand, beauty is viewed as something mystical and very elevating, but unfortunately, at the same time, very indefinite, and consequently embracing philosophy, religion and life itself; or, on the other hand, beauty is simply a certain kind of disinterested pleasure received by us. This latter conception of beauty, although it seems clear, is also inexact, for, as is acknowledged by some of Kant's followers, it includes the pleasure derived from drink, from food, or from touching a delicate skin. It is true that the nearer we get to our own time the more does an experimental definition come to the front, and this has recently assumed a physiological form. But such experimental definitions have had very little success, and, by the majority of the highly educated public, as well as of artists and the learned, a conception of beauty is held which agrees with the definitions contained in most of the æsthetic treatises, that is to say, which regards beauty either as something mystical or metaphysical, or as a special kind of enjoyment. Tolstoi, on the other hand, maintains that, in order to define any human activity, it is necessary to understand its significance and importance. In order to do this, it is primarily needful to examine that activity in itself, in its dependence on its causes and in connection with its effects, and not merely in relation to the pleasure we can get from it. If we say that the aim of any activity is merely our pleasure, and define it solely by that pleasure, our definition will, evidently, be a false one. Should we, for instance, consider the food question, it would not occur to any one to affirm that the importance of food consists in the pleasure we receive from eating it. Every one understands that the satisfaction of our palate cannot serve as a basis for our definition of the merits of food. In the same way beauty, or that which pleases us, can in no sense serve as the basis for the definition of art; nor can a series of objects which afford us pleasure serve as the model of what art should be. Just as people who conceive the aim and purpose of food to be pleasure cannot recognize the real meaning of eating, so people who consider the aim of art to be pleasure cannot realize its true meaning and purpose, because they attribute to an activity, the meaning of which lies in connection with other phenomena of life, the false and exceptional aim of pleasure. People come to understand that the meaning of eating lies in the nourishment of the body only when they cease to consider that the object of that activity is pleasure. It is the same with regard to art. People will come to understand the meaning of art only when they cease to consider that the aim of that activity is beauty, or, in other words, that which pleases. The acknowledgment of beauty—that is, of a certain kind of pleasure received from art—as being the aim of art, not only fails to assist us in finding a definition of what art is, but, on the contrary, by transferring the question into metaphysical, psychological and physiological regions, renders such definition impossible.

III.

We pass to Tolstoi's attempt to answer the question, What is this art to which is offered up the labor of millions, the very lives of men, and even morality itself? Tolstoi submits that the inaccuracy of all the foregoing definitions arises from the fact that, in them all, the object considered is the pleasure art may give, and not the purpose it may serve in the life of mankind. He holds that, in order to define art correctly, it is needful, first of all, to cease to regard it as a means to pleasure, and to consider it as one of the conditions of human life. Viewing it in this way, we cannot fail, he thinks, to observe that art is one of the means of intercourse between man and man. Every work of art causes the receiver to enter into a certain kind of relationship both with him who produced or is producing the art and with all those who simultaneously, previously, or subsequently receive the same artistic impression. It is needless to point out that speech, transmitting as it does the thoughts and experiences of men, serves as a means of union among them. Art acts in a similar manner. The peculiarity of this latter means of intercourse, distinguished from intercourse by means of words, consists in this: that, whereas by words a man transmits his thoughts to another, by means of art he transmits his feelings. The activity of art is based on the fact that a man receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man's expression of feeling is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it. To take the simplest example: One man laughs, and another who hears becomes merry; or a man weeps, and another who hears feels sorry. A man is excited or irritable, and another man, seeing him, comes to a similar state of mind. By his movements or by the sounds of his voice a man expresses courage and determination or sadness and resignation, and this state of mind passes on to others. It is on this capacity of man to receive another man's expression of feeling and experience those feelings himself that the activity of art is based. Art, however, must be voluntary and deliberate. If a man infects another immediately and unconsciously by his very appearance, or by the sounds he instinctively gives vent to at the moment he experiences a feeling; if, for instance, he causes another man to yawn when he himself cannot help yawning, or to laugh or cry when he himself is obliged to laugh or cry, or to suffer when he himself is really suffering—that does not amount to art. Art begins when one person, with the deliberate purpose of joining another to himself in one and the same feeling, expresses that feeling by certain external indications. To take the simplest example: A boy having experienced, let us say, fear on encountering a wolf, subsequently relates that encounter, and in order to evoke in others the feeling he had experienced describes himself, his condition before the encounter, the surroundings, the wood, his own lightheartedness and then the wolf's appearance, its movements, the distance between himself and the animal, &c. All this, if only the boy, when telling the story, experiences the feelings he had lived through and infects the hearers and compels them to feel what the narrator had felt, is art. If even the boy had not seen a wolf, but had frequently been afraid of one, and if, wishing to evoke in others the fear he had felt, he invented an encounter with a wolf and recounted it so as to make his hearers share the feeling he experienced when he feared the animal, that, also, would be art. Just, in the same way, it is art if a man having experienced in reality or in imagination the fear of suffering or the attraction of enjoyment, expresses these feelings on canvas or in marble so that others are infected by them. It is also art if a man feels or imagines to himself feelings of delight, gladness, sorrow, despair, courage, or despondency, and the transition from one to another of these feelings, and expresses these emotions by sounds so that the hearers are infected by them and experience them as they were experienced by the composer. The feelings, in truth, with which the artist, whether poet, painter, sculptor, or composer, infects others may be most various, very strong or very weak, very important or very insignificant, very bad or very good; feelings of love for one's native land, of self-devotion and of submission to fate or to God expressed in a drama; raptures of lovers described in a novel; feelings of voluptuousness set forth in a picture; courage expressed in a triumphal march; merriment evoked by a dance; the sense of humor awakened by a funny story; the impression of quietude transmitted by an evening landscape or by a lullaby, or the feeling of admiration aroused by a beautiful arabesque—it is all art. If only the spectators or auditors are infected by the feelings which the author has himself felt, and deliberately tries to express, it is art. We arrive then at Tolstoi's definition: "To evoke in one's self a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in one's self then by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art. Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man, consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them." Art, then, is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious idea of beauty or God. It is not, as the æsthetical physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the unconscious, involuntary expression of man's emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; above all, it is not pleasure. It is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and for the progress toward well being of individuals and of mankind. As, thanks to man's capacity to express *thoughts* by words, every man may know all that has been done for him in the realms of thought by all mankind before his day, and can, in the present, thanks to this capacity to understand the thoughts of others, become a sharer in their activities, and can, himself, hand on to his contemporaries and descendants the thoughts he has assimilated from others, as well as those which have arisen within himself; just so, thanks to man's capacity to be infected with the *feelings* of others by means of art, all that is being lived through by his contemporaries is accessible to him, as well as the feelings experienced by men thousands of years ago, and he has also the possibility of transmitting his own feelings to others.

IV.

If people lacked the capacity to receive the thoughts conceived by the men who preceded them and to pass on to others their own thoughts, men would be like wild beasts, or like Kaspar Hauser. If, on the other hand, men lacked this other capacity of being infected by art with one another's feelings, people might be almost more savage still, more separated from one another, and more hostile to each other. It follows that the activity of art is a most important one, no less important than the activity of speech itself, and as generally diffused. We are accustomed, it is true, to understand by art only what we hear and see in theatres, concerts, and exhibitions, together with buildings, statues, coins, and novels. But, as Tolstoi points out, all this is but the smallest part of the art by which we communicate with each other in life. All human life is filled with works of art of every kind, from cradle-song, jest, mimicry, the ornamentation of houses, dress, and utensils, up to church services, edifices, monuments, and triumphal processions. It is all artistic activity. It follows that by art in the narrow, limited sense of the word, Tolstoi does not mean all human activity transmitting feelings, but only that part which we, for some reason, do or should select from it, and to which we attach special importance. Here we are reminded that this special importance has always been attributed by all men to that part of this activity which transmits feelings flowing from their religious perception. This small part of the function of artistic activity they have, at various times, specifically called art, attaching to it the full meaning of the word. That was how men of old, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, looked on art. Thus did the Hebrew prophets and the ancient Christians regard art; thus it was and still is understood by the Mohammedans, and thus is it still understood by religious folk among the Russian peasantry. Some teachers of mankind, as Plato, for instance, in his "Republic," and some peoples, such as the primitive Christians, the strict Mohammedans and the Buddhists, have gone so far as to repudiate all art. People thus viewing art, in contradiction to the prevalent view of to-day which regards any art as good if only it affords pleasure, considered, and still consider that art, as contrasted with speech which need not be listened to, is so highly dangerous in the power to infect people against their wills, that mankind would lose far less by banishing all art than by tolerating each and every art. Tolstoi has no doubt that such people were wrong in repudiating all art, for they rejected that which cannot be rejected, one of the indispensable means of communication without which mankind could not exist. Not less wrong, in his judgment, are the people of civilized European society of our class and day, in favoring any art if it but serve beauty, that is, gives people pleasure. Formerly certain people feared lest among the works of art there might chance to be some causing corruption, and they prohibited art altogether. Now we only fear lest we should be deprived of any enjoyment art can afford, and so patronize any art. Tolstoi thinks the last error is much grosser than the first and that its consequences are far more harmful.

How could it happen that the very kind of art which, in ancient times, was merely tolerated, if tolerated at all, should have come in our times to have been invariably considered a good thing, if only it affords pleasure? According to Tolstoi this has resulted from the following causes: The estimation of the value of art, that is, of the feelings it transmits, depends on men's perception of the meaning of life; depends on what they consider to be the good and the evil of life. What is good and what is evil is defined by what is termed religion. Religions are the exponents of the highest comprehension of life acceptable to the best and foremost men at a given time in a given society; a comprehension toward which, inevitably and irresistibly, all the rest of that society must advance. It is, therefore, only religions that have always served, and still serve, as bases for the valuation of human sentiments. If feelings bring men nearer the ideal their religion indicates, if they are in harmony with it and do not contradict it, they are good; if they estrange men from it and oppose it, they are bad. Now, in every age and in every human society there exists a religious sense common to that whole society of what is good and what is bad, and it is this religious conception that decides the value of the feelings transmitted by art. Consequently, among all nations, art which transmitted feelings considered to be good by this general religious sense was recognized as being good and was encouraged; but art which transmitted feelings considered to be bad by this general religious conception was stigmatized as bad and was rejected. All the rest of the immense field of art by means of which people communicate one with another was not subjected to any exact valuation, and was only noticed when it ran counter to the religious conception of its age and then merely to be repudiated. Thus was it among all nations, Greeks, Jews, Hindus, Egyptians, and Chinese, and so it was when Christianity appeared.

The Christians of the first century recognized as productions of good art only legends, lives of saints, sermons, prayers, and hymn-singings, evoking love of Christ, sympathy with His life, desire to follow His example, renunciation of a worldly existence, humility and the love of others; all productions transmitting feelings of personal enjoyment they considered to be bad, and, therefore, rejected; for instance, while tolerating plastic representations when they were symbolical, they discarded all the pagan sculptures. Such was the attitude of the Christians of the first century who accepted Christ's teaching, if not quite in its true form, at least not in the perverted paganized form in which it was accepted subsequently. By the side of this Christianity, however, from the time of the wholesale conversion of nations by order of the civil authorities, as in the days of Constantine, Charlemagne, and Vladimir, there appeared another Christianity, a Church Christianity, which, in the opinion of Tolstoi, as of very many Protestants, was nearer to paganism than to Christ's teachings. "This Church Christianity not only did not acknowledge the fundamental and essential conditions of true Christianity, the immediate relationship of each man to the Father, the consequent brotherhood and equality of all men and the substitution of humility and love in place of every kind of intolerance, but, on the contrary, having set up a heavenly hierarchy similar to the pagan mythology, and having introduced the worship of Christ, of the Virgin, of angels, of apostles, of saints and of martyrs, and not only of these divinities themselves, but also of their images, it made blind faith in the Church and its ordinances the essential point of its teachings."

Our author goes on to acknowledge that, however foreign this teaching may have been to true Christianity, it was, for all that, to the barbarians who accepted it a higher doctrine than their former adoration of God, heroes and good and bad spirits. Therefore, this teaching was a religion to them, and, on the basis of that religion, the art of the time was assessed—that is to say, such art as transmitted pious adoration of the Virgin, Jesus, the saints and the angels, a blind faith in the Church, and a blind submission to it, with fear of torments and the hope of blessedness in a life beyond the grave, was considered good; all art opposed to this was considered bad. Tolstoi concedes that, while the teaching on the basis of which this art arose was a perversion of Christ's teachings, the art which sprang from this perverted teaching was, nevertheless, true, because it corresponded to the religious view of life held by the people among whom it arose. The artists of the middle ages, of the period, that is to say, which preceded the so-called Renaissance, being vitalized by the same source of feeling, religion, as the mass of the people, and transmitting in architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, or drama the feelings or states of mind they had themselves experienced, are admitted to have been true artists; their activity, founded on the highest conceptions accessible to their age, and common to the entire people, though, for our times, a mean art, was, nevertheless, a true one, in which the whole community could share.

V.

Such was the state of things when, about the middle of the fifteenth century, doubt arose in the upper, rich and more educated classes of European society as to the truth of that understanding of life which was expressed by Church Christianity. When, after the Crusades and the maximum development of Papal power and its abuses, people of the rich classes became acquainted with the wisdom of the classics and saw on the one hand the reasonable lucidity of the teaching of the ancient sages, and, on the other hand, the incompatibility of the prevailing Church doctrines with the teachings of Christ, they ceased to continue to believe the former. If, in externals, they still kept to the form of Church teaching, they held to it only by inertia, and for the sake of influencing the masses, who continued to believe blindly in Church doctrines, and whom the upper classes, for their own advantage, considered it necessary to support in those beliefs. In respect to religion, the upper circles of the period of the Renaissance, those circles in whose hands lay the power and wealth, and, therefore, the leisure, to produce and encourage art, found themselves in the same position in which the educated Romans were before Christianity arose; that is to say, they no longer believed in the religion of the masses, but had no beliefs they could put in place of the worn-out Church doctrine which, for them, had lost its reason. There was this difference, however: that, whereas for the Romans who lost faith in their Emperor-gods and household gods it was impossible to extract anything further from all the complex mythology they had borrowed from conquered nations, and it was, consequently, needful to find a completely new conception of life, the people of the later middle ages, when they doubted the truth of the Church teaching, had no need to seek an altogether fresh one. The Christian teaching which they professed to accept in the perverted form of Church doctrine had mapped out the path of human progress so far ahead that they had but to rid themselves of the perversions which hid the teaching announced by Christ and to adopt its real meaning. This, we are reminded, was partially done, not only in the reformations of Wycliff, Huss, Luther, and Calvin, but by the whole current of non-Church Christianity represented in earlier times by the Paulicians, the Bogomili, and, afterward, by the Waldenses and other so-called heretics. But this could be and was done chiefly by poor people, who did not rule. A few of the rich and strong, like Francis of Assisi and others, accepted the Christian teaching in its full significance, even though it undermined their privileged positions. Most people of the upper classes, however, could not or would not act thus, because the essence of that Christian view of life which stood ready to be adopted when once they discarded the Church faith, was a teaching of the brotherhood and, therefore, the equality, of man. This negatived the privileges on which they lived, in which they had grown up and been educated, and which they were accustomed to. Not in the depths of their hearts believing in the Church teachings, which had no longer any true meaning for them, and not being strong enough to accept true Christianity, men of the rich governing classes, Popes, Kings, Dukes, and all the great ones of the earth, were left without any religion, and with but the external forms of one, which they upheld as being profitable and even necessary for themselves, since these forms screened a teaching which justified those privileges which they made use of. In reality these people believed in nothing, just as the Romans of the first centuries of our era believed in nothing. Then there took place among these upper classes what is called the renaissance of science and art, which really involved not only a denial of every religion, but also an assertion that religion is unnecessary. It was among these people who alone possessed the power and the wealth to reward art that there grew up an art esteemed not according to its success in expressing men's religious feelings, but in proportion to its beauty—in other words, according to the enjoyment it gave. Having no religious view of life, they could have no standard wherewith to estimate what was good and what was bad art but that of personal enjoyment. Henceforward, beauty—that is to say, the pleasure derivable from art—became their sole criterion of artistic merit. In accordance with that view, an æsthetic theory naturally sprang up among those upper classes justifying such a conception, a theory according to which the aim of art is to exhibit beauty.

VI.

The unbelief, then, of the upper classes of the European world came to have this effect, that, instead of an artistic activity aiming at transmitting the highest feelings to which humanity has attained, those flowing from religious perceptions, they encouraged and developed an activity which aims at affording the greatest enjoyment to a certain class of society. Of all the immense domain of art, that part has been fenced off and is alone denominated art which affords enjoyment to the people of this particular circle. The first effect of the selection of a single narrow section from the whole sphere of art was the impoverishment of art's subject matter. That only is a true work of art which transmits fresh feelings. The variety of feelings flowing from religious perception is endless, and they are all fresh, for religious perception is nothing else than the first indication of that which is just coming into existence, namely, the new relation of man to the world around him. The feelings, on the contrary, flowing from the desire of enjoyment are not only limited, but were, long ago, experienced and expressed. Therefore the lack of belief on the part of the upper classes of Europe has left them with an art fed on the poorest subject matter. Again the impoverishment of the subject matter of upper-class art was further increased by the fact that, ceasing to be religious, it ceased, also, to be popular, and this, again, diminished the range of feelings which it transmitted. For the range of feelings experienced by the powerful and the rich, who have no experience of labor for the support of life, is far poorer, more limited and more insignificant than the range of feelings natural to working people. This affirmation will seem to many persons a paradox, but Tolstoi thus defends it: "I remember how Gontcharoff, the author, a very clever and educated man, but a thorough townsman and æsthetician, said to me that, after Tourgenieff's 'Memoirs of a Sportsman,' there was nothing left to write about in peasant life. It was all used up. The life of working people seemed to him so simple that Tourgenieff's peasant stories had used up all there was to describe. The life of our wealthy people with their love affairs and their dissatisfaction with themselves seemed to him full of inexhaustible subject matter. One hero kissed his lady on her palm, another on her elbow and a third somewhere else. One man is discontented through idleness, and another because people don't love him. And Gontcharoff thought that, in this sphere, there is no end of variety."

Tolstoi, for his part, goes on to maintain that nothing is more mistaken than the notion that the life of working people is poor in subject matter. "The life of a laboring man, with its endless varied forms of labor, and the dangers connected with this labor on sea and underground; his migrations, the intercourse with his employers, overseers and companions, and with men of other religions and other nationalities; his struggles with nature and with wild beasts, the association with domestic animals, the work in the forests, on the steppe, the field, the garden, the orchard; his intercourse with wife and children, not only as with people near and dear to him, but as with co-workers and helpers in labor, replacing him in time of need; his concern in all economic questions, not as matters of display or discussion, but as problems of life for himself and his family; his pride in self-suppression and service to others, his pleasures of refreshment; and with all these interests permeated by a religious attitude toward these occurrences—all this to us, who have not these interests and possess no religious perception, seems monotonous in comparison with the small enjoyments and insignificant cares of our own life, a life not of labor nor of production, but of consumption and destruction of that which others have produced for us." Our author holds that, in reality, almost all the emotions of people of the upper classes amount to but three very insignificant and simple feelings, the feeling of pride, the feeling of sexual desire and the feeling of weariness of life. These three feelings, with their outgrowths, form almost the only subject matter of the art of the rich classes.

At first, at the very beginning of the separation of the exclusive art of the upper classes from universal art, its chief subject matter was the feeling of pride. This was the case at the time of the Renaissance and after it, when the chief subject of works of art was the laudation of the strong, Popes, Kings, and Dukes, men and women of great political and social importance; odes and madrigals were written in their honor, and they were extolled in cantatas and hymns; their portraits were painted and their statues carved in various adulatory ways. Next, the element of sexual desire began more and more to enter into art, and, with very few exceptions (indeed, so far as novels and dramas are concerned, almost without any exceptions), it has now become an essential feature of every art product destined for the affluent classes. The third feeling transmitted by the art of the rich, that of discontent with life, appeared latest in modern art. This feeling, which, at the commencement of the present century, was expressed only by exceptional men, by Byron, by Leopardi and by Heine, has, latterly, become fashionable, and is expressed by most ordinary and empty people. Concerning the works of the so-called new writers, Tolstoi adopts the summing up of the French critic Doumic. What we see in them, says Doumic, is "the weariness of life, contempt for the present epoch, regret for another age seen through the illusion of art, a taste for paradox, a desire to be singular, a sentimental aspiration after simplicity, an infantine adoration of the marvellous, a sickly tendency toward reverie, a shattered condition of nerves, and, above all, the exasperated demands of sensuality."

VII.

As a matter of fact, among these three feelings transmitted by the art of the rich, it is sensuality, the lowest, because accessible not only to all men but even to animals, which forms the chief subject matter of works of art in recent times. From Petrarch to Marcel Prévost almost all the poems and verses transmit the feeling of sexual love in its various forms, idealized or realistic. Of the novels published on the Continent, adultery is not only the favorite, but almost the only, theme. A theatrical performance is scarcely reckoned a performance at all unless, under some pretence, women appear with exposed busts and limbs. The songs and *romances* devised by musical composers are almost all expressions of the sexual happiness idealized in various degrees. A majority of the pictures by French artists represent feminine nakedness in various forms. In recent French literature there is hardly a page or a poem in which nudity is not described. In Tolstoi's opinion, these are all the productions of people suffering from erotic mania. The authors are evidently convinced that, as the whole of their own lives, in consequence of their diseased condition, is concentrated on the indulgence of sexual desire, therefore the life of all mankind must be similarly concentrated.

Tolstoi returns to this particular topic in a later chapter of his book, the seventeenth, and insists that it is the art of our time that serves as the chief cause of the perversion of people in the most important question of social life, to wit, their sexual relations. "We nearly all know," he says, "by our own experience, and those who are fathers and mothers know in the case of their grown-up children also, what fearful mental and physical suffering, what useless waste of strength people suffer merely as a consequence of dissoluteness in sexual desire. Since the world began, since the Trojan war, which sprang from that same sexual dissoluteness, down to and including the suicides and murders of lovers described in almost every newspaper, a great proportion of the sufferings of the human race has come from this source." With reference to this source of human suffering, what is the art of our time doing? Tolstoi answers: "All art, real and counterfeit, with very few exceptions, is devoted to describing, depicting and inflaming sexual love in every shape and form. When one remembers all the novels and their lust-kindling descriptions of love, from the most refined to the grossest, with which the literature of our society overflows; if one only remembers all the pictures and statues representing women's naked bodies, and the multiform abominations which are reproduced in illustrations and advertisements; if one only remembers all the filthy operas and operettas, songs and *romances* with which our world teems, involuntarily it seems as if existing art had but one definite aim—to disseminate sexual vice as widely as possible. Such, though not all, are the most direct consequences of that perversion of art which has occurred in our society. So that, what in our society is called art not only does not conduce to the progress of mankind, but, more than almost anything else, hinders the attainment of goodness in our lives."

In view of this outcome of modern art, our author suggests that the question which must involuntarily present itself to every man not engaged in artistic activity, and, therefore, not tied to existing art by self-interest, is the question asked by him at the beginning of this work: Is it just that to what we call art, to a something belonging to but a small section of society, should be offered up such sacrifices of human labor, of human lives and of possible human goodness as are now being offered up? The reply that he would make to the question is: "No; it is unjust, and these things should not be. So also replies sound sense and unperverted moral feeling. Not only should these things not be, not only should no sacrifices be offered up to what among us is called art, but, on the contrary, the efforts of those who wish to live rightly should be directed toward the destruction of this art, for it is one of the most cruel of the evils that harass our section of humanity. So that, were the question put: Would it be preferable for our Christian world to be deprived of *all* that is now esteemed to be art, and, together with the false, to lose *all* that is good in it, I think that every reasonable and moral man would again decide the question as Plato decided it for his 'Republic,' and as all the church, Christian and Mohammedan teachers of mankind decided it, *i. e.*, would say, 'Rather let there be no art at all than continue the depraving art, or simulation of art, which now exists.'" It is, however, acknowledged that "happily, no one has to face this question, and no one need adopt either solution. All that man can do, and that we—the so-called educated people, who are so placed that we have the possibility of understanding the meaning of the phenomena of our life—can and should do, is to understand the error we are involved in and not harden our hearts in it, but seek a way of escape."

M. W. H.

Peasant Life in Lower Canada.

A good deal of interesting information regarding the manners and customs, ideas, traditions and legends of the French-speaking inhabitants of the province of Quebec is obtainable from a recently published book entitled *Canadian Folk Life and Folk Lore*, by W. P. Greenough (G. H. Richmond). It is almost a new field which the author has traversed. Many Americans are familiar with the city of Quebec, but few have seen much of the country people of the province, the *habitants*, as they are called. About their home life, a life different in many particulars from our own, very little is known on this side of the border. Mr. Greenough, it seems, has been brought, for many years, by business relations, into contact with the *habitants*, that is to say, the farmers descended from the early French settlers, and for a considerable period he lived almost constantly among them. What is set forth in this book is the record of his observations and experiences in certain country parishes peopled by French Canadian agriculturists.

I.

By *habitant* is simply meant the peasant of French origin. The name was given to those pioneer emigrants who intended to inhabit the country and till the soil, as distinguished from officials, traders, and others who did not expect to reside permanently in the New World. The Canada of which we hear in this book is the lower part of the valley of the St. Lawrence, which is now known as the province of Quebec. Its scenery, climate, institutions, people, and history are all unique, being unlike those of any of the other provinces. Mr. Greenough begins by correcting some current misconceptions. In the first place, Quebec is much less further north than most persons imagine it to be. As a matter of fact, it is 1,025 miles south of St. Petersburg, 625 miles south of Glasgow, 325 miles south of London and 150 miles south of Paris. It is on almost the same parallel of latitude which passes through Lyons in France and divides Switzerland from Italy. It is also a mistake to suppose that the climate of the province in winter is that of the Arctic regions. The climate is cold, it is true, but, being dry and clear, it is endurable; far less trying than the damp atmosphere of eastern New England, even when there is a difference of 10° or 15° by the thermometer. The greatest cold that the author has personally recorded was 38° below zero. That was in the woods; probably, in the city of Quebec, or in especially exposed places, it was at that time 42° or 45° below. This intense cold, however, lasted only a few hours, and it did not prevent the lumbermen from working as usual. Of course, feet and fingers, ears and faces would soon be frozen if carelessly exposed to such a temperature, but the workingman, thickly clad in three or four heavy flannel shirts and pairs of trousers, and, with several pairs of stockings on his feet, experiences no inconvenience. From about 10° above to 10° below zero, when there is no wind, is reputed very comfortable winter weather, and the Canadian climate furnishes a good deal of it. Such a temperature certainly is not cold enough to interfere with any business or pleasure that the people may have in hand. Those who dwell further south may think that in Quebec the spring comes on late; once started, however, vegetation advances with wonderful rapidity. Fields are usually covered with snow till the middle of April, but in two or three days after it is gone the grass is up fresh and bright. The ground seldom gets frozen deep before it is covered with snow, and so soon as the snow is gone the frost is out, and on dry land ploughing may be begun at once. As the spring comes late, so the autumn comes early. Heavy frosts may be expected in September, and by the middle of October everything liable to be damaged by cold weather should be harvested. The growth of crops is so rapid that it is perceptible from day to day. The latter part of May and the whole of June are beautiful with the ever-changing hues of springing grass and bursting vegetation. There is no dallying for the *habitant*. Nature keeps him busy, and every day shows what she is doing for him.

The main body of improved and cultivated land north of the Lower St. Lawrence is the tract lying between the river and the Laurentian Hills, which seem to come down to the water's edge at Les Éboulements, about 65 miles below Quebec, and extend nearly west, losing their distinctive name somewhere about north of Montreal, although, in point of fact, the range continues to and beyond the head of Lake Superior. As the general course of the river is toward the northeast, the width of this cultivable strip generally increases as one goes west. Near Quebec it does not exceed nine miles, and continues to be of about the same width for some sixty or seventy miles west of it. On the south side of the St. Lawrence, approaching what are known as the "eastern townships," land is generally level or gently rolling and the soil is fertile and easily worked. There the buildings have somewhat of the appearance characteristic of a well-to-do New England farming community. North of the St. Lawrence, also, to the west of the city of Three Rivers (about ninety miles west of Quebec), wide, rich and well-cultivated farms, amply provided with substantial buildings, stretch far away from the river's bank.

II.

The parts of the country, however, which Mr. Greenough writes about are mainly the rougher and less-favored regions near the city of Quebec. Here the average farmer would not be considered in the States a very thriving person. His wants, on the other hand, are few and his tastes of the simplest, so that he manages to feed his numerous children, pay his dues to Church and State, and have a decent suit of clothes for Sundays and holidays. He must be very poor indeed if he does not make a respectable appearance at church, for this to him is a matter of religious duty. He works less steadily and with less intelligence than the New Englander, but is twice as well satisfied with what he gets. He makes but little progress in any direction, but feels no uneasiness on that account. He is, in fine, a great deal of the bliss that goes with ignorance, although, during the last two or three decades, the *habitant* has undergone insistent changes, which we shall mention. His fathers is good enough for him. The *habitant's* principal crops are hay, oats and potatoes, which are raised for some buckwheat and other articles of minor importance. Tobacco is everywhere raised for home consumption, but it is almost always of very inferior quality. A few cattle and hogs, a little poultry and a very few sheep are kept. Canadian cows and horses are small, but hardy and good milkers. Since the general introduction of butter and cheese factories the product of these articles has been greatly increased, and the cattle raising is a little more profitable. Fat cattle raising is a little more improved, so that cattle raising is a by first-class fat cattle are raised; the best beef on the Quebec market comes mostly from the province of Ontario, or from the "Eastern Townships," a term applied to the counties along or near the line of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. The raising of horses has not been profitable of late years. The race of Canadian horses that was famous fifty or seventy-five years ago has become entirely extinct. Short-legged, heavy-bodied and broad-chested, with intelligent eyes and wide nostrils they could endure more hard work and hard fare than any of the chevaline races that have supplanted them. Without being extremely swift, they were good drivers and could take the traveller over as much road as he would care to traverse in one day.

Among the *habitants*, women and children help a good deal in field work, but not so generally now as they did formerly. It is not unusual to see a horse and an ox harnessed together, with the man holding the plough and the woman driving. In comparatively fertile localities the women work only at lighter tasks, such as hay making and grain harvesting. In the old times, when all the grain was cut with the sickle, there was much hard work for women, and the rounded backs and shoulders of many of the old farmers' wives tell of the labors they endured. Formerly, a good deal of flax was raised and homespun linen was the rule, but now it is cheaper to buy linen than to weave it. With all his labor and his simplicity of life, the *habitant* who tills the irresponsive soils near the foot of the Laurentians cannot always succeed in making both ends meet, and many uncultivated fields and deserted dwellings may be seen in that section, the owners of which have been tempted to occupy the abandoned farms of New England. There they are almost always successful, for, being pre-eminently patient and frugal, they are content with results that did not satisfy the more ambitious American.

In the region described by Mr. Greenough the principal winter industry of the *habitants*, except those who have farms important enough to demand their whole attention, and those occupied in ordinary mechanical work, such as shoemakers, carriage makers and the like, is lumbering. The larger farmers themselves have no small amount of work to do in the woods, for they need a great deal of firewood in the course of the year, and it is also they who are called upon to supply all the material for building and miscellaneous purposes, except that produced by mill owners. The lumbering work is still generally conducted as it was in former times. Where timber is plenty, large camps accommodating from 30 to 50 men are built; where the timber is less plentiful, the logs are made by jobbers, who cut and draw them to the water's edge at an agreed price per hundred. The jobbers are usually two or three neighbors, or, sometimes, a man with one or two sons, who work together and divide their earnings. The jobber can make logs more cheaply than can the employer by hiring men, for the former can support himself for less than it would cost to feed him in a large camp. He would grumble fearfully, we are told, if he were fed by an employer no better than he feeds himself. For a large number of men, the employer would be obliged to build a camp, with separate stables for the horses, which might cost him two or three hundred dollars, whereas the jobbers can run up a camp in a couple of days for next to nothing that will accommodate both them and their horses. A jobber's camp is not a pleasant place to sleep in, we are informed, for the stranger who is prejudiced against vermin. The fare is simple and cheap, consisting mainly of bread, pork, and pea soup. The soup kettle is always on the fire, never exhausted and never washed. Pork, peas and water are put into it as required, and the soup goes on continuously until the winter's work is done. The drawing of logs in the country of which Mr. Greenough speaks is all done by single horses, and the powerful ox teams used in other regions are never seen there. A *habitant* jobber may occasionally have an ox, but he is always harnessed like a horse and driven with reins. The oxen are small and slow, but they are less liable to accidents and diseases than horses, and if anything happens to them may be killed and eaten, which is no small consideration to the *habitant*. The net earnings of the jobber probably amount to less than he might have had in a large camp, where he would be hired by the month, fed, and furnished with food, but he has the satisfaction of not working so hard and of being his own master. Before leaving this subject we may mention that it is asserted by Canadian lumber merchants that many times more timber is destroyed by fire than by the axe. This seems a surprising statement to those who see for the first time the Laurentian hills. There is scarcely any earth at all visible; nothing but rocks covered with decayed leaves and rotten wood. As a matter of fact, this shallow bed, which seems incapable of supporting the dense forest, will burn like tinder when once a fire gets into it. That is why the forest fires are so destructive in the Laurentian country.

III.

In a chapter on language, Mr. Greenough expresses the opinion that the mother tongue of the *habitants* does not differ greatly from that spoken by persons of the same degree of education or illiteracy in France. In some of the parishes where the Acadians expelled from Nova Scotia settled may be heard many expressions not found elsewhere, and the pronunciation is somewhat peculiar. The speech of the people of the Eastern Townships also differs from that of those dwelling on the north side of the St. Lawrence. On the banks of the river approaching the Gulf of St. Lawrence many curious verbal forms and phrases are in common use. This is partly accounted for by the fact that a regiment of Highland Scotch troops which had been disbanded at Quebec settled along that shore. They intermarried with the *habitants*, and, no doubt, interpolated into the French, which, of necessity, they acquired, many English and some Gaelic forms of speech. The words that they used were, for the most part, French, but the idioms and constructions were foreign. Since that time, however, some of these peculiarities have worn away. Even in the language spoken by *habitants* of pure descent many English words have been incorporated, especially in connection with machinery and modes of communication. In the section with which Mr. Greenough became familiar the *habitants* commonly said "railroad" and "steamboat," but usually put a stress on the last syllable, as if the expression were not quite naturalized and quotation marks were implied. The railway men say "switch," and our author has even heard a half-Anglicized Canadian say "shunter." A man at work for him once said that a certain person was "*malaisé à beater*" (hard to beat). When his attention was called to some holes in the boards he was using, he said, "*Je vais les plugger*" (I am going to plug them up). Another example cited shows how foreign words find their way into the *habitant's* language. At the author's fishing camp many baked beans were used. Now, the French for beans is, of course, *fèves*, but baked beans are called simply "beans." The cook would frequently ask if he was to "*mettre tremper des fèves pour faire de beans*," that is, put some beans in soak to make some *beans*. So baked beans are *beans* in French, while the unbaked article continues to be *fèves*. The same French-Canadian cook would not recognize potatoes as *pommes d'terre*; he would call them *patates*, or, more likely, *patakes*. He would not say *froid* for cold, but *frette*. It is to be remembered that the language brought here by the lower classes was largely that of Normandy. The language of the *habitant* to-day is not a *patois*, but resembles the French spoken by the Norman peasant 200 years ago.

There have been, of course, many changes of type among the *habitants* during the last fifty years. Of the sturdy and adventurous canoeman, for instance, and the hardy and resourceful carter, the vocations have almost passed away. Steamboats have superseded the one and railroads the other on all the main lines of travel. Nearly extinct, also, is the *seigneur* of earlier times. The attempts to establish a permanent nobility in French Canada failed. The country was too poor; while a few of the *seigneurs* endeavored for a time to maintain a style and a dignity corresponding to their rank, their revenues were inadequate, owing to the thinness of the population. Others somewhat lower in the social scale did not make much effort in that direction. Although landlords holding large estates, their poverty obliged them to become, in some measure, *habitants* or farmers, and, sometimes, traders. After the English conquest many of them returned to France, a few prospered with the improved condition of the country, and the rest became merged in the mass of the people. Even among lawyers and priests, a marked change has taken place during the last half century. The younger notaries at the present day are less devoted to their profession than their forefathers, and are more ready to abandon it for the chances of political life. Even the priest, although by education and training inclined to be conservative, finds himself constrained to adapt himself more or less to the forces that are moving forward the community. The *habitant* has changed with the others. He does not now invariably wear gray homespun, but our author is inclined to think that his wearing of factory-made goods comes about not so much through any vanity of his own as because his wife and daughters find more profitable employment than the tedious process of spinning and weaving by hand. Many of the daughters have gone to work in New England factories, and the result is that at home the demand for female labor has increased. Thirty years ago a seamstress in French Canada was glad to work for twenty cents a day, whereas now she demands fifty. Emigration, indeed, has been enormous and incessant on the part of the *habitants* within the last quarter of a century, and it still goes on, although somewhat fluctuating from year to year, according to the condition of business. In the section of which our author saw the most, there was, he said, scarcely a family of which some immediate member had not "*monté dans les Etats*" (gone up into the States). A good many of them, indeed, find their way back, because, although they earn much more in the States, they are obliged to work much harder and more steadily than at home; and it is not every *habitant* that likes hard work, even if well paid. Within a few years, however, so many have decided to remain south of the border and make the States their abiding place, that there are now about two-thirds as many French Canadians in the States as in Canada itself, and the contingent which used to migrate annually to and fro has been proportionately diminished.