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# Leo Tolstoy

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Diaries

Volume 2: 1895–1910

Selected, edited and translated by  
R. F. Christian

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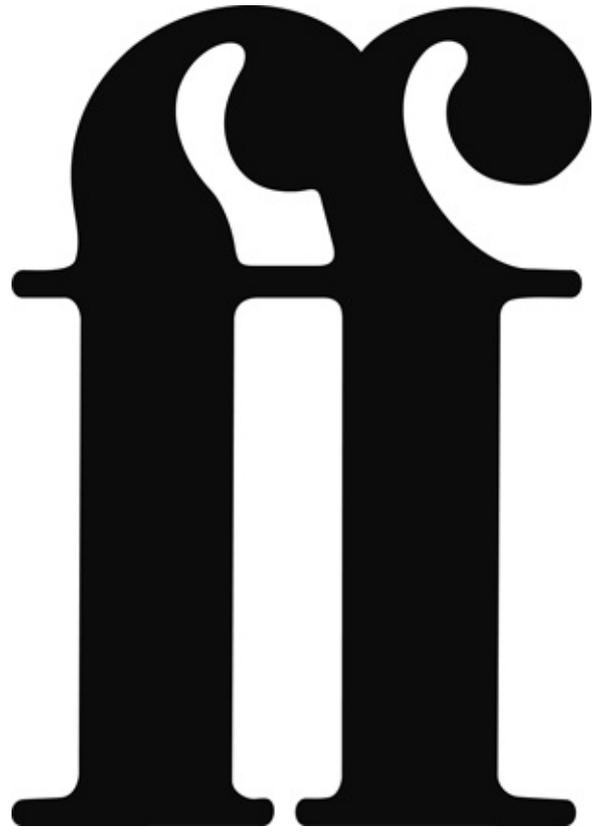
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# Tolstoy's Diaries

*Volume II: 1895-1910*

Edited and translated by  
R. F. CHRISTIAN



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## Preface to the 2015 Edition

Tolstoy's literary activities famously began in the venereal diseases clinic of Kazan University in the spring of 1847, when he was eighteen years old. During the month that he spent in the clinic, in almost complete isolation, he started keeping a diary. To begin with, Tolstoy regarded his diary as a record of his hopelessly optimistic self-improvement programme. Later it became an outlet for his creative and philosophical reflections, and as such comprises an indispensable companion to his published writings, both fictional and otherwise.

Keeping a diary, for Tolstoy, was not the deeply private affair it is for most people, even if it started out that way. In the all-too-brief week between Tolstoy's proposal and marriage to Sonya Behrs in September 1862, he felt it incumbent upon him to give his young fiancée his diaries to read. The vivid realism which is the hallmark of Tolstoy's fiction is matched by the frankness of his diary entries, but he did not feel he should conceal anything in his past from his future bride.

As an innocent and inexperienced eighteen-year-old girl, who had seen little of life, Sonya was deeply shocked and upset by what she later termed his 'excessive conscientiousness', particularly when it came to reading about his sexual history with peasant girls. Nevertheless, she went ahead with the marriage and before long she and her husband were regularly and sometimes frenetically reading each other's diaries. It was a habit kept up until the very last months of Tolstoy's long life in the summer and autumn of 1910, when his deteriorating relations with Sonya led him to try for the first time to keep a diary for 'himself alone'.

Tolstoy did not keep a diary regularly throughout his life, for sometimes he transferred his exploration and articulation of psychological processes to his fictional works. Since his diaries span his entire adult life, however, they are indispensable reading for anyone seeking to look behind the scenes of the great novels and become better acquainted with their creator.

The same is true of Tolstoy's letters, and his epistolary output was, as one might expect, equally prodigious – there are 8,500 letters published in the Russian edition of his *Complete Collected Works*. Tolstoy wrote thousands of letters, to all manner of people, from persecuted peasant sectarians exiled to Siberia to the Romanovs, eventually addressing both *muzhik* and Tsar as 'Dear brother'.

The most touching letters Tolstoy wrote were to his immediate family - his wife Sonya, his children, his 'aunt' and surrogate mother Tatyana Alexandrovna ('Toinette'), his sister and brothers. The most important letters he wrote were to his closest friends. First there was his distant relative Alexandra Andreyevna, a lady-in-waiting at Court, for whom he had the deepest respect and affection until his defection from the Orthodox Church. Then there was the shy and retiring Nikolay Strakhov, who worked at the Imperial Library in St Petersburg, but the most frequent recipient of Tolstoy's letters was the aristocratic Vladimir Chertkov, his devoted follower. Chertkov was instrumental in disseminating Tolstoy's religious ideas in translation, and thousands of people, from a dizzying array of faiths, felt compelled after reading them to write to the 'Sage of Yasnaya Polyana' for his advice on how to live their lives. Tolstoy tried to reply to them all.

It will be a long time before we have full English editions of the fourteen volumes of Tolstoy's diaries and the twenty-five volumes of his letters in the *Complete Collected Works*. In the meantime, we can be eternally grateful to R. F. Christian, doyen of Anglophone Tolstoy studies, for doing all the hard work for us. The result of Professor Christian's scrupulous work is four manageable volumes containing faithful translations of the most important of Tolstoy's diary entries and letters. Rendered into supple English, they are enhanced by judicious and helpful annotations, and introductions which draw on Professor Christian's deep knowledge, the fruit of a distinguished career of studying and writing about Tolstoy. It is hard to see how these invaluable editions can be surpassed.

Rosamund Bartlett

*Rosamund Bartlett is the author of Tolstoy: A Russian Life (Profile Books).*

*R. F. Christian's four volumes of Tolstoy's Diaries and Letters are all available in Faber Finds.*

## 1895-1902

Much of Tolstoy's energy in the last years of the nineteenth century was concentrated on his vigorous campaign on behalf of the Dukhobors, victims of religious persecution in the south of Russia, many of whom were eventually resettled in Canada thanks largely to his efforts and the financial proceeds of *Father Sergey* and *Resurrection*. *Father Sergey* is often linked with *The Devil* and *The Kreutzer Sonata* because of their common theme of sexual passion and its evil potential, although Tolstoy was concerned to show that the struggle against pride and worldly fame was even more difficult to wage than the struggle against lust. His wide-ranging, if artistically flawed, major novel *Resurrection* was in effect a vast synthesis of all his social, political and religious ideas. To the same period belong the short story *Master and Man* with its theme of an eleventh-hour act of unselfishness in the face of death, and the stimulating, irritating and iconoclastic treatise *What is Art?* All these works were written when Tolstoy was approaching seventy, and they were written against a background of an unsettled family life, complicated by his absurd jealousy of his wife's platonic friendship with the composer Taneyev, his puritanical disapproval of his son's disorderly behaviour and his anxiety over his daughters' matrimonial intentions.

In his seventieth year Tolstoy was busy organising aid for the starving peasants of the Tula province. Three years later he was excommunicated from the Orthodox Church for his heretical beliefs and writings, and retaliated with *A Reply to the Holy Synod's Edict*. Shortly afterwards he became seriously ill, and was persuaded to move to the Black Sea coast of the Crimea to the luxurious house of the wealthy Countess Panina near Yalta, where he and his wife lived for nearly a year until he was well enough to return to Yasnaya Polyana in the summer of 1902. Despite his serious illness he continued to work as and when he could, his most important essay being *What is Religion and What is its Essential Nature?* While convalescing in the Crimea he also wrote a long letter to Nicholas II appealing to him among other things to abolish the private ownership of land. Not surprisingly there was no reply. Despite his advancing years and erratic health, Tolstoy's energy remained formidable. If his enthusiasm for bicycling and tennis waned, he continued to ride and walk long distances and he kept up an extensive correspondence. He published no more works of fiction in his life-time, but his posthumous publications

show that his creative energy was by no means exhausted. In 1902 he was still working on his late masterpiece *Hadji Murat* (eventually finished, but not published, in 1904), the theme of which took him back to his days as a soldier in the Caucasus, and seemed to accord ill with his belief in the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force. He also returned intermittently to his drama *The Light Shinet in Darkness*, which Shaw believed was his greatest play, and in which Tolstoy appeared to be mocking all his most cherished ideas and to be hinting at the disastrous results likely to follow from becoming a 'Tolstoyan'!

## 1895

*3 January, Nikolskoye* The Olsufyevs'.<sup>1</sup> We set off as planned on the 1st. I worked on *Master and Man* till the last hour. It's now respectable artistically, but still weak in content. The business about the photograph is very sad. They are all offended. I wrote a letter to Chertkov.<sup>2</sup> Even before that I felt unwell, and I was unwell and weak when I set off. We arrived in good shape. The next day and today I did nothing - read, walked and slept. Yesterday there was a lively argument about Orthodoxy. All the confusion of understanding is due to the fact that people don't acknowledge that to live is to be part of the process of improving oneself and improving life. *Be better and make life better*. I've made no notes these last days. It's now gone 8 in the evening - I'm sleepy.

*Today is 6 January, Nikolskoye* I'm quite well and have begun work again on *The Catechism*: yesterday and today. It interests me very much and is very near to my heart, but I still can't find the right form and am dissatisfied. Read my story<sup>3</sup> the day before yesterday evening. It's not good. Both lack character. Now I know what to do. Twice argued with Dmitry Adamovich.<sup>4</sup> He has organised for himself a form of practical service to the people in a Slavophile spirit, i.e. a feather-bed on which to lie, and not work. The point is that they regard life as static and not fluid. Thought about something very important yesterday and forgot it. Mikhail Adamovich<sup>5</sup> is obviously afraid of Tanya. It's a great shame. And she's thin and pale. Received many pleasant letters: from Kenworthy, Sergeyenko<sup>6</sup> and Stadling. Did some thinking. [...]

It's now 6 o'clock in the evening. I'll go for a walk and also see the Christmas tree. Went to the hospital today and was present at an operation.

*29 January, Moscow* Haven't written my diary for more than three weeks. Had a good time at the Olsufyevs'. Was mainly busy with the story. And I still haven't finished it, although it's in proof. An important event which, I'm afraid, won't be without consequence for me is the Tsar's audacious speech.<sup>7</sup> We went to Shakovskoy's meeting. We shouldn't have done so. It's all stupid, and it's obvious that an organisation paralyses the powers of individual people. [...]<sup>8</sup>

*Today is 7 February, 11 o'clock in the morning, Moscow [...]* More than a week has passed. During this time I wrote a short foreword to the biography of Drozhzhin and continued revising my story. An unfortunate story. It was the cause of a terrible storm on Sonya's part that broke out yesterday. She was unwell, weak and exhausted after dear Vanechka's illness, and I've been unwell these last few days. It began with her beginning to copy out the proofs. When I asked why ... [A page of the diary has been torn out here.]

Help me not to desert Thee, not to forget who I am, or what and why I am. Help me.

Thought during this time: [...]

(4) The situation of the majority of people educated in true brotherly love and now oppressed by the deceit and cunning of those who wield power and who force this majority to ruin their own lives - this situation is terrible and seems to offer no way out. Only two ways out present themselves and both are barred: one is to break violence by violence, terror, dynamite bombs and daggers as our nihilists and anarchists did, to smash the conspiracy of governments against peoples, without our participation; the other is to enter into agreement with the government, make concessions to it and, by taking part in it, gradually unravel the net which holds the people fast and free it. Both ways out are barred.

Dynamite and daggers, as experience shows us, only provoke reaction and destroy the most valuable power, the only power in our control - public opinion; the other way out is barred by the fact that governments have already come to know how far to tolerate the participation of people who want to reform them. They only tolerate what doesn't destroy the essentials, and are very sensitive about what is harmful to them, sensitive because it concerns their very existence. They do tolerate people who don't agree with them and want to reform the government, not only in order to satisfy the demands of these people, but also for their own sakes, for the sake of the government. These people would be dangerous for governments if they remained outside these governments and rose up against them; they would strengthen the one weapon which is stronger than governments - public opinion - and so they need to make these people safe, win them over by means of concessions made by the government, render them harmless like microbe cultures - and then use them to serve the aims of governments, i.e. the oppression and exploitation of the people.

Both ways out are firmly and impenetrably barred. What then remains? You can't break violence by violence - you increase reaction; nor can you join the ranks of government - you become

an instrument of government. Only one thing remains: to fight the government with weapons of thought, word and way of life, not making concessions to it, not joining its ranks, not increasing its power oneself. That's the one thing necessary, and it will probably be successful. And this is what God wants and this is what Christ taught.

(5) Looking at what goes on in all assemblies, at what goes on in society with its conventional proprieties and entertainments, I was struck very vividly by the thought which, I think, had never occurred to me before, that only evil is done by a group, or crowd or an assembly. Good is done only by each individual person separately. [...]

*15 February* God has helped me; helped me in that He has manifested Himself in me, though weakly, through love - love for those who do us evil, i.e. the only true love. And once this feeling had manifested itself, it first of all overwhelmed and inflamed me, and then those near to me as well, and everything disappeared, i.e. the suffering disappeared.

The following days things got worse. She was decidedly close to madness and to suicide. The children followed her on foot and by vehicle, and brought her back home. She was suffering terribly. It was the devil of jealousy, insane, groundless jealousy. I had only to love her again for me to understand her motives, and having understood her motives, it wasn't a question of forgiving her, but there being nothing to forgive. Sent the story to the *Northern Herald*, and it's being printed here by her and also in *The Intermediary*.<sup>9</sup> I finished three fables and sent them off.<sup>10</sup>

*15 February, Moscow* Got up tired in the morning and couldn't do any work. Ivan Ivanovich<sup>11</sup> and Goltsev came. I refused to sign the petition about legalising freedom of the press.<sup>12</sup> [...]

Today, I think, is 21 February, Moscow. These five days I've been revising the fables, revising *Master and Man*, and thinking about - I can't say writing - the *Catechism*. Sonya's health is fully restored. Snegiryov came and explained that it was the menopause which comes with old age. How good to grow old and free.

An event which astonished me very much during this time was the drunkenness and rowdyism of the Petersburg students.<sup>13</sup> It's terrible. This is what they have reduced the young to - by they, I mean not only the government, but also the liberals and revolutionaries, the ringleaders with no basis. Another thing: Škarvan's refusal to serve, the demand by Alyokhin and others in Nalchik to pay allegiance without swearing an oath, and Posha's

fine all seem to me to be the start of a direct conflict with the government.<sup>14</sup> I very much want to write about this, and several times have had clear ideas about it. Clear ideas how to describe the lies amid which we live and what supports them, and to include at the same time that simple philosophy which I express in the *Catechism*.

Thought: [...] (4) Further clarified my ideas during this time in a conversation with the young Goryushin, a friend of Pavel Petrovich,<sup>15</sup> about a subject I never cease to think about – the state: we have reached the point where a merely good and reasonable man cannot take part in the affairs of state, i.e. cannot be in sympathy with it – I’m not speaking about our own Russia, but cannot be in sympathy in England with the ownership of land and exploitation by factory owners and capitalists, or with the extermination of peoples in Africa, the preparations for wars and wars themselves. And the firm ground on which a man says: ‘I don’t know what the state is or how it works, and I don’t want to know, but I do know that I can’t live contrary to my conscience’ – this point of view is unshakeable, and the people of our time must adopt it in order to further the progress of life. I know what my conscience bids me, and you people who are concerned with the state, you organise it as you like, as long as it conforms with the demands of the conscience of the people of our time. But meanwhile people are abandoning this unshakeable ground and adopting the point of view that state forms must be amended and improved, and they are thereby losing their ground by acknowledging the need for the state, and so departing from their unshakeable point of view. Not clear, but I think I’ll write about this theme. It seems very important to me.

It’s now 12 o’clock. I’m going to send the proofs to Petersburg, and Sonya is very agitated. Poor woman. I’m sorry for her and love her, the more so now that I know about her illness.

Yesterday Ogranovich helped me to be more fair towards Lyova.<sup>16</sup> He explained to me that it’s a latent form of malaria. And I began to understand his condition and to feel sorry for him, but I still can’t summon up any vital feeling of love for him.

*Today is the 26th night-time, Moscow* We’ve buried Vanechka.<sup>17</sup> A terrible – no, not a terrible, but a great spiritual event. I thank Thee, Father. I thank Thee.

*Today is 12 March, Moscow* So much has been felt, thought, and lived through during this time that I don’t know what to write. The death of Vanechka was for me, like the death of Nikolienka – no, to a far greater degree – a manifestation of God, a drawing of

me towards Him. And so not only can I not say that it was a sad, painful event but I can say outright that it was a joyful one – not joyful, that’s a bad word – but a merciful event, coming from God, disentangling the lies of life, and bringing me closer to Him.

Sonya can’t see it that way. For her the pain – almost physical – of separation conceals the spiritual importance of the event. But she astonished me. The pain of separation immediately released her from all that was darkening her soul. It was as if doors had been thrown open and the divine essence of love which constitutes our soul had been uncovered. She astonished me during the first days by her amazing power of love: everything that in any way destroyed love, that was a condemnation of anyone or anything, even a gesture of ill-will – all this offended her, made her suffer and caused a painful contraction of the newly exposed shoot of love. But time passes, and that shoot is hidden once more, and her suffering ceases to find satisfaction, *vent*, [relief], in universal love, and is becoming unrelievedly painful. She suffers particularly because the object of her love has gone from her, and she thinks that her happiness was in that object and not in the love itself. She can’t separate the one from the other; she can’t take a religious view of life in general or of her own. She can’t clearly understand and feel that there are only two alternatives: either there is death, which hangs over all of us, has power over us and can separate us and deprive us of the happiness of love, or else there is no death, but only a series of changes which happen to all of us, among which one of the most important is death, and that these changes come over all of us like waves, in different combinations, some earlier, others later.

I try to help her, but I can see that I haven’t helped her so far. But I love her, and to be with her is both painful and good for me. She is still weak physically: no periods for two months, and she sometimes thinks she is pregnant. Poor dear Tanya is also very weak. We are all very close to one another, as D.<sup>18</sup> put it very well: just as when one leaf falls, the others soon bunch closer together. I feel very weak physically and can’t write anything. Worked a bit on the *Catechism*. But only in thought. Wrote a letter to Schmitt with a programme for an international *Intermediary*.<sup>19</sup> During this time *Master and Man* came out, and I hear praises on all sides and I don’t like it, but despite that, I feel a petty, vain satisfaction.

Felt like writing something literary today. Tried to remember what things of mine were unfinished. It would be good to finish them all, namely:

(1) Koni’s story, (2) *Who is Right?*, (3) *Father Sergey*, (4) *The Devil in Hell*, (5) *The Coupon*, (6) *Notes of a Mother*, (7) *Alexander I*, (8)

the drama, (9) The settlers and the Bashkirs.<sup>20</sup> At the same time I must finish the Catechism. And now having planned all this – enough work for about eight years at least – I may die tomorrow. And that’s good.

Thought during this time: [...]

(3) The death of children from an objective point of view: nature tried to give forth her best, and when she sees the world isn’t ready for them, she takes them back again. But she has to try, in order to advance. It’s an experiment. And like swallows which fly in too early, they die of cold. But they must fly in all the same. So with Vanechka. But this is an objective, foolish argument. A sensible argument is that he did the work of God: the establishment of the kingdom of God through the increase of love – more so than many people who lived for half a century and more.

(4) Sonya often said: ‘He saved me from evil. Mine is a bad and harsh nature; he softened it by his love, and brought me closer to God.’ As if he isn’t doing so now! [...]

(6) Yes, one must always live as though a favourite child is dying in a room nearby. He is always dying. And I am always dying. [...]

(8) A few days after Vanechka’s death when love began to grow weaker within me (what God gave me through Vanechka’s life and death will never be destroyed), I thought that it would be good to sustain that love in myself by seeing all people as children – imagining them as they were at the age of seven. I can do that. And it’s good.

(9) The joy of life without temptation is the subject of art.

(10) Understood with a new special force that my life and that of all people is only service, and has no end in itself.

(11) Read a bad article by Solovyov against non-resistance.<sup>21</sup> Every practical moral injunction contains the possibility of contradicting that injunction by another one deriving from the same principle. Abstinence: well, should we stop eating, and become incapable of serving mankind? Don’t kill animals: well, should we let them eat each other? Don’t drink alcohol. Well, should we not take communion, or use alcohol for medicinal purposes? Don’t resist evil by violence. Well, should we let a man kill himself and others?

Trying to look for these contradictions only shows that a person who spends his time at it doesn’t want to follow the moral rule. It’s always the same story: because of one person who needs alcohol for medicinal purposes, drunkenness is not resisted. Because of one imaginary aggressor, people kill, execute and imprison. [...]

*Today is the 18th Morning.* Five days have passed. I’ve done

nothing. In the mornings I've thought about the *Catechism*. Once I wrote a little more of *Father Sergey*, but it wasn't good. Masha has gone to Ilya's. Sonya is moving into a new stage of life, with painful suffering. Help her, Lord. All this time I've had headaches and felt great weakness. In the evenings there have been many visitors. And they depress me very much.

Writing, especially works of fiction, is frankly harmful to me morally. When I was writing *Master and Man* I succumbed to the desire for fame. And the praise and the success of it are a sure indication that it was a bad thing to do. Today I seem to have woken up a little morally. [...]

*Today is 27 March, Moscow* During this time I've written, or rather revised, letters to Schmitt and Kenworthy and somebody else. And apart from that, to my shame, I've done nothing. I don't like the letters to Kenworthy and Schmitt with the plan for a European edition. A voice in the bottom of my heart seems to say that it isn't good. And I don't think it is. I've written nothing; I'm not dissatisfied with myself. The love of God has not deserted me.

With Seryozha I feel well and at ease. And I don't remember any unkind feeling towards anyone in all this time. Since I don't hear all the criticisms, but only the praise for *Master and Man*, I have the impression of a lot of fuss, and remember the anecdote about the preacher who stopped at a burst of applause which drowned a phrase of his and asked: 'Did I say something stupid?' I feel the same and know I've done something stupid: spending time on the artistic revision of a shallow story. The idea itself is unclear and laboured - not simple. The story is bad. And I would like to write an anonymous criticism of it if I had the time and it didn't mean bothering about something that isn't worth it.

During this time I've visited Izyumchenko in prison and Khokhlov in hospital.<sup>22</sup> Izyumchenko is very simple and cheerful. Khokhlov is very pitiable. I'd also like to write about the cruelty of this form of violence. Sonya is still suffering and can't raise herself to a religious height. Probably she needs this suffering, and it's doing its work within her. I'm sorry for her. But I believe it's necessary - necessary in order to feel the action of the hand of God, to recognise it and to love it. I was thinking yesterday about Leskov's will,<sup>23</sup> and thought I ought to write a similar one. I keep putting it off as though it were still far away, but whatever I do it's close at hand. It's good and necessary, not only because it saves one's nearest and dearest from doubts and uncertainties about what to do with the body, but also because a voice from beyond the grave is especially audible. And if one has anything to say to one's nearest and dearest, and to anybody else, it's good to say it in these first moments. *My will would be roughly as follows. Until*

*I write another one it will be entirely as follows.*<sup>24</sup>

(1) Bury me in the place where I die, in the cheapest cemetery if it should be in town, and in the cheapest grave – as paupers are buried. Lay no flowers or wreaths, and make no speeches. If possible, bury me without a priest and a burial service. But if that should be unpleasant for those who bury me, let them do so in the usual manner with a burial service, but as cheaply and simply as possible.

(2) Do not announce my death in the newspapers and do not write any obituaries.

(3) Give all my papers to be looked through and sorted out to my wife, V. G. Chertkov, Strakhov, (and my daughters Tanya and Masha) (what is crossed out I crossed out myself. My daughters need not bother about this), – to those of these people who are still alive. My sons I exclude from this commission, not because I have not loved them (I have loved them more and more in recent times, thank God), and I know that they love me, but they are not fully aware of my thoughts, have not followed their course, and might have their own particular views about things, as a result of which they might keep what ought not to be kept, and throw out what ought to be kept. The diaries of my former bachelor life I ask you to destroy, after selecting from them what is worth it, and in the diaries of my married life I ask you to destroy everything which, if published, might be unpleasant for anybody. Chertkov has promised to do this for me while I am still alive. And given his great love for me which I have not deserved and his great moral sensitiveness, I am sure that he will do it very well. The diaries of my bachelor life I ask you to destroy, not because I would like to conceal from people my own bad life – my life was the usual life of unprincipled young men, worthless from the point of view of the world – but because these diaries, in which I only wrote down what tormented me through the awareness of my sins, produce a falsely one-sided impression and are ...

But no, let my diaries stay as they are. At least they will show that despite all the triviality and worthlessness of my youth, I was still not abandoned by God, and, if only in my old age, began to understand Him a little and love Him.

Of my other papers, I ask those who will be sorting them out not to print everything, but only what might be useful to people.

I write all this, not because I ascribe great, or indeed any importance to my papers, but because I know in advance that in the early days after my death my works will be printed and discussed, and importance will be ascribed to them. If that is the case, then let my writings not cause any harm to people.

(4) The right to publish my earlier works: the ten volumes and the *Primers* I ask my heirs to make over to the public, i.e. to renounce

copyright. But I only ask this, and I don't will it. If you do it, it will be good. It will be good for you too. If you don't do it, that's your own affair. That means you were not able to do it. The fact that my works have been sold these last ten years has been the most depressing thing of my life.

(5) Furthermore, and in particular, I ask all people near and far not to praise me ( I know they will do so because they have done so in my lifetime in the most unseemly way), but if they want to study my writings, let them look carefully at those passages in them in which I know the power of God spoke through me, and make use of them for their own lives. There have been times when I felt I was becoming the bearer of God's will. I have often been so impure, so full of personal passions, that the light of this truth has been obscured by my own darkness, but nevertheless this truth has sometimes passed through me, and these have been the happiest moments of my life. God grant that these truths should not have been defiled in passing through me, and that people might feed on them, despite the superficial and impure form which I have given to them.

In this alone lies the importance of my writings. And so I can only be reproved for them, not praised at all. That is all. [...]

*Today is 6 April, Moscow* There have been no particularly interesting visits or letters. [...] I'm very oppressed by this bad, idle, luxurious town life. I think I'm being useful to Sonya in her weakness. But it's unforgivable that I'm not writing, if I can't do anything else apart from that.

The only justification is that I've been physically very weak all this time. I've grown ten years older. My inclination to love is weaker. But, thank God, I haven't yet forsaken the state of universal love. In that respect I feel well - in so far as a parasite that is aware of its parasitism can feel well. During this time I've written a few letters, one to Vengerov with a foreword for Bondarev,<sup>25</sup> and have read Ruskin's splendid *Birthday Book* and made notes in it.<sup>26</sup>

Thought during this time: [...]

(6) A mother suffers over the loss of a child and can't be comforted. And she can't be comforted until she understands that her life is not in the vessel which is broken, but in the contents which spilled over and lost their shape, but have not vanished. [...]

(13) The greatest number of sufferings which arise from the association of men and women are due to the complete misunderstanding of one sex by the other. Few men understand what children mean to women, what place they occupy in their lives, and even fewer women understand what duty to society, or

to religion means to men. [...]

*10 April, Moscow* All this time - all Easter Week - I continue to be unusually weak: I'm doing nothing and thinking little: only rarely do islands of thought suddenly emerge from the darkness and mist, and probably for that reason they seem particularly important. Sonya is still ill. She had almost recovered and unfortunately had started to adopt her former irritable and domineering tone - I was so sorry to see the loss of that loving mood which was apparent after Vanechka's death - but the day before yesterday she began to have a headache and a temperature again, though not a high one, and acute apathy and weakness. Help me, Father, to do and feel what I should.

Yesterday I walked along the streets and looked at people's faces: there were few which were not disfigured by alcohol, nicotine or syphilis. Their feebleness is terribly pitiful and offensive, when the road to salvation is so clear. Sheep jump into the water and you stand and wave them back, but they go on jumping in, and you get the impression they are doing what they should be doing, and you are getting in their way. I'm terribly tempted to write about the relationship of society to the Tsar,<sup>27</sup> explaining it by the false attitude towards what is old, but Sonya's illness and weakness hold me up.

Thought during this time:

(1) The natural course of life is as follows: at first, as a child and a youth, a person merely acts, and then through acting, making mistakes and acquiring experience, gets to know things, and then when he has learned the main thing a person can know, - what is good - he begins to love that good: to act, to get to know, to love. His subsequent life (like our present life which is a continuation of a previous one) is first of all activity in the name of what you love, then getting to know what is new and worthy of love, and, finally, love of this new thing, worthy of love. This constitutes the circular movement of all life.

(2) A man is considered to be disgraced if he lets himself be beaten, or if he is accused of robbery, brawling or not paying card debts, etc., but not if he signs a death sentence, takes part in an execution, reads other people's letters, separates fathers and husbands and wives from their families, confiscates people's last resources or puts them in prison. But surely that is worse. [...]

*Today is 14 April, Moscow* Thought further: Continue to be idle and bad. No thoughts or feelings. Mental lethargy. And if any feelings emerge, they are the basest, most egotistical ones: the bicycle, freedom from family ties, etc. Am I tired after what I have experienced recently, or am I experiencing a new stage in life,

having entered upon a pure old age which I have long desired? I don't know, but I'm asleep. In the mornings I don't even read, but play patience. Sonya's health is not improving, rather it is getting worse. [...] Thought during this time:

(1) I was walking beside the Alexandrovsky Gardens when suddenly, with astonishing vividness and delight, I imagined to myself a novel – how an educated man of our circle ran away from his wife to join the settlers, and took his son and his son's nurse with him. He lived a clean, hard-working life and brought his son up there. And then the son went back to his mother who had sent for him, and who lived the completely luxurious, dissipated urban life of our gentry. I could write it wonderfully well.<sup>28</sup> At least it seemed so to me. [...]

(3) I've been reading a journal with articles by M. Kovalevsky, Pypin and Solovyov, a story by Orzeszkowa and something by Bourget, etc.,<sup>29</sup> and recalled what my brother Seryozha demanded of literature. There is the work of the heart and the spirit, clothed in thought. This is real, and this is what Seryozha and I and all understanding people love. And there is the work of the intellect without the heart, and with stuffing in place of the heart, and this is what journals and books are full of.

During this time I've been to court.<sup>30</sup> It was dreadful. I never expected such incredible stupidity. I've been busy with Khokhlov. I never expected such baseness and cruelty by doctors. And Sonya's illness. I'm very sorry for her and love her. [...]

*25 April, Moscow* Yesterday Sonya left for Kiev with Tanya<sup>31</sup> who came to fetch her. Her health is a bit better – she has picked up, but is quite jaded and still can't find any moral point of support. A mother's position is terribly tragic: nature has endowed her above all with irresistible desire (she has similarly endowed man, but with a man it doesn't have the same fateful consequences – the birth of children), as a result of which children appear, for whom she is endowed with an even stronger love, a physical love, since carrying, and bearing and nursing and looking after children is a physical thing. A woman, a good woman, gives her entire soul to her children, devotes herself entirely to them, acquires the habit in her soul of living only for them and by them (a most terrible temptation, especially since everybody not merely approves, but praises it highly); the years go by and these children begin to depart – into life or death – in the first case slowly, paying back love with anger, as against someone who had been a millstone round their necks, interfering with their lives; in the second case – through death – which momentarily causes terrible pain and leaves behind emptiness. The woman must live, but there is