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A GUIDE TO RUSSIAN LITERATURE

(1820 — 1917)

BY

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PREFACE

A NATIONAL literature may be viewed as a manifestation of a purely creative genius, or as a reflection of the spiritual life of a people, or as a picture of its national character and socio-political conditions. It is evident that descriptions of social groups and classes or reproductions of spiritual gropings must form an element of every literature, the writers being children of their times, members of their nations, and drawing their experience from immediate surroundings. Yet hardly any literature equals the Russian in reproducing the spiritual struggles of men, and few western writers have been as willing as their Russian colleagues to go down to the very bottom of everyday existence and to scrutinize the economic, the social, and the political life of their country. This makes Russian literature a valuable object of study not only as art, but also as the surest road to the understanding of the Russian people and Russian conditions.

The task of the present volume is to be of assistance in such studies. From the literary productions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it selects only those which have a value for the present, either on account of their artistic qualities, or as representing some aspect of Russian life. This marks a point of departure from the traditional histories of literature. The *Guide* omits many poets who were of importance in their time, yet have been overshadowed by greater contemporaries or successors working in the same field. This is the case with Nikitin

in the presence of Koltzov and Nekrasov, with Maikov and Polonsky in the presence of Pushkin, Lermontov and Foeth, with Minsky in the presence of Balmont and Bryusov. The *Guide* omits a number of older writers describing economic and social conditions when the same conditions have been presented more adequately and with more talent by others. Such is the case with Grigorovitch, Pisemsky, Potapenko, Stanyukovitch. All these and many other writers must take their place in a history of Russian literature, yet there is no room for them in a practical guide. On the other hand, the *Guide* includes many an author of the present generation who may not prove great *sub specie aeternitatis*, yet who is indispensable as a truthful narrator and interpreter of events in recent times. To this class belong Chirikov, Yushkevitch, Gusev-Orenburgsky, Mujzhel. The *Guide* intends to answer the persistent question coming from many quarters, "What shall I read to understand Russian character and Russian life?" Yet it passes by no book that marks a step forward in the progress of purely artistic creation.

The fact that a book has not been translated into English could not serve as a reason for excluding it from the *Guide*, as the list of translations is steadily growing and as the volume is intended to be of service not only to the general reader but also to publishers and translators. Moreover, in most cases it would be profitable to read a chapter devoted even to an untranslated author, as this may help in understanding the general tendencies in Russian literature and the drift of Russian thought.

A selection not only among writers but also among the works of each writer is inherent in a practical guide. Works have been specified which characterize the creative personality of the author, or possess a special literary

value, or throw light on some particular facet in Russian life. This criterion made it necessary to select, on the whole, fewer works from authors of a uniform character and more from versatile writers. Thus, the fact that the *Guide* mentions less of Bunin's and more of Andreyev's works does not in any way put Bunin below Andreyev; it only indicates that Andreyev's interests were wider and so more of his works are required to give his portrait as a writer. On the other hand, the *Guide* is not overburdened with works that make tedious reading for even the Russian of our time because they are too local or too detailed or somewhat antiquated. For this reason, only a few of Uspensky's and Shchedrin's works are mentioned.

The space given each author naturally varies in accordance with his place in Russian literature. Yet departures from this general rule are unavoidable. Writers of the older generations receive a less detailed treatment than authors of our time. Writers well known in English-speaking countries are comparatively less dwelt upon than writers totally unknown. This procedure may be open to criticism from the standpoint of historic perspective; in a practical guide, however, it is natural that Ostrovsky, a writer of fifty years ago, should occupy less space than our contemporary, Veresayev. It is also excusable that Turgenev, so well known and so generously commented upon, should not be reviewed with more detail than Sergeyev-Tzensky, whose name has hardly appeared in English. The underlying idea is that modern literature in its best manifestations gives a better insight into the soul of modern Russia than the works of long passed generations.

It would have been gratifying to the author had it been

possible to make the *Guide* a mere compilation of Russian critical essays. This would present a study in Russian literature written by the keenest Russian scholars for Russian consumption. This, however, could not be realized, at least not within the scope set. It remained, therefore, to use quotations from Russian critics only as supplements, or as appreciations of individual books. The quotations were taken from the collected works of recognized students of Russian literature, from individual treatises, and from essays appearing in the most respected monthlies.

The *Guide* makes no attempt at criticizing the individual authors, *i.e.*, at pointing out not only their merits but also their shortcomings and limitations. It is assumed that the qualities that make an author desirable as an object of study are his originality, his artistic personality, his closeness to Russian realities, not his failures or weaknesses which may be detected by one critic or another according to their conceptions. Therefore, no mention is made of the various and frequent attacks launched at Gorky after the first period of his glory. Similarly, the fierce controversy over the merits of the symbolists or Leonid Andreyev could hardly be given sufficient consideration. For detailed information, the student will, of course, have to turn to the work of the respective writers and to more elaborate critical surveys. Only where some negative quality gnaws at the root of an author's talent, it had to be pointed out in the *Guide*.

A word must be said about the terms *story*, *novelette*, and *novel* as used in the *Guide*. These terms are indicative only of the approximate size of a work. A short work, whatever its contents or character, if not exceeding in size some fifty pages of an ordinary book, is termed

story. A longer work of between fifty and one hundred and fifty pages is called *novelette*. A longer production is marked as *novel*. Those names are a mere expedient for the orientation of the reader. In Russian the respective names are *román*, *póvyest*, *razskáz*.



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LIST OF PRONUNCIATIONS

a	is pronounced like the English a in <i>garden</i> .			
g	“	“	“	g in <i>good</i> .
e	“	“	“	e in <i>yes</i> .
zh	“	“	“	s in <i>pleasure</i> .
i	“	“	“	i in <i>liberty</i> .
kh	“	“	“	Scots ch in <i>loch</i> .
l	“	soft like the English l in <i>flute</i> .		

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
Aksakov	Aksákawv
Andreyev	Andryéyev
Artzybashev	Artzybáshev
Balmont	Bálmawnt
Block	Bláwck
Boborykin	Bawbawrykeen
Bryusov	Bryússawv
Bunin	Bóoneen
Byelinsky	Byeléénskee
Byely	Byéliy
Chekhov	Chyékhawv
Chernyshevsky	Chyernishévskee
Chirikov	Chéereekawv
Dostoyevsky	Dawstawyévskee
Foeth	Fet
Garin-Mikhaylovsky	Gáreen-Meekhayláwvskee
Garshin	Gársheen
Gogol	Gáwgal
Gontcharov	Gawntcharáwv
Gorky	Gáwrkee
Griboyedov	Greebawyédawv
Gusev-Orenburgsky	Goóssyev-Orenboórgskee
Ivanov	Eevánawv
Koltzov	Kawltzáwv
Korolenko	Kawrawlyénkaw
Kuprin	Koopreén
Lermontov	Lyermawntawv
Lyeskov	Lyeskáwv
Mamin-Sibiryak	Mámeen-Seebeeryák

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
Merezhkovsky	Myeryezhkawvskée
Mikhaylovsky	Meekhaylawvskée
Mujzhel	Mooyzhel
Nadson	Nadsawn
Nekrasov	Nyékraássawv
Ostrovsky	Awstrawvskée
Pisarev	Peéssaryev
Pushkin	Pooshkeen
Remizov	Rémeezawv
Reshetnikov	Ryeshétneekawv
Ropshin	Rawpsheén
Saltykov-Shchedrin	Sáltikawv-Shchedreén
Sergeyev-Tzensky	Syergyéyev-Tzyénskee
Sologub	Sawlawgóob
Solovyov	Sawlawvyawv
Tolstoi	Tawlstawv
Turgenev	Toorgýenyev
Tyutchev	Tyóotchev
Uspensky	Oospýenskee
Veresayev	Vyeryessáyev
Volynsky	Vawlinskee
Yakubovitch	Yakoobawvveetch
Yushkevitch	Yooshkyéveetch
Zaitzev	Záitzev

)

THE GROWTH OF A NATIONAL LITERATURE



GENERAL SURVEY

THE historians of Russian literature follow its progress from decade to decade. They speak of the literature and men of the forties, the sixties, the seventies. They find clear lines of demarcation between one such period and another. For the purpose of a more comprehensive survey, however, Russian literature from the twenties to the beginning of the nineties of the past century may be viewed as one great entity. The points of resemblance between the literary productions of this entire period are numerous.

1. Russian literature is still a product of the land-owning nobility. Pushkin and Lermontov, Gontcharov and Aksakov, Turgenev and the Tolstois, and many another great light, were born in the mansions of the landlords, breathed the air of family traditions, led a carefree life in their youth, received a good education at the hands of private tutors, often foreigners, or in secluded aristocratic schools. This gave a certain unconscious refinement to their writings, and influenced their conception of life. Ordinarily they knew the village and the provincial town well, but the large city was quite outside their range of vision. They were intimately connected with the land-holding class, and consequently had an understanding of the peasantry which was grouped, geographically and economically, around the landlords' mansions, but they were little interested in the problems of the city folk. Russia for them was the village. The Russian people coincided with the Russian peasants.

In the last third of the century, the *raznotchinetz*, the man from the ranks, makes his appearance in Russian literature. Up to that time, only very few sons of the people succeeded in treading upon the sacred literary ground. The poets Koltzov and Nikitin, and the story-writer Reshetnikov, were the best known. Now, with the general progress of life and the development of education, more and more writers of the non-privileged classes step to the front. The new men have a new boldness in their manner; they are crude; they are in many cases more vigorous than their noble brothers, as raw life often appears to have greater vigor than its more refined manifestations. Yet the new writers cannot compete with the others in charm, in ease, in masterful handling of their subjects, in artistic poise. Notwithstanding all the changes in Russian life gradually developing after the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the dominant figure in literature is still the son of the nobleman's nest.

2. Russian literature of this period is, to a large extent, a substitution for social and political activities. Russian intelligentsia, well acquainted with the ideas and movements of the western world, was prevented by autocracy from putting its ideas into practice. The progressive elements were practically barred from any economic or political work not favored by the ruling group. Many of those elements hit their heads against the black wall of Russian absolutism, in a vain attempt to break it. Those were the revolutionists of the seventies and early eighties who stained their martyr-path with tears and blood and were finally crushed by the old régime. But they were few. The vast majority preferred to dream. The intelligentsia lived an imaginary life in its books and writings. Literature in Russia was

more than a pastime, more than an artistic reflection of life. It was life itself. It was the only realm where the creative power of the nation's best men could find a semblance of constructive work.

It is for this reason that our political factions almost always coincided with literary schools. The Slavophiles and the Westerners of the forties and fifties were fundamentally divided in their political conceptions. Had they been allowed to carry their controversy into the political field, the Slavophiles might have conducted a campaign for a patriarchal system based on confidence between the Czar as father and the people as his children, with a Parliament discussing but not voting bills, while the Westerners might have striven to introduce a parliamentary system on a European scale. Much of the intellectual energies of both factions would have been absorbed by purely political activities, and literature would have only reflected these processes of life. Under autocratic rule, however, both factions turned to the field halfway open for them, and literature became the ground where they fought their battles.

A score of years later, the same was true about the Narodniki and Marxists. What divided these factions was their conception of Russia's economic future. The Narodniki thought industrialism a foreign growth incompatible with the foundations of Russian economic life. In the communal ownership of land as it existed in the peasant communities, the Narodniki saw the nucleus of a better social order. The peasants were in their eyes the half-conscious bearers of a socialist ideal, which only the pressure of bureaucracy prevented from reorganizing society on the basis of equality and freedom. Hence the great reverence of the Narodniki for the peasant life

and habits, for peasant ideology. The Marxists, on the contrary, thought industrialization of Russia unavoidable, and the villages were in their eyes so many nests of ancient prejudices and social reaction. The center of gravity was put by the Marxists in the industrial workers as a coming revolutionary force. All this had little to do with literature, yet for a quarter of a century the ideal of the Naródniki, their hopes and queries could find only literary expression. The few enthusiasts who early in the seventies tried to approach the peasants with social propaganda, were soon imprisoned, and nothing remained for the Naródnik but to study peasant life and to put his dream of a bright future in literary images.

Literature was the only refuge of the Russian mind, the only safety isle to avoid stagnation. All that was deepest in the soul of our spiritual leaders rushed to literature and literary criticism to find realization.

We resembled a strange order in the midst of the atrocities of Russian life. We gratified our social instinct by reading descriptions of the people's life. We satisfied our desire for political action by discussing the various types of Naródniki, Socialists, bureaucrats, capitalists, workingmen, which were presented in our literature. It was almost a civic duty for any member of the intelligentsia to have read the latest sketch of Uspensky or Veresayev, the stories of Korolenko, the poems of Yakubovitch. This is why our writers were so eager to describe all the most novel occurrences in our social life. This is why they always had their ears close to the ground to perceive the faintest sound the very moment it was born.

3. Literature of this period is a very serious occupation, almost a civic service. A writer is not supposed to

tell a story for the story's sake. [The aim of literature is not to be pleasing, but to touch the most important moments in the life of the individual as well as in the life of society or humanity.] A writer is a friend, a teacher and a leader. It is, of course, taken for granted that a writer must have talent, else he would not be able to impress his readers. Talent alone, however, is not sufficient. [Generally speaking, the author is supposed to do one of three things: to broaden the social vision of the public by picturing social injustices and by holding out the ideal of a better social order, [though this ideal may not always be clear—(pictures of family life, of relations between the sexes, between fathers and children, all treated from a social viewpoint, would also come under this head); to deepen the spiritual life of the readers by giving descriptions of psychological problems, of mental strife, of philosophical, metaphysical, ethical, or esthetic gropings; to make the Russians better acquainted with their fatherland by describing social phenomena little known to the public, such as the life of the Siberian miners, the life of the marines, the life of fishermen, the life of the half-civilized inhabitants of the border-provinces, the life of religious sects repudiating the official church,] etc. Such descriptions may not be animated by an ideal, yet they are taken as something useful in Russian cultural life. Writings that do not serve one of these purposes are hardly considered worth while reading. Literature is a means of keeping the mind and the soul awake to the important problems of existence. Accordingly, the author occupies a high position, perhaps the highest and most respected, in the esteem of his contemporaries. The attitude towards literature is a serious one, almost excluding the aspect

of amusement. Literature may give joy, suffering or rapture, but it certainly is not the aim of literature to give pleasure.

4. Throughout the literature of this period sounds the voice of a sick conscience. Russian writers think themselves partly responsible for the miserable conditions of the people. This was a direct outcome of the isolated position into which the intelligentsia was forced by autocratic rule. The sons of the noblemen were, certainly, uncomfortable in their cultural solitude. The intellectual *raznotchinets* could not be happy with his modern education which elevated him above the masses. The writers of aristocratic origin indulged in gloomy moods deploring their great unredeemed debt to the people. The writers of the *raznotchinets* type were, perhaps, gloomier because they felt more keenly the chaos and humiliating baseness of Russian life. All of them were fully aware of the fact that no changes could be undertaken before they found a way to the minds of the masses. This way, however, was hidden in the mists of the future. There was no bridge over the gulf dividing the intelligentsia and the people.

Only a few writers, notably Foeth and Alexey Tolstoi, were free from this typical Russian gloom, and this is one of the reasons why they never succeeded in becoming leaders of intellectual Russia. They were too much out of tone with the prevailing motives.

5. Russian literature is moved by a keen desire to understand the character of the nation. Up to Pushkin, hardly any writer tried to describe the Russian people and Russian conditions as they were. The task confronting our literature in the nineteenth century is enormous. For the first time in history, the writers have to sketch

the fundamentals of the Russian character, the essential features of the Russian soul. True it is that literatures of all periods and all nations depict the characters of the respective nations. Yet one thing it is to record new types in a country where life had been mirrored by literature for generations, and another to outline the features of a great nation for the first time, with hardly any literary traditions in the past. The latter is the situation in Russia, especially in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. Many Russian writers are practically discoverers of new realms: Aksakov discovers patriarchal Russia under serfdom, Gogol discovers the discrepancies of a decaying feudal system, Ostrovsky introduces the Russian middle-class, Turgenev discovers a human being in the peasant, Lyeskov sketches for the first time the Russian clergy and the simple faith of the masses, Koltzov is himself a revelation of the people's spirit, Gontcharov depicts the national traits of inertia in *Oblomov*; all of them are discovering the beauty of the Russian landscape, the inherent intelligence of the plain people, the mysticism at the bottom of the Russian soul. Everything is novel in Russia; everything is eagerly read and commented upon. It is only natural that the writers develop a keen interest for all such observations. Literature is scrutinizing the Russian nation from every angle. Literature makes Russia aware of herself as a nation, at least in the mind of her thinking elements.

6. Particular attention is given the peasantry. Scrutiny of the village and contemplation over the fate of the agricultural worker are common to the writers of all camps and factions, Slavophil or Westerner, nobleman or *raznotchinetz.* Gogol writes tales of the Ukrainian people with an amazing gaiety of color and humorous fond-

ness. Turgenev portrays a number of peasant types in a tone of lofty artistic composure. Nekrasov writes of the peasants' sufferings with tears and seething compassion. Uspensky tries to be a calm inquisitive observer interested primarily in facts though his brain is constantly aflame. Reshetnikov made the reader shiver with fear at the sight of the dreadful savagery of the people. All these writers, varying in talent and in social conceptions, are united by their profound interest in the life of the peasants, by their insatiable desire to solve the mystery of the great sphinx,—the Russian masses.

This is not mere artistic curiosity. Neither is it a feeling of charitable pity for the poor. Back of it all is the consciousness of the fact that the peasant is the cornerstone of Russian life, that all work of reconstructing Russia must begin from below. The object of all this interest, the *moujik*, was hardly aware of the intellectual attempts at interpreting his very essence. He continued to lead his obscure routine life. He seldom stirred. He never protested. He was like a drop in a black sea under a heavy sky. He was not conscious of his power. Yet all those gentlemen who stretched at him their artistic feelers, had a distinct premonition that some day the black sea would begin to heave and rage and storm and break its chains. Hence the feeling of awe that the Russian sphinx inspired in all the writers.

7. Life in Russia through all this period is in a state of organic development. No violent changes are taking place. No great social catastrophes shake the body of the nation,—up to the famine of 1891. What is annoying in Russia is the slowness of all processes. Misery and poverty are increasing in the rural districts, to be sure, but even these threatening symptoms are accumulating

gradually, with the steady and slow progress of a glacier. Accordingly, Russian literature is slow in manner and style. Compared with the modern way of writing, many of the older authors such as Grigorovitch, Zlatovratsky, Pisemsky, Uspensky, seem very tedious. They are painstakingly recording every detail. They go into lengthy descriptions of nature, often occupying several pages. They stop to reason over life in general, over the fate of their heroes, over the destinies of their native land. They proceed in their narrative with utter deliberation.

This, of course, is not applicable to such brilliant writers as Gogol or Turgenev or Nekrasov. Yet even in the best works of this period we notice a preponderance of matter over form, of contents over construction. As a rule, Russian writers do not construct their works carefully. They are hardly concerned over a plot. They are not very fastidious as to the choice of expressions. What is their real interest and what gives their work a peculiar value is the palpitation of actual life, the soaring of the spirit, the sincerity of a human soul speaking directly and freely. Literary productions called by their authors a story or a novel are quite often neither one nor the other. They are just a morsel of real life, an illuminating episode, a study in human character, or a string of such episodes and studies loosely connected. The Russian reader and the Russian critic were looking for the truthfulness and spiritual depth of a work rather than for its external perfection.

8. In a country where literature takes the place of life, the critic takes the place of a leader. From the forties to the nineties, Byelinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, Mikhaylovsky follow one another in a splendid succession, exerting an amazing influence over

the minds of their generation. What they do cannot be called pure criticism. Even the most artistic of the group, Byelinsky, considered literary criticism a means to raise the nation to a higher level of social and cultural life. The others use the works of art as a basis for discourses over philosophical, sociological, or political topics. From a character or an incident given by an author they proceed to the social background and to the causes of the existing evils. This procedure brings within their scope all the important problems of their time. They are not mere critics, they are teachers, propagandists, prophets of a new order. Their work is ordinarily connected with the editing of progressive monthlies.

9. The literary language remains almost uniform throughout the entire period. Aside from individual deviations, nearly all writers use the same literary apparatus. Pushkin's language is dominant in poetry, and the subsequent works of Nekrasov, Alexey Tolstoi, or Nadson are, perhaps, even a step backward. Foeth and Tyutchev are using a very refined and subtle language, but they are outside of the general run and seem to have little influence on their colleagues. Turgenev's manner is dominant in prose writing, but there seems to be no worship of the language, no effort at stretching it or making it more colorful. Here as in many other respects, the writers are more interested in what they have to say than in the way they say it. The language is taken for granted. Rhythm and music and a certain beauty are almost common property. This accounted for lucidity, simplicity, chastity and honesty of expression, yet reform work in this realm became imminent.

All this changes towards the beginning of the nineties. Social and cultural progress initiated by the abolition of

serfdom and facilitated by subsequent industrial development, brought about new literary schools. The modernist with his gospel of beauty, his lack of interest for social problems, and his strong inclination towards a mystical conception of life, makes his appearance, and within a short time becomes one of the dominant factors. On the other hand, new waves of social energy, hardly perceptible at the outset, make the ground vibrate. Unrest spreads. Social forces are growing. The country is in the grip of a revolution. Russian literature responds. It is saturated with new color. It breathes unrest. It expands. It becomes infinitely more abundant in motives, forms, observations, ideas. Thus the great trunk of Russian literature of the nineteenth century branches off into two main boughs. These will form the subject of the second and the third divisions of the present work.

A. S. PUSHKIN (1799-1837)

POET. One of the great national classic writers.

Pushkin created the modern Russian poetic language. He freed it from dead hyperbolism and false solemnity; he brought it closer to the living language of the people, and gave it sincerity, dignity, flexibility, and vigor.

Pushkin is the first Russian poet to express in simple and truthful words the soul of a Russian. "The substance and qualities of his poetry," said Turgenev, "coincided with the substance and qualities of the Russian nation." Pushkin gave utterance to such emotions and moods as constituted the best traits of the Russian character. He thus fulfilled a great desire for self-expression dormant in a great people. Russia instantly recognized in Pushkin her own and loved him as people love their soil, their nature, the house of their parents. Pushkin's influence on the following generations is incalculable. Not one Russian possessing the knowledge of reading has failed to learn from Pushkin beautiful and inspiring things.

Pushkin is firm and tender. The joy of living permeates his musical lines, and their reading is a strange solace even when they touch the dark aspects of existence. There is clarity, serenity, balance in his poems; they give the impression of a clear autumn sky over a country rich with fruit and seeds. Life is sparkling in his songs, ballads, and verbal paintings; there is often pain and sadness and a longing for unmitigated freedom in his melodies; at times he is bitter, full of indignation

and stinging mockery; yet his faith in man is never diminished, and the undertone of all his poetry is a restrained gladness of the soul in intimate contact with the destinies of human beings, the life of humanity, and nature.

Pushkin is not only a lyrical poet, though the lyrical element permeates most of his poetic creations. He wrote a series of epic works unmatched in Russian literature. His numerous fantastic poems use the material of fairy-tales current among the plain people. His poetic tales exceed in simplicity and national color even the original productions of folklore. In a number of dramatic productions and fragments he manifested a dramatist's talent equal to the best. His prose stories are marked by a simplicity, lucidity, and charm undreamed of before, and they open a new era in the history of Russian prose.

All of Pushkin's writings bear the stamp of a rich personality. Pushkin is unusually clever, sharp, and witty. At the same time he is deeply earnest. Underneath his frivolity which is only the play of overabundant creative power, there is a foundation of thought. And whatever Pushkin writes is brilliant.

Not one of the Russian classic writers has been studied so lovingly and with so much care as Pushkin. Pushkinism has become an important science occupying an honorable place side by side with other branches of history. The literature on Pushkin is enormous.

“When you pronounce the name of Pushkin you invariably think of a Russian national poet. He possesses all the richness, the power, and the flexibility of our language. He, more than anybody, widened the boundaries of the language and showed its entire scope. Pushkin is an extraordinary phenome-

non, perhaps the most unique phenomenon in the history of the Russian spirit: he is the Russian man in the process of development, as he will be, say, two hundred years from now. Russian nature, Russian soul, Russian character, Russian language have been reflected through him with such purity, in such purified beauty, as a landscape is reflected on the convex surface of an optic glass."

N. V. GOGOL.

"Pushkin's main contribution to Russian literature consisted in putting poetry on a high level of independence. He freed poetry from its former subsidiary rôle as a means of propaganda or a pretty pastime. He made poetry the highest activity of the human spirit. This activity, in his opinion, ought to be unrestricted. He, therefore, proclaimed the right of human personality to be free. From the very first words of his poetic creations, he unequivocally declared himself a champion of freedom.

"His creative activities were not a result of reason and logic, however, but of a poetic imagination. He brought into poetry a wealth of live impressions. This is why his pictures and moods are so infinitely varied. Still, hand in hand with imagination, works his conscious thought.

". . . Pushkin's poetry is the history of a lofty ideal which seeks for light, for sincere feeling, and for freedom. ('I wish to live that I may think and suffer,') the poet said."

"The unusual wealth of his poetic pictures was a revelation. He widened the horizon of Russian poetry beyond national boundaries. He made it universal."

A. N. PYPIN.

"Pushkin is the echo of the world, an obedient and melodious echo which moves from realm to realm, passionately responding to everything so that no one significant tone in the life of the universe may vanish without leaving a trace. There is something fundamentally human in this ability to respond, in this gift of musical answers to all living voices, as nobody ought to limit himself to a definite set of impressions, and the universe ought to exist as a whole for every one of us.

Yet there is something inherently poetic in these qualities of Pushkin's. . . . There was such a limitless amount of beauty in his own soul that it could find relief, consonance, and inner rhyme only in the variety of nature and in the boundlessness of human existence. His all-responding soul was like a many-stringed instrument, and the universe playing on this Aeolian harp extracted from it the most marvelous songs. Pushkin, the great Pan of poetry, listened eagerly to the call of the sky, the earth, the throbbing of the heart. . . . A giant of the spirit, full of burning curiosity, full of restlessness and sounds, Pushkin embraces all, sees and hears everything. The soul is indivisible and eternal, he said, and he proved it by his own example. Without boundaries or limits, knowing no distance or past, always in the present, everywhere alive, a contemporary of everything, he moves, above space and above time, from land to land, from age to age, and nothing is alien or foreign to him."

J. EICHENWALD.

1. *Lyrical Poems.* (From approximately 1820 to 1837.)

"In his charming anthology of short poems, Pushkin is still more versatile and broader in scope than in his epics. Some of his smaller productions are of a dazzling brilliance. Here is everything: enjoyment, simplicity, an instant elevation of thought which gives the reader a thrill of inspiration. There is no eloquence here, only pure poetry; there is no outward luster, no elaboration, no perplexing form, but there is inner light which reveals itself gradually. The poems are laconic as pure poetry ought to be, but they are full of meaning, they signify everything. There is a world of space in every word; every word is boundless as the poet himself."

N. V. GOGOL.

It is needless to say that almost every poem of Pushkin's has been studied in the schools and is known to every educated Russian. No classic poet has been, through many generations, so close as Pushkin to the heart of his nation. We have all learned to love Russian

nature and the best elements in the past and present of Russia through Pushkin's poems.

2. *Evgeny Onegin*. A novel in verse. (1825-1832.)

Being the sad love-story of Onegin and Tatyana, the novel is a broad picture of Russian life early in the nineteenth century. It contains a number of Russian characters drawn with a master hand. Its pictures of Russian nature are, perhaps, the most mature in Pushkin's work. What gives it particular value, however, is a reflection of the spiritual life of Russian educated groups which, at that time, were entirely of the landed nobility. *Evgeny Onegin* is fundamentally a novel of the intelligentsia, the first of its kind. The tragedy of Onegin, the main hero, is far more than personal.

"Onegin heads the long row of Russian intellectual wanderers. A stranger to his surroundings, free from the ties of public service or family relations, wandering gloomily over his country without aim and without work, he has preserved a living soul. He is not a hero, the author did not idealize him; he is only a clever and good-hearted Russian, a representative of the intelligentsia of his time, who found no place and no work under conditions as they then existed.

"In Tatyana Pushkin showed with marvelous skill what treasures of the human heart and intelligence, what untouched spiritual powers could lie hidden in darkness and cold, under the suffocating atmosphere of philistine life, waiting for a better time when the first ray of light and the first breath of fresh air would call them to life and allow them to unfold."

D. N. OVSYANIKO-KULIKOVSKY.

3. *Poltava*. An epic poem. (1829.)

Events are centered around the Battle of Poltava (1709). The main figures are Peter the Great; Mazeppa, the Ukrainian Hetman; Maria, the beautiful Ukrainian

maiden. The pictures of Ukrainian nature and of the Battle of Poltava belong to the best of Pushkin's creations. *Poltava* is, perhaps, the ripest and most perfect of all his works.

"The pathos [of Poltava] is turned towards a colossal subject. We see Peter and the Battle of Poltava. The picture of the battle is drawn with a broad and daring brush; it is full of life and motion: a painter could copy it as he copies nature. The appearance of Peter in the midst of this picture, an appearance represented in flaming colors which make your hair stand upright on your head, gives you an impression of being present at a great religious mystery; as if some unknown God, in rays of glory unbearable to mortal eyes, were passing before us surrounded by lightning and thunder."

V. G. BYELINSKY.

Russians learned to appreciate Peter the Great through Pushkin's *Poltava* more than through all the textbooks of history.

4. *Boris Godounov*. A historical drama in verse.
(1830.)

The first historical drama of a realistic nature in Russian literature. The main figure is the Tzar Boris Godounov (1605) ascending the throne over the dead body of the legitimate heir whom he caused to be murdered. Godounov's tragedy is the discrepancy between outward happiness and inner consciousness of guilt. The hand of a Nemesis is suspended over all his deeds. Worse is the Nemesis intrenched in his own soul.

A group of other historic figures very well drawn fill the drama with life and action.

"*Boris Godounov* is all permeated with Russian history. The poet condensed it; he extracted it lovingly from old

documents and chronicles and transformed it into living figures. On the very words, grave and earnest, on their choice and arrangement, our national past and its spirit are stamped; they are hidden in the very folds of the play notwithstanding its Shakespearean manner. When you read *Boris Godounov* you see history in action, you feel its vibration.

"Yet, the individual, the historic, became under Pushkin's hand universal; a human crime retained in the annals of Russian history, the poet represented not only as an event in Russian life, but as a universal phenomenon of conscience."

J. EICHENWALD.

5. *The Copper Rider*. (1837.)

A series of poetic pictures and contemplations connected with the city of Petersburg and its founder, Peter the Great, whose copper statue, a powerful rider on a wild prancing horse, seemed to Pushkin to symbolize an entire epoch in Russian history.

The city of Petersburg, rising in melancholy beauty from the marshes of a dreary country on the faraway Gulf of Finland; its imposing structures combining barbarous taste with western refinement; its river and canals half hidden in fog; its "white" summer nights when dawn almost instantly follows sunset,—all the glory and mystic charm and hopes for the future are living in this series of poetic sketches centered around the inundation of Petersburg in 1824. The subject, however, is wider. The subject is Russia of modern times assimilating western civilization.

6. *The Avaricious Knight*. Dramatic fragment. (1836.)

Here Pushkin leaves his time and nation and carries us back to mediæval times. His subject is a lonely knight devoured by the passion of avarice. The character is represented with marvelous vigor. The Knight's mono-

logues are equal in psychological truth, color, and expression to those of the best classic tragedies.

[Other works of importance: *Ruslan and Ludmila*, fantastic poem; *Mozart and Salieri*, dramatic fragment; *The Stone Guest*, dramatic sketch; *The Feast in Pest Time*; *The Water Fairy*; *Tales*; *Songs of Eastern Slavs*; *The Captain's Daughter*, novelette in prose; *Byelkins Stories* in prose; *Dame Pique*, story in prose; and many more. In fact, all of Pushkin's works available in English, including his brilliant letters, deserve to be studied.]

A. S. GRIBOYEDOV (1795-1829)

GRIBOYEDOV is known as the author of one comedy, *The Misfortune of Reason*. Though he wrote many other works, they were all of slight value and would not have made his name known. *The Misfortune of Reason* put him instantly into the foremost ranks of Russian writers.

The Misfortune of Reason, a comedy in five acts, in verse, was written between 1818 and 1823. It subsequently underwent many revisions, and numerous handwritten copies were circulating for years among the public, arousing merriment and admiration; many monologues of the comedy became famous before the work finally appeared in print in 1833.

Few works equal *The Misfortune of Reason* in its influence on the public mind. The comedy is a presentation of the Russian nobility and higher bureaucracy looked at from the angle of modern progress. The scene of action is Moscow, and the characters are a noble Russian bureaucrat, his daughter, his subordinate, a colonel of the army, and many other representatives of society each with his own peculiar traits. The element of protest and criticism is embodied in young Tchatzky who returns to Moscow after a few years of absence.

As Pushkin showed his people the better elements of the national character, so Griboyedov showed in a realistic manner the dark side of their life. He came, however, not as a preacher in solemn garb; he came as a friend who mocks at the infirmities and emptiness of the upper class. He touched a very sensitive spot, and the response was vast. We all know Griboyedov's characters as we

know our best friends. Their ideas, the object of their interest, their past and present are an open book to us. Their sayings have become an integral part of every intellectual's vocabulary. The various features of their characters we can and do trace in other types created by Russian writers and, more important, in actual life. It is the peculiarity of *The Misfortune of Reason* that its characters are undying. Even in the twentieth century we still find in our public life men and women who can be identified easily with Griboyedov's heroes. We experience a melancholy satisfaction in comparing their words and deeds with those of their prototypes in a comedy written a hundred years ago.

The Misfortune of Reason formed all through the nineteenth and twentieth century an integral part of the Russian stage repertoire. Generation after generation looked at its production with the same mirth. Its influence on dramatic literature, on the stage, on generations of actors was immense.

"He [Griboyedov] loved the truth; he was her champion from his very youth; he spoke the truth fearlessly, without mercy to himself or to others. Contemporaries and witnesses admired the power of his mind and his devotion to the truth. Representatives of the most divergent views agree in appreciating his personality. One is almost astonished that men of this kind could really exist.

"The opinions expressed by the hero of the comedy are quite unusual for his time. They combine admiration for ancient Russian customs with a love for European institutions, sympathy for the sound fundamentals of national life and appreciation of modern progress. Tchatzky advocates higher education, freedom of opinions; he is proud of the new century when 'a man can breathe freely.' This is good Russian patriotism on a European basis."

A. VESELOVSKY.

"Every word of Griboyedov's comedy showed life in a comical aspect. It impressed one with the quickness of understanding, the originality of expression, the poetical realism of the characters. . . . Griboyedov is one of the most powerful manifestations of the Russian spirit."

V. G. BYELINSKY.

"The comedy *The Misfortune of Reason* is both a picture of social customs, a gallery of living types, and a scathing, deeply penetrating satire. As a picture it is undoubtedly stupendous. Its canvas includes a long period of Russian life, from Catherine to Emperor Nicholas [the First]. In a group of twenty persons is reflected, as a ray of the sun in a drop of water, all of old Moscow, its pattern, its spirit, its manners at a certain historic moment. All is done with an artistic skill, an objectivity and perfection equaled only by Pushkin and Gogol. In a picture which contains not one blurred spot, not one superfluous stroke, the reader even now feels himself at home, among living persons.

"Both the general subject and the details are taken from the Moscow drawing-rooms and transferred into the book and to the stage, all the time retaining their freshness and peculiar Moscow atmosphere.

"The salt, the epigrams, the satire, the conversational verse, it seems to me, will never die, nor will that sharp and caustic Russian mind die which lives in Griboyedov's lines. It is impossible to imagine a better language, more natural, more simple, more close to life. Prose and verse have here amalgamated into an indivisible entity as if with conscious intention that they might be easier retained in memory and circulated with all the wit, humor, fun, and malice which the author has put into them."

A. I. GONTCHAROV.

M. J. LERMONTOV (1814-1841)

WHEN we think of Lermontov, we see in our minds a huge mountain-peak somewhere in the heart of the Caucasus. Eternal silence reigns in its clefts and gorges. Its mass of ice and stone looks a picture of gloomy solitude. It seems to be indifferent to the turmoil of life. Still, there is boiling lava deep in its heart. Time and again it shakes from the fury of compressed inner forces. On its bare stony body little trees with lacy foliage climb higher and higher; and when the world is in bloom, winds laden with fragrance blow on its ragged brow, bringing the lure of distant lands.

Such is the poet Lermontov. This is, perhaps, why he loved the Caucasus all his life.

He is the most tragic of the Russian poets. From his very boyhood he was full of disdain for humanity, whose life he thought shallow, empty, and ugly; at the same time, he was irresistibly attracted by this very meaningless life. He cherished the ideal of a demon, a proud, lonely, and powerful superhuman creature challenging peaceful virtues and conventional happiness; at the same time he was fiercely craving for mortal love and sunlit human happiness, the absence of which filled his heart with pain. He had a cool and strong intellect, a power of analysis and criticism which revealed the futility of endeavor in this world and dictated an attitude of bored aloofness; at the same time he was torn by mad passions prompting him to the most unreasonable actions. He was inclined to protest, to repudiate, to curse, and almost without noticing he drifted into a prayer or saw

the vision of an angel singing his quiet song over "a world of grief and tears." Altogether he is a profoundly unhappy nature, just the reverse of his older brother Pushkin.

If Pushkin is primarily the poet of the Russian soul and Russian nature, Lermontov is the first of the great Russian poets of the spirit. And if Pushkin is fundamentally national, acquiring international significance through his closeness to his native land, Lermontov is of universal value in himself as expressing those doubts and moods and gropings which are common to all cultured men. This did not prevent him from being a genuine Russian poet. One is even justified in looking for a connection between his dark rebellious moods and the dark conditions of the society in which he lived.

Lermontov is a self-centered poet. "The most characteristic feature of Lermontov's genius," Vladimir Solov'yov says, "is a terrific intensity of thought concentrated on himself, on his ego, a terrific power of personal feeling." This, however, is no self-centeredness. Lermontov seeks refuge within himself because he finds no values in the ephemeral existence of the world. He sinks into brooding moods not because he finds in them satisfaction, but because life does not quell his thirst for harmony and truth. He is at war with society, with humanity, with the universe. He is at war even with God in the name of some great unearthly beauty which only at rare moments gives to his soul her luminous forebodings.

If Pushkin is the poet of *all* the people, Lermontov is the poet of the thinking elements in it. As such he played a colossal rôle in the spiritual history of his country. Generation after generation learned from him to hate the sluggishness of Russian life and the convention of

every life, to repudiate compromises, to understand the longing of the soul for things non-existent, and to cherish freedom in the broad sense of the word.

Lermontov's form is in full accord with his moods, varying from the most exquisite tenderness to "verses coined of iron, dipped in poignancy and gall," from slow, thoughtful, and melancholy lines to volcanic outbursts of fury. In expressing delicate shades of emotions and in dignified refinement Lermontov is, perhaps, even superior to Pushkin. There is more of the elusive quality in his poems, that which cannot be expressed in definite words.

"Horrified by the triviality of life, by its corruption and helplessness, Lermontov sounded the motive of indignation. This indignation, so rare in Russia, utterly alien to Pushkin, timidly sounding in the work of Tchitzky,¹ unknown to Gogol, was something new and unheard of. Through Lermontov's indignation, the Russian citizen for the first time became aware of himself as a real human being. The feeling of human dignity was stronger in Lermontov than all other feelings. It sometimes assumed unhealthy proportions, it led him to satanical pride, to contempt for all his surroundings. And in the name of this human dignity, unrecognized and down-trodden, he raised the voice of indignation.

"It appeared to him that not only society, those hangmen of freedom and genius, but also the Deity that gave him life, are making attempts on his inalienable rights as a man and are preventing him from living a full, eternal life which alone was of value to him. He saw no prospect of eternal life, no fullness of existence, no love without betrayal, no passion without satiety, and he did not wish to agree to less, as a deposed ruler does not wish to receive donations from the hand of the victor. . . .

"Lermontov is a religious nature, but his religion is primarily a groping, an indefinite, hazy admittance of life's tragic mystery."

EVG. SOLOVYOV (ANDREYEVITCH.).

¹ See *Griboyedov*.

“Lermontov introduced into literature the struggle against philistinism. Not, perhaps, till the end of the nineteenth century did philistinism meet a more ruthless, merciless foe. His aversion to philistinism is the key to his entire conception of life. His hatred for everything ordinary led him to his outspoken individualism and brought him near to that real romanticism which was unknown in Russia before him. It also imbued him with that contempt for the surrounding world which it is customary to view as Lermontov's characteristic pessimism. Lermontov, however, is not only a pessimist. Lermontov believed that life in itself could be beautiful, even at present. It could be beautiful, and it was all soiled under philistine rule,—this was for him the tragic contradiction. Hence his pessimism, his misanthropy, his hatred for life. He sees ethical philistinism in all social groups, in all society, in humanity at large. From this standpoint he is perhaps the most outspoken individualist in all Russian literature.”

IVANOV-RAZUMNIK.

“The leading motives of Lermontov's charming and sparkling poetry were a protest against the restrictions of individual freedom, a detached attitude towards an oppressing world, and the lure of another world which though not shaped clearly, not based on a definite foundation, is possessed of an irresistible power. This luring world is ordinarily somewhere in the past; it is a reminiscence, not a hope; at times it is heaven, at times, nature, at times, an idea, unclear yet so wonderful that the very sounds which give an inkling of its dark meaning cannot be listened to ‘without emotion.’ It is this better world which gives real meaning to a soul reminiscent of it, and the idea of this world lives in many of Lermontov's heroes.

“The idea of something which does not allow us to accept our world as the best of all worlds, an idea appearing to men in the best moments of their life and stirring them to action and changes, was very strong in Lermontov's mind. The circumstances of his personal life and the conditions of his time might have strengthened his longing for another world; fundamentally, however, this longing is an inherent quality of mankind, and through it, Lermontov is close not only to his own

contemporaries, but also to readers of the present and the future."

I. IGNATOV.

"What an abundance of power, what a variety of ideas and images, emotions and pictures! What a strong fusion of energy and grace, depth and ease, elevation and simplicity!

"Not a superfluous word; everything in its place; everything as required, because everything had been felt before it was said, everything had been seen before it was put on the canvas. His song is free, without strain. It flows forth, here as a roaring waterfall, there as a lucid stream.

"The quickness and variety of emotions are controlled by the unity of thought; agitation and struggle of opposing elements readily flow into one harmony, as the musical instruments in an orchestra join in one harmonious entity under the conductor's baton. And all sparkles with original colors, all is imbued with genuine creative thought and forms a new world similar to none."

V. G. BYELINSKY.

I. *Lyrical poems.* (1828-1841.)

"Invincible spiritual power; subdued complaints; the fragrant incense of prayer; flaming, stormy inspiration; silent sadness; gentle pensiveness; cries of proud suffering, moans of despair; mysterious tenderness of feeling; indomitable outbursts of daring desires; chaste purity; infirmities of modern society; pictures from the life of the universe; intoxicating lures of existence; pangs of conscience; sweet remorse; sobs of passion; quiet tears flowing in the fullness of a heart that has been tamed in the storms of life; joy of love; trembling of separation; gladness of meeting; emotions of a mother; contempt for the prose of life; mad thirst for ecstasies; completeness of spirit that rejoices over the luxuries of existence; burning faith; pains of soul's emptiness; outcry of a life that shuns itself; poison of negation; chill of doubt; struggle between fullness of experience and destructive reflection; angel fallen from heaven; proud demon and innocent child; impetuous

bacchante and pure maiden,—all, all is contained in Lermontov's poetry: heaven and earth, paradise and hell. . . ."

V. G. BYELINSKY.

2. *The Demon*. A fantastic poem. (1829-1841.)

The Demon, the Spirit of Evil, craves to free himself from his cold loneliness and to rise to heights of harmony through love for a mortal, the nun Tamar. The scene is set in the Caucasus, and the story is full of the mystic glow of the Orient.

The figure of the Demon was the creation Lermontov loved most. He worked on it practically all his life.

"Lermontov's Demon is not a symbol of the eternal Evil; he is not the Satan, he is a proud spirit, embittered and therefore sowing evil. He lived a lonely, monotonous life. He spread evil without satisfaction to himself. The Demon is an idealist suffering from disappointment. His hatred for mortals is too human. His love for Tamar suddenly transforms him. Her appearance makes him comprehend the sanctity of 'love, the good, and the beautiful' which had never been foreign to his soul, but lay hidden in its remotest corners. A Demon, however, is not destined for joy. Victory does not satisfy his heart, and torn by despair, he goes to tear the one he loves."

K. I. ARABAZHIN.

3. *Mtzyri*. (1840.)

The poem of freedom. A Circassian boy brought up in a monastery and ready to become a monk, is lured by the wild freedom of nature. On a stormy night he runs away from his half-voluntary prison. For three days he is absent. On the fourth, he is found in the fields near the monastery. He is exhausted and dying. The poem consists mainly of the boy's story. He tells what he experienced in his dash for freedom.

In *Mtzyri*, Lermontov expressed one of his strongest

emotions: his desire to be free like the wind, like the eagle on top of a mountain, like a powerful horse running through the boundless steppe. It is the fullness of life that lured both Lermontov and his Caucasian hero.

4. *Ismael Bey*. An epic poem. (1832.)

The scene of action is the Caucasus, the fight of the native mountain tribes against Russian aggression. Attention is centered on Ismael's drama.

"Ismael is endowed by nature with a powerful mind, a strong will, and stormy passions; in a word, he possesses the qualities of a demon whom nobody can oppose unpunished. He is a son of the mountains, a free child of wild nature who was early torn away from his homeland and made to taste the fruit of civilization. This devastated his soul. When he finally comes back to his native mountains, he believes regeneration is still possible for his withered soul. But he is mistaken, a civilized man cannot return to the happiness of the primitive. Ismael remains alone with his hatred for the Russians who swept the mountain ranges of his country with iron and fire. He is alone with his gloom and regret."

NESTOR KOTLYAREVSKY.

Much has been spoken about the influence of Byron on Lermontov's poetry. Lermontov himself was aware of a certain kinship of souls between himself and Byron. Careful investigators agree, however, that there was only a certain affinity of moods between both poets, but that Lermontov never imitated Byron.

5. *Song of Tzar Ivan Vassilyevitch*. Epic poem. (1838.)

Lermontov was a singer of heroism. Heroic moods and heroic deeds were at the very heart of his poetry. He

found the heroic in his demon, in the wild inhabitants of the Caucasus, but he also looked for heroes in the past of Russia. The *Song of Tzar Ivan Vassilyevitch* presents a hero coming from the rank of the people and challenging the authority of the Tzar even under the threat of death. The poem is written in the tone and in the spirit of the heroic folk-tales and as such was considered a remarkable contribution to Russian literature.

[Other works of importance: *Boyar Orsha*; *Maskarade*; *The Hero of Our Times*.]

A. V. KOLTZOV (1808-1842)

A POET. He came from the very bottom of society, from the house of a poor merchant, a dealer in cattle, wool, and lard. He received no school education, and spent all his boyhood and even years of maturity helping his father in business. He took a fancy early for reading, and became interested in poetry. At fifteen he still used to sing the poems he happened to find in books. Later he began to write poetry himself. Soon he attracted the attention of Byelinsky and his friends, who published some of his poems, but he never succeeded in freeing himself from ugly surroundings so as to devote himself entirely to literature.

Koltzov is a strange phenomenon of the Russian spirit. Without education, almost unlettered, he manifests a talent for poetry and a sense of beauty which make his poems a valuable and unique contribution to Russian literature. His poems are mostly an artistic improvisation on the themes of folk-songs. No folk-songs, however, have been as perfect and as musical as those simple, unsophisticated, yet entirely charming imitations. There is the freshness of primitive life in his lines, as if a whole country, forlorn and yearning under a pale sky, began suddenly to sing in sweet rhymes the chant of its hopes and sorrows. There is the fragrance of genuine Russia in Koltzov's poems, the Russia of vast steppes, melancholy songs, dark forests, untamed souls, and fundamental unhappiness. Koltzov's songs are as subdued, unassuming,

and chaste as the little birch-tree in the midst of a Russian meadow.

Poems. (1827-1842.)

“Koltzov’s poems are unique in our literature. When you read him you have a feeling that the ancient popular bards had awakened to life in all their power. More marvelous is it that this poet of the golden cornfields and vast steppes came from an environment where petty greed for money and comfort deadens the feeling of beauty.”

V. V. KALLASH.

“Koltzov is a real artist. He saw the universe with a human eye, he saturated the universe with humanity, he blended human life with nature. Everything is alive for Koltzov, life is everywhere, joy is intertwined with sorrow, light and shadow flow into a higher harmony. His poetry is the expression of the pantheist’s feelings; he is always aware of harmony diffused in nature; he bows before Divine Power.”

N. BRODSKY.

Koltzov’s poems are not many. He died young.

V. G. BYELINSKY (1811-1848)

CRITIC, publicist, and philosopher. Founder of Russian literary criticism.

The name of Byelinsky stands out as a bright light in the history of Russian thought. The whole decade of the forties is named after Byelinsky. He was a real teacher of men in the best sense of the word. He stood at the very center of the spiritual movement of his generation, and his influence was colossal. He possessed broad knowledge, great talent as a writer, an arduous temperament, and an extraordinary charm of personality.

Byelinsky was the first of a series of critics who blended literary appreciation with the exposition of a philosophical theory and at the same time shaped social views. A man with a burning love for pure literature and pure art, Byelinsky never satisfied himself with pure criticism, but strove always to put a broader foundation under his literary opinions. Starting out with the philosophy of Schelling and Fichte, he soon became an adherent of Hegel, and in his essays attempted to interpret the teachings of his master. Nature and history were to him only manifestations of the Absolute. The spirit, in his opinion, was supreme, and real happiness could be found only in the depths of a man's spirit. Hegel's axiom, "All that is real, is reasonable," he propounded in a very eloquent manner. In nature he found wonderful harmony, in its infinite variety he saw great unity. History to him was "a real and reasonable development of the Divine Idea." He, therefore, found no cause for criticizing history or striving to improve its present course.

Soon, however, he abandoned this doctrine, descending from quiescent, idealistic heights to the burning realities of life. Contact with surrounding conditions and more mature thinking convinced him that not all "existing" was "reasonable," at least not in his native land. Consequently, he abandons metaphysics for positive knowledge; admiration for the world's harmony is superseded in his works by scathing criticism of existing evils; indifference to political problems gives way to an acute interest in the political destinies of his country. From a pure idealist he becomes a realist, and this second period of his life (approximately nine years, 1839-1847) is the most active and fruitful.

In accordance with his philosophic and social conceptions, his views on literature and art also underwent a radical change. In his first period, he preaches pure art as an incarnation of beauty, as an expression of the idea of "nature's universal life" and as a representation of "not the problems of the day, but the problems of ages, not the interests of a country, but the interests of the world, not the destiny of parties, but the destinies of mankind"; in his second period, he becomes more inclined to appreciate literature that depicts actual life, actual persons, actual conditions even in a naturalistic way. Now, as formerly, he is a champion of the sovereignty of art. He would not like to make art and literature a means of social or political propaganda. He believes in the freedom of the writer and demands truthfulness above all. Still he maintains that art, true and independent, may have a great social function. "Nobody, save the stupid and the immature," he wrote, "would demand that a poet sing hymns to virtue and punish vice with satire; yet every man of reason has a

right to demand that the poet's poetry give answers to the problems of the day, or at least that it be saturated with grief over those grave insoluble problems."

Throughout all his changes Byelinsky carried his high enthusiasm and his sincerity. "Furious Vissarion" [Vissarion was his first name] his contemporaries rightly called him. He accepted every idea, every thought, every impression with great animation. His style was a white-hot metal spreading sparks and an almost oppressive radiance. Byelinsky was possessed of real intellectual passion, and carried away his readers in whatever direction his genius was striving. In the second period of his life, he exerted a greater influence on Russia, as he came closer to those problems which nobody could escape. In a letter to Gogol, he thus voiced the demands of Russia: "Russia sees her salvation, not in mysticism, not in asceticism, not in ossified piety, but in the progress of civilization, in enlightenment, in humanitarianism. She needs, not preachings (she has had enough of them!), not prayers (she has prayed them long enough!), but the awakening in the people of a feeling of human dignity lost for centuries in mire and dirt; she needs right and law in accordance with common sense and justice, and a rigid execution of the law. Instead of this, she represents the terrible picture of a country where men sell and buy men,¹ a country where people do not call themselves by full name but by derogatory nicknames, a country lacking guarantees of personal dignity and property, and governed by a huge corporation of various robbers and thieves."

This high pressure of civic indignation, together with

¹ Under serfdom, families of peasants could be sold by their masters and transferred to new owners.

an unequaled love for art and beauty, endeared Byelinsky to Russian society and made him a teacher not only of his contemporaries, but of many following generations. Time has shown many of Byelinsky's errors and shed a clearer light on many of his views. Yet his great heart, his deep love, his passion for the truth, his hatred for oppression, and his adoration of harmony of life and of spirit are undying and still exert their influence on millions of Russians.

“Byelinsky represents the progress of Russian thought from the abstract realms of literature, estheticism, and philosophy towards social problems. Byelinsky cherished the ideal of a moral human personality, an ideal which grew in our midst after European examples in the course of an entire historic epoch; at the same time, he passionately repudiated the social ugliness of his time. His point of view, his temperament, and the trend of the best contemporary minds made it impossible for him to enjoy truth, beauty, and a moral ideal in a theoretical way only; he wished to see the realization in life of what was his deep conviction and the object of his heart's devotion. This is why he was indignant at the sight of rotteness and meanness which he encountered everywhere. He certainly was a negator, and nobody ought to overlook or minimize this side of his activities. Yet he was all his life in the power of ideals which gave tone and meaning to his negation. His ideals changed, to be sure, but never in his life was he devoid of ideals. Only in the name of an ideal did Byelinsky repudiate first the Russian literature of the preceding period and then contemporary conditions. To him can justly be applied the maxim that hatred is the other side of love. Both were combined in his work, both appeared hand in hand. And it is due to Byelinsky's ideals and their application that his influence was so great. Byelinsky educated entire generations not only by his repudiation of the archaic, the backward, and the useless, but also by elevating our minds and souls to the heights of a moral ideal which could be formulated by every one in accordance with his conception and serve

as a basis for practical work. Byelinsky exerted a direct influence on the life-giving soil and the root of every ideal,—on the human, moral, and spiritual personality.”

K. D. KAVYELIN.

“If at present Byelinsky’s words touch us more by their tone of conviction and by their animation than by making us feel that we have heard undying vital truths; if at the mention of his name we are now stirred by emotion rather than by restless thought, one ought not to forget that there was a time when Byelinsky’s words were an answer both to the queries of Russian hearts and Russian minds. Byelinsky’s criticisms were for his time a quite complete encyclopedia of knowledge. Byelinsky was not only a witness but a judge of an entire epoch in our development; he lived it as hardly any of his contemporaries, because nobody equaled him in the ability to respond to all the problems of spiritual and material life which at that time had not only to be discussed, but sometimes guessed, conceived, and formulated for the first time. Byelinsky’s generation found in his critical essays the most complete and many-sided expression. His essays are the most important document of an entire decade in the history of our progress. They are a historic monument which sums up the flow of our philosophical, esthetic, historical, and social thought for many years; they tell the history of our self-consciousness in one of the most remarkable moments in our development; they tell it, perhaps, not always with full objectivity, but sincerely, completely, with a rare broadness and depth of critical outlook.”

N. KOTLYAREVSKY.

“Byelinsky was not only a man of the highest nobility of character, a great critic of artistic works and a publicist highly responsive to the problems of his time, but he also manifested a marvelous foresight in formulating the deepest and most important problems of our later social development.”

G. V. PLEKHANOV.

1. *On Gogol's Stories*. Essay. (1835.)
2. *A. V. Koltzov*. Essay. (1835.)

3. *Two Essays on Lermontov.* (1840.)
4. *The Works of Alexander Pushkin. Treatise.* (1846.)

Byelinsky's manner of treatment is both broad and detailed. He usually outlines a theoretical foundation for his views and then proceeds to analyze the author from this angle. His analysis is never detached. Byelinsky is either full of admiration which he expresses in enthusiastic words, or he is indignant and then his speech is still more heated. On whatever he writes, he impresses his personality, and you feel that for him criticizing was not only literary work, but a humanitarian service of the highest rank.

[The student of Byelinsky's works will be very much interested in his yearly *Reviews of Russian Literature* for 1840-1847, and in his treatise on *Russian Folklore Poetry*.]

N. V. GOGOL (1809-1852)

FOREMOST Russian humorist. A man who wrote of himself that he described life "through visible laughter and invisible tears, hidden from the world." The discrepancies, crudeness, emptiness, and meanness of provincial life under the bureaucratic régime is the object of his unrivaled mockery which for seventy-five years has made Russia tremble with delight, notwithstanding the accompanying moral indignation.

Gogol's types are undying. Gogol's *mots* are a part of the Russian vocabulary. Gogol's lyrical descriptions of Russian nature, strangely intertwined with most cutting comical scenes and situations, are learned by heart in Russian schools. In the midst of life gloomy under a load of misery, made painful by unfulfilled desires, down-trodden under the boot of a reckless ruling caste, Gogol was the mocking bird whose gay laughter, flowing from a loving heart, brought relief and comfort.

Yet, in Gogol's own heart there was no gaiety and no feeling of comfort. Gogol was a dreamer first, a humorist second. He loved to dwell in a romantic world where everything is beautiful, harmonious, perfect; and he was compelled by his humorous talent to lead people into a world where everything is petty, trivial, ugly. He longed to picture men and women of moral strength, virtue and purity, and he saw about himself people with crooked souls and crooked morals. Moreover, he thought himself the prototype of all his humorous persons, and this weighed heavily on his exalted religious spirit. Torn by

mental agonies, he gave up his realistic writings, destroyed the second part of his *Dead Souls* in a vain hope to find more sublime channels for his creative work. In fighting against himself, he destroyed his marvelous talent and practically died for Russian literature long before his physical death.

Marks of these intense struggles are on all, even the most famous of his works. Gogol is not an accuser. He hardly aimed at radical social reforms. He did not blame the political system, though others used his writings as a splendid illustration of the viciousness of the old régime. Gogol himself was horror-stricken at the sight of human infirmities. His laughter was not the result of feeling morally superior, but a kind of sympathy for the afflicted. He suffered himself as he laughed. He often interrupted his laughter with long lyrical outpourings in which he spoke of Russia's destinies, of a poet's task, or contemplated people in general. He alternated between excruciating pain and wild enthusiasm, between the most minute scrutiny of the most trifling phenomena and a sweeping vision devoid of definite contours but full of mysterious light. He loved his country with an intensity and adoration bordering on delirium, and he saw everywhere only devils making mischief in his native land. He was intolerably proud and intolerably humble; he made people roar with mirth, and he was mortally wounded in the grip of the typical Russian *toskà* (melancholy).

His style is, of course, an expression of his soul. He is considered the first Russian realist (though Pushkin deserves this title with more right), yet he constantly oversteps the boundaries of realism. He is supposed to picture Russia as it actually is, yet he is always exaggerat-

ing in the direction of the grotesque, or of the romantic, or of the symbolic. Such is the intensity of his talent that he carries the reader completely in the direction he chooses. The brightness of colors in his pictures is overwhelming. The teeming life in even his romantic stories is amazing. The clearness of lines, the variety of pattern is unmatched in Russian literature. There is almost too much movement and too many voices in his works. All is drenched with an emotion which breathes into the gayest pages the chill of unfathomable depths.

As time passed, Gogol was appreciated more and more in Russia. In the twentieth century, he is even more valued, because more understood, than he had ever been before.

“ From his early years Gogol, more than any other Russian and even non-Russian writer, conceived the delusive joy, the limitless power, the deadening poison, and the suicidal bitterness of laughter. In his *Author's Confession* he tells us that even in his childhood and boyhood he experienced ‘fits of mockery’ deriding all his surroundings. This is why even in his earliest creations, in those ‘carefree scenes’ as he calls them, we find the intrusion of something terrible, something elementally funny, something demoniacal into the midst of the most picturesque and even idyllic places. Later, as the naïve creations of his first ‘carefree scenes’ were followed by others more numerous and marked with depth and perfection, they turned into an entire world, an inimitable museum full of little monsters. In this collection of crippled, deformed, and dwarfed beings, in this amusing zoological garden which speaks all languages of the world, in this hospital in which only hopelessly incurable cases are accepted, in this remarkable world, you would seek in vain for even one figure that is not funny. And no wonder; is it not laughter that called them all into being? ”

ELLIS (pseud.).

“Everybody sees evil in great violations of the moral law, in rare, unusual crimes, in tragic catastrophes of a shocking nature. Gogol was the first to notice the most dreadful, eternal evil not in a tragedy but in the absence of anything tragic, not in power but in the lack of power, not in senseless extremes but in too sensible mediocrity, not in sharpness and depth but in dullness and flatness, in triviality of all human feelings and thoughts, not in the greatest but in the smallest. Gogol was the first to understand that the devil is in reality something infinitely small, and seems large only because we ourselves are so very small; that he is the most feeble thing, appearing strong only because we ourselves are so feeble. ‘I call things by their real name,’ he said; ‘I call the devil, devil, I do not give him a splendid costume à la Byron, and I know that he wears a frock-coat.’ . . . ‘The devil appeared in the world without a mask: he looks what he actually is.’ . . . Gogol was the first to see the devil without a mask, to see his real face, which is dreadful not by virtue of unusual qualities but because it is ordinary and trivial; he was the first to understand that the face of the devil is not anything distant, uncommon, strange, or fantastic, but that it is a very close and well known, real ‘human all too human’ face, the face of the crowd, a face ‘like everybody’s,’ almost our own face at moments when we dare not be ourselves and agree to be ‘like everybody.’”

D. S. MEREZHKOVSKY.

“If we have a right to demand of an author that he reproduce before our eyes the pulse not of one individual person, but of an entire diversified society, then Gogol’s works ought to take the first place among the novels that preceded them or appeared at one time with them, and may be considered the first realistic productions. They helped their reader to understand the meaning of the historic moment in which he lived. Gogol’s comedies and *Dead Souls* thus filled one of the greatest gaps in Russian literature. Gogol’s characters were not individual phenomena, they were Russia itself with its current social habits, tendencies, thoughts, and programs of life. Gogol has a right to be called a realistic writer, not only because he

described the Russian people in a realistic manner, but because he grasped the real substance of Russian life, because he knew how to incarnate in a single type a wealth of mental states and a number of lives."

NESTOR KOTLAREVSKY.

"Gogol understands the secret of being hail-fellow with his readers; with enviable ease he practises a language of familiarity which puts us straight into the atmosphere of patriarchal life, making us feel its specific odor even by the very construction of the phrases. He speaks with his readers in the tone of an old acquaintance, as if he had lived with them in the same town, perhaps on the same street, had seen them nearly every day and is sure they know him as well as his friends and everything he tells about them. Gogol indulges in all sorts of intimacies with his readers, and his talk is sometimes peculiarly simple-hearted and gentle."

V. TH. PEREVERZEV.

1. *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*. Ukrainian Tales. (1831.)

In these charming stories the fantastic and the realistic, the heroic and the humorous are strangely intertwined. The beliefs of the plain folk in Ukraine, Gogol's native land, the various types of the Ukrainian village, the beauty of the Ukrainian landscape, and the legends and myths of the Ukrainian past, form the unique texture of these stories. What is, perhaps, most precious in them is Ukrainian nature. Russia has not many such artistic descriptions of a rich and colorful country.

The conflict between the two elements in Gogol's soul, the romantic and the realistic, is strikingly manifest in these stories.

2. *The Controller General*. Comedy. (1836.)

One of the most famous of Gogol's works. The scene of action is the provincial bureaucracy. The *Controller*

is an integral part of the Russian repertoire, an everlasting source of merriment. When it was first set in a printing shop, the typesetters could not work for laughter; the proof readers shook in convulsions of laughter. Audiences, then and now, all over the country burst into uproars.

The source of humor in *The Controller General* is in the situation and characters, not in exaggerations. In his Instructions to the actors, Gogol warns them to play most naturally, to be modest, to appear even a little more noble than the persons represented would be in life. The actor ought not to think of being funny. "The comical," Gogol writes, "will appear in the very seriousness with which every person of the comedy pursues his own task."

The main hero is Khlestakov, an impostor, a byword in the mouth of every educated Russian, as are all the characters of the comedy.

"Khlestakov's lies have something in common with the creative inventions of an artist. He is intoxicated by his fantasy to full abandon. Least of all does he think of gain, of material advantage. His is a disinterested lying, lying for lying's sake, art for art's sake. He requires nothing of his hearers but that they believe him. He lies innocently, in an unsophisticated manner, he is the first to believe what he tells, he deceives himself; herein is the secret of his influence. . . . He has the ability to turn everything into one dimension, the flatness of triviality."

S. D. MEREZHKOVSKY.

"Gogol's humor is quiet, quiet in its very indignation, good-natured in its very shrewdness. He has, however, still another humor, frank and menacing in its frankness. This humor bites till blood runs, it sinks its teeth into the flesh to the very bone, it hits with all its might, it lashes right and left with

its whip which is woven of hissing serpents. This humor is full of gall, of venom; it knows no mercy."

V. G. BYELINSKY.

3. *The Dead Souls*. Novel. (1842.)

This is Gogol's main work. It is a broad panorama of Russian provincial life under the system of serfdom. The peasants are not yet considered human beings, but "souls" who can be bought and sold. The landlords are ignorant, idle, and addicted to primitive physical pleasures. The bureaucracy is part and parcel of this system, thriving on it in a parasitic way. When Pushkin heard the reading of the manuscript of this work he exclaimed: "God, what a sad country our Russia is!" Yet he could not help laughing.

"The salient characteristic of Gogol's writing, the extraordinary plasticity and vividness of his figures, reaches its climax here. Russian literature knows of no other figures that would surpass the figures of *The Dead Souls* in vividness and striking power. The contents of the book is, however, too national, it is too Russian. *The Dead Souls* is a picture of Russia. Gogol saw the process of disintegration of the primitive, patriarchal system of serfdom, and the dreadful vulgarity of this primitive life. The picture is actually appalling."

N. I. KOROBKA.

"What is common to all Gogol's figures, is the emptiness of their existence. This emptiness shows itself either in complete idleness or in paltry and senseless activities of no use to anybody and is accompanied by the failure to understand that it is emptiness or even by a proud conviction of being the salt of the earth. This is the source of merriment those types provoke. The more satisfied they are with themselves, the more they are convinced that they are the center of the universe, the more comical and strange do they appear and the less pity you feel for them. . . . This feature of Gogol's

characters is a subjective psychological reflection of their position in society. They belong to a class that has become economically and socially useless while it still maintains its legal status as the first and foremost class."

M. TH. PEREVERZEV.

The Dead Souls are really undying. Even as late as the twentieth century we still found in Russia types and characters which we easily identified with the persons of this great, though unfinished, work.

4. *The Cloak*. Novelette. (1836.)

If ever Gogol strove to make us feel the misery of life and at the same time to open our souls for a real understanding of our fellow human beings, for moral indignation over the wrongs of the world and for the highest altruistic emotions, he succeeded in this small sketch, which is the history of one humble ordinary creature crushed under the weight of a cruel and senseless order. "What are you doing? Am I not your brother?" this poor, funny man seems to cry out for generations over the entire length and breadth of Russia.

[Other important works: *Taras Bulba*; *Mirgorod*; *Arabesques*, and *Marriage*.]

S. T. AKSAKOV (1791-1859)

AKSAKOV is first of all and above all a Russian gentleman, a member of the land-holding nobility. His works have the odor of the eastern steppe, the freshness of a field-brook, the peacefulness of clear summer evenings in a blessed country place. The things that live in his books are those beautiful country places in eastern Russia, not yet invaded by modern civilization, placid and contented in their patriarchal simplicity. Aksakov takes us into the homes of the landed nobility and into their family-life, shows us their ideas, their cultural strivings. Contrary to Gogol and many another writer, he accentuates the good qualities of the old-fashioned Russian *pomieshchik* (landlord). His works are, in a manner, a record of intellectual life among the Russian nobility at the end of the eighteenth century.

However, being a sincere narrator, Aksakov could not pass over the dark basis of the *pomieshchik* life,—serfdom. His good-natured and powerful old types manifest sometimes a cruelty towards their peasants which seems ghastly now. Despotism is an outstanding feature of those quiet little nests amid a primitive and blossoming country,—despotism in the relation between the father and the rest of the family, and despotism in the relation to the unpaid laborers. If these qualities provoke in us a smile rather than indignation, it is due primarily to the good humor, the epic tone and the devotion to the old life with which this old gentleman, Aksakov, proceeds in his narratives.

"He is more than a thinker, he is a sage. . . . Lack of pretense, simplicity, candor, combined with an ardent and tender heart, soundness of judgment and clearness of vision, not excluding passionate outbursts, honesty, integrity, indifference to material advantages, a fine artistic perception, a sound judgment, all these qualities endeared Sergey Timofeyevitch to every one who knew him."

IV. S. AKSAKOV. (Son of S. T. Aksakov.)

I. *Family Chronicles*. (1856.)

A history of the family Bagrov for a number of generations. It was no secret in Russia that under the guise of Bagrov, Aksakov portrayed his own grandfather, father and mother and other members of his family. Notwithstanding this biographical character of the *Chronicles*, the book possesses a general interest as a picture of the local gentry at the end of the eighteenth century.

Excerpts from this book have become an integral part of every school-reader, still it has great value also for adults. The simplicity of a life close to nature lends this work a lasting charm.

"Side by side with landscapes, fresh hues and intimacy of tone, the *Family Chronicles* possesses another valuable element; namely, vivid and graphic characterization. Aksakov's memory has retained for decades hundreds and thousands of characteristic details. This wealth of details lends the work a marvelous richness and makes it all alive. . . . Hardly any other book in Russian literature contains a fuller picture of gentry life in the good old times, a strange mixture of the most sympathetic good-naturedness with a wild and at times even beastly despotism."

S. A. VENGEROV.

"Aksakov told the truth about the old times; it is not the full truth, to be sure, but what he tells is authentic, uncolored,

and this is his artistic contribution and his social merit. Being averse to cruelty, he retained a warm feeling, a relative's love for the cruel, and if this is somewhat of an offense to our moral sense, if at times we would expect of Aksakov less lyricism and more indignation, still this circumstance does not take away from the truthfulness of the story as to facts and artistic presentation, and this is the main thing we may expect of memoirs. Aksakov's tranquil narrative did not lull the reader into sleep; on the contrary, it stirred his feeling of responsibility and aroused hopes for a better future."

M. A. PROTOPOV.

2. *Notes of a Hunter in the Province of Orenburg.*
Sketches. (1852.)

Lovers of primitive nature and descriptions of wild life found a peculiar joy in reading these. One might call them poems in prose, dealing with the woods, rivers, and various sorts of animals in eastern Russia at a time when that region was almost untouched by civilization. Aksakov's language, style and manner in this book are superb.

"Let the reader not think that *Notes of a Hunter* has value only for sportsmen. Every one who loves nature in all its variety, in all its beauty and power, every one who is touched by the manifestation of universal life wherein man himself stands as a living link, superior to the others but closely connected with them, will not be able to forget Mr. Aksakov's work: it will become his favorite; he will read and reread it. The specialist in natural science will be enchanted."

I. S. TURGENEV.

[Another important work of Aksakov's is *The Childhood of Bagrov-Grandson*, being a sequel to *Family Chronicles*.]

A. N. OSTROVSKY (1823-1886)

FIRST professional Russian playwright. Creator of an original Russian repertoire and a realistic Russian theater. Though not considered among the greatest classic authors, Ostrovsky occupies an honorable place in Russian literature. He belongs to the few chosen whose work it was to mirror in literature, for the first time, a certain social group and thus to make Russia see herself as she was.

The realm of Ostrovsky's observations is primarily the Russian middle-class, merchants and manufacturers, as they could be seen in Moscow and in provincial towns about the middle of the century. As Ostrovsky represents it, this class is in the powerful grip of tradition. It had hardly changed in its family relations since the seventeenth century. The order is strictly patriarchal. The power of the father is practically unlimited. Wives, sons and daughters, especially the latter, lead a life of fear and subordination. Still, there are many splendid characters among those people, and underneath the deadening crust of centuries-old habits runs a stream of fresh life. The best of the class are protesting in various ways, longing, as they are, for a more human existence, for light and independence.

Ostrovsky is a strong realist. The characters of his plays are taken from the very midst of life and are typical. Many of his characters have become a byword in Russia. His dialogues are a treasure of the Russian language. As a playwright, he was very skilful, and for decades his productions were a feature of the Russian stage.

Though Ostrovsky's plays are primarily centered around the family relations of their heroes, they give also a picture of the middle-class as an economic and social group. Many other groups appear in his productions, but his fame is based on his presentations of the middle-class.

"Reviewing in memory the long series of Ostrovsky's heroes and heroines, you invariably see them equipped either with the mouth of a wolf or with the tail of a fox, or with both. The psychology of violence and fraud as they appear in Russia is the subject of nearly all Ostrovsky's plays. It forms the contents at least of those works which will live as Ostrovsky's most characteristic productions and which are a valuable contribution to Russian literature and Russian scenic art. Ostrovsky's historic dramas and historic chronicles may possess good qualities, but they are not original and are not characteristic of him as an author. His power is in his depicting of typical Russian violence and fraud with inexhaustible force and the most penetrating analysis."

N. K. MIKHAYLOVSKY.

"At the basis of Ostrovsky's plays lie democratic ideals, not in the political sense of adherence to a social order based on democratic principles, but in the broader sense as applied to everyday life and individual morality. Simplicity, mildness, honesty, truthfulness, courage in the fight against evil, hard assiduous work, are everywhere contrasted with laziness, looseness of manner, lewdness, meekness, outward luster, false appearances, unrestricted despotism, and stubborn wilfulness. We see representatives of the various social groups. They are far from perfection, sometimes they are very funny and awkward. Others are strong of spirit and will, and are actuated by a desire even to sacrifice their lives for their neighbors. . . . As to the scope of Ostrovsky's works, we are amazed to find in them an unusually broad panorama of Russian life, present and past."

A. M. SKABITCHEVSKY.

“ There is a profound reason why Ostrovsky chose the merchant class as his subject, outside of the fact that he was intimately acquainted with it. The merchant class, as the most numerous and active, was by its very occupation compelled to come into contact with all the other social groups and classes; it thus acquired all the habits and customs prevailing in Russia; it crystallized, as it were, the fundamental traits of the national character; it manifested both the influences of a many-sided civilization and those primitive features which retained their original simplicity.”

P. WEINBERG.

1. *The Storm*. Drama. (1860.)

This is Ostrovsky's most famous play. The conflict between the deadening grip of a crude patriarchal family life and the craving of a young beautiful woman's soul towards emotional freedom, is given a most vivid presentation. It is one of the most genuine Russian creations.

“ The dramatic conflicts and catastrophes in Ostrovsky's works are the result of conflicts between old and young, rich and poor, despotic and defenseless. We see the melancholy faces of our younger brothers, sad, full of resignation. This is a world of subdued, silently moaning grief, a world of dull, nagging pain, a world of prisonlike, gravelike silence. There is no light, no warmth, no space to move in. Yet man is alive; you never can destroy his craving for life. In utter darkness, a spark is sometimes rekindled, that sacred fire which burns in the heart of every man before it is drowned in the muddy swamp of life. By the passing light of those sparks we see the sufferings of our brothers. Such a 'spark of light in the world of darkness' is Katharine, the heroine of *The Storm*.”

N. A. DOBROLYUBOV.

2. *Poverty Is No Crime*. Comedy. (1854.)

We see another protest here, the protest of a man who prefers poverty and freedom to the restrictions imposed

on the human soul by wealth. There are two brothers in the comedy, one is prosperous and proud, the other has squandered his property, he is almost a beggar, and he has no family and no shelter. Yet he has retained independence of spirit; his judgment is broad and humane, and the reader is irresistibly attracted to him.

[Other works of interest: *The Snow-Maiden*, *Bad Days*. Ostrovsky's plays number several dozen.]

TH. M. RESHETNIKOV (1841-1871)

A SIMPLE son of the people who, through infinite pain and struggle, acquired an education and began to write, describing the life of the poor in a very realistic manner. His sketches, particularly those depicting the peasants in eastern Russia, made a profound impression. They were like the call of the earth itself, the cry of a life caught in the clutches of poverty, suffering, ignorance, cruelty. . . . Nobody equaled Reshetnikov in power, though his talent is quite inferior to that of the great masters.

Those of Podlipovka. Novelette. (1864.)

A history of two peasants of the Perm province who left their native village to seek happiness in town. They are supposed to be free men, these serfs of yesterday, yet Russia was shocked by the savage appearance and primitive minds of these new citizens.

“Even now, after having gone through many experiences and having seen not a few horrifying pictures, now that we make such great demands on the language of a writer of fiction and our literary style has made such rapid progress, *Those of Podlipovka*, with their primitive language, with their description of small details of peasant life, make the impression of a prolonged, terrifying, importunate nightmare. Poverty and ignorance, impotence and impossibility are strangely intertwined in this implacable nightmare; you never find a way out, you do not know how to break its spell.

“It gives the dumbfounding impression of a big clod of life, split off from ordinary human existence, a shapeless, uncanny, unendurable clod.”

I. N. IGNATOV.

N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY (1828-1889)

ECONOMIST, sociologist, philosopher, publicist, critic. One of the most influential intellectual leaders of the fifties and sixties.

Chernyshevsky appeared on the scene of Russian life when the end of serfdom was near, when new economic forces were rapidly developing, when a new intelligentsia was coming up from the ranks of the plain people pushing the intelligentsia of the noble mansions to the background, when all Russian life was ready, at least in the opinion of the progressive elements, to be reconstructed on a modern basis. Chernyshevsky gave utterance to those strivings of the new times. A profound scholar in many realms, a disciple of Fourier and Feuerbach, he evolved a theory of radical reconstruction in Russia which, he thought, would culminate in a socialist order. He was more than a mere philosopher and economist, however; he influenced his generation as a teacher of life. His numerous essays and articles had the aim of showing young Russia how to live, how to free itself from the superstitions of the passing epoch, how to organize its family life, how to build up relations within the community, how to establish a healthy, prosperous, rational social life. What was most precious in his writings was faith in life, faith in man, a vigorous tone, confidence in the future. The impending and later actually realized reforms were for Chernyshevsky the beginning of a new joyous era shot through with the fire of ideals. The response in Russia was enormous. Chernyshevsky be-

came the idol of his time, enjoying even more recognition than did Byelinsky in the forties.

It was natural for a man of Chernyshevsky's kind to write also on literature, as the characters presented in literary works gave him an occasion to criticize society and to make his followers realize the need for a higher culture in a better social order. Between 1853 and 1858 Chernyshevsky is the leading critic. Later he resorted to fiction in order to make his ideas more accessible to the public. Czarism, of course, could not tolerate a worker of Chernyshevsky's scope; it imprisoned him and sent him to eastern Siberia, where he spent some twenty years under rigid vigilance. Thus his fruitful career was cut almost at its beginning. Still, the trace left by Chernyshevsky in Russian economic and political life and in social thinking is deep and indelible.

1. *What Is To Be Done?* Novel. (1863.)

Written in the fortress of Peter and Paul, this work is a repetition in fiction of what the author was preaching in serious essays and treatises. It is the history of a few intellectuals from the ranks who organized their life on a new sound basis. There is nothing unusual about most of them. They have just acquired education, they have done away with the apathy of archaic Russia, they are doing practical work of a useful character, they are free from senseless conventional restrictions, they recognize full equality between men and women in the pursuit of life, and they are ready to help their neighbors actively. They are far from sacrificing themselves (with very few exceptions); their idea is rather sound egoism which necessarily involves cooperation with others. What is valuable about them is their courage, confidence, respect

for sound work, ability to live a full life with no vestige of the traditional Russian gloom.

The novel was a revelation to Russia. "It was like a bomb exploding with a terrible, crushing force," to use the expression of a Russian critic. It became the Bible of the young generations for many a decade. Life, that terrible tangle, looked so plain and rational in *What Is To Be Done?* It was such a joy to know that man, by force of will and rational thinking, can make himself like one of the heroes of that startling novel. *What Is To Be Done?* was soon suppressed by the censor, but *sub rosa* editions circulated everywhere, and there was hardly an intellectual Russian who did not read the novel.

Chernyshevsky's novels are long-winded, they are checkered with digressions, they present a somewhat uncouth appearance, and remind one of productions *à thèse*, yet *What Is To Be Done?* is being read with unabating interest even at present, and it stirs our soul. One may explain this phenomenon by the contents of the book, its type of characters, and the qualities of the idea propounded. Such an explanation, however, would not be sufficient. The very fact that the novel has stood the greatest of all tests, the test of time, shows that it is not devoid of certain artistic qualities; it shows that the psychology of the time was reflected in it correctly, and this alone is an important feature. Aside from this, however, it must be said that some of Chernyshevsky's types are drawn with great artistic power. . . . Still, the dominant element in his fiction is not the artistic, but the instructive."

J. M. STYKLOV.

"*What Is To Be Done?* was a vast success. It does not sparkle with artistic subtleties, though it is full of keen observations and humor. Its main value lies in a passionate, thoroughly sincere enthusiasm. The novel ought to be compared not with the artistic works of a Turgenev, Tolstoi, or

Dostoyevsky, but with such productions as, for instance, the philosophical novels of Voltaire.”

G. V. PLEKHANOV.

“If the value of a writer is measured by the degree of his influence on society; if the value of a book is determined by the force of its reaction on the mind of the reader, then Chernyshevsky and his *What Is To Be Done?* occupy an exceptional place in the history of Russian culture. Not only contemporaries, but also later generations attributed to this novel some of their best moments, their humanitarian emotions, their striving for life, light, and happiness. It gave them faith in life, and courage to construct it on the basis of equality and freedom.”

N. BRODSKY.

2. *Gogol's Epoch in Russian Literature*. Critical Essays. (1856.)
3. *Critical Essays*. (1854-1861.)

In his critical essays, Chernyshevsky accentuates the social element almost more than the artistic, the useful more than the beautiful. True it is that he requires talent of an author. He also takes it for granted that a work of no artistic value cannot serve a social purpose. He says occasionally that “the poet ought to be free, first of all, his lips ought to utter only things that fill his heart.” He says that “autonomy is the supreme law of art.” Still, for him as a social propagandist and reformer, the contents of a literary work is of supreme importance. “For a real critic,” he writes, “the work under consideration is often a mere pretext to develop his own views on a subject which was touched by the author only in passing and in a one-sided manner.” In accordance with this conception, Chernyshevsky’s criticism is quite often only a discourse over certain aspects of

life which he finds mentioned in a work, though he does not altogether refrain from discussing the purely artistic merits of an author. Thus Chernyshevsky's criticisms are, in a way, a connecting link between Byelinsky's estheticism and Pisarev's artistic nihilism.¹

¹ See respective chapters.

D. I. PISAREV (1841-1868)

CRITIC, publicist, and author of popular works on history and science. Pisarev is the leading spirit of the sixties. He most fully expresses the trend of thought and the social movement of his time.

This was a stirring time. The serfs had just been liberated. A number of important civic reforms (the great reforms of the sixties) had been introduced. New possibilities for economic development had been opened. Industrialism was making its first conquests in hitherto archaic Russia. The thinking elements saw the coming of a new era. Their attention, previously concentrated on one paramount issue, abolition of slavery, turned now to the broad problem of making Russia more prosperous and more healthy. Two things were most pressing: work instead of former indolence, and technical knowledge instead of former dreams.

These two points formed the foundation of Pisarev's program. "Two facts," he wrote, "loom up before our eyes; two immense facts which are the source of all our other miseries and evils. First, we are poor; second, we are ignorant. We are poor, that is to say, in relation to our population we have not enough bread, meat, linen, cloth, clothing, shoes, underwear, dwellings, comfortable furniture, good agricultural machinery; in short, not enough products of work. We are ignorant, that is to say, an overwhelming majority of our minds do not work; only one out of ten thousand brains is active in one way or another, still that one produces twenty times less of

useful thoughts than it could produce under normal conditions without any strain."

In accordance with this program, Pisarev hailed the realist and condemned art.

A realist in his conception is a man who does useful practical work in any realm of life. A realist is not a dreamer. He pursues his own interest. He works for himself. He is an egoist. Yet in his pursuit of happiness he inevitably takes account of his neighbors, as he can never be happy where others suffer. His very egoism prompts him to direct his work so as to secure the happiness of all. "When the individual realizes the importance and the high significance of his personal work, when he sees in it a connecting link between himself and millions of other thinking human beings, then he becomes still more attached to his work, he develops his abilities more fully, he feels more keenly the justice of his endeavor, and his happiness grows."

A realist is a man equipped with skill, with knowledge, with natural science, a worker free of prejudices and unhampered by archaic conventions. He is the builder of a new, healthy, and prosperous mankind.

Yet a realist has no place for art in the scheme of his life. Under art Pisarev understands every luxury of a refined, inactive life, every indulgence in esthetic pursuits that have no bearing upon the practical improvement of economic or social conditions. Pure poetry, pure literature, accordingly, falls under Pisarev's ban. A son of the nobility with all its refinement and estheticism, Pisarev launches the heaviest attacks on the idle landlords whose sole occupation is music, poetry in various languages, romanticism, and the idealistic philosophy of the West. All his writings are an attempt to shake the Russian in-

telligentzia out of its inertia and traditional detachment, to make it see life as it is, partake of life's work, and be useful citizens of a progressive country.

Consequently, Pisarev demands that literature spread new and sound ideas. Literature does not exist for him as a value in itself. Literature must do public service. The writers, he says, ought to be teachers in practical life. What the philosopher or sociologist do through their investigations, the writer ought to do through his pictures, both differing only in method: the former propound general ideas; the latter shows practical instances illustrating the same ideas. According to Pisarev, it would be better to do away with literature altogether. "Yet," he writes, "if there are human organisms who can express their thoughts easier in images, if a novel or a poem is a better means for them to propound a new idea which they would be unable to develop with sufficient completeness and clearness in a theoretical essay, then let them do as it is convenient for them. The critic will notice and society will appreciate a fruitful idea in whatever form it may appear."

It is evident that from this standpoint most of Russian literature and Russian criticism, including Pushkin and Byelinsky, was of no value to Pisarev. His critical essays, accordingly, are hardly to be classed with literary criticism. They are splendid sociological analyses where the critic sits in judgment over the characters represented by the author, revealing the defects of their conceptions, criticising their "unreasonable" behavior, pointing out the vices of their class, tracing their shortcomings back to social environment, enumerating the faults of the social order, and making a vigorous plea for better, healthier, more advanced lives. A writer whose characters do not

conform with the idea of realism is, in Pisarev's judgment, useless.

It was an untenable doctrine, yet such was the urgency for practical work,—for education, for knowledge, for eliminating the remnants of a shattered feudal system, that Pisarev soon became the leading writer of his generation, and his influence was enormous. His articles and essays were a veritable school of life for the youth of his time and of many decades to come, and his name was often mentioned with Byelinsky's.

Pisarev possesses a splendid style, an ease, fluency, and boldness of expression which make his writings very attractive reading even now.

Pisarev created no school, yet there are a number of well-known Russian critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who, though not proclaiming the uselessness of art, discuss literary work from the sociological standpoint, and approve or disapprove of a writer in the degree his work manifests a progressive conception. Those critics cannot be called Pisarev's disciples, as they differ from him radically in their starting points, yet in methods they hark back to the great critic of the sixties.

1. *Realists*. Essay. (1864.)

Taking as an example the hero of Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*, Bazarov, the author gives a clear exposition of what a realist ought to be. The *Realists* aroused a stormy discussion.

2. *Pushkin and Byelinsky*. Essay. (1865.)

Pisarev applies his method here in the most brilliant manner. It is hardly an essay on Pushkin or Byelinsky as writers. It is a work intended to show that Pushkin's

heroes, notably Onegin and Tatyana, are typical representatives of a parasitic class; that Pushkin who describes them lovingly is no better than his heroes; and that Byelinsky who praises Pushkin is a useless writer. Pisarev regrets that Byelinsky did not receive a mathematical education which would have enabled him to write essays on history or science.

[Other characteristic essays: *Pisemsky*; *Turgenev and Goncharov*; *Women's Types*; *Flowers of Innocent Humor*; *The Romance of a Muslin Girl*.]

N. A. NEKRASOV (1821-1877)

POET. One of the most typical representatives of the Russian intelligentsia whose heart was constantly aching with the sufferings of the people. He was the son of a landlord and a member of the nobility, but he despised slavery and condemned the humiliation of the peasants. Being unable to identify himself completely with the exploited and downtrodden classes, he despised himself and condemned his own, often imaginary vices. Being a poet of great lyrical vehemence, he often wrote journalistic stuff in verse, or political satires, or scourging feuilletons. All his works, personal as well as political, lyrical as well as narrative, are marked with a deep sincerity of pain, realism of description, clarity of expression, and power of emphasis. Apollon Grigoryev speaks of "the sledge-hammer of Nekrasov's emotions which strikes outright with might and main," and I. S. Turgenev says that "Nekrasov's poems, focused on one point, are scorching."

Nekrasov himself calls his Muse "the Muse of revenge and of grief," and it was through his works that generations of young Russians learned to hate oppression, to abominate autocracy, to understand the common people, and to sympathize with the toiler. While Pushkin was a source of beauty and serene fancy, Nekrasov gave his readers the stinging touch of excruciating reality; while Pushkin resembled a colorful flower-bed in a frame of marble statuary, Nekrasov was a strong salty breeze from a heaving sea. And there were times when Nekrasov

was more cherished by the progressive Russian intelligentsia than even Pushkin or Lermontov.

“Nekrasov was a strong analyst. His thought always proceeded from facts to their causes. In his lyrics he castigates himself with merciless passion. In his other poems he exposes the contradictions of social life, protesting against their evils in one way or another. He treats of the most fundamental issues of the Russian social order, and his poems reflect the broodings and moods of his progressive contemporaries in the most sensitive manner. Being a satirist, striking evil not with a lash, but with a hammer, Nekrasov directed his blows to those points where contradictions were the sharpest, where sufferings were the keenest. Children, women, and the mass of the peasantry, the “people,” were the closest objects of his attention. To illuminate the life of the people with rays of consciousness he thought his direct vocation. In his larger works, however, he approached those sides of the people’s life which required not the passionate grief of a satirist, but the lofty tenderness of an epic poet.”

V. P. KRANICHFELD.

1. *Lyrical Poems.* (1840-1877.)

It was only in the last decade that particular attention was called to the short lyrical poems of Nekrasov, which up to that time were overshadowed by his more bulky and more readable socio-political poems. Lovers of poetry were charmed by the penetrative sincerity of those personal confessions, by the music of their language, by the grip of their pain. In poetical value those poems often surpass the more known objective works.

2. *Who Lives Well in Russia.* (1869-1874.)

Seven peasants assembled, the poet says, and began to argue as to who lives well in Russia. Opinions differed. One said, the landlords; another, the fat merchant; a

third, the priest; a fourth, the government's official; a fifth, the Tsar. The peasants made a bet. They decided to go over Russia from end to end and to find out who is the happiest one. Thus the poet created a framework for a broad and vivid description of Russia just a year or two after the abolition of serfdom. The work is written in the tone of folklore. Miracles happen in it as in any of the popular fairy tales. Yet *Who Lives Well in Russia* is full of striking realism, of keen observation. Interwoven as it is with lyrical digressions, with narratives of human lives, with contemplations of the fate of the Fatherland, it is unique in Russian literature.

“Thou art beggarly,
Thou art plentiful,
Thou art infirm,
Thou art powerful,
O mother Russia!”

These lines could be used as a refrain to the entire work which is borne on waves of deep compassion for the native land.

“It was Nekrasov's intention to write a tremendous poem which would reflect the entire life of Russia, from the potentate down to the sailor on the Volga, all against the background of Russian nature. A picture, colorful as Russia herself, unrolls before us; melancholy and pity breathe from all its corners.”

P. WEINBERG.

3. *Red Nose Frost*. (1864.)

A powerful description of the peasant's family life in a poor village, and a study in peasant character. The figure of the peasant woman whom the poet observes in a moment of crushing distress, is full of unusual beauty, almost greatness. Yet Nekrasov did not idealize. He

only wanted to reveal before the eyes of the world some of the hidden treasures of the human heart and intelligence which lie buried under the débris of poverty and misfortune. The poem is unsurpassed in vigor of style and in sublimity of feeling.

4. *Russian Women.* (1872-1873.)

If the heroine of *Red Nose Frost* comes from the lowest class, the Princess Volkonskaya and the Princess Trubetskaya in the *Russian Women* come from the top. Essentially, however, all three women are the same. They are strong and tender, sensitive and unbending in their self-sacrifice for what is dearest to them. Princess Volkonskaya and Princess Trubetskaya leave their comfortable homes and their social positions to share the bitter lot of their husbands, who had participated in the revolutionary uprising of 1825 and were sentenced to hard labor in the mines of eastern Siberia. The characters of the two women are drawn with a firm and loving hand. The hardships they have to face and the crudeness of the surroundings they have to adapt themselves to, only make the beauty of their souls appear in a brighter light. Princess Volkonskaya and Princess Trubetskaya belong to the most charming feminine portraits in Russian poetry.

[For further reading, Nekrasov's *Railroad, Contemplations at the Mansion Door, Children*, may be recommended.]

I. A. GONTCHAROV (1812-1891)

ON the border-line between the old and the new, between the well-defined characters of a patriarchal régime and the unclear shapes of approaching modern times, stands the novelist Gontcharov, one of the classical Russian artists. Temperamentally and emotionally he is with the old, with the placid noble mansions, with the quiet lakes hardly disturbed by a ripple, with the robust, red-faced and well-fed old gentlemen of the landed estates, with the unsophisticated beautiful and good-natured women, with that vegetarian life where even the sky seems closer to the earth and the chariot of life is rolling with the swiftness of a peasant wagon drawn by oxen in the midst of a sun-tired landscape on a July mid-day. Mentally, however, Gontcharov sees the coming of new men, new ideas, new wishes, new struggles, the rising of new tones which combine in dissonances and often fill the air with an uncomfortable uproar. Gontcharov sees the inevitability of impending changes; he deems it even his duty to sympathize with some of the reforms which, of course, he thinks should be introduced ever so slowly, cautiously, peacefully, with no shocks at all. Innately he is a *bárin*, a gentleman of the *pomieshchik* type, and his writings inevitably reflect this duality of his make-up.

He is a beautiful artist. He has an ease and charm of style hardly surpassed by Turgenev. He has a penetrating eye which sees a wealth of detail and color. He has a manner, quiet, composed, serene, which makes all

his pictures emanate a refreshing warmth. He has a humor, soft and friendly, which gives a peculiar human touch to most of his observations. He creates characters with a master hand confident of its strength. With all that, he never became a "leading" writer. He is a member of the classic Pantheon, to be sure, he is studied in schools, he is recognized as the creator of at least one national type, yet he never was a priest in the temple of the Russian spirit. This is because he lacks that spirituality which Russians were (and are) wont to seek for in the works of their artists. He is, as it were, too close to the ground, though he manages to transform his ground into sheer beauty. Lacking the exhilaration of spirituality and, besides, lacking in heartfelt sympathy for the new social characters who then appeared in Russian life equipped with a luring ideal, Gontcharov naturally could not find the response which was due to his great artistic talent. It is only now that we are in a position to overlook his defects and to enjoy thoroughly the permanent beauty of his writings.

Among his defects, one deserves particular mention,—his inability to draw a new character. Thus, whenever Gontcharov tried to picture a strong, self-assured, practical man of affairs, a type which attracted his attention in a high degree, he inevitably failed. The explanation lies in the fact that new phenomena were not as close to his soul as the well-known old.

"Gontcharov is, above all, a master of the *genre*, here is his strength, here belong his best pages. He loves a man in his domestic environment, among the various trifles of a peaceful everyday existence, in his cosy native corner. He is a poet of the room, a singer of the house . . . He pictures with pleasure *nature morte* and all that approaches it in simplicity

of mind . . . He is interested in a bright open life where houses and souls are transparent . . . A poet of the ordinary, he knows how to extract warmth and beauty from household prose . . . On the other hand, the further he moves from the uncultured, primitive, elementary man, the paler and more tiresome becomes his brush."

J. EICHENWALD.

"In his wonderfully sober attitude towards the world, Gontcharov approaches Pushkin. Turgenev is intoxicated with beauty, Dostoyevsky, with the sufferings of men, Leo Tolstoi, with a thirst for truth; all of them look at life from a certain angle. Reality in their work becomes slightly distorted, like the outlines of things on a disturbed surface of water.

"Gontcharov knows of no intoxication. Life projects itself into his soul with imperturbable clarity, as the tiniest grass-blades or the distant stars are reflected in a deep forest spring shielded from the wind. The sobriety, simplicity, and health of this powerful talent have something refreshing. However beautiful may be the works of other modern writers, all of them have some dark corner breathing cold and horror. Gontcharov has no such corners. All the monumental structure of his epics is lit by an even light of intelligent love for human life."

D. MEREZHKOVSKY.

1. *Oblomov*. Novel. (1859.)

This is Gontcharov's principal work. It is a novel of will, or rather a novel studying the lack of will. Oblomov has a beautiful soul. He is capable of the most noble emotions. His intentions are always good. The storms aroused in his soul are genuine. They shake him deeply. He is honest, good-hearted, idealistically inclined. But—he is Oblomov. He is lazy. He is inertia incarnated. From his thoughts and emotions there are no wires to the mechanism of action. Oblomov's life is followed up by Gontcharov from his childhood until the time when he definitely "settled down" (if this term can properly

be applied to a man who spent all his life "lying on one side," as the Russian says). The dramatic moment of Oblomov's life arrives when he falls in love with the charming young Olga. It is only natural that this love should end in nothing. Olga marries Stoltz, a Russian of German descent, who is just the opposite of Oblomov and who conducts business on a large scale.

Oblomov represented a trait of character so well known and so common in Russia that nearly every Russian recognized himself or his friends in the hero of the novel. Oblomov possesses inertia in an excessive measure, he is pure inertia. It may be questioned whether there ever existed a real human being personifying inertia to such an extent; this, however, does not diminish the realistic value of Oblomov. Russians speak of Oblomov as of a man they know personally, much in the same way as Englishmen speak of Micawber.

"Apathy, peaceful, placid, smiling, feeling no urge to get out of inertia, this is *Oblomovism*, as Gontcharov called it, this is a disease facilitated by Slav nature and the conditions of our society. The development of this disease was traced by Gontcharov in his novel. The author's tremendous idea, in all its bigness and beauty, was put in a perfectly adequate framework."

D. I. PISAREV.

"The introduction of the Oblomov type into Russian literature was of tremendous importance. It recorded a fundamental Russian quality, a national attribute which hampered the progress of Russian life. A formula was given, characterizing a large group of people who had reached a stage where the desire for progressive work, not enmeshed in routine, became imperative, where, however, the ability to act was still lacking."

E. A. LYATZKY.

2. *The Precipice*. Novel. (1869.)

A world of types; among them the old and attractive grandmother who incarnates the best traits of the patriarchal world; a nihilist of the brand quite common in the sixties, with an uncouth appearance and a harmonious program for social reform; two young sisters, of whom one is imbued with the spirit of restlessness, striving to unknown horizons, while the other is all domesticity and has the charm of sedate virtue; an artist, a Russian genius lacking the will to make the best of his great abilities, etc. The novel bears the clear marks of a transitional period.

[Another well-known novel by Gontcharov, *An Ordinary Story*.]

I. S. TURGENEV (1818-1883)

ONE of the few central figures in Russian literature. Creator of a great school. An inexhaustible source of beauty and inspiration. Turgenev's language is like music. His pictures are tender pastels. His characters are drawn with a firm and loving hand. His range of observation is wide, reaching from the first dawn of love in a budding maiden heart to the agony of a fighter for freedom who has lost his path in the maze of life; from the dream-like haze of spring over tender flower-heads to the trumpet-call of life under glaring sunlight. Turgenev is the poet of youth and love, a guide through the sweet mysteries of women's souls, an interpreter of the most gentle, delicate emotions, a garden full of quaint beauty. Yet Turgenev is at the same time in the very midst of social life, recording the political and social movements of his time, giving voice and artistic interpretation to the foremost ideas of the society he lived in. This society is mainly composed of well-educated, progressive noblemen, who are much concerned with the fate of the "people," yet never lose the essential qualities of noble gentlemen. The other classes of the Russian people are given only a secondary place in Turgenev's works.

"Several generations owe him a part of their intellectual substance, as their growth was and is still going on under the unchanging powerful influence of the psychic impulses which are diffused in his works. People received their education at the hands of Turgenev, from him they learned how to love

and feel, and there are perceptions of which Turgenev will never cease to be the great master. These are the beauty and poetry of life, the charm of intimate human feelings, and the value of a free personality rising to a feeling of broad humanitarian solidarity.”

A. E. GRUZINSKY.

1. *Short Stories.* (1843-1883.)

“Turgenev created a whole world of the most diversified figures, full of life and color; he sketched several important moments of our cultural progress, and gave splendid descriptions of the old life. Yet, his main subjects are intimate psychological experiences. The broad outline of an entire epoch which we find in his works, is composed of little studies and miniatures selected and executed with the most unusual sensitiveness and skill. A note is incessantly sounding through all his writings, a peculiar note of tender lyrical sadness.”

A. E. GRUZINSKY.

2. *Diary of a Sportsman.* Stories and sketches. (1852.)

It has been said that Turgenev's *Diary* added more to the campaign for the liberation of the serfs than all the political activities of the progressive factions combined. Turgenev performed a true human service. He gave a series of sketches of rural life thrown against a background of Russian nature which showed that the peasants, “our younger brethren,” were possessed of the same human qualities as the “better” classes. It seems an obvious truth in our days. It was a great revelation in 1852. Turgenev did not idealize. He shed no cheap tears. His aim was not to arouse pity. He was fundamentally an artist. He touched peasant life with his artistic wand, and the world stood aghast at the sight of those simple men and women whose hearts were moved by the same emotions, whose souls were craving for the same truth, beauty and good, as the upper classes. It must be borne in mind, however, that *The Diary of a*

Sportsman is not a book written with a conscious social purpose. In no sentence has Turgenev betrayed his political tendency. He was an artist above all things. His love was his best argument. His artistic sympathy with the objects of his descriptions was his best political weapon.

“In the one volume of *The Diary of a Sportsman* you have a complete representation of all peasant life with all its numerous miseries and few joys. You can observe how popular beliefs are being formed, how popular conceptions are being crystallized. You can see the deep patience of the Russian people, their passive heroism, their gloomy good-nature, and the tenderness of their hearts. Looking more attentively you will easily notice their intelligence, their common sense and capability of education. . . . You will gain a very clear idea of the moral countenance of the genuine ‘black earth’ powers.”

S. VENGEROV.

“The entire work is dominated by the broad view and peaceful tone of an artist who has been enchanted by Russian rural life and whose aim is to enchant the heart of the reader by its simplicity, its humble poetical truthfulness. The sketches are diversified, and they still give an idea of the people’s life which has since undergone a great reform.”

V. BURENIN.

“*The Diary of a Sportsman* contains descriptions of Russian landscapes unsurpassed in Russian literature. No lyrical poet has ever found words more tender, colors more refined, than Turgenev in those prose sketches of Russian nature.

“We find here a live sympathy with nature, a complete understanding of its beauty, a freshness of genuine sentiment. In his manner we hear a voice of sympathy so gentle, so fine, that sometimes it grows akin to pain, passion, submission. Poetry of this kind is characterized not by striking power, but by refinement and lucidity of colors.”

A. GRIGORYEV.

3. *A Nobleman's Nest*. Novel. (1859.)

"No other work of Turgenev's is full of so much ardent faith, none is so permeated with a lyric sympathy, as is *A Nobleman's Nest*. Here we have the purest figure of a woman after Pushkin's Tatyana, the figure of Liza; here we have Lavretzky, the hero in whom Turgenev trusted most, of whom he expected most in the future. In drawing him, the poet gave a beautiful historic and *genre* picture of all the elements that composed Russian society, as if to show that he is the outcome of a great historic process.

"A bright tone is sounding throughout the entire work from the beginning to the very end where the aging Lavretzky greets the budding life of the new generation.

"*A Nobleman's Nest* is a novel in the best sense of the word; Russian life is reflected in it from various angles; here we see Westerners and Slavophiles, the Petersburg bureaucracy with its detached haughtiness, the life of the village and town, and all those elements of the present and the past which make up our actual environment."

A. NEZELYONOV.

4. *Fathers and Children*. Novel. (1862.)

The years immediately following the abolition of serfdom in Russia (in 1861) were years of great intellectual unrest. The bonds of an ancient patriarchal régime were broken. The beginnings of a transition to modern economic and social conditions were felt as an urge to something vast, though indefinite. A new man appeared on the scene: an "intellectual," though not a son of the manor; a member of the lower classes, though claiming equality with the nobles, nay, asserting his superiority over the "idle rich." The new man had education, but cared little for good manners; he loved culture, but had no respect for traditions. His intellectual guides were the materialistic philosophers Buechner and Moleschott with their crude naturalism, whereas the idols of the

former generation had been Hegel, Schelling, Pushkin. The new man claimed to believe in the results of experience only, to deny the refinements of an idealistic spirit. This is why this brand of intellectuals soon became known as Nihilists. *Fathers and Children* introduces the new type of Nihilist as contrasted to the old "beautiful souls" of the patriarchal manor. Bazarov, the hero, is a student of natural science, a man who declares that the world is a vast workshop and the man is born to be a master there.

No type in Russian literature has aroused so much heated comment as Bazarov.

"*The succession of generations*—this is the main subject of the novel. Yet the reader feels that he has to do with *human* life in its broadest and fullest meaning. Behind the mirage of external actions there is a stream of life so deep, so inexhaustible, that compared with it all those characters and happenings shrink into insignificance."

N. STRAKHOV.

"'I am an adherent of the negating tendencies,' says Bazarov. 'It gives me pleasure to reject, it suits best the construction of my brain. That's all!' As an empiric, Bazarov recognizes only those things whose existence can be proved by his senses. Bazarov needs nobody, he is afraid of no one, he has no love for anybody, and therefore knows no mercy. His ironical attitude towards all sorts of emotions, towards sentimental dreams, lyrical strivings, confessions, is a manifestation of his inner cynicism. The crude expression of this irony, the unwarranted and aimless roughness of his manners, mark his outward cynicism."

D. PISAREV.

5. *New Earth*. Novel. (1877.)

The intellectual unrest of the sixties ripened into revolutionary activities at the beginning of the seventies. A

number of young men and women of the educated class went into the Russian villages to conduct revolutionary propaganda among the peasants. The revolutionists, known as *Naródniki*, idealized the qualities of the people (*naród*). They believed that the Russian village community contained the nucleus of a better social order based on equality and cooperation. They saw in the village an ideal life of truthfulness and peace. It was, therefore, natural for them to try and adopt the same mode of living as the peasants. They called it, "to become simple." Altogether it was a naïve movement, full of the beauty and daring of inspired youth, though the consequences—imprisonment and death for many—were by no means simple.

New Earth depicts a few intellectuals of this *Naródniki* movement. It seems that Turgenev has minimized the extent and the seriousness of the revolutionary activities, partly, perhaps, because he had to reckon with the requirements of the censor. At any rate, the novel reflects truly the atmosphere of the time and the psychology of the revolutionary heroes, as well as the bureaucrats. The figure of Marianna, the girl revolutionist who "becomes simple" for the sake of the cause, is one of the loveliest portraits in Turgenev's gallery.

"The facts of the movement, the methods and the practice of the propaganda and conspiracies as described in the *New Earth*, coincide in all particulars with the materials revealed in the case of Netchayev. The types of the revolutionaries are well represented. Turgenev gives a true reflection of the psychology of the movement."

A. E. GRUZINSKY.

[Nearly every work of Turgenev's is of great and lasting value, and should be read. We call special attention to his delightful novels, *Rudin*, *On the Eve*, and to his *Poems in Prose*.]

V. L. GARSHIN (1855-1888)

THERE is a story by Garshin, *The Red Flower*. A man in an insane asylum has seen a red flower down in the garden. To him the flower has a deep significance. It is evil incarnate. "It has gathered all the blood of innocent victims (that is why it is so red), all the tears, all the misery of mankind. It is a mysterious dreadful being, the antithesis of God, Ahriman in an innocent shape." The man decides to pluck the flower, to kill it and thus kill evil. It is a hard task. The window-bars are strong. The guards are cunning. Moreover, he knows that after plucking the flower he will have to hide it on his breast lest it shed its poison into the world with its last breath. He knows he must die. But this gives him superhuman courage and strength. "The evil will permeate his very heart, his soul. It will be conquered there or else he will die as the foremost fighter of mankind who first dared to challenge all the evil of the world at once."

The man undertakes the heroic deed. He has to do it alone because nobody sees the meaning of the flower, nobody cares. In anguish he exclaims, "Why do they not see it? I do. Can I go on living?"

Such a cry, "Why do they not see it?" were the stories of the tragic writer, Garshin, who died as a young man in an insane asylum. He was a typical son of the eighties: sad, subdued, with no vigor, with no hope but full of great yearning for beauty and humaneness that cannot be. Garshin's stories are delicately carved. Their

lines are simple, almost naïve, and each is vibrating with intense emotion. Garshin was one of the few writers dearly loved by intellectual Russia. This young man with the head of a saint and deep marks of suffering on his face, appears as in a halo of devotion and admiration. He died too young for his talent to blossom out in full power. Yet his influence on Russia was unmistakable.

“Garshin lived in a strange spiritual tension. He never wrote calmly, he was never balanced. Even his short stories were accompanied by a great mental strain. He was upset by the creations of his own fantasy. This is why his stories are so deeply lyrical, why they are full of unusual trepidation. His tone quite often approaches the boundary line between lyrical emotionalism and unhealthy excitement. However, he is endowed with a wonderful sense of subtle distinctions and he never oversteps this line.”

V. L. G. KOROLENKO.

“He was a man of extraordinary sensitiveness and alertness, one of those souls which are woven of the ‘best ether,’ a natural advocate of humanity. The sufferings of others evoked in him an unusually keen response. It was his nature to respond most readily to human suffering, he could not help it. He did not need the aid of cool reflection, the reminder of ‘duty’ to sacrifice himself for others, to be heroic. It was his own, his deepest characteristic. Garshin’s face is said to have borne from his very childhood the stamp of unusual ‘unearthly’ beauty. The same stamp marked his inner self, and is manifest in his work.”

E. KOLTONOVSKAYA.

Stories, Vol. I, 1883; Vol. II, 1885; Vol. III, 1888.

Pain, honesty, chastity, lucidity, and youthful enthusiasm characterize these stories.

“One feature impresses itself constantly upon the reader of Garshin’s stories, whether it is accentuated or not, and that is grief over that particular and ultimate humiliation which human dignity is made to suffer when a man becomes a tool, a subservient part of an organism. We loved Garshin just for this reminding us of human dignity, for this original, deeply personal grief.”

N. K. MIKHAYLOVSKY.

[Particular attention is called to the stories, *Four Days, A Coward, Artists, The Red Flower, Attalea Princeps, Nadezhda Nikolayevna*, and *The Signal*.]

S. J. NADSON (1862-1887)

POET. A son of the gloomy eighties,—the nightmare-like period in recent Russian history; a singer of the intelligentsia's melancholy and broken hopes. In Nadson's poetry everything is somber, subdued, shrouded in the atmosphere of graves. When he speaks even of "sacred hope" it sounds more like weak resignation. When he says "Brother, friend, believe in a beautiful future," he himself lacks this faith or, perhaps, he thinks of it as of some remote hazy dream that has no substance. When he speaks of love, it is "love for the broken, the suffering brothers." Tiredness marks Nadson's young Muse. It is a wounded Muse, craving for happiness yet ever afraid even of a ray of sunshine; afraid to betray the eternal life-companion, grief.

"The flowers have faded, the lights have burnt out,
The limitless night is black like a grave,—"

this is the leading motive in the sick poetry of Nadson, the poet of a sick generation.

Lyrical Poems. (1878-1886.)

Nadson's poems do not sparkle with vivid colors. It is the vehemence of his lamentations, his animated declamation that is their greatest value. Nadson is more than sincere. He is almost too personal. He speaks as if a brother were telling a brother of his secret pain in the silence of the night. Yet his language is much poorer

than that of the classics who drew their words and pictures from the treasuries of folklore. Notwithstanding artistic defects, Nadson has grown to be one of the most beloved poets read by young and old.

TH. I. TYUTCHEV (1803-1873)

“O PROPHEPIC soul of mine, O heart full of alarm, thou flutterest as on the threshold of a double existence! Yes, thou art the dwelling place of two worlds; thy day is pained and passionate, thy dream is prophetic and unclear as the revelation of the spirits . . .”¹

Thus Tyutchev, in one of his famous poems, formulated his state of mind. He is “on the threshold of a double existence.” His “day,” the surrounding world, the life of men, is entangled and meaningless; society is the “eternal human triviality”; the judgment of the world “pulls at the root of the best plants” of life. Man in himself, aside from human aggregations, is only the shadow of a passing cloud. His very existence is hardly more than an illusion. His thought resembles the ray of a fountain: it rises, sparkles, reaches a certain height and then falls down only to begin the process again. Human thought strives towards heaven, yet “an invisible and fatal hand persistently breaks its ray and glitters from above in its sparks.” Human love is only a dream bound to end in bitter awakening. Man is a discordant note in the order of things.

The poet’s “day,” the things most men call real, are no comfort to him. Here he is lonely and detached. His real life is in his “night,” in his “sleep,” in his “dream,” in those regions which cannot be reached by logic or perception and are accessible only to intuition. Here the poet touches the very heart of existence, the life of the

¹ Literal translation.

universe. Contrary to man, the universe is eternal. The universe is endowed with a soul. Nature is all-powerful. The individual phenomena of nature are manifestations of universal and eternal life. Man has only one solace—to fuse with nature, to melt into it, to abandon himself in its incessant flow. Then he may hear the roar of the original chaos, our “native chaos,” the beginning and the end of the world, the dark foundation of all.

Yet while the poet thus approaches the boundaries of forgetfulness, of the great “abyss, all-devouring and consoling,” he is stirred by a great desire for happiness, for joy, for love, for day-by-day existence. And so he is torn between his two motherlands, and, steeped in thought, he writes at intervals his short and quiet poems which fall like drops of moon-lit water into a deep and silent basin.

Tyutchev is a musing poet. He knows no loud notes. Poetic expressions are foreign to him. “A thought when uttered is a lie,” he says in one of his poems. He wrote seldom, and he wrote for himself, as if trying to formulate in solitude what was happening in his innermost soul. His poems are always contemplations of a succinct nature. They deal with the fate of man and life. They try to express in their very cadence and rhythm the mood of their author. They are clear, like prisms of a strange lucid gem, and through their clearness an unknown world is visible to the soul.

It is only recently that intellectual Russia began to value this great and original philosophical poet. Of his contemporaries, only a few appreciated the depth and beauty of his creations. This was partly due to the unusual qualities in his poetry, which appeals only to a refined taste; partly to the small volume of his work

(some three hundred short poems in the course of half a century); and partly to the fact that, politically, Tyutchev, as a diplomat and official, belonged to the reactionary camp. Only with the growth of symbolism in Russia, the new school¹ began to study Tyutchev with love and admiration and to interpret his contribution to Russian spirit. The new school considers itself the successor of Tyutchev. It can hardly be said that Tyutchev was a symbolist in the modern sense of the word, yet careful study discloses in his work many elements of what is now called impressionism.

Tyutchev is "a teacher of poetry for poets," to use the expression of the critic Gornfeld. "In Tyutchev's poetry," says one of the leaders of the new school, Valery Bryusov, "Russian verse reached a refinement, an 'etheral height' [Foeth's words] which was hitherto unknown. Side by side with Pushkin, the creator of our real classic poetry, stands Tyutchev as the great master and originator of a poetry of allusions."

Tyutchev is a universal poet. What moves him is common to all the world. Still his language, his manner of expression, the very music of his soul are unmistakably Russian.

"Amazing is Tyutchev's ability to abandon himself in the most abstract ideas which would seem foreign to life. The finest dialectic constructions of the mind burn in him with a magic brilliance. He was in a high degree possessed of that quality which Dostoyevsky called 'the wit of a deep feeling.' 'To feel a thought' is in Dostoyevsky's opinion the modern form of passion. Tyutchev is in the power of these intellectual passions, and what a chill they sometimes breathe in his works! There was, however, no discord in him between the

¹ See Chapter II.

inspiration of an artist and the sober penetration of a wizard. Both faculties harmonized in deepest unity and most intimate accord.”

D. S. DARSKY.

“Tyutchev was deeply convinced that nature is animated; this was to him not a mere fancy, but a conscious belief, and so he was spared that duality of thought and feeling which was the curse of artists and poets from the end of the last [eighteenth] century up to recent times. Tyutchev’s mind was in complete accord with his inspiration: his poetry was full of conscious thought, and his thought found only a poetic, *i.e.*, an inspired and perfect expression. Probably nobody has reached so deeply as our poet to the dark root of the world’s existence; nobody has felt so strongly or conceived so distinctly that mysterious foundation of all life, of nature as well as of humanity, on which is based the meaning of the cosmic process, the fate of the human soul, and the entire history of mankind. Here is the key to all his poetry, the source of its significance and enchanting originality.

“Chaos, *i.e.*, negative infinity, the yawning abyss containing every madness and ugliness, demoniacal impulses which revolt against everything positive and dutiful, this is the deepest essence of the world’s soul and the basis of all creation. The cosmic process leads this chaotic elemental power into a general scheme, subjecting it to the laws of reason, gradually embodying in it the ideal contents of existence, giving this wild life meaning and beauty. Yet even then the chaos makes itself felt in impulses and movements of revolt. This presence of the chaotic, irrational elements in the depth of existence, lends the various natural phenomena that freedom and power the absence of which would mean the absence of life and beauty. In depicting such phenomena of nature where the dark foundation is felt most distinctly, Tyutchev knows no equal.”

V. SOLOVYOV.

“One idea is at the bottom of all his philosophic thoughts and moods, the idea of the limitations of human personality . . . A man can find real happiness only in going away from life. Where? First of all, into solitude. The poet finds a

number of refuges: nature, night, silence; all this can detach us from life and give us an independent and satisfying existence.

“The thing Tyutchev calls silence has nothing to do with gloom or lack of sociability. The limitations of human personality are most clearly manifest in the impossibility of expressing our thought. A man can think only with himself and for himself: the soul conceals an entire world of ‘mysteriously magic thoughts’ which ‘ripen in the soul’s depth’; they are ‘drowned by external noise, disturbed by the light of day.’ When these thoughts have ripened, they cannot be shared with others, because others would not understand, because a heart cannot tell itself . . .

“To detach oneself from the world, to ‘live alone within himself’—and to say nothing, this is what ‘silence’ means to Tyutchev. This is why he longs for the quiet of the night when he can return to his native world, the world of penetration into the hidden problems of existence. Nobody has gone deeper into the mood of this dark and pensive ‘hour of wonders and visions’ when ‘the living chariot of the cosmos rolls openly in the sanctum of heaven.’ The world becomes silent; consciousness has left it. ‘Only gods stir the Muse’s maiden soul with prophetic dreams.’”

A. G. GORNFELD.

Lyrical Poems. (1820–1873.)

No words can describe the subtle charm of Tyutchev’s poems. They are strong and delicate, emotional and restrained, almost cool yet saturated with life. They give a strange spiritual intoxication similar to the sensation of awakening in new realms. They are not always perfect in form, yet this very imperfection makes them closer to our soul. They are so human and yet they transfer us instantly into vast and serene eternity.

“Two years ago, on a quiet autumn night, I stood in the dark passage of the Colosseum looking through one of the apertures into the starry sky. Big stars, intent and luminous,

looked into my eyes. As I was examining the delicate azure, new stars appeared looking at me as mysteriously and eloquently as the first. Beyond them, in the depth, more and more stars were twinkling, gradually swimming forward in their turn, encased in the black mass of the walls. My eyes saw only a small part of the sky, yet I felt it was boundless and there was no end to its beauty. With a similar feeling I open Tyutchev's poems. How is it possible to put within narrow limits (I am speaking of the small size of the book) so much beauty, depth, power!"

A. A. FOETH.

"Tyutchev's poems on nature are almost always a passionate confession of love. The greatest happiness a man can reach is, in his opinion, to enjoy the various manifestations of nature's life. His most sacred wish is 'to drink all day the warm air of spring' in 'perfect idleness,' to 'follow the clouds in the sky above.' He is convinced that joys of paradise are nil compared with 'the blossoming joy of May' . . . He sees in nature not only 'happiness,' 'charm,' 'enchantment,' but something higher than human life, something divine, holy. The spring he expressly calls 'divinity.' The mountain summits he calls 'divinely native'; Mont Blanc seems to him an 'unearthly revelation'; in the flashes of heat-lightning he guesses the solution of some 'mysterious affair', even the autumnal slumber of the forest falling asleep before winter seems to him 'prophetic.'"

V. BRYUSOV.

The most beautiful and profound of Tyutchev's poems on nature, however, are those where he melts into it, losing consciousness and the sense of his own personality, feeling himself one particle in the great mystery of Life.

COUNT ALEXEY TOLSTOI (1817-1875)

POET and dramatist. Contrary to the main current of Russian literature, Alexey Tolstoi was less concerned with social problems or with the actual life of the people than with beauty for beauty's sake. He called himself a bard who carried beauty's banner high. His slogan was "row fearlessly in the name of the beautiful, against the current." As to the two warring camps, the Westerners and Slavophiles, he declared he was "no fighter in either camp, only a casual guest." The same thing may be said of his relation to the two camps of progressivism and conservatism in Russia. Neither was his realm. What attracted him most was a beautiful word-picture, a refined emotion expressed in a harmonious rhythm, an attractive story well told. Yet, he was thoroughly national. He was imbued with the spirit of folk-lyricism. He draws upon the rich resources of ancient folk-poetry. He looked upon Russia through the prism of old folk-songs and heroic legends. His legends and ballads of old Russian life are national gems.

"As a poet, Tolstoi showed that a man can serve pure art and yet not disconnect it from the moral meaning of life; that art must be free from things base and false, but not from ideal contents and relation to life. As a thinker, he expressed in a remarkably clear and harmonious poetical form the old but forever true Platonico-Christian conception of the world. As a patriot, he stood for the very thing our country needs most,—and moreover, he himself represented the ideal he stood for,—the live power of a free personality."

VL. SOLOVYOV.

1. *Lyrical Poems.* (1850-1875.)

"In his lyrical poems A. Tolstoi charms with the ear-caressing musical quality of his form as well as with the crystal-clear, chaste quality of his inspirations. The oscillations of feeling, the capricious curves of emotion, are reproduced with the graceful simplicity of the genuine artist."

TH. D. BATYUSHKCV.

Imitations of folk-songs occupy a prominent place among Tolstoi's lyrical poems.

2. *John of Damascus.* Epic poem. (1859.)

The fight between inspiration and dogma, between the free creative human personality which is divine in itself, and the rigid canons of a church. John of Damascus is a singer by the grace of God; he has the power to move human hearts by his images and harmonies. But he is a monk. The Father Superior ordered him to refrain from making songs. Inspiration comes to him "like a black cloud" which he cannot resist, yet the rules of the monastery are implacable. Only the intervention of the Holy Virgin removes finally the seal from his lips. "God wishes no restriction and oppression of free thought; born free in the soul, it should not die in fetters."

This is one of the most impressive works of Tolstoi.

3. *Dramatic Trilogy.*

The Death of Ivan the Terrible. (1866.)

Tsar Theodore. (1868.)

Tsar Boris. (1870.)

Each of those tragedies has become an integral part of the Russian repertoire. The old Russian life, the language, the costumes, are reproduced in an artistic way. The interest, however, centers around the figures

of the Tsars who ruled Russia in the most dramatic times of her history.

“The trilogy has been denoted as national drama because it lets us feel the ‘national traits of character and national conception of the world’ and because it puts forward one of the main problems of our history, the problem of autocracy, which it represented in three different manifestations: in the person of a despot, cruel and obsessed; in the person of a Tsar possessed of high moral qualities, but lacking will-power and enlightened views; and in the person of a Tsar who had a strong will and enlightened views, but lacked ‘moral stamina.’”

ТН. D. БАТЮШКОВ.

It must be remarked, however, that all three parts of the trilogy represent, first of all, tragedies of human souls. Autocracy is not the main object of interest, but the conflicts in the souls of the characters. A. Tolstoi was a poet “who derived his inspirations principally from the data of personal experience.”

[Other works of interest: *Prince Serebryany*, a historic novel; *Don Juan*, a dramatic poem.]

A. A. FOETH-SHENSHIN (1820-1892)

POET. The most talented of the few Russian poets who, about the middle of the nineteenth century, proclaimed their adherence to "pure art." In Foeth's opinion, poetry could have nothing to do with political or social problems; poetry is a way to forget the burdens of practical life. "It was our wish," he wrote, "to turn away from those burdens, to break the ice of everyday monotony, so that we may breathe for a moment the pure and free air of poetry."

The poet is, in Foeth's conception, a singer of winged sounds which grasp, in their flight, "the dark delirium of the soul, the unclear fragrance of the grasses." The poet's attention is concentrated on his inner world, as he bears in his breast, "like a certain Seraph," "a fire stronger and more brilliant than the world."

Foeth adheres faithfully to this program. In his poems he tries to seize the most delicate moods of the human soul, the cravings of an instant, the frailest shades of emotion. He would like to fathom the "eternal depths of existence," where words are numb, where "not a song do we hear, but the soul of the singer," where "the spirit throws off the superfluous body."

Two ways lead him into those ethereal regions which to him are the heights of reality: nature and love. Foeth is the sweet-voiced Russian nightingale whose songs caress our soul as miracles of nature and love inseparably blended. Foeth almost dissolves, melts away, in the soft embraces of nature. And Foeth rises to hazy, luminous

worlds on the wings of love. Over all these wonders, a great sun is shining, its rays almost maddening the poet with joy. And beauty reigns. The world is full of beauty; love is beauty, death is beauty. The gladness of harmony is without end.

Foeth is the most ecstatic of Russian poets. Inspiration is no metaphor to him. He is overcharged with emotion. He is all in the grip of his visions, however evanescent. He hears voices "from other shores." His eyes are always turned skyward. His lips are whispering a half-prayer, half-song. He would be glad to do away with words altogether. Words are too definite and heavy. Music, perhaps, is the better means. Music is the language of the soul. Foeth resembles a priest in the temple of the Universe. He kneels before the altar, his heart is aching with gladness, he is ready "to die with every sound" of his song, his breast is "too narrow for his heart."

Foeth's are not poems of action. They are revelations. They are the flashes of mysterious light which allow the human soul to reach in one moment the deepest elusive truths. They are outbursts of sudden self-realization when a man feels himself an instrument in the great mysterious harmony of life.

Foeth's poems are unusually fresh. They remind one of a flower bathed in dew. They are immaculate in purity, sincerity, perfection. They seem to be not a creation of human effort, but natural organisms born as an entity. Yet, the language is not always faultless.

Foeth wrote in his youth and he wrote in his old age, and the older he became, the deeper and more spiritual were his poems, and the more harmonious strength vibrated through their tender fabric. Not till the very

year of his death did his emotions become less acute or less noble. He saw death approaching, yet to him it was rest, winter-sleep, a return to the sources of life. His latest poems are, perhaps, the best.

It is hardly conceivable that a poet of such genuine spirituality and talent should not have gained wide recognition in Russian intellectual circles. Yet such was the strength of the other, the "civic protest" trend of poetry, as represented by Nekrasov, that for many years intellectual Russia only scoffed at this poet. This attitude was partly due to the notorious reactionary views of Foeth, who, for example, was against the abolition of serfdom. Only towards the end of his life did his fame begin to grow. Even in the twentieth century he is hardly valued according to his merits.

1. *Lyrical Poems.* (1840-1892.)

"Foeth's power lies in his ability to penetrate into the deepest recesses of our soul. Inspiration and faith in the power of inspiration, a deep understanding of natural beauty, and the consciousness of the fact that the prose of life seems prose only to those unilluminated by poetry, these qualities reveal Foeth as a pure poet of high standing. He possesses a keen eye that discovers poetry in ordinary objects, and he is animated by an unflinching artistic endurance which knows no rest till a given poetic moment is expressed with unusual accuracy. In his poems, the elusive is snatched; poetry is embodied in a harmonious word; the most nebulous moments of our life are made clear. He appears to represent what every poet of powerful gifts ought to be: a seer more than anything else, an interpreter of poetry in our everyday life."

A. V. DRUZHININ.

"He does not present to us a feeling in its various phases, he does not picture a passion in its definite forms, in the fullness of its development; he gets hold of only one moment

in the totality of a feeling or a passion, he is all in the present, in that swift instant which overwhelmed him, compelling him to pour forth in charming tones. Each of Foeth's poems has reference to only one point of existence, one throb of the heart; it is therefore indivisible, it cannot be dissolved in its component parts; it is a harmony in which all strings respond to the sound of one string slightly touched in passing. It is here, therefore, that the beauty, naturalness, sincerity, and sweetness of poetry grow to perfection. . . . He does not choose subjects; he does not draw complicated pictures and does not unroll a sequence of thoughts, but he dwells on one figure, on one side of a feeling. Looked at from this standpoint, he does not appear monotonous; on the contrary, we marvel at the breadth of his stroke, the variety and number of his subjects. Like the magician who turns into gold whatever he touches, so our poet transforms into poetry all possible elements of our life."

N. N. STRAKHOV.

"Infatuated, intoxicated, averse to definite words, Foeth does not speak, he is delirious; he wants no consciousness, he is afraid of its crude exactness; he prefers to remain on the elusive line between the light of the soul and its darkness. He feels well in the unconscious, in the unmotivated, he seeks no explanation . . . therefore a delicate veil is wrapt over his poems and they are all like "a message that reached not distinctly"; they appear from under the covering mist of the past as if animated by Platonic remembrance. . . . The poet tells us his wonderful dream of which only the most delicate fragments have survived,—those silvery, silver-gray, lucid poems or those separate words which caress our souls with the touch of some tender silken fabric. . . .

"The angels hovering around the Sistine Madonna melt together into a cloud; so all that is tender and ephemeral in the world melts in his poems into something aerial, indissoluble. This indivisible unity of unutterable experiences, this world which has become so refined as to enter in its totality into one single human heart,—this is what the poet speaks to us about in the mode of something immaterialized,—as if

he were kissing his words and they were opening to him their lips,—or are those not words but petals of flowers? Or are those not flowers but stars? Or are those not stars but maidens' eyes? Whatever it may be, it surely is happiness."

J. EICHENWALD.

"This poet-philosopher is so much a poet of philosophers that his works will inevitably become a favorite book of every thinker, every scientist, every man of a philosophical turn of mind if he is not entirely deprived of artistic sense.

"Of all the lyrical poets that have hitherto lived, none has succeeded to such a degree in acquiring a purely philosophical spirit, at the same time remaining a poet and only a poet. This great artist is like a golden link between beauty and truth, he is a golden bridge between philosophy and poetry. Penetration into the substance of things is in his opinion the limit of creative intensity:

'Wings has my spirit acquired in your palaces,
Truth does it bring from the heights of creation,'

he says to the poets. This insight, however, remains for him only the result of poetic soaring: the truth is revealed to him on the summits of esthetic ecstasy which he seeks or leaves for purposes other than truth. He approaches it in his own way inaccessible to the exact thinker yet in close relation to him. The poet and the thinker agree in results differing only in the ways of approach."

B. V. NIKOLSKY.

[Foeth is known as the translator of numerous classical poets such as Horatius, Catullus, Tibullus, Ovid, Vergil, etc. He translated Goethe's *Faust* and *Hermann und Dorothea*, also Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, etc.]

F. M. DOSTOYEVSKY (1821-1881)

PICTURE a country, vast, powerful, endowed with limitless natural riches, yet lacking ease and comfort; a country torn by the most picturesque and painful contrasts, yet passionately dreaming of harmony and beauty; a country struggling against the leaden floods of gloom that threaten to choke every living thing, yet seeing visions of pure white light and rapturous joy. Picture a life where the dominant factor is cruelty: cruelty of an autocratic government using the whip and the lash and the fist and the bayonet and the saber and the dungeon to crush its peaceful innocent citizens; cruelty of landlords using the rod as a means of ruling their serfs, and of factory employers "crushing the skulls" of their workers; cruelty of rural communities inflicting corporal punishment on their respectable members, and of military units where the practice of physical tortures developed into an art and the most refined methods of painful humiliation were devised; cruelty of parents, of schools, of husbands, of farm managers, of judges, of priests; cruelty of poverty, of bad roads, of primitive nature, of disorganization, of dirt, mud, filth. Picture a people of a hundred millions inflicted with a profound religious spirit and craving for their God; thousands of convents scattered over the plains of two continents where, among lazy and good-for-nothing impostors, there live individual monks of the purest and most sublime moral and spiritual attainments, ascending to the highest sun-lit peaks of faith and devotion and eternal peace; hosts of plain

folks, men, women and children, strong and infirm, rich and poor, leaving their homes every spring for a long pilgrimage by foot to the holy places, walking from village to village in colorful clusters, sleeping nights in the open air and wandering for months and months through rain and hail and dust and mud in the hope of falling prostrate before the holy ikon and of unloading the burden of sin that weighs so heavily on their consciences. Picture a class of intellectual, well-educated people who have absorbed all the cultural and spiritual ideas of their time and who are woefully aware of the discrepancies between their ideal conception and the brutal reality that stares mockingly into their faces from near and far. Picture one of those intellectuals who has received a very careful and thorough European education; a thinker who is irresistibly drawn to philosophical, primarily metaphysical reasoning, living the problems of conscience, of good and evil, of God and man, of time and eternity and things "beyond" in a more acute and suffering way than do ordinary mortals live the problems of their personal happiness; an artist with the most piercing eye, with the deepest understanding of human psychology and with an ability to fathom the abysses of the human mind beyond the surface of common sense; a responsive soul who can hear the cry of a child in the night when it is cruelly beaten by an ignorant mother, the sigh of agony of a man whose daughter is selling her body to earn a meager living for him and his family, the chatter of the teeth of the insane when he is tormented by his infernal visions, and who drinks the cup of suffering of humanity so deeply that the entire world appears to him in a white heat of pain; a constructive genius who has the power to put all his visions, queries, doubts, anguish, rebellions,

analyses, curses, blessings into broad, gripping, scourging pictures saturated with elements of reality, of human life, human nature. Let this genius be sentenced to death for no fault of his, let him be put on the scaffold and made to listen to his death sentence only to be later "pardoned" to serve a number of years in chains in the mines of Siberia together with highwaymen and murderers; let him, besides, develop epilepsy and be ever tormented by the expectation of an attack and by all the terror that accompanies the fits of his disease. Let this man loose upon a country pictured above, let him create great monumental works giving expression to his own soul as influenced by the surrounding world,—and you will, perhaps, have an idea of Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

People outside of Russia do not like to read Dostoyevsky. "He is too morbid," they say, "he may be very talented, but he is too dark and gruesome." True it is that Dostoyevsky is no amusing reading. Moreover, some of his scenes may appear incredible to those who judge Russia by the standards of the comfortable western civilization. Dostoyevsky does not try to make his writings palatable. He heaps one shocking picture on the other, he tops one excruciating scene by another as if some formidable God were piling black sharp-edged boulders to form a mountain which would penetrate the sky. He is relentless. He knows no pity. He makes the reader gasp for breath and feel as if the entire world were turning insane. Yet the man who has gone through the purgatory of Dostoyevsky's novels emerges with a greater soul, with a wiser mind, with a wealth of unmatched experiences that give new meaning to the world. It is for this reason that Dostoyevsky has grown to be ever more valued and read and commented upon by thinking Rus-

sians. Now Dostoyevsky looms up on the spiritual horizon of Russia larger than, perhaps, any of the great.

“One finds in Dostoyevsky everywhere the human personality extended to the last limits; growing, developing from the very dark, elemental, animal-like roots to the uppermost illuminated heights of spirituality; everywhere one finds the struggle of a heroic will: against the elemental power of moral duty and conscience; against the elemental power of the people, the state, the political influences; finally, against the elemental power of metaphysical and religious mysteries. Passing through the crucible of this struggle, through the fire of red-hot passions and still more red-hot consciousness, the kernel of the human personality remains undestroyed, it reveals itself,—and all Dostoyevsky’s heroes are contrasted with the elemental powers that absorb them.

“His main works are in reality neither novels, nor epics; they are tragedies. He has no rivals in the art of gradually intensifying, accumulating, deepening and fearfully concentrating the tragic action. There comes a moment for all Dostoyevsky’s heroes when they cease ‘feeling their own body.’ These creatures are by no means bodiless or bloodless, they are not ephemeral. Yet the highest elation, the utmost tension of their spiritual life, the most heated passions not of heart and emotions, but of mind, intellect, conscience, give them this freedom from their bodies; they produce, as it were, the supernatural lightness, the spirituality of the flesh. Because of their high spirituality, all Dostoyevsky’s heroes live an incredibly accelerated life; they do not walk like ordinary mortals, they are flying; and in their very destruction they experience the rapture of this terrible flight, since it carries them into the abyss.

“Dostoyevsky’s heroes are, first of all, clever people. Through them we can see how even abstract thoughts can be passionate, how metaphysical premises and conclusions can be rooted not only in our intellect, but also in our hearts, emotions, will. Their crimes are irresistible conclusions from dialectics. They feel deeply because they think deeply; they suffer enormously because they cogitate enormously; they

dare to will because they dare to think. The most abstract thought is at the same time the most passionate: this is the thought of God. All Dostoyevsky's heroes are 'tormented by God.'

"To make the hidden sides, the powers latent in the depths of human souls reveal themselves, Dostoyevsky needs a certain degree of pressure of moral atmospheres which under conditions of present 'real' life never, or almost never, are to be found:—he needs either the rarefied, icy air of abstract dialectics, or the fire of elemental, animal-like passion. These experiments sometimes yield totally novel states of the human soul, which seem to be impossible, unnatural, like the liquid state of the air. Dostoyevsky's so-called psychology reminds one of a vast laboratory equipped with the finest, most exact instruments and mechanisms to measure, investigate, analyze human souls."

D. S. MEREZHKOVSKY.

"A romanticist by emotion and purpose, Dostoyevsky, nevertheless, was a realist in the means of execution. His penetration into the depths of human consciousness we cannot fail to recognize as a truthful and realistic reproduction of the psychic processes of his heroes. Even in this reproduction, however, he remains a subjective romantic author inasmuch as he does not copy his characters from the observations of others, but objectivizes in them his own mental struggles and his own experiences in their extraordinary scope and intensity. He thus represents a type of artistic work which consists in judgment of an author over himself. To this type belonged also Gogol's work."

CH. VYETRINSKY.

1. *Crime and Punishment*. Novel. (1866.)

Through the processes of pure reasoning, a man comes to the murder of a fellow human being. The man is honest. He is an idealist. He is a thinker. He despises conventional morals. He challenges society by challenging his own deeply rooted moral conceptions. There are,

he says, human lives that are worth nothing, less than nothing. They are injurious to society. They are parasites pure and simple. Why should I not be permitted to go and kill one of these persons, even if it is an old helpless decrepit woman, and take away her money which I can use for some progressive purpose?

The man dares. He kills the woman. What will become of him? What mental processes will he go through? This is the main problem Dostoyevsky sets out to solve in this novel. "People call me a psychologist," Dostoyevsky once wrote about himself. "This is not true. I am only a realist of a higher order; that is to say, I am depicting all the depths of human soul." Raskolnikov, the hero of *Crime and Punishment*, offers a vast opportunity for this realism of a higher order. Sonja Marmeladov, the prostitute who is destined to play the most important part in Raskolnikov's regeneration, offers to this realism another rich field for experimenting. Thrown against the background of the "mad" city of Petersburg, a nightmare of stone and dust in the hot summer months, the story becomes one of the very significant events in the lives of those who have read it.

"Raskolnikov belongs to the men whose thinking is very intense. He led a solitary, secluded life, all absorbed in thought and contemplation, in logical combinations, examining with his intellect the riddles of life. He tasted of the poison of unfulfilled desires which turned inward, he experienced the fever of indecision. But he wishes not only to think, he wishes to act."

TH. D. BATYUSHKOV.

2. *The Idiot*. Novel. (1868.)

The man thus labeled is not an idiot at all. He is wiser than many a wise man. He has been ill up to a

mature age, suffering from a kind of mental disease. Now he is well. He returns to society, rich and independent. But he returns with a soul so sensitive that it seems nude. His impressions have a freshness and a spontaneity unknown to civilized men. His ideas of right and wrong, proper and improper, are dictated by a moral sense that is as responsive and tremulous as would be a living being stripped of its skin. He is a child, he is a sage, he is a saint. How would he react if he were put in a company not of dull commonplace people, but of men and women of the hottest passions and the darkest gropings? Dostoyevsky introduces a gallery of such men and women. The savage Rogozhin with his primitive impulses; the cultured unhappy Nastasya Philippovna whose soul has been forever downtrodden and who revenges herself by disregarding human laws, and a number of others. The novel is a string of tragic scenes unsurpassed in dramatic power. It leads up to a climax that is haunting.

“A tragic struggle between demoniacal powers of beauty on one hand and distant truths, quiet and salutary, shining from far off, on the other, is represented in *The Idiot*. The novel has no construction whatever. The author cared little about what is commonly called plausibility in descriptions of human life. When fundamental powers are in conflict, such as God and atheism, the universal and the individual, transcendental truth and sensual beauty, it is inevitable that a great confusion, a storm, a hurricane should follow. Caught by this hurricane, the persons of the novel live in a constant rush. They are all running up-hill or down-hill, they fall and rise again, and even when they reach heights above the clouds, they still shake in mad convulsions. This is a true reproduction of the historic process, yet it is done in the feverish tempo of a pathetic and disease-stricken genius.”

A. L. VOLYNSKY.

"*The Idiot* is fundamentally a love story. The entire action is centered around a love affair, and the catastrophe is brought about by unsatisfied love. In Dostoyevsky's work, however, love almost entirely loses its specific character of an instinctive, sentimental or sensual attraction, of a desire of two human beings to merge in one undivided life. The eternal theme of love is here afforded not an individual, but a broad universal treatment. In a sort of hurricane, phantoms pass before our eyes: Rogozhin obsessed by a mad passion, the tragic figure of Nastasya Philippovna, the proud Aglaya, and a whole series of other figures, strange personalities, crippled by disease or circumstances."

TH. D. BATYUSHKOV.

3. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Novel. (1879-1880.)

The ripest and most monumental of Dostoyevsky's works. Here all the trends and currents of his creative searchings are concentrated and deepened. The voluminous novel represents a momentous tragedy constructed with unusual technical skill. The numerous figures are located around the main event so as to make a complete whole. The psychological vivisection, the cruel dipping into the most obscure corners of human souls, the uncanny joy at pursuing the victim of the artist's acrid stare, coupled with a human sympathy and compassion for suffering human beings as profound and tender and all-embracing as only suffering can produce, are more evident in this work than, perhaps, in all the works of Dostoyevsky.

"Somewhere, in an unknown and insignificant provincial town, a grave family drama took place culminating in a sensational scandalous trial. The acting figures in the novel are almost personified complexes of various qualities and attributes of the human soul: the sensual element is primarily incarnated in Fyodor Pavlovitch Karamazov; as to his sons,

Ivan represents intellect, pride, and 'greediness for life,' Domitri, unbridled passions and goodness of heart, Alyosha, tenderness and sympathy, while the illegitimate son Smerdyakov is an example of servility and bitterness. As a contrast to all those sinister, nightmare-like, destructive and mortifying experiences in a whirlwind of passion and strife which, besides the main figures, embraces a number of secondary personages, women, adolescents, and almost children, the solemn magnificent figure of Saint Zosima looms up,—the figure of a man once in the turmoil of worldly strife, now calm and composed in possession of the higher truth, living outside the world, though never losing interest in the fate of his fellow human beings."

TH. D. BATYUSHKOV.

"The most harrowing of all philosophico-religious problems is here treated: how can we reconcile the faith in an all-powerful and all-benevolent God with the existence of evil, cruelties, bestiality in the world, particularly with the greatest injustice—children's torture? Ivan is revolting against the idea of universal harmony achieved at the price of endless suffering, primarily of innocent victims. He rejects the 'truth' thus attained, he declares beforehand that the truth is not worth such a price. It is not a theoretical, theologico-philosophical discussion as to the proofs of God's existence, it is a burning question of life and moral consciousness. The question is put so sharply and in such a daring manner that no superficial answer is possible."

D. N. OVSYANIKO-KULIKOVSKY.

[Other works of Dostoyevsky indispensable to the student of his talent: *Memories from the Dead House*; *Notes from the Underground*; *Poor People*; *Netotchka Nezvanova*; *The Obsessed*.]

VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV (1853-1900)

PHILOSOPHER, publicist, poet, and critic. The student of Russian literature cannot pass by the figure of Vladimir Solovyov though his main work lies outside the realm of literature proper. Solovyov occupies an honorable place among the Russian idealistic philosophers. His most important philosophic treatises are *The Spiritual Foundation of Life*, *The Justification of the Good*, and *Russia and the Universal Church*. Here Solovyov appears as an adherent of the Neo-Platonic school and as a thinker whose main concern is religion. His aim was, to use his own words, "to justify the faith of our fathers by raising it to a new level of intelligent consciousness; to show how this ancient faith, freed from the fetters of local separatism and national egotism, coincides with the eternal universal truth."

In the field of social problems, Solovyov's famous work is *The National Problem in Russia*, in which he stands against narrow nationalism and false patriotism. His ideal in social questions is "love, truth, and universal solidarity." Patriotism he understands "not as hatred to members of other races or adherents of other religions, but as active love for the entire suffering people." In his political works Solovyov embraces a wide range of national and international problems; through these works he was known to the public more than through his purely philosophic researches.

Fundamentally, however, Solovyov was a poet, and a poetic feeling colored all his philosophic thinking and writing. E. Radlov, author of many essays on Solovyov,

says: "The stamp of poetry, of something far away which has no connection whatever with the interests of our time, is seen in Solovyov's philosophy and expresses the mystical element which is a salient feature of the Russian soul." Solovyov was a poet and a mystic, a mystic poet, and in a number of talented poems he gave utterance to his moods. In several splendid essays he gave appreciations of other Russian poets and writers who, in his opinion, approached most closely the ideal of real art. Altogether, Solovyov is a many-sided, highly talented spiritual personality; he stands out as a bright figure on the gloomy horizon of Russian intellectual life. He deserves respect even on the part of those who do not agree with his philosophico-theological conceptions.

"What is most unusual in Solovyov and most fundamental, is his world-wide interest, his universalism. Sectarianism or apostasy was foreign to him. Russian life and thought of the second half of the nineteenth century shows no other instance of a universal personality concerned with Russia, humanity, the world's soul, the Church, God, and not with circles or factions. Solovyov is neither a Slavophil nor a Westerner, neither Greek-Catholic nor Roman-Catholic, because he dwelt all his life in the Church of the Universe. He dwelt all his life in unity with the soul of the world which, as a faithful knight, he wished to free from captivity. Dostoyevsky's assertion that the Russian is primarily a universal man, is most applicable to Solovyov. This Russian longing for a universal humanity led him to raise the question of 'Orient and Occident.' The problem of Orient and Occident, of uniting both worlds in a Christian universal humanity, was Solovyov's main problem which pursued him all his life."

NIKOLAS BERDYAYEV.

I. *Lyrical Poems.* (1875-1900.)

Solovyov's poems are poems of thought rather than intuition. They supplement his philosophic and religious

gropings. Their main theme may be expressed in the following passage from his famous poem *Three Meetings*: "Disbelieving in the deceptive world, I felt the imperishable mantle of purple, and recognized the radiance of God under the rough crust of matter."¹ In their style and language they represent hardly any new features, as compared with the works of the great masters. Their value is in their spirituality and mystic moods.

"Solovyov possessed a gift of artistic expression which obliterated the line of demarcation between poetry and prose; this gift was combined in him with an actual song-making ability. His poems are valuable not only as material for the history of his inner life; the best of them are full of a peculiar charm; at times they call forth from the depth of the soul something half-forgotten, veiled in a mist of unaccountable sadness; at times they offer flashlike glimpses into the infinite distances of the future. . . . Of the few poems on current questions, the strongest is *Ex oriente lux* with its question put to Russia: 'What Orient wouldst thou prefer to be, that of Xerxes or of Christ?' Solovyov understood the fundamental qualities of the Russian soul."

K. ARSENYEV.

2. *Three Speeches on Dostoyevsky*. (1881-1883.)
- The Poetry of Th. I. Tyutchev*. Essay. (1895.)
- The Poetry of Count A. K. Tolstoi*. Essay. (1895.)
- Lermontov*. Essay. (1899.)
- Significance of Poetry in Pushkin's Poems*. Essay. (1899.)
- Lermontov*. Essay. (Published in 1901.)
- Poetry*. Essay. (Published in 1901.)

In his penetrating and beautiful critical essays, Solovyov appears a man of refined literary taste, of real love for poetry and a keen understanding of a poet's task. He

¹ Literal translation.

does not confine himself to external things, he goes into the very essence of a poet's creative individuality. What he demands of poetry is "the bloom and radiance of spiritual forces." Poetry incarnates in images the high meaning of life. The source of poetry is eternal ideas. Poetry is no play of fancy, it is an expression of the unity and animation of nature. Poetry should tell the truth about the nature of the universe. Poetic creations that do not conform with this ideal, are inferior in Solovyov's opinion. Still, he says, even writers who are not aware of serving a high ideal, are nevertheless endowed with a divine spirit and serve the cause of truth. For Solovyov, poetry is a service, a sacred performance.

[Other important essays: *Beauty in Nature*; *The Poetry of Ya. P. Polonsky*.]

L. N. TOLSTOI (1828-1910)

“WITH a feeling of awe you approach Tolstoi,—he is so tremendous and masterful; with a feeling of timid admiration you stand at the foot of this human mountain. The Cyclopean structure of his spirit overpowers the student.

“It is the naturalness, the almost primeval character and elemental power of his works that strike one most. He is the eternal pupil of life, forever learning something new; his soul is full to the brim, it is a vessel of beauty, artistically carved, precious in its simplicity. He can identify himself with every soul; he remembers and understands everything; he includes all objects, big and small, in the vast sphere of his observations; he transforms himself into everybody and everything, and all sensations, however fleeting, experienced by him or by others, he puts into an artistic form that stays forever. . . . The all-embracing scope of his creative power gives him access to human beings, to animals, and even to the soul of a dying tree; you cannot resist the authenticity with which he pictures all the experiences of all the living creatures in God’s world. Being no *littérateur*, he has no literary specialty. // He approaches every subject with equal ease, and the diameter of his creative area is astounding. From Napoleon to Kholstomer (the Horse)—all this tremendous psychological distance he passes with equal strength, never fatigued, never strained, never artificial. The dreams of a child falling asleep, and the last visions of a dying person, the *début* of a little girl who is in love for the first time, and the nights of the old Prince turning on the hard bed of senility,—all this Tolstoi understood and lived through and incorporated into pieces of art, and better than any artist in the world has he shown that nothing is lost in the soul; he showed how endlessly rich life is, how every drop of dew glistens and sparkles with a fullness of color.

“And yet, slowly completing his inspiring progress through the world, fondly absorbing every detail of existence, Tol-

stoi does not forget its general meaning; the concrete manifestations of life never screen for him life as a whole; he sees the latter in every trifle. Generous, knowing no fear of exhaustion, never menaced by the ghost of poverty, he gives much time and attention to details, he cherishes them, he transforms them into gems of creation, he is in no hurry to let them pass by. He can be exuberant. He likes luxury. He devotes entire pages—pages of unrivaled beauty—to hunting, races, birthday-dinners, weddings.

“From amid all this, from amid the trivial, ordinary, the trifling, rises the sublime, the beautiful, the great, stirring the soul with the purest emotions. Without an obvious purpose, without aiming at effects, he attains the most sublime results; amid every-day life, out of the material of every-day occurrences, he gives us a holiday of spirit; out of prose he creates fragrant poetry, and you are thankful to him, and you send him your blessings.”

J. EICHENWALD.

1. *Anna Karenina*. Novel. (1875-1877.)

The Song of Songs of love stories. Tolstoi personally disapproves of Anna's love for Vronsky. Anna is a married woman, and, according to Tolstoi's moral conception, she should not have left her husband and child for the sake of her love. Yet Tolstoi the artist is infinitely stronger than Tolstoi the moralist. His narrative of emotional developments is their justification; his sketches of Anna's, her husband's, Vronsky's and the others' characters, make events appear inevitable. Tolstoi tells the story of human weaknesses and human inconsequence with so much fondness that it seems almost impossible to identify the author of *Anna Karenina* with the old, stern-looking, implacable man we know so well from his portraits. Here, as elsewhere, Tolstoi the artist is utterly humane; his own ideas do not cloud his vision; his philosophic conceptions remain in the background so

long as he anatomizes actual life. "Tolstoi was more of a pagan than any other of our writers," said a famous Russian critic. His greediness for life in its concrete manifestations made him dread the reverse,—death. In *Anna Karenina* we have a streak of this dread which pursued Tolstoi all through his works.

Still, *Anna Karenina* is infinitely more than a story of love, life, and death. It is one of the few works where the thinking elements of the Russian nobility were pictured with broad, frank strokes, it is a colorful panorama of the upper class of Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century. Tolstoi was not partial, though his sympathy with his own class was most natural. He pictures both the virtues and weaknesses of high society, and the student of Russian social conditions will have to acquaint himself with the characters of the novel just as well as with historic or sociological data. It is conceivable that he will see more through *Anna Karenina* than through piles of dry material.

The novel, however, is even more than a social study. It touches the broader principles of existence. It is saturated with pure thought. It gropes for a solution of the meaning of life. The individual, the social, and the universal, are subtly combined into an organic whole.

2. *War and Peace*. Novel. (1865-1869.)

"The author faced a tremendous task. The scene of action in the novel is the whole of Europe, from the Volga to Austerlitz; equal participants in the action are great armies of hundreds of thousands, and a little girl Natasha; the "great Napoleon," and the captive soldier Platon Karatayev. The battle of Borodino, and a hunting party; the movements of huge masses of armed men, and the hardly perceptible movements of a human soul; the slaughter of innumerable thou-

sands, and the fleeting grief of an individual; the meeting between Alexander and Napoleon, and the meeting between Pierre and Natasha,—all those historical and romantic occurrences are combined into one great tangle of life. To be able to untangle this wealth of events, to draw out the novel into one straight line, it was necessary to find the meaning of all, to see clearly how everything happened, what were the moving forces, the psychological grounds, why things shaped themselves one way and not another. Once faced with all these questions, Tolstoi was naturally compelled to inquire into the philosophical foundations both of the historical and psychological parts of the novel. *War and Peace* thus became an artistic, historic, and philosophic epic whose elements are inseparably intertwined.”

R. V. IVANOV-RAZUMNIK.

“The conflict between two peoples, or, strictly speaking, between Napoleon and Russia, served the author as a background for depicting a conflict of two moral powers, a struggle between a proud personality who dares to mold the fate of peoples, and a spirit of humble submission to the aims of an unknown higher force. Russia’s victory over Napoleon is the triumph of the moral idea which, in Tolstoi’s opinion, is represented by the Russian people. All parts of the picture are placed so as to form one harmonious entity, and it often seems as if all the heroes of the novel, and all the masses that move against each other, were only manifestations of the higher force which thus reveals itself.”

P. KOGAN.

War and Peace is, first of all, an artistic biography of several men and women at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A number of very young Russians, almost children, members of the upper class, are introduced in the first chapters of the novel, and the author proceeds to follow their lives, through all the hazards and vicissitudes of a turbulent historic epoch, up to the time of their full maturity when their mental powers reached a climax.

The lives of those people often cross and clash, forming the romantic and dramatic part of the novel. *War and Peace* is, thus, one of the rare works that picture the growth and development of an entire generation. The subtlety of the psychological analysis is not hampered by the great number of persons and the overwhelming amount of material to be handled.

A second element is the national life of Russia. Hardly any representative of any class in Russia, from the serfs and the village reeve to the Emperor and his advisers, is omitted in this work. In fact, it was the clear purpose of Tolstoi to review the whole of Russia in her moment of hardest trial. The picture drawn is both broad and vivid, true to life and shot through with spirit.

A third element is the historical event: battles, diplomatic relations, military drives, the invasion of Russia by Napoleon, the burning of Moscow, the retreat and annihilation of the French army. The latter events are represented with so much vigor and clarity that one is almost inclined to think this narrative one of the best sources of the history of 1812 in Russia.

3. *Resurrection*. Novel. (1900.)

In this novel Tolstoi aimed at picturing the moral regeneration of a person steeped in wrong. Prince Nekhludov, the rich man, the *bon vivant*, realizes the evils of his life. The seduction of young Katya, the peasant girl, which led her down-hill to vice and misery and finally to a trial for participation in murder, is Nekhludov's heaviest sin. Nekhludov repents and is ready to change his life. The actual center of the novel and its greatest artistic achievement, however, is not the figure of Nekhludov, but prison-life in Russia, Katya's long and dreary

journey to Siberia together with a band of political prisoners, her gradual change under the influence of more intelligent and human companions, her timid love for one of the revolutionaries, and the first rays of hope that illuminate this sorely tried young heart still capable of the best human emotions.

[The student of Tolstoi will read every literary work of his with equal joy and profit. Particular attention should be called to *Childhood, Adolescence, Youth*, which is a kind of artistic autobiography; to *The Cossacks*, an early story where many of Tolstoi's later philosophical doubts and queries are foreshadowed; *Sebastopol Stories*, forming almost personal memoirs in which the author, then a young man, set down his experiences as an officer in the Crimean campaign; the *Kreuzer Sonata*, in which sexual love and pleasure for pleasure's sake are strongly condemned; *The Death of Ivan Ilitch* and *Man and Master*, both dealing with the problem of death; a number of short stories written for the masses in plain language; all the posthumous works, of which the *Living Corpse* is, perhaps, the most remarkable. Brilliant descriptions, conversations, characteristics are scattered in Tolstoi's "prose" discourses, such as *Confessions, What Is Art? What, Then, Shall We Do?* and others. No complete understanding of Tolstoi's artistic manner is possible without recourse to these prose works.]

N. S. LYESKOV (1831-1895)

DUALITY marks the character and the literary career of this great and original Russian writer. He has a vast knowledge of Russian life acquired in the course of his extensive travels through the country, and he often pictures characters not as they are but as he sees them in his prejudiced mind. He undoubtedly cherishes the ideas of a sound progressive order on the basis of justice and law, and he often plays into the hands of reactionary forces defying law and justice. He is a staunch defender of the truth and nothing but the truth, and it so happens that both camps, the reactionary and the progressive, refuse to accept his truth. He is a splendid narrator with a rich language, with a carefully constructed and always amusing plot, with a wealth of details and a strong sense of humor, yet the reader does not grasp eagerly at his books and does not become a friend of the author.

The reason lies, perhaps, in Lyeskov's inherent pessimism. When he appeared in the literary world early in the sixties, he found no elements in Russian society which, in his opinion, were capable of building up a new life. He distrusted the radical intelligentsia ("nihilists" they were called in those times), whom he conceived as a group of idle talkers with no practical sense; and he had little faith in programs of social reconstruction, because he thought the people not ripe for progressive reforms. Yet, without the conscious efforts of enlightened masses, he said, no program or constitution

could be materialized. Thus he fundamentally differed from the current liberal opinion of his time according to which a change in institutions was the prime necessity for Russia. Hence his lack of sympathy for either the peasant or the radical movement. Hence his lack of a clear program in a world divided according to programs and social conceptions. Hence that lack of burning enthusiasm for a lofty, though distant, aim which the Russian public was wont to find in its leading writers. Hence, consequently, a certain degree of sympathy for the conservative Russian bureaucrat, although Lyeskov was never tired of pointing out his shortcomings. If we add a restless mind easily prejudiced and seeing things not in their proper light, we may understand why Lyeskov was never popular in Russia. Only after the lapse of decades, critics like Vengerov, Lerner, Sementkovsky began to see what was actually great in Lyeskov, and that is a tremendous capacity for picturing life (such parts of it as did not arouse his prejudice), an individual style of unusual vigor, an abundance of color laid on almost to superfluity, and an ardent, somewhat voluptuous love for life in all its manifestations.

Not till lately have the critics acquired a calm attitude towards Lyeskov, as may be seen from the following two quotations divided by a distance of some fifteen years.

“A writer endowed with talent and observing power yet without a God in his soul. A cynic by constitution and a libertine by temperament, he is a hypocrite screening himself with lofty words in the sanctity of which he does not believe. He saw much, observed much, but he did not digest what he heard and saw, and therefore he gave a series of distorted and elaborated arabesques and nothing truthful. He is not a caricaturist, and he is not a satirist. For a caricaturist he has not enough gaiety and wit, for a satirist he has not enough

brains and civic courage. He is simply a joker and a jester. The twelve volumes of his works are a heap of ruins. In their ugly aggregation, among loads of débris, among piles of useless rubbish you find wonderful things, but nothing complete, nothing stamped with the stamp of a higher gift, nothing animated by a higher truth or warmed by goodness and faith."

A. I. BOGDANOVITCH.

"In Lyeskov's soul lived a great desire for truth, but, twisted by an overabundant richness of a live and sensitive nature and by a number of purely external events which altered the course destined for his talent, his seeking for the truth did not manifest itself in a clear, pure and bright form. As far as purely artistic significance and genuine individuality of talent is concerned, he is hardly inferior to Tolstoi, Turgenyev, Saltykov, Dostoyevsky, the foremost writers of his time. As to interior consistency, as to the degree of saturation with the ideals that formed the life of those writers, Lyeskov was much less than the others. . . . Lyeskov loved life in all its variety, with all its contradictions. . . . He was, however, too much attracted by the bright colors and dark depths of life. Overwhelmed by the struggle of varying and sometimes conflicting sympathies, he never succeeded in 'placing himself,' to use his own expression. And so he remains 'unplaced' in the history of Russian thought and Russian literature. The one thing that is definite and tangible about him is a bright and refined artistic feeling for life, and a pity for man. The title of one of his stories, *Vexation of Mind*, may be used as a motto for all his creative work. All Lyeskov is in these words. His mind was vexed by a longing for truth and he knew how to stir souls, to arouse in them good feelings and to lead them on the road of self-analysis and self-contemplation at the end of which all problems are solved."

N. O. LERNER.

It seems that Mr. Lerner's opinion is nearer to a true appreciation of Lyeskov's value.

Lyeskov wrote a large number of novels and stories of which the following are the most characteristic:

1. *The Bullsheep*. Novelette. (1863.)

“The man here grew up in sheer want. He is seeking for evangelical people, he is indignant over ‘senseless injustice, boundless injury.’ His heart is full of pain at the sight of human suffering. He reads nothing but the Bible. He thinks himself a preacher of God’s word. He goes to the people to preach and help, but fails lamentably, grows disappointed, becomes a laughing-stock in the eyes of the people, and finally commits suicide. Everybody thinks he is a clown, and only a few realize his great moral powers and his great tragedy.”

R. SEMENTKOVSKY.

2. *Nowhere*. Novel. (1864.)

“The very name of the novel indicates that contemporary social movements are nothing but bubbles, mirages, smoke. The best people can move ‘nowhere’: the old is rotten, the new is not trustworthy. Two ideal types occupy the foreground, an ideal Socialist, Reiner, and an ideal nihilist, Liza. Reiner is animated by the death of his father, a Swiss revolutionary, who was shot. Reiner is disappointed in European life and comes to Russia, where he hopes to find genuine Socialism rooted in the plain masses of the people. What he finds is a crowd of corrupt nihilists. In desperation he throws himself into the Polish revolt, where he hopes to find true Socialism, but he finds nothing of the kind, falls into captivity and dies on the scaffold. Liza is oppressed in family life, she seeks a way out in the revolutionary movement, but she meets the same nihilists. Disappointed, she knows not where to betake herself, she finds that she can go nowhere, and finally dies.”

A. M. SKABITCHEVSKY.

The novel aroused the indignation of progressive Russia, which thought the pictures of the nihilists a malicious attack on radical Russia. The following novel, however, overshadowed *Nowhere* by its mistreatment of the nihilists.

3. *At Knives' Points*. Novel. (1870-1871.)

Describes the nihilists as a group of criminals and bloodthirsty monsters. Two large volumes.

"It is inconceivable that the most radical part of society at that time, especially the youth, could have contained only crooks, clowns, and madmen. The hero of the novel commits the following crimes: he manages to have his friend searched and arrested; he sells his friend, literally, for 9,500 rubles, to a lady who is in need of a husband; he keeps a sub-rosa pawnshop; he steals letters and forges a number of notes; he seduces three girls; finally he crowns his career by killing his lover's husband. The other heroes rival with him, and in general the author pictures a black hole teeming with outcasts against whom struggle the ideal heroes of a conservative type, courageously but vainly."

A. I. BOGDANOVITCH.

After the appearance of this novel, Lyeskov was literally ostracized by progressive Russia.

4. *The Churchmen*. Novel. (1872.)5. *Odds and Ends from an Archbishop's Life*. Sketches. (1878.)

Lyeskov was truly religious, and in his writings often described the life of the clergy.

"The two main heroes of *The Churchmen*, the priest of the Cathedral and his deacon, are drawn with a master hand. The good-naturedness of the latter, the quiet, cordial warmth of the former, make them almost proverbial. The priest's diary leads us into the most intimate corners of Russian church life, revealing many causes of the shortcomings in our clergy. Lyeskov manifests here an admirable knowledge of the class he describes, and the priest makes such a sympathetic impression that the reader grows to love him. The priest's attitude towards the clerical and civil authorities is reproduced very

truthfully. On the contrary, his struggle against the dark forces of faithlessness and revolution, contains much artificial fun and obviously impossible situations."

K. GOLOVIN.

Odds and Ends from an Archbishop's Life bore the character of almost scandalous revelations and put Lyeskov into disfavor with the authorities. He had to quit a governmental position in consequence.

6. *The Enchanted Wanderer* (1873) and other legends composed in the spirit of the people's beliefs.

"After Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky, Lyeskov is decidedly the most outspoken religious writer in the entire Russian literature of the nineteenth century. His religious feeling throughout the major part of his life was perfectly satisfied with the Greek Orthodox Church, in which he saw a worthy expression of the Christian spirit. He loved also the outward forms of Church service. Christianity, to him, was inseparable from nationalism. He conceived Christianity not as an abstract dogma, but he took it in the way it is understood and expressed by the plain people."

N. O. LERNER.

M. E. SALTYKOV (SHCHEDRIN) (1826-1889)

SATIRIST. Was a high governmental official prior to devoting himself to literature. Knew bureaucracy from the inside. Possessed an enormous talent of reducing to absurdity the objects of his satire. There is something venomous, implacable, almost cruel, almost uncanny in the way he follows every crevice in the soul of his victim, exposing meanness, vulgarity, inefficiency, hypocrisy, ridiculing, castigating, branding with mockery, and laughing, laughing. . . . Compared with Shchedrin, Gogol appears almost tame. Shchedrin is grim. He is serious. He is masterful. Only after a while the reader realizes the grotesqueness of this serious face, and a gruesome gaiety takes hold of him. Shchedrin is a realist. Hardly ever has a Russian writer descended as deeply as Shchedrin into the mire of human minds and into the filth in social conditions. He shared with Gogol his contempt for the bureaucrat and the noble landlord, but he discovered in Russia a new type that was only an embryo in Gogol's times: the modern, "real Russian," bourgeois.

Shchedrin's manner was a result of the press censorship in Russia. It was the necessity of preserving an innocent appearance, of talking in a detached way about things that hurt most, of hinting and alluding to topics which could not be discussed, at the same time keeping the tone of loyalty and devotion to the existing powers, that shaped Shchedrin's form. His most satirical and

most effective volumes are those where he speaks the language of a bureaucrat.

“Pity and sympathy for the masses of the people who suffer under hard labor, ignorance, and darkness; a contempt for the same masses who bore on their shoulders the ugly order of things which oppressed it,—this is the leading tendency of Shchedrin’s works, the foundation of his formidable and scornful satire.

“Shchedrin’s creative work is surprisingly versatile. There is not a subject that escaped his penetrating eyes and thus failed to arouse his scornful indignation. He attacked all the reactionary elements both in the ranks of the government and in society; he attacked the class privileges of the nobility, the liking for serfdom among the landlords, the exploitation of the village capitalists, the new bourgeoisie, the stock-exchange people and the man of affairs, the idle talk and the superficial liberalism of the Zemstvos, the hypocrites, impostors, seekers for easy money.”

D. N. OVSYANIKO-KULIKOVSKY.

1. *The Family Golovlev*. Novel. (1880.)

The story of the decadence of a noble family, perhaps the strongest arraignment of the nobility ever written in Russian. Porfiri Golovlev, the main figure, combines voracious greed with oily piety, demoniacal sensuality with a righteous appearance, vicious cruelty with suavity of manner, frightful hollowness of soul with constant moral-preaching. The choking grave-like odors of decaying flesh are rising from this monstrous book which, in spite of its exaggerations, bears a sinister resemblance to real life. “Judas” Golovlev, as the name of the hero is known in Russia, became a black symbol. It has been applied to many a known leader in Russia, and fitted well. Shchedrin’s analytical power and overwhelming realism reach a climax in this book. It is a book of social

criticism, and also represents one of the most valuable studies in human nature.

2. *Monrepos the Refuge*. Novel. (1878-1879.)

This is the history of the advent of modern capitalism in Russia over the débris of the feudal order, which received its mortal blow with the abolition of serfdom in 1861. The merchant Razuvayev, the capitalist hero, the unscrupulous manipulator who feels the entire district as his personal domain, the "strong man" who disdains both the noble gentleman of the mansion and the "free" agricultural laborer, viewing them as so many flies who are doomed finally to land in his spider's net of money power,—this new type makes in *Monrepos* his first appearance in Russian literature. Needless to say, Shchedrin hates his crudeness, his ignorance, his worship of wealth, and his assurance. Contrasted with him is the old "noblemen's nest" Monrepos, full of old traditions and ambitions, but falling to ruins under the pressure of new economic conditions.

"*Monrepos the Refuge* is one of the masterpieces of the satirist. In this unusually striking epic of the ruin of the nobility, you are particularly impressed by the skill with which the artist noticed and represented the inevitableness of the process. The fateful end is felt from the very beginning of the story. 'Finis Monrepos' approaches as by itself, as the logical consequence of causes nobody is able to control."

V. P. KRANICHFELD.

[Other valuable works of Shchedrin are: *History of a City*; *Sketches of a Province Town*; *Male and Female Pompadours*; *Letters to My Aunt*.]

G. I. USPENSKY (1843-1902)

AN observer of Russian life who used his literary talent to depict the lower strata of the people, primarily the peasants, in a form that was a blending of fiction and journalism, story and social study. As a *Naródnik*, Uspensky saw in the Russian village the possibilities of a complete, harmonious life based on a just social order; as an observer with an uncommonly penetrating eye, Uspensky never failed to notice the disintegration of the patriarchal social order in the village community and the changes that ensued; as a writer with a compelling facility and sincerity of expression, he gave utterance to all his notions, doubts, beliefs and moods, drawing an endless number of sketches of individuals, localities, types, scenes, conversations, happenings, always aware of the ugliness and cruelty of the life he depicted, and always longing for beauty. Uspensky's works are not pleasant reading. They are sometimes uncouth as the *moujiks* he presents. And they are as passionately unhappy as was their author, who ended his life in an insane asylum. Yet Uspensky possessed an artistic talent, and his grip over the reader is strong. The works of Uspensky compelled Russia to think and to loathe the misery of her conditions.

“An artist of tremendous gifts, with tremendous possibilities of thoroughly artistic accomplishments, yet torn partly by circumstances, partly by his own sensitiveness and passionate interest in current events, Uspensky greedily seeks for some-

thing that is not torn, that is not worm-eaten by morbid contradictions, that is whole and wholesome."

N. K. MIKHAYLOVSKI.

"Uspensky was always on his way, always wandering the road of life, listening to its voices, its unceasing talks, repeating them in all the reality of their tragic-comical contents, and even with all the subtleties of their intonation. On the deck of a steamer, in a railroad car, mostly in the third class which 'chatters its unending chatter in all the trains that run over the Russian land,' he keeps on journeying over his native country, lending a sensitive ear, bending a sensitive eye to all the 'discrepancies, the unhappiness, the burdens, the unsatisfied desires and unfulfilled dreams of Great and Little and White Russia.' Everywhere he is a seeker of men, and everywhere men hasten to meet him halfway. The result is something like a psychological ethnography, a series of journeys into strange souls affecting you as if they were journeys into strange, though not far-off lands."

J. EICHENWALD.

1. *In the Grip of the Earth*. (1882.)

2. *The Village Diary*.

"*In the Grip of the Earth* (and also *The Village Diary*) is a sort of treatise written in a half-literary, half-journalistic way. The facts are taken from real life, from immediate observation, and underwent only a slight literary modeling. The conclusions from this material are drawn in the prosaic form of a discussion. The aim of these discussions is to show that the psychology of the peasantry, particularly their morals, is a world in itself, a world foreign to us, which we can never understand unless we trace its connection with the peasant's labor, with the conditions of his agricultural life, with the requirements of the peasant economy, in a word, with the 'grip of the earth' which is being cultivated by the peasant and feeds him."

D. N. OVSYANIKO-KULIKOVSKY.

N. K. MIKHAYLOVSKY (1842-1904)

SOCIOLOGIST, publicist, and critic. One of the leading minds of Russia for three decades. As early as the seventies he worked out his famous "formula of progress" which became the topic of heated discussions among Russian thinkers. "Progress," he wrote, "is a gradual approach to the fullest and most many-sided division of labor among the parts of an organism and the least possible division of labor among human beings. Immoral, unjust, injurious, unreasonable is all that hampers this movement. Moral, just, reasonable, and useful is only that which makes society less complex, thus increasing the many-sidedness of its individual members." The last two sentences of the formula indicate that Mikhaylovsky considered the subjective attitude of reasoning human beings one of the important factors in the progress of society, as counteracting the blind mechanical processes. This "subjective sociology," of which Mikhaylovsky was the strongest adherent, made him the target of numerous attacks of another sociological school, the Marxists.

Being in the foremost ranks of social thought, Mikhaylovsky necessarily devoted part of his attention to literature as one of the expressions of Russian life. In this respect he differed little from other leaders.

"Mikhaylovsky was extremely responsive to the problems of the day; he possessed an extraordinary ability of philosophic generalization, yet he never became a political fighter or an academic thinker. He was a typical writer, a writer *par*

excellence. Both his desire to influence society and his inclination towards theoretical thinking found their expression in literary work. His powerful pen gave explanation to the main currents of Russian social life and thinking, sometimes even running ahead of the times."

N. S. RUSSANOV.

It was only natural that Mikhaylovsky should become a critic, yet he was a critic of a peculiar brand. It was not the How but the What that interested him in a literary work. He took the writer to account for his conception of life, for his sociological or philosophic views, even for his characters. He tried to point out to the readers the fundamental idea of a literary work, giving special attention to social conditions. When modernism made its appearance in Russia towards the close of the century, Mikhaylovsky fought against it with might and venom. This was primarily due to his lack of interest in problems of form, in subtleties of expression, in unusual twists of emotion.

1. *A Cruel Talent.* Essay. (1882.)

This is, perhaps, the strongest of Mikhaylovsky's critical essays. A scathing accusation of Dostoyevsky for the excesses of cruelty one finds in his works. Mikhaylovsky blames the horrors of prison-life for having made Dostoyevsky a fiend of cruelty. The critic fails to see that behind the pictures of cruelty there is a heart agonizing with love for the sufferers and with a cry for justice. The essay is one-sided, yet it adds to the understanding of the great writer.

2. *G. I. Uspensky.* Essay. (1888.)

A critical survey of Uspensky's literary character and

sociological tendencies with which Mikhaylovsky is in full accord. The essay is written with deep sympathy for the unfortunate "seeker of the truth."

[Other critical essays: *On Turgenev*; *On Shchedrin*; *The Right and Left of Count L. Tolstoi*.]

P. YA. (P. YAKUBOVITCH, known also as MELSHIN and GRINEVITCH) (1860-1911)

UNDER the name of P. Ya., a revolutionary prisoner, a victim of the fight for freedom, was sending his messages to the Russian intelligentsia. Yakubovitch spent more than ten years of his life in the *katorga* (hard labor prisons) of Siberia. He wrote poems and, in later years, a number of sketches describing prison-life. He had no exceptional artistic talent, but his very life and his ideals made his influence strong. He expressed the attitude towards life of the more radical elements of Russian society in the eighties.

1. *Poems*. Vol. I, 1897; Vol. II, 1902.

Yakubovitch's poems are full of pain for the suffering of the people, full of dreams of the brotherhood of men. They are born of faith in the inherent goodness of the human soul and in the ultimate victory of justice and right. At the same time, they give expression to the sadness and the longings of a man cruelly downtrodden by an autocratic power. Yakubovitch's muse is melancholy, and yet animated with admiration for the fighters who challenge evil.

As to expression, Yakubovitch is lucid, sincere, and simple. His resemble the poems of Nekrasov, yet they do not mark a step forward.

2. *In the World of Castaways*. Novel. (1895-1898.)
A narrative of prison-life in Siberia, the first to reach

the Russian thinking world after Dostoyevsky's *Memories from a Dead House*. The descriptions of this strange corner of Russian life, the character-sketches of various prisoners, are vivid and full of color. In their time, they created a profound impression. They still remain one of the indispensable documents for the study of the late *katorga*. *In the World of Castaways* was published under the pseudonym of Melshin.

“Yakubovitch's splendid sketches are full of the truth of real life, cruel truth; at the same time the author manifestly wishes to defend those with whom he had to live. This, however, does not impair the objective character of the pictures in which he represents his sleeping-board and *balanda* (prison soup) comrades. His narrative is truthful and calm though it contains such an episode as the attempt of the criminal prisoners to poison their 'political' fellow-sufferers,—one of the eternal misunderstandings looming up between the *moujik* and the people who received as a historical inheritance the name of 'barin' (master).

“Together with truthfulness, Yakubovitch has some other instinct which helps him to analyze the dregs of humanity found in prisons and even there to detect valuable elements. He tells of things it was a joy for himself to discover, he shows that even those professional murderers, ravishers, and thieves have moments—brief and seldom though they be—in which their souls are illuminated by real humanness and human dignity.”

A. E. RYEDKO.

D. N. MAMIN-SIBIRYAK (1852-1912)

THERE was a marked difference between Siberia and the rest of Russia. Starting from the Ural mountains, where nature is primitive and people far less cultured than in European Russia, there stretches an immense land with broad rivers, primeval forests, high unexplored mountains, deep lakes, and a virgin soil. The land contains tremendous riches in iron, copper, and gold. The population, besides aboriginal barbaric tribes, consisted of either religious rebels, "adherents of the old faith," whose ancestors centuries ago had fled from Russia proper to worship God in their own way, or descendants of criminals whose fathers had been deported to Siberia to serve their term at hard labor. The rest were adventurers attracted by the hope of easy money or hungry laborers in search of work. They were all a sturdy lot, those Siberian Russians, hardened by rough nature, emboldened by the fight against elemental forces, made self-reliant in the school of cruel treatment. They had more personality, more of an enterprising spirit, more stubbornness in pursuing their aims, and more physical vigor.

The centers of life in Siberia were the iron and gold mines and the iron works where up to 1861 work was conducted by slave labor, the slaves (serfs) belonging either to private owners or to the State; only after the abolition of serfdom was the wage system introduced. Still, even after the reform, the works retained many archaic features, presenting, as they did, strong modern industrial enterprises in the midst of primitive conditions. In one such industrial settlement was born and reared Mamin,

who later devoted his talent to descriptions of Siberian life and characters and added to his name the word *Sibiryak* (the Siberian). Mamin practically discovered Siberia for Russian fiction.

There is a strange affinity between Siberia and Mamin's character as an artist. He is vigorous, keen-eyed, stirred by primitive instincts. He loves wild nature, he loves motion, danger, exertion. He enjoys a fierce fight between man and an impetuous torrent, between man and his passions, or between two clans of a Siberian village. He follows his hunters, his gold-seekers, his outlaws with unabating sympathy. At the same time he is aware of the recklessness, lawlessness, cruelty, and exploitation prevailing in the Siberian settlements. He knows thoroughly the business of the plants, the intrigues, greed, and cowardly meanness accompanying the lust for gold. He paints all this with bold, fresh strokes. Yet, to apply his own expression, he is an "unorganized character" as a writer. The artistic and the indifferent follow in his works in rapid succession. His works lack structure. Events are heaped for their own sake with only a slight organic connection. With all this he is refreshing. He sounds his own clear note.

"From a purely artistic standpoint, Mamin's assets are his ability to compose broad pictures of mass-movements, an unusually rich vocabulary of the plain people's language, full of striking sayings and similes, shot through with a wealth of embellishments and by-words, and a marvelously fluent natural dialogue. In the latter he sometimes reaches perfection.

"Mamin's shortcomings are, besides the 'chaotic' character of his writings, a good deal of carelessness, an inclination to repetition and long-windedness, and a naïve artificiality of plot, especially in his big novels."

M. NEVEDOMSKY.

“Hardly any Russian writer exceeds Mamin in the artistic presentation of mass-movements. Not that Mamin makes it his task to depict movements of crowds, conflicts of masses. On the contrary, his attention is concentrated on the experiences and actions of individual persons. Yet those persons enter as parts into the scheme of general mass-life. Out of descriptions of individuals arises the life of a great collective entity. This gift of presenting mass-movements makes Mamin one of our strongest and most original artists.”

I. IGNATOV.

Mamin is known and loved also as a writer of stories for children. He is tender, simple, good-humored, full of amusing and touching observations. His books of tales became a part of all libraries for children.

1. *Ural Stories*. Four volumes. (1888-1900.)

“That the *Ural Stories* arose in Mamin’s imagination as ‘the witchcraft of beautiful fancy,’ as intense joy at recollecting the land of his birth, as a bright dream of its luring charm, is their main artistic value. It may be said that this is their substance, not only for the writer himself, but also for the reader. Together with Mamin, the reader is seized by a longing for Mamin’s native land; he is drawn into that enchanted world of virgin forests, swift mountain brooks, clear lakes, adroit and feverish mining work, and the vast and complicated activities of the ancient iron plants. In Mamin’s presentation, all this is attractive, fairy-like, unusual; all is astir with an energetic, unique life. Interesting people and interesting occurrences are to be met at every step. Unusually strong emotions, unusual characters are very frequent. Everything shines with special brilliance; altogether it gives you the feeling of some particular, purely Russian beauty. . . . In reading Mamin’s sketches, you experience a desire to wander, with a rifle on your shoulder, somewhere on the Shikhan or near the Miass or along the Tchusovaya river, you wish to plunge into that Russia, even ancient Russia which has survived there, both in nature and in the people.”

E. ANITCHKOV.

2. *A Nest in the Mountains*. Novel. (1884.)

Mamin finds the Siberian iron and gold mines in a period of transition. The old system of production gives way to new capitalistic methods. The mines are rapidly changing hands. Corporations are succeeding individual or state ownership and management. Yet modern efficient industrialism is not easily established in a country like Siberia. The first attempts are a failure. The old is destroyed, the new has not yet grown to full life. Abuses, frauds, exploitation under such conditions are inevitable. The worst instincts of man are let loose.

This is particularly manifest in the novel *A Nest in the Mountains*. The narrative centers around the arrival of the owner of the plant from abroad for inspection. The owner is immensely wealthy and bored and has no interest in the plant. He is practically a plaything in the hands of his satellites who have nothing but their selfish interests in mind. The characters of the Siberian "sharks" are drawn in the novel very clearly.

3. *Three Ends*. Novel. (1890.)

Three Ends is a study of the life, habits and customs of three distinct groups of Russian workers engaged in a cast-iron foundry and inhabiting three districts of a Siberian village. The narrative finds the population still in the chains of serfdom. The author follows the life of the village through the great reform and the subsequent ruin of the enterprise. The novel is valuable as a first-hand study in the character of Russian masses.

4. *Stories and Tales* (for children).

[The number of books by Mamin reaches fifty. The student may be interested in his *Siberian Stories* (3 volumes); *Gold*, a novel; *Impetuous Torrent*, a novel; *Privalov's Millions*, a novel.]

P. D. BOBORYKIN (1836-)

PROBABLY the most prolific Russian novelist who for more than half a century was ably and truthfully describing social developments and social conditions in a country just entering the era of industrialism. Boborykin's works may be compared to a succession of photographic pictures taken from actual life. Lacking the depth and high artistic qualities of the outstanding figures of Russian literature, he is none the less indispensable in the study of Russian social life. His novels are always attractive, full of interesting conversations, populated by types snatched from the very centers of public attention at certain moments, and made vivid by plot and action. His attention was particularly turned to the rise of a middle-class in Russia, a subject which few novelists considered.

"None of our modern writers equals Boborykin in the ability to grasp the present moment of life, just that live nerve which is pulsating to-day. Each of his novels depicts that which our society lives on to-day, and a series of his works may serve as an artistic chronicle of the currents passing in our society."

A. M. SKABITCHEVSKY.

1. *Men of Affairs*. Novel. (1872-1873.)

"*Men of Affairs* introduces us into that part of our society of the sixties in the capital which in one way or another, directly or indirectly, was drawn into the turmoil of feverish undertakings, speculation, concessions. This is, in our literature,

perhaps the most striking document depicting that transition from a patriarchal system and a 'natural economy' to a bourgeois order and money economy which came with the force of a historic necessity after the abolition of serfdom (in 1861) and was accelerated by the reforms of the sixties and the construction of railways. The novel is full of unusual vividness and color."

D. N. OVSYANIKO-KULIKOVSKY.

2. *Kitay-Gorod*. Novel. (1882.)

3. *Mountain Summit*. Novel. (1894.)

Both novels lead us into the intimate circle of middle-class life in Moscow (*Kitay-Gorod* is one of the business sections of Moscow). The author selected Moscow because, of all Russia, that city retained most of the original national color, and the transition of its middle-class from patriarchal modes of living to modern culture and European ideas was more slow and more picturesque here than elsewhere. In these two novels Boborykin makes interesting studies of the psychology of the middle-class, both men and women. We witness the growth of consciousness of power on the part of a new social factor and its rising to new standards.

4. *Vassili Tyorkin*. Novel. (1892.)

The hero of this novel is a peasant who, through personal energy and pluck, has risen to the position of a rich man of affairs and is a great power in the community. Tyorkin is clever, far-sighted, efficient. He is very successful in business, yet he is alive to the needs of the poor peasants and is giving much consideration to the problem of relieving their misery. Tyorkin is an entirely new type in Russia. He is no dreamer. He does not believe in the inherent ideal element the intellectuals claimed to discover

in the "people." He has no use for social Utopia. What he wished was a healthy, normal development on the basis of the existing economic and social order.

Boborykin wrote also a number of very successful plays.

A. P. CHEKHOV (1860-1904)

FUNDAMENTALLY, Chekhov is of a happy disposition. He loves life. He loves fun, merriment, laughter. He is fond of every creature that lives and thrives on the earth. He would like to feel that the world is all sun-lit, full of wonders, and that great masses of people are celebrating in it some festive holiday.

Fundamentally, Chekov is a good friend. He would like to have a witty, animated and serious talk with clever persons who have a keen eye for the events of life. He could tell so many curious, funny, sad and pointed things about human relations, provided the listeners would be as sympathetic and alive as he is. At the same time he would smile a wise smile and think that life is worth living.

Yes, fundamentally Chekhov has a desire and an aptitude for a beautiful, a thoughtful, peaceful and spiritual life akin, perhaps, to the carefree existence of ancient Greek wizards. Yet he resembles a tropical plant that opened its blossoms in the dreary air of a northern country. He was a son of the eighties in Russia. Surrounding life was more than sad. It was horror-stricken. The intelligentsia was afraid not only to revolt, but even to be dissatisfied. People made attempts to adapt even their psychology and their ideology to brutal political and social environments. That was the time when the dominating theory was, "No broad aspects; no universal aspirations; do your little bit of work in your tiny corner, and don't stir." That was the time of broken wills, of well-meaning creatures with-

out backbones, of shedding tears over one's own weakness and still finding in this very weakness a justification for one's unseemly existence. That was the time of no hope, no prospect, no way out of misery.

Chekhov, the sun-loving and fun-loving young artist, opened his eyes to find himself in the midst of this horror-smitten ugliness. It did not break him, because his sense of life was too strong. It did not make him even gloomy, because his sense of humor and witticism was inexhaustible. It only made him subdued. He did not become a hater of life, yet a strain of melancholy sounds all through his work. He did not lose his longing for a perfect existence, yet he transferred the possibility of human perfection into the remote future, "perhaps some tens of thousands of years from our time." The present had no prospect for him. Life is just a strange conglomeration of strange occurrences, some sad, some humorous, some ugly or pitiful, with no general tendency and no possibility of betterment. People are a great host of prisoners shut in a huge building where each has an opportunity to manifest his individual traits and to do something, small or great, only to pass away and vanish forever. There is thought, and there is aspiration, and there is love, and there is greatness, but all this is submerged in the original sadness and meanness of things, and leads nowhere. This is why there is, perhaps, no great difference between good and evil.

Thus Chekhov became a wise observer with a wistful smile and an aching heart. He resembled a jovial strong fellow bed-ridden by an incurable disease, who sees every detail of life more clearly and with a sounder judgment than the healthy ones, but cannot suppress the everlasting nagging pain in his own body. Chekhov's soul is full

of forgiveness. He is never irritated. He does not curse, nor bless. He is like a father who sees the follies of his children and cannot help being amused over the trifles they are concerned with. He has a better insight into the reality of things than those little children—humanity at large—he can tell about them so many interesting details, but he certainly would not weep or suffer on their account. He may even think how happy children are; a sigh may silently escape his heart; his head would bend a little lower; his story would then become one shade more melancholy. “People passed before me with their loves,” Chekhov wrote, “clear days followed dark nights, nightingales sang, the hay was fragrant, and all these things, dear, wonderful in memory, passed away, disappeared, leaving no trace, vanished like mist. . . . Where is it all?”

Chekhov is delicate and truthful, elegiac and humorous, soft and penetrating, musical and crisp. The range of his observations is vast. The people he describes belong more to the present time, as he is more of a city inhabitant than were the classic writers. His art of description is both subtle and striking. There is almost magic in the way he contrives to draw a picture in a few seemingly simple lines. He is never tiresome. Russians who have read his stories many a time, find a peculiar delight in opening a volume of his at random and reading away for hours. He is the writer who is a friend, and whom the reader grows to love with a tender, admiring, and bashful love. At the same time, none is as modest in his writing as Chekhov.

A strange fate pursued this man. It was on the eve of the revolution in Russia, when waves of energy were rolling through the formerly sad country, and life acquired

a new luminous meaning. Chekhov, the bright-eyed, pure-hearted, sad friend, unwillingly responded. A note of faint hope crept into his song. His stories began to breathe fresh, invigorating air. But those were his last stories. Chekhov died in the summer of 1904, one year before the revolution.

It is very difficult to make a selection of his stories or plays, and it is difficult to characterize any of them in a few words. "It is impossible, and it were sinful to analyze, thread after thread, the precious fabric of Chekhov's works," wrote a distinguished Russian critic, J. Eichenwald. "Such an operation would destroy the very fabric, as if you were to blow away the gold dust from the wings of a butterfly. The contents of Chekhov's works cannot be told at all; one has to read them. Reading Chekhov means to drink his lines, to be afraid of omitting a word, because notwithstanding its simplicity—dear, noble simplicity—every word contains an artistic point of observation, some unusually striking personification of nature, a wonderful detail of human character."

[One has to read two or three collections of Chekhov's stories to gain an insight into his talent. His "humorous" stories are, perhaps, of a lesser value as they belong to the earliest period of his work. Special attention is called to *A Tiresome Story* (1891), *Ward Number Six* (1892), *Peasants* (1887), *In the Hallow* (1900), *Three Sisters*, play (1900), *Cherry Orchard*, play (1903), *The Archbishop* (1902).]

N. G. GARIN-MIKHAYLOVSKY (1852-1906)

Not before the age of forty did Garin appear in the field of letters. Up to that time he was a successful engineer, a railroad constructor in the employ of the central government and provincial Zemstvo, and a modern large-scale farmer. What brought him into the realm of literature was an overabundance of vitality, a wealth of creative visions which could not all be embodied in his broad plans for the economic improvement of Russia. Even after becoming a writer of high repute, Garin never abandoned his other activities. Thus he represents a unique combination of practical work and artistic achievement; he is right in the midst of the prose of life, and he is in the grip of a dynamic imagination. This is felt in his literary works, which are bright, strenuous, graphic, vibrant with living actualities and permeated with broad humane understanding. Garin is not a *littérateur* whose business it is to observe and create. Garin gives from his plenty, he lives while he writes, and what he writes bears the stamp of a rich personality. It is genuine, and it has an existence of its own.

“Garin was all impulse, all desire to make the world happy. He was a fearless dreamer with a noble heart and an undying faith. He was always full of ideas and plans; he *lived* in the higher sense of the word. He was always creating new enterprises, new projects, producing veritable fireworks of daring ideas. At the same time he had a happy character, a good, tender heart; he was friendly to all.”

P. V. BYKOV.

"There was something of the Hellene in Garin's nature. He was brilliant and exquisite, as if he had come from the splendid times of Athens. He had a passionate love for the beautiful and the artistic. . . . There was genuine charm in this sensitive, refined, nervous, artistic nature, which was marvelously tender and entirely sincere. . . . Garin was full of elemental power. He wrote as the bird sings, as the flower sheds its fragrance. Few writers created images with such facility and ease, and few are so fortunate as to have every expression so inevitably assume an artistic form."

S. YA. YELPATIEVSKY.

Garin was accepted among the realistic writers of the first rank. He was one of the most widely read authors.

1. *The Trilogy*, consisting of the following novels:

Tyoma's Childhood. (1882.)

Gymnasium Pupils. (1893.)

Students. (1895.)

Fundamentally the trilogy is the history of Tyoma Kartashev's childhood, adolescence, and youth. As such it shows the growth of a distinct personality groping for the realization of possibilities inherent in its nature. Dealing with essentials of human character common to all civilized mankind and being written with a masterful hand that throws individualized figures into a clear relief, the trilogy assumes a more than national significance. Looking back to his own youth, every modern man will find something in common with Tyoma Kartashev's experiences.

At the same time, the trilogy is distinctly Russian. The background of a suburban estate in southern Russia, where the boy's childhood is passed, the gymnasium, the teachers, the pupils, the University in the capital, the student's life, all this is described with great accuracy and

skill. The life of Kartashev's family, both material and moral, the characters of each member of the family, the characters of friends and acquaintances, are drawn carefully and are true to life. Altogether the trilogy gives a panorama of the world in which the children of well-to-do Russian families grew up in the second half of the nineteenth century (and perhaps even later). Full of vigor and creative optimism as was Garin, he could not overlook the dark sides of Russian realities. Light and shadow alternate in his novels.

Special value is attached to the trilogy as a study of the régime in Russian gymnasia,—that curse of Russian youth for many generations. The history of Tyoma Kartashev is the history of a constant fight between a richly gifted, spontaneous, imaginative, temperamental youth and the deadening régime of a bureaucratic school conducted in the spirit of military barracks, with the aim of killing personality and choking the inquisitive mind.

It was due to this side of the trilogy that it became a favorite among young students in Russia.

2. *A Few Years in the Village.* (1892.)

When Garin bought a 75,000 ruble estate and settled down to introduce new methods of agriculture, he was mindful not only of himself but also of the surrounding peasantry. It was his desire to help the peasants, by acting as an example and by teaching them how to do away with their archaic methods. He gave himself to the task with all the practical knowledge in his possession and all the fanatical devotion of his personality. It would have been a success if the peasants had not failed to see in Garin a friend and had not followed the injurious advice of the exploiters in their own midst rather than the

useful advice of a "gentleman." Four times the peasants burned down Garin's estate, and in the end he was compelled to give up.

The history of this experiment is told in a charming volume, *A Few Years in the Village*. Notwithstanding its specific contents, notwithstanding many excursions into details of agriculture, the work reads like a story. It has something of the equality of rural epic. Garin's frankness and simplicity make it a document indispensable to the student of Russian life.

3. *A Rural Panorama*. Collection of stories.

"The total absence of culture breeds savagery, wretchedness and darkness in the Russian village. People do not know how to make use of their own powers; they are poor, brutal, beast-like; they have no idea of law, no respect for the human person. Worst of all, poverty is growing in the rural districts, year in and year out, like some dreadful disease. All this fills the series of Garin's stories *A Rural Panorama*, where we find many beautifully sketched types of men and women and many local details. . . . With the great love of a thinker and artist, Garin puts his panorama in a natural light where crimes, horrors, mysticism, superstition, the tragic and the comic, intertwine and leave an irresistible impression."

P. V. ВУКОВ.

It must be noted that in spite of many discouraging experiences, Garin never gave up the hope of a better future in rural Russia. What he wished to emphasize was the necessity of intelligent and persistent work in this realm.

4. *Short Stories*. (1886-1906.)

Garin wrote his stories everywhere: on a sleigh in the bitter cold, in railroad cars, in a tent after a day of survey-

ing, at a stage-coach station while swallowing hot tea and waiting for the horses to be changed. It is natural that his stories are fresh, vivid, lucid. What is unexpected is their finished form and refinement.

[Other works of interest: *In the Turmoil of Provincial Life*; *Korean Fairy-Tales*; *Travels in Korea*; *Manchuria and the Liautung Peninsula*; *Engineers* (unfinished).]

V. G. KOROLENKO (1853-)

A STORY writer. His talent is of a rather narrow scope, but it is full of that noble idealism which makes the reader love and trust the author. Charm and simplicity of expression are combined in his works with a luminous honesty. The caressing hand of a father is felt in all Korolenko's stories.

“Korolenko is dear to the Russian intelligentsia, because in his works a responding heart is revealed which no injury, no injustice can escape. The very essence of his nature is to be a defender, an aid. Wherever assistance is necessary and possible, he can never remain indifferent. Many a time has he raised his soft, yet firm voice in defense of the injured. The arrow of social conscience always tends in the direction indicated by Korolenko, and if you follow him you are sure to follow the truth. Fate has sent him frost and cold in abundance, yet under a snow-bound life he preserved a warm heart.

“The same indefatigable humanism which marks the activities of Korolenko in political and social life is also the salient feature of his writings. His works kindle the fire of love and good. Korolenko educates, because his works may serve as a school of pity and love. One of the most striking characteristics of his moral and literary make-up is a peculiar politeness, this word being used in its most positive and sublime meaning. He never forgets human dignity, the sacred rights of human beings; he grants them even to those who will not admit them in others.”

J. EICHENWALD.

I. *Siberian Stories*. (1901.)

An exile in Eastern Siberia for many years, Korolenko had an opportunity to make first-hand studies of what

was, perhaps, the hardest experience of progressive Russian intellectuals. Yet, in these frost-breathing stories there is no hatred, no bitterness, not even against officials. They are rather good-natured, clever, and colorful observations of a God-forsaken corner of the world where people live in the most primitive conditions.

2. *Short Stories.* (1885-1917.)

Korolenko's stories are all very readable and attractive. Attention is called to *Yom-Kipur*, which is permeated with sympathy for the oppressed Jew; *Makar's Dream*, breathing pity for the ignorant and poor Siberian peasant; *The Old Bellman*, an idyl of rural life; *The Murmuring Forest*, where, among the mystery of green shadows, a drama of love and jealousy leads to a cruel end; and *In Bad Society*, picturing the types of outcasts in a small town in southern Russia. The characters and nature depicted in most of these stories belong to southern Russia (Ukraine), though Korolenko writes in the great Russian language.

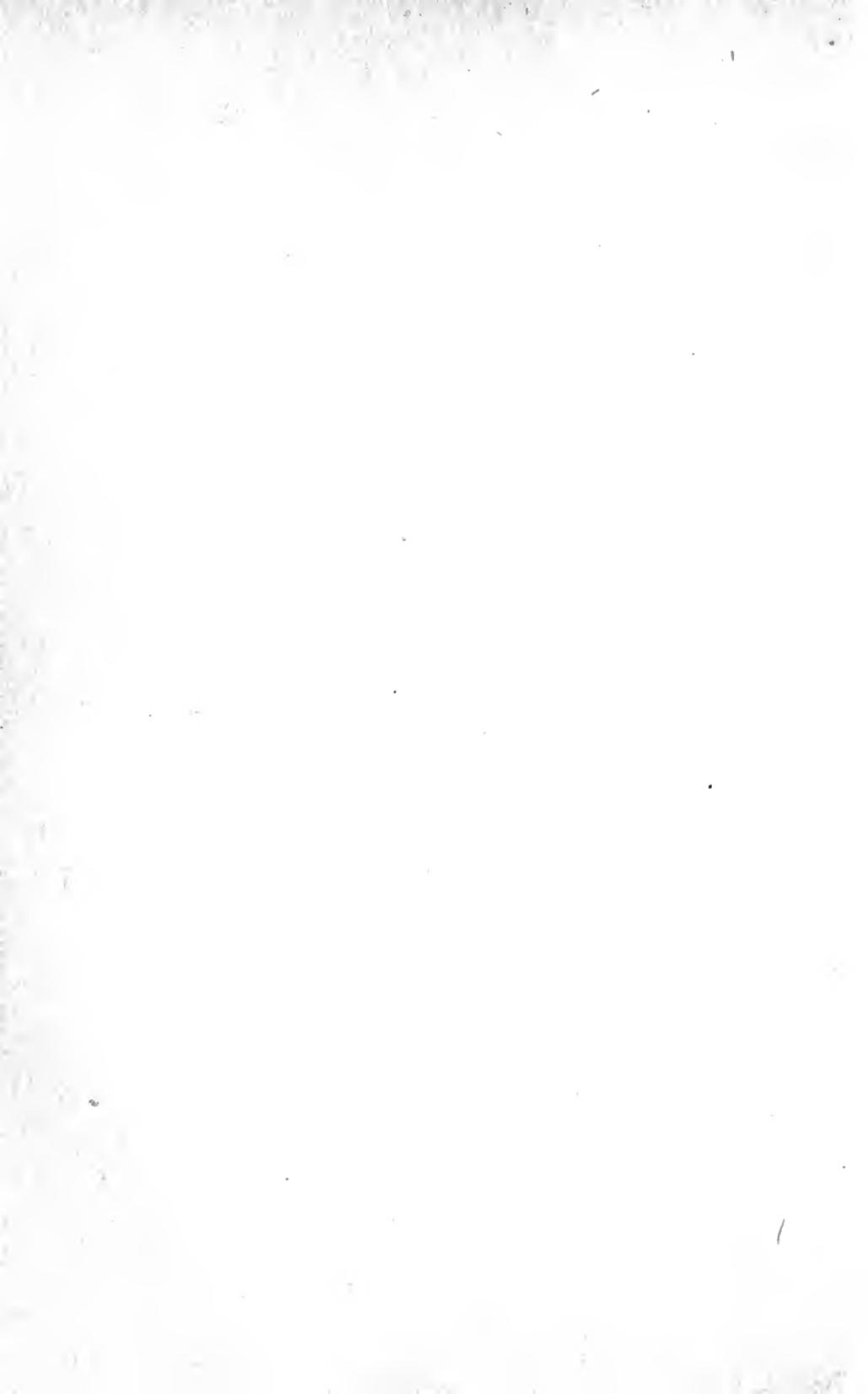
3. *The Blind Musician.* Novelette. (1886.)

The story of a gifted child born blind, and groping its way to a conception of the world. The entire book is a psychological study born of the spirit of love for the afflicted. The scene of the story is rural surroundings, and the fragrance of the Ukrainian fields and groves fills it with tender sadness.

[Another work of significance, *History of My Contemporary*, an artistic autobiography.]

II

THE "MODERNISTS"



GENERAL SURVEY

BACK of the modernist movement in Russian literature, two sets of social phenomena are clearly discernible. One is the growing complexity of life in the last decade of the nineteenth century; the other is the grip of an archaic political system deadening the efforts of sound constructive work. It was only to the outside world that Russia of that time seemed a sleeping giant, immovable and unchanging. In reality, great transformations were taking place in the economic structure, in social relations, in educational ideas, in the general tone of life. The center of gravity was constantly moving from the lazy, aristocratic country houses to modern cities; the class of nobility was giving way to the professional intellectual and the modern business man; the steam engine and the locomotive began their triumphal march over the plains of eastern Europe; the pulse of life quickened; the experiences of individuals increased in number, became more striking and of a lesser duration; the colors gained in variety and brightness. The old subdued harmony of patriarchal Russia was rapidly waning before new sounds and new voices. On the other hand, the chains of absolutism allowed no space for the oncoming of modern forces. Russia was surrounded by a black, solid wall that threatened to choke all manifestations of progress.

It is this unique socio-political atmosphere that breathes in the works of the Russian modernists who made their appearance early in the nineties. Consciously, and unconsciously, this group of young writers was trying to remake literature in accordance with the new im-

pressions offered by a modern world. "The soul of man has grown," a young writer, Denisov, wrote to the critic Volynsky in a private letter in 1896, "man's consciousness has become brighter, its rays are longer; we see now horizons which always existed, which we, however, failed to notice through darkness and sleep. Nature, life, the world at large seem different, they speak to us a new language. All phenomena have become transparent to us, they have turned into mere symbols, behind which something important, something mysterious, something vitally significant is visible. . . . For this new wine, new jugs are required; new expression is needed for new feelings. Men treading new paths, men endowed with a growing, brightening, and widening soul, must also find new words. Let them grope, then, let them demand. Their voices, however feeble, are nearer and more welcome to us than the strongest and most beautiful voices of the past, for the mere reason that the past is known, that it has been lived through and completely expressed, whereas at present a strange uneasiness is stirring within us; it moves us towards unknown experiences which we may have but we are still unable to express, and which we expect and search for in the creations of others."

It is, perhaps, not so much the contents of this outburst as the restlessness of its young author that marks the tendency of the time. Men had become aware of something new in the life of the country. The old standards of good literature and noble art became insufficient. Old, lofty motives seemed stale. Old forms appeared primitive. Shapes of unknown complexity were beckoning through the mists of the future.

On the other hand, the well-educated and high-strung intellectual had to seek shelter from the cold rains and

hail of nasty political weather. The members of the intelligentsia were not all inclined to fight revolutionary battles. The prospect was gloomy. The black wall seemed heavy, unshakable, eternal. To exhaust one's soul in hatred or to cripple it by despair, seemed a useless expenditure of energy. Ways of self-defense had to be found. Was it not best to turn one's back to the ugly wall? Was it not advisable to draw a magic circle from which all heinous realities should be banished? Sometimes it would seem to be opportune to accept the black wall, to discover in it a power of good. This would make life possible, if not easy. As to real great values, they have to be searched for, not among the stones and gullies of a barren field of reality, but in the blossoming jungle of thought and fancy.

The group of intellectuals, writers and thinkers, who accepted this creed and carried it into literature and art, became known as the modernist school. They were a distinct group by themselves. Hardly noticed at the beginning, very powerful and influential in later years, they always remained a separate group. And although the elements of modernism soon permeated all trends of Russian creative work, the modernists as such never submerged in the general stream. The names of Balmont, Bryusov, Merezhkovsky, Filosofov, Gippius, Volynsky, Minsky, Block, Vyacheslav, Ivanov, Sologub, Byely, and their younger followers, stand out as something apart from the rest of Russian literature. To the outsider they appear to be almost a secluded masonic order.

It is, of course, difficult to give the general characteristics of a group in which every individual is anxious to assert his personality to the utmost, with all its oddities and wayward moods. Lines of resemblance between

creative individuals can hardly, as a rule, be drawn with security. As regards the Russian modernists, however, this task had been made somewhat easier by the theories carefully framed, eloquently preached, and copiously illustrated by the modernists themselves. In fact, every writer of the new school thought it his duty not only to create, but also to explain why his work was the true art.

Reviewing, then, these theories and comparing them with the accomplishments of the modernists in the fields of fiction, poetry, drama, and literary criticism, we may arrive at the following generalizations.

1. The modernists keep aloof from social or political problems. The economic misery of the masses, the political chaos, the brutality of Russian realities are outside their range of vision. They do not want to teach the people. They do not care to love the people. They do not make it their task to arouse indignation against material evils. In this, they radically differ from Russian literary traditions. They adore Pushkin as the poet of sublime spiritual harmony, but they do not sympathize with Pushkin who wrote: "And long shall I be cherished by the people, because I stirred good feelings with my lyre."¹ They respect in Lermontov the many-stringed instrument that caught sounds from beyond, but they would not repeat with him: "Chagrined do I observe the present generation," neither would they make it the task of the prophet to proclaim "the pure teachings of love and truth." Gogol the artist, as every true artist, was close to their soul. But Gogol the castigator, Gogol who traveled over the length and breadth of Russia to show her miserable conditions, was a stranger

¹ This and subsequent quotations are prose translations from lines of poetry beautiful in their music.

to them. Similarly strange were Turgenev, Gontcharov, Shchedrin, Nekrasov, Uspenky, Alexey Tolstoi, and all the critics of former generations, to the prophets of the new school. Leo Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky were much commented upon by the modernists, yet Tolstoi was too close to the earth in their eyes. All in all, three names of the past, Tuytchev, Vladimir Solyvyov, the idealistic philosopher, and Dostoyevsky, were respected and truly loved by the "new."

It is in keeping with this attitude that the "people," the peasants and workingmen, find hardly a place in the works of the modernists. The new writers have no use for the unthinking. Their attention is concentrated on those who labor their way through harrowing spiritual conflicts. They write for the cultured about the cultured, giving utterance to their internal life apart from their surroundings.

Some of the modernists went even so far as to recognize in autocracy a great spiritual force. "When I wrote my treatise on *Leo Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky*," Merezhkovsky remarks in an introduction to his complete works, "I saw, or desired to see, a positive religious force in Russian absolutism, namely its connection with the Russian Faith; I thought, together with Vladimir Solovyov and Dostoyevsky, though starting from totally different premises, that Russian absolutism was a road to theocracy, to the Kingdom of Heaven on earth." Later, when the storms of the revolution shook the Russian steppe, and the clamor of battles rang near and far, Merezhkovsky and his colleagues abandoned their faith in the constructive forces of the autocratic régime. In 1905, Balmont wrote revolutionary poems, and Minsky published—for a very short while—a Social-Democratic

paper. Yet this was only a passing tribute to the spirit of the times. Fundamentally, the modernists were not interested in the struggle for social reforms, especially before the 1905 revolution. Theirs was an interest of a different order.

2. The modernists make it their task to embody in words the most delicate, most unclear and fleeting emotions of the human soul. Their ear seems to be infinitely more sensitive than that of their predecessors. They hear the faintest calls from far off, the most subtle harmonies of a mysterious world, the throbbing of an unknown life diffused everywhere. "The thoughts and deeds of men will pass," Minski writes in a poem which may be considered as programmatic for the entire school. "There is one thing, however, which will survive. That which we now consider an idle dream, the unclear yearning after things unearthly, the hazy striving somewhere, the hatred for the things that are, the timid light of anticipation, and the burning thirst for sanctities that are not,—this alone will never vanish. . . . A new unknown world is faintly visible in the distance, non-existent, yet eternal." This world can be called into existence through the magic of poetry. "Poetry is internal music externally expressed in rhythmic words," Balmont declares. "The world needs the formation of images," he writes in another place. "The world contains magicians who by their sorcery and by their singing melody make the circle of existence wider and richer. Nature gives only the nucleus of existence, it creates unfinished little monsters; the magician perfects the work of nature and gives life a beautiful face." This he can accomplish only by carefully listening to the teaching of his own imagination, by following the winding paths of his moods, yearnings,

visions, presentiments, and impulses. Such an attitude presupposes the supremacy of human personality over the material world. Man is not the slave of things material, but their master. He is not bound to the clay of reality; he can soar high up into the realm of another, more real, reality. His wings are the faculties of his spirit. This is why the poetry of the modernist is more spiritual, more refined, and of a more tender fabric than the works of the older poets. Some of the modernist poetry is almost transparent.

3. This is in full harmony with the philosophical views of the school. The modernists are strong adherents and advocates of an idealistic philosophy. They believe in the existence of a world beyond the reach of human experience, in the existence of mysterious powers which no human knowledge will ever be able to perceive or to explain. The majority of the modernists are imbued with a religious spirit, with the belief in a personal God. "Christianity not only has been, but it is and will be," Merezhkovsky proclaims, "Christ is not only a power that has been perfected, but He is being continually perfected. He is an incessantly growing power. The liberation of Russia, the liberation of the entire world, can be accomplished only in Christ." "Only faith in something infinite can inflame the human soul," he wrote in 1892. "Men need faith, need ecstasy, need the sacred madness of heroes and martyrs. Without faith in the divine origin of the world, there can be on earth no beauty, no justice, no poetry, no freedom." "I may say," Zinaida Gippius confesses in her autobiography, "that there was no period of irreligion in my life. The childish earthy 'grandmother's image-lamp' was soon overshadowed by life. Yet life, putting me face to face with the mystery of

Death, the mystery of Personality, the mystery of the Beautiful, could not bring my soul to a level where image-lamps are not being kindled at all." Other members of the modernist school may not have believed in a personal God as strongly as Merezhkovsky or Gippius. Yet to all of them, the material world was only a shell of something higher and more significant. Bryusov, one of the ablest exponents of the school, puts his philosophy in simple terms. "There is no line of demarcation," he writes, "between the real and the imaginary world, between the 'visible' and the 'dream,' between 'life' and 'phantasy.' The things we used to consider imaginary may be the highest reality of the world; the things accepted by everybody as realities, may be the most horrid delirium."

In the light of this philosophical and religious creed, poetry assumes a new meaning. Men are groping towards the mystic reality of life: poetry is the way to approach it. Men sometimes hear the voice of God within themselves: poetry is the way to express it. The aim of poetry is to grant the human spirit access to the mysteries that hover above the visible world. In poetry, eternal reality reveals itself in unknown ways. Poetry is like a window opened into the beyond. "Art can reveal its mysteries only to the inquisitive mind of the philosopher," Volynsky writes in explanation of the critic's task. "In a contemplative ecstasy the philosopher unites the finite with the infinite; he combines the psychic moods poured into poetry, with the eternal laws of the development of the universe."

Poetry, in the conception of the modernists, is no more a slave to life, no more a vehicle of pleasurable sensations, not even a mere expression of human thoughts and emo-

tions. Poetry becomes sacred; it is the individuality's most subtle yet most powerful instrument in its struggle for liberation. Man's soul is painfully battling against the clay: poetry is the light that marks the road to victory.

4. It follows that human personality is supreme in the works of the modernists. Theirs is also a rebellious spirit, yet it rebels, not against certain manifest evils of the existing political or social order, but against all restrictions imposed on the human soul from without. In fact, every code, be it the code of accepted morality or the code of law, in an autocratic as well as in a democratic society, is a dead weight on the wings of the human soul. Man bears his own law within himself; man sees in the light of the Unknown his right way; man has to be allowed full freedom to assert himself, which means to come nearer to his God. Human institutions created for the multitude are a check on the free soul of free men; positivistic knowledge pretending to explain the universe completely, is also a check on human freedom; materialistic conceptions in philosophy, ethics, politics, are no less a hindrance to freedom. It follows that the modernist fights haughtily against accepted, "philistine," opinions, against the domination of surroundings, against established authorities in the spiritual world. He hates slavery, yet to him even the fighter for freedom is a wretched slave if he pursues nothing but material improvements.

5. The modernists are inhabitants of modern cities. Russian village life, Russian rural nature only incidentally appear in their works. It is the study of an intellectual in Petersburg or Moscow that sees the birth of modernist works. Quite often it is the noisy café in the Latin Quarter of Paris, or a hotel on the Riviera, or a lodging house

in Venice. The Russian modernists prefer to spend their time in conversations with European thinkers and artists than to listen to the ages-old wisdom of the *moujiks*. In the picture galleries or the libraries of Florence, Rome, Vienna, among the splendors of the Alpine landscapes or the enchantment of the seashore do they look for inspiration. Their religion breathes the spirit of old dark cathedrals rather than the free and primitive faith of overgrown children as are the simple folks in the great plains of Russia.

In many modernist works, the clatter and throbbing of modern city life can be clearly heard. In a number of strong poems, Bryusov, notably, pictured the industrial city. Others paid a smaller, yet very distinct tribute to the scenes of modern urban life. Not only in these direct descriptions, however, but in the rhythm, in the tone, in the succession of light and shadows, in the assonances and dissonances of the modernists' works is felt the change in the character of society. (Balmont, Gippius.)

6. Most of the modernists are very well acquainted with philosophy and have an extensive knowledge of European literature. Some of them know a number of modern languages. It is hardly just to say that they are moved by foreign examples. Such spontaneous outbursts of new ideas in literature and art cannot be ascribed to external and accidental causes, especially in view of the lasting character and the valuable contributions of the new school. Yet it cannot be denied that, at least in the initial stages of their work, the modernists were greatly influenced by a number of foreign thinkers and poets. Edgar Allan Poe dominated the imagination of Balmont and Bryusov more, perhaps, than any of the dead or living artists. Nietzsche's influence was not less marked.

Maeterlinck was more cited and referred to than Ibsen, both of them exemplifying symbolist forms and methods. Knut Hamsun was one of the favorites. The French poets, notably Verlaine, Baudelaire and Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, were in great vogue. All these authors were devoutly and lovingly translated into Russian or commented upon by the adherents of the new school. It must be emphasized, however, that of all foreign poets, the cult of Poe was supreme. Men were speaking of the deep revelations contained in his stories. Men were citing his poems as masterpieces of musical rhythm expressing an indomitable spirit.

Along with these influences there is a revival of interest in classic literatures, Greek and Roman. The tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides are attracting much attention. New translations into Russian are being made of some of them.

7. The modernists completely revolutionized the Russian language and the Russian poetic forms. Compared with the language of Balmont or Block, the language of Nekrasov and Nadson appears almost primitive. Compared with the prose of Sologub, Turgenev's writings seem antiquated. It gives the impression that the new school has recast the entire material of the Russian language, remodeled every tool of it, reforged every accessory, made it broader in scope, finer in quality, more vigorous, more flexible, and more saturated with spirit. Nobody prior to the modernists had suspected that Russian contained such singing possibilities, that it could be used to express such subtle intimacies, that it possessed such nobility, sublimity, sincerity, dignity. The Russian modernists actually worshiped the language. "I look with humble love at every letter," Balmont wrote, "and

every one looks at me caressingly, promising to speak to me apart from others." The result of all these efforts which, in the nature of things, could not escape some clumsy experimentation, was a new era in the history of the Russian written word.

8. It must be clear from the foregoing that the term "decadents," often flung at the Russian modernists by their opponents, could hardly be applied with justice to this group of writers. If we are to understand under "decadence" the cult of selfish pleasure, the cherishing of art for art's sake, as a means of exquisite and delightful sensations; if we are to attribute to "decadence" the preaching of a-moralism, the indulgence in sexual extravagances under the cloak of refinement, the disinclination to face the gravest problems of the human spirit or the negation of the very existence of such problems, then, in fairness to the modernists, we cannot name them "decadents." True it is that in the early period of this school, echoes of pure decadence were sounding here and there. There were references to "beauty for beauty's sake," to a Bacchant conception of the world, to sex as a means of reaching the deepest depths of ecstasy, to the philosophy of *carpe diem*, but all this was of a passing character and soon gave way to the more earnest aspects of human life.

O, Heaven, grant me to be beautiful,
To descend on earth from sublime heights,
Radiant and passionless,
And all-embracing as Thou art.

(MEREZHKOVSKY).

Men able to utter such prayers could hardly be named decadents, whatever the difference of their conceptions from the other currents of thought.

Not without hard struggle did the modernists gain recognition in Russia. They had to suffer much slander, much contempt, much misunderstanding. Their manner was often ridiculed, their idealistic aspirations declared reactionary, their gropings considered the pastime of lunatics. The old story of the merciless fight between the old and the new repeated itself once more. Forms and methods that are now the common property of the entire Russian literature were looked upon as risky innovations unintelligible to normal readers. Poems and stories that are now, after twenty years, accepted as classics, were uncompromisingly rejected by critics of the old school. A few sentences from an article by Nikolai Mikhaylovsky may serve as an example. Mikhaylovsky was a leading critic and a man of the highest standing in journalism and public life. "It is all nonsense," he wrote in 1895, reviewing a book of the new school under the name *Our Symbolists*. "The poems are sheer nonsense, and unoriginal nonsense at that, since all those 'violet hands,' 'resounding silences,' 'hospitals where children are wrapt in mourning,' are stolen from the French; and all that our symbolists are able to produce is a meager pamphlet of imitations which they squeezed out of themselves and called it a book." (Mikhaylovsky refers to a little book by Valeri Bryusov. In 1913 a collection of Bryusov's works made twenty-five volumes in quarto.) Why, then, do the symbolists make all these ridiculous attempts? Mikhaylovsky asks, and his answer reads as follows: "They are prompted by a greed for fame, a desire to be in the public eye, at the same time knowing that they are powerless to achieve it in an orderly manner. . . . It is my belief that if the gentlemen under discussion are maniacs and lunatics, they are not genuine ones,

but impostors. Our decadents and symbolists mostly rival Herostrates. The undertaking of their classical prototype, however, is too risky and dangerous for them; they would hardly venture even so far as to run out into the street in Father Adam's costume, however piquant the lure of it may be, because they know that the result would be the utterly unsymbolistic police station. Yet they passionately desire to do some indecency in order to attract attention. 'Here we are!' is their sole contention. For this purpose they write nonsense which is artistically indecent and the nonsensicalness of which is so loud that you cannot fail to hear it."

Thus the ages-old misunderstandings between fathers and sons was displayed once more. Ten years later such scathing criticism would have seemed entirely unwarranted, if not ridiculous.

K. D. BALMONT (1867-)

THE leading poet of the present generation; the recognized king in the realm of lyrics. Twenty years ago Balmont was still labeled as decadent and an insane iconoclast. To-day he is counted among the classics, and many of his poems are included in textbooks for children. The influence of Balmont upon the poetry and poets of our time can hardly be overestimated. Never since Pushkin has one great talent so completely revolutionized the contents, the tone, the language, the spirit of poetry, as does Balmont.

Balmont is the lyrical encyclopaedia of the modern intellectual man. "Nothing human is alien to me" could be put as a motto for all his works. No human mood, however fleeting, escapes his sympathetic attention. No phenomenon in the wide universe is too remote for his alert soul. At times it even seems that he is too diversified; that there are too many strings in his ever reverberating, supersensitive musical instrument. He started with moonlight motives, with half-tones, with passing echoes in the midst of mysterious silence, with vistas resembling a winter-forest where every branch and every twig is quaintly carved out of ice crystals and reflects a melancholy sun in numberless cold sparks. He spoke of existences half awake, half dreamy. He sang of the belladonna, the magic of poisonous perfumes, the somber depths issuing a strange radiance, the waves of subdued emotions in a state of mental intoxication. Soon, however, he published one volume of poems entitled *Let Us*

Be Like the Sun, and another *Burning Buildings*, where the cry of red blood, the lusty hymn of sunshine, the all-dominating glory of fire is voiced in strong metallic verses. In these new poems, Balmont appears to be a heathen, a worshiper of elemental forces, a friend to the savage tribes who revel in the sight of red blood and in rushing over the primitive steppe on the backs of their swift horses. Balmont, however, does not dwell long in those moods. He soon passes to other experiences: pain, suffering, beauty, joy of existence, love for the near or love for the remote, passions, hell, demons, the torture of thought, hopelessness, prison-walls, physical and mental despair. This swift passing from one experience to another with complete abandon in each feeling is, perhaps, the most characteristic feature of Balmont. He speaks of "the joy of eternal changes." "I am the surface that breaks the rays, I am the playing thunder, I am the crystalline brook, I am for all and nobody," he declares in one of his poems. He admires the "miracle of his flaming thought," he knows that "whatever is in heaven, and much more, is in the human soul." "My heart is wounded by my reason," he confesses; yet soon he accepts absurdity because "in the abysses of absurdity mad flowers are living"; he is ready to greet even hell because "there is truth in suffering," yet he knows that suffering for him is not final: "I have burned my happiness, yet I doubted I might kindle it with a stronger flame."

Thus Balmont is the eternal wanderer in the jungles of human thought, feeling, and emotion. There are, however, a few points of concentration in his poetry, a few motives to which he returns with renewed fondness. These are the witchcraft of poetry, sun and fire, and eternal change.

“Verse is magic in substance,” he writes in his essay on *Poetry as Witchcraft*. “Every letter in it is magic. The Word is a miracle, the Verse is witchcraft. The music that governs the universe and the soul, is Verse. Prose is a line, and Prose is a plane, it has only two dimensions. Verse alone has three dimensions. Verse is a pyramid, a shaft, a tower. In the rare verse of a rare poet there are even more than three dimensions: there are as many as there are in fancy.” “The Universe is multi-voiced music. The entire Universe is chiseled Verse.”

The power of sun and fire is perhaps the most favorite subject of Balmont's lyrics. The sun is “the creator of the world,” “the giver of life,” “the music of a beautiful tale,” the hot blood “that makes the soul impassioned.” The fire is “purifying, fateful, beautiful, imperious, radiant, alive.” “O, thou shinest, thou warmest, thou burnest, thou livest, thou livest!” In fire all the qualities of poetry, including that of change, are combined.

Change for Balmont is life. “I live too quickly,” he writes in his notebook, “and I know nobody who loves moments as I do. I go, I go, I go away, I change, I suffer changes. I give myself to the moment, and over and over again it opens before me new fields. And new flowers are blossoming before me forever.”

“I give myself to the Universal, and the Universe invades me. Stars, and valleys, and mountains are near to me. Beasts and heroes are near to me. The beautiful and the unbeautiful are near to me. I speak to a friend, and at the same time I am far away from him, beyond the barrier of centuries, somewhere in ancient Rome, somewhere in eternal India, somewhere in a country whose

name is Mâyâ. I speak to a foe, and at the same time I secretly love him though I may say the most cruel words. . . . I know full freedom. Immensity can shut itself in a small space. A grain of sand can become a system of the astral world. Feeble hands will erect immense edifices in the name of Beauty. Cities will perish, forests will burn down, and where they spread their noise or silence there will be new whispers and new rustling, life eternal.

"I know there are two gods: the god of rest, and the god of motion. I love both of them, yet I do not linger with the former. I have paid my tribute to him. Let it be. I see the quick glance of sparkling eyes. I hear the hiss of the wind. I hear the singing of strings; hammers near the furnace; the rolling of the world-music. I am giving myself to the Universal. I am awed. I am full of joy. The Universe has invaded me. Good-bye, my Yesterday. Onward to unknown To-morrow."

Balmont uses all the devices of modern art; schematization; symbolization; impressionism. His rhythms are rich in variety, in time, in timbre, in color. His language represents all shadings from the very powerful to the mellow, blending echoes of distant faint music.

Balmont is an indefatigable translator. He knows all the European languages. He translated all the works of Shelley, most of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, nearly all the works of Edgar Allan Poe, many dramas of Ibsen, of the Polish poet Slowacki, the poems of Calderon, a number of legends from the Sanscrit, etc. He has also written a book of poems for children and many short stories.

"Balmont's poetry is characterized by his desire to divest himself of time and space, to move entirely into the kingdom

of dreams. People and reality interest him very little. He sings primarily of sky, stars, sun, infiniteness, fleetingness, silence, lucidity, darkness, chaos, eternity, elevation, spheres 'beyond the limits of the limited.' All these abstract ideas are living realities to Balmont, and in this respect he is, after Tyutchev, the most intimate of Russian pantheistic poets. The real, living nature, however, such as trees, grass, azure, gushing of waters, is hardly felt by him, and he does not even attempt to picture such things. He is concerned with the abstract substance of nature as a whole. He is almost deprived of the ability to draw or paint; his landscapes are indefinite, his flowers are only 'bashful,' his ocean is 'powerful,' his wind is 'reckless, unaccountable,' etc. He writes entirely in epithets, in abstract definitions, and projects his own sensations into inanimate nature. Thus we have before us typical symbolic poetry, poetry of hazy moods and misty contours, poetry of reflection, where the living, direct impression gives way before the synthesis, the philosophical inquiry into the foundations of the life of the universe. Balmont thinks of himself as a poet of the elements. Yet he is much nearer to us than he would care to admit."

S. A. VENGEROV.

"A book of Balmont's enchants the reader, it makes him dizzy like a bouquet of heavy-scented flowers. Balmont is a creator, a magician, a veritable *vates*. His book intoxicates both author and reader."

D. VYGODSKY.

"Lyricism is the foundation of Balmont's poetry. All the ten volumes of his works are lyrics only. Drop after drop and tear after tear the poet's soul is pouring out in an unceasing, uniform, though scattered and many-voiced song, and never can express itself. There are not enough words, enough harmonies, it is impossible to say all. Balmont is too full of rhymes and rhythms, harmonies and dreams."

E. V. ANITCHKOV.

Of the many volumes of poems by Balmont, the following are the most celebrated and most characteristic:

Under Northern Skies. (1894.)

Burning Buildings. (1900.)

Let Us Be Like the Sun. (1903.)

Love Only. (1904.)

The general character of each volume is suggested by the titles.

V. BRYUSOV (1873-)

POET, novelist, critic. One of the founders of the modernist school and one of the most erudite Russian writers of the present generation. In the nineties, he attained questionable fame by his ultra-decadent poems which, as he later admitted in his autobiography, were not meant seriously. In those poems, he spoke of "pale limbs," "the cry of the desire," "the whirling inexhaustible ardor of [physical] delights" as a means to reach the deepest mysteries of existence. Even among those ecstatic confessions, however, we hear voices of a different order. One of Bryusov's early poems, written in 1895, begins with: "God, relieve our torturous pain! We are crouching like beasts in the caves. We are prostrate on rough beds of stone, we are choking without sunshine and faith." Even in his early poems, the visible world appears to be only a series of symbols signifying the Real. "In the radiance of earthly reflections, hazy shadows I see both by day and by night, passing shadows that are lit by a dull fire," he wrote in 1896. All this manifested a serious turn of mind and a meditative nature. Soon it became obvious that his first poems were a passing mood. Bryusov is reserved by nature, he is cool, he is passionless. He is only an observer. "A wizard with crossed arms, turned into stone," he was characterized by one of the critics. Bryusov of the later period is the poet who puts the feelings and gropings of modern men into lines of classical purity and academic perfection. He is one of the first to give poetic descriptions of modern city life. Automobiles, electric cars, aeroplanes, are not only men-

tioned in his poems, but the very throbbing of the heart of a modern industrial center is audible in many of his lines.

"His poems have the strange quality of giving sternness, nobility, and a peculiar air of solemnity to everything they touch. You have the feeling of having read them long ago in old volumes. It seems as if every line of Bryusov's could live an independent life, so beautiful is it by itself, so perfect is it in itself, so finished is it in every way. It seems that if those lines were torn asunder, scattered, separated from each other, they would assemble by themselves and resume their former shape.

"Bryusov is a crystallizing poet. Madness, storm, chaos become icy and lucid in his works. 'My poems are a magic vessel of poisons distilled in silence,' he spoke about himself. If you put into this vessel the most ecstatic, the most passionate experiences, how beautifully the process of purification will be completed, and what a thick, aromatic translucent wine will pour forth!"

K. TCHUKOVSKY.

As a novelist Bryusov tends towards the mysterious, the miraculous. He is one of the best imitators of the style of old-time writers. He has also written, however, a number of realistic stories depicting modern life. Bryusov is considered one of the best Pushkinists, and his critical essays on Russian and foreign writers place him among the best critics. Bryusov also translated many works of Paul Verlaine, Verhaeren, Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, Oscar Wilde, and others.

1. *Stephanos*. (1906.)

Considered the ripest and most perfect book of Bryusov's seven volumes of poems.

"*Stephanos* is a great book. In it Bryusov is celebrating a victory over the elemental powers in his own spirit. In it he

is a hero, a victor, a giant. It is a great radiant book of Russian poetry which is destined to make an epoch. . . . *Stephanos* is a book which carries a blessing. It knows the sorcery of purifying the human soul. From a high mountain you look over your life, and you reconcile yourself to all, and forgive all, and know that all is wise and all is quiet."

K. TCHUKOVSKY.

2. *The Axis of the Globe*. (1907.)

A book of short stories and plays of a fantastic character. Although somewhat similar to the stories of Poe and Hoffmann, they, nevertheless, bear the stamp of an individual talent and possess a peculiar fascination. "For each individual, dream-life is a second reality," we read in one of the stories. "It depends upon personal inclination which of the two realities to choose." In *The Axis of the Globe*, Bryusov chose the reality of dream-life, but he made the dream real.

3. *The Flaming Angel*. Novel. (1908-1909.)

The work bears the subtitle "A story of the sixteenth century in two volumes" and is for the sake of local color declared to be an exact translation from an old German manuscript. The full title reads: *The Flaming Angel, or a true story of the Devil who at various times appeared to an innocent Virgin in the shape of a Holy Angel, luring her to sinful actions; of the ungodly practices of magic, alchemy, astrology, cabalistic art, and necromancy; of the trial of the aforesaid Virgin under the presidency of His Reverence, the Bishop of Trier; and also of meetings and conversations with the Knight and thrice Doctor Agrippa of Nettesheim, and Doctor Faust, written by an eyewitness.*

[Of value is also Bryusov's *The Far and Near*, essays on Russian poets from Tyutchev to our days. Two volumes.]

K. D. MEREZHKOVSKY (1865-)

NOVELIST, critic, publicist, poet. One of the most influential figures in the modernist school, yet one who aroused much criticism and disparaging comment because of the unusual point of concentration of all his writings. Merezhkovsky is a religious mystic who believes that all the past history of humanity was only a preparation for the coming of the New Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit. The First Testament, he says, was the religion of God in the World. The Second Testament, that of the Son, was the religion of God in Man. The Third Testament, the religion to come, will be the religion of God in Humanity. "The Father is personified in Cosmos, the Son in Logos, the Spirit, in one collective universal Being, God-Humanity."

This creed of Merezhkovsky's makes all his work unique. Merezhkovsky is a writer with a purpose. He scans millennia and remote cultures to detect the struggle of the Spirit against earthly chains, the striving of humanity towards a new religious life. "There is a strong bond of unity between all these books notwithstanding their heterogeneous, often contradictory character," he writes in an introduction to a complete edition of his works. "They are all links of one chain, parts of one whole. They are not many books but one book published in several parts for the sake of convenience. One book, one topic. What is Christianity for the modern man? The answer to this question is the covert bond between the parts of the whole."

Merezhkovsky's creed is both his strength and his weakness. It gives meaning to his writings; it elevates his novels above the plane of mere narratives; it gives his critical research a peculiar orientation; it marks his essays on current events with an uncompromising spirituality. Yet, at the same time, it narrows, as it were, the range of his vision, and quite frequently it induces him to see a struggle of religious ideas where this is hardly the case. His hunger for spiritual tragedies prompts him sometimes to distort the perspective. And it is due less to his central idea and more to his skill as a reviver of epochs, to his ingenuity in creating characters and situations, to his sincere and lucid language, to his sensitive penetration into the very essence of the works of others, in short to his talent as a novelist and critic, that many of his works achieved recognition and even became famous.

“Poetry, mysticism, criticism, religion, all this was transformed by Merezhkovsky into an aureole around some new attitude towards religion, a theurgical one, in which religion, mysticism, and poetry are blended. All the rest, such as history, culture, science, philosophy, have only prepared humanity for the new life. Now this life is approaching, and pure art, the historical Church, the State, science, history, are being discarded.

“And what light is flooding Merezhkovsky's message; how this light is being refracted in the existing methods of creative work, in novels, criticism, religious research! How it attracts to his esthetes, mystics, theologians, and ordinary cultured people! Verily, something new has Merezhkovsky beheld! It is incommensurable with the existing forms of creative work. And this is the reason why the tower of his works, reaching high into the clouds, has no homogeneous foundation. . . .

“A strange light colors the work of Merezhkovsky. It cannot be decomposed. It cannot be reconstructed out of a sum

total of his critical, mystic, and poetic qualities. . . . Merezhkovsky is more than a mere poet, a mere critic."

ANDREY BYELY.

1. *Christ and Antichrist*, a trilogy consisting of the following historical novels:

Julian the Apostate. (The Death of the Gods.)
(1896.)

Leonardo da Vinci. (Gods Resurrecting.) (1901.)

Peter and Alexis. (1905.)

Each of these novels deals with the spiritual aspect of a period grave with consequences for humanity. Their aim is to give the reader not so much the sequence of historic events as the atmosphere of past epochs vibrating with intellectual and emotional unrest. The structure of the novels is rational. Every scene and every detail is chosen to illustrate the main idea of the author. The scheme of the author is often all too evident. Yet each of the novels makes excellent reading, being full of life and action.

"Few possess Merezhkovsky's art of bringing near to us the vistas of the magic past, of identifying the hopes, anxieties, thoughts, and feelings of the most distant epochs with our own. Merezhkovsky knows how to be convincing. He has enough knowledge of history, archeology, scholasticism, ancient paintings, diaries and other sources of information, and he uses it very skilfully. His attention is drawn to the most striking moments in the history of the world. . . . The historic perspective becomes clear, and we gain the impression that we are ourselves completing the slow underground work of unseen elemental powers."

A. DOLININ.

2. *Julian the Apostate* is all astir with the clash of two worlds, the Hellenic and the Christian. The former is nearly gone. It lives only in the memory of the Roman

Emperor Julian and the priest of Dionysius, Maxim, as the last strain of a melody beautiful and joyous. Christianity is the present, with its killing of the flesh, with its barren exterior, with its poverty, black monks, eternal disputes, sternness, punishments, shadows instead of sunshine. The central figure is Julian, torn between the two worlds and yet hoping against hope that some day a resurrection of God-like beauty would take place on earth.

The novel is full of vivid scenes and unusual color. The tragedy of the few survivors of the Hellenic world is represented in strong yet delicate strokes. The novel lives a life of its own.

3. *Leonardo da Vinci* deals with the Renaissance in Italy when the Hellenic world once more triumphed in the soul of man. The place of action is Florence. The persons are Savonarola, Leonardo, Moro, Cesare Borgia, Machiavelli.

“Under the surface of political events, another current, not less stormy, makes itself felt. It penetrates religion, art, science, the modes of every-day life. The fires of the Inquisition are burning . . . yet simultaneously new and perfect works of art are being created embodying classic subjects; new statutes are being erected by the hands of such geniuses as Leonardo, Michael Angelo, and Raphael. Black Magic is still reigning . . . yet here are made tremendous scientific discoveries of eternal universal value. And the same everywhere. All foundations are shattered, everything is moving, changing. The spirit of revival is rampant, the worship of life asserts itself, the assertion of one's own personality is the question of the day.”

A. DOLININ.

The figure of Leonardo as described by Merezhkovsky makes a lasting impression. If anybody succeeded in drawing the picture of a superman, it is Merezhkovsky.

The spirit of the epoch is given a very careful, almost scientific presentation in the novel.

Peter and Alexis takes us into the northern Russian capital just erected by the powerful Russian monarch, Peter the Great, on the marshes of the Gulf of Finland. Here again we see the struggle between religion and materialism, between the spiritual aspects of life and the craving for external achievements. Peter is the reckless, wilful, stubborn representative of earthly glory. His son, Alexis, is thinking of spiritual values. Peter looks at the Church as a tool to serve the ends of the State. Alexis thinks of the Church as the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Peter is masterful, merciless, cruel in his work as in his pleasure. Alexis is tender, loving, though firm in the struggle for his ideas. Peter is the representative of the Antichrist. Alexis is the herald of Christ.

The novel gives an impressive picture of Russian life two hundred years ago.

4. *Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky*. (Life, Work, and Religion.) (1901-1902.)

A two-volume critical review of the personalities and creations of the two Russian literary giants. Considered the best work in this field. Merezhkovsky's analysis is both philosophic and artistic; he is primarily concerned with the religious and moral views of both writers, yet he has a deep and sympathetic understanding for the pure beauty of their work. Moreover, the scope of his investigations required an analysis of the very methods of their artistic work. Thus, the essay, although fundamentally an argument in favor of a definite thesis, represents the keenest and the most intellectual appreciation of Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky. The thesis Merezhkovsky intends to

prove is that while Tolstoi is something between a heathen and a Christian, while he has no real conception of the spiritual aspects of life, Dostoyevsky is the man who penetrated the *sancta sanctorum* of the spirit. The thesis is formulated in the following words: "Tolstoi is the greatest expositor of the man who is neither flesh nor spirit but is somewhere between flesh and spirit, the 'man of the soul'; he describes that side of the flesh which faces the spirit, and that side of the spirit which faces the flesh, a mysterious realm where the struggle between the Beast and God in man takes place. This is, let it be noted, the struggle and tragedy of his own personal life; he himself is primarily a man of the soul, neither thoroughly pagan, nor thoroughly Christian, a man who is constantly being reborn, who is constantly being converted yet cannot be reborn and become converted into Christianity; a half-heathen, half-Christian."

5. *Eternal Companions.* (1897.)

A book of essays on old and modern European and Russian authors, among them Cervantes, Calderon, Flaubert, Ibsen, Pushkin. In the preface Merezhkovsky says: "The author would like to show, behind the books, the living soul of the writer, that unique form of being which will never be repeated; then to show the influence of this soul, often separated from us by ages and nations and yet closer to us than those among whom we live, upon the intellect, the will, the heart, and the entire inner life of a critic who is representative of a certain generation."

Merezhkovsky also translated a number of classic tragedies by Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

[Of importance are Merezhkovsky's *Pavel the First*, a drama, and *Alexander the First*, a novel forming the first part of another trilogy.]

F. SOLOGUB (1863-)

POET, novelist, writer of short stories. One of the strangest and most fascinating figures in the new school.

Sologub is a dreamer, yet his dreams are uglier than real life. Sologub is a worshiper of beauty, yet in most of his beauty-feasts the odor of decay is disturbing. Sologub craves full-blooded lusty life, yet invariably he sees the grimace of a wrinkled hag behind the face of youth. Sologub is fiercely longing for pure love, yet his love is always tormented by the devil of lust, and vulgar hideous sensuality screens from him the image of innocent joy.

Sologub is obsessed by a multi-colored unhealthy imagination which populates his world with demons, witches, and other sinister shadowy creatures. At the same time he is one of the most lucid and incisive realists with unusual skill at throwing life's actualities into sharp relief. He does not ignore the facts of political struggle, and his sympathies are quite clear and outspoken. Yet his transition from realism to demonism is accomplished without strain. Sologub does not need a conjurer; his little and big devils, his witches and dragons are always lurking on the edge of his horizon, ready to overrun the field of his vision and to embrace with their impure arms every man and woman they come across.

Darkness, ugliness, monstrosity, graveyard reptiles, the thick poison of weird pleasures, distorted figures, death. . . . And yet, over it all and in spite of it all, there is a luminous beautiful light shining in Sologub's works.

One learns to love him. One feels a suffering sympathetic soul afflicted with the madness of modern sensitiveness and cherishing some clear undying hope. There is an innocent, almost childish enthusiasm in Sologub, as if he were strangely happy over the strange things that unfold before his eyes.

It may be added that intellectual Russia accepted Sologub perhaps more readily than any of the modernists outside of Balmont.

“ Being complicated, he is uniform; being crudely realistic, he is an idealist; being tortuous, he is simple; being intelligible, he is full of riddles. He is pitiful and formidable; he says the truth when he is jesting; he is appalling yet strangely attractive; his democratic sympathies are as indubitable as his profound contempt for all humanity, including the *demos*. In our literature, there is no other figure embodying as many riddles and horrors, yet look at his portrait and you see a respectable old gentleman, earnest and placid. He carries a stone on his bosom, this innocent one; and so do his books.”

A. G. GORNFELD.

“ Sologub’s style is chiseled, at once subtle and simple. In Sologub, the lyrical pathos of Gogol turns into a pathos of solemn greatness and sternness. . . . From parts of his works we carried away many riches into the treasury of our letters. His phrases are often stalks heavy with grain; he has no empty words: every word is magnificent in its heaviness, simple in its structural uniformity.”

A. BYELY.

I. *Lyrical Poems.* (1896-1917.)

Utter loneliness cries out of these carved lines. The subsoil of loneliness breathes a chill even through the gayest of Sologub’s poems. The gaiety in itself is of a dismal kind. “ Dreadful is the enchanted trail, yet it gives forgetfulness; bitter is the hemlock, yet it brings gaiety;

there is comfort in the breathing of dead lips. Bring me, then, oh sorceress, thy cruel herb," he says in one of his poems. The motive of death often recurs in his lyrics. Death seems to be a coveted haven. Men enter the kingdom of death as if it were a land of blossoming dreams,—perhaps because death is the limit of abandon in sex. Yet Sologub often speaks of "unimpassioned death," "unimpassioned overstepping of the fateful mark." Sologub is torn by suffering, and sufferings have a sweetness for him. "Fearfully dreaming, we yearn for tortures" could be made a motto to the several volumes of his poems. Twisted with convulsions of wretchedness, however, he always aspires to spring, youth, clear unrippled waters.

Sologub's poems are endowed with a peculiar convincing power. Grave and somewhat monotonous, lacking the brilliancy of Balmont and the sculptural qualities of Bryusov, they have a compelling sincerity and a life of their own. Sologub's verse is delicate and stoutly constructed.

2. *The Little Demon*. (1907.)

A novel whose hero became a byword in Russian literature and in everyday conversation. The words "Little Demon" hardly convey the idea of the title. It should, perhaps, be translated as *The Trivial Demon*, or *The Mean Little Devil*. This latter creature is the torment of a half-insane Russian official Peredonov who embodies the pestilential side of Russian life under the autocratic régime. Peredonov sees the evasive petty devil as "a dirty, stinking, hideous, and strange" being; she is "mist-like" and assumes "many forms," she lies in a petty vulgar way, and "laughs squeakingly"; she wraps life in

a colorless nauseating shroud. Never since *The Family Golovlev* did Russian literature create a negative type equal to Peredonov.

“In the literature of the world there is hardly a creature more absurd, more monstrous and appalling, more unreal in spite of his commonness than this gymnasium teacher of an ordinary provincial town. It is utterly impossible to characterize in a few words the power of vulgarity which is the keynote of Peredonov's nature. There is something great in this limitless, all-embracing pettiness, there is something satanical in the mire of his paltry meanness. His gloomy self-satisfaction, his reckless egotism, his cowardly vileness, his ever-suspecting fright, his unremitting and yet feeble sensuality, his superstitions and cynicism form a living figure from the very beginning. The further you read the more you are overwhelmed by this curious combination of shocking impossibility and artistic convincingness.”

A. G. GORNFELD.

Peredonov is afflicted by progressing insanity, yet this is a kind of normal insanity, similar to that of Golovlev. It only tends to bring forth the fundamental qualities of his nature. Peredonov has ugly and cruel illusions which are the true reflection of himself.

Contrasted to Peredonov is the love of a number of young people in the same provincial town—Sologub's love, always tinged with the restrained lust which our author is so prone to describe.

3. *Witchcraft, or The Legend That Is Being Created.*
(1907-1913.)

A novel consisting of four independent parts. The first part begins with the following words: “I take a piece of life, crude and poor, and create from it a delightful legend, because I am a poet. Stagnate in darkness, thou bleak

everyday life, or blaze up in a furious conflagration,—over thee, I, the poet, will erect the legend of the beautiful and the charming that I am creating."

Among the persons of the novel, there are commonplace citizens and men endowed with supernatural forces. The central figure is a man whose uncanny scientific achievements make him omnipotent. The places of action are a provincial Russian town, the legendary United Islands, and the air through which the heroes travel in a scientifically prepared little planet. The novel has a peculiar charm,—that of Sologub's enchanted trail.

"In the rapid succession of pictures and persons you begin early to experience the influence of a cruel enchantment characteristic of Sologub's conception of the world. As you follow him, you notice that he has left the usual well-known road to lead you over some strange winding paths. You have repeatedly stumbled over unevennesses and débris. You look around and to your amazement you see tombs, half-destroyed monuments. . . . Yet this is no graveyard, no! This is the enchanted trail which has a miraculous power of creating illusions. On this trail, the living seem to be ghosts, the ghosts turn into living beings, the swift little devils are running up and down; the mysterious 'quiet boys' wander silently about, tracing around you some weird magic circles. . . . If the realm of the mysterious and problematical in art does not offend your rational attitude towards the world, do not hesitate to follow the artist on his enchanted trail."

VL. KRANICHFELD.

4. *Short Stories.* (1896-1917.)

Sologub has written several volumes of short stories which are of the same quality as the rest of his work. No student of Sologub's should fail to acquaint himself with his short stories and sketches.

5. *War Poems.* (1915.)

A volume of dignified and simple poems on subjects of the World War. Here are some of the titles: *Hymn; Russia Is Love; March; Unity of Nations; A Warrior to His Bride; A Wife to the Reservist; The Veteran; Wilhelm II; Victory Be with You; Belgium; To a Boy Scout; Trench Fever*, etc.

[Of interest are also Sologub's *Sweeter than Poison*, a novel, and his fables for children and for adults.]

A. VOLYNSKY (FLEXER) (1863-)

PHILOSOPHER and critic. One of the founders of the new school in Russian literature. At one time, in the nineties, he stood in the midst of the most heated battles between the old and the new. As a critic of the monthly *Syeveryny Vyestnik* (*The Northern Courier*) he bitterly attacked the former school of critics, including Mikhaylovsky, primarily for their inadequate knowledge of philosophy. He criticized the Russian literature of the past period for paying much attention to the questions of political and social reforms. These questions, in his opinion, had nothing to do with art. The task of the artist, he said, was to seek for the metaphysical roots of human life, for the metaphysical foundations of our spiritual values. The philosophy Volynsky preached was purely idealistic as opposed to what he called the gross materialism of the dominant literary school.

Volynsky was not recognized by the majority of Russian intellectuals. His aversion to the burning questions of social reform, his keen interest in religion, his attacks on venerable masters of public opinion, gained him the notoriety of a reactionary which was not true, and he was venomously mocked. However, his influence on the new school was quite considerable, and the trace he left in Russian thought is quite unmistakable.

1. *The Fight for Idealism*. Critical Essays. (1900.)
2. *The Book of Great Indignation*. Essays. (1904.)
3. *F. M. Dostoyevsky*. Essay. (1906.)

In all these essays, Volynsky appears as the champion of symbolistic art as opposed to realism or naturalism. The symbol, he says, is a means of connecting the outward concrete phenomena with their internal meaning. This meaning reveals itself only to such philosophers and artists who adhere to the idealistic philosophy. When we are imbued with such a philosophic spirit "our consciousness becomes particularly sensitive to the processes which are taking place in the darkness of the human soul, it acquires a penetrative keenness which aids the unclear forebodings and moods to issue forth from the depths and clothe themselves in fresh artistic forms. The idealistic conception appears to bore the human psyche, the complicated, entangled, sometimes accidental processes of the mind, as a borer penetrates the earth allowing the fresh salubrious waters to burst forth." Idealism and symbolism are twin brothers, "both uniting the visible and the invisible world."

Philosophy, *i.e.*, the idealistic conception of the world, is, thus, in Volynsky's opinion, indispensable for the real artist. Moreover, the poet and the philosopher do practically the same thing,—they reveal the truth, though their methods differ. "Both feel and grasp the truth directly, through the momentary vital contact of an elated soul with the world, notwithstanding a host of logical failures, illusions of our senses and predilections of everyday life." In this instant of grasping the truth, the poet is a philosopher and the philosopher is a poet. But whereas the philosopher proves his truth in a chain of syllogisms, the poet represents it in a concrete phenomenon. "His task is to show the indissoluble bond of unity between the particular and the general, the finite and the infinite, the transitory and the eternal,—

to show it in simple and clear images taken from everyday life."

This being the ideal of a poet, it is natural for Volynsky to think that only a philosopher can be a critic. "Criticism must be, not of a social, but of a philosophic nature, *i.e.*, it must be based on the solid foundation of an idealistic philosophy. It is the task of criticism to observe how a poetic idea, born in the mysterious depths of the human spirit, makes its way through the heterogeneous material of the author's practical views and conceptions; an idea thus born either transforms the facts of external experience and puts them in a light where their real meaning can be apprehended, or, where the natural talent of the writer is limited, it dissolves under the influence of his psychological peculiarities and false conceptions. Real criticism must be competent both in the valuation of poetic ideas which are always of an abstract nature, and in laying bare the creative processes which are a reciprocal action between the conscious and unconscious forces of the artist. Art can yield its secrets only to the philosopher who, in a contemplative ecstasy, unites the finite with the infinite, traces the connection between psychic moods as expressed in poetic images and the eternal laws of the development of the world."

Volynsky's involved and cumbersome style was a great hindrance to his popularity, yet, aside from this and from his philosophical conceptions, his criticisms struck a new note in the understanding of the task of an artist and a critic. Volynsky himself gave good examples. His critical sketches of Dostoyevsky, Tolstoi, and others are undoubtedly a step forward in the history of Russian criticism. They are fresh, bold, vivid, and artistic.

[Other books by Volynsky: *Russian Critics*; *Leonardo da Vinci*.]

A. BLOCK (1880-)

POET. Author of many books of lyrical poems. Author of many plays. One of the leaders of the modernist school.

“Block is the soul of music, irresistible, charming, tenderly luring. . . . It is not the reading alone that gives us an idea of Block: his poems enter your soul and stay there as a reminiscence of music, of an enchanted land. Block’s songs draw your soul close to the altar of silence, which is born out of a deep, genuine, and most complete experience of the moment.

“Block has a refined ear, he hears the grass grow, he hears ‘the flight of angels in the ether’; Block is a mystic. Yet Block hears, not only the rustling of angels’ wings, but also ‘the crawling monsters at the bottom of the sea.’ Block, as Dostoyevsky, never turns his back on the ordinary, everyday realities, but how fantastic these same realities often appear both to Block and Dostoyevsky!”

M. HOFMAN.

“Block is a great poet. He is one of the few who fight for the right of poetry to look, not only into the clear, definite movements of the human soul, but also into its mysteries, riddles, strange twists, and precipices hidden in its darkest recesses.”

A. IZMAILOV.

1. *Songs of the Beautiful Lady.* (1905.)

A series of lyrical poems to the eternal beauty of the feminine soul which, to the poet, is something holy, recalling, as it does, the Madonna or the queen of his dreams.

"The sanctuary of eternal beauty, the sanctuary of the universal feminine soul is equivalent in Block's eyes to a religious sanctuary. . . . Whatever the feminine figure created by the fantasy of the poet is called, whether his Queen or his Muse, does not matter. To Block she is the incarnation of all beauty on earth and outside of it. He cherished a mystic belief that some day he would meet her and this day would mark the beginning of a new life. Who is She? He does not know himself. She is the Unknown. . . . His dream of her is misty and hazy. The images in which he thinks of her are sometimes strange to the utmost and capricious to madness. She appears and disappears like a spirit. He knows nothing about her, he knows nothing about the hour of their meeting, whether it would be long or only a fleeting moment. . . . The shadowy quality of his pictures, the haziness of the action, its remoteness from all background of reality, is one of the characteristic features of Block's poetry. It gave occasion to one of the critics to call him justly the poet of the dream-like consciousness."

A. IZMAILOV.

2. *Poems on Russia.* (1915.)

There is nothing shadowy or dream-like about this collection of poems dealing with Russia as a nation and giving utterance to the poet's healthy patriotic feelings. Block sees "the poverty of his native land," the "rags and tatters," the "swamps eternal," the "rusty hillocks," yet he loves his country as part of himself. He believes in Russia's future. Russia fought the Tartars, Russia's history is one continuous fight, Russia could dream of quiet only "through tears and dust," and Russia will fight her way to strength and happiness. The *Poems on Russia* are full of robust hope, sturdy confidence in the power of the native land, and, to accompaniment of murmuring forests and singing snow-storms, they strike a new note in Russian poetry.

V. IVANOV (1866-)

ONE of the most erudite Russian poets. Thoroughly familiar with the history, mythology, literature, and institutions of ancient Greece and Rome. A linguist mastering, besides the classic languages, nearly every cultural European tongue (his doctor's dissertation, written in Latin, bears the title, *De societatibus vectigalium publicorum populi Roman*). His scholarly knowledge of the ancient world, of history, philosophy and religion, he pours into his poetry, which is a curious blend of archaic language and modernist ideas and emotions.

Somebody has called Ivanov "The sunny old wizard with a soul of a baby." He says about himself: "Poor and sun-lit do I wander with a song; I bestow my gift of brightness on the world." This "gift of brightness" is the worship of Beauty.

"He gave himself to the idea of art so completely that all the rest appears to him a mere insignificant appendix. He is close to philosophy; he goes through the experiences of ancient cults, beginning with the Orient, continuing through the Hellenic religion of Dionysius, going up to the preaching of the Galilean; yet even religion is conceived by him as beauty, as various shades of beauty. In some strange manner, beauty to him is always connected with the idea of ancient times. . . .

"He is not interested in passing psychological moods, as hundreds of other poets. He looks everywhere for broad philosophical generalizations. . . . He is interested in the mysteries of the universe, in cosmic phenomena, human conceptions and births, eternal dawns, days and nights, relations of luminaries and days, mysterious riddles of constellations. For instance, human passion occupies him, not as a personal

experience of his or of any given individual, but rather as a philosophical abstraction, as a synthesis of feelings."

A. IZMAILOV.

Lyrical Poems. (1903-1917.)

"A guest has come from foreign lands, a stranger, full of thoughts, full of experiences, full of wisdom. Nobody knows him, but somehow everybody begins to smile at him as if he were their own, as if they had been looking for him and longing for his coming. Joyfully they greet him, joyfully they call him their beloved one, with happy surprise they become aware that they are closely connected with this seemingly elaborate but at bottom most simple poet. Everybody feels that they had loved him for a long time, that they had known him as he is: crowned, yet calm and gentle.

"Ivanov's influence is only beginning to be felt, and it is hardly possible to maintain a correct perspective in appreciating it. Suffice it to be said that all the new forces that actually contributed something valuable in the field of poetry in the last few years, ought to feel themselves obliged to the creative genius of Vyatcheslav Ivanov and bound to him by the most intimate bonds."

VL. PYAST.

ANDREY BYELY (B. N. BUGAYEV) (1880-)

POET, novelist, critic, and theoretician of symbolism. The most profound exponent of symbolism in the present generation.

Byely has the rare ability of living philosophical problems. It is not reason alone that he exercises in the search for the meaning of life; it is all the passions, cravings, delights, and sufferings of a talented, imaginative, high-strung, and truthful nature that he brings into his philosophical gropings. And in the very same way as poets sing their love for mortals or their pain from conflicting psychological phenomena, so Byely tells about his attempts at unveiling the mystery of the universe or his clashes with the Unknowable and Eternal.

The professional philosopher may not discern anything new in Byely's constructions. When Byely was a very young man, a mere boy, the school of modernists was still indulging in the worship of the Ego, in the art of the decadence. He paid a brief tribute to this doctrine, but he was dissatisfied. His way ever since, to put it in Ivanov-Razumnik's words, was "a struggle against the 'icy desert' of cosmic loneliness, a continuous impatient search for an exit from the 'wilderness of nonsense.'" He takes refuge in religion. He must have a living, acting God. Yet the promises of religion are far-flung. The glorious future is so remote. Andrey Byely then seizes at the idea of the approaching end of the world. Christ is coming, very soon, he believes now; the closed door is about to open. This new profession of faith, however,

is also of brief duration. The young thinker is disappointed. The magic future is slow to come. The stormy years of 1905-1906 find him in the power of a new faith: the people; Russia; the shining horizons opening before a religious nation that arose to battle for a new truth. This faith is naturally crushed with the defeat of the people, and his restless mind turns to the Kantian philosophy, hoping to find in critical reason a guide through the tangle of existence. But reason is cold; logism kills metaphysics, which for Byely is life itself. Byely is a mystic by his very nature. Back into the warm embrace of mysticism he falls from the cool heights of pure reason, making a swift stride towards theosophy of which he becomes an ardent proselyte under the mastership of Rudolph Steiner. In each point of these wanderings, he is all enthusiasm, inspiration; still he is always aware of the other gods left behind, and he speaks of them as a man would speak of his personal enemies or friends.

These queries are very familiar to the students of philosophy, and Byely hardly created anything novel. What is valuable in his gropings is their artistic expression. His poems, sketches, essays, and stories are one continuous record of his progress over the twisted paths of philosophical research. And though to him, personally, his experiences may be of supreme importance, he is noted in Russia more for his artistic achievements than for his philosophical conceptions.

Andrey Byely is the most refined of Russian modernists. Even Balmont and Bryusov seem heavy compared with his aerial, ethereal, almost ephemeral ways of expressing poetic thoughts. At the same time, he is full of white fire, and his lines have the quality of coined silver. He is constantly carried on a high tide of enthusiasm.

Nobody equals him in using an abstract language, yet he can be so simple, so naïve, so strangely convincing. Lack of stability is one of his characteristic features. He is as restless in his style, his forms, and his methods as he is in philosophy. Sometimes it is an article written in the most scientific manner, equal in dryness only to the works of German scholars; sometimes it is a half-poetic essay full of images and brilliant illustrations; at other times a poem of excellent musical qualities is produced, to be followed by a gripping literary appreciation of some domestic or foreign writer, or by a story where moral problems and vast philosophical generalizations are inseparably blended with such keen and detailed presentations of characters and surroundings as to make the old realistic masters appear dull. The historian of literature would have to class all these productions under different heads—if such classification be necessary at all. To Byely they are united in his personality, being as they are, the expressions of one individual soul pouring itself out at various moments and in various moods. A more sedate author might have been more uniform and rounded. Yet these qualities, if qualities they may be called, are surpassed by the spontaneity of Byely's works, which are all flashes of his soul, sparks of his burning brain, calls of joy at the sight of enchanted lands, and mournful chants around the urns where ashes of once living gods are buried.

Andrey Byely is the most individual of Russian modernists. He writes for himself and in a way that suits himself. This is why he is sometimes difficult to follow; the meaning of his images is not always clear at first sight. In fact, he advises his readers to be patient, to read his book several times (as in the case of *The Goblet of Snow-*

Storms). Some of his theosophic terms will be understood only by specialists. This was the cause of much unfavorable comment on the part of writers opposed to the modernist school. Even the severest critics, however, recognize in him a sparkling talent with a streak of genius and with an unusual emotional appeal. Byely is one of the few occupying the very summit of present-day Russian literature.

"A desire to read mysteries in phenomena, the attempt of a sincere mind to penetrate instantly, by one superhuman effort, into the meaning of life,—those characteristic features of modern mystics, assume in the works of A. Byely a tragic aspect. There is much fiery impact in his artistic work. He is sensitive to hysterics; he must needs put every perceived phenomenon into the most conspicuous place, illuminate it by the most brilliant light. . . . He loses his balance, he feels the incommensurability of his soul with the universe, and now he is indignant over the universe that cannot enter his soul, now he is indignant over his soul that cannot embrace the universe. With all that, Byely has a talent of undoubted quality. He has the gift of hearing the voice of the masses and being understood by the masses. Look at his picture of provincial life in *The Silver Dove*. What a delicate lacy fabric, what fine threads of great love, poignant bitterness, and boundless sympathy with the poor tragedies of a little world! Brilliant sparks of irony, a product of deep suffering, mix with genuine pearls of bursting tears."

P. KOGAN.

I. *Symphonies*.

The Heroic (Northern Symphony). (1902.)

The Second (Dramatic Symphony). (1904.)

The Return (Third Symphony). (1905.)

The Goblet of Snow-Storms (Fourth Symphony).
(1908.)

Each of these volumes is a collection of symbolic poems in prose, philosophic visions, half-tales, half-dreams, little

sketches from actual life terminating in imaginary realms, even polemic articles, pictures, portraits, miniatures. The *Symphonies* seem to be the form best adapted to the tone of Byely's soul. In connection with them, a Russian critic quotes Edgar Allan Poe: "Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before."

"A symphony in artistic prose,—what can be more daring than this undertaking! No critic, however, would deny the young artist a right to such daring. The strict rules of harmony, and perhaps even counterpoint, are observed in relation to the language. You can trace the leading motives and the changing voices."

VL. PYAST.

2. *The Silver Dove*. Novel. (1910.)

The leading idea is that Russia is destined to regenerate the world through a combination of religious faith and revolutionary action. An intellectual man, a student of the classic world, leaves his cultural environments to mix with the plain people where he hopes to find the germs of a new truth. He has an idea that the Hellenic feeling of life has not yet vanished under the cover of Christianity. He hopes for a new era in humanity brought about by the contact of western thought with Russian faith. "The Russians are people of the fields, of the woods; they do not clothe themselves in words, they do not gladden the eye by the mode of their living; their speech is just filthy, their mode of living is drunken, quarrelsome, uncouthness, hunger, dumbness, darkness. . . . But look here: the wine of the spirit is ready on the table before every one. Russia is that rock on which theories are being wrecked, science is turned into dust, and even life itself is burned out. On the day when the West will be grafted on Russia, a world-wide conflagration will enwrap it;

everything inflammable will perish, because only from the ashes of death will arise the soul of Eden, the Golden Bird."

The hero goes down to the people, where he becomes involved in the religious sect of "The Doves," whose members, in the author's presentation, are endowed with great mystic power. They are plain workingmen, with very little education, but they are all aflame with religious and revolutionary ardor. Their mysticism is black, crude, but genuine.

The novel shows signs of the author's theosophic beliefs.

3. *Petersburg*. Novel. (1913.)

The leading idea: conflict between the Mongolian world and the Russian religious soul. The Mongolian world is nihilism, the power of darkness, the spirit of death. This spirit is incarnated in father and son, of whom one is a high Russian bureaucrat and the other a revolutionary terrorist. The action is set against the background of the Russian revolution with its conspiracies, agents provocateurs, secret service men, self-sacrifices of pure idealistic souls, and harrowing tragedies for many. In Byely's conception, this is a clash between the Orient and real Russia, between the general spirit of destruction and Christ. It is a forecast of the future, an apocalyptic struggle between the Dragon and Christ throughout the universe. In the novel, Christ wins, sad and merciful; the tragedies have purified the souls of the sinners.

The novel contains many allusions to theosophic experiences which only the initiated would understand. Still, it is very strong and full of splendid pictures.

4. *Poems.* (1904-1917.)

There are many volumes of Byely's poetry, marking the stages of his philosophical and religious moods, beginning with *Gold in Azure* and ending with *Urns and Ashes*. In all of them Byely appears a poet of great sincerity and charm who knows the secret of being convincing even when he treats a very abstract subject. Sometimes, though, he becomes a naïve and youthful singer of things common to all poets of the world: longings, loneliness, love. Attention should be called to his beautiful poems of the exquisite life of the eighteenth century. It is, however, the tortures of a never-satisfied thinker that give his lyricisms their special value. Sometimes he is mocking at himself. Sometimes he is at war with all the powers of the spirit. At all times he is himself, utterly individual and self-centered.

5. *Symbolism.* (1910.)

A book of essays on the theory of artistic creative ability. Byely's views may be thus briefly summarized: There is a fundamental difference between reason and creative ability in their questioning the nature of the existent and in the forms in which they answer this question. "While reason asks, 'What is life, what is the reality of life?' creative ability answers in bold affirmative: 'Here is that which is being actually experienced; here is life.'" The forms of reason are the ways in which the nature of the existent is being defined, *i.e.*, they are the methods of exact science. The forms in which creative ability affirms life are the expression of experiences, the expression of the images lived through.

"The image lived through is a symbol; a symbol put into words, paint, matter, is an artistic image."

There is a difference between the image of reality and the image of art. The former exists through the laws of nature; the laws of nature are part of my "I," the reflecting part of it, not the entire "I." "Reality, if I wish to conceive it, is turned into a question which I put to my reason. Whereas in the image of art my whole 'I' is given. My 'I' is the actual reality; it is the creative power."

This is, Byely says, contrary to the popular conception, according to which the creative work is only an emblem of reality while the real reality is in surrounding nature. "It is nothing astonishing that the imagery of the artist which is not subject to reason, has been taken by many to be an expression of a creative dream; it has been denied reality. To those, however, who have conceived the real nature of symbols, the phenomena, including the 'I,' are only a reflection of another 'I' which is real, eternal, creative."

III

THE RECENT TIDE



GENERAL SURVEY

THE years between the middle of the nineties of the past century and the revolution of 1917 may be called the revolutionary period in the history of Russia. It starts with an outbreak of social unrest on a large scale: labor strikes in 1896 and subsequent years, political demonstrations in various cities, upheavals of university students all over the country. In 1902, peasant revolts begin and spread like wildfire. Then comes the unfortunate war with Japan in 1904 and 1905. It is followed by a tremendous revolutionary uprising in 1905-1906 which changed Russia from an autocratic country to a nominal parliamentary monarchy. The revolution is soon quelled; the old régime wreaks vengeance on its opponents. Yet the new forces are not destroyed. After a brief period of stupefaction, social movement again stirs the country. Strikes follow political manifestations, parliamentary protests are backed by growing political parties. The masses of the people, notably the industrial workers, awake to new courage and new activities sooner than the intelligentsia. The world war culminates in the great revolution of 1917, which totally changed the face of Russia.

The literature of this period is a true reflection of the times. In fact, it is hardly possible to understand the new Russian literature without an insight into the underlying social and political conditions.

1. The peasant is still a dominant figure in the works of many writers. This is Russian literary tradition. Yet attention is rapidly turning to the city, to the modern in-

dustrial center. Veresayev, Gorky, Andreyev, Kuprin, Artzybashev, Yushkevitch, and many others have little to do with the village. They either describe the modern intellectual confronted with a multitude of novel problems, or they go down to the plain people who are awakening from ages-old stupor. It is evident that the center of gravity has moved from rural Russia into the large city. The nobleman's nest is not mentioned at all, or it is shown in a state of dilapidation and decay. The old life is gone. The patriarchal system has disappeared. In the works of Russian writers we hear the sound of factory whistles, the noise of locomotives, the clatter of industrial work. The Russian writers, as a rule, do not worship at the shrine of industrialism, yet they do not fail to record the new era. Neither do they close their eyes to the fact that the poor man of the city, the factory hand, the clerk, the artisan's apprentice, is of a quicker intelligence, has more culture, and is more susceptible to new ideas than the peasant. The unprecedented movements that stir the large cities, the formation of secret parties, the organization of strikes, demonstrations and other forms of social protest, are novel subjects of study for Russian writers. With their customary thoroughness, they scrutinize every detail of these movements and report them in literary works.

2. The village offers new and startling material for the study of the Russian national character. For the first time in modern history, the village has awakened. True, it is hardly moved by ideas. It strikes out blindly. It seems to be following a primitive impulse. It burns the mansion of the noble landlord and gets hold of his grain. One may argue the wisdom of such actions. Yet, what a picture! What material for an artist! Millions of

slaves, patient for centuries, throwing off their chains, breathing new courage, facing terrible dangers, believing in their right to destroy their foes. What a wealth of color! What a variety of characters! Here are self-conscious leaders of a modern type, and half-savages who are almost inarticulate; old patriarchs with long beards and childlike faith, and gay youths enjoying revolt as a glorious diversion. In the roar of battle sounds the voice of an ancient creed which never died in the mind of the people, "The land is God's and the people's."

The agrarian revolts hold the modern Russian writer spellbound. Here he has an occasion to look into the very depths of the people's character. Here he has a chance to test the people's faith. Here he can also find solutions to the old controversy: is the peasant a communist by nature, or does he only care to improve his individual life with no regard for the rest?

The landlord, of course, is a prominent figure in many descriptions of peasant upheavals. Some writers have sympathy with him. As a rule, however, the landlord's psychology, expressed in fear and hate, fascinated the writers much less than the psychology of the peasants.

In descriptions of ordinary village life, outside of the agrarian movement, a new tone is prevailing. The writers have before their eyes the standards of living in the cities. They compare the life of a poor urban worker with the life of the peasant, and they are appalled. There is no more reverence in their writings for the traditions and customs of the village. They are indignant. They are sick at heart. With a nauseating feeling do they picture the poverty, brutality, degradations of the peasant. All descriptions of the modern village are a continuous cry of anguish.

3. The conflagration of 1905-1906 reaching into practically every realm of Russian life and making sober people mad with passions, hopes and visions, offered a source of material which will not be exhausted for generations. Every Russian writer had to write about the revolution. There was no escaping it. There was no end to the variety of subjects that pressed themselves irresistibly on the mind of the observer. Here was the psychology of revolutionary individuals and the psychology of the masses; the bureaucratic official waging war against the people, and his son or daughter in the ranks of the revolution; the army officer quelling rebellion and secretly sympathizing with his victims; the professional terrorist and the agent provocateur; the priest who throws off his robe to serve God in unity with the masses, and the priest who organizes the dregs of the city to murder and rob the fighters for freedom; the exalted youth who waits in a prison cell for his last dawn, and the mother who gives her son the last caress before he is shot. . . . The revolution and the aristocracy, the revolution and the men of wealth, the revolution and the army, the revolution and the factory, the revolution and the morals, the revolution and the school, the revolution and the family, the revolution everywhere. A literature with a tradition of recording truthfully all social movements, could not fail to respond. If the nineteenth century literature suffered from the monotony of life, that of the twentieth century was overwhelmed by too much material. It could not digest it in a short time. The descriptions of the revolution are mostly crude sketches, raw material hardly turned into works of art.

4. The reaction of the revolutionary period on the mind of intellectual Russia was, perhaps, the most potent

factor in shaping the literature of recent times. A revolutionary period takes nothing for granted. It is inclined to question every fundamental of society, of humanity, of the universe. It seeks for a revision of the accepted answers as to the meaning of life. This natural tendency was strengthened by the peculiar situation of the intelligentsia in the revolution. The time for discussion had passed. The time for action had come. Every thinking man and woman had to decide as to the place they were going to take in the great struggle. Those who went into the revolution had to justify their idealistic cooperation with the workingmen or the peasants whose cause was not their own cause. Those who stayed out had to justify their unwillingness to sacrifice their lives for mere social or political improvements. Either camp was laboring under a terrific nervous and mental strain. Why suffer? Why give up my most precious life, for a future I shall not share? What, after all, is a real value in life? What is the meaning of an ideal? Can there be an ideal without belief in an eternal moral law? Can there be an eternal moral law without religion? Is a fight for freedom also a manifestation of a religious spirit, or it is only a crass materialistic greed for bread and butter? Have I a right to take somebody's life so that the life of others might be improved? From these questions there was a straight road to the most harrowing, accursed problems of consciousness and existence, matter and spirit, causality and moral law, God and the world. Literature faithfully recorded all these queries that made the intellectual unhappy in the midst of a world rampant with shouts, battles, and hopes.

Contrary to tradition, literature works now in fits and starts. Moods are coming and moods are going, and while

they last every writer deems it his duty to indulge in them whether he has a natural inclination for such broodings or not. The intellectual vogue becomes a compelling force. Out of a welter of themes and attempts, three important subjects are worth particular mention: religion, individualism, sex. They occupy the foreground of Russian literature, especially after the collapse of the 1905-1906 upheaval.

5. The modernists, or symbolists,¹ whose artistic work was, in a measure, determined by their religious conceptions, are now becoming more outspoken. They no more repudiate social movements. They are not against the revolution. What they wish is to see the revolution conducted on a religious basis and for religious purposes. They loathe the materialistic spirit which is, in their opinion, the moving force of the great struggle. They would rather see it a movement to free the soul from all fetters, to open an era for the spiritual regeneration of mankind. "The coming of Christ" is a slogan now often repeated in literature.

Mystic moods and religious problems soon begin to interest many of the writers who do not belong to the group of symbolists; some of them are hardly fit to discuss such questions at all or even to understand real religious emotions, but such is the current of the time that nearly every writer makes his heroes think and talk religion. "Seeking for a God" and "Constructing a God" was the name of the movement. How widespread it became, may be seen from the fact that some Social-Democrats, notoriously atheists and materialists, began to speak of the necessity to construct a proletarian revolutionary religion. Said Lunatcharsky, later Minister of

¹ See Chapter II.

Education in Soviet-Russia: "Socialism as a doctrine is the real religion of mankind. . . . Human cooperation is striving towards one aim: there must be a living all-powerful God. We are those who construct Him. . . . Our grandchildren will feel as if they were the neurons of one universal brain, the inseparable molecules of a growing world soul, participants in the consciousness and ruling will of a beautiful universe." (1908.)

The symbolists at one end of society, the Socialists at the other, mark the extent of the dominant religious mood which colored the literature of the period after 1905-1906.

6. Another, less dominant current was individualism. The intellectual who discovered that the revolution was not the great glorious holiday he had hoped it would become and that his rôle in it was not a leading or determining one, soon turned his back to all social cooperation. The preaching of the ego becomes loud in certain sections of Russian literature. Gratification of individual desires is now the law for many a hero of fiction. . . . Said the notorious Sanin, in a novel of the same name: "Why shall I expose my 'ego' to humiliation and death in order that the workingmen of the thirtieth century may not be wanting in food and sexual love? . . . Let the devil take all the workingmen and all the non-workingmen of all the world!" And further: "What is Bebel¹ to me! . . . A talker talks, another will talk something else, and I must die anyway, to-day or to-morrow. . . . It seems to me that when you are dying and know exactly that you are dying, it will not even enter your mind to think that the words of Bebel, Nietzsche, Tolstoi, or somebody else have any meaning."

This spelled nihilism. Fortunately for Russia, it was

¹ Leading German socialist widely read in Russia.

more pronounced in literature than in life, though it must be said that after the abortive revolution, hosts of intellectuals abandoned what they called their former "dreams," settled down and were concerned with their material well-being more than with the fate of their fatherland or humanity in general. The greed for pleasure was quite considerable in large sections of the intellectual world.

7. Hand in hand with these movements went the flooding of literature with sex. There are several reasons for this sex tide. One, purely mechanical, is the lifting of the censorship ban after the revolution. Up to 1905, the censor read every word before it was put into print. The censor was rigid in eliminating what he deemed indecent. The abolition of preliminary censorship made it easier for the authors to describe certain moments which they thought a vital part of their stories. On the other hand, literature in the twentieth century had generally become more realistic, more keenly interested in characteristic details; and it was natural for many a writer to dwell upon a certain aspect of life which he thought of great importance.

There was, however, something unnatural in this sudden incline of an entire literature towards the discussion and description of sex. The springs of this movement ought to be sought in the general disorganization of life; in the inflamed condition of popular imagination after the heroisms, sufferings, and cruelties of the revolution; in the relaxation of the intellectual world after the terrific strain; in a feeling of hopelessness and despair that began to weigh on the soul of many a former fighter, causing epidemics of suicide; in discrepancy between recent shining hopes and surrounding inhuman conditions. The

mystic trend of the time must also be taken into account, as it was undoubtedly reflected in a kind of sex mysticism dwelt upon by some writers.

The sex wave was of brief duration. Careful observers agree in the opinion that it was more a literary movement than an adequate presentation of what was happening in life. Literature was exaggerating certain phenomena, making exceptions almost a general rule. Whatever the case may be, hardly any writer escaped the influence of the sex vogue. The years 1907-1910 may be rightly called the years of sexual aberration in Russian literature.

Even then, however, there was a difference in the treatment of sex subjects. While a small minority drew no line of demarcation between sex and lust, the overwhelming majority of writers, among them leading figures like Andreyev, Sergeyev-Tzensky, Kuprin, and even Artzybashev, approached sex as a grave problem, as one of the greatest tragedies in human life, as one of the moments where man's real self becomes bare. Sex for those writers was a means of looking into the remotest corners of the human soul.

8. The number of readers in the twentieth century increased enormously. Readers are now recruited not only from the intelligentsia, but from the unlearned city population, from the more advanced workingmen, even from the peasantry. An audience which a popular writer is facing in recent times is much more heterogeneous than were the audiences of a Dostoyevsky or Turgenev. Consequently, it is easy for an author to become a success by catering to the popular taste and by nerve-racking methods. The number of writers also increased; the competition between them grew. This, of course, made

some writers unconsciously seek for popular favor. On the other hand, it made the authors more agile, more eager to respond to the call of the time, more concerned with the form of their writings.

9. The form of Russian literature underwent tremendous changes. Started by the group of modernists, the reform of language and style is spreading over all the literary field. There is a difference in the subjects treated by the symbolists and realists; there is a difference in moods; but there is almost no difference in methods. Nearly all Russian literature uses now a more vivid, more refined, more pointed, and more flexible language. Nearly all Russian writers resort to impressionism as a means of giving a quick and incisive picture of an object. The slowness of Russian writings is now a thing of the past. The authors use bold, sometimes daring strokes; they go straight to the core of a subject, eliminating introductory tedium. They are unusually frank, simple, close to the reader. At the same time, they are more realistic than their predecessors. They feel more keenly the details of life; they pay more attention to material surroundings; they are more accurate in their descriptions. There is an air of extraordinary freshness about the best works of this period.

10. If Russian literature of the nineteenth century resembled a stream, that of the twentieth resembles a spring tide. Its waters are rushing, scintillating, spreading over large regions. The heavy monthly ceased being the literary center. Life is too quick for a monthly. The great respected journals have not disappeared; they have even increased in number, yet political discussion now uses the pamphlet and the book as the most effective weapon; literature is resorting to the almanac which is

quicker and more flexible, less bound by traditions and more accessible to the public. Great collections of periodically appearing almanacs, notably *Shipovnik* (*Wild Rose*), *Znanie* (*Knowledge*), and *Zemlya* (*Earth*), become the leading centers of literature. Leading in modern times, however, has no more the meaning attributed to the word in former generations. The leading almanacs give the newest and most representative literature of their time. Yet there is no one writer or critic who would stand out as the spokesman of his generation. There are innumerable voices, but no dominant voice.

The critics have now ceased to be the masters of thought. The number of critics has increased in a large proportion. They are divided according to schools. The socialist critic, ordinarily an adherent of the economic interpretation of history, takes an author to account for the material he represents and for his attitude towards his figures. This school of critics is mainly concerned with the contents of a work; it searches literature as to the reactionary or progressive ideas it embodies; it argues with authors as to their interest in members of a decaying class or in a civilization doomed to failure. It uses literature as a means of discussing sociological and political problems. At the other pole are the mystic critics who would see in literature a revelation of eternal ideas, an incarnation of the mystic essence which cannot be expressed in terms of positive knowledge. This school is interested both in the form of literary works and in their substance. It pays much attention to the artistic qualities of literary production; it is eager to portray in vivid strokes the creative personality of an artist. Yet it has slight use for works that do not touch upon the mystic.

The rest of the critics occupy a position close to one

or the other extreme. Most of them are doing excellent work. Russian literature is being carefully and lovingly studied. Great collective works on the history of our literature appear. Individual treatises devoted to one phase of literature or to one writer become more numerous and more serious. The literary treatise, one may say, is almost entirely a product of this period. The flood of essays is enormous. Yet critics are mere critics. Leadership has passed into other hands.

Russian literature resembles a spring tide. Yet it has not become shallow. Russian authors are now, as before, concerned with the most fundamental problems of life, and the light of an ideal shines throughout their writings.

11. The World War brought no deep changes in Russian literature. Peace-loving had been a tradition of Russian writers for over a century. The sufferings of a nation in consequence of war had interested Russian authors infinitely more than the gains or glory of war. This attitude was, in general, maintained also in the course of the World War, up to the revolution of 1917. A few authors went to the front as war correspondents. A few pictured the feelings of those at the rear. Several books of war songs and war poetry were published. Still, with all the gravity and vastness of the world crisis, no exceptional work of war fiction or war poetry was produced. This was partly due to crass individualism that still prevailed among many of the intellectuals, an individualism indifferent to social or national problems. On the other hand, the war was unpopular among the more radical groups and this must have unconsciously influenced the writers.

War time, as a rule, is not conducive to deep artistic work in the literary field, and Russia was no exception.

In 1915-1917, the old motives seemed quite exhausted; impending social changes were felt by many, and literature was on a cross-road, with no definite trend or dominant idea.

Then came the revolution, changing Russia from its very foundations. Upon the outcome of the present crisis depends the future of Russian culture and the fate of its most precious flower, Russian literature.

MAXIM GORKY (1868-)

GORKY's appearance in Russian literature amounted to little less than a revolution. He hurled himself into Russian life like a lusty playboy's laughter into the midst of a dull and mournful company. He thrust an abundance of self-conscious vitality into a sad, subdued atmosphere. It was a time when the social ground was beginning to vibrate with latent energy. Waves of crude yet irresistible strength were saturating those huge blocks of the plain people who, to the intelligentsia, had presented the eternal riddle of Russia. The plain people were rapidly going through molecular social transformations wrought with revolution.

In the field of literature, the open outburst of this new energy was Maxim Gorky. He came at the head of a motley crowd of hungry but invincibly bold individuals, the *bossyaki* (tramps) who took particular delight in shouting into the colorless Russian intellectual landscape: "Here we are, and we shall leave no stone in your edifice unturned."

It was not altogether true what Gorky told in his early stories and plays. His characters were too clever, too enlightened, too self-conscious, and they expressed themselves in such excellent maxims that the friendly aid of the author was justly suspected. Yet the obviousness of it somehow did not matter. It was the tone that thrilled. It was the greed for life manifested by those individuals that caught the breath of the intelligentsia. Gorky's characters could not be pitied. They were poor,

they were outcasts, yet they possessed a staggering amount of compressed energy, a rebellious daring, and they behaved like the masters of life, not like her subordinates. They had a voracious appetite for the best things on earth, and they were restless.

Thus Gorky of the first years was the herald of a coming era. Hence the almost miraculous spread of his popularity. All his contemporaries seemed men of the past. He alone was the man of the future. "I love to listen when the instruments in an orchestra are being tuned," Nil the machinist declares in one of Gorky's plays. All Russia was then tuning her instruments for the symphony of the revolution, and Gorky was the man that foretold the leading motive. Gorky became a leading spirit of Russia because he was ahead of his time.

Yet he could not be a herald forever. The revolution of 1905 came and overshadowed all that human imagination could foresee. Gorky's task now becomes, not to outrun events, but to keep pace with life. In this second period, he attempts to depict the most significant sides of the new era in Russia: revolutionary labor movement, the revolutionary agrarian movement, the philosophico-theological gropings of the progressive elements, the new appreciation of human personality asserting itself in hard and perilous struggle. In all the works of this period, he throws magnificent figures into sharp relief. His spirit is alive in a supreme effort to embrace all, to open new vistas in every direction, to say the real, the final thing unrevealed to the rest. Yet the response of the reader is no more the same, not because Gorky has changed, but because social conditions are different from what they were. The public ceased to find in his works the sign of new revelations.

The third period of Gorky's career arrived when he gave up the effort to depict contemporary events and turned to his past for material. We see old Russia again, looked at from the summit of the present understanding. Gorky endeavors to trace the path that leads from the shadowy caverns of yesterday to to-day. He throws into literature gross unshapely clods of old Russian life, uncanny in its brutality, fiendish in its savage instincts, yet full of indomitable strength and fiercely longing for spiritual regeneration.

Throughout his works, particularly in the long stories, one motive is ever recurring, one problem is always pressing to the foreground. It is the story of a mute soul that strives to become articulate; it is the story of innately sound human beings thrown into primitive environments and groping their way upward to the light. This fundamental interest of Gorky's, a direct consequence of his own ascension from the bottom, is, perhaps, his greatest contribution to Russian spiritual growth.

"In Gorky's works, the heroes often preach ideas; they speak in the name of the author; they speak all in the same manner. This is because Gorky is never satisfied with mere presentation; he almost always sees a definite goal, there is always somebody suffering whom he rushes to aid, whom he wishes to rescue from danger, with whom he must share his thoughts and feelings, as they come along. He is not satisfied to wait for the natural process to transform his thoughts into artistic images. Gorky has no patience."

A. DERMAN.

"Gorky is all of the people, he is elemental, he is vast, he is a continuation of the people just as the people are a continuation of Gorky. None in present-day Russian literature has more right to be called the writer of the people. This not because the people are the subject of Gorky's artistic work:

many have treated the same subject. This is because Gorky's writings are not pictures of the people, but their self-revelation. Gorky was destined to be a vessel for the best thoughts of the people, their sorrows and joys, their strivings and ascensions."

R. GRIGORYEV.

In the course of time between 1905 and 1913, the period of Gorky's forced absence from Russia, Gorky became intensely popular among a new class of people, the Russian industrial workingmen. His return home was enthusiastically hailed by this young aspiring class of Russian readers, who saw in him the great luminary of optimistic humanitarianism. One of the many workingmen's greetings reads: "We hail the man whom neither cowardice nor selfishness could deter from the common cause. Only a few voices were raised for the assertion of life and human personality, and yours was the loudest of all. Now funeral motives are being drowned by the vigorous voices of awakening life, and we are firmly convinced that contact with the working people and the native soil will give a powerful uplift to your creative work."

For the first period (approximately 1892-1904) the following works are the most outstanding:

1. *Short Stories and Sketches*. (Several volumes.)

In these productions, Gorky is at odds with life. He hates the smug existence of the rich, the placid spirit of the intelligentsia, the servility of the peasant. It seems to him that the only free man in his country, free in spirit and body, is the *bossyak* (literally, "the barefooted") whom he decorates with gay colors. Some day, he thinks, this *bossyak* may become the master of life. At any rate,

he is superior to the rest of society (this gave occasion to critics to discover affinities between Gorky of the first period and Nietzsche). The stories and sketches are hardly an adequate picture of real life. They rather express the yearnings and cravings of a restless poetic soul.

2. *Foma Gordyeyev*. (1899.)

3. *Three of Them*. (1900-1901.)

Novels expressing the groping of plain men for a solution of the meaning of life. Foma in *Foma Gordyeyev* is a son of the middle-class, heir to a great fortune; Ilya in *Three of Them* is a son of peasants who emigrated into a modern industrial center. Both are thrown into the jungle of life to work out for themselves a true philosophy. Both have a restless soul, dissatisfied with compromises, and both finally perish in agony under the lash of inscrutable reality.

"Foma is a *bossyak* and a proletarian in spite of his millions. He is a *bossyak* reared in the Russian soil, that is to say, he is not only a man absolutely unadapted to struggle, but he accelerates his own destruction with a strange impatience and passion. His destruction lures him as an abyss into which he looks every minute.

"Foma is a mystic, religious nature, thinking in terms of the truth of life and peace among men, yet at the same time he is a skeptic. A terrible drama of spiritual blindness and spiritual impotence takes place. The hunger for life and heroism is expressed in orgies, the hunger for space, in hideous excesses; yearnings turn into sickness, into a veritable nostalgia for an unknown far-off homeland of beauty." ANDREYEVITCH.

4. *The Philistines*. (1902.)

A play depicting the decay of the middle-class Russian family. Contrasted with this decay is the sturdy workman, Nil.

"Nil, the machinist, is enthusiastic over the processes of life; he preaches courage and the love of life. His activities are directed against the petty middle-class which lacks creative energy. Nil loves to forge; 'to swing the hammer' is for him a joy; he is always eager to meddle 'in the very thickest of life'; he hates 'rotting existence' and believes in the victory of new life."

V. L. LVOV-ROGATCHEVSKY.

5. *In the Depths* (literally: *At the Bottom*). (1903.)

A play taking place in a lodging house for the poorest (night asylum). Gorky gives a remarkable collection of creatures that once were men. The play is more realistic than his earlier stories. Hardly any tinge of the superman is given to those tramps, thieves, ex-convicts, and prostitutes. The picture is extremely gloomy.

In the second period, Gorky is enchanted by the social forces that seem to him to mold life into new shapes. These are the working-class struggling for industrial freedom, the peasantry breaking the chains of slavery, and the thinking elements of the masses finding in the people at large the meaning of life. The major works of this period are:

6. *Mother*. (1905.)

✓ A novel describing the revolutionary labor-movement in an industrial suburb and the changes wrought in the minds of the workingmen through their adherence to an ideal lifting them above their everyday life.

"There is a purpose in each of Gorky's works, yet the development of his purpose is seldom mechanical: he nearly always succeeds in overcoming his rationalism, in subjugating his idea to a living, stirring image. An example is *Mother*. The story is rational from beginning to end. The task of the

author was incredible, enough to make you giddy. He wanted to show how a middle-aged ignorant woman, beaten all her life and broken into a dull patience, is transformed into a conscious and active socialist with a sweeping grasp of revolutionary principles. However, when you finish reading and look back over those hundreds of pages, you marvel not so much at the magnitude of his purpose as at the purely artistic impressions the author made you experience."

A. DERMAN. ✓

7. *Confessions*. Novel. (1908.)

The story of a plain man seeking a religious solution for the problem of life and finally making the people his great religious ideal. His God becomes the God of justice and love, unity and humaneness.

8. *Summer*. (1909.)

A novel devoted to the agrarian movement in the villages. The story is full of sun-lit love for the common people and ends with "Holiday greetings, thou great Russian nation." It is remarkable for its optimism at a time when the political prospect of Russia was very dark.

In the third period, Gorky's writings are stripped of their romantic adornments. Gorky goes back to life as it is, yet now he no more rejects it as in his first period. He finds beauty even among the poorest in spirit. He is more calm, reposed. A delicate tenderness permeates his realistic colorful descriptions. The most notable of this period are:

9. *Matvey Kozhemyakin*. Novel. (1911.)

10. *My Childhood*. Reminiscences. (1913.)

"Gorky describes the savagery, ignorance, drunkenness, rakishness, stupidity, recklessness, poverty, and dirt of the

gray masses of the people. In a word, he tells a story of an immense sea of evil flooding our grievous and gloomy life. However, there is only a deepened melancholy, a sadness, a subdued longing [in these works]. Above this feeling rises his sincere faith in the triumph of good, the joy of living."

M. KOROLITZKY.

[Among the rest of Gorky's works attention is called to his *Town Okurov*; *Italian Tales*; *Over Russia*; *Children of the Sun*; *The Life of a Superfluous Man*.]

LEONID ANDREYEV (1871-1919)

"I HAVE traversed many towns and lands, and nowhere have I seen a free man," says one of Andreyev's heroes. "I have seen only slaves. I have seen cages in which they live, beds on which they are born and die; I have seen their hatred and love, their sin and virtue. And their pleasures have I seen: miserable attempts at reviving ancient joy. And whatever I saw bore the stamp of stupidity and madness. . . . Amid the flowers of a beautiful earth they have erected a madhouse."

These words could be made a motto to most of Andreyev's works. Andreyev questions the fundamentals of our life. Things taken by mankind for granted he subjects to a sharp scrutiny only to arrive at the conclusion that there is madness and horror everywhere. Human existence, human thought, human actions, and valuations strike him as full of exasperating problems that allow no rest and no happiness in the inquisitive mind. The simplest of these problems is, perhaps, the problem of the subconscious. Man never knows what he is apt to do in a few minutes. "Thousands of lives are present in my soul," Andreyev says in one of his essays, "lives that preceded my birth. Every life speaks its own language." Can there be any prospect of freedom for the individual?

Andreyev creates one work after the other to emphasize this lack of freedom. Man's passions are the abysmal brute that is ever lurking in the depths of the human soul. Man's thought is a treacherous weapon that turns against its master in the most crucial moment.

Man is limited to his individual consciousness, ever unable to cast a glance under the skull of another human being. Man thinks he is embracing the universe while he himself is only a slave to laws of thought and existence that not he has created and not he is at liberty to alter.

Walls and walls are surrounding Andreyev on every side: The wall of the laws of nature that make every human being a prisoner in the world, and the wall of our psychology that make a man a prisoner within his own brain; the wall of blind fate determining the lot of man with implacable cruelty, and the wall of the unknown that breathes dread into human souls; the wall of modern culture crushing every trait of creative individuality, and the wall of human institutions with their misery, hatred, oppression of the weakest, and streams of innocent blood; the wall of age which nobody can fail to approach, and the wall of all walls—death looming up at the end of men and worlds. Against all these walls, Andreyev's thought beats with furious passion. He finds no solution. He accepts no consolation. Religion is no answer to him. God, if there is a God, is the greatest of all riddles that make man's mind despair and man's heart ache with indignation; love leads nowhere, since men that burnt themselves out in a great sacrifice of love have not improved the world; good in general is of no avail, since it is a shame to flaunt one's goodness in a world steeped in sin, wretchedness, and evil. Only a miracle could break the numerous walls that surround our existence, but he who puts his faith in a miracle is finally deceived and betrayed.

Thus Andreyev is engaged in a cruel feud with life, with destiny, with God, with reason. He challenges his masters, the masters of all our fortunes, in the words of

Anathema: "I am tired of searching. I am tired of living and fruitless suffering in my vain pursuit of the thing that ever escapes me. Give me death, but do not torture me with not knowing." Yet the only answer he hears from "Him Who Guards the Entrance" is: "My face is uncovered, yet you do not see it. My speech is loud, yet you do not hear it. My commands are clear, yet you do not know them. And you shall never see and never hear and never understand." He Who Guards the Entrance is speaking "in the language of silence," and loud cries out Andreyev, the man with the wounded intellect, in a contemptuous protest against a reply that answers nothing. Loudly rings that cry of despair through all Andreyev's writings.

Andreyev is the spokesman of the Russian intellectual who was awakened by modern progress from the sluggishness of a patriarchal system to the realization of the complexity of life. The Russian intellectual was suddenly put before enormous problems. The alternative of either heroic sacrifice for a common cause or cowardly abstinence from life's constructive work loomed up before every self-conscious individual. Life itself was undergoing catastrophic changes. Everything was shaking, yielding, giving way to new forms. It looked as if a powerful hand had tossed all structures asunder, revealing the very foundations. Russian intellect was feverishly scrutinizing life, revaluing the most harrowing problems. It was in the nature of Russian surroundings to tinge all these gropings with the dark colors of sadness, loneliness, pessimism. Andreyev was the writer destined to embody this spirit of intellectual unrest in striking artistic pictures. When he wrote his great question marks, he brought together strong yet unclear currents of thought

and emotion diffused through thinking Russia, and out of them created vivid images. The response was vast.

Andreyev is never contented to write a story for the story's sake. Every story or play of his represents a problem. The scheme is somewhat like this: Granted a man is put in certain conditions and made to suffer certain experiences, what would be the spiritual or moral effect? The surroundings and conditions thus become of subordinate importance; the center of gravity is put into the spiritual or moral reaction. It is, therefore, natural for Andreyev to depart often from the road of realism, to substitute abstractions for living human beings, to transfer the place of his tragedies into imaginary realms. Andreyev is one of the first to introduce *schematization* into Russian literature. Yet such is the power of his talent that even the abstract creations of his mind are glowing with intense life, and the excruciating pain of a King Hunger or a Eleazar becomes our own.

“Andreyev has no types. He has masks through which the author himself is speaking to you. Not one image created by Andreyev will enter Russian literature to stay in it as a type. Leonid Andreyev himself will stay in it with all his masks, with his Punch and Judy theater in which all the time is heard the nervous, alarmed, and somewhat bawling voice of the author, a man exalted, stirred, and restless.

“When the sea is covered with a ripple it cannot reflect things. The soul of a modern man, nervous and agitated, is not fitted to objective contemplation, to the construction of characters and bringing them to life. It can reflect only itself, clamor about itself, think its own thought, suffer its own tortures. That is why Andreyev is inclined to fantastic images, to stylization. That is why he makes a number of masks covering the same contents and without individual traits.”

K. I. ARABAZHIN.

"There is a spiral-like impetuosity and the glow of a passionate temperament in the combination of Andreyev's words and phrases. His words harass, beat, lash your face, they importunately intrude into your soul, they moan and clang, they ring the great alarm bells, they strike your heart like claps of thunder, they rankle in your soul, sometimes they yelp and howl like hungry dogs begging for mercy and attention. Andreyev loves contrasts. His contours are sharp. Everything is thrust on the canvas with crude and bold strokes, sometimes producing a sensational effect."

K. I. ARABAZHIN.

And yet, there is sometimes a beautiful tenderness, an almost bashful love of life and youth in many of Andreyev's works. In spite of his heralded objectivism, there is a strain of lyricism vibrating through his thunderous questionings, at times rising to heights of powerful harmony and drowning all other sounds. It is this personal, intimately human quality of his writings that lends them a peculiar fascination.

Andreyev is one of the most prolific and versatile Russian story writers and dramatists. Out of an abundance of a twenty years' harvest we shall select a few most characteristic specimens:

1. *The Wall*. A story. (1901.)

The Great Wall stands between the lepers and the unknown which lures them with irresistible force. In vain are their efforts to crush it or climb over it. It is implacable and eternally silent.

2. *The Abyss*. A story. (1902.)

3. *In the Fog*. A story. (1902.)

Both stories deal with the brute force of sex passion overmastering otherwise pure and innocent human beings.

The Abyss was a subject of nation-wide discussion for a number of months.

4. *The Thought*. Novelette. (1902.)

5. *The Black Masks*. A play. (1908.)

Both works deal with the limitations of the human mind. The hero of *The Thought* was betrayed by reason, which he had considered his most faithful slave. The hero of *The Black Masks* was defeated by the multitude of dark forces hidden within his own personality.

“In *The Black Masks*, Andreyev cruelly asserted that we cannot escape the horror and darkness spread around us; that even if we take refuge in the ‘enchanted castles of our souls’ illuminating them with the brightest lights, the black masks would come and bring along the boundless horror and coldness of life, and extinguish the lights.”

L. S. KOZLOVSKY.

6. *The Life of Vassily Fiveysky*. Novelette. (1904.)

One of the most powerful of Andreyev's works. A man whom fate unjustly persecuted all his life, a second Job, begins to question the justice of God. He is a priest, a believer, and his rebellion against the order of things makes him finally believe that he is chosen to perform miracles. He dies in his superhuman effort to attain the unattainable. The story is carved with a masterful hand out of the very substance of emotion.

7. *So It Was*. Novelette. (1906.)

8. *The Governor*. Novelette. (1906.)

The heroes of both stories, the king in the first, the Russian governor in the second, are persecuted and finally destroyed by the force of blind popular passion. In both stories, the revolutionary movement assumes the rôle of

Fate for individuals put in a position to arouse the people's hatred.

9. *Savva*. A play. (1906.)

Savva is an anarchist disgusted with civilization. He says: "We have got to destroy everything, the old houses, the Universities, science, the old literature, the old art! . . . What I wish is to free the earth, to free Thought. . . . To break the prison in which ideas are hidden away, to give them wings, to open a new, great, unknown world. In fire and thunder, I wish to overstep the boundary of the universe."

Savva is voicing Andreyev's hazy belief in some unknown world which may come as a result of the free creative energy of unshackled humanity. This belief, however, is never as strong in Andreyev as the consciousness of the chains imposed upon human life and soul. The climax of *Savva* is reached when the anarchist's rationalism clashes against the childlike faith of plain people. A miracle happens, yet it is not due to supernatural intervention. It is the miracle of the human mind which creates gods and makes them a living reality.

10. *Judas Iscariot and Others*. Novelette. (1907.)

"In Andreyev's presentation, the ultimate and most horrifying sacrifice brought on the altar of love was not Christ's but Judas's: Christ let men crucify His body, Judas crucified his soul; Christ was beaten and spit upon when led to His execution; Judas's soul is forever crushed and downtrodden. With Judas, as Andreyev depicts him, betrayal is only a mask, not his real face. He betrays Christ out of love for Him, out of the yearning for a miracle. He wants the world to realize quickly who Christ is. He hopes that people will liberate Christ from the hands of His tormentors, he hopes they will pull the accursed cross out of the ground and raise free Jesus high above the earth."

L. S. KOZLOVSKY.

11. *Darkness*. Novelette. (1907.)

Here Andreyev raises the question: What right has a man to be good in the face of so many unhappy people whom life made sinful? Isn't it the greatest sacrifice to give one's purity for his fellow-beings? The story aroused much discussion.

12. *The Life of Man*. A play. (1907.)

This is an almost allegorical work. What is the meaning of life? Of what avail is our struggle for happiness if everything is destined to pass away? What sense is there in beauty, youth, love, fame, friendship, creative work, if man is always alone and at the end he is old and doomed to death?

All these questions are shouting from *The Life of Man*. The inexorableness of the order of things is represented by Him in Gray, in whose hands the candle symbolizing human life is burning down slowly but incessantly.

"Who is 'He in Gray?' Is it God, Devil, Fate? We do not know. Neither does Andreyev know. Or perhaps he only pretends not to know. A deeply nihilistic thought, full of all-denying pessimism, is hidden behind 'Him in Gray.' For Andreyev, there is nothing beyond, neither Devil, nor God, nor Fate. There is only 'Somebody in Gray,' only a 'Wall' against which mankind struggles in vain. It is a stony, gray, indifferent implacable wall."

K. I. ARABAZHIN.

13. *King Hunger*. A play. (1908.)

An allegorical presentation of modern class-struggle and revolution. Artistically, *King Hunger* does not rank with the best of Andreyev's works. It is, however, significant as a reflection of the counter-revolution in Russia and the belief in coming upheavals.

14. *Eleazar*. A story. (1908.)

The man who spent three days and three nights in the kingdom of death comes back to life, yet his glance deadens all joy and puts horror into men's hearts. *Eleazar* is counted among the best of Andreyev's productions.

15. *The Seven Who Were Hanged*. Novelette. (1909.)

Seven men and women, revolutionists and ordinary criminals, are waiting for death in their prison cells. What do they experience? What thoughts are surging in their minds? What visions do they see? What fears are consuming them? Leonid Andreyev follows the seven up to the very scaffold. The story stands out as a work of unsurpassed strength and penetration.

16. *Anathema*. A tragedy. (1909.)

Three figures occupy the foreground in this profound work: David Laizer, personifying goodness and self-sacrifice for the sake of humanity; *Anathema*, personifying the inquisitive human mind that wants to understand instead of blindly believing; and He Who Guards the Entrance, the eternal mystery, the eternal silence to which man cannot reconcile himself. *Anathema* is highly valued as a work of art.

17. *The Ocean*. A tragedy. (1911.)

"Beyond the shores of life, beyond the boundaries accessible to our eyes, the limitless ocean of chaos begins, deep, indomitable, constantly stirred. Andreyev's symbolical drama, *The Ocean*, is a hymn to this boundless unconquered elemental power of life, to those new and fearful possibilities of life exceeding all limits of conscious creative work."

L. S. KOZLOVSKY.

Andreyev's lyrical qualities attain here an unusual power.

18. *The Sorrows of Belgium*. A play. (1914.)

The fate of invaded Belgium and the sacrifice of her best minds are represented in this imaginary work.

19. *Gaudeamus*. (1910.)

20. *Ekaterina Ivanovna*. (1913.)

Two plays of the more realistic kind, where philosophical problems give way to dramas of everyday life. The characters in both plays are sharply drawn, and the psychological analysis is very keen. Both plays were, for a long time, part of the Russian repertoire.

[Other works of interest: *To the Stars*, a play; *The Thief*, a story; *The Red Laughter*, notes; *The Curse of the Beast*, a story; *My Diary*, a story; *Sashka Zhegulev*, a novel; *Anfisa*, a play. It must be noted that in almost every work of Andreyev's his creative personality is revealed to a certain degree, the only exceptions being his early stories up to approximately 1900-1901. Nearly every work of Andreyev's, therefore, is of interest to the student.]

V. VERESAYEV (1867--)

AUTHOR of stories and sketches whose works were particularly dear to the progressive Russian intellectual of modern times. Veresayev, perhaps, more than any other writer marks the transition from old patriarchalism to the intensity of modern social life. In his first stories we still feel the melancholy resignation of a Chekhov. In his post-revolutionary works (after 1905) there is the sturdy optimism characteristic of Gorky. Veresayev gives lucid and colorful expression to social gropings prevailing among the thinking elements of Russia. The pivot of his artistic interest is man in his relation to self-sacrifice for a great social cause. However, his figures are no abstractions. They breathe the spirit of unmistakable reality. They are molded from the clay of experiences common to every man and woman in Russia who was connected with the struggle for freedom.

“Veresayev is neither a master of our thoughts, nor a master of our feelings. He is merely a sensitive, observing intellectual, himself overmastered by current thoughts and feelings. With marvelous precision and skill, he records the fluctuations of the social tide. He has reflected all the changes in the course of social thought, all the stages of social movement. . . . His courageous, active characters illumine the darkness of Russian life like so many bright torches, and like the luminaries of Christianity they wake in our soul a passionate desire to live in light, to forsake the stale misery of everyday life for the joy of heroic deeds.”

V. Lvov.

"Veresayev's hero is always an intellectual, and could be nothing else. Veresayev is a writer of the intelligentzia, pure and simple. He is fascinated by contemplations over the intelligentzia; he is its historian and interpreter. As a many-sided person, Veresayev is necessarily interested in many things, yet only in a casual way. His real self is revealed in his analysis of the intellectual's mind. This is his element, his main object, his real interest that gives a clue to his personality. Whatever he has written bears the sharp imprint of deep personal experiences. The works and the author are intimately connected as if supplementing each other. In this respect hardly any writer is more subjective than Veresayev."

E. KOLTONOVSKAYA.

Veresayev's language is clear, simple, and refined. His tone is sincere and intimate. His attitude is broad and sympathetic. A peculiar warmth of human understanding permeates Veresayev's writings, and the reader feels that he is taken into the confidence of a loving brother who cherishes beautiful ideals.

1. *Pathless*. A story. (1894.)

"Tchekanov, the hero of *Pathless*, a physician, is a son of the dark and gloomy eighties when nobody saw a way out. He is weighed down by the 'horror and curse' of his generation. . . . He is able, honest; he is hungry for social activities, yet his time passes aimlessly, 'with no guiding star,' and he does not believe he could make use of his powers. When opportunity offers itself, he goes to fight famine and cholera, yet he lacks faith to animate his work. His only desire is to 'anesthetize himself, to find complete forgetfulness' in this semblance of useful work in the service of humanity.

"Life is cruel to him. The people whom he wanted to serve mistake him for an enemy and beat him to death. The physician dies in a rotten dark village, and it is astonishing to find that on his deathbed he musters enough power to forgive the people."

A. IZMAILOV.

2. *The Contagious Disease*. A story. (1897).

This story depicts the next stage in the life of the intelligentsia. The deep shadows of the eighties are already dissipating. There are new voices in the air. Labor begins to stir. Unrest is accumulating under the surface. The Marxists are predicting a speedy revolution.

“In prolonged debates between Narodniki and Marxists, the standards of two camps and two generations become outlined in a somewhat schematic manner. On one hand the camp of the sentimental philanthropists of the eighties who had substituted the sacrifice of money for the sacrifice of themselves and had confused service to the government with service to the people; on the other hand the camp of revolutionary Marxists rejecting compromises and half-measures, proclaiming with enthusiasm the gospel of work for the cause.”

V. L. LVOV-ROGATCHEVSKY.

3. *The Turning Point*. Novel. (1902.)

The story marks the beginning of the new century. We find in it a group of young intellectuals some of whom are actually engaged in revolutionary work. We still hear the voices of meditation and reflection; there are men and women who complain and whine in their inability either to raise the banner of heroic but dangerous work or settle down in the mire of conventional sluggishness. Yet those feeble voices are drowned in hymns of youth and life, unreflecting, undoubting, unflinching, eager to give everything in the ecstasy of revolutionary onrush. In the background, the figure of the revolutionary workingman looms up.

4. *Towards Life*. Novel. (1909.)

Here we notice the growth of the revolutionary intellectual as a result of intensive social strife and an im-

proved social atmosphere. The hero grows broader and deeper.

"The hero is much interested in social problems; he is a radical, a member of the Social-Democratic party. Yet he is no more a rationalist as were the former heroes of Veresayev. He has a religious feeling and a still more pronounced cosmic feeling. He is, first of all, a man facing God and Nature. He needs to know the truth about himself as a man, a part of one great living whole. The dry human reason with its ready answers that 'have no roots in the soul,' inspires him with little confidence. He greedily listens to the voices of his elemental life where everything is to him dark, mysterious, and new."

E. KOLTONOVSKAYA.

5. *Memories of a Physician.* (1901.)

With ultimate sincerity Veresayev related in this book his experiences first as a student of medicine, then as a young physician. What he told was not flattering to the medical profession. The book aroused an enormous amount of discussion.

6. *In the War.* Sketches. (1907.)

As a participant of the Russo-Japanese war, Veresayev gives an eyewitness's account of the inefficiency, negligence, cowardice, and brutality of the Russian military command which culminated in shameful defeats. This is one of the most truthful stories of the disintegration and demoralization of a great army under corrupt rule.

7. *The Living Life*, consisting of two volumes:

Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoi. (1911.)

Apollo and Dionysius. (1915.)

Differing in contents, the first being a juxtaposition of Dostoyevsky's and Tolstoi's philosophies of life, the sec-

ond, a study in Nietzsche's philosophy as compared with the cults of the ancient gods of Greece, both volumes have one aim,—the assertion of life. Veresayev proclaims the supremacy of instinct over reason, of life over consciousness. Truth is to him, together with Nietzsche, "not a thing to be revealed, but a thing to be created." The road to it lies in "rejuvenation of the man himself, rejuvenation of his blood, nerves, his entire body, regeneration of the instinct of life." The books are written in an easy and vivid style, and are full of poetic beauty.

[Of interest are also Veresayev's short stories and his longer story, *The End of Andrey Ivanovitch*.]

A. KUPRIN (1870-)

WRITER of stories and sketches. Kuprin's works, all of a realistic character, reveal the author as a man of spiritual balance and health. Kuprin is interested in life, in all its manifestations. *The Stream of Life* he called one of his stories, and the stream of life he is eager to reflect in his artistic productions. Life is infinite; its forms are countless; its happenings are manifold; the aspect of things changes from beautiful sublimity to crime and despair. Yet the light of the soul shines through all the jungles of life, and our scrutiny of her face should never lose its keenness. Such is Kuprin's program.

Kuprin is actuated by an insatiable artistic curiosity. He would not shut himself in one corner of the world. There is not one thing that looms up before his eyes to the exclusion of the rest. The problem of God or the life beyond is only one wave in the stream of life; revolution is a ripple; death is an episode; sex is one among many emotions. Joy and sadness are twin brothers wandering through the hearts of men. What remains for the artist is to go through life, to fix his gaze on people, characters, quaint constellations, amusing or touching or shocking happenings.

This Kuprin does with joy and force. His works are all alive with gay designs, brimful of powerful emotions, astir with movement and packed with meaning, swept by strong winds, and pierced through by arrows of light. Kuprin loves everything, and the number of his friends is

amazing: the tramp and the scholar, the horse thief and the philosopher, the contrabandist and the artist, the bar-keeper and the physician, the prostitute and the priest, the plain soldier and the army officer, the Pole and the Jew, the revolutionist and the Black Hundred official, the peasant and the noble landlord, the industrial worker and the business magnate, the prize-fighter and the school teacher, the young girl and the crippled beggar, the child and the burglar, the race horse and the dog,—all find room in his stories, and to all of them he gives in turn his loving attention. He makes no effort in calling his figures into existence. They come to him with ease and grace. His only task is to choose, to concentrate for a while on a definite point in the everlasting current. This concentration is done with unusual energy. Kuprin takes in every shade, every line, every detail. His characters are typical. His slang is magnificent. His dialogues are reality itself. His descriptions are a result of numerous and careful observations. Altogether his works unfold before the reader a broad and varied panorama of everyday Russian life at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the same time, there is a touch of sadness in most of Kuprin's writings, as if a man were bashfully yearning for something vague and beautiful which will never be attained.

In summing up Kuprin's merits, in a report before the Russian National Academy, division of Literature, in 1912, the aged venerable academician, K. Arsenyev, thus characterized our author:

“Kuprin remains faithful to the best traditions of our literature. Not overstepping the boundaries of healthy realism, at the same time not shrinking before the darkest sides of reality, he follows the traditions of Turgenev in preserving the

purity of the Russian language, and he writes with a graceful simplicity which excludes artificial contents or unnaturally distorted form."

These words link Kuprin with Russian literature of the nineteenth century, with Turgenev and Tolstoi: Kuprin is a direct descendant of the classics. Yet there is a difference between him and the traditional Russian writer. Kuprin lacks a central idea. His works do not revolve around one axis. Therefore, they do not seem to be *disjecta membra* of one whole. "What is Kuprin himself?" The question was asked many a time by Russian critics. The answer can be only general. Kuprin, as seen in his works, loves strength, motion, sharp reliefs, bright colors, and he is more interested in the psychology of men than in universal ideas. Often he is witty, and his humor is refreshing. Sometimes he chooses to become very simple, and then he writes delightful stories for children. Russia has been glad to recognize his value as a narrator, and he occupies a foremost place among the present generation of writers.

In his versatility, in his search for local color, in his careful construction of a plot, Kuprin approaches the type of an American story-writer more, perhaps, than any of his contemporaries.

1. *Short Stories.* (1893-1918.)

It is hardly possible to make a choice between Kuprin's numerous short stories. In fact, each has an interest of its own, and no one can serve as a substitute for another. The student of Russian literature and Russian life will read as many of them as can be secured.

"Kuprin's stories give the impression of unusual freshness, purity, and brightness. Reading those brief scenes, sketches

and descriptions, you experience something akin to your state of mind on a clear spring morning, when the air expands your chest, when you breathe easily and freely, when the most delicate details of the young verdure are drawn against a blue sky with marvelous accuracy. Life is gladdening at such moments, and this unconscious gladness over the interest, the depth and the multiplicity of life, fills Kuprin's book. The artist resembles a child who has just rushed out into the fields; he cannot have enough of the immediateness of existence; he is affected himself and affects the reader with healthy, sturdy feelings. Involuntarily you exclaim, ' God, how good it is to live! ' And yet, the content of the stories is not happy. In them, as in life, sorrow and joy, the comic and the sad are combined in the most capricious patterns, are fused into one multicolored bright picture so alive that you can almost touch it."

A. I. BOGDANOVITCH.

Of the longer stories the most remarkable are:

2. *The Duel*. Novel. (1905.)

One of the first to describe barrack-life in modern Russia. (Before 1905, the censor allowed no adequate description of the army.) The main figures in the story are the officers of a regiment stationed in a provincial town. The tragedies of the heroes are of a more universal than local character. Yet great attention is given to the environment, to the psychology of the plain soldiers, the drilling, the senseless subordination, the inefficiency of the commander. The types of the officers are drawn with a skilful hand.

"*The Duel* is the best of Kuprin's works. It reveals his talent in a maximum of power and brilliancy. It is written with amazing mastery, at the same time it shows no signs of effort. A plastic expositor of real life is combined in Kuprin with an artist of modern type, a psychologist, and a lyricist. *The Duel* is not only a story but an artistic epic, both of so-

ciety and individuals, combining the satirical and the tragic elements. Its power is in its simplicity and in its undivided artistic mood."

E. KOLTONOVSKAYA.

3. *Sulamith*. Novelette. (1908.)

The love-story of King Solomon and the shepherdess. Oriental nature, oriental tone, and oriental temperament are reproduced in this work with much love and artistic finish. One of the best exotic stories in the Russian language.

4. *The Pit*. Novel. (1909-1913.)

The scene of action is a house of ill-repute in a southern Russian town. The characters are a number of girls and a host of intellectual visitors. The work is a gallery of the actual types which could be met in any intellectual circle in Russia. The place where the author finds his men, gives him an opportunity to look deeper into their real selves. Kuprin does not shun details of sex-life, yet he always remains the artist whose frankness is the presentation of truth. He never revels in an artistically superfluous scrutiny of vulgar things. There is almost an unique simplicity in his writings on sex relation. The psychological analysis is very keen.

5. *A Bracelet of Garnets*. Novelette. (1911.)

A sentimental yet very beautiful love-story, full of romanticism and youthful faith in human nature. As a motto, the author puts on the front pages the following note: "L. van Beethoven, 2 Son. (Op. 2, No. 2)."

6. *Leastrygonians*. Sketches. (1912.)

One of the most charming descriptions of the Black Sea coast and its fisherfolk. Kuprin's eye for nature's

beauty and his love for the primitive appear at their best in these sketches. Refinement, humor, imagination, make these simple pages almost a hymn to the eternal forces of life.

“Sharp external perception is combined in Kuprin with internal fullness and depth. He almost exceeds the boundaries of our five senses. He is endowed with a strange faculty, a subconscious reason, which enables him to grasp the inner substance of things, the sequence of causes and effects, the primitive foundation of life.”

E. KOLTONOVSKAYA.

[Other works of interest: *Moloch*; *Stories for Children*; *Humorous Stories*; *At Rest*, a play.]

I. BUNIN (1870-)

IN lonely corners of the great Plain, old mansions are dreaming of days gone by. Life, once gay and sturdy, oozed out through moldy floors and cracked walls. The noble inhabitants have disappeared, or live in little out-buildings, forlorn and poor. The broad ponds are half dry. The park and the orchard overrun the playgrounds and the paths. A riot of green and blossoms triumphs over the work of human hands. Life glories among ruins. . . . An eternal sun pours life over dilapidation.

This is the Russia of the nobles, the decay of noble landholding: a tendency clearly marked in the economic history of Russia after the abolition of serfdom.

In one of such melancholy nooks, Ivan Bunin was born. In his childhood, he still breathed the atmosphere of ancient traditions. The old types, pillars of an archaic yet genuine culture, were still alive, though passing rapidly. When he grew up, decay was nearly complete. Sadness lingered on the silent, too silent piazzas; sadness looked, wide-eyed, at the onrush of primitive nature.

This clear crystalline sadness Bunin took with him into his poems and stories. It is a sadness that never complains. It is dejection full of reserve and resignation. It is dignified. It is shy. Its words are scant and lucid. It looks backward yet it has courage to face the present. It finds a quaint happiness in its own sweetness. And it finds consolation in life's eternal regeneration. "My heart is grieving in secret joy that life is vast and empty like the steppe." . . . "All is as was before. . . . Only

my life has passed." . . . "And happy am I with my grievous lot." . . . "I greet you, silent cell and joy of lonely days."

In Bunin's poems, nature is foremost, but it appears in its more subdued moments. Dusk, night, moonshine, autumn, falling leaves, far north, golden fields after harvest, asters, steppe, hoar frost, lonely forest. . . . Bunin not only describes, he lives nature. Often he goes to the Orient, to Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey. He stands there at the grave of ancient civilizations; he meditates over the tombs of old heroic deeds. His sadness is nourished by the contrast between the present loneliness and the former wealth of thought and action. His moods become more universal. His poems rise to heights of philosophic contemplation.

In his stories, Bunin lovingly returns to the old noble mansion. He recollects former years. He draws types of the former generation. He gives the spirit of the old, carefree life. When he visits the same mansions later, he sees the passing, the desolation, the cobwebs, the powerless inhabitants. His stories, or rather sketches, of this life are almost poems in prose,—the notes of a wanderer who has lost his home. What he describes is no more his own, though it stirs beautiful and gracious recollections. Here Bunin remains detached,—friendly, understanding, but detached.

There is, however, another aspect to the mansion, and that is the surrounding village with its *moujiks*. Following the Russian tradition, Bunin gives much care to pictures of peasant life. But here he is still more detached. He does not live the life of the village. He does not suffer the pain of its people. He does not see their visions. He is an outside observer, and what he

sees and narrates is appalling. Here the lyrical tone leaves Bunin entirely. He is cool and analytical, and though he does not accuse, he cannot conceal his aversion. "They have not even traditions," he writes of the peasants. "Their graves have no names. And their lives, how they resemble each other, how meager they are and how they pass without leaving a trace! For the fruit of their work and worry is only bread, the real concrete bread which is being eaten. They have dug ponds in the rocky bed of the little stream Kamenka which disappeared long ago. Yet the ponds are nothing durable, they become dry. They have built habitations. Yet their habitations are short-lived; at the first spark they burn to the ground." Bunin has no love for this kind of people and almost no pity.

Bunin's style is well characterized by the venerable academician, Count Golenishtchev-Kutuzov, in a paper presented to the National Academy: "Those who seek 'novelty' in art can find proof in Bunin's works to the effect that real art detects in ages-old and yet ever young pictures of nature, as well as in the moods of the human soul, a wealth of new details, new shades of beauty which can be expressed in original form without recurring to the artificial means of symbolism, impressionism, or decadence." Bunin himself, in a public address in 1913, characterized as "the most precious features" of Russian literature the qualities of "depth, earnestness, simplicity, sincerity, nobility, directness," repudiating all "modernist" attempts. Bunin remains classic. Yet he could not avoid the influence of his time. His poems are more colorful than those of the nineteenth century and are often tinged with impressionism, especially where the shades of color are given.

1. *Poems.* (Various collections and groups between 1886 and 1915.)

"Against the background of Russian modernism, Bunin's poetry stands out as the best in the old. He continues the eternal Pushkin tradition and in his clear and stern outlines he gives examples of nobility and directness. . . . His lines are of the old coinage that has stood the test; his handwriting is the most legible in modern literature; his design is concise and concentrated. . . . Both inwardly and outwardly, his poems deviate from prose at just the proper time; perhaps it is more correct to say that he makes prose poetic; perhaps he rather conquers prose and turns it into poems than creates poems as something apart from prose. His verse seems to have lost its independence, its absolute distinction from prose, yet it has not become ordinary.

"Bunin turns into poetry the everyday facts. He is not afraid of the old values of the world. . . . He pictures facts, from which beauty is organically born. We would call it white beauty, for this is Bunin's favorite color. The epithets white, silvery, silver-gray sound so often in his lucid pages. Not only on his window-pane 'silvery from rime, chrysanthemums are sketched' but his poems in general seem to be touched with rime and recall those charming arabesques which our Russian landscape painter, Frost, draws. . . . His poetry never flames, it has no pathos, but it has the power of sincerity and truth."

J. EICHENWALD.

"Bunin has shown an inimitable mastery in the art of landscape painting. In this realm none equals him among the writers of the present generation. Bunin's landscapes are distinguished by genuine simplicity and clarity. His attitude towards nature is, not the impetuous passion of Tyutchev, but a quiet love which seeks for tenderness, happiness, joy."

VL. KRANICHFELD.

"After picturing his native land, he was drawn to far-away countries, to the burning sun-lit Orient which he describes in colors seen with a sharp eye, yet he also puts into his poems 'the things that shone in these lands.' This, how-

ever, he acquired mainly from books, legends, and the beliefs of the Oriental peoples, particularly the peoples of ancient times. In a revival of the past, in a spiritual communion with former generations, Bunin finds a way of broadening, or, as he puts it himself, of 'multiplying' our own existence."

TH. D. BATYUSHKOV.

2. *Short Stories and Sketches.* (1886-1917.)

In one of his lyrical sketches, Bunin speaks of his trip over a new railroad-line cut through the woods. "I see the station-fires recede and disappear among the trees. To which country belong I, a lonesome wanderer? What has remained in common between me and this primitive forest land? Over vast plains it stretches endlessly. Is it my part to understand its sorrow, to give it aid? How beautiful, how rich is this virgin land! Great shadowy walls loom up on either side drowsing silently in this warm January night filled with the tender and pure fragrance of snow and fresh pines. And what mystic distances ahead!"

This tone prevails in most of Bunin's lyrical sketches. However, when he comes down to the plain inhabitants of these "mystic distances," he sees only misery and ugliness. A hungry peasant-woman whose children are too frightened to clamor for bread. A poor country teacher whose life is devoid of culture and refinement. A broken landlord, drinking heavily. Tattered pilgrims marching through a bleak landscape. A country priest in primitive surroundings. "Quiet and desolation,—not exhaustion but desolation," as Bunin said in one of these sketches. "A whole epic of desolation."

3. *The Village.* Sketches. (1910.)

In this book, the author's aversion to village life reached its climax. With outward calm and inner horror,

Bunin describes the peasants of a small village after the stormy days of the abortive revolution. He sees only hideous instincts, savagery, brutality, greed.

“Bunin as narrator has a streak of cruelty. It is in the nature of his talent. His is not the pathological, neurotic cruelty which pervades Dostoyevsky's works. His cruelty is calm, balanced, judicious; it is a result of long contemplation and scrupulous investigation. Bunin searches for the roots of evil with a sober, coldly incisive mind, and yet with inner passion. These researches draw him irresistibly. The impression created by *The Village* is dumbfounding.”

E. KALTONOVSKAYA.

Bunin is also known as a translator of Anglo-American poets. He translated many of Byron's, Tennyson's, and Longfellow's poems.

[Of merit is also Bunin's *Temple of the Sun*, lyrical travel-sketches of Turkey, the Archipelago, Palestine, Egypt.]

O. G. SERGEYEV-TZENSKY (1876-)

IN the polychrome symphony of Russian literature, Sergeyev-Tzensky's voice became heard as a cry of anguish. Amidst a multitude of complacent artists, he stood up with a distorted face, with a curse on his lips, with a gesture of burning despair. Life, what is it? It is a mockery, a humiliation. "All of life seems to be dragged to the ground by an iron rope; there is no good or evil in life, there are only facts; the thing that alone justifies life is horror, which has been invented for this purpose by the feeble human soul." Sergeyev-Tzensky was vehement and merciless in recording the futility of life. It seemed to him that the fate of men was in the hands of somebody or something blind, cruel, vicious, without aim or reason. Accident was determining the happiness or misery of human beings; brute elemental force was killing what nobility and beauty tried to assert itself. "Life is a road to the cemetery decorated with theatrical scenery." "Life is a series of senseless accidents and senseless deaths." "Life is cruelty." "Man is a malign mixture of deity and amphibium." Story after story Sergeyev-Tzensky put forth to express his repudiation of life. And because the stories were strong in the drawing of characters and the vividness of description, and because the sincerity of the author was felt as a perceptible vibration throughout every story, and because his productions were so strange, challenging, almost cruel, yet always full of a humane spirit and tense with suppressed emotion, the author rapidly became

the object of interest and heated discussion. There was much gloom, much brooding, much ugliness in his works. Yet somehow nobody resented it. Sergeyev-Tzensky's personality made the reader accept the horrors he invoked. The reader loved this afflicted, much suffering soul.

At the same time, the stories of Sergeyev-Tzensky were astir with life. This gruff negator knew so well the secret of loving observation, the joy of contact with reality, the fascination of closeness to nature. Moreover, he seemed to draw a sharp line between human society and nature. Man is being eternally "chewed between the jaws of somebody or something"; nature is eternally harmonious and eternally beautiful. Man is destined to pass; Nature is everlasting; her strong current is cleansing the human soul of its mire and filth.

As years passed, however, a change came over Sergeyev-Tzensky. Perhaps it was due to the new tone in Russian life when the country began to recuperate after the shock of 1905-1907. Perhaps it was due to the growing maturity of the artist. Sergeyev-Tzensky began to see a light in the dark cave of life. He discovered a power that would elevate man over the horrors, the meanness, and the cruelty of bare facts. Love as justification, emotional acceptance preceding logical inquiry, impressed itself on the writer's creative imagination. His stories were now shot through with sympathy; the call of life as an irresistible force, the overcoming of loneliness through contact with another human soul, became the subjects of his writing. He sees a time in the future, "when something common for all in the world will gradually filter into life. Shall I call it soul, mystery, thought, or eternity? The word does not matter. Whatever you

call it, the word will not express the thing because it has no name. It will come, and everything will sound in accord; lines from everything will concentrate in the heart of man."

In this new phase, Sergeyev-Tzensky was heartily greeted by those who believed in his talent, and now he stands as one of the most respected and hopeful writers of our generation.

"In reading Sergeyev-Tzensky's stories, we are invariably under the spell of the rare sincerity and avidity with which the author seeks for his truth. We feel that for him it is an actual question of life, that all his stories and novelettes, better or worse, bright or dull, are not a narrative of his seeking for the truth, but the process of seeking itself, that he wrote them not for the reader but for himself; while creating his works, he formulates to himself, he clarifies and apprehends those nebulous shapes of truth, the absence of which makes life devoid of meaning. This increases the contagious effect of the objective truth sought and found by the author."

A. DERMAN.

"The world for Sergeyev-Tzensky is full of things; everything has a face, has life, has a name. Sergeyev-Tzensky's world is just the opposite of Dostoyevsky's, where human beings are surrounded by a great void; here everything is saturated with a variety of things that have been noticed, recorded, and expressed in the language of the plain people, in our everyday terminology. Sergeyev-Tzensky avidly drinks from these inexhaustible sources of concrete knowledge of the visible world. 'Every day was overcrowded with sun, flowers, care for meals and tea, sound sleep.' So every story by Sergeyev-Tzensky is overcrowded with various things, colors, names, sayings. . . . Here everything has sharp contours, has individuality. Overpowered by the idea that our life is in the hands of somebody hostile, he still admires the constructive processes of life. . . . Never since Gogol has Russian literature known such a religion of work. Death only emphasizes

the futility of this intensive spending of energy, the rottenness at the bottom of great effort.”

A. GORNFELD.

“Sergeyev-Tzensky’s images, all saturated with color, remind one of double-petaled flowers in a hothouse. This quality is felt in his poetic prose, musical, picturesque, plastic, fragrant. His stories should not be read in haste, should not be scanned. One ought to read them slowly, the way you recite verse that is full of epithets and similes. Sergeyev-Tzensky is an artist who is in love with picturesque words. He does not typewrite them, indeed, he enjoys the creative process, he devotes his free time to the happiness of creative work. . . . If our contemporary writers suffer from anemia, Sergeyev-Tzensky is sometimes hampered by a fullness of blood and vigor. His imagination knows no limit.”

V. LVOV-ROGATCHEVSKY.

“A desire to express in full every notion of life, coupled with an aversion for the trite images and similes current in literature, led Sergeyev-Tzensky, in the first years of his career, to use queer expressions, startling descriptions, far-fetched similes which sometimes appealed very little to the imagination of the reader. Some of his descriptions became excellent material for parodies. Some gave him more fame than even the discussions over his best stories. It must be noted, however, that at no time was it a pose with the author. It was a sincere desire on his part to give the impression of the thing as he felt it. It was an attempt to break the monotony of traditional writing. That it induced many a critic to class him with the pseudo-modernists and decadents, mattered little to him. In the course of time, he gradually dropped this vague and unnatural manner and became strongly realistic in the best sense of the word.

“Sergeyev-Tzensky grows with every year, with every new step. Each new work of his bears a clearer stamp of those tragic motives which make the essence of Russian literature and give it a world-wide significance. Ever closer does he come to the understanding of ‘something’ which makes life sacred and reconciles us with existence.”

IVANOV-RAZUMNIK.

1. *Short Stories.* (1903-1917.)

The evolution of Sergeyev-Tzensky's conception of life can be traced through his short stories as well as through his novelettes. The former, therefore, must be divided into two groups—those of the first and those of the second period. The most characteristic of the first period are: *Masks*; *Difteria*; *Father Dear*; *Murder*; *Wing-Stroke*; *I Shall Soon Die*; *A Little Corner*; *The Baby Bear*; *On the Shore*. As a motto to all these stories, a sentence from *Masks* may be cited: "Somebody big and powerful has covered the earth with an air-pump, pressed its edges tight and pumped the air from within; that is why life is so crowded, tense, and there is nothing to breathe with." In the second period, of which the stories *Sky*; *Bosom*; *Neighbor*; *Fright*; *The Sun That Is in No Hurry* are the most characteristic, a more optimistic view on life prevails.

2. *Forest Marshes.* (1907.)

One of the most impressive of the author's novelettes. It is the story of a plain woman, a daughter of poor peasants, who has an inherently beautiful soul, a craving for a clean life, a strong sense of justice, and a sensitiveness as tender as only the most chosen are endowed with. All this, however, is crushed by a terrific combination of circumstances amidst a poor and hideous life, and finally the woman dies as senselessly as she lived. The impression of *Forest Marshes* is actually haunting.

3. *Babayev.* (1907.)

A series of sketches in its totality forming the life story of Lieutenant Babayev, who serves in the Russian army, partakes in the orgies of his comrades, in the Jew-

ish massacres, in the quelling of a peasants' revolt, in the crushing of a revolutionary insurrection, and yet feels that his life is ugly and that there must be some truth, some meaning in life which he cannot grasp. The struggle of that unhappy and cruel soul for a solution of his appalling existence makes the reader forget some weak parts in the work. *Babayev* is essentially Russian, and it shows a varied panorama of general disorder and neurasthenia in the Russia of 1905-1906.

"There is no meaning, no sanctity, no beauty,—Lieutenant Babayev cannot find them, and therefore he purposely and with cold curiosity commits all these senseless, criminal, abhorrent acts. When he shoots down the workingmen and students, he envies them passionately because 'they, not he, intend to create a new life; they are broad, while he is narrow; they broke off from themselves and plunged, gaily-voiced, into immensity, as one plunges from a high beach into the ocean, while he is chained to himself and exhausted.' Lieutenant Babayev dies as senselessly as he lived; he falls from the hand of a girl-revolutionary, and not even in the agony of death is his soul born."

IVANOV-RAZUMNIK.

4. *The Sadness of the Fields*. Novelette. (1909.)

"There was suffering, beautiful, deep, gladsome, painful, silent, wept over in sleepless nights," thus the author speaks of the heroine of this novelette, the young beautiful woman whose six children died at their birth and who now bears the seventh under her heart. She is sad, yet there is hope faintly gleaming; she is composed, yet despair is eating at the root of her existence. Contrasted with it is a sturdy, active, healthy farm life tense with sheer muscular vigor and saturated with creative effort. The question "why?" is ringing throughout the entire

work, which is full of plastic figures and motion, and yet gives the impression of a pathetic, melancholy song. The figure of the woman is drawn with much tenderness and love. Anna dies, yet life continues its course. Life is stronger than all our questions, suffering, and despair.

This strangely moving story is one of the best productions of modern Russian literature.

5. *Movements.* (1909-1910.)

A novelette where the question of fate again occupies the author. A man is telling the story of his life. He was healthy, strong, gay, a hard worker, a builder of life. He started poor, he created for himself an independent and respected existence. His estate is his pride and joy. He is at the summit of life. Yet a combination of circumstances ruins him and leaves him practically poor. He loses his good name. He discovers that he is ill and soon to die. Why is it so? What is his fault?

In the days of his suffering he discovers a great truth—that he has been selfish all his life. The return to a more altruistic conception, a more humane and intimate contact with his fellow human beings, brings a ray of light into the misery of his suffering.

6. *The Oblique Helena.* Novelette. (1916.)

The oblique "Helena" is a coal mine. A young mining engineer who lives there in primitive and inhuman conditions becomes disgusted with life and decides to commit suicide. Just when he is ready for the fatal act, a series of ordinary incidents disturbs his mind. For the first time he realizes how much meaning there is even to the most trivial life. A heavy shock and subsequent recovery make him feel life with a new keenness. It is

not abstract reasoning that erases his non-acceptance of life. It is the immediate realization of numerous bonds connecting us with the actualities of existence. Life simply stretches its many tentacles and holds the man fast; it pours over him a great variety of events which he must face and of responsibilities which he must bear. Thus the solution of the problem, "Why live?", the author indicates, is to be found in the very entanglement of life itself. Here, too, as in *Movements*, the idea of life as a sympathetic contact with other human beings, is modestly, though firmly asserted.

The Oblique Helena is a splendid piece of realistic literature devoid of all the embellishments that were common in Sergeyev-Tzensky's early writings. It is full of unusual vigor, action, and details.

[Other works of importance: *The Orchard*; *Chief of Police Deryabin*, etc.]

M. P. ARTZYBASHEV (1878-)

ARTZYBASHEV belongs entirely to the twentieth century and to the modern city. He lacks the composure of the older Russian writers. He is full of sharp dissonances, of crude and cruel visions. A man with an enormous narrative talent and an eager eye for the tragic, he is haunted by a few ideas which give a strange fascination to most of his works, yet in a way make them repulsive. Artzybashev is afraid of death, which invariably appears to him in the form of disease, decay, decomposition of flesh. To save himself from the apparition of death, he clings to life's most striking manifestations, which, to him, outside of man, are nature in its vigor and beauty, in man himself, sex. Artzybashev became known as the first to speak of sex passion in the most naked manner.

“Artzybashev's ‘peculiarity’ as a writer consists in abusing that manner of artistic expression which I would suggest calling the sexual manner of writing. This manner brings to the foreground descriptions of the details of sex-life which are unnecessary from the standpoint of artistic truth and which it would be better to pass over with silence in the interest of mental hygiene. . . . Naturally, with this dwelling upon unnecessary sexual details, Artzybashev combines a lack of respect for womanhood.”

DR. A. P. OMELTCHENKO (physician).

Sex-life in its crudest forms, sex-desire in its primitive appearance, color the works of Artzybashev, yet they do not exhaust his contents as a writer. He is a keen observer, he eagerly responds to the trend of sentiment in

surrounding society, and he has the ability to thrill the reader by his frankness and boldness.

“ M. Artzybashev scrutinizes the face of nature with a painfully sharp gaze. . . . He looks as if he were seeing every trait, every minute detail of living nature for the first and last time. . . . Artzybashev is first a painter, then a narrator. He writes, not in his study, but in the open air, he uses not a pen, but a brush. This is no more a corner of nature seen through the prism of man’s temperament; this is art striving to become nature.

“ Artzybashev’s landscapes are made by the sun, shot through with light, and saturated with air.

“ . . . However, when the artist turns from landscape to man, he is unable to overcome technical difficulties and the prevailing sentiment of sadness and despair. Here Artzybashev scratches off with a knife the picture of life, and draws death.

“ . . . A dull, heavy tone; twilight; a black casket, a black grave, a black hole; a nightmare of black and fire; a black desert; a black man. All this screens the sun, the moon, and the stars. Black colors replace the golden hues, which the rays of the sun have so tenderly played with. . . .

“ . . . The keenest pleasure of a person is, then, reduced to the cult of the body.”

V. LVOV-ROGATCHEVSKY.

It is fair to say that Artzybashev belongs to the number of young writers who do not shun sensationalism. He would not shrink from catching the reader or holding him spellbound even at the price of too sharp contrasts and nerve-racking scenes. The purpose in his works is not always concealed. Sometimes a strange unpleasant protest arises in the cultured reader against Artzybashev’s “naturalism,” which is intermixed with long and trite discussions.

1. *Stories of the Revolution.* (1904-1907.)

Scattered among Artzybashev's works are a number of short stories which give a good picture of various moments and happenings in the revolution of 1905-1906. The inevitably piercing tones and cruel clashes of revolutionary struggle fitted Artzybashev's artistic inclinations. Scenes that appalled others had a strong attraction for him. In his *Revolutionist*, a squad of soldiers flogs the peasants; his *In the Village* pictures rape committed by a punitive expedition, the peasants kill their soldier enemies from an ambush; *The Blood Stain* describes the fight on barricades and the subsequent cruel execution of revolutionists by victorious officers; *Moujik and Landlord*, *Revolt*, *Horror*, *Morning Shadows* belong to the same series. The revolutionary stories are taken from real life, and give the atmosphere of the bloody strife. To the same series belong the following two:

2. *The Human Tide.* Novel. (1907.)

The scene of action is the city and port of Odessa. The events are grouped around the revolutionary insurrection of the masses in the summer of 1905. The revolt of the sailors on a battle cruiser in the harbor forms a picturesque chapter. The burning of the harbor warehouses is described with a masterful hand. The atmosphere of the great upheaval is, in the main, truthfully reproduced. So are the types of the philistines and the characters of the revolutionists.

3. *The Workingman Shevyrev.* Novelette. (1909.)

The hero is an anarchist, a terrorist. He is hunted by the police and knows that he will soon be captured. The story gives the events of his last day before he is

surrounded. Shevyrev, nominally a workingman, in reality a former student and a man of culture, evolved the creed of hate. "I do not think of love," he says, "I can only hate. Why should I love our people? Because they devour each other like pigs? because they are so miserable, so pitiful, so weak and foolish that they allow millions of them to be driven under the table? . . . I have turned my hate towards those who think themselves the unassailable masters of life. . . . I cannot live, yet while dying I shall remind them of their error; I shall prove that they are themselves defenseless in the hands of men who have courage and sense to throw off the spell of hypnotism."

4. *Sanin*. (1907.)

This novel is a product of the reaction felt by the intelligentsia after the storms of 1905.^{NOI} Individualism instead of collectivism, the cult of power instead of the worship of ideas, bodily pleasures instead of self-sacrifice, are accentuated, if not directly preached, in *Sanin*. Its texture consists of love-episodes and discussions between a group of intellectuals in a provincial town. The love episodes are crude and frank as to sex emotions. The discussions are rather primitive and tedious. The attention attracted by the novel is due to the fact that it attacked boldly a problem much discussed in intellectual circles just after the revolution. Its power lies in its vivid description of characters, in many scenes full of action, and in a strongly felt hunger for life.

"Sanin [the main hero] does not understand human sufferings and sorrow, he cannot experience them in sympathy with others, and he would not hold his lust in bounds even if it should be the cause of others' misfortune. Not one fea-

ture of a new man is contained in such a nature. Sanins are as old as the old régime of which they are a product. . . . They are those who, being ejected from their own social class,—Sanin is the last of a noble family—do not become members of another class or another stable group. They are social parasites.”

DR. A. P. OMELTCHENKO.

“Bright succulent colors, breathing the vibration of joy and strength, alternate with a pale mournful sheen, boresome scraggy words, which importunately stick to you. It seems to the reader that the life of the people described by the author is revolving, as it were, in two different worlds. One world is limited, suffocating, and ugly; here people cripple each other and inflict mortal wounds; whereas, near by, a vast and friendly world lies outstretched, a world radiant with all the joys of life, a world alluring through the powerful voices of blood, instincts, heart.”

L. VOITOLOVSKY.

5. *The Woman That Stood Between*. Novel. (1915.)

Here Artzybashev attempted to show the other side of unrestricted sex-passion. A woman is described, a clean, healthy, and beautiful, though by no means exceptional young woman, destined by nature to be a mother and a friend. Love-experiences with self-seeking men who never cared for the soul or the personality in the object of their desire, make her a fiend of passion, a soulless, dangerous, and desperate enemy of human society. Artzybashev's manner is much more refined in this than in his earlier works.

[Other works of importance: *The Death of Lande*; *The Wife*; *The Millionaire*; *Sub-Lieutenant Gololobov*, and many other short stories; *The Breaking Point*, a novel; *Jealousy*, a play.]

EVGENY CHIRIKOV (1864-)

NOTWITHSTANDING significant changes in the social and economic structure of Russia towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the country as a whole remained provincial. Industrial centers were increasing, yet the prevailing type was a small archaic town. Political parties were forming in the capitals and in the leading cities, yet the bulk of Russia remained untouched. Intellectual unrest was rapidly spreading, yet the average Russian citizen (or inhabitant as he was termed in the official language) was rather indolent and bored. The town population, what may be called, in a sense, the cultured stratum of the Russian nation, led a colorless, spiritless existence. The government officials were confined to deadening routine under a system of strict subordination. The professional man, after leaving his Alma Mater, ordinarily succumbed to the apathy of his surroundings, though never forgetting the dreams and aspirations of his youth. The business man, not yet stirred by the enterprising spirit of modern industrialism, continued his crude work in a lazy, monotonous fashion. Altogether, it was a narrow, stagnant, listless existence, where gossip, cards, drinking, petty jealousies, and paltry ambitions took the place of events. Only at times, a real intellectual, a radical student, a former revolutionary, a political refugee would be thrown into the swamp of provincial lassitude. His clashes with the "aborigines," his futile attempts to mold native thought according to modern ideas, his suffering and despair, would, then, represent a veritable tragedy.

Evgeny Chirikov is the man who described provincial Russia in its true colors. Born and bred in the heart of the Eastern provinces, he knew provincial Russia as few of his colleagues. It was the very air he breathed till late in his life. Through him, perhaps, more than through many a realist, Russia learned to know herself.

Chirikov is possessed of an easy style, an attractive conversational mode of writing, a sense of unobtrusive humor, a tolerant attitude to human weaknesses, and a vague, though sincere, idealism. Chirikov is not the groping kind of a writer. He never tries to grasp the new, the social and political phenomena which are in the making. His is not the task to express very subtle movements of the human soul. He takes known types, characteristics that are widespread, forms of life that have been crystallized and are easy to observe. Moreover, he does not seek for the extraordinary. His material is the ordinary life of ordinary people. "Their life runs, day in and day out, monotonous, boresome like a rainy evening when everything is wet, gray, and gloomy. It is a colorless and tiresome existence. It is like turning the pages of a cook-book. To-day soup and cutlets, tomorrow *borshch* and cutlets, and this is the only change." Chirikov's stories and plays would appear monotonous if not for his vividness, alertness, and unusual skill in drawing characters and reproducing situations and conversations.

Chirikov is not what one may call a great writer. Yet he has been very popular among intellectual Russians during the last twenty years as a truthful narrator, a critic of Russian backwardness, and an inexhaustible source of information concerning provincial Russia. Somehow, Chirikov becomes a friend to those who read him. It is

perhaps his smile, perhaps his love for youth and youthful endeavor. He has the peculiar ability of the Russian writer to "laugh through tears." He is in sympathy with his unhappy heroes, giving utterance to their longing for a sounder and more human life, yet never condemning them for inability to break their chains. He loves and describes children with a unique tenderness.

To the foreigner, Chirikov ought to be most welcome as a man reproducing the original Russian town-life with almost photographic accuracy.

Chirikov's stories, novels, and plays are very numerous. It is, perhaps, advisable to make a selection according to the main themes.

1. *The Students Have Come*. A story. (1897.)
- The Foreigners*. A novelette. (1899.)
- The Prodigal Son*. A story. (1899.)
- On Bail*. A story. (1904.)

In each of these works, one or several radical intellectuals happen to live in a provincial town. In *The Students Have Come*, two university boys, spending their vacation in the native town, are trying to develop the consciousness of their provincial friends. In *The Foreigners*, a group of revolutionary intellectuals are founding a local progressive paper. In *The Prodigal Son* and *On Bail*, a young man, formerly active in revolutionary movements, comes home to his parents after prison and wanderings. In each case, the hopes of the newcomers are frustrated. Prejudices, archaic conceptions of decency, intrigues, ambitions of local officials, all the petrified forms of life, crush the attempts at improvement. Even the hope of living peacefully under a father's roof is made impossible through incessant lecturing and nagging. The figures of

former idealists now settled down and absorbed in the mire of contentment, figures to be met in many other of Chirikov's sketches, are quite appalling.

2. *Faust*. A story. (1900.)

In the Rear-House. A two-act play. (1902.)

Ivan Mironytch. A four-act play. (1905.)

A woman's soul enmeshed in the trivialities of philistine existence and longing for something beautiful and meaningful, is the subject which recurs in these as in many other of Chirikov's productions. In drawing the women prisoners of provincial somnolence, the author is particularly eloquent and sympathetic. To the heroine of *Faust*, life in her youth "seemed big, extending far away to limitless horizons; it was wrapt in luring blue mists, attractive in infinite variety, and full of mystery and promise." Her soul was stirred with "a vague expectation of happiness, perhaps the happiness of triumphant love." Yet time passed, the horizons became narrower. "Everybody lives in the same way. They are bored, they gossip, they talk of apartments and positions, they play cards, they raise children, and they complain, the husbands to their wives, the wives to their husbands. . . . There is no triumphant love. There is triumphant vulgarity, meanness, and boredom." The heroine of *The Rear-House* exclaims: "If I could only go away, run away from this terrible life! . . . I do not want it any more. I cannot stand it!" In *Ivan Mironytch* a seemingly happy family-life in the narrow cage of sluggish officialdom is interrupted by the wife's cry of anguish: "I am sinking. . . . I wish to live and there is nothing to live with! . . . You have eaten out half the life from my soul. I loathe your schedule!"

3. *Tanya's Happiness*. A story. (1899.)
The Birthday Child. A novelette. (1900.)
Marka of the Pits. A novelette. (1904.)

Chirikov draws here the figures of poor girls who by force of circumstances became street-walkers. The author shows that fundamentally they are healthy human beings. *Marka of the Pits* is a woman of special gifts who fought bravely for purity and love. She has the physical vigor, the strength of character, and the love of freedom which mark only the chosen. She succumbs, as many others, to poverty in the midst of an unorganized society that can offer no protection. *Marka of the Pits* is one of the most colorful pieces of Chirikov's writings.

4. *Invalids*. A story. (1897.)
The House of the Kochergins. A play. (1910.)

The intellectual conflict between the older and the younger generation of Russian radicals is the subject of these works. In both, an old-time fighter for freedom returns home after many years of political exile only to find that the programs, the tactics, and the aspirations of the younger revolutionaries differ radically from former faiths and methods. The old men seem antiquated and are pushed aside with the brutality of heartless youth.

5. *In a Dale among Mountains*. A story. (1899.)

A humorous story presenting the ring of local official lawlessness which offers stubborn resistance to any protest or attempt at improvement, however loyal. The ring closes its deadly grip over any alien body which disturbs the peace of unhampered arbitrary and selfish administration.

6. *Insurrectionists*. A novelette. (1906.)

The Peasants. A four-act play. (1906.)

Here Chirikov deals with the agrarian movement of the Russian peasantry in the abortive revolution of 1905-1906. The pictures and events are those that are most typical in that vast popular movement. Both pieces almost approach an eyewitness account of actual events in one or two of the numberless Russian villages. The characters of the landlords, the officials, and the peasants are well known and stereotyped. The causes of the movement are laid bare with a clever hand.

7. *The Jews*. A play. (1905.)

A typical pogrom in a Jewish town is here presented. Attention is centered on a Jewish family of patriarchal parents, a beautiful innocent daughter, and a revolutionary son. The pogroms bring ruin and death to the unfortunate family.

8. *Tarchanov's Life*. (1911-1913.)

Volume I. *Youth*.

Volume II. *Exile*.

Volume III. *Return*.

A story of love and youth interwoven with the political movements in Russia at the end of the century and thrown against a background of Russian provincial life. The novel is written in the first person and contains some autobiographical material. It narrates the life of a young Russian from the moment he passes his college entrance examination to the time he reaches his full growth and occupies a position in the ranks of constructive workers. The novel is typical of a young Russian radical of the middle-class and is full of details of everyday Russia.

9. *War Echoes*. Sketches. (1916.)

“There are towns in Russia whose existence is known only to Our Lord and the *ispravnik* (county chief of police). They are mentioned neither in history, nor in geography, and it is not known who was their inventor. Nothing is spoken about them and nothing is written.” Into such a town Chirikov takes us at the beginning of the world war and shows us a series of transformations wrought in local conditions and habit by the great storm. The second part gives pictures of trench-life.

[Other interesting works of Chirikov are *The Friends of the Press*, a play; *The Legend of the Old Castle*; *The Prison of Human Passions*, and a number of short sketches.]

V. ROPSHIN (BORIS SAVINKOV)

FROM the ranks of revolutionary terrorists came Boris Savinkov, a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary party, an active participant in many terrorist attempts on the life of high Russian officials, and one of the leaders of his party. Under the name of Ropshin, he came to tell in a strong and truthful language of the tragedies inevitably connected with the work of hunting and killing human beings as a revolutionary profession. Perhaps he was somewhat disappointed in the results of his own activities and in the revolution as a whole. Perhaps his meditations reflect a state of reaction after the upheavals of 1905-1906. Yet his sincerity was beyond doubt. And he embodied his thoughts in living images that were convincing.

The sensation among Russian intellectuals was immense. A flood of heated discussion followed. Adherents and opponents of revolutionary terrorism interpreted Ropshin's writings from various angles. Most of them, however, overlooked the fundamental fact that his works were works of fiction and that their merits lay only in their being an adequate presentation of the human soul under certain conditions. Now that the discussion has subsided and it is possible to view the matter from an historic standpoint, it is clear that Ropshin contributed human documents of considerable importance. No student of the Russian revolutionary movement should fail to read them.

Ropshin is a talented writer. He is influenced by the

great masters, particularly by Tolstoi, but he is not an imitator. His works have literary value aside from their contents.

1. *The Pale Horse*. Novelette. (1909.)

2. *What Never Happened*. Novel. (1912.)

When a man shatters all his relations with the rest of humanity and devotes himself entirely to the work of killing human beings, strange transformations must take place in his soul. No matter how lofty the ideal he fights for, no matter how unselfish the revolutionist is (there can be no common selfishness in a man who knows that his activities must unavoidably culminate in his death), he must soon begin to look at life from angles hitherto unknown to him. He will either harden and turn into a "master of the red guild" to whom life in general has no value, or he will begin to question his right to take human lives. The former is the case with George, the hero of *The Pale Horse*; the latter is personified in Bolotov, the main figure of *What Never Happened*.

"George is the head of a terrorist group, the organizer and executor of terroristic assassinations. His life is one continuous, unrelenting struggle, the struggle of beasts: either he will kill, or he will be killed. An iron hand, a keen eye, an unusual presence of mind, an indomitable will are his weapons. When he wins a victory, he feels himself the incarnation of an elemental, apocalyptic, revenging power, elevated high above the rest of mankind. This gives him joy, triumph, a sensation of life's exuberance. In the intoxication of such a struggle, there is no place for self-analysis. George passes calmly by all theoretical discussions. He only cares for practical results. What is beyond action is mere words to him. He loves nobody. He cares for nobody. He is indifferent to the spiritual life of men, their sufferings and gropings. This defect in instincts, however, making George a perfect instrument of terror, car-

ries with it its own negation. If people are only machines, if there is no love to bind human beings together, what place remains for ideologies that gave birth to revolutionary movements and to terrorism itself?"

S. ADRIANOV.

It must be noted that investigations conducted by the Socialist-Revolutionary party in 1910-1911 as to the activities of the terrorist groups, revealed the existence of types similar to George of *The Pale Horse*, although they were not the rule. There were many terrorists who could say with Vanya, another figure in *The Pale Horse*: "We must go through the torture of crucifixion; out of love and for the sake of love we must determine upon the worst. But only, only out of love and for the sake of love."

A far more frequent type was the revolutionist who practised terror yet was full of doubt and query. Such is Bolotov of *What Never Happened*.

"Bolotov is a veritable Hamlet whom fate has thrown into the ranks of fighters for freedom. He is perhaps more of a Hamlet than his prototype himself. True, his Hamletism does not prevent him from acting in a very decisive manner. But just when he acts, the conflict between reason and will becomes manifest. His will prompts him to fight, his fight brings him to acts of violence, and the acts of violence arouse in his mind the question, 'Can violence be justified, and if so, what is its justification?' This question haunts Bolotov, it follows him to the barricades, to a revolutionary congress, to terroristic attempts. He is so absorbed in this question that everything outside of it seems to him superfluous and bore-some nonsense. . . . Whatever our personal conception, such experiences deserve a careful and, let me say frankly, a respectful attitude. Those experiences are no phrase and no invention, they are a tragedy, one of those tragedies which 'purify' the spectator (to use a well-known expression of Aristotle) and which make us believe in the inherent beauty,

if not of human nature as a whole, at least of certain portions of mankind.”

G. V. PLEKHANOV.

What Never Happened contains many pictures of mass-movement, such as the record of the Moscow revolt in December, 1905, one of the best in the Russian language, and many descriptions of revolutionary party activities. The characters of the revolutionaries are vivid and true to life.

ALEXEY REMIZOV (1877-)

A SHOCKING world. Hideous details. Men and women seem ordinary human beings, yet each of them has a little mean devil in his brain. Every man and woman is committing or about to commit some unclean act. They are no criminals, yet a fetid ichor runs through their veins, and they experience malicious joy when they do vile mischief.

Such are the characters in Alexey Remizov's stories. Such is, in his perception, the population of his native land. A foul smell rises from the places he describes, an odor of decaying corpses, of suppurating ulcers, of ugly diseases, of sickening offal. A slimy substance is creeping through the land, through habitations of men, through their very souls, a heavy substance full of venom, license, rot, loathsome vermin, uncanny abomination. "A catalogue of turpitude," somebody called Remizov's stories.

His people are bored and intrinsically unhappy. Yet their conduct cannot be blamed on conditions alone. They have sinister instincts. They are cruel. They are drunken. They use the basest language. They indulge in vicious obscenity. They are sensuous in petty ways. They beat each other, they cripple the weak, they kiss the dust from the boots of the strong, they torture animals, they see ghosts, they are intermixed with demons, witches, monsters, and all the filthy creatures of an unhealthy imagination. Altogether it is a world in which every evil desire is given free swing, and the inhabitants would ap-

pear insane if they did not bear such a striking resemblance to the people we see every day in the ordinary pursuits of life.

It is this mixture of almost fantastic debasement with the most usual features of human character and occupation that makes Remizov's writings unique in Russian literature. Somehow one feels that he is not even exaggerating. He has only a keener eye for the ugly facts of life as they occur every day. He is appalled by the amount of real Russian, good-humored, matter-of-fact degradation, physical and mental, which is spread in every realm of life. His most favored image is a dragon, an unclean mystic serpent, wriggling slowly over the land. One must not forget that the time he appeared in literature was the time of Rasputins and Azovs, the time of cruel agrarian revolts accompanied by unwarranted atrocities, the time of Black Hundred outrages, punitive expeditions, scaffolds erected before dawn, summary shootings and pogroms. It is evident that most of his revolting details Remizov collected from news items in the daily press. One of his characters thus summarizes his views on Russia in the watchful hours of unhappy nights. "Injuries, violence, ruin, overcrowding, want, robbery, venality, murder, disorder, and lawlessness,—this is the Russian land. Unbalanced, unfriendly to each other, erratic in their ways, incoherent and inarticulate, eternally silent,—this is the Russian people. Who will save the Russian land, stripped, burned out, trampled bare, corroded, and devastated as it is? Who will break the untruth? Who will allay the hatred? Where are the straight, fearless thoughts, the untrembling heart?" Still, it must be noted that the scope of Remizov's pictures is much broader than mere social and political influences on human con-

duct. His scrutiny is directed into the souls of men. And it is there that he sees his dreadful visions.

In his effort to convey an adequate impression, Remizov often resorts to the fantastic. Devils, hobgoblins, all sorts of witchcraft, all manner of unnatural occurrences take place in his stories side by side with the facts of real life. It is sometimes difficult to discern whether the writer introduces these strange phenomena as part of the experiences of his persons, or gives them as an element of his own visions. Still, he is one of the staunchest realists in modern Russian literature. He knows a wealth of facts about the actual people in every walk of life. He knows such details as hardly any other man of letters has had an occasion to observe. He presents all this with unusual skill and in sharp outlines that impress themselves irresistibly on the mind of the reader. He seems to be grinning inwardly while unloading his mass of palpitating, glaring illuminated human material. He has done his work well, he seems to think. In fact, he came into the closest possible contact with the people. He acquired a vast knowledge of the people's tales, songs, conjurations, plays, beliefs, superstitions. He studied the people's toys, works of art, incarnations of the popular imagination. He drank from the fresh well of the people's mythology and mysticism, and the fantastic creations of the people's mind became almost a reality to him.

All this he embodies in his writings with relentless energy. He overwhelms by the number and variety of his facts. He makes one tired. Yet this very accumulation of colorful particulars creates the impression desired, the impression of a dreadful world.

Remizov seems to be objective. Yet through all his cruel pages a wounded soul is crying without words.

Remizov is sick of life. Remizov is crushed by the horrors of life. It were easier if life were a tragedy. He might have found solace in the grandeur of conflicting forces. But life to him is abominable nonsense. Life is one protracted, agonizing nausea. And the miserable sadness of it all lingers at the bottom of his heart.

Sometimes he tries to be humorous. It seems as if a smile could give him relief. But he cannot detach himself from his world. He cannot be aloof. That's why his smile is more of a grin. He cannot even be funny. He is grotesque. He makes the grimaces of a clown. At times he looks as if he were a madman. There is no end to the twists of his caprices. Some of his pages would sound like a conscious mocking exaggeration if not for the repugnant horror that creeps through them. Altogether, Remizov's form is admirably suited to express just that perception of life which must drive a man into complete and incurable despair.

Just to catch his breath, Remizov sometimes leaves his cultured circles and goes back to folklore. Then he creates tales in the strain and in the language of the primitive people. It would be proper to call them "tales of our times," because they combine the folklore with a modern conception of things. Remizov also writes stories for children,—very simple, very graceful, very sincere. Yet the careful reader will even here perceive the echoes of his dread of life. The same crooked nasty demons are playing their petty games everywhere.

Remizov is one of the unhappiest of modern Russian authors. Not one of the solutions offered by his fellow-artists comforts him. He is not religious in the higher sense of the word. He is close to the plain rugged men who believe, pray, worship, go to church, light a candle

before the holy images, and drink before and after. He often feels like one of them. But he is only in the grip of religious ceremonies without the elevation of real faith. In his worst moments he is inclined to mock even at God. These are, perhaps, the most painful spasms in the gray torture of his despair.

And no aid. And no way out.

Alexey Remizov is, perhaps, the greatest master of the Russian language in the present generation of writers. His vocabulary of popular expressions is amazing. His ability to adapt words to ideas is unsurpassed. He gives the impression of using naked words. His language is almost perplexing. With all this, he is not posing. He is genuine. A strange, unhealthy flower in the swamp of Russian life.

1. *Sisters in Christ*. Novelette. (1910.)

A large tenement house in a poor section of Petersburg. Flats and rooms packed with clerks, students, professional folk, and some of the working-class. Remizov goes from story to story, from door to door describing the inhabitants. In a few lines, he condenses the whole life of a person. And the life is always a hideous misery. As the descriptions grow in number and particulars, the reader is seized with fear. It seems as if a god with the qualities of a monkey had decided to distort the face of life, making it a mockery at harmony, happiness, justice.

2. *The Fifth Affliction*. Novelette. (1912.)

A provincial town. The portraits of all the notables are drawn with uncanny penetration. The elements of a society devoid of a higher human interest are presented with such clairvoyance as to make them look almost

fantastic. Against this background is thrown the figure of a strong man longing for beauty and right. His protest against surrounding forces is silent but relentless. It is a gigantic struggle of one reticent man against the evil of a world absorbing even his own wife and children. In the tragic features of the hero, it is easy to recognize the author himself.

3. *Tales*. (1907-1916.)

4. *Stories for Children*.

Some of Remizov's stories for children were published in two volumes as early as 1907; others are contained in numerous periodicals and almanacs. Remizov's tales include, besides imitations of folklore, also plain stories and observations of a realistic nature.

V. V. MUJZHEL (1880-)

MUJZHEL is stern and gloomy. A son of a small village in northern Russia, he had a taste of the real life of the real people, and what he tells would seem revenge if his objectivity were not clearly evident. He is primarily concerned with the life of the modern village, and his stories sometimes border on ethnographic descriptions. A man of modern times, he can no more idealize the rural institutions and foundations as did the *Naródniki*, at the same time he has no contempt for the peasant. He seems to say, "Here he is, the cornerstone of Russian economic structure, the backbone of the nation; it is not my fault, and it is not his fault, if he is so poor, dismal, and degraded."

Mujzhel is as slow and monotonous as the progress of a loaded wagon over the muddy Russian roads. Not a sparkle, not a smile. Even nature rarely distracts his attention from his drab, uncanny *moujiks*. With the same heavy solemnity, he tells of customs and crimes, village amusements and debasement. What he writes is not fiction, it is horror. One cannot love Mujzhel. Yet one must admit that what he tells is true. Somehow, the crudeness of his style goes well with the crudeness of his subjects. Artistic finish would seem incompatible with abysmal poverty, brutishness, coarseness, hatred, and rage. Mujzhel does not want to be attractive. He proceeds to heap detail upon detail, to link event with event till the reader is overwhelmed and crushed. All the time, the author remains composed, giving no hint as to his own feelings.

Mujzhel started his literary career in 1904, when revolt, prison, and exile were everyday occurrences in Russia. This phase of Russian life is also presented by Mujzhel and with the same nerve-racking monotony. Altogether he gives the impression of being himself the most uncomfortable of modern writers, reflecting, as he does, the lack of harmony and comfort throughout the vast plains of Russia. There is the quality of an anatomist in Mujzhel's work: with a black scalpel he dissects hideous growths, shirking before no depravity. He is cruel, yet it is the cruelty of facts, not the cruelty of his nature. Russians were compelled to read him as they were compelled to live under the old régime. He was their own, part of their natural experiences.

1. *A Peasant's Death*. A story. (1905.)

Cruel is the life of a peasant, cruel his death, yet the man is no savage. He has intelligence. He has a strong longing for righteousness and light. He is dying, slowly and painfully, a victim of invincible and hostile forces, yet in his agony he is thinking. "Before the end of his life, Gregory suddenly beheld all his life at once, all as it had been: dark, filthy, full of worry and pain. He saw a long row of years, monotonous, gloomy, hungry. . . . He could have lived in light, goodness, and love as other people, he could have lived in obedience to God as, he heard, others did, he could have been good, just, pure. Now . . . now it is too late. He is dying, he must die. In front of him is only death. . . ."

2. *Rent*. A story. (1906.)

What stands out in this narrative of a common agrarian revolt is the fury of hatred displayed by the peasants.

Centuries of slavery had nourished their hatred for the master. Decades of starvation had filled good-natured people with sheer animal rage against those who have meals to eat. Agrarian uprisings seem to be no acts of deliberation, but outbursts of dark elemental passions.

3. *The Life of a Peasant Woman*. Novelette. (1907.)

“ . . . She bore children, she was ill . . . she bore children again and was ill again, she suffered long and hard. All the time she worked, she carried pails of water up the frozen steps twelve times a day, she tended the cattle, she heated the stove, in summer she mowed and reaped, her back ached, her chest was heavy, her arms were full of crushing pain, and the tears trickled down her nose, and there was no time to wipe them away.” Worst of all is the lack of sympathy, of care, of understanding between the members of one family. Brutal life erased many of their human qualities and—*homo homini lupus*. The climax of the story, when the woman gives birth to a dead child in the midst of a deserted field, makes even the hardened reader shudder.

4. *A Year*. Novel. (1911.)

This two-volume work is almost an encyclopedia of Russian village life after 1906. It follows the cycle of agricultural activities season after season. It describes village holidays, weddings, and other festivities with all their ceremonies. It presents a number of peasants, men and women, whose aspirations, loves, hatreds, and sufferings it unrolls in natural sequence. All this is shown against the background of an entire community engaged in a fierce struggle for a meager existence.

Of special significance is the process of disintegration

convincingly pictured. Old semi-communistic land tenure is doomed. The poorer peasants still cling to it as a last means of protection, yet the implacable law of competition breaks old barriers. The rich become richer, the poor poorer. Patriarchal conditions are an anachronism in a society invaded by modern capitalism. The government is frankly aiding the strong against the weak, and all are aware that new times are coming.

The central figure of the novel is young Sergey, a simple peasant endowed with common sense and a feeling of justice. He is not a revolutionist, not a hero, yet one can easily see how a man of his type may become a leader in times of crisis. "Contrary to what happens in all classes higher up, where the hero unites the masses by his will, here the masses squeeze the hero out from among themselves, endowing him with all their qualities, putting him in a position where he cannot retreat, almost depriving him of his own will, which may not be in accord with the will of the masses. They split his life with the heavy blow of their impersonal power and lead him, ungratefully, on the painful way of sacrifice under a heavy yoke which drags him to the ground."

The only ray of light in the gloomy and discordant picture of *The Year* is the dignity of labor on the soil. It elevates and cleanses.

5. *Sin*. Novelette. (1912.)

This is the bottom of misery and humiliation. It is a nightmare. The story centers around a soldier who comes home to his native village all saturated with the traditions of barrack life, such as recklessness, lack of respect for human dignity, and that particular contempt for civilians which was carefully bred in the army under the old

régime. He is ill with an ugly disease, and he has heard that innocent bodies are a cure to such diseases. . . .

6. *On the Edge of Life*. Novelette. (1909.)

Put a number of refined and cultured revolutionaries into the midst of a forlorn semi-savage little peasant community thousands of miles away from civilization, and you will have the contents of this story. Despair on the side of the exiles, hatred on the side of the natives. Added are hunger, physical discomfort, humiliations. The result is murder, suicide, and horror.

[Another work of significance, besides numerous stories of revolt and prison, such as *Nightmare*, *Criminals*, etc., is *Iron in Hand, a Cross in the Heart*,—volume of war sketches published in 1915 containing observations on the East-Prussian front.]

SEMYON YUSHKEVITCH (1868-)

THE end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century saw the coming of a new crop of writers who might be called the new realists (Gusev-Orenburgsky, Seraphimovitch, Skitaletz, Teleshov, Yushkevitch, and others). These writers are no "seekers." They are not battling against universal problems. They are not creators of new forms. They are not strikingly original. Sometimes it is quite difficult to distinguish between the style of one author and the other. What they do is to observe honestly and to record truthfully the main currents of life as it rolls before their eyes.

None of these writers belongs to the first ranks of Russian literature; none will be called "the master of the thought" of his generation. Yet they are respected and loved as able exponents of the ideas that move their contemporaries. They are all good narrators. They have color, imagination, a vivid dialogue, a sense of harmony. In their manner, they mark a long step forward as compared with the average realistic writings of the nineteenth century. They are quicker, bolder, more decisive, and more accurate in their descriptions. They use a more palpitating language, thus unconsciously following the tempo of more restless times. And they are, on the whole, more attractive reading, more shot through with emotion than their predecessors of the same caliber.¹

¹ With these writers may also be classed Chirikov and Mujzhel. (See respective chapters.)

At heart, all these writers are dreaming of a beautiful human life cloaked in light and warmed by genuine love. Their ideal is vague, yet it makes them bitter opponents of all the evil in life. Contrary to their symbolistic colleagues, they are inclined to seek the roots of evil in social conditions. They scrutinize men in their emotions and passions, yet they invariably put their characters into the broader social and political framework. They are all adherents of progressive ideas, and a sympathy for the radical social movements is manifest in their works. The general reader was sometimes more eager to read those works than the productions of the great masters.

One of this set, perhaps one of the ablest, is Semyon Yushkevitch. The realm of his observations is primarily the Jewish life.

A world of pathetic contrasts enfolds before our eyes in Yushkevitch's stories and plays. As he proceeds from the upper to the lower strata of Jewish society, the burden of oppression increases, yet the light of idealism becomes brighter. Down below, in those crowded suburbs of modern industrial centers, where there is packed together the most miserable portion of the most miserable people in Russia, life is sheer agony. Men and women are stricken dumb and stirred again to mad activity by the lash of hunger. Yet the spirit is alive, the self-conscious personality attempts to assert itself, the protest is rampant, and the pure flowers of dreams are in constant bloom. There is poverty, but there is intelligence. There is forced degradation, but the mass of the people is inherently sound. There is injustice, but there is not hatred, because people prefer to love than to hate.

Yushkevitch is one of the very few through whom Russian society learned to trace the ramifications of an evil régime in a portion of Russia whose life was not familiar to it through personal experience.

1. *Ita Heine*. (1902.)
 2. *Our Sisters*. (1903.)
 3. *The Street*. (1911.)
- } Novelettes.

This is how Yushkevitch himself characterizes the poorest class of Jews: "There were no chosen here, nobody was spared. . . . Men ever howled for bread, howled over their misery, howled with the hopeless sound of despair. As if all hearts had melted into one heart, pure human suffering flowed from a deep well, cutting the soul like a sword. Nobody was spared. . . . Fathers and mothers tormented themselves, nobody knows why, and they lived like martyr-animals, from morning to evening, from morning to evening. Crushed by labor, hunger, worries, they still gave birth to children, prepared them for the great service of life, and boys and girls, knowing want from their early childhood, were put into factories, shops, and plants where bodies withered, youth evaporated. . . . In the struggle for bread, everything was grasped at, nothing was shunned, neither prostitution, nor theft."

One of the occupations in the struggle for bread is the service of a wet nurse as described in *Ita Heine*. Young mothers, sometimes unhappy young girls, hire themselves and their bodies to feed the children of the wealthy, while their own children, their flesh and blood, are dying under the cruel hand of a careless keeper. The traffic in wet nurses is a history of complete misery and deprivation, leading down to the street.

Another occupation is domestic service as described in *Our Sisters*. Domestic servants in a backward and unorganized society can hardly be distinguished from slaves. The employers, families of the middle-class, lead an idle, lazy, senseless life. The servants have no definite working hours, no rest, no rights. Worst of all—they are made a plaything in the hands of the house-masters or their sons, against whom they have no means of defense. The work of the domestic servant often leads down to the street.

And so we see in *The Street* all those outcasts of human society shunned by all, yet recognized by law and considered an unavoidable evil. Yushkevitch goes to the houses, the families of the girls, shows us their circumstances, gives details of the girls' efforts to find clean, honest work sufficient to maintain themselves. He looks into the souls of the poor victims, and the reader realizes that underneath the misery and hideousness of their occupation there is a human soul, crushed, trampled down, bleeding, and yearning, eternally yearning for honesty, purity, peace. . . . "Don't you see, we've got to live; somehow we've got to," this is the ultimate justification of all those horrors often recorded by Yushkevitch.

4. *The Jews*. Novel. (1904.)

A great stir has come over the poor suburb. Some new God has touched the hearts of all those sufferers and toilers. The forebodings of the revolution are in the air. New hopes are dawning. Prophets are rising from the dust; poor human frames, bent under the burden of oppression, straighten out, and words, awkward and unlearned, but burning with fanatic faith, are warming hearts. Zionism on one hand,—the hope for a speedy

return to the land of the fathers; revolutionary doctrine on the other hand,—the hope for a brotherly cooperation of all Russian peoples in the glorious work of liberty. A clash of ideals, a battle of convictions,—and over it all, the shining vision of a better life. Love, young and bashful, makes its appearance among youth, and then—a mysterious hand spreading venom, a pogrom, blood and death. . . .

The Jews made Yushkevitch very popular in Russia.

5. *Hunger*. Play in four acts. (1905.)

6. *In Town*. Play in four acts. (1906.)

The souls of people brought to despair by utter poverty, yet resisting with all their might and unwilling to give up the struggle, form the contents of both plays. It is interesting to note the difference between Yushkevitch's characters and the peasants of Mujzhel. The poverty and the hopeless situation are the same, yet Yushkevitch's people live in towns. They are more intelligent, more alert. Their sufferings are more keenly felt and more hysterically protested against.

7. *Miserere*. A lyric drama in eight scenes. (1911.)

The most poetic of Yushkevitch's works. Strains of subdued music are sounding throughout the scenes, and the dominant note is death. A group of young Jewish boys and girls, working boys and working girls, who grew up on the marshes of poverty, resemble a cluster of pale, delicate flowers in the crack of a ruin. They pray for sun, but the sun is shut out. They reach for life, but life eludes them. They love, yet sadness cuts love at its root. They are beautiful in their humane attitude and in their ideals, but death weighs heavily on their bent

heads. They willingly pass away, to the sound of music. . . .

Miserere was a favorite of the Russian stage.

[Other works of significance: *The King*, a play; *The Comedy of Marriage*, a play; *Leon Drei*, a novel in two volumes; *Sketches from Childhood*; *Doves*, tales from the life of doves, and many short stories.]

S. I. GUSEV-ORENBURGSKY (1867-)

THE life of the clergy, especially in the rural districts, offers very instructive material to the student of Russia. The rural clergy is in a double position. On one hand, it comes into close contact with the poor peasant in his most intimate personal and family affairs; on the other hand, it is a member of a strong bureaucratic hierarchy whose aim is anything but the welfare of the people. On one hand, it is surrounded by primitive conditions, away from the centers of civilization; on the other hand, it feels itself entitled, by education and social position, to a more cultured existence. On one hand, it is supposed to be concerned with the highest spiritual values; on the other, it is placed in a situation where the care for daily bread and the worry for material things absorb all the faculties.

The rural clergy receives no salary outside of a house to live in and a piece of land. The minister's income consists of fees collected from the parishioners for the performance of religious ceremonies. As the peasants have very little money, the fees are quite often presented in kind: geese, chickens, eggs, bread. At any rate, this involves a haggling between minister and peasant and is quite injurious to the dignity of a clergyman. For the meager living he is thus allowed to make, the minister is supposed to obey rigidly all the orders from the bishop. He is not allowed to hesitate, to have his personal opinion, under the threat of being immediately transferred to a worse and more distant parish or suspended from service.

The bishop of the province is the supreme power over local ministers and no appeal is of any use.

“The entire order of life in this social class bears an archaic stamp. It is the order of things as it existed before Peter [the Great]. On the surface, old Russia is supposed to have disappeared some two hundred years ago; down in the depths, however, it has still retained its power. Here the officers live on fees collected for their maintenance; here people prostrate themselves bodily before their superiors. Centuries have brought almost no change in this social stratum. Of course, the archbishop seems to be quite up to date; he studies Augustine, he is a conscious adherent of modern clericalism on a nationalist basis, and is mentally superior to the bulk of the clergy. Yet all his relations and endeavors remind you of the Kiev school in the seventeenth century. It is ancient Russia, its strength is still great; it is a factor of tremendous importance and as such deserves careful attention.”

N. KOROBKA.

However, in spite of distressing conditions, in spite of harrowing loneliness in out-of-the-way barbarous villages, in spite of pressure from above and misery from below, the spirit is not all dead, the conscience is not extinguished. God's spark is often shining through the mud and mist of humiliation and stupefaction. The ministers are doing wrong but as a rule they do not rest satisfied. They are tools in the hands of a strong and sinister power, and are often aware of it. They help to keep the people in ignorance and bondage, but they protest inwardly and are not infrequently the most lamentable victims of a conflict between their duties before God and their duties before human institutions.

The writer of our times who devoted most of his talent to studies in the life of the clergy is Gusev-Orenburgsky. Hardly any living man of letters knows this class better

than Gusev. An easy style, a conversational mode of writing, and a colorful language make his short and long stories very attractive reading.

1. *Short Stories.* (1899-1916.)

Gusev-Orenburgsky is a friend of the clergy. He does not come to condemn. He comes to understand. He brands nobody even for evil acts, he wants to lay bare the springs of human actions. This is why his stories contain both negative and positive types of clergymen. The former are subservient to their superiors, they care for their fields and orchards and cattle and poultry more than for their spiritual flock, and they indulge in abundant food and drinks. In many cases, they are hand in glove with the local "fist," the rich peasant who exploits his fellow-villagers. The positive types of clergymen are idealistic, they help their parishioners both materially and spiritually, they serve as their spokesmen before the authorities, they participate in their mental and moral struggles, and they help to combat the "fists."

The wives of the ministers are ordinarily more refined than their husbands, and their loneliness is sometimes intolerable. One of them says in a story by Gusev-Orenburgsky: "I have counted all the eggs, examined all the chickens, played all the waltzes . . . and what now? And thus to live all my life?! Year after year?! I'll soon be aging, my face will become wrinkled, my eyes will lose their luster. . . . I'll get spectacles, and still I'll go on examining the chickens, counting the eggs, playing the waltzes. . . ."

2. *The Land of the Fathers.* Novel. (1905.)

"The land of the fathers is old Russia, the land of the children is young Russia. They have come into conflict now, they

are brazenly facing each other, and there can be no peace. The battle is raging all along the front; the question is no more who shall win, as the victory of the young is assured; the question is how soon the victory will come and how many painful skirmishes will be required. . . . The clergy takes an important part in the life of the village, and it has been touched by the rebellious spirit of our times. City and town have drawn closer in mutual influences, and a roaring stream is rushing between banks recently quiet in a patriarchal complacency."

N. ASHESHOV.

Father Ivan, one of the main figures, is drawn into the revolutionary movement. He feels "as if from the golden peaks of a mountain range he saw boundless vistas, flooded with the light of a morning sun." He takes off his robe to serve the cause of the people.

3. *Over the Meadow*. Novelette. (1909.)

A great stir has come over the land. Life is out of joint. Old foundations are shaking under the onrush of new forces. The clergy is restless. Hot waves of popular emotion, often moving in unhealthy channels, reach the ministers, infect their souls, make them see new visions. The spirit of mysticism awakens in a time of popular upheavals. Religion and revolution are blended in the dark depths of the masses.

Over the turmoil and haze of movements, clashes, and despair, rises the calm figure of a minister who interprets the Bible literally and finds in it all the ideals of equality, brotherhood, justice. "Eternal justice must be restored," is his slogan. For this evangelical faith he is considered a dangerous rebel.

4. *Darkness*. Novelette. (1915.)

A forlorn poor village. A young minister adored by his parish, an ideal shepherd of men. Economic work is

united with the preaching of religious and moral ideals in the work of this young idealist. He manifests strength of will, courage, and a real sense of leadership. Under his guidance the village improves considerably. This, however, is to the disfavor of the local rich man who used to hold the entire country in his grip. A visit to the bishop makes him victorious over the minister. The latter dares to blame the bishop for a partial attitude. His fate is sealed.

BORIS ZAITZEV (1881-)

OF all the voices in modern Russian literature, Zaitzev's is the lowest. It is tender and fragile. It melts away in the distance. It leaves the impression of a silent prayer.

Zaitzev writes stories. They tell real facts about real people. They do not shun the mire and the evil of existence. Yet they always touch the strings of lyricism, and longing rises in their wake, happy longing akin to sadness.

Zaitzev pictures life. He is in the midst of it. There is strife and hatred and blood in his stories. There is the clash of wills, of passions, of ideals. There is brutal force often triumphant. Yet over the turmoil and the ugly noises, Zaitzev spreads the cover of lofty silence. It hangs over all and pacifies all and bridges the space between the passing happenings of the earth and the silent roads to eternity.

Zaitzev loves life, yet he is not afraid of death. Life to him is a great unending festivity. The sun pours gold into his heart and gives him the happiness of a child, and he knows there is no dread in death. Death is only one step to a new, light, and joyous existence. He knows firmly "the gladness and the refreshingness of that which is above life."

Zaitzev knows suffering. Yet he knows also the curing power of love. Fundamentally man cannot be penetrated by utter despair. Man breathes the soft air of love and longing and is happy. Man is a vessel of happiness. "When human souls blossom, thou givest them fragrance.

When they perish, thou puttest ecstasy into them. Oh, Eternal spirit of love, thou art triumphant! ”

Zaitzev is the most ecstatic of all modern Russian writers. He is like a saint that lives in the wilderness; a man that has seen much pain and much travail and much sin, and has retained a pure, kind, gentle soul able to bless God for every ray of light, for every whiff of the summer breeze. Zaitzev is drunk with joy, but he is never riotous. Only his voice trembles with suppressed emotion.

Zaitzev is religious, perhaps the only writer that does not seek his God, because he has found Him. God appears to Zaitzev in nature, in the actions of men, in the destinies of mankind. Zaitzev cannot call his God by name—no religious man can—but he feels His presence in those miraculous changes that come into a human soul and lead it over new paths.

Zaitzev is close to nature as few of his contemporaries. Nature to him is the mother of all; it is the great Whole of which men and animals and flowers and fields are only parts. Everything in nature is important, as everything in life is full of meaning, and a man finds his real self only in close communion with nature. “ I could lie for hours half sleeping on the sand,” he speaks through one of his persons, “ I could listen to the ocean, observe the endless course of the clouds. I experienced that detachment from men and life, some return to the primeval which must be known to anchorets and the founders of monasteries. I did not feel any more that I was a member of the bar, a member of society, and a man dressed according to fashion. I would have been able to say in the words of St. Francis: ‘ The ocean is my brother, the clouds, the grasses, the sea-weeds are dear sisters of mine.’ ”

Here I could have been as nude and mentally simple as the children, the fishes, the butterflies.”

Zaitzev has been compared frequently to an aquarelle painter. His landscapes, characters, and happenings are presented in tender, almost transparent hues. At the same time, he has a peculiar inner strength, a subdued yet never diminishing inner glow which makes every stroke of his brush vibrate with warm though restrained life.

There have been no two opinions in Russia as to the originality and beauty of his talent, and he quickly occupied a place in the foremost ranks of modern Russian writers.

“He is illuminated by the inner light of his idealism; he has a transparent soul, and it is this soul that allows him to live for the sake of beauty, to notice keenly hearts and nature, those ‘pale peach-colored carpets’ which the dawn brushes over the sea, those ‘black folds of the night’ in which wander robbing and perishing people, that ‘clear fragrance, the air which seemed to condense into a wonderful winter-drink.’ Zaitzev is monotonous, and there is no plot in his stories, no ‘subject,’ but there is quiet real life, the undulation of its moods, its intangible solace and beauty. He has fine palaces and a great hospitable heart; he is the psalmist of the human soul, the David who stepped forth to fight the giant of the world’s raging reality. To the horror and the drama of life, he opposed himself, his radiance, his young though restrained triumphant joy.”

J. EICHENWALD.

It is natural that Zaitzev’s persons are not men of action. They are rather passive. They are clay in the hands of Fate. This gave rise to a number of criticisms which, far from disputing Zaitzev’s talent, disagreed with his conception of life. Here is a sample:

“In his stories, Zaitzev sketches a religious person who merges into the cosmos, believes in the transformation of the

flesh, in immortality, in God. We have a full-size portrait of a will-less, passive, yielding person who blesses pain, has a benign soul, is not very clever, and does not even need reason. He is far from resembling that lightning-bearing creator of life, the man girdled with the rainbow of knowledge and faith who appeared in the visions of some mystic philosophers. Zaitzev's man, in an aureole of tender Christian submissiveness, is inactive, he lacks creative power, and no social bonds unite him with his fellow human beings."

M. MOROZOV.

1. *Stories*. (1904-1917.)

It is almost impossible to make a selection from Zaitzev's stories, all of which are of nearly equal value and written in the same style. Six volumes of his collected stories appeared between 1906 and 1916.

2. *Far-Away Country*. Novel. (1913.)

This is a typical novel of the life of the Russian intelligentsia in the stormy years of 1904-1906. Students; students' unrest; demonstrations; aid for starving peasants; revolutionary parties; terror; prison; exile; fugitives abroad; tragedies of lost and found faith. Through all this whirl of a great mass of humanity in upheaval, Zaitzev leads with a gentle hand a number of young men and women to the "far-away country," which may be death for the sake of an ideal, and may be a life full of work and sound endeavor. . . . Neither life nor death is the end of things, and the "far-away country" still lures with its mystic charm.

[Zaitzev is also the translator of Flaubert's *St. Anthony's Trials* and *A Simple Heart*, and other works.]

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

JUVENILE LITERATURE IN RUSSIA

IN the year of Christ, 1903, the writer of these lines was involved in a formidable conspiracy. Painfully he had to guard every step lest he fall into the hands of the ever-vigilant police. Furtively, under the cloak of night, he had to steal to the place of his dangerous activities. With the keenest attention he had to scrutinize the signs in the windows of that mysterious little house in the suburb before he entered the low door. The sign denoting "danger" made his heart ache for the fate of the whole enterprise.

And when at last he made his way to the spacious back-room facing the cherry orchard, what did he find there? A number of boys between the ages of fifteen and nineteen whom he, together with two other young students, was teaching to read and write. Between lessons, we were also telling the pupils stories from botany, geography, or physics. In short, it was an evening school, for boys who had received no school education. The aims of our little undertaking were purely cultural: we wanted to bring a spark of light into the lives of some young artisans' apprentices in the town where we were spending our summer vacation. We conducted no political propaganda. We couldn't have done it if we had wanted to because the level of understanding among the boys was very low. Yet, had we been discovered by the Argus of the gendarmery, we might have been tried for sedition.

It is easy to imagine that in a country where educational work among the masses was facing obstacles of such gravity; where teaching in an elementary school in one of the forlorn villages was a series of heroic self-sacrifices; where schools for adults, Sunday schools, public lectures of every description were looked upon as so many nests of destructive propaganda; where books were scarce, libraries for the villagers very rare, and even the sale of books to plain people considered undesirable—it is easy to imagine that in a country of this kind, where the overwhelming majority of the population is illiterate, the book must have a totally different value from that in any modern civilized country. One of the ever-recurring sentimental topics of Russian journalism, fiction and painting, is that keen-eyed, intelligent-looking school-boy who reads before the adults of his family some of the wonders contained in a book furnished by the teacher. It is night. The low ceiling of the cabin is covered with soot. The little oil lamp hardly flickers. Shadows are hovering in every corner. Outside, the snow-storm is raging. Close to the stove, in the circle of light, the boy reads his story. Men with shaggy beards and heavy fists, work-worn women in their fantastic shawls, the old ghastly looking grandfather on top of the fireplace—all listen attentively, with dreamy eyes, with an expression of bewilderment, delight, and appreciation. "Yes, son, the book is a great thing," some one will thoughtfully sum up the impressions.

This unusually high value attached to the book throughout the vast steppes of the Russian empire accounts for one characteristic feature of Russian juvenile literature. There is no marked distinction between books for children and books for uneducated adults. In the majority

of cases, both classes merge into one. It seems as if the Russian genius found it too extravagant to expend national intellectual energy on the creation of a specific literature suited to the psychology and understanding of children. It favored rather a popular literature of a general character where every person, young or old, may find delight and profit. Opinions of this kind were voiced more than once by the leading thinkers of Russia. "What is the characteristic feature of a story for children?" asks Byelinsky, the great critic of the forties. "A story of this kind," he says, "is clumsily put together and is strewn over with moral sentences. The aim of such works is to deceive the children, to distort the face of life." That should not be. If you want to write for children, the critic says, do so, but "create narratives and pictures full of life and motion, permeated with enthusiasm, warm with emotion, written in an easy, free, playful, colorful yet simple language, and be sure that your work will form the most solid foundation and the most effective means of education. Write for children, if you wish, but write in a manner that your book may be read by an adult with equal pleasure." A similar thought is expressed in a more drastic language by Pisarev, the leading critic and publicist of the sixties. "Literature for children," he writes, "is a miserable, adulterated, and utterly artificial branch of general literature. No place should be given in school libraries to literature for children. Such libraries should be open for pupils who are in a position to read with pleasure and understand books written for adults. What books, then, should form a library for pupils? The works of the best fictionists and critics, Russian, French and German, descriptions of famous travels, historical works, and popular books on all

branches of science." In our times, Rubakin, the famous bibliophile, author of numerous popular books and compiler of the most serious systematic catalogue of Russian literature, expressed the same idea. "A library for children," he writes, "ought to be constructed on the same principle as a library for adults, with the sole difference that the books contained in the children's department should be interesting for children and accessible to their understanding. The word accessible, however, allows for no arbitrary interpretation. Accessibility is a question of form, not of contents. The most abstract thought can be made accessible to the child's understanding if it is illustrated by a series of concrete facts and if the facts are grouped in a way to make the reader proceed from the less difficult to the more difficult item. . . . This is no theoretical assertion; it is derived from all our activities at popularizing science." Rubakin insists on giving children a maximum of freedom in choosing reading matter.

It was in conformity with this idea that specific juvenile literature was not looked upon with favor by the best elements of the Russian intelligentsia. This does not mean that Russia lacked writers who published special magazines for children or compiled sentimental stories to be read in the children's rooms of more or less wealthy families. Some of these writers even attained great fame among their little readers. Yet the progressive Russian looked askance at all such writings. Sugar-coated stories stuffed with moral preachings were not to his taste. Producers of such works were outside the pale of literature. In fact, not one "children's author" gained recognition in Russia as equal to the "real" writers.

What, then, is the literature that the thinking Russian

deems worthy of circulating among the children and, equally, among the plain people? These are, first of all, the creations of the primitive popular genius: fairy-tales (*skazki*), hero songs (*byliny*), legends, collected and partly put into modern language. Russian folklore is an inexhaustible source of poetic creations. Those creations, however, lack the refinements of the Hellenic epics or the exuberant fantasy and color of the Hindu tales. Russian folklore is of a more realistic kind. Personified forces of nature do not seem out of place in a country which has retained much of its primitive simplicity. Domestic and wild animals fit well into the scheme of rural life dominating Russia even at present. This makes Russian folklore welcome reading for the family and school. Russian fairy tales in certain ways represent a good picture of the Russian national character. Their humor is genuine and refreshing. Many a great writer, notably the poets Pushkin, Zhukovsky, Count Alexey Tolstoi, and Koltzov, have created beautiful legends, songs, and ballads on themes borrowed from folklore. These are being read, perhaps, with more delight than even the original tales. In recent years, many talented artists have devoted much fond attention to illustration for fairy-tales. The name of Bilibin stands out as the most famous among these artists.

The volume of reading matter for the young and for the unsophisticated adult, however, is composed of the works of the best Russian writers, classical as well as modern. In a model catalogue for children between the ages of nine and eleven, I find works of Bunin, Gogol, Grigorovitch, Garshin, Gorky, Krylov, Korolenko, Kuprin, Mamin-Sibiriyak, Machtet, Nikitin, Nekrasov, Nemirovitch-Danchenko, Pushkin, Zhukovsky, Stan-

yukovitch, Seroshevsky, Seraphimovitch, Tolstoi, Turgenev, Chekhov, and others,—all writers for adults. It is the contention of pedagogues that what is good for adults is good for the little ones, provided they understand it. Fortunately, almost every great Russian writer created a number of stories of such lucidity, simplicity, and humanness as to make them, sometimes in an abridged form, superb reading for children. Nothing can equal such stories as *The Captain's Daughter* by Pushkin; *The Cloak* by Gogol; *The Diary of a Sportsman* by Turgenev, or those wonderful popular stories by Leo Tolstoi which are being circulated by the millions all over Russia. Through such works, the young reader learns early to appreciate good realistic literature and to love his classics. Excerpts from the writers for adults form also the main body of readers used in the classroom.

A third category of Russian juvenile literature is popular works on natural sciences, including geography and travel. A fourth, by far not the least important, is translations from foreign languages. In the above-mentioned catalogue, we find such names as De Amicis, Auerbach, Baron Muenchhausen, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Bret Harte, Braddon, Defoe, Dickens, Daudet, Eliot, Goethe, Malot, Aldrich, Pressensé, Rosegger, Saunders, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, etc. It may be interesting to know that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Prince and the Pauper* rank among the most popular books in Russia. Not long ago, Fenimore Cooper and Captain Mayne Reid were among the favorites.

It seems that America has not been as eager to translate from Russian authors for her children, as Russia has been to translate American authors. The number of translations from Russian we find in such a good collec-

tion of juvenile books as the children's department of the Astor Library in the City of New York is very limited. In fact, nothing but a few fairy-tale books are available. Of these, Leonard A. Magnus's *Russian Folk Tales* represents the most complete collection of popular fairy-tales and is very close to the original. It gives a very adequate presentation of the character of Russian folklore. The translations are made from the original Afanasyev collection, which is considered one of the best in Russia. Post Wheeler's *Russian Wonder Tales* is less complete, yet it has the advantage of twelve Bilibin illustrations which, though very much smaller than the original Russian pictures, give the book an artistic touch. Arthur Ransome's *Old Peter's Russian Tales* with illustrations by the Russian artist, Mitrokhin, is wholly charming. The book represents Russian fairy-tales retold in a modern manner, and its illustrations are vivid and full of fancy. Richard Wilson's *Russian Story Book*, representing a prose translation of some heroic epics originally composed in loose verse, gives the contents of those epics but hardly conveys their spirit. For very little readers, *Russian Picture Tales* by Valery Carrick is highly recommended. Carrick's little fairy albums enjoy widespread recognition in Russia.

In conclusion, may we not suggest a few Russian books which, in our opinion might be welcome in any library for children, the world over? Leo Tolstoi's collection of popular stories is one of such books; Mamin-Sibiryak's tales, another. Of the modern writers, Kuprin has written a number of realistic stories for children that are very attractive. Collections of stories from the works of various Russian classics, for the reading of young Americans, would be advisable. Many such stories have already

been translated, but they are strewn among other works of the respective authors. Pushkin's fairy tales in verse, with illustrations by Bilibin, still await their reincarnation in English. The translator, however, must be a poet by the grace of God, to be able to put the beauty, ease, and musical charm of Pushkin into English.

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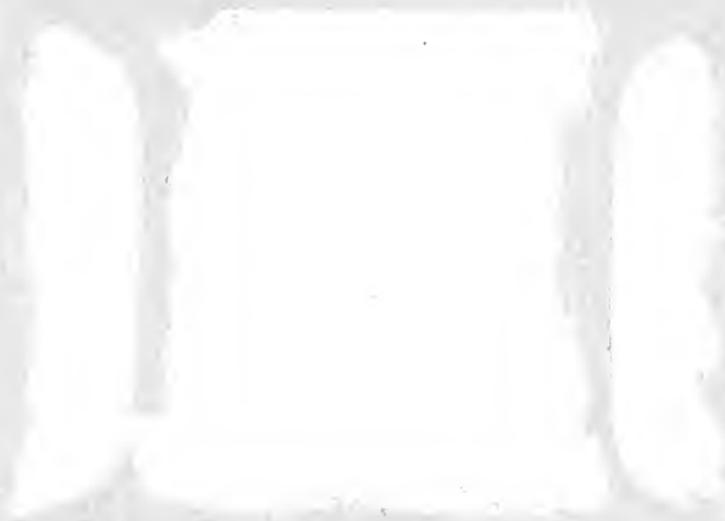
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