



ALEXEI TOLSTOY
His name was a handicap

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he brought out his next novel in 1919, that he had matured impressively as a result of his experiences and also, one must add, as a result of the experiences of the Russian people.

This novel, *Sisters*, was the first of a trilogy that was to occupy him for over 20 years. It was completed only a week or so before Hitler invaded the U.S.S.R. The epigraph to the final book has a timeliness that seems premonitory: To live as victors or die with glory.

Tolstoy called his trilogy *The Road to Calvary*, a title that may strike some people as strange, not to say blasphemous, since it deals with the irreligious revolution. But wait a minute. To begin with, the Soviet Union has turned out not to be so irreclaimably impious as we had been told to believe; but let that be aside from the present point. Calvary is a word with connotations as explicit to the Russians as to us, no matter what most Russians may believe or disbelieve.

Tolstoy chose to assess the Russian Revolution as a climacteric in human progress, chose to depict human progress on earth in terms of Calvary, and as an artist was wholly within his rights in doing so. We may differ from him in our appraisals of the revolution, according to our various orientations, but we cannot deny his right to symbolise it as a Calvary his countrymen had to endure before they could shake off the dead-weight of oppression they were stifling under.

Not Quite a Genius

At any rate *The Road to Calvary* is a striking document about Russia approaching revolution, in revolution and in transition after the revolution. There are fine descriptive chapters, especially descriptions of the defence of Tsaritsyn, now called Stalingrad, and of Budyenny's rout of the White Guard cavalry at Voronezh. But in the main Tolstoy's epic is an intellectual commentary on the revolution and on the Soviet regime; a justification of both, and one written with more than ordinary conviction.

Unquestionably it is a work Alexei will be remembered by. Except in scope, it hardly ranks with *War and Peace*, but after all, Leo Tolstoy was a genius. Alexei fell short, though by ever so

TWO PAINFUL TROUBLES

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT,
Director of the Division of School Hygiene)

CRAMPS in the legs at night, when resting in bed, worry old people, mothers in the later stages of pregnancy, and sometimes young people. A muscle goes into spasm, and there is acute discomfort.

In our cell-tissues, respiration goes on all the time, oxygen going into them, waste material like lactic acid coming out into the blood. This interchange can be hindered by poor circulation in any area. The muscle cells go into spasm if they do not get enough oxygen, and pain is felt if they collect too much lactic acid. Disease may be responsible—for example, diabetes interferes with the blood sugar level, and a certain sugar (dextrose) is needed as a catalyst for tissue respiration. The level of calcium in the blood has a bearing, for it must be right.

To unravel the reason for cramps means a very thorough medical examination. It may be due to impaired circulation from arterio-sclerosis, high blood pressure, or vascular disease—these are more likely from the middle age of life. It may be due to diabetes, or some not so serious interference with the blood sugar level. And it may be from improper calcium levels in the blood caused by insufficient calcium rich foods. So the circulatory system needs testing out—and this, before trial of any lay treatments if cramps are worrisome.

A hot bottle usually fails to relieve cramps—it only increases the oxygen demands of the muscle. Coolness would be better, to reduce the call on the blood supply. But you can try drinking more milk—and if you cannot drink milk, take calcium by the mouth—to increase your blood calcium level—and if this fails let your doctor find the cause.

And Now Backache

Probably no other form of pain gives rise to more "imaginative troubles" than backache. It is a complex problem to find the right cause among so many possible causes. The doctor knows that this symptom may indicate one of a great many disorders or diseases, of

little, of being that. He was enormously competent, enviably gifted, he had a sharp understanding; but in reading him one senses his limitations, one misses the lyric insight into things which illuminates so poignantly the best work of the greater Tolstoy.

Still, it was not for nothing that *The Road to Calvary* was awarded a Stalin Prize. The trilogy is a remarkable expression of patriotism, of faith in human potentialities, and as such it ranks as an authentic piece of literature.

Alexei Tolstoy felt that in his work he was helping to build the Soviet Union, helping Russians to understand the nature of the responsibilities involved in Soviet citizenship. As I have said, a purposeful writer. The world needs more of them, for what they contribute to the common stock of understanding; and since Alexei was that kind of humanitarian, and a captivatingly articulate one, his death is more than simply a loss to Russian letters.

It concerns us as well and it is right that we should know it.

which the following unpleasant collection are only a few—gastric ulcer, duodenal ulcer, dyspepsia, gall-stones, disease of the uterus or generative organs, disease of the bladder or the lower bowel, fibrositis (of which one form is lumbago), disease of the spinal cord itself, or arthritis.

The treatment of backache is the treatment of its cause, and the discovery of its cause is a job for an experienced doctor. Various physical measures for

the relief of pain may be followed, but if you suffer at all from backache, you may be sure there is a good reason for it. Let your doctor find the reason. As with every other complaint, early diagnosis is half the battle.

I have made no mention of kidneys in reference to backache, for the reason that it is comparatively rarely that pain in the back is caused by kidney disease. When pain does originate in the kidneys, it is more likely to be felt in some part of the abdomen, even in the groin, than in the back.

If backache is severe and persistent it must have treatment based on an accurate diagnosis—a job for your doctor. This may give him a headache, but if he can only find the cause you will get relief.

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