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# A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE.

BY

K. WALISZEWSKI

AUTHOR OF THE ROMANCE OF AN EMPRESS,  
PETER THE GREAT, ETC.



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## P R E F A C E

IN the year 1834 the great Biéliniski, on his maiden appearance as a literary critic, bestowed the following epigraph, borrowed from one of his fellow-critics, Senkowski, on his first essay :—

“Do we possess a literature ?”

“No, we have nothing but a book-trade !”

Eighteen months later, he began to publish a half-yearly Review under this somewhat confusing title,—*Nothings about Nothing*.

Hence we may conceive what the country of Pouchkine, of Gogol, of Tourguéniev, and of Tolstoï has gained by the labour of the past half-century.

For this labour has not confined itself to the amassing of a treasure-house of conceptions, exquisite or stately. It has endowed the nation that conceived them, and Biéliniski himself as well, with the conscious possession of a national genius, the anterior manifestations of which had escaped appreciation, because they had been judged from the æsthetic point of view only, and not from that historical standpoint which alone befitted them. In Russia, more even than elsewhere, the theory of evolution, applied by Taine—in how brilliant a manner we all know—to English literature, remains the only one whereby the sense of a literary develop-

ment which, during the march of history, has experienced such strange checks and forward impulses, can be efficiently revealed. The volume of the literary patrimony of Russia, increasing in proportion to the political fortunes of the country, attracted first the curiosity, and presently the admiration, of Western Europe.

It is a far cry, now, to the days when Sir John Bowring's articles in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* came as a revelation. But the notoriety then so rapidly acquired is still unfairly apportioned. The works of Krylov have been translated into twenty-one languages. Those of Pouchkine still await a worthy translator, both in England, in France, and in Germany. Such authors as Lermontov and Chtchédrine are practically unknown to foreign readers.

These special circumstances have dictated the plan of my work. I have thought it right to avoid excessive generalisation. Russian literature has not yet acquired, in the eyes of the European public, that remoteness which would permit of my summing it up in certain given works and salient figures. I have likewise felt unable to avoid a certain amount of detail. It is not possible to speak to English readers of a Eugène Oniéguine, as I should speak to them of Hamlet. My Russian readers, if such there be, will doubtless reproach me with having paid too scant attention to some one or other of their favourite authors. My excuse is, that even in such a book as this, I have not chosen to speak of anything save that which I personally know, and am capable of judging.

I expect to elicit yet other reproaches, in this direction. The form assumed, in the lapse of time, by such personages as Hamlet or Eugène Oniéguine, is the two-fold outcome of an original individual conception, and of a subsequent and collective process. These, first superposed, become inter-pervading, and end, to the popular imagination, in complete fusion. This collaborative process, the secret and existence of which escape the notice of the great majority, constitutes a great difficulty for a writer addressing a public other than that in the midst of which the types he evokes have sprung into being. Try to forget all that the lapse of years, and the action of endless commentaries, the ingenuity, the tenderness, the worship of millions of readers, have added and altered, in such a figure as that of Gretchen. You will see how much of the original remains, and you will realise my difficulty in speaking to my readers of Tatiana, if by chance (and it is a very likely chance) the character of Tatiana be unknown to them. I dare not venture to flatter myself I have completely overcome this difficulty.

Further, I do not close my eyes to my own deficiencies as an interpreter between two worlds, in each of which I myself am half a stranger. While other qualifications for the part may fail me, I bring to it, I hope, a freshness of impression, and an independence of judgment, which may, to a certain extent, justify the Editor of this series in the selection with which he has been good enough to honour me.

Will Mr. Gosse allow me to associate with him, in

this expression of my gratitude, those Russian friends who have helped me towards the accomplishment of my undertaking,—among them MM. Oniéguine and Chtchoukine, to whom a double share of thanks is due. Their knowledge and their courtesy have proved as inexhaustible as their libraries, which rank among the wonders of this fair city of Paris, where they have fixed their home, and where I myself have been so happy as to be able to write this book.

K. WALISZEWSKI.

*December 1899*

# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	I
I. THE EPIC AGE . . . . .	8
II. THE RENAISSANCE . . . . .	47
III. THE FORGING OF THE LANGUAGE . . . . .	65
IV. THE BONDAGE OF THE WEST—CATHERINE II. . . . .	88
V. THE TRANSITION PERIOD—KARAMZINE AND JOU- KOVSKI . . . . .	128
VI. THE NATIONAL EVOLUTION—POUCHKINE . . . . .	154
VII. THE EMANCIPATING MOVEMENT—THE DOCTRINAIRES	189
VIII. LERMONTOV, GOGOL, AND TOURGUÉNIEV . . . . .	227
IX. THE CONTROVERSIALISTS—HERZEN AND CHTCHÉ- DRINE . . . . .	299
X. THE PREACHERS—DOSTOÏEVSKI AND TOLSTOÏ . . . . .	330
XI. CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE . . . . .	403
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	441
INDEX . . . . .	447







# A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

## INTRODUCTION

THE Slavs, like the Latins, the Celts, and the Germans, belong to the Aryan or Indo-European race. Oppressed for many years by the Western peoples, which drew the word *slave* from the appellation "Slav," scorned by their German neighbours, who would not regard their race in any other light but that of "ethnological matter" (*ethnologischer Stoff*), they probably owed their inferiority solely to their geographical position. Modern civilisation, like that of the ancients, built itself up almost independently of the Slavs. Yet they have raised their protest against a too absolute decree of exclusion, and they have right on their side. The Slav nation did not, indeed, hollow out the channels of the double movement, intellectual or religious, Renaissance and Reform, from which the modern era issued, but it opened them in two directions. Copernicus and John Huss were both Slavs.

The Slav race, the latest comer into the world of civilisation, has always been at school, always under some rod or sway. Whether it be the Oriental and material conquest of the thirteenth century, or the Western and moral one of the eighteenth, it merely undergoes a change of masters. Thus the evolution of the

individuality of the race was no easy matter. Modern Russia still labours at the task, and it has other work to do as well. Modern Russia is an empire a thousand years old, and a colony, the age of which is not, indeed, as has been asserted, that of one hundred and fifty years, but of four centuries precisely. And the colonists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who recommenced, in the neighbourhood of Perm and towards the Upper Kama, the interrupted work of the old Novgorod merchants, have made but little relative progress. Odessa, with its 405,000 inhabitants, dates from 1794.

Between the Novgorod merchants and their sixteenth-century successors came the Mongol invasion. This does not suffice to explain the prolonged check in the organic development of the huge body which it left in life. Previously, indeed, gaps, periodic suppressions of growth and evolution, had been manifest, and they were repeated after the disappearance of this particular cause. They would seem to be the result of some constitutional vice, connected as much with race and climate as with the course of historical events. Under these inclement skies, history appears to have brought about an accidental mingling of elements, the ill-controlled action of which, when they chanced to harmonise, gave birth to violent outbreaks of energy, while, when they disagreed, the result became apparent in sudden stoppages of progress. The outcome has something of the American in it, and yet something of the Turkish. Thanks to its geographical situation betwixt Europe and Asia, thanks to its historical position betwixt a series of anvils, whereon the Byzantine priest, the Tartar soldier, and the German free-lance have taken turns to hammer out its genius, Russia, young and old at once, has not yet found its

orbit nor its true balance. Here we see a waste; there extreme refinement. Men have called it rotten ere it was ripe. But that must not be said. Prematurely ripe on one side, indeed, with a distracting medley of savage instincts and ideal aspirations, of intellectual riches and moral penury. But Nature must be given time to perfect her own work.

There is much for her to do. The mixture of races, and their struggles against hostile conditions of existence, against the climate, against foreign invasion, have called another problem into existence. How to fuse into one amalgam such contradictory elements as strength and weakness, tenacity and elasticity, ruggedness and good-nature, insensibility and kindness. The perpetual struggle which has tempered and hardened the Russian to his inmost soul has rendered him singularly susceptible to external emotions. He knows—no man better—how to suffer. No man knows better than he what suffering costs; and this makes him compassionate. Under an exterior that is often coarse enough you may find a man of infinite tenderness. But press him not too far. Count not too much upon him. He is prone to terrible revulsions!

The same causes have developed his practical inclinations. In his case—in art as in life—realism is no theory; it is the application of natural instincts. Even in poetry and in religion the Russian has a horror of abstractions. No metaphysical spirit, no sentimentality whatsoever; great resourcefulness, perfect tact as regards both men and matters, and in all his ideas, his habits, and his literature, a positivism carried to the point of brutality. This, in brief, appears to me to be Russian psychology. But to all this, and from the same causes

always, is linked a marked proneness to melancholy, "Sadness, scepticism, irony," said Herzen, "are the three strings of Russian literature." He added, "Our laugh is but a sickly sneer!" Some weep; some dream. In these last, their melancholy inclines them to a hazy mysticism, which either triumphs over the realistic instincts, or else allies itself with them in strangest union. Of such a union Dostoïevski was the product.

Finally, we must inquire of the climate, of the race, and of its history, wherefore this Russian, who is a conceiver of ideas, a realiser of artistic forms, should be possessed of scant originality in his methods of thought, while showing much in his methods of translating the thoughts of others, in his sentiments, his tastes, his gestures. In such matters, indeed, his originality reaches the point of oddity, and goes beyond it, even as far as that indigenious *samodourstvo* which, in certain of its forms, borders closely on madness. This, again, is natural, because psychological development has degrees of its own, and the emotional faculties are here naturally on a lower plane.

To sum it up. A people and a literature standing apart; geographically, ethnographically, historically, outside the Western European community. No doubt the three great elements of Western civilisation, the Christian, the Græco-Norman, and the German, are to be found at the base of this eccentric formation, but in very different proportion, combination, and depth. Both the nation and its literature have, indeed, alike received the triple baptism which freed Russia from all the primitive barbarisms—the apostolate of Cyril and Methodius, the Vargian conquest, the Byzantine civilization. But the hold of the conquerors, whether of Norman or of German

origin, was weak and transient; so weak and so transient, indeed, that their very origin is now disputed. Cyril and Methodius bore with them the germ of the Eastern Schism, and by that schism, as well as by the influence of Byzantium, Russia was actually cut off from the Western European world, and isolated in a solitude which was to endure for centuries. From the Crusades down to the Revolution, she bore no part in any of the manifestations of European life. She slumbered on, hard by.

All this will be recognised by my readers in the literature we are about to study together. Somewhat of it is evident even in the language used by Dostoi-evski and Tolstoï. A wondrous instrument it is, the most melodious, certainly, in the Slavonic circle, one of the most melodious in the universe; flexible, sonorous, graceful, lending itself to every tone and every style, simple or elegant at will, subtle and refined, energetic, picturesque. In its diversity of form and construction, partly due to its frequent inversions, it resembles the classic languages and German. Its power of embodying a whole figure in one word marks its kinship with the Oriental tongues. The extreme variability of the tonic accent, which lends itself to every rhythmic combination, a markedly intuitive character, and a wonderful plasticity, combine to form a language unrivalled, perhaps, in its poetic qualities. But the instrument was made but yesterday. There are gaps in it; some parts are borrowed; we find discords here and there which the centuries have not yet had time to fill, to harmonise, to resolve. This tongue finds soft and caressing words even for those things which partake the least of such a character. *Voïna* stands for war;

*voïne* for the warrior. But should the warrior be called to defend his country, threatened by an invader, he becomes *Khrabryï*, *Zachtichtchaïouchtchyï*! Can we not hear the hoarse whistling yell of the barbarians?

This language is the offspring, too, of Peter the Great and the Reform. Later on I shall speak of its origin. In its alphabet we recognise perverted forms of both Greek and Roman letters, and others of strange appearance, which neither these two classic alphabets nor that of the German tongue possess; and a residuum, also perverted, from the ancient liturgic or *Cyrillic* Slav alphabet—the Tower of Babel, never-ending.

Modern Russia belongs to the Oriental family of the Slavonic languages; but of all these languages it is the one which contains the greatest number of elements pertaining to other families. Thus the vowel *a*, specially characteristic of the Finnish tongue, has replaced, in many words, the primitive *o* of the Slavonic roots. The Tartar invasion has left its impress both on words and on the construction of sentences. In the department of science, the German invader has won a decided victory; and Dobrolioubov, the great critic of the “fifties,” was able to say, and without undue exaggeration, that the literary language of his country had nothing Russian about it.

But the Russian tongue it is; and being also the language of a colonising nation, it admits of no divergence nor any provincial corruption. There is hardly any *patois* in the country. But it is a new language, without any deep root in the country’s history, and the literature of which it is the organ is likewise new, and devoid of historic depth. Hence, apart even from the manifold

causes already enumerated, we have an alternation of periods of rich and rapid expansion with others of the sterility born of exhaustion. Of this fact we shall see clear evidence. Hence also a predisposition to new formulæ, and to the wiping out of the old ones, to thorough-going radicalism in things literary, to haughty scorn of all traditions and conventions, and even of propriety.

CHAPTER I  
THE EPIC AGE  
POPULAR POETRY

IN Russia the epic age was prolonged up to the threshold of the present century. The heroic legend of Platov and his Cossacks pursuing the retreat of the hated *Khrantzouz* (Frenchman) is still in the mouth of the popular bard, the strings of whose rustic lyre yet ring in certain remote corners of the country, in defiance of Pouchkine and his followers. This phenomenon is natural enough. From the point of view of literary evolution, five or six centuries lie between Russia and the other countries possessed of European culture. At the period when Duns Scotus, William of Wykeham, and Roger Bacon were barring the West with that streak of light whereat such men as Columbus, Descartes, Galileo, and Newton were soon to kindle their torches, Russia still lay wrapped in darkness. An explanation of this long-continued gloom has been sought even among the skulls lately unearthed in the neighbourhood of Moscow. These appear to have revealed that, in the primitive inhabitants of that country, the sensual elements were so excessively developed as to exclude the rest.

The Tartar conquest of the thirteenth century should be a much more trustworthy event on which to reckon, in this connection. It destroyed the budding civilisation



of the sphere influenced by Kiev. But even then, the empire of the Vladimirs and the Jaroslavs followed far indeed behind the progress of the European world. In 1240, when the hordes of Baty thundered at the gates of Kiev, nothing within them portended the approaching birth of a Dante, and no labours such as those of a Duns Scotus, nor even of a Villehardouin, suffered interruption. The tardy dawn of Christianity in these quarters, together with the baptism of Vladimir (988), and the Byzantine hegemony, which was its first-fruit, in themselves involved a falling behind the hour marked by the European clock. The Byzantine culture had a value of its own. Previous to the Renaissance, it imposed itself even upon the West. But it had little communicative power. To the outer world its only effulgence was that of a centre of religious propaganda, and this fervour, strongly tinged with asceticism, checked, more than it favoured, any intellectual soarings. Here we find the explanation of another phenomenon—that the poetry of this epoch, and even of later times, has only been handed down to us by word of mouth. In this part of the world, and up till the close of the seventeenth century writing and printing were controlled by the Church—a Church resolute in her hostility to every element of profane culture. In the Domestic Code (*domostroi*) of Pope Sylvester, a contemporary of Ivan the Terrible, the national poetry is still treated as devilry—pagan, and consequently damnable.

Thus the harmonious offspring of the national genius has lived on in the memories of succeeding generations. But hunted, even in this final refuge, by ecclesiastical anathemas, it has retreated, step by step, towards the

lonely and bitter regions of the extremest North. When modern science sought to wake the echoes of the old songs first warbled under the "Golden Gate" of Kiev, the only answer came from the huts and taverns of the White Sea. The oldest of all the collections of Russian verse, that of Kircha Danilov, dates from the eighteenth century only, and is of dubious value. The wave of melody has rolled across time and space, gathering, as it passed, local legends, passing inspirations, and the enigmatic fruit of foreign fiction and lyrics. Then it has divided, evaporated, and lost itself, finally, in the sand and mud.

The work done for the West by the Icelandic Sagas was thus delayed, in Russia, by some four or five centuries. The only written traces of the glory of Ilia of Mourom, the great hero of the cycle of Kiev, are to be found in German, Polish, or Scandinavian manuscripts. It was an English traveller, Richard James, whose curiosity induced him, at the beginning of the seventeenth century (1619), to note down the original forms of the Russian lyric; and as a crowning disgrace, the first imitators (in the following century) of this English collector (Novikov, Tchoulkov, Popov, Bogdanovitch) were forgers. They took upon themselves to correct the outpourings of the popular inspiration!

Did ancient Russia possess concurrently with this oral poetry a literary verse, allied with the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Chansons de Geste*? One specimen exists, the famous "Story of the Band of Igor." But this is but a solitary ruin. I shall refer to it later.

In our own day, the popular poetry brought to light by the labours of such Russian savants as Kiriéievski, Sakharov, Rybnikov, and Hilferding, and revealed to

the Western world by the translations and studies of Ralston, Bistrom, Damberg, Iagic, and Rambaud, has emerged in all its wealth. It was an astonishment and a delight. The fragments of French popular songs collected in 1853, the *gwerzïou* of Lower Brittany, the *Chants des Pauvres* of the Velay and the Forez, the national poetry of Languedoc and Provence, form but a poverty-stricken treasury in comparison. But there is no possibility of any comparison. The prolongation of the epic period in the lower strata of the Russian world, until the moment of its paradoxical encounter with the sudden development, literary and scientific, which took place in the upper strata, has produced a result which I believe to be unprecedented in human history. At the gates of Archangel the Russian collectors found themselves face to face with the authentic depositaries of a poetic heritage dating from prehistoric epochs. One night in a railway train still carries them into the heart of the twelfth century.

But this inheritance, rich though it be, is not absolutely intact. Some Russian savants, such as Mr. Srezniewski, have gone so far as to doubt its authenticity. It was the absence of certain historic links, the presence of certain features corresponding with the popular poetry, and even with the poetical literature, of other nations which stirred their scepticism. We find no symptom, indeed, of the recorded historic life of the period anterior to the Tartar conquest, and that conquest itself is only reflected in imagery of excessive faintness. On the other hand, we easily recognise in *Polkane*, one of the heroes of the poetic legend of *Bova*, the *Pulicane* of the *Reali di Francia*, a collection of Italian epic poetry.

Mr. Khalanski has gone so far as to contest the

commonly accepted fact of the migration of this poetry from south to north. He founds his theory on the absence of any corresponding movement among the Southern peoples. But no German emigrants were needed to carry the songs of the Edda across the continent of Europe ; and as to the phenomena of concord, or even fusion, with the poetry of the West, they are sufficiently accounted for by the special character of the Russian *epopée*. This *epopée* was, until quite recent times, a living being, who dwelt, like all living beings, in communion with the world about him.

To sum it up, Russian popular poetry, as we know it, is neither homogeneous in character nor precise in date. It is the complex product of a series of centuries, and of an organic development which has continued down to our own days. It reflects both the ancient Russian life of the Kiev period, the later Muscovite period, and even the St. Petersburg period of modern times. It has likewise absorbed some features of Western life.

As to form, we find two chief phases—the polymorphous metre, of seven, eight, or nine feet, and the line of three or six feet, in which the simple trochee is followed by the dactyl :—

— ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡

As to substance, we have three leading categories—heroic tales or *bylines*, songs on special subjects, and historical songs ; all with one common characteristic, the predominance of the Pagan spirit. The influence of Christianity is hardly to be discerned. And this one feature, both from the point of view of culture, and more particularly from that of literary evolution, opens an abyss between Russia and Europe. The anathema of the Church falls

on every legend, Christian or Pagan, with equal severity. Hence, partly, arises that profound and imperturbable realism which seems to have saturated the national literature from the outset, and which still predominates in its development.

#### THE BYLINES.

The word *byline* seems to be derived from *bylo*, "has been." Sakharov was, indeed, the first person to use it, after an ancient manuscript which has now disappeared. Yet it is found in the "Story of the Band of Igor" as equivalent to the expression "narrative." In the seventeenth-century texts the word used is *staryna* = "antiquity."

The *bylines* gravitate in two distinct cycles round the two centres of ancient Russian life—Kiev and Novgorod. In the Kiev cycle, the legendary figures cluster round Vladimir. Yet a certain number of *bylines* evoke yet more ancient heroes, of origin and prowess alike fabulous. Volga Sviatoslavitch is the son of a princess by a serpent; he is the personification of wisdom and cunning. In the case of Sviatogor the ruling quality is strength. He is so huge that the earth can scarcely carry him—a feature also to be found in the Rustem of Persian story. These personages, like the Titans of the Greek legend, symbolise the struggle of man with the elements. But this Slav myth is far from possessing the fulness of those which have descended to us from the Germans and Scandinavians. There was no priestly caste among the Slav pagans to garner up those religious traditions which have formed the basis of every great school of poetry.

With Vladimir, a gleam of chivalry appears. He and those about him are giants, but jolly companions and

mighty drinkers as well. At this point the epic links itself with history, for the Vladimir known to history actually was a great feast-giver. Yet the link is a frail one. The *bylines* know naught either of this sovereign's introduction of Christianity, or of the energy and skill which, according to the chroniclers, marked his initiatory efforts. The Vladimir of poetry confines himself to perpetually inventing fresh exploits for his heroes, to feeding them royally, and to marrying them off. He has no personal heroism. His deeds of prowess do not exist, and his usual bearing strikes us as somewhat effeminate, and even cowardly. When the Tartars besiege Kiév, he almost goes on his knees to Ilia, the destined saviour of the empire. Ilia requires a good deal of pressing, and is not far wrong, for the sovereign's behaviour betrays a general lack of generosity, not to speak of common honesty.

He covets the spouse of one of his heroes, and drives husband and wife to despair and death. This legend is evidently a mere variation of the biblical story of David and the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and the polygamous Vladimir bears the sins of a whole series of sovereigns, down to Ivan the Terrible. But the inspiration of the poem is all the more significant.

Ilia is a peerless comrade, the favourite hero of the *bylines*. His personal appearance, qualities, and brave deeds, are generally supposed to typify the ideal personification of the national temperament and genius. The peculiarities of the hero warrant this belief. In the first place, he is of peasant blood; and at the feast he forces the lords of Vladimir's court to give place before the *moujiks* of his company. This humility of origin is not exceptional in the circle about the prince. Another

member of it, Aliocha, is the son of a pope ; and another, Solovieï Boudimirovitch, the son of a shopkeeper. Both of these fraternise with Dobrynia, who belongs to a princely family. Ilia and Dobrynia exchange their crosses as a sign of friendship. These traits are true to the instincts and traditions of a nation in whose bosom a real aristocracy has never succeeded in taking root.

Ilia—like one of his forerunners in the prehistoric cycle, Mikoula Selianinovitch—is a cultivator of the soil, and except for the Russian bard, I believe none but the rhapsodist of the Finnish *Kalevala* would have bestowed a leading heroic rôle on a tiller of the ground. Yet in some other traits of character, and certain of his exploits, Ilia so nearly approaches the epic and mythologic world of neighbouring countries, as to seem merged in more than one of their representatives. Until the age of thirty, he remains inactive ; and here the influence of the Christian myth is clearly visible. Later on he fights with a fabulous robber, Solovieï (the Nightingale), who has wings, and bends the mightiest oaks by the mere weight of his body. But danger alarms Ilia, and the expedients he invents to escape it carry our minds to Hector fleeing before Achilles, and to Rama, seized with terror in the presence of Kabhanda. At the time of his greatest feats, Ilia is no longer young, and his white beard reminds us of Roland. He hesitates long before he succours Kiév ; he is perpetually disputing with Vladimir, and with and around him the whole turbulent and quarrelsome band of the legendary heroes of Europe and Asia, Rustem, Achilles, Sigurd, Siegfried, Arthur, with all the Olympian demi-gods, from the Hindoo Indra to the Thor-Wotan of the Germans, and the Peroune of the Russians, rise before our eyes. But

dissimilarities crop up forthwith. When, at long last, Ilia consents to deliver Kiév, it is neither lest he should be accused of cowardice, like Rustem, nor to wreak a personal vengeance, like Achilles. He is too much of a philosopher, too good-natured, for that. The Palatine Ogier, whose son has been slain by Charlemagne, demands the murderer's head as the price of his co-operation against the Saracens. Ilia is incapable of making such a bargain; nor does he obey any instinct of personal devotion to Vladimir. Indifferent alike to the point of honour and to the hope of glory, he raises his eyes above them both. That redoubtable arm is only lifted to defend the widow and the orphan, or for the common weal.

The manner in which this conception has been utilised by the Slavophil party will be easily divined. And assuredly the comparison which certain Western writers, following their lead, have delighted to establish with the Greek heroes and the noblest paladins of the *Chansons de Geste*, redounds to Ilia's advantage. Yet even here the comparison is irrelevant. The Greek heroes were not Christians, and the paladins were the merest miscreants. This latter type only assumes an ideal aspect in the *Romances of the Round Table*, and there it at once appears in conjunction with that pregnant belief, the source of true Christian chivalry, that the noblest fashion of employing strength is for the defence of the weak. Ilia, too, has his origin in this belief. The final elaboration of his type is certainly of later date than the *Romances of the Round Table*, and in its best, which are not always its most apparent features, it undoubtedly is a Christian type.

Apart, in fact, from his humanitarian instincts, there



is nothing knightly about Ilia. He is too coarse for that, too commonplace, and, above all, too pacifically inclined. He only fights under compulsion, and when it is inevitable—never for the pleasure of the thing. And this peculiarity makes him the faithful representative of a race the accidents of whose historical fate has rendered it warlike, but which has never been swept away by one of those floods of martial ardour which stirred the Western countries during the Middle Ages.

Ilia is a mighty eater and a heavy drinker. On the very eve of a battle we see him get drunk, and remain for twelve days in a state of vinous stupefaction and consequent incapability of action. If his wine does not actually overwhelm his senses, he grows noisy and intolerable. When sober he is cautious and calculating, not caring either to exert his strength unnecessarily, or to expose it to ordeals involving too much risk. When he has once made up his mind to face a danger, and has contrived to surmount the shudder which, in his case, always accompanies such a decision, he is much given to joke and banter, a trait which survives in the Russian peasant to this day.

The type, on the whole, is a sympathetic one—but quite exceptional even in the legend—set far up on the height of the popular inspiration. Ilia's followers do not reach his ankle. They are lost below him—very much below him—in a confused medley of rogues, blunderers, boasters, and cowards, of whom he himself has but a poor opinion, seeing he generally has to do their work for them. Their merit is their strength—a physical vigour which enables them to triumph over everything, even over common sense. They run their heads against fortress walls, and the walls crumble before them.

Barren of ideals as of ideas, they represent, in the popular conception, the lower grade of heroism, the elementary forces of Nature, of the earth, of the wind, of the heavy fist.

Tourguéniev has placed this terrible declaration in the mouth of Potioughine, the grumbler in *Smoke*: "What is known as our 'epic literature' is the only one in Europe or Asia which does not afford a single example of a typical pair of lovers. The hero of Holy Russia always begins his relations with the being to whose destiny fate has linked his own, by mercilessly ill-treating her. . . . Look into our legends. Love never appears in them but as the result of a charm or spell. It is absorbed with the liquor that brings forgetfulness; its effect is compared with soil that is dried up, or frozen."

Yet numerous female figures flit across these legends. They possess but little charm. They are triumphant, often, with an air of superiority which raises them above the masculine element; but this they owe neither to their attraction nor to the love they inspire. Ilia of Moürom is overthrown by a giant *Polénitsa* (*Polénitsas* is the generic title of these viragos), who prowls over the steppe, shouldering a club weighing several thousand pounds, defying the *bohatory* (heroes)—and who turns out to be his own daughter. Vassilissa, the daughter of Mikoula, combines strength with cunning to rescue her husband, Stavre Godounovitch; but the legend is dumb as to her beauty and that of her fellow-women. And this neglect suffices to distinguish the *Polénitsas* from the Amazons, as well as from the Valkyries. Men fight with them, they are frequently overcome by them, but they never pay court to them.

The woman of modern Russia does not share this peculiarity of her legendary predecessor. Yet certain features of the legendary type do appear, even in the most recent artistic creations, both in poetry and romance. Whether the author be Pouchkine, Tourguéniev, or Tolstoï, whether it be a question of love or of action, of doing good or of finding the right way, the initiative is most frequently allotted to the woman. She inspires, guides, rectifies—and is fond of putting herself forward.

But this type is not the only one, either in history or legend. It proceeds from the pagan tradition. Byzantine Christianity has added the woman of the *Terem*. This lady has “long hair and a short understanding,” a narrow intelligence and an erring flesh. The Penelope of these parts, Nastasia, wife of Dobrynia, wearies of waiting for the husband whom the war keeps from the conjugal hearth, much more quickly than the fair Greek, and forgets all too soon that she has sworn she will not marry Aliocha.

The figures evoked by the cycle of Novgorod are quite different—a race of merchants, of pilgrims to the Holy Land, of navigators, and builders of towns. Quarrelsome and pugnacious they still are, but only within the walls of their own city; and they still lead expeditions into Moslem countries, but only for the sake of traffic. “The Venetians of the Russian Crusade,” a certain writer has justly called them. Their history is embodied in two legends, of which many variations exist. That of Sadko only shows us the somewhat vulgar figure of a devout and pushing merchant. The hero of another, Vassili or Vaska, son of Bousslai, is a burgher, unsurpassed even by Ilia in stormy and quarrelsome

temper, who makes the town ring with the tumult of his freaks and bloodthirsty rages. Just as he is about to destroy his fellow-citizens, his father intervenes. Whereupon Vaska shuts him up in a cellar. Vaska's whole life is one tissue of follies and crimes. To expiate these, he goes on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and dies, on his return, by attempting a dangerous leap and striking against a rock—the image of the fate his pride has courted.

### POPULAR SONGS.

The first singers of *bylines* are believed to have been professional bards, attached to the court of the Varegian princes. Their tradition seems to have been carried on by the *skoromokhy* of the Muscovite epoch, against whom the pious and scrupulous Tsar Alexis waged merciless war. For a long period they were the great entertainment of the noble houses. Their present descendants are only to be found in the huts and taverns of the province of Olonetz.

In hut and tavern, from one end of Russia to the other, simple melodies are still sung, recalling or accompanying the recital, in a confused traditional medley, of the common events of the popular life and of Christian and Pagan festivals. Christmas *Koliada*, *Roussalnaïa*, in honour of the Slavonic nymphs (*roussalki*), harvest songs (*dojinki*), betrothal songs (*svadiébnymié piesni*), and funeral songs (*pokhoronnyié*).

Incantations (*zagovory*) against drought and fire hold a considerable place in this national poetry, and so do riddles (*zagadki*) and proverbs (*poslovitsy*), which enshrine the popular wisdom as drawn from all its numerous sources—half Pagan, half Christian, ancient, modern.

To these the *bylines* bring their share, as do the Scriptures, more especially the Psalms and Ecclesiastes, and further and more recent contributions are supplied by the epigrams of Kapnist, the fables of Krylov, and the humoristic verses of Gogol.

It may easily be conceived that these songs, resounding as they do all over a huge stretch of territory, Great Russia, Little Russia, White Russia, are not absolutely uniform. They reproduce the divergences of historical existence. Their common feature is a profound melancholy, which broods even over the betrothal songs, and of which we perceive the echo in most of the modern poets.

“We all sing in sadness. . . . The Russian song is a melancholy plaint,” so writes Pouchkine.

Nature and history have alike dealt hardly with this people. A severe climate, an ungrateful soil, an unattractive landscape, poverty, serfdom, the Byzantine yoke, the autocratic régime, have all combined to make up a troubled existence, a rugged fatherland, a home devoid of charm. For a lengthened period, the only remedy the Russian could discover against these many enemies was that he found in his glass—intoxication. The primitive bards have lovingly sung the praises of this arch-consoler. The poets who have succeeded them—their superiors in inspiration and culture—have sought some other expedient, and have discovered none—save death.

Yet the nation endowed with this ungrateful country, this inhospitable home, has loved both with a tenderness which I do not fear to call unexampled—so strong, so passionate, so jealous, so devoted does it appear to me. Perhaps this is because, in order to love what has so

little that is lovable about it, the Russian has been constrained to idealise the object of his love, to re-create it, as it were, by faith and imagination ; and he has thus succeeded in converting his love into a religion, a worship, a fanaticism.

The national literature, like the popular poetry, is saturated with this principle.

#### HISTORICAL NARRATIVES.

These gravitate round Moscow, reconstructing more especially the dramatic period dominated by the great figure of Ivan the Terrible. Certain anecdotes reported by Collins in his *Travels in Russia* in the middle of the seventeenth century are founded on ancient *skazki* (recitals) concerning this sovereign. Some, indeed, of these narratives plunge even into the Tartar epoch, and are thus connected with the Kiév cycle. The form is almost that of the *bylines*, and the inspiration is frequently analogous—the mythical element being wedded to the historical groundwork. Ivan keeps open table like Vladimir, and some of his boyards perform fabulous exploits as improbable as those ascribed to Ilia.

In every poetic evocation of the "Terrible," the ruling idea is the glorification of his conquest. To the poets he is above all things the Tsar who captured Kazan, Riazan, and Astrakhan. Yet the popular inspiration is not content with mere commonplace and superficial praise. It dissects the Tsar's character, lays bare his personal psychology, and does not ignore its contradictions and dissonances ; but it makes the best of them. It is fully aware of the man's cruelty, and even takes care to depict it in frightful colours, but at the same time

justifies it. It finds the explanation for this cruelty in the Tsar's struggle against the aristocratic oligarchy. In this quarrel the whole heart of the people goes with the sovereign and against the boyards; and indeed his Russian surname (*Groznyi*) does not so much mean the "Terrible" as the "Dreaded."

The popular poets rise in arms against the false Demetrius, and hold him up as a traducer of the national beliefs and customs. Their descriptions of the siege of the monastery of Solovietsk in the time of Alexis, betray a certain sympathy with the *raskol*. Other ballads of the same epoch celebrate the exploits of Stenka Razine, the Cossack rebel. These form part of a whole picturesque cycle, enshrining a series of similar exploits, in which the followers of the famous partisan (mere robbers, in fact) play the heroes' parts, after the quaintest and most suggestive fashion.

In Kiriéievski's collection, one whole volume is devoted to Peter the Great; but the popular verse has not done justice to the Reformer. None but the external features of his mighty work—such as his sanguinary extermination of the Streltsy and his wars—are noticed, and only one attractive phase of his character—his simplicity—is extolled.

Seated on the main staircase of the Kreml, the *Krasnoié-Kryltso*, the Tsar challenges the nobles surrounding him to single combat with their fists. The boyards make no answer. One young soldier, only, accepts the challenge. But the Tsar lays down his conditions.

"If I win, thy head will be cut off!"

"So be it."

The soldier wins. The vanquished Tsar offers to reward him with lands and gold. The hero's reply is

typical, and identical with that of the legendary *bohatyr*, Potok, to Vladimir, in similar circumstances.

“All I ask is permission to drink without payment in the Tsar’s taverns!”

As the modern era approaches, this poetic current narrows, loses its depth, its freshness, and its brightness. When Alexander I.’s time comes, we have nought but a turbid stream, rolling down formless heaps of mud—not a reflection of Austerlitz, Friedland, or Tilsit. Moscow appears, like a flash, in the flames kindled by the hand of the *Khrantzouz*. The popular imagination lingers lovingly over the rugged figures of the Hetman Platov and his Cossacks. They are the heroes of the great historic drama. But historical truth, sincere emotion, and even originality, are utterly lacking in these ballads. The death of Alexander I. inspires one of these poet-narrators with a mere transcription of the Marlborough song, which had been already applied, in the form of a filthy parody, to the death of Patiomkine. Artistic poetry delayed long in coming to claim the inheritance of these degenerate bards.

#### RELIGIOUS VERSE.

The religious songs contemporary with this last evolution of popular poetry possess a special character, for they have their springs in written literature, and like it, they belong to the Church. And indeed they do not date earlier than from the seventeenth century. These songs, concerning the beginning and end of the world, the last judgment, St. George, are for the most part—like the above-mentioned literature, which was first popularised in the Southern Provinces—of Southern origin. One string of this lyre—and it is constantly struck—is



sacred to the *Raskol*, and is used, more especially, to call up the figure of Antichrist. Invisibly, and even visibly, according to the teaching of certain sects, the reign of Antichrist begins, in Church and Empire alike, from the seventeenth century onward.

One form taken by this poetry is that of legends, prose narratives of a religious nature, drawn indifferently from the Holy Books and from apocryphal sources. The Devil hindering Noah from building his ark, Solomon taking into his head to found a monastery in hell, and such incidents, furnish forth these recitals. I have reserved a special place for the "Story of the Band of Igor." This ballad cannot indeed be classed with others. It is unique.

#### THE BALLAD OF THE BAND OF IGOR.

It has been, and is still, a subject of passionate discussion. The text of the poem was not discovered until 1795, in a fourteenth or early fifteenth century manuscript, and this nothing but a copy—since the work is believed, by those who accept it as authentic, to date from the twelfth century. The copy itself no longer exists. It was burnt, together with the whole Moussine-Pouchkine library, in the year 1812. A transcript was made for the Empress Catherine II., and this is all that remains to us—little enough, in the case of so priceless a relic, the sole remaining waif and witness of a vanished and shadowy literary past.

Is it the work of a single author who has failed to leave his name behind him? Or does it, like the *bylines*, represent the conjoint labour of several generations of poets? These questions afford matter for cogitation.

At the present day, the hypothesis of an individual authorship prevails, coupled with the admission of the existence of an ingenious grouping of elements, common to all the popular poetry of that period. This would not appear to be an isolated case. An almost equal variety of subject, coupled with a curiously similar inspiration, has been remarked in an old work known as the *Khalitcho-Volhynian Chronicle*. The very form of the poem seems to indicate it as the work of an individual. The author is constantly speaking in the first person, sometimes to invoke the memory of some forerunner of his own—whom he calls Bořane, and our knowledge of whose existence we owe to him—and sometimes to express his own admiration or sorrow, for he has not a touch of the Homeric calm.

He tells us the story of the expedition led by Igor, Prince of Novgorod-Siéviérski, charged by Sviatoslav, Prince of Kiév, to drive back the Polovtsy. Up to the time of the Tartar invasion, the Polovtsy were the greatest enemies of Russia. Igor begins with a victory, but, in a decisive battle, he is utterly beaten and carried into captivity. This event is attributed, in the chronicle known as that of Ipatiev, to the year 1185, and in that of Lavrentii, to the following one. Both chronicles agree with the poet in ascribing the responsibility for the disaster to a quarrel between the princes. The poet adds some inventions of his own. Sviatoslav, who has not left Kiév—these Kiév princes are stay-at-home fellows, and generally send some one else when there is fighting to be done—sees the awful disaster in a dream. He hears the moans of the vanquished, mingled with the croaking of the ravens. Waking, he learns the facts, does not bestir himself, but sends messengers to the other neigh-

bouring princes beseeching them to rise, "for the sake of the Russian soil and the wounds of Igor." Meanwhile, Iaroslavna, the wife of Igor, shut up in the castle of Poutivl, mounts the walls, and "mourns like a lonely cuckoo at sunrise." She is ready enough to go forth! "I will fly like a bird towards the Danube. I will dip my sleeve of otter-skin into its waters, and I will lave the wounds on the mighty body of Igor!"

The denouement is a triumph, though not of an over-heroic nature. Igor escapes from his prison. The Polovtsy pursue him, but Nature herself abets his flight. The woodpeckers, tapping on the tree-trunks, show him the way to the Doniets; the nightingales warn him of the approach of dawn. He reaches his home, and the Danube bears the voices of the daughters of Russia, singing the universal joy, across the sea to Kiév (*sic*).

Though this arrangement of the episode is weak enough, both historically and geographically, it proves great wealth of imagination, and a tolerably intense poetic feeling. Certainly there has been an exaggeration as to the sentiments of a higher order—the love of the Russian Fatherland, the aspirations towards national unity—which some have chosen to discover in the work. Yet I cannot share the absolute scepticism of certain commentators as to these points. Surprising as the idea that such conceptions and emotions should have existed round about Kiév and Novgorod, towards the year 1185, may now appear to us, we are forced to admit that the *Chronicle* of Nestor shows us something of the same nature, at a much earlier date.

And apart from this, the poem, whether its authorship be individual or collective, is a work of art, and occasionally of very subtle art. Its methods of expression

are classic; in the descriptive portions similes are frequent. The rolling *telegas* (waggons) of the Polovtsy scream in the darkness like a flight of wild swans. The invading army is likened to a cloud, which pours a murderous rain of arrows.

Another favourite poetic artifice is the personification of the elements. After Igor's defeat, the grass withers, the trees bend under the weight of the mourning that overshadows Russian soil. Iaroslavna confides her grief to the sun, to the wind, to the Dnieper. There is a fine lyric flow in her lament.

Some other passages, though they appear instinct with an equally seductive inspiration, are almost unintelligible. Even to Russian readers, other than archæologists, the poem is only accessible nowadays through translations. The considerable divergence between the language of the original and that which obtains in modern Russia, the probable corruptions existing in the text, and the allusions it contains to contemporary events now scarcely known, have crammed it with incomprehensible enigmas.

Thus indeed may we explain the doubts which have arisen as to the authenticity, the nature, and even the literary value of the work. Some competent judges have imagined the whole thing to be an imposture, like that which victimised Pouchkine when, in all good faith, he translated Mérimée's *Servian Songs*—a modern work in the pseudo-classic style, or even an imitation of Ossian. They have pointed out suspicious features, evocations of Stribog, the sea-god, and Dajbog, the sun-god—neither of them very probable on the part of a court poet writing two centuries after the introduction of Christianity. This mythological element runs through the whole texture of

the work, round the figure of Troïane,—whom some critics believe to be the Tsar-Troïan of Bulgarian and Servian legend, contemporary with the elves and the *roussalky*; while others see in him the Roman Trajan, whose memory lingered long in Dacia, near the home of the Southern Slavs. And what, we are asked, is to be thought of certain features evidently borrowed from Greek literature? The invocation to Boiane, with which the poem opens, is almost a reproduction of a passage from Euripides.

If I may give my own impression, I would first of all put aside, in common with all Russian critics, the purely personal conjectures of the learned Professor Léger, of the College of France, who sees in this *Story of the Band of Igor* an imitation of the *Zadonchtchina*.

This latter work is generally, and, as I believe, justly, taken to be an oral popular production of the Tartar epoch, but, unlike it, inspired by the *Slovo o Polkou Igoriévié*. I agree with the majority, as to the authenticity of the *Slovo*, though it has been greatly tampered with by copyists, translators, and commentators. Like Biéliniski, and contrary, this time, to the majority, I refuse to regard the *Story of the Band of Igor* as a second Iliad. I do not even place it, as a work of art, on a par with the poems of the Round Table Cycle. This work, as it stands at present, excels them in that simple wild-flower freshness, full of colour and perfume, which made so great an impression on Biéliniski. It is behind them too—far behind, especially as regards the principal figure, that of Igor, which is utterly lifeless and dim. On the whole, it shows great wealth of form, and an absolute poverty of idea. Russian life in the twelfth century could furnish but little of that.

None the less does this poem constitute an infinitely precious link between the oral poetry and the written literature of the epoch preceding that of Peter the Great, of which I must now give a brief summary.

#### WRITTEN LITERATURE PRIOR TO THE REIGN OF PETER THE GREAT.

The value of this literary inheritance is almost purely historical. As art, it has hardly any at all. Written literature and Christianity, one bearing the other with it, entered Russia from Byzantium, by way of Bulgaria, with the apostles of the ninth century, Cyril and Methodius. They translated the Holy Books into the Slav language, and invented the Slav alphabet, or *Kirillitsa*, so called to distinguish it from the *Glagolitsa* (*Glagol*, the word), another and more complicated alphabet, adopted by the South-Western Slavs.

The *Gospel of Ostromir*, prepared about 1050 by the Scribe Gregory for a Novgorod burgher, and the religious works of SVIATOSLAV (1073-1076), are the most ancient existing monuments of the Slavo-ecclesiastic language and the national literature. During this period the national education was entirely concentrated in the churches and monasteries, and was consequently impressed with the religious and Byzantine stamp. From the literary point of view, the Greek influence continued down to the close of the sixteenth century, at which period Western and European culture entered Moscow through Poland.

The first writers proceeding from this school were monks and compilers. They do indeed mention the presence among them of learned men and philosophers,

but it would hardly be safe to take this for an established fact. The *Sborniki* (Collections) of Sviatoslav, which possess a very high reputation, the *Zlatooust* ("Golden Sayings" of Chrysostom), the *Ismaragd* (emerald), the *Margarit* (jewel), the *Ptchely* (bees), are a mere farrago of orisons and homilies.

Another group (called Paléia, from the ancient Greek *παλαια*) consists of versions of biblical history, in which the apocryphal books occupy a considerable space.

These versions preserved their authoritative quality till the very threshold of the eighteenth century.

Some of these ancient works, however, bear signs of a certain amount of artistic culture. They give evidence of a study of rhetoric. Certain passages in the *Slovo* (discourse) of the Metropolitan Hilarion (middle of the twelfth century) are masterly, and we must go to Karamzine to find anything to compare with them. This discourse, and the *Story of the Band of Igor*, constitute the gem of this period.

The essential feature of this religious literature, from the earliest sermons to Peter the Great's famous *Ecclesiastical Regulations*, is the struggle of Church teaching against Pagan tradition, and the superstitions and heresies therewith connected, and also against the dualistic current which flowed from the Latin Church. The *Raskol* of the eighteenth century has deep roots that run full four centuries back. The *Strigolniki* of the fourteenth century and the *Jidovstvouiouchtchyié* (Hebraists) of the fifteenth century may be looked on as the ancestors of the modern dissenters. Hence in all the writings of this period, even those on profane subjects, we perceive a controversial tendency.

Amongst the profane writers of the epoch prior to

the Tartar conquest (eleventh to thirteenth century), the foremost place belongs to NESTOR. Unhappily we are not sure that the chronicle which bears his name was written by him.

He was born about the year 1050. At the age of seventeen he was in the *Piétchersky-Monastyr* ("Monastery of the Caves") at Kiév, and had assumed monastic garb. In 1091 he was commissioned, with two other monks, to exhume the relics of St. Theodosius. He died about 1100. These few lines contain all that we know of his biography. The works presumed to be his are *The Life of Boris and of Gleb*, the *Life of Theodosius*, and the *Russian Chronicle* (*Poviest vremiennykh Liet*).

His right to the title of the first of the *Lietopisiéts* (chroniclers) has been contested by Tatichtchev. This historian, a contemporary of Peter the Great, has reproduced, in his own *History of Russia*, a fragment of a chronicle called that of Joachim, discovered by himself in an eighteenth-century copy, and which is said to be the first chronicle of Novgorod down to the year 1016. This Joachim, Bishop of Novgorod, died there in 1030. The original of the chronicle has never been found. But this is also the case as regards the chronicle ascribed to Nestor, whose name, indeed, only appears on a single copy, that known under the name of *Khliëbnikov*, and dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. This supposed work by Nestor is a history of the beginnings of Russia, starting, after the Greek pattern, with the Deluge. The ruling spirit of the chronicle, and the quality which renders it a singularly expressive document, is a mixture—amazing for that epoch—of the deepest religious feeling with the most ardent patriotism. This fact is worth remembering. Russian literature, and



Modern Russia herself, are both the daughters of this union. Nestor believes that every country has its guardian angel, and that the wings of the angel which watches over the fate of his own land are of exceptional span. The chronicler is something of a poet too. Hear what he says of the death of Saint Olga: "*She beamed on Christendom like a morning star. She shed over it a gentle dawn. Amidst the infidels she shone like the moon in the darkness. . . . Now she has risen before us to the Russian heaven, where, worshipped by the sons of Russia, she prays God on their behalf.*"

The poet has epic power. His story unrolls itself slowly, calmly, with numerous digressions. He uses the Slavo-ecclesiastic or Old Bulgarian tongue, with some traces—more especially in the passages recording the local legends—of the old popular languages of the North.

This chronicle goes no farther than the year 1110. The continuation of its story, to be found in the Collection of Ipatiev, is the anonymous *Chronicle of Kiév* (down to 1200). For the years between 1201 and 1292 we have the *Volhynian Chronicle*, also anonymous, the earlier portion of which is supposed to have been lost. And after 1292 the *Chronicle of Souzdal*, or *Chronicle of the North*, is our chief historical authority. The complete collection of the *Lietopisy* also contains four chronicles of Novgorod, covering the period between 1016 and 1716.

All these works possess the same character. Every event is considered from the religious standpoint, and all comments are of a moralising tendency. If, according to Nestor, the Guardian Angel permitted the Polovtsy to invade his country, it was as a punishment for the sins

committed by her sons. This primitive bond of resemblance fades out after the division of the country into principalities (*oudiélly*), and the consequent development of local colour among its chroniclers. The Novgorod chroniclers are curt, dry, precise. They talk like business men. Those of the Southern regions abound in picturesque imagery, and their story is full of detail.

After the unification of the principalities under the Muscovite hegemony, a new type appears—the *Annals of Sophia* (*Sofiiskii Vrémiennik*), and the chronicles known as the *Chronicle of Nicone*, and that of the *Resurrection* (*Vosskrèssenskaïa*). The resolute and far-seeing political spirit which created this hegemony is strongly discernible in these chronicles. The *Nestorian Chronicle* contains certain poetic legends which have been taken by some persons to be the relics of an ancient epic, and the *Volhynian Chronicle* mentions bards who sang the exploits of their princes.

Until the Tartars appeared, all literary culture was concentrated at Kiév and Novgorod. After the Tartar invasion, we find signs of it in the North-East, at Vladimir, Rostov, Mourom, Iaroslavl, Tver, and Riazan. But still it only existed in monastic life. What with the universal turmoil, the Mongol tyranny, and the quarrels between the various princes, the monastery was its only possible refuge. In the fourteenth century there were two hundred of these establishments, the only spots where men read, and even where books existed. But books, and the spirit they inspired, were alike instinct with an ever-growing and savage asceticism, which went far to suppress secular literature of any kind.

In the fifteenth century, Moscow was a metropolis in two senses, the political and religious; but it had

hard work to become a centre of intellectual activity. There was, indeed, some stirring of men's souls just at this period; the terrible conditions of existence, both public and private, provoked a certain uprising of the critical spirit. The stock-in-trade of the literature of that day consists of religious precepts and epistles (*pooutchénia, posslania*). The Metropolitan Fotii (1410-1431) excelled in this line. He was a malcontent, not a writer. Besides, he was Greek by birth, and by no means skilful in the use of the Russian tongue. In the sixteenth century, another Albanian Greek, Maximus, summoned to Russia to catalogue the Grand-Duke's library, and translate books into the Slav language, travelled much farther along the road thus opened by his fellow-countryman. Maximus the Greek, summing up the work of his predecessors, gives us a full catalogue of all the shortcomings, religious, moral, and intellectual, under which the contemporary life of the country laboured.

Born in 1480, he had lived at Florence just after the execution of Savonarola. Better for him if he had forgotten it. Accused of having corrupted the sacred books, he was imprisoned in monasteries for five-and-twenty years, and died unnoticed in 1556, at the Laura of St. Sergius. His justification is enshrined, even more clearly than in his compositions in his own defence, in the reports of the Council convoked at Moscow in 1551 by Ivan the Terrible, according to his agreement with the metropolite Macarius.

These are known as the *Stoglav* (the *Hundred Chapters*). All the Bishops in Russia assembled at this Council, listened to the address, divided into thirty-seven heads, with which the Tsar saw fit to open the

debate, and they might have fancied they heard Maximus speaking through the sovereign's mouth. He reproduced every item of the plea formulated by the foreign monk. The decision of the Council was a foregone conclusion. Maximus was left in prison, but the creation of a certain number of schools was decided on in principle, and the opening of a printing-press was decreed by ukase. From this press issued, between 1563 and 1565, a *Book of the Apostles* and a *Book of Hours*. But the Muscovites, docile followers of their monkish teachers, took printing to be a work of the devil, and the following year saw the press destroyed by fire, during a riot. The two printers, Ivan Feodorov and Peter Timeofiéiev, only avoided death by crossing over the frontier. They first of all worked at Zabloudov, under the protection of the Polish Hetman Chodkiewicz, then successively at Lemberg and Vilna, and finally at Ostrog, where the first Slav Bible was printed in 1581. But a new printing-press had already been set up at Moscow, where a Psalter appeared in 1568.

At the same time the monastic spirit won a triumph by the popularisation of a book the authorship of which was long attributed to a contemporary of Ivan the Terrible—the Pope Sylvester. According to the latest investigations, only the fifty-second and closing chapter of the *Domostroï* can properly be ascribed to this priest. The others were put together at various periods, and arranged in order before the composition of the last. The ideas and principles expressed reflect those of several centuries of historical life. The word *Domostroï* signifies "House-master." Compared with the works of the same nature originating in other Western countries (such as *Regimento delle Donne*, and

the *Menagier de Paris* (1393), the *Domostroi* is distinguished by a far more comprehensive moral teaching, and also by a very special utilitarian tendency. The directions and counsels it contains, which cover the whole of Russian life, spiritual, domestic, and social, are all founded on essentially practical motives. A man should not get drunk, because that involves a risk of spoiling one's clothes and being robbed of one's money. The *Domostroi* even goes the length of recommending the use of certain innocent deceptions. It defines, after the most exact fashion, the respective duties and positions of husband and wife. The wife is to be kind, silent, hard-working, obedient, and she is to submit to physical punishment, administered by her husband, gently and without anger, "*while he holds her decently by the hand,*" and always in private, so that nobody shall see or know of it. The husband has supreme power over the house and family, but all the internal government is in his wife's hands. She is the first to rise in the morning; she rouses the servants, and sets every one an example of hard work.

The *Domostroi* was not printed until 1849. IVAN THE TERRIBLE himself made an attempt in the same direction, after having left posterity a literary legacy of quite a different order. His *Code*, or *Precept*, was intended for the Monastery of St. Cyril at Biéloziorsk. This was a place of exile for disgraced Boyards and *Kniazi*, who, as a rule, carried their lay customs with them, and disseminated them largely. The Tsar opens with a modest and pious expression of his doubts as to the propriety of his intervention. Can it be right that he, "stinking dog" that he is, should teach God's servants a lesson? But he forthwith recalls the fact

that during a visit to the monastery he had announced his intention of some day retiring to it himself. The monks, therefore, must surely count him as one of themselves. That is their clear duty! And thereupon he starts off hot-foot, his pen, as sharp as any hunting-spear, pouring forth a violent diatribe against the dissolute life of the community, in which, no doubt, he suspects his latest condemned exiles, Chérévétiev and Khabarov, to be deeply involved.

More interesting from the historical, and even from the literary point of view, is Ivan's correspondence with Prince Kourbski, one of his principal collaborators, who had fled to Lithuania after being defeated in battle. The commanders who served Ivan the Terrible, like the generals of the French Republic, went to the scaffold if they failed to march to victory.

The free country of Poland was at that period a land of refuge for her Muscovite neighbours. Kourbski did his best, during his exile, to spread the Orthodox Faith, but with this effort he combined certain classical studies. He applied his mind to Latin, grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics, and thus armed, he addressed his former sovereign in letters intended to impress him with his own ignorance, and with the injustice of his behaviour. Ivan was not the man to be overawed by such learning. His replies utterly scorn the example of oratorical artifice set him by his correspondent. Without affectation, and careless of all style, they simply pour out his rage and hatred in a torrent of passionate invective, and we perceive that the master of rhetoric, the triumphant dialectician, is the Tsar. What Kourbski and such traitors say of his cruelty is puerile, and their claim to call down God's judgment on him is absurd.

He loathes bloodshed, and would never permit it, if the crime of Kourbski and his like did not force his hand. God will discern the true culprit !

“What you write me,” answers Koursbi, “is ridiculous, and it is indecent to send such writings into a country where men know grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy.”

The correspondence extends over a period of sixteen years, from 1563 to 1579, and comprises four letters from Kourbski and two of Ivan's replies. The post travelled slowly in those days ! There has been much splitting of hairs over the value of the arguments advanced in this epistolary tournament, and the process still continues.

Kourbski also wrote a *History of Ivan the Terrible*, which is interesting as being the first Russian attempt at learned composition modelled on the classics. The work is full of detail, and has a picturesqueness of style which recommends it, but it lacks calm, and is totally devoid of impartiality.

From the close of the seventeenth century onwards, a new influence becomes evident in the intellectual development of Russia. The presence of the Jesuits, brought to Kiév by the Polish conquest, makes that city a centre of culture of a comparatively enlarged nature, and the seat of a school of advanced teaching, transformed, after 1701, into an ecclesiastical college.

One curious peculiarity of the teaching of Kiév, and of the literary movement which preceded it, is that though both were Latin and Roman in origin, they both fought chiefly against Rome. Their chief aim was the defence of orthodoxy. Apart from that, they are essentially scholastic in character. Like everything Polish of that epoch, they pertain to the Middle Ages. Beside the

rhetoric, so beloved of Kourbski, poetry holds an honoured place at Kiév, and gives birth to a bevy of compositions wherein religious drama (mysteries) holds the most prominent position. This particular element soon penetrates as far as Moscow.

Towards the middle of the seventeenth century, Southern Russia is severed from Poland. Then the intellectual and literary influence of the southern focus takes the migratory form. In 1649, during the reign of Alexis Michailovitch, the Boyard Rtychtchev sends for Little-Russian monks to manage a school he has established near the monastery of St. Andrew. But before long the local orthodoxy takes fright at these instructors. A struggle begins between the Greek and the Latin system of instruction, and lasts until Peter the Great decides in favour of the latter, and re-models the Greek Academy at Moscow on the Kiévian lines. This institution, founded in 1682 by the Tsar Fiodor Alexiéiévitich, appears fated to undergo periodic changes of name and management. In its Greek period it was chiefly occupied—under the direction of the famous Patriarch Nicone, assisted by one of the monks summoned by Rtychtchev, Epiphane Slavetsky—with inaugurating the correction of the Sacred Books. The result of this work, which its opponents held to be suspicious and irreverent, was the *Raskol*.

At last, with the appearance of the learned men of Kiév and the establishment of schools, profane science took root at Moscow. Its first steps were modest indeed. Literally, it had to begin with the alphabet. The first national alphabet had been published at Vilna in 1596. It was not till 1648 that the grammar of Melétii Smotrytski was printed at Moscow. This was followed, early in the



eighteenth century, by those of Fiodor Polikarpov (1721) and Fiodor Maksimov (1723), which remained the authorities until the publication of Lomonossov's work (1755).

A few attempts at bibliography and lexicography accompany these elementary productions, together with some accounts of travel, chronicles, and the *Tchéti-Minéï* ("Ecclesiastical Years"), a very popular work of encyclopædic hagiography, by Danilo Touptala (St. Demetrius of Rostov). It seems, in this book, as though Orthodox and ascetic Russia, standing on the threshold of a new epoch, were casting back a glance fraught with terror and regret. Yet even in these pages the modern spirit stirs. The author follows Western models. He has both Simeon the Metaphrast and the Bollandists under his hand. Danilo, indeed, who was born in 1651, in the province of Kiév, of a noble Cossack family, and lived both at Vilna and at Sloutsk, was himself the child of Little-Russian soil and Polish culture. The foreign and Western element also made itself evident in two literary productions of very dissimilar natures. *Russia under Alexis Mikhaïlovitch*, by Kotochikhine, and *The Russian Empire in the Middle of the Eighteenth Century*, by Jouriï Krijanitch.

#### KOTOCHIKHINE AND KRIJANITCH.

Kotochikhine, an employé in the Foreign Office (*Possolskoi Prikaze*), who took refuge at a later period in Poland, and afterwards in Sweden, where he wrote his book, is a second Kourbski, with a wider intelligence. He struck the first note in that literary concert of accusation and divulgation which in our day has made the name of such men as Herzen, Chtchédrine, and Pissemiski.

He boldly lays his hand even on the family matters of his sovereign, revealing his moral poverty, his coarse habits, his lack of education. He denounces the ignorance, the bad faith, the robbery, rampant on every step of the social ladder. He has been taxed, in Russia, with spite and prejudice; but he is too objective and too cold to deserve this reproach. He never declaims, he merely quotes facts, and he is authoritatively confirmed in two quarters—by Pope Sylvester with his *Domostroï*, and by Peter the Great with his reforms. His end was tragic. In 1667, when he was only thirty-seven, he went to the scaffold in expiation of a murder committed in Stockholm, the circumstances of which have never been clearly ascertained. The manuscript of his book was only discovered in the Upsala Library in 1837.

Kotochikhine, like his modern imitators, confined himself to pointing out the evil without suggesting any remedy. The Servian KRIJANITCH, on the contrary, is a doctor for every disease, ready with both diagnosis and prescription. He was a reformer, a Catholic priest who had studied at Agram, at Vienna, and at Rome, where, while writing a book on the great Schism, he was bitten with the mania for reuniting the two Churches. He reached Moscow in 1658, bubbling over with splendid plans. Three years later we find him at Tobolsk, in the depths of Siberia. What caused this disgrace? We know not. It lasted till 1676, and in his distant exile the unhappy man composed all his works—a grammar and a book on politics, which was published, but not until 1860, by Bezsonov, under the title already mentioned. It gives us, in a series of dialogues, a complete plan of political and social reorganisation on Western lines, and a fancy picture of a reformed Russia.

Krijanitch's work being, like that of Kotochikhine, proscribed and ignored, counted for naught in the intellectual movement of the times. Yet it heralded the advent of a new world. When the Protopope Avvakoume raised his protest against the correction of the Sacred Books, the knell of ancient Russia was ringing in his ears. The purging of the original texts was only one of the many signs of the crumbling of the old foundations, religious and social. When this was undertaken, the critical spirit entered the charmed circle wherein for centuries the national spirit had slumbered on its bed of idleness, of ignorance, and of superstition, and the outer air swept in through the breach opened towards Europe. The Russia of Alexis woke to the memory of a past when she had seen Greek artists at Kiév, German artisans at Novgorod and Pskov, Italian architects even in far distant Vladimir, and held familiar intercourse with the Christian princes of the West. The foreign immigration had recommenced even under Ivan III., at the close of the fifteenth century. The thread of tradition was taken up again, when that Tsar chose Sophia Paleologus, a Greek princess brought up at Rome, to be his partner. When she brought over Fioravanti, the Italian architect, Western art once more took up its quarters on Russian soil. Early in the following century, Herberstein already mentions a beginning of European life at Moscow—the German "Faubourg." One of the most curious traits in the character of Ivan the Terrible is his mania for things English. At one time we find him dreaming of an interview with Queen Elizabeth, and obstinately clinging to his dream. Later, and this at the close of his life, his heart is set on marrying Mary Hastings. At certain moments of moral con-

vulsion, the idea of retiring permanently to England tempted him, and even haunted his fevered brain.

Under Alexis, the German, or rather the cosmopolitan "Faubourg," attained civic rights. Its special life became an integral part of the local existence. Yet the civilising influence still needed a conductor, and the part devolved on the Little-Russian element. This possessed a twofold principle of relative knowledge and anti-catholicism, which facilitated its mission. The first workers of the renaissance which was to transform Moscow issued from this group, but their labour must be judged more by the spirit than by the letter of their writings.

#### THE RENAISSANCE.

One of the Little-Russian priests who arrived in the capital at this period, SIMEON POLOTSKI, had all the air of a court abbé. He gave lessons in literature in the sovereign's family, and wrote verses for special occasions. These monks of Kiév introduced the art of poetry as well as the elements of Western science. Simeon, who was tutor to Alexis, and then to his brother Fiodor, also wielded a decisive influence over the education of Sofia, sister of Peter the Great, and his predecessor at the head of the state. His books on religious controversy are interspersed with scientific digressions. His views on cosmology are somewhat peculiar. He believed the sky to be a great crystal sphere, wherein the stars are fixed. He also thought he knew the sun to be a hundred times larger than the earth, and that the universe measured exactly 428,550 versts. He was a poet, and wrote plays—*Nebuchadnezzar* and *The Prodigal Son*, which were played at court and in

the schools. In *The Prodigal Son* we have a thinly veiled criticism of the over-despotic conditions of family life. In 1672, Johann Gottfried Gregori, a German, installed himself in the Faubourg with his troupe of performers. Moscow had a theatre, and before long she had a school of dramatic art. Natalia Narychkine, the second wife of Alexis, opened the gates of the Kremlin to the actors. Unknown rivals and forerunners of Racine set the story of Esther and Ahasuerus on the stage, and Sofia introduced the works of Molière.

After the drama comes the novel. This form of narrative had long been familiar and popular in Russia. Until the sixteenth century, it preserved the Byzantine type, in the form of adaptations of the apocryphal legends, which had a large circulation. It ultimately underwent the Western influence, and received, by way of Poland, the elements, strangely corrupted and travestied, of the Romance of Chivalry. But presently, in a group of anonymous works, of which *The Adventures of Frol Skobiéiev*, the seducer of Annouchka, daughter of the Stolnik (*dapifer*) Nachtchokine, is the most characteristic, we observe a perfectly fresh type. Not a trace of fancy have we here, but the sharpest observation of contemporary life, a reproduction, faithful to triviality, of its least attractive aspects—in a word, all the essential features of the modern realists. Frol, a professional pettifogger, openly dubbed a thief and rogue by Annouchka's father, attains his end by dint of boldness, cunning, and bribery. He carries off the fair lady and wins the pardon of the indignant Boyard, who leaves him all his fortune. In spite of the evident influence of the German *Schelmen-Romane*, we here find an undoubted vein of originality, which, checked by the general current

of foreign importation, will scarcely reappear until the time of Gogol. *Frol Skobiéiev* is the lineal ancestor of *Tchitchikov* in *Dead Souls*; and this Russian romance of the seventeenth century may be taken to be a literary treasure not equalled by any other works of the periods of Peter the Great and of the great Catherine.

In any case, it constitutes an extremely interesting and significant phenomenon. It consummates the rupture, partial at all events, with those superannuated traditions which trammelled the Russian genius for so long a period. The evolution which in Italy was foreshadowed by Dante and realised by Petrarch, the conquest of literature by life and our common humanity, with all its contingent circumstances, is accomplished, in the Fatherland of Peter the Great, on the very eve of the advent of the great Reformer, while the special tendencies to which Gogol, Tourguéniev, and Dostoïevski were to impart their full scope begin, already and simultaneously, to make themselves felt.

Simeon Polotski, dying in 1680, was replaced as court poet by his own pupil, Sylvester Miédviédiev, who had spent a considerable time in Poland.

Following his predecessor's lead, he founded a school for the teaching of Latin, and he also succeeded him as leader of the party opposed to the Greek tradition.

The end of the struggle was tragic and unexpected. Miédviédiev, the favourite of Sofia, was mixed up in the quarrel between the Regent and her brother, and in it he lost his life. The Greek party enjoyed a momentary triumph. I have demonstrated elsewhere the manner in which this transient victory brought the victors to confusion. I will here describe how Miédviédiev was avenged by the author of his punishment.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RENAISSANCE

THE thinking world of Russia at the end of the seventeenth century, has been compared to a great raft floating unanchored, drawn, indeed, eastward towards Asia, by the current of its natural traditions, but suddenly cast in an opposite direction by some violent and merciless eddy. This idea still lingers in Western literature. It is as false as most stereotyped assertions of the kind. The eastward tendency is, on the contrary, a quite modern phenomenon in the history of Russian civilisation. It dates from yesterday, and its nature, so far, remains purely political, economic, and industrial. From a more general point of view, the tendency of the national life, though drawn even at Kiév, as at Novgorod, from the Byzantine East, was to develop itself in quite the contrary direction. Kiév entered into relations with Germany, and even with France. Novgorod opened the Baltic roads towards the West. The Tartar invasion checked all these puttings forth, but it did not replace them with any in a different direction. The "intellectuals" of the sixteenth century did not attempt, during their quarrel with the despotism resulting from the Mongol conquest, to seek refuge in Asia. We know whither Kourbski fled. In the following century, PETER THE GREAT neither sent for the Italian artists, who had then already rebuilt Moscow,

nor for the Little Russian monks, who, before his time, had laboured to reform the schools. He simply hurried forward, with his eager spirit, the slow progress which was already carrying his bark steadily westward. He swelled the sails, he made the rowers pant for breath, and grasped the helm with steady hand; but the vessel's course was laid already.

Some impenitent Slavophiles do indeed still cast as a crime in the great Reformer's teeth, that he broke the link which should, according to their view, have bound the progress of their country's civilisation to the original manifestations of the national genius. But this rupture is purely imaginary. The threads which bound the Russia of the seventeenth century to her semi-oriental origin bind her to it still. We shall trace them even in the Russian literature of this present century. They are scarcely apparent in that which was contemporary with Peter the Great. But this is the common story of every modern literature. There is not one which, like that of the Greeks, is the direct and organic outcome of the national inspiration. The Renaissance makes them all, in the first place, the adopted children of Rome and Athens, and after this each goes back to, and discovers, the secret of its own origin. Russia has perforce followed this law. In her case, the period of Peter the Great was no more than the hasty accomplishment of that tardy Renaissance, the first symptoms of which I have described in the preceding chapter. Yet one difference exists, and one cause of inferiority, between the Russian evolution and that of its Western rivals. The Greek culture, instead of percolating through the Latin medium alone, has been fain to reach the Muscovite through several—the



Polish influence, then the German, the French and English.

The personal share of the Reformer in this process is clearly expressed and summed up in the great scientific institution which he planned, and which was not established until after his death. The Slavo-Latin Academy at Moscow did not satisfy him. He desired to have another at St. Petersburg, modelled on European lines, and according to the plan suggested to him by Leibnitz. But his second German adviser, Wolff, was in favour of a university, and a third argued that in a country where schools were lacking it might be wise to begin with a *Gymnasium*. After prolonged hesitation, which must have tried a man of his temperament severely, Peter resolved to combine all these desiderata, and planned an institution to combine all the three types suggested. But the university remained a mere paper plan, and the gymnasium met with woeful difficulties. In 1730 there were only thirty-six pupils on the books, and twenty of them were non-attendants, for Peter, always short of men, was employing them elsewhere. In 1736 the roll dwindled to nineteen. The academy alone prospered. Academicians are always to be had. Some came from Germany, and some even from France.

These, in the Reformer's eyes, were pioneers, whom he expected to open up the country to cultivation. In the furrows they ploughed, the seed for future harvests was to be sown broadcast. First he would have translations,—and the great man worked at them himself, swearing at German prolixity meanwhile. To the native writers he assigned, for the moment, a less dignified part. They were, like himself, to put themselves to the Western

school, and then to second his efforts to bring the lessons there learnt into practice. Every branch of literary production was forced to serve this double end. Thus a dramatic piece played in the Red Square at Moscow was nothing but a paraphrase of the official announcement of a victory over the Swedes, and a sermon preached in the Cathedral of the Assumption was a commentary on a decree published the day before its delivery.

Sometimes these theatrical representations slipped from the hand which generally directed them, and went into opposition; this more especially in the case of the "interludes," burlesque dialogues, which were generally played in private houses, though, following the democratic habits of the place, the public of every class had free access to the performance. On these occasions the popular opposition to the reforms, and chiefly to the reform in the national dress, so hateful to the lower classes, was expressed in the boldest sallies. Peter took no heed, and rather challenged his adversaries on their own ground than gave any hint of the future severities of the censorship. However much his temperament, his taste for rough undignified amusements, his inclination to exaggeration, may have led him in the direction of those masquerades and buffooneries and those licentious parodies, wherein he spent his wits and prostituted his dignity (and I have elsewhere admitted the excess of which he was guilty in this respect), he certainly nursed thoughts of a higher nature through it all. He desired to drag his people out of the old Byzantine rut. He meant to enfranchise the public mind, even at the expense of horrid profanation. The national genius sat huddled under the shade of the national cathedrals. Peter was resolved to drag out the priest, even if he had to cast him

into the kennel. The most eminent writer, even of that period, was still a bishop, a prelate given to worldly matters, suspected of being a Protestant, if not a free-thinker. The one literary work which stands out above the contemporary medley of compilations and hasty adaptations is the *Ecclesiastical Regulations*. This is, above all things, a pamphlet directed against the monastic life of that epoch. The name of its author was FEOFAN PROKOPOVITCH.

In this struggle within the very walls of the temple, two priests, of similar origin, widely different in feeling and education, stood face to face. Stephen Javorski (1658-1722), a Little-Russian by birth, brought up in the Polish schools at Lemberg and Posen, succeeded the last Patriarch, Adrian, in 1702, as "temporary guardian" of a throne that was never to be filled again. A man of poor education, except in church matters, he began by swimming with the new current. Then, taking fright, he fought against it, calling all the dignity of his sacerdotal vestments, and of the traditions they represented, to his aid. Peter was thus fain to seek some more determined adept in reforming ideas to oppose this backslider.

Feofan Prokopovitch (1681-1736), the son of a Kiév merchant, had also made a stay in Poland, and even went so far as to accept the *union*, with the habit of the Basilian Fathers at Witepsk. Yet he was deemed worthy of Rome and of the Missionary College of St. Athanasius. But the neighbourhood of St. Peter's influenced his borrowed Catholicism in a manner very different from that which had been expected. Within two years Feofan went back to Kiév and to the bosom of the Orthodox Church. Yet not in vain had he travelled across Europe, and been brought into touch with her intellectual life.

He taught theology at Kiév, but he forsook the scholastic methods, and followed those of the Protestant doctors. Gerhard was his master, and he drew his inspiration from Auerstedt. At the same time, he utilised his leisure time in composing verses, plays, and a dissertation on poetry, which was published after his death in 1756.

We must observe, that at this moment Peter was only just beginning his career, and that no sign of his future work had yet appeared. The helm of the great ship, still worked by a temporary crew, had hitherto felt no strong hand upon it. And yet this lonely monk was already steering his frail bark towards the light. It was not until 1709 that he attracted the Tsar's attention, by a sermon preached on the occasion of the victory of Poltava. He was summoned to St. Petersburg, and from that time we see him the Tsar's mouthpiece in the pulpit and the press, the semi-official interpreter and apologist of his master's policy. He will help him in all his plans for reform. Preaching on the Tsarevitch's birthday, October 18, 1706, he will sum up the work already accomplished, and compare the ancient condition of Russia with her present state. To establish the sovereign's right to choose his own successor, he will write that *Pravda voli Monarcheï* ("Truth of the Sovereign's Will") which has become the corner-stone of the political edifice left by the Reformer to his heirs; and in 1721, in his *Ecclesiastical Regulations*, which prefaced the final suppression of the Patriarchate and the institution of the Holy Synod, he will lay the foundations of the reorganisation of the Russian clergy.

Appointed Bishop of Pskov in 1718 (against Javorski's will), he became the second member of the Holy Synod in 1721, and in 1724 he was made Archbishop of Nov-

gorod. His position in the Church, supported as he was by the Tsar's favour and authority, was really unrivalled. He succeeded in obtaining the suppression of the *Kamièqne Viéri* ("Stone of the Faith"), a religious controversial work in which Javorski formulated the protest of the ancient Church against her would-be reformers. The author was to have his revenge. In 1729, when Peter was dead, the *Kamièqne* was published, and made a stir which was felt beyond the Russian frontier. Two Germans, Buddæus and Mosheim, replied to the arguments of a Spanish Dominican, Ribeira, who had followed the Duke of Liria, ambassador of the Most Catholic King, to St. Petersburg, in a dispute which was destined to last over the whole of the first half of the eighteenth century. This was a direct blow at Prokopovitch. To defend the position thus threatened, he deliberately threw himself into the thick of the struggles and political intrigues which were another legacy from the great Tsar's reign, and which were to continue till the accession of Catherine II. Nevertheless he remained in the forefront of the intellectual movement of his day—not without a certain alarm and simple surprise at the unforeseen extent of the horizon he himself was labouring to unveil, and the knowledge thereby acquired, together with a different and altogether secular sense of anxiety with regard to the mystery beyond this life, which his newly-awakened imagination painted in colours hitherto unknown.

"*Oh, head! head! thou hast grown drunk with learning; where wilt thou rest thee now?*" Thus he was heard to murmur on his death-bed. He had lived the life of a modern man in his fine house on the Karpovka, an affluent of the Neva, on whose waters a flotilla of boats always lay, in readiness to transport him to

some one of his other residences. At Karpovka he had a library of 30,000 volumes, and a school for secondary education, which was the best of that period. Here he received the most eminent men of the day—D. M. Galitsine, Tatichtchev, Kantémir, and the foreign members of the Academy, one of whom, Baier, dedicated his *Museum Sinicum* to him. Up to the very end, he never ceased to take his part in every manifestation of literary and scientific activity; he wrote verses to greet the dawn of a new art in Kantémir's first satire, and he was the protector of Lomonossov. The only thing lacking to his glory was to have known and appreciated Possochkov.

In POSSOCHKOV we have another Russian who turned to the West without waiting for Peter and his reforms. He was a peasant, born about 1673, in a village near Moscow. How did he learn to read, to write, to think? It is a mystery. He felt the stirring of the springs of water destined to flow over this remote country, hidden under its crust of barbarism, and forthwith he too launched his little boat. Instinct made him a mechanician and a naturalist. He was soon to be a philosopher. Meanwhile, while he eagerly studied the properties of sulphur, of asphalt, of naphtha, he earned an honest competency by selling brandy. He came of an industrious race. By 1724, Possochkov had bought a landed property and set up a factory. Thus, though unknown to the Reformer, he was bearing his share in the Reform—I mean, in the general progress which was its aim. Yet he was conservative, after his own fashion. In the *Precepts for my Son*, which constitute his first attempt at authorship, he still appears wedded to the traditions of the *Domostroï*, and exalts ancient, at the

expense of modern, Russia, wherein many things, and more especially the pre-eminence given to foreigners, displease him. But these very *Precepts* were a sort of *vade mecum* for the use of his son during a tour in Europe, which he proposes to make with his father's full consent.

And Possochkov went further yet. As the close of the great Tsar's reign approached, he seemed to rouse himself out of the half-slumber which had prevented him from realising the new world created around him. And we see him paying homage to Peter in a book which is a creation in itself—a book dealing with poverty and riches! We must not forget that at this moment Adam Smith had only just seen the light in England, and that the physiocratic school had not yet appeared in France. In spite of its strange medley of bold ideas, truisms, and absurdities, Possochkov's work is absolutely original. It was a bold stroke on his part to found his argument on the principle that the wealth of all empire lies, not in the sovereign's treasury, but in the possessions of his subjects. To increase these last in Russia, the former adherent of the *Domostroï* now deems a radical reform in manners and customs indispensable. His study of the national resources has convinced him that idleness, drunkenness, and theft constitute an intolerable obstacle to their natural development. But how is this obstacle to be removed? By the means conceived by Peter himself. Schools! Schools everywhere, for every one. Like all other theorists, whether autodidact or neophyte, Possochkov is a Radical. He demands compulsory and universal education. He does not even except his brother peasants. He considers, besides, the question of improving their condition. By suppressing

serfdom? No, he does not go those lengths. Himself a landed proprietor and a factory-owner, he owns serfs, and could not well do without them. So he juggles with the difficulty, and comes to the very odd conclusion that in this matter the best way of easing the law is to strengthen it! If the serf becomes the master's chattel even more completely than before, he stands the chance of better treatment!

Some indulgence must be granted to neophytes. None the less did Possochkov deserve a welcome from the great man whose views he had come to share, though somewhat tardily. But it was too late! Peter was dying. And in the eyes of his successors the man who cared so little for the Imperial Treasury was no better than a traitor. Possochkov was arrested, shut up in a casemate in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, and there died the following year. Peter, who had thus missed his co-operation, was chiefly assisted in matters of national economy by Vassili Nikititch Tatichtchev.

Tatichtchev was a *Dilélatiel* (literally, *a maker*), a completely new type, with all the constitutional qualities and faults of his kind, which have endured down to the present day. An engineer, an administrator, a geographer and historian, whose lengthy sojourns in foreign countries (more especially in Germany) had brought him into close touch with the intellectual progress of the West, VASSILI NIKITITCH TATICHTCHEV (1685-1750) was rich in gifts and resources. But he stands convicted, during his mission in the province of Orenburg, of an incurable taste for speculation, and the only defence he can make is to quote this maxim, "If a man judges justly, it is only fair he should be paid." After being sent in semi-disgrace to Stockholm, and having exposed



himself to fresh judicial proceedings at Astrakan, whither he was despatched as governor by Elizabeth, Tatichtchev died just as he had snatched an acquittal from the too facile good-nature of his sovereign. Russians know how to die. This national virtue has been splendidly extolled and illustrated by Tolstoï and Garchine. The believer performs the final duties of his faith as calmly and serenely as if he were going to a baptism or a marriage. Even amongst atheists, we seldom see a case in which the terrors of death drive a man to deny his convictions. Tatichtchev, perceiving that his end drew near, set his domestic affairs in order, and then, mounting his horse, betook himself to the neighbouring cemetery to choose his grave and warn the priest. The next day he passed away. His death had been better ordered than his life.

In his works, both literary and scientific, we notice a lack of rule and proportion which was still common among the writers and savants of his country. At one moment he conceived a plan for a National Geography, so huge that his spirit recoiled in alarm from the idea of carrying it into execution. At another he undertook to produce a lexicon of history, geography, and politics. He carried it no further than the letter L. As a historian he was more especially a collector of materials, and his work is still valuable, because it contains fragments of chronicles, the originals of which have entirely disappeared.

His views are those of a self-taught man, who has done no preparatory work, and has had to fight his own way. But he was the first man in Russia to realise the necessity of including, in any history, the whole life of the country concerned, its habits, customs, and tradi-

tions. This fact places a great gulf between Tatichtchev and his immediate forerunners, the ancient chroniclers.

His contemporaries considered him a free-thinker, and Peter has the credit of having combated certain slips of judgment noticed in his collaborator by arguments of his own, not unconnected with the employment of his legendary *doubina* (thick stick). Yet Tatichtchev's scepticism does not appear to have gone beyond that of which Prokopovitch himself showed himself capable in the discussion of the authenticity of a certain *icon*, attributed to the brush of St. Methodius. He clung to his Western Rationalism, and combined with it a constant effort to reconcile faith with reason. Walch's *Dictionary of Philosophy*, then popular in Germany, was the expression, and marked the limit, of his boldness.

He also wrote commentaries on the ancient Russian laws—the *Rousskaïa Pravda* and the *Soudiébnik*. The gifts of his fellow-countrymen were still essentially of the polygraphic and encyclopedic order. But the most complete expression of the ideas of Tatichtchev is to be found in his *Conversation with Friends on the Utility of Knowledge and of Schools*, and his *Will*—further precepts given by a father to a son. In the first of these works he indicates the existence of a twofold opposition to the diffusion of light among the masses—one that of the clergy; the other that of a certain school of politicians who look on ignorance as a guarantee of docility. Boldly he strikes at these twin adversaries, invoking, to confound the first, the example of Christ and his apostles, who were all teachers, and demanding of the last, "Would you take fools and ignorant folk to manage and wait on your household?" Both on this point and on others his *Precepts*, which are contemporary with those

of Possochkov (1719 and 1725), speak out boldly. Tati-chtchev, though he always regards religion as the necessary foundation for education, whether public or private, turns his back resolutely on the *Domostroï*. Domestic authority, as represented by the whip—even when used gently and in private—is utterly repugnant to him. He divides life into three parts—military service, civil service, and finally retirement to the country, to be employed in caring for whatever property a man may possess. This leads him to formulate certain teachings, which show his agreement with Possochkov's view of the necessary connection between the economic progress of a country and the raising of its intellectual level.

My readers will observe the utilitarian character of all this literature. This is the special mark of the period in which art has not, as yet, its appointed place. One event occurs, however, and one current is formed, which, from the literary and artistic point of view, would appear to indicate that the process of evolution was approaching its natural close. I referred to this event when I mentioned a contemporary theatrical migration.

From the German Faubourg the actors found their way into the court. From the Kreml they passed on to the public square. After 1702, the new German troupe, led by Johann Kunscht of Dantzig, gave performances in the Red Square at Moscow, and was obliged to use the Russian language. The repertory consisted, for the most part, of translations, but Peter commanded that allusions to contemporary events, in a sense favourable to his policy, should be interpolated. *Vladimir*, a tragi-comedy by Prokopovitch, which was performed at Kiév in 1702 and at Moscow in 1705, teems with such allusions.

Had Prokopovitch any knowledge of Shakespeare? Possibly, through Philipps' *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675). In the religious drama, the comic element only appears as an accessory, in the form of burlesque interludes, but it is an integral part of the work of the bishop-playwright. The interest of this piece is concentrated on the struggle in Vladimir's soul between the habits and beliefs of paganism and the teachings of the new faith, and constitutes a *bona-fide* attempt at psychological drama.

The current to which I have adverted is the appearance, on the heels of the translators employed by Peter, of the *Imitators*. It, too, had an earlier source. Of this I have indicated some symptoms in the time of Ivan the Terrible. All the Reformer did was to hurry it forward and increase it. His personal genius was, as is well known, imitative to the highest degree, and literature was fain to follow his lead.

This period was one of Indian file, and the honour of leading the way fell to a foreigner. The poetic work of the Moldavian prince, Kantémir, whose father allied himself with Peter in 1709, and thereby lost his principality, is of a date posterior to that of the great Tsar's reign. In his days, men fought and were beaten too often to leave much time for sacrificing to Apollo. The man of letters had no chance of asserting himself among the bevy of soldiers and craftsmen whom the mighty fighter carried in his train. ANTIOCHUS DMITRIÉVITCH KANTÉMIR, who was born at Constantinople in 1708, and died in Paris, after a sojourn of some years in London, in 1744, was himself no more than a *dilettante*. By profession he was a diplomatist. His first literary attempt was a satire. Through all the vicissitudes of future times, this form of expression was to predominate in the

literature of his adopted country, and to afford, in every period, proofs of superior originality and more direct inspiration. In an engraving inspired by the death of Peter the Great, and representing a cat borne to the tomb by mice, the celebrated iconographer Rovinski has discovered a number of features which bear no resemblance to the Western models. Pictorial details and letterpress are alike of local growth, from the mouse of Riazan, *Siva* ("grey one"), which, draped in a *saraphane*, weeps as it skips *v prissiadjkou* (bending its knees), and seems to symbolise the hypocrisy of the priesthood, to the reminiscences, so evident in the funeral *cortège*, of the burlesque masquerades which were one of the peculiarities of the famous reign.

Kantémir's first satire, composed in 1729, attacked the opponents of education, and more particularly the personal enemies of Prokopovitch, whose pupil the author was. The young man found himself forthwith enrolled under the banner of progress, and torn between politics and literature. This did not hinder him, two years later, from joining Tatichtchev in the composition of the famous address in which the Russian nobles, after having raised the shadow of an agitation in favour of constitutional reform, besought the Empress Anne to take up autocratic power once more, and cut off men's heads according to her own goodwill and pleasure. But to this adventure the master urged his pupil, and it ensured Kantémir the prospect of a brilliant career. At the age of two-and-twenty he started for London, with the rank of Resident. There he did little diplomatic work, but he translated Anacreon, Horace, and Justinian. In 1738 he passed on to Paris, made the acquaintance of Montesquieu, and worked at a Russian version

of the *Lettres Persanes*. But soon Maupertuis gave him ideas for an essay on algebra, and Fontenelle tempted him, in his turn, to translate his work on the "Plurality of Worlds." He was fast losing himself in this labyrinth when death laid its hand upon him.

He had begun by moving in the track of Boileau, while he believed and declared himself to be following Horace and Juvenal. The philosophic ideal of Horace, vaguely floating betwixt the doctrine of the Stoics and that of the Epicureans, gave birth to his sixth and eighth satires. To be content with little, to live apart, "with the Greek and Latin poets for company," to reflect on events and their causes, and steer a wise middle course in all matters—this was his fancy. The Empress Elizabeth's method of government made it somewhat of a necessity. The poet had no fortune of his own, and his salary was most irregularly paid.

His poetry is chiefly valuable from the historical point of view. I discern a certain amount of imagination in it, but no charm of any kind. Occasionally his language is strong, but for the most part it is trivial even to the point of vulgarity. Further—and this may be forgiven in a foreigner—he has not a shadow of originality, not a touch of personal sentiment nor of national feeling. Though superior to most of his Russian contemporaries in his power of understanding and appreciating the Western world, and capable of grasping and appreciating the real meaning of the civilisations he studied, Kantémir was unable to add anything of his own to them. The form of verse he employs, a syllabic metre of twelve feet, is clumsy and stiff. But let us not forget that at that moment Trédiakovski was engaged on the first study ever made of the elementary principles of

Russian versification, and had just realised the necessity of replacing the syllabic by the tonic line. And even he could not succeed in adding example to precept. Kantémir attempted it, with some measure of success, in his fifth satire, and thereafter, in his *Letter to a Friend on the Composition of Russian Poetry*, he took his turn at theory instead of practice, and was much less successful.

He made attempts on other lines, philosophic odes, odes on special subjects, fables, epigrams. He even began a *Pet Reid*, which, mercifully perhaps for the Reformer's reputation, was never finished. He always came back to his satires, with the sensation, so he declared, "of swimming in familiar waters, never making his readers yawn . . . flying like a general to victory!" His chief victory was that he came in first in the race, and had no competitors. The soil of Russia, though cleared for cultivation by the efforts of Peter the Great, must needs undergo two further processes before the art of poetry could spread and blossom freely on its bosom. I refer to the patient preparation involved in the labours of Trédiakovski, and of that other gifted toiler in the field of intellect, Lomonossov. It was by no means an ungrateful soil. I have before me, as I write, some lines written by an unknown poet, in 1724, on the subject of the tragic fate of Mons, Catherine the First's beheaded lover. In them I find, long before Rousseau's time, real feeling, lyric and sentimental, grown up, like a wild flower, how we cannot tell,—a garden spot in this land of brutal realism. But this would appear to be a very isolated instance.

Russia, as she drew closer to the Western countries, was necessarily forced to obey the Western laws of lite-

rary development, and follow her predecessors through the same regular course and series of culture. The establishment of a court and a court aristocracy was destined, just at this precise period, to favour the birth of a form of literature which, in France, reached its highest point during the reign of Louis XIV.—the Classic.



## CHAPTER III

### THE FORGING OF THE LANGUAGE

ONE winter evening in 1732, in a room in the wooden palace where the Empress Anne held her court, a man knelt beside the fireplace, close to which the sovereign's armchair had been drawn on account of the bitter cold. He was reading aloud a set of verses, half-panegyric, half-madrigal. When his voice ceased, her Majesty beckoned him towards her. He obeyed without changing his posture, dragging himself along on his knees. The Empress gave him a friendly tap on the cheek, and he retired backwards, followed by glances half-scornful, half-jealous, from the assembled company. Once in his own chamber, he noted the event in his journal. It was destined to become the depository of less pleasant memories. A few years later, he attended at court to take orders for a poem to celebrate some special occasion. A Minister whose anger he had roused had his face slapped in far rougher fashion, and his body most mercilessly beaten. Half-dead with pain and fright, he was left to spend his night in prison, and there compose the lines commanded by his employer. Then the following day, with his face swelled out of knowledge and his back beaten raw, he was forced to put on some burlesque disguise, take part in a court display, and there recite his poem. He died poor and forgotten, and was only remembered by the next generation as the author of the

unlucky *Telemachida*, the lines of which Catherine II. caused the habitual members of her circle at the Hermitage to recite as a task.

This man was VASSILI KIRILLOVITCH TRÉDIAKOVSKI (1703-1769). Compare the biographical details given above with what we know of the behaviour of Swift, who wrung an apology from Harley and then "restored him to his favour," and refused the advances of the Duke of Buckingham, and at once we realise the gulf between these two provinces of the literary world! The man thus handled by his contemporaries and their descendants deserved a better fate. Born at Astrakan, on the confines of Asia, in 1703, we find him, in 1728, plodding along the road from the Hague to Paris, wild with the longing to see and learn, living we know not how, begging for knowledge, rather than for bread. He was the son of a pope, had been taught at Astrakhan by the Capuchin missionaries, and had afterwards studied at the Slavo-Græco-Latin Academy at Moscow, where he wrote two plays, a *Jason* and a *Titus*, which were performed by the pupils of the establishment, and an elegy on the death of Peter the Great. A disagreement with his superiors—he was always quarrelsome—pecuniary difficulties, and the irresistible charm of the new outlook opened to him by the Reform, combined to drive him abroad. By the favour of the Russian Minister in Paris, Kourakine, he attended the lectures delivered at the University by Rollin, and won his diploma. This enabled him to snap his fingers at the Muscovite Academy. He returned to Russia, and found employment of the kind indicated in the opening lines of this chapter. It was not till 1733 that he was appointed secretary of the St. Petersburg Academy, and this dignity did not screen him

from the ministerial bludgeon, for the terrible experience I have related above took place in 1740. In 1735 a "Society of the Friends of the Russian Language" was formed in connection with the St. Petersburg Academy, and Trédiakovski inaugurated its proceedings by an address on "The Purity of the Russian Tongue." He was the first to point out to his comrades the necessity for a good grammar and an authoritative system of rhetoric and poetry. Ten years later, under Elizabeth, we find him higher up the ladder, Professor of Latin and of Russian Elocution at the Academy and University; but nothing but his sovereign's imperative command obtained his nomination to this post, contrary to the will of the Committee of the Academy, entirely composed of foreigners, who "did not choose to have a Russian in their company." For eighteen years Trédiakovski gave the greater part of his time and all his best efforts to his professional duties. He trained Popov and Barsov, the first Russian professors of the University of Moscow, and, like Lomonossov, did his utmost to serve the interests of science and of the national education.

He wrote as well, unluckily! He translated Boileau's *Art Poétique*, *Télémaque*, and some of Æsop's fables into verse, and did Horace's *De Arte Poetica* and Tallemant's *Voyage à l'Île d'Amour* into prose. He produced an ode on the taking of Danzig, and various other poems on special occasions, besides a considerable number of essays on the art of poetry, on versification, the Russian tongue, and various historical subjects.

Both verse and prose have been the theme of his fellow-countrymen's spiteful wit down to the time of Pouchkine, who was the first to understand and plainly say, that underneath the poet, at whom all men scoffed,

there lurked a philologist and grammarian of the foremost rank. According to the author of *Eugène Oniéguine*, Trédiakovski's views on versification are more profound and more correct than those of Lomonossov himself. And even as a poet, the author of the *Telemachida* is superior to Soumarokov and Khéraskov, the two literary stars of the succeeding period.

Nevertheless, for over fifty years the hexameters of the *Telemachida* were the bugbear of several generations of poets, and in 1790, Gniéditch, the Russian translator of the *Iliad*, was extolled for having dared to "snatch the verse of Homer and Virgil from the stake of infamy to which Trédiakovski had nailed it."

Trédiakovski was essentially a theorist, gifted with a quite remarkable intuitive power. His public advocacy of the use of the tonic accent (*oudarénie*) in poetic metre is sufficient proof of my assertion. He lacked inspiration and æsthetic feeling; but what an ungrateful task was his, when we recollect that he was driven to explain to his readers that when he spoke of the *God of Love* he did not intend any disrespect to the doctrine of the Trinity! His literary faith was that of Boileau. Poetry, according to him, began with the Greeks, passed through a brilliant period with the Romans, and . . . "at last Malherbe appeared." He believed this. While he wove laborious lines in the tongue of Malherbe, he felt himself a proud participator in the glories of a modern Athens. And had he desired to use his own language, what difficulties still lay in his path!

Which language was he to employ, in the first place? There were three in current use—the old Slavonic tongue of the Church, the popular speech, which differed from it considerably, and the official language, one of Peter

the Great's creations, originally adopted at his Foreign Office, stuffed full, by the scribes employed there, with German, Dutch, and French words, and forced by superior orders on the translators of foreign books. It was a second Tower of Babel, and within it Trédiakovski and his partners struggled desperately, till Lomonossov appeared upon the scene.

The personal character of the unhappy *Popovitch* ("son of a priest") also affected both his life and his reputation. He felt outrage cruelly, and was incapable of raising himself above it by his consciousness of real dignity and worth. Thus he sought compensation of a less legitimate nature, was servile to his superiors, and unbearably arrogant in his dealings with others. The advent of Lomonossov and the successes of Soumarokov were more bitter to him than the cudgellings of his earlier days. He had grown into the habit, amidst his many insults, of proclaiming himself the foremost of living poets. He lost his head now, quarrelled with his rivals, insulted, and finally denounced them. In 1759, thoroughly beaten, he retired from the Academy, and led the life of a recluse, almost of an outcast, until 1769.

The career and work of Lomonossov are, in a sense, the continuation of the career and the revolutionary work of Peter the Great. But to render this continuation possible, a second revolution was necessary. The inheritance left by the Reformer was built up by foreign hands, out of materials largely foreign in their origin. After his death, under a prolonged gynocracy, with one Empress who came from Livonia or Poland, another from Germany, these foreign auxiliaries broke their ranks, pushed to the front, made themselves the masters. We

have seen how they would have shut the door in Trédiakovski's face. It was not until 1741 that the native element rose in revolt and recovered the upper hand, driving out the Brunswick family and placing Elizabeth, Peter's own daughter, in power. In 1746, a Little-Russian named Razoumovski was appointed president of the Academy of Sciences, and a year later, a fresh regulation admitted Russians to this learned assembly. Without this distinct order they would have remained outside! At the same time, Latin and Russian were declared the only official languages of the institution. Thus its doors were opened to the native Russians. Trédiakovski entered with Lomonossov; then came Krachennikov, a botanist; Kotiélnikov, a mathematician; and others besides, such as Popov and Kozitski. The foreign members shrieked with horror, and some asked leave to quit a country in which the natives actually claimed to be at home.

There was some slight excuse for their protests. Razoumovski, who had been deputed to preside over their labours, was only eighteen years of age, and his sole merit consisted in having a brother who, on private occasions, did not go to the trouble of taking off his dressing-gown to dine with the Empress. His place was filled—and the change was for the better—during the second half of her reign, by I. I. Chouvalov, whose behaviour may indeed have been as informal, but who did take a serious interest in intellectual matters. He was known as the "Russian Mæcenas." Brought up in French schools, a great gentleman and a courtier, Chouvalov felt the need of some one to plan undertakings which were beyond the natural scope of his own powers and occupations, and help him to carry them

through. He did not find it necessary to seek such a man abroad. The being for whose appearance Peter had longed, when he expressed his hope that the mercenaries, scientific and literary, whom he had gathered from the four corners of the earth, might be replaced, at some not too far distant time, by sons of the Russian soil, was under his hand. The whole process of evolution which produced our modern Russia—the work of several centuries previous to the first reforms, the gradual awakening of the mighty sleeper to a new existence, the first contact with the Western world, the gropings after the road that led towards the future—all these things are personified in the advent and career of this astounding *moujik*.

A fisherman's family, a cabin close to the White Sea, far away in the distant north-east, beyond Archangel; a corner of the earth wrapped in the twofold darkness of the Northern winter and of a rude and coarse existence; a lad helping his father to cast his nets. There you have the home, the country, the childhood of MICHAEL VASSILIÉVITCH LOMONOSSOV (1711-1765). The region was not utterly dark and barbarous. Occasional rays of light had fallen upon it from time to time. Peter had passed through it on his way to serve his first sea-apprenticeship in the inhospitable haven where Chancellor cast his anchor. Already, at a yet earlier date, British sailors had carried a breath of European civilisation to the spot. The inclement sky, the thankless soil, the boisterous sea, had bred a strong and hardy race of workers, among whom remoteness and isolation in the depths of an historic particularism had perpetuated the traditions of a freedom which had long escaped the miseries of serfdom. The fisherman's son found a

peasant, Ivan Choubine, who knew enough to teach the boy to act as reader in the church. From these humble beginnings the child imbibed, and never lost, an intimate knowledge of the Slavo-ecclesiastic language, and a deep sense of religion. In the house of another peasant he found Smotrytski's Slav grammar, Magnitski's arithmetic, Simeon Polotski's Psalter in rhyme, and beyond the foggy horizon that hemmed his humble existence, strange lights, half guessed at, beckoned him more and more imperiously.

At seventeen Lomonossov could bear it no longer, persuaded Choubine to give him a warm kaftan and three roubles, slipped out of his father's house, and started for Moscow—for the light! Conceive his journey, and his arrival in the great town, where he did not know a soul! It was in January 1731, in the bitter cold. He spent his first night in the fish-market, where he found shelter in an empty sledge. We know not what providence carried him into the Academy school. The story goes, that to rouse interest, he declared himself the son of a priest. The Academy supported its scholars, giving each of them an *altine* a day (a coin worth three kopeks = three-halfpence). For three years Lomonossov lived on his pay. Half a kopek for bread, half a kopek for *kwass*, the rest he spent on his clothes, on paper, ink, and books. He bought books. He prospered. By the end of the third year he looked like a Hercules, and he had learnt Latin. He was sent to Kiév to complete his education and study philosophy and natural science. Perhaps the authorities were glad to get rid of him. He was hard-working, but turbulent. He fell out with the teaching authorities at Kiév, came back to Moscow, and was thinking of taking orders, not knowing how else to



provide for himself, when a sudden message from St. Petersburg commanded that twelve of the best Academy students should be sent thither. The Gymnasium belonging to the Academy of the new capital was starved for want of pupils. Lomonossov formed one of the batch, and a few months later he was again chosen to be sent across the frontier, and cast into the lap of the German schools. He went to Marburg, then to Freiburg in Saxony, studied physics, philosophy, and logic, but contracted, meanwhile, those habits of dissipation and debauchery which were to ruin his robust constitution and hasten his death.

At the same time, he felt the poetic faculty stir within him. The quite phenomenal scope and grasp of a mind open to every impression made him the most powerful and perfect type of those Russian intellects the capacity and facility of which so astound us, even at the present day. One is almost tempted to believe that the long period of inaction imposed upon the race has caused it, so to speak, to accumulate and lay up a store of potential activity in connection with these faculties, which, where earlier developed, seem blunted by the wear and tear of centuries. While Lomonossov listened to the teaching of Wolff and Henkel he wove rhymes.

In 1740 he sent to St. Petersburg an ode, after the style of Günther, on the subject of the taking of Chocim by the Russians. It made a great stir. A dissertation on Russian versification accompanied the poem, elicited a reply from Trédiakovski, and was laid before the Academic Areopagus. This assembly, consisting of Germans and Frenchmen, saw nothing in it. But in the outer world every one blamed Trédiakovski, and acclaimed the advent of a great poet. Lomonossov won fame in

Russia, but in Germany he had debts, and a wife who did not help him to economise. He had married his landlord's daughter. He narrowly escaped going to jail, wandered for a while from one region to another, and finally, near Düsseldorf, fell in with a Prussian recruiting party, who made him drunk and carried him off to the fortress of Wesel. His height and his broad shoulders made him a welcome prize. He escaped, and contrived to get back to St. Petersburg, leaving his wife and child behind him in Germany. His father-in-law was a tailor, and able to provide for them. At the end of two years, having obtained the post of Assistant-Professor of Physical Science, he was able to send for his family, which his chosen spouse, Elizabeth-Christine Zilch, like the good German she was, forthwith increased. He taught physics and chemistry as well, besides natural history, geography, versification, and the laws of style. In 1745, on the departure of Gmelin, a German, he succeeded to the chair of Chemistry. In 1757, he entered the Chancery of the Academy, and instantly challenged the Germans who still remained, and claimed to continue to rule it. He invented all sorts of reforms and contrivances, calculated to deprive them of the management of the institution.

The death of Elizabeth, which ruined Chouvalov's credit, and restored, to a certain degree, the power of the foreign party, checked all these plans and ambitions. Lomonossov's boldness in the struggle had only been equalled by his activity, and the support he had received from Chouvalov had never been of a nature which involved any compromise with his own dignity. Swift himself might have been responsible for the terms in which he repulsed an attempt made by his "Mæcenas"

to reconcile him with Soumarokov: "I will not look like a *dourak* (fool), not only before the great men of the earth, but before God himself!" But he had been more quarrelsome, and, above all, more violent, than Trédiakovski himself, breaking out perpetually into insults and boorish sallies which betrayed the native coarseness of the man. He was once temporarily excluded from the Academy, and deprived of part of his salary, for having abused his German colleagues and told them they were thieves. The salary amounted to fifteen roubles (£3) a month, and his injured colleagues, who were less poorly paid, would have preferred his receiving some corporal punishment. But to this Elizabeth would not consent. He died in the enjoyment of a reputation destined to a fate the very opposite of that of Trédiakovski. In each case, Pouchkine has intervened, and revised the ill-founded judgment passed by a public opinion insufficiently instructed, even at the present day.

In his lifetime, Lomonossov heard himself likened to Cicero, to Virgil, to Pindar, to Malherbe. To his immediate posterity he was the greatest national poet and writer, "an eagle," "a demi-god." Even Pouchkine gives him liberal praise, declaring he constituted in his own person, "the first Russian University." But he refuses to acknowledge his poetic gifts. He will only allow his verse to be an awkward imitation of German poets, already discredited in their own country, and will not ascribe merit to any of his poems, except certain translations from the Psalms, and a few imitations of the grand poetry of the Sacred Books, whence the former church reader drew a happy inspiration. Lomonossov, it must be said, regarded this portion of his own work with considerable scorn, whence Pouchkine argues that its

influence on the national literature could not be otherwise than harmful.

This, if I may dare to say it, shows a lack of instinct, both psychological and historical. The best work is often unconscious work. Lomonossov, by profession a naturalist, a chemist, and, above all, a teacher of physics, was a man of letters in his rare leisure moments only. And it is worth while to notice the care taken to arrange how those moments were to be employed.

On April 20, 1748, an order from court desires Professor Lomonossov to translate into Russian verse, and within eight-and-forty hours, a German ode by the Academician Staehlin, which was wanted "for an illumination." On September 29, 1750, Trédiakovski and Lomonossov receive orders, after the same fashion, to produce a tragedy.

It is not for me to estimate, in this place, the value of the latter as a *savant*. His theories as to the propagation of light would appear, at the present day, to be false; but others, on the formation of coal, have been accepted by modern scientists. In an essay on electric phenomena, published in 1753, he seems to have outstripped Franklin. During the later half of his life, he applied himself specially to the study of the national language, literature, and history, and it is more particularly as a poet that he has dwelt in the memory of the two or three generations that came after him. Both in literature and in poetry he is a harbinger, and the sonorous and harmonious verse which is the pride and delight of the readers of *Eugène Oniéguine*, is simply the verse of Lomonossov quickened by a superior inspiration. There is the same full tone, the same masculine power, the same rhythm.

The didactic spirit general at that period, the predominance of reflection over inspiration, the classical allusions, Mars and Venus, Neptune and Apollo, offend our modern taste. But tastes will alter. Over and above that, the mighty breath of poetry sweeps through the whole of Lomonossov's work—odes, epigrams, epistles, satires, and even the inevitable *Pet Reid*, which the poet commenced, and in which he exhausted every form of the poetic art. He was not an *artist*, but he belonged to a heroic period—a period of enthusiasm, of passionate patriotism, and virile energy. He succeeded in giving these feelings a popular expression, and from this expression, in its best and most inspiring forms, the soul of Pouchkine himself has drawn breath and sustenance.

To this mere *moujik* Pouchkine owed the very language of which he made so magnificent a use. The peasant came on the scene just in time to blend the three heterogeneous elements infused into the national literature by history, the Church, and the reforms, into one harmonious stream. And in this respect, also, he performed his work unconsciously. Theoretically, he believed himself to be perpetuating the separation of these elements, by classifying all discourses into three orders of style—the highest, the middle, and the lower style, each with its own suitable choice of words and expressions. On the first level he naturally placed the pompous panegyrics, carefully formulated in the lengthy periods demanded by the Latin syntax, which he composed for Peter and Elizabeth, and which were to draw down Pouchkine's displeasure. But in his scientific writings, his notes, his draughts, even in some of his poems, he forgot his theory, chose the words and expressions best suited to his purpose, regardless of the limits within

which he himself had undertaken to restrict them, and, like Monsieur Jourdain, ended, without being aware of it, by writing a language drawn from every source, which spontaneously mingled and harmonised every contribution, simple, curt, vigorous, opulent—that which has become the language of Pouchkine, and of every other Russian.

He wrote a book on rhetoric after that of Gottsched, and, like him, only succeeded in formulating the pseudo-classic principles of that period. But on this work followed a Grammar (1755), in which the author proved himself an original thinker, recognising that languages are living organisms, and deducing other principles, far in advance of his times, from this conception.

Lomonossov's attempts at history were merely incidental, undertaken at the request of Elizabeth or of Chouvalov. But he could do nothing by halves. He soon installed himself as master on this new ground, and thence defied Müller, who would have described Rurik as a Scandinavian prince. The ancestors of the founder of the Russian Empire could not have been anything but Romans! Lomonossov undertook to convince his opponent, and also to prevent him from dubbing the famous Siberian leader, Yermak, a robber, or choosing, as the subject of his essays, a period so distressing to the national feelings as that of the "Demetrius" impostors. He has left us a History of Russia carried, on these principles, up to the death of Jaroslav, and a short chronological and genealogical manual. He deserves that this should not be too much remembered, nor his tragedies either. The great playwright of those days was Soumarokov, and he was no Corneille.

The vocation of ALEXIS PETROVITCH SOUMAROKOV

(1718-1777) was decided by the theatrical performances which were the chief entertainment of the court of Anne I. These were given, as a rule, by Italian actors. But on Sundays an addition was made in the shape of Russian "interludes," specially written for the occasion, and played by the pupils of the Cadet Corps. This, until the later half of the eighteenth century, was the only school in which the elements of a general education were to be found. There Soumarokov, with many of his comrades, pursued the study of the French classics; later on he joined the army, and served until 1747, when a tragedy of his composition, which was acted by other cadets, won him the reputation of a great writer.

Elizabeth's courtiers and officials were forced, on pain of punishment, to attend these theatrical performances. Yet, until 1756, there was no stage in the capital specially affected to the Russian drama. The first theatre of this nature was opened in the provincial city of Jaroslav. There a man named Volkov, the son of a shopkeeper, engaged a troupe of actors, and built a room large enough to hold a thousand spectators. He was summoned to St. Petersburg, and kept there. Soumarokov, who had meanwhile produced three more tragedies, one of them a *Hamlet*, was appointed manager of the Russian theatre thus tardily opened. In reality the management was in the hands of the Imperial Procurator. Soumarokov fell out with him, migrated, in 1760, to Moscow, quarrelled with the governor there (P. S. Saltykov), and deafened Catherine II., who had succeeded Elizabeth, with his complaints. She sent him word, at last, that she would open no more of his letters, for that she "would rather see the effect of passion in his plays than in his correspondence." He died poor and forsaken.

In spite of their Slav or Varegian names, there is even less connection between his heroes and the ancient Russian world, than between those of Racine and Voltaire and the old Greeks and Romans. They are Frenchmen in essence, the Frenchmen of Corneille, of Racine, of Voltaire, *minus* the masterly disguise cast over them by those authors. The imitation of French models is the keynote of all Soumarokov's work. From Shakespeare, whom he only knew, indeed, through German translations, he borrowed no more than the semblance of a subject just then becoming popular. Apart, indeed, from the soliloquy in the first act, his *Hamlet* bears no resemblance to that of the English poet. From Corneille, from Racine, from Voltaire, he borrows their hasty psychology, carrying it even farther from Nature than in their case. His *Khorev*, his *Trouvor*, his *Demetrius*, are mere abstractions, artificial personifications of some single idea or sentiment, which probably has no correspondence whatever with their natural or probable physiognomy.

In the same way he exaggerates and parodies Molière, till comedy becomes a farce, criticism of habits and customs degenerates into mere pamphleteering, and epigram develops into insult.

Yet it is only just to remember his education and surroundings, and Pouchkine's severe treatment of him betrays a further forgetfulness of the laws of historical perspective. Foreign literature in the Russia of the eighteenth century was not a bud carefully grafted on the native trunk. It was the plant itself, suddenly set in a soil that was poorly prepared for its reception. In spite of this drawback, it was to grow, and grow vigorously, and, as it absorbed and assimilated the juices of the



earth in which it was planted, it was speedily to eliminate all foreign elements near it. But we cannot wonder that the earliest fruits were unsatisfactory, ugly to look at, scentless, and flavourless.

The literary attempts of Soumarokov and his contemporaries, it must be further observed, fell on a period of transition in Western literature, during which the pseudo-classic style itself was growing corrupt and debased. Soumarokov was far more haunted by the glory of Voltaire than he was disturbed by the successes of his rival Lomonossov. Though he composed odes to the number of eighty, so as to outstrip Lomonossov in that respect, though, like him, he translated Psalms, and exceeded him in piling up platitudes, couched in fervent dithyrambs, in honour of the virtues of Elizabeth, it was on Voltaire that his mind was set when he wandered from the lyric drama to the eclogue, from idyl to madrigal, from epigram to epitaph. There is perhaps much to criticise in this. But criticism did not exist in a society which, intellectually speaking, was in the embryonic state, which possessed far more appetite than taste, and looked less at the quality than at the quantity of the dishes set before it. In 1759 Soumarokov conceived the idea of founding a literary periodical, the first seen in his country, modelled on those of Steele and Addison, and thus opened a path which was not to be retrodden till Biéliniski appeared upon the scene, nearly a century later. The best Soumarokov could achieve in this publication was to imitate Boileau, in a purely external criticism, directed against faults of language, of grammar and syntax, and strongly coloured by personal likes and dislikes. Thus Lomonossov was most frequently attacked, for having turned the language of

Moscow into an "Archangel *patois*," and Soumarokov's temper, which was swayed by his wounded vanity, was allowed its full play.

But it was vanity alone that had made him a man of letters, and how exasperating were the conditions, moral and material, under which he worked! He edited a review. His occasional collaborators, Trédiakovski, Kozitski, Polétika, generally left all the labour to him, and at the end of the first year his subscribers had all deserted him. He managed a theatre. Out of his salary of 5000 roubles he had to bear all the expenses of production, and three parts of the seats were occupied by a non-paying audience! One day he was fain to warn Chouvalov that there would be no performance, because there was no costume for "Trouvor" to put on! The public, whether it paid or not, was coarse in its behaviour, talked loud, and "cracked nuts" during the performance, and took much more interest in the dresses of the actors and the persons of the actresses, than in the action of the piece.

These causes aggravated Soumarokov's natural susceptibility until it became a real malady. He took it into his head to compile a book of comparative extracts from his own odes and those of Lomonossov, to prove that he himself was the only person who knew how to imitate Malherbe and Rousseau. In 1755 the *Mercur de France* published a detailed and very laudatory account of one of his tragedies. This sufficed to convince him that in future he would take rank with Voltaire. He sent some of his works to Ferney, received a batch of compliments in return, and thought himself qualified to share the throne of the literary world with its master. In Russia, at all events, he claimed despotic

powers. In 1764 he desired leave to travel abroad at the expense of the Crown. "If Europe were described by such a pen as mine, an outlay of 300,000 would seem small. . . . What has been seen at Athens, what is now to be seen in Paris, is also seen in Russia, by my care. . . . In Germany, a crowd of poets has not produced what I have succeeded in doing by my own effort."

His effort, great as it was, received a poor reward. Chance did Soumarokov a bad turn when it made him a would-be rival of Racine and Voltaire. His true literary vocation was quite different. In the course of his many attempts in different directions, he touched on the form of literature in which Kantémir so delighted, and himself found it to possess a strong and inspiring charm. There is nothing very wonderful about the form of his satires, fables, and apologues; yet there is such distinctness in his pictures, such vigour in his ideas, such intensity in his feeling, that even in the present day the national genius betrays his influence in traits which have become proverbial. He draws us pictures of local life, thrust clumsily enough into the setting already borrowed by Kantémir from Boileau, but far fresher and more lively—his ideas—the humanitarian notions of his own period, quite unsuited to the native Russian system, introduced, nevertheless, some conception of liberty, of tolerance, of intellectual progress, and, through everything runs a deep, sincere, ingenuous feeling of patriotism, attachment to his fatherland, and national pride.

Notice, in the *Chorus to the Corrupt World*, the story of the bird that flies back from foreign climes, "where men are not sold like cattle . . . where patri-monies are not staked on a single card. . . . Yet the bird

returns as fast as its wings will carry it, and joyfully perches on the branch of a Russian birch-tree."

The description of the death of "Trouvor" is a mere transcription of that of Théràmène. The soliloquy of Demetrius ("The diadem of the Tsars seems to tremble on my brow") recalls that of Richard III., which Pouchkine, in his turn, was to remember. Yet the author of *Trouvor* and *Demetrius* has not scrupled to direct his satire against the combination of French habits and literature which had taken root in his country. Lomonossov's works, jealous though he was of him, convinced him that the national literature was nearing a brighter future. He perceived the rise of the new sap, rich in originality. And it may be, indeed, that but for the approaching period of exaggerated occidentalism arising out of another German reign, that of Catherine the Great, of Anhalt and Zerbst, his own effort might have won a different result, and the nationalisation of the patrimony created by the *moujik* of Archangel might have been accelerated by half a century.

Soumarokov himself had no direct heirs. His collaborators in the department of the drama were Fiodor Volkov (1729-1763) and Dmitrievski. Of the literary work of the first named (who also distinguished himself as an actor, an architect, a decorator, and stage-carpenter), the only specimen remaining to us is a masquerade, *The Triumph of Minerva*, published in 1763. Dmitrievski began by playing the female parts in Volkov's company. After having spent two years abroad, he succeeded the manager as leading actor. I find him some time later a member of the "Academy of Science," of the "Free Society of Economy," and of the "Society of Friends of Russian Literature." A man who had trodden

the soil on which Voltaire first saw the light could not remain a mere player. He composed plays, made adaptations, and wrote a *History of the Theatre in Russia*, the original of which has been lost, but on which another actor, J. Nossov, founded a summary which has been highly valued.

The scientific movement of this period, being distinct from the literary, does not come within the scope of these pages. Apart from the labours of Lomonossov and Soumarokov, it is only represented by the work and originating effort of a few meritorious foreigners—Müller, Schlözer, Bilfinger.

A good many memoirs have come down to us from the reign of Anna Ivanovna. The most deserving of mention are those of Princess Dolgoroukaïa, Prince Chakhofskoï (1705–1772), Nachtchokine (died 1761), and Danilov. NATALIA BORISSOVNA DOLGOROUKAÏA (1713–1770) was the heroine of a drama which drew many a tear from Russian eyes, and inspired a whole pleiad of poets, Kozlov among the number. She was likewise the prototype of an historical element wherein some observers have perceived—and, it may be, rightly perceived—the ideal side of modern Russia—the sublime counterbalance to certain moral failings which mar the glory of her mighty progress. She seems, almost a century before their time, to herald the approach of those wives of the Decembrists of 1825, who besought permission to follow their husbands to Siberia and share their fate. She was the daughter of Field-Marshal Boris Chérémétiev, the valiant comrade in arms of Peter the Great, and up to the eve of the catastrophe which was to render her an object of eternal pity, her future promised brilliantly. She was eighteen, radiantly beautiful, one of the greatest

heiresses in Russia, and betrothed to Ivan Dolgorouki, the prime favourite of the reigning Tsar, Peter II. Before her wedding-day dawned, all these joys had been swept away. The Tsar's death, the favourite's disgrace, the persecution that overwhelmed his entire family, confiscation, banishment, cast the unhappy woman on to a path of misery, which she was to tread, through sorrow upon sorrow, until her life closed. She followed her betrothed, whom she was resolved to make her husband, to Berezov, a village far away on the Siberian moors. She slipped furtively into the dungeon—a mere hole dug in the frozen earth—where he was slowly dying of hunger, bringing him food and her caresses. Not long after, she saw him die in unspeakable anguish at Novgorod, and she herself lived on, that the two children born of their few hours of love might not be left motherless.

Elizabeth's accession recalled her to Moscow, but the world saw her no more. As soon as her children's education was completed, she repaired to Kiév, cast her betrothal ring into the Dnieper, and took the veil. Her memoirs were written in her convent cell. We look in vain for a complaint; only in the few lines she wrote when she felt her end approaching, we read, "I hope every Christian soul will rejoice at my death, and say, 'Her weeping is ended.'" Insensitive? No! Nor a passive victim either! Proud, indeed, passionate, very irritable, incapable of forgetting that she was a Dolgoroukaïa, nor that Biron, the favourite of Anne, whom she believed to be the author of all her sorrows, had made her uncle's boots, a detail, by the way, in which her memory played her false. Passing along the Oka River on her way to Siberia, she bought a live sturgeon, and made it swim

behind her boat, so, she declared, as to have a companion in her captivity. But though she never lost her feminine sensitiveness and her patrician pride, she did not rebel. She proved herself a true Christian by her resignation and by her endurance ; she showed herself the worthy daughter of a race which centuries of torture have instructed in the art of suffering. We shall find this trait repeated.

The most striking feature of the other memoirs to which I have referred is the alarming vacuum as regards things moral, in which the authors, and the whole society they describe in their reminiscences, appear to have languished.

The personages drawn by Danilov seem to have served Von Visine and Catherine II. as models for the comic types to which I shall presently refer.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BONDAGE OF THE WEST—CATHERINE II.

EVEN in certain manuals published in foreign countries, the reign of the Northern Semiramis is described as the "Golden Age" of Russian literature. The only justification for this title lies in the amount of gold distributed by the Tsarina among her French and German panegyrists. The period of her reign is filled by a twofold labour, the beginnings of which date farther back, and have been already indicated in these pages. In the first place, we have the hasty and feverish absorption of the humanitarian ideas, symptoms of which we have already noticed in the works of Soumarokov. The national mind comes into contact, though still indirectly, and by percolation through other countries, with English thought. This external process is accompanied by another, internal, or more secret, whereby a conscious national individuality is gradually elaborated. This development is assisted by the philosophical ideas which have been imported from abroad. Soumarokov's quarrels with individual foreigners generally led him into wholesale opposition to France. His successors showed more discretion. They summed up the total of their exotic importations, and separated those worth keeping from those which, even in their native home, had already been cast aside. The natural consequence was a feeling of disenchantment and self-exami-



nation. This found expression, among the learned, by the publication of chronicles and other documents bearing on the past history of the nation, and of books containing the collected treasures of its literature; the foundation of a "Russian Academy," charged with the duty of preparing a dictionary and a grammar of its language; and the organisation of exploratory journeys throughout the interior of the country. The same cause gave rise, in the domain of literature, to a number of works inspired by national subjects and idealising them beyond all measure.

Thus two currents were formed, which, under the names of Occidentalism, and of Nationalism, or *Slavophilism*, continue to flow even in the present day. In the celebrated *Set of Questions* addressed to Catherine by Von Visine, and looked on as an indiscretion by the Tsarina, the disquieting problem arising out of them—that of reconciling these two extremes—was made apparent. The Tsarina knew nothing, and cared little, about it. She began by favouring both movements; then, when they grew inconvenient, she opposed, and even checked them absolutely, or something very near it. Especially she encouraged the pseudo-classic literature at the expense of those original productions springing from the popular instinct, of which we have noticed the first-fruits in *Frol Skobieiev*. It would not be just to cast the whole responsibility on her. The same phenomenon may be observed in all quarters, as the natural and inevitable result of the Renaissance, and the artificial culture it imposed. In this manner Germany went so far as to forget her own native language. For two centuries, German authors wrote first in Latin and then in French. And the intellectual

capital of the country, richer than that of Russia, suffered even more by this neglect. Yet, under an autocratic régime like the Russian, every phase of life depends more or less on the sovereign—either on his influence or on his will. And when the ruler is himself a writer, he has power, at all events, to regulate the progress of literature with a despotic hand, even if he does not absolutely determine the direction of its development. Russia was bound to go through her classical education, but the stage need not have been such a long one, and might have been less prejudicial to her natural faculties.

Like the worthy descendant of Peter the Great she claimed to be, CATHERINE began by opening her doors and windows to every wind of heaven. She defied the tempest, held disputations with Novikov, and admitted Diderot to her most intimate circle. When the Encyclopedist's violent gestures grew displeasing to her, she held her familiar conversations with him across a table, and so continued to enjoy the ideas he communicated to her. To her all this was a mere intellectual sport, useful for the entertainment of leisure hours. The only places, indeed, that were open to this current of fresh air were her own palace, and those of a few of the nobles who surrounded her. The people's huts, and even the dwellings of the country gentlemen who had been attracted to St. Petersburg, were still impenetrable, hermetically sealed, every chink closed by tradition, bigotry, and ignorance. The outer breeze might blow in, therefore, and do no harm. Within those luxurious halls, it could always draw jeering notes from Frederick II.'s flute, and weave them into some gay country dance. Liberty, when it entered that

circle, became mere license, an elegant screen for debauchery.

But presently the West began to thunder in real earnest. Instantly Catherine took fright. Let everything be closed! Shutters, padlocks, triple locks on every door! Let no one move abroad! One man, Radichtchev, a candid earnest soul, persisted in remaining out of doors, listening eagerly to the whirlwind, noting down the clamour, which now terrified the sovereign. "To prison with him!" she cried. He was condemned to death. She commuted his sentence, sent him to Siberia, and the Western and humanitarian current was stopped short. The other, the Nationalist current, still remained, and the reaction now begun seemed likely to be favourable to it. Unfortunately, among Slavophiles of the stamp of Novikov there existed a compromising leaven of humanitarian views. Novikov was a "populariser." He distributed pamphlets and founded schools. So he, too, went to prison, and Catherine breathed freely once more. She was to have peace at last. By the end of her reign scarcely any one wrote. Under Paul I. nobody dared to speak.

This epoch corresponds, in the history of the evolution of the national genius, to a childish illness, natural in itself, but aggravated by accidental circumstances; the most harmful of which was acclaimed by contemporary philosophers, and is acclaimed by some of their present descendants, as a benefit sent from heaven. Even during the period of great literary activity which preceded the final check, Catherine's excessive Occidentalism interfered with the normal development of the tree, which was disturbed by the constant and exaggerated system of grafts imposed upon it. Catherine

was only a German, who had learnt Russian while she ran barefoot about her room, but who knew French far better. She wrote a great deal, she shared the literary itch of her time, and in this sense she certainly did a useful work of propagation. But in vain do we seek for a single original idea in all her writings. She gives us an heroic imitation of Voltaire, and even of Shakespeare, and is surrounded by a legion of plagiarists, all the humble slaves of Encyclopedic philosophy, of Ossianic poetry, of bourgeois comedy, and of a whole seraglio of foreign Muses, upon whom they wait as shrill-voiced eunuchs, and no more. Even Diérjavine has none of the dash, the conviction, of Lomonossov, nor his sonorous language.

The first specimen of the Tsarina's literary activity was a "Miscellany" (*Vssiakaïa Vssyatchina*), a newspaper published under her direction (1769-1770) by her private secretary, Gregory Vassiliévitch Kozitski. At a later period she turned her attention to the drama, wrote a series of comedies, plays, and operas, and, in 1783, went back to journalism, and inserted satirical articles, notably the *Realities and Fictions* (*Byli i Niébylitsy*) published in *The Interlocutor* (*Sobiéssiednik*) and in other journals. When the French Revolution broke out, Semiramis put away her inkstand.

There is a literary character about a great deal of her private correspondence, and she composed for her grandsons a little library (the *Alexandro-Constantine*, as she called it), wherein figured instructive tales inspired by Montaigne, Locke, Basedow, and Rousseau, a collection of proverbs, and some allegorical stories founded on the national legends.

In her *Notes on Russian History*, and in a refutation

of the Abbé Chappe's *Voyage in Siberia*, published under the title of *The Antidote*, she also touched on science. She must have had numerous collaborators, for she could never write with ease in any language. Novikov is supposed to have had a hand in some—the least inferior—of her comedies; and this hypothesis would seem to find confirmation in the history of her relations with the celebrated writer.

Her plays numbered about thirty, I believe. All that now remain to us are eleven comedies and dramas, seven operas, and five proverbs. In spite of Diderot's assertion to the contrary, none of these possess the smallest artistic value.

Catherine gave out, in fact, that in these dramatic efforts of hers she only pursued three objects. First, her own amusement; second, the feeding of the national repertory, which was sorely starved; third, a means of opposing Freemasonry. "*O Tempora! O Mores!*" gives us the picture of a sham devotee, Mme. Khanjakhina, who kneels in wrapt devotion before the sacred pictures when her creditors come to ask for their money, beats her servant-girls with her missal, and runs from one church to another to collect gossip. All this is easily recognised as a pleading in self-defence, directed against those who were scandalised by the free and joyous life led by the august writer. Another comedy, *Mme. Vortchalkhina's Wedding-Day*, repeats this theme with some variations. The remainder, all of them written after the author's quarrel with Novikov, are much weaker. In one of these, *The History of a Linen-Basket*, Catherine has adapted some scenes from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

At the head of two of her pieces, *Rurik* and *Oleg*, she

has written *Imitated from Shakespeare*. She had read the English tragedian in Eschenberg's German translation, and had done her best to reproduce as much of her model as she had been able to comprehend—no more than some purely external features. Apart from these, her *Rurik*, composed during her anti-revolutionary period, is the outcome of the Encyclopedic spirit, and expresses ideas and sentiments as foreign to the soul of Shakespeare, probably, as to that of any Varegian prince.

The other plays, written at the period of those dreams of expansion which the Tsarina and Patiomkine nursed in company, belongs more to the domain of politics than to that of art or national history. In it we are shown Oleg making his victorious entry within the walls of Constantinople.

This was yet another way of fighting the Turks. To wage war with the Freemasons both in the press and on the stage, Catherine went back to the fortress of her "enlightened despotism." The Freemasons who ventured to found schools and hospitals struck her in the light of most presumptuous rivals. Was not that her affair? She did not treat her enemies fairly, and was apt to confound such men as Novikov with Cagliostro. Three of her comedies, *Chamane of Siberia*, *The Deceiver*, and *The Deceived*, belonged to this category.

The sovereign's relations with Novikov had their origin in a somewhat lively controversy between the *Micellanies* and *The Drone* (*Troutègne*). Novikov edited this last journal. Catherine was anxious to win over the laughers to her side. Naturally cheerful, without a shadow of sentimentality, and a marked taste for buffoonery, she worshipped Lesage, preferred Molière

to Racine, and especially enjoyed the comic element in Shakespeare. When Novikov, in *The Drone*, attacked the traditional vices of the political and social life of Russia, which the Reform had done nothing to extirpate, Catherine acknowledged the justice of his complaint, but objected to the tragic view he took of matters. The officials did wrong to steal, that was certain, and the judges did wrong to take bribes; but all the poor wretches were exposed to so many temptations! When argument failed her she grew angry, reminded her opponent that not so very long ago his behaviour would have brought him into imminent risk of making acquaintancè with the country of *Chamane*, and answered him in the most conclusive manner by suppressing *The Drone* (1770).

The publicist, thus silenced, grew convinced, more or less sincerely, that bitter criticism, pitiless satire, acrimony and anger, were not the best moralising agents he could choose. He made overtures of reconciliation, to which Catherine willingly responded. They met, they came to an understanding, and collaborated in a new publication, *The Painter* (*Jivopisiéts*), and also, probably, in the comedies *O Tempora! O Mores!* and *The Wedding-Day*, in both of which Novikov's pet ideas, his hatred of Gallomania and his anxiety concerning the miserable condition of the Russian peasant, are clearly seen.

But this work in double harness was not destined to be of long duration. In 1774 *The Painter*, accused of being connected with Freemasonry, was suppressed in its turn, and the budding progress of the Russian press suffered a check. The *St. Petersburg Messenger*, which began to appear in 1779, shared its predecessor's fate before two years were out; and the *Interlocutor of*

*the Friends of the Russian Tongue*, which replaced it in 1783, marks a return to the official journalism of the preceding period. In this publication Catherine inserted one of her most curious works, under the title of *Realities and Fictions*. In it we find a series of hard-hitting articles, with no connecting link save a general tone of humorous banter directed against the society of that day. They are always full of gaiety, go, and youth,—the imperial authoress was then fifty—of wit which entertains itself, and seems sure (sometimes without sufficient reason) that it will amuse others, together with a close knowledge of every social circle, even the lowest, and an evident moral intention which surprises us in the case of the heroine of a romance which had already reached so many chapters. The satirical touch seems heavier here than in the comedies; the morality more easy-going. We are far from the days of Novikov.

But Catherine must have some one to contradict her. The journal was supposed to be a tilt-yard, where all opinions were free to meet. She found Von Visine. He drew up his famous *Set of Questions*, and inquired, among other things, "Why buffoons, wags, and harlequins, who in times gone by had no occupation except to amuse people, were now given places and honours which did not seem intended for them?" The question was a direct thrust at Narychkine, one of the sovereign's intimate friends. She considered it very impertinent, and the author was obliged to apologise humbly, and to renounce all future efforts of the kind. Princess Dachkov, who now entered the lists, fared no better. At the first thrust, Catherine put a stop to the encounter. She wrote to Grimm, "This journal will not be so good in future, because the buffoons have quarrelled with the



editors. These last cannot fail to suffer. It was the delight of the court and the town."

*The buffoons*—her own self—grew serious and grave, replaced *Realities and Fictions* by *Notes on Russian History*, and the journal did actually lose the greater part of its readers. The spirit of these articles is that of *The Antidote*, with the same evident anxiety to defend the threatened prestige of the nation, and the same use of scientific arguments which are quite beside the mark. Thus she wanders on, irrationally and imperturbably, till the year 1784, when her taste for literature is quenched, for some considerable time, by the death of the handsome Lanskoř. The pedagogic works to which I have already referred belong to the last period of the Tsarina's life. In them she drew liberally on Locke and Rousseau, while simultaneously applying the theory of the superiority of education over teaching, borrowed from the two great writers, to the bringing up of her grandsons.

Catherine served the cause of science and literature less by her writings than by an initiatory instinct which was frequently happy, and by her really royal gift of grouping individual efforts. The famous *Dictionary of Languages and Dialects*, published at St. Petersburg in 1787-1789, with the assistance of the Russian Academician and traveller Pallas, the German bookseller and critic Nicolai, Bacmeister, and Arndt, was produced in this way, and is a landmark in the history of linguistic study. Further, though in a limited circle, and under the form of a somewhat capricious dilettantism, she propagated a taste for science and literature among people whose favourite pastime had hitherto consisted in watching wild beasts fight, or fighting with their own fists. And

finally—though for only too short a time—she inaugurated a régime of liberty in press matters, which Russia was never to know again.

I have already explained the manner in which Catherine's intervention and her influence may have been harmful. A consideration of the works of Von Visine will enable my readers to judge this point more clearly.

The greatest writer of this period was a German. His ancestors served under the banner of the Teutonic Order of the Sword-bearers, and were numbered among the most doughty foes of the Slav race. The family settled in Russia in the days of Ivan the Terrible, and DENIS IVANOVITCH VON VISINE (1744-1792) was born at Moscow. To another German, at whom, in a biographical essay, he pokes rather spiteful fun, he probably owed the fact of his becoming a playwright. A performance of a piece by the Danish dramatist, Holberg, given in St. Petersburg during the reign of Elizabeth, appears to have settled his vocation. In 1766, while performing the functions of Secretary to the Minister, I. P. Iélaguine, he wrote his *Brigadier*.

The reading of this comedy met with so brilliant a success that all the great people in St. Petersburg, including the Empress, desired to hear it. But the author was at that moment in the throes of a religious crisis, which is said to have been brought about by the discourse of the Procurator of the Holy Synod, Tchébichev, who, though he represented the highest ecclesiastical authority in the country, was an atheist. His influence over Von Visine's mind was successfully overcome by that of Samuel Clarke, in whose theological works the writer delighted. He even went so far as to translate some chapters of the *Treatise on the Existence of God*, and

grew calmer in the process. But idleness fell upon his pen. He climbed the professional ladder, became secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, N. S. Panine, in 1769, grew rich, and travelled abroad. He sojourned at Leipzig, at Lyons, at Montpellier, and finally at Paris, whence he wrote Panine a series of letters which have attracted much attention, but which do not constitute a masterpiece. It was not till 1782, after an eclipse lasting sixteen years, that he reappeared on the literary horizon, with the *Set of Questions* which so upset Catherine's temper, followed by another comedy, *The Minor*, which at once carried him to the very front. A year after he was abroad again; the death of Panine, the displeasure of the Empress, and other worries, together with his own dissipated life, had ruined his health. At forty he was a mere wreck. Paralysis laid its hand on him; then, in 1786, he planned a fresh attempt at independent journalism, was checked by a formal veto from the censorship, and died at last in 1792, in the midst of a second crisis of moral prostration and religious fanaticism, resembling that which was to mark the last days of Gogol.

Von Visine's talent is essentially satirical. Even when he was a student at the Moscow University, his witty sayings won him constant successes, and his *Brigadier* may be taken as a prelude to Gogol's manner, though with much less art, and a complete absence of the ideal. The sense of his satire strikes us as being purely negative. The author has intended to demonstrate the fatal effect of French habits and education, but he overwhelms his characters, whether representing the ancient or the modern society, whether affected by this education or not, with an equal share of ridicule for their moral baseness.

The Brigadier himself, a type of the old school, who reads nothing but the "Military Regulations," and never thinks of anything but his *tchine*, is not very likely to attract much sympathy. The figure of his wife places us in the difficulty of not knowing whether to admire her for her goodness and simplicity, or to despise her for her folly and stinginess. The character placed in contrast with these unattractive types—Ivanouchka, the Brigadier's son, brought up by French tutors—has no solid qualities to serve as background to his ludicrous features. The intrigue is weak, and vulgar farce takes the place of comic power. In this copy of seventeenth-century models, Holberg and Dryden, Von Visine only contrives to give the impression of his own laborious search after coarse effect, and a revelation of a condition of easy morals, the effect of which, from the beneficial point of view, is hard to discover.

*The Minor* follows on *The Brigadier*, just as the second part of *Dead Souls* was to follow on its predecessor, as the result of a similar effort on the author's part to fill up the void caused by the *negative* system which, in the first instance, they both employed. In this second play we have, besides Mme. Prostakova, who has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing, and who is shocked when she hears that one of her female serfs has ventured, being ill, to go to bed ("she actually has the impudence to think she has *birth!*"); and besides her son, Mitrofanouchka (the Minor), who has gained nothing from his coarse and stupid tutors except an absolute absence of the moral sense, other more ideal figures—Sofia, a young lady intended to become the wife of Mitrofanouchka, but who reads Fénelon's book on education, and dreams of a very different kind of husband; her uncle, Staro-

doume, who has perused the *Instructions to the Legislative Commission*, and absorbed all the principles therein contained; and, finally, Pravdine, the good *tchinovik*, the representative of "enlightened despotism," who intervenes at the close of the play, like a *Deus ex machinâ*, to clear up the plot and put everything in its place. Unluckily, while in *The Brigadier* we were left to choose between two equally repulsive realities, our choice in *The Minor* must be made, to all appearances, between reality and fiction. Mme. Prostakova and her son are creatures of flesh and blood, frequently to be met with in the society of that day. But a consultation of the memoirs of the period suffices to convince us of the unlikelihood of the existence of such a character as Sofia—not to mention the young lady's insufferable pedantry—or Pravdine, a model functionary, who finds himself sorely puzzled to reconcile his ideas with his tastes, and his attachment to the good old times with his enthusiasm for the Reform. This will also be noticed in the case of Gogol's heroes.

As regards workmanship; the play gives proof of a more thorough study of the Western models, and hence it somewhat resembles a harlequin's cloak. The geographical examination, during which Mitrofanouchka reveals his stupidity, is copied from Voltaire's *Jeannot et Collin*.

The ideas expressed by Starodoume belong in great measure to the Nationalist doctrines of that period, and have much in common with those of the modern Slavophil theory. The view taken of the Western world is correspondingly narrow and imperfect. Von Visine himself only regarded the philosophical current of his time, which both attracted and alarmed him, as a corrupting

element, and quite overlooked the principle of freedom it involved. Thus, when he first meets it, he "invokes every text in the Bible to exorcise the foreign devil," as Dostoïevski puts it. His letters from France betray this mental inclination, and the determination at which he had already arrived to set up a new sun, to rise over the Eastern plains in opposition to the setting sun of the West. "We are beginning. They are near their end. To us belongs the future, and the choice of a form of national existence appropriate to our national genius." Here we have the watchword of the Akssakovs and Khomiakovs of the future. As a traveller, Von Visine was much what he was as a dramatist. We notice the same lack of direct observation, and the same industrious effort to replace this want by easy plagiarism. His criticisms of and invectives against French society, which have been admired as specimens of the straightforwardness and clear-sightedness of the Russian mind, are simply copied from Duclos' *Considerations sur les Mœurs du Siècle*, from Diderot's *Pensées Philosophiques*, and from some pamphlets emanating from the German press of that period.

As a journalist, Von Visine has given us his best effort in the *Set of Questions*, to which I have already referred. In the articles prepared for the newspaper, the publication of which was stopped by the censor, Starodoume reappears on the scene, full of naïve astonishment because the *Instructions to the Legislative Commission* have not resulted in the framing of any law. The future had yet other surprises in store for him. Even in this department Von Visine was an incorrigible imitator. The letters of Dourikine, which he intended for the same newspaper, may be found word for word in the works of Rabener, from which they were copied.

The success of *The Minor* was stupendous. After the first performance, Patiomkine called out to the author, "Die now, at once!—or never write again!" Such triumphs were not to be repeated on the Russian stage for many a day.

In the hands of Jakov Borissovitch Kniajnine (1747–1791), the author of a *Dido* copied from Metastasio and Lefranc de Perpignan, and of some pseudo-classic works, such as *Rosslav* and *Vadim*, the Russian drama fell back into the rut in which Soumarokov had run. And indeed Kniajnine was Soumarokov's son-in-law. *Vadim* attained the undeserved honour of attracting Catherine's displeasure. The play celebrated the exploits of a military leader who fought with Rurik for the independence of Novgorod. Kniajnine's comedies are mere adaptations of French pieces.

In *Chicanery*, by Vassili Iakovlevitch Kapnist (1757–1824), a piece which shared the ill-luck of *Vadim*, and could not be presented to the public till after Catherine's death, there are some pleasing features. But it is not so much a play as a pamphlet in dialogue, containing a bold and violent attack against the judicial circles of the day. Paul I., who liked violence of any kind, authorised its performance, and considered it "did a public service." But though the play entertained the public vastly, and though a considerable number of its lines, which lashed the members of the national magistracy severely, have become proverbs, history does not tell us that a bribe the less has passed into the Russian magistrates' hands since its sensational appearance.

Far more interesting, from the artistic point of view, is the contemporary attempt of VLADIMIR IGNATIÉVITCH LOUKINE (1757–1824) to acclimatise "middle-class

comedy" in Russia. The idea might well seem strange in a country which, at that time, possessed no middle class whatever. But this effort was concerned with subject rather than with form, and especially with the withdrawal of the classic buskin, and the continuation of that process of evolution of which Richardson had been the inaugurator, and Diderot the kindly theorist. With these Loukine also associated an inkling of independent leanings in the direction of the Nationalist movement. He thought it desirable that a man of the people should speak from the stage in his own tongue, and not in that of Racine as transposed by Soumarokov. This view he ventured to express in his prefaces, prefixed, unluckily, to translations and adaptations from the French. For he was nothing but an imitator, after all, "serving up Campistron, Marivaux, and Beaumarchais in the Russian style," as Novikov puts it. He did not know how to put his own theory into practice. Though he fought with the holders of the old formulæ, he never could succeed in drawing his own feet out of their shoes, and he suffered, besides, from the inferiority, not of his talent—for that, on both sides, was poor or altogether lacking—but of his social status. He was of humble birth, his rank in the official hierarchy was modest, and in Russia, until quite lately, literature has been an essentially aristocratic province.

Loukine's fate strongly resembled that of Trédiakovski, and the struggle he commenced was not to be decided in favour of his views until the appearance of Karamzine, who, appealing to Lessing and Shakespeare, succeeded in introducing, or rather reintroducing, the first element of realism, the germ of all future growth, into the literature of his country.



Yet this essentially national and popular element did contrive, even in Catherine's lifetime, and with some slight help from her, to make its appearance on the stage under another form, exceedingly fashionable at that period—the comic opera. Thus labelled, the satirical spirit of the race, and that love of parody which in all Russians, as in Peter the Great himself, is but another form of the critical spirit, gave birth to a succession of works closely allied with the type produced in later days by Offenbach. We see the same grotesque and facetious travesty of the ancients, the same light and cynical opinion of mankind, the same kindly and sympathetic glance, cast, in spite of all, on the lower strata of the populace. The whole effect is confused. Lessons to proprietors on their duties to their serfs are mingled with the defence of serfdom itself. But this chaos of feeling and ideas obtains in all the literature of the day. Abléssimov (1724-1784) was for many years the favourite writer in this line. Diérjavine himself tried his hand at it, but there was nothing of the playwright about the author of *Félitsa*.

The glory of Diérjavine, like that of Lomonossov, met with varying fortunes. To-day the latter is held the greatest of the Russian poets of the eighteenth century, and full justice is not done to Lomonossov unless we also class him among men of science. Until the advent of Pouchkine, that great demolisher of reputations, Diérjavine's importance was steadily on the increase. The words "great poet" were pronounced regardless of chronology and comparison, and he was even called "a god." Pouchkine fell upon the idol, and Biéliniski's assault was still more violent. The "god" was torn from Olympus, and was denied even the title of "artist."

As a matter of truth, he was, like all the writers of his generation, a *dilettante*, who only haunted Parnassus from time to time, as other more tempting or more lucrative vocations—those of the courtier or the ministerial functionary—permitted. In these circles he has left regrettable memories, which have served as weapons for the severity of his posthumous detractors. The publication of his Memoirs, in 1857 (their frankness is great, even too great), cast a flood of light on this part of his career, and darkened the shadow that already brooded over the rest.

GABRIEL ROMANOVITCH DIÉRJAVINE (1743–1816), the scion of an ancient Tartar family, made his first studies at the Gymnasium of Kazan, where, if his recollection may be depended on, “religion was taught without a catechism, languages without grammar, and music without notes!” Yet here he learnt sufficient German to enable him to go through a complete course of poets—Gellert, Hagedorn, Heller, Kleist, Herder, and Klopstock—in the original. This done, and his general studies completed, he entered the army, like everybody else, and spent twelve years in the barracks of the Préobrajenski Regiment.

His *Odes to Tchitalgaï* (a mountain of that name), inspired by, or even translated from, Frederick II. (Frederick II.'s verses were the wretched poet's model!), an Epistle to Michelsohn, the victor of Pougatchov, and the beginnings of an epic poem entitled *The Pougatchovchtchina*, all belong to this period. Following the plan drawn up by Tatichtchev, the author of these efforts passed into the ranks of the civil employés of the Government, and made rough draughts of financial regulations, while he sang the charms of

Plénire, a fair Portuguese whose happy husband he became. In 1778 he contributed to the *St. Petersburg Messenger*, inserting in its columns two rhymed panegyrics of Peter the Great, an epistle to Chouvalov, and the famous *Ode to Sovereigns*, which was later to earn him the reputation of a Jacobin. His literary reputation was not established until the publication, in 1782, of *Félitsa*—a poem founded on a tale by Catherine II., in which a good fairy of that name, who represents Happiness, rewards a virtuous young prince. This good fairy could be none other than Catherine herself. Diérjavine hinted the fact, and was rewarded with a gold snuff-box containing five hundred ducats. Soon afterwards, however, Félitsa invited the poet to retire from the administrative career, wherein he did not show sufficient docility. "Let him write verses!" He wrote them for Zoubov and for Patiomkine, the rival favourites, and by this shady device contrived to gain forgiveness, and even to enter the sovereign's intimate circle as her private secretary. But one day, as he was working with her, the second secretary, Popov, was called in.

"Remain here; this gentleman is too free with his hands."

Zoubov and Patiomkine sufficed Catherine at the moment. Yet she forgave him, but fancied such an act of clemency deserved another laudatory poem. None came. On close acquaintance, Félitsa ceased to inspire the poet. They parted, and Diérjavine, banished to the Senate, climbed the slippery slope no more, until the days of Paul and Alexander I. He had grown wise. The man who had been called a Jacobin, the apologist of the humanitarian ideas attributed to "Félitsa," President of the College of Commerce in 1800, Minister of Justice in

1802, sent forth verses against the enfranchisement of the serfs, and succeeded, in 1803, in getting himself dismissed as a "reactionary"! He spent the last thirteen years of his life on his own property of Zvanka, where he wrote his Memoirs, and, when more than sixty years of age, turned his attention to the stage. In 1811 he founded, at St. Petersburg, in conjunction with A. S. Chichkov, the "Society of Friends of the Russian Tongue," which in itself was an attempt to react against the new literary tendencies, represented by Karamzine and Joukovski. He is said to have realised the inanity of this attempt before he died. On the 8th of January 1815, at a public gathering at the College of Tsarskořé-Siélo, he heard one of the pupils read some verses of his own composition. He congratulated the young author, and sighed, "My day is past!" The pupil's name was Pouchkine. I greatly fear the story must be ascribed to some accommodating flight of the imagination, for when we read the verses in question, we find that they contain a lofty eulogy of Catherine II., her grandson, and of Diérjavine himself. The workmanship is in Diérjavine's own style, and nothing about it betokens the future author of *Eugène Oniéguine*.

In Catherine's time poetry was not—it has scarcely been, even up to the present day, in Russia—what other conditions of existence have made it in other countries—the natural blossoming of the national life, a delight, an ornament. In its origin especially, it was a weapon of attack and defence, which some chosen spirits took up against the calamities of the common life. Thus it is that satire is the dominant note, that complaint runs through and pervades its every accent, that the gloomiest pessimism underlies it all. And even this

need not have prevented Diérjavine from becoming a great poet. But he was, above all things, a man of his own time. His work is like a mirror, wherein we see every aspect and every phase of Catherine's reign reflected. This being so, it gives us an equal proportion of patches of light and pools of darkness, much spirit, a certain dignity, no personal feeling for beauty, and no moral sense whatever. Diérjavine only saw beauty through other men's eyes, and frequently lost sight of goodness altogether. Now and then his voice rings with an accent of dignity, but he always produces the sensation that we are listening to a well-conned lesson. Oftener yet his muse seems to have wandered into evil resorts, where degradation of character is swiftly followed by debauch of talent.

Until he wrote *Félitsa*, he remained the pupil of Trédiakovski and the imitator of Lomonossov. But this last author towered far above the stature of his imitator's talent. Diérjavine had the sense to acknowledge it, and, advised by some of his friends, he condescended to Anacreon, taking Horace and Ossian on his way. He knew neither Latin, Greek, nor English. His friends, Lvov, Kapnist, and Dmitriev, more educated, though less gifted, than himself, set themselves to overcome this difficulty. Their assistance even extended to very copious corrections, which may still be traced on the poet's manuscripts.

*Félitsa*, like most of his poems, is a mixture of satire and ode. Catherine is extolled, contemporary habits are criticised. The general tone betrays the humourist. The goddess of Happiness descends from heaven and becomes a Tartar princess, whose virtues are sung by a *murza*. This *murza*, who reappears in another poem

(*The Vision of the Murza*, 1783), was, we are told, sincere. Was this still true when, at a later date, he lauded the exploits of "the Russian Mars" (Patiomkine) and of Zoubov? It would be hardly safe, indeed, to seek the origin of this personage on the Russian steppe. I think we are more likely to find it in two numbers of the *Spectator* (159 and 604), where, under the same title, *The Vision of Mirza*, Addison has used the same allegory to convey an identical idea,—the luminous transparence of life under the light of the imagination.

In the *Odes on the Capture of Warsaw* (1794) and the poems dealing with Souvarov's exploits in Italy, the imitation of Ossian is closer yet. In fact, the poet "of the clouds and seas" is actually mentioned by name. At the same time we perceive a progressive accentuation of the note of melancholy philosophy and philosophic moralising, of the inclination to ponder on the mysterious depths of human existence, of longings for a higher ideal of greatness and happiness, of meditation on death and eternity, and appeals to truth, justice, and goodness. This is the dominant tone in the Epistles addressed to his early and life-long friends Lvov, Kapnist, Chouvalov, Narychkine, and Khrapovitski. Taking his work as a whole, a poetic festival at which the mock Scottish bard thus elbows Horace, Anacreon really rules the feast, and Diogenes, screened by Epicurus, often makes himself far too much at home.

In the dramatic efforts which Diérjavine sent forth at the very end of his life, his views were of the most ambitious nature. He dreamt of a theatre which should be a school like that of Greece, and he claimed to establish it on a wide popular basis, drawn alike from the history and the poetry of the nation. The publication, in 1804,

of a collection of *Bylines* by Klioutcharev inspired him to the composition of a *Dobrynia*, in the fourth act of which he introduced a chorus of young Russian girls. At the same time, to the great scandal of the "Society of Friends of the Russian Tongue," the veteran poet, like Joukovski, went so far as to compose ballads on popular subjects. But his heart was with the classics, and he did not withstand the temptation to clap a mask, borrowed from Corneille, upon his *Dobrynia*, and so disfigure the character completely. But indeed, as I have already said, he had no scenic talent.

Still, when Pouchkine denies him, generally and absolutely, every artistic gift, he goes too far. The ex-grenadier's language gives him a splendid opening. "Diérjavine," he writes, "knew nothing either of the grammar or the spirit of the Russian tongue (in this he was inferior to Lomonossov); he had no idea of style nor harmony, nor even of the rules of versification. . . . Reading his work, you would think you were reading a bad translation of an uncouth original. Truly his mind worked in Tartar, and never had time to learn to write Russian" (Letters to Baron Delwig).

I feel a natural shyness about contradicting such an authority. Yet the "Tartar's" language strikes me, in places, at all events, as being very expressive, plastic, and powerful, if not exceedingly correct. His verse, though less full than Lomonossov's, has more simplicity, more freedom, much greater flexibility, and, in the use of the new metres, which broke the old classic uniformity, a fertility of resource by which Pouchkine himself appears to me to have profited. I believe that the man himself, the *tchinovnik*, the courtier, has compromised the poet's cause in the eyes of this judge.

In the department of lyric poetry, Diérjavine has had a host of imitators, most of them forgotten at the present day, such as Kostrov (Iermiel Ivanovitch, died 1796), Petrov (Vassili Petrovitch, died 1800), an imitator of Addison, and, as a result of five years spent in England while translating Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a fervent admirer of English poetry. The bard of *Félitsa* wrote no epic, though the whole of his literary work may be regarded as an historical evocation of Catherine's reign. He left the honour of following in Homer's footsteps to Khéraskov.

If we desired, with a view to comparative study, to possess a map whereon the style of the *Iliad*, that of the *Æneid*, that of *Jerusalem Delivered*, and possibly of the *Henriade* as well, are set forth side by side, without the employment of the smallest artifice likely to result in their confusion, we could do no better than to glance at the *Rossiad* or the *Vladimir* of MICHAEL MATVIÉIÉVITCH KHÉRASKOV (1733-1807).

This poet has conscientiously made his zephyrs blow and his dryads weep in the forests round Kazan, and industriously amalgamated the features of Agamemnon and Godefroi de Bouillon in the person of Ivan the Terrible. The *Rossiad* is a history of the conquest of Kazan, with which the writer has connected the more modern enterprises of Catherine's reign, and to this bond a great proportion of its success was due. Khéraskov was a scholar, an academic student, who had strayed into the domain of poetry. He had been a soldier (he belonged to an old Wallachian family), curator of the Moscow University, and director of the theatre of that city, and wielded considerable literary influence by means of two periodical publications, to



which the best writers of the time contributed. In 1775 he became a Freemason and supported the propaganda of Novikov and his German master, Schwartz, obtaining a professorial chair for the first, and farming the printing of the University to the second. His epic poems have a strong flavour of mysticism. In the *Rossiad* there is a struggle between good and evil; in *Vladimir*, a struggle between Pagan instincts and Christian faith, with, here and there, a victory won by the better element, thanks to the intervention of occult forces, less connected with the Gospel than with the Kabala, which put forward in the most unevangelical fashion, and on the esoteric principle of the opposing of evil by evil, the struggle of lie against lie, working out the final triumph of truth and virtue.

Those who have the curiosity to look will find the same ideas and tendencies in numerous novels by Khéraskov, imitated from Fénélon and Marmontel. They are also to be observed, in a generalised and popularised form, in the strange application by other contemporary Russian writers of their studies of the sensualist novels imported from France. It must not be forgotten that in Russia Gogol was destined to be taken for an imitator of Paul de Kock! These Russian adapters accept these novels as satires, and superadd a moral intention. Thus we see Tchoulkov and Ismailov making astonishingly realistic attempts to Russify the popular type of Faublas.

Richardson's novels also found many Russian readers, and some few imitators, at this period. Among these last was Fiodor Emine, author of the *Adventures of Miramond*, which some have taken to be an autobiography. Miramond is a sort of Telemachus, travelling under the care of a mentor, a near relation, it would

seem, of the author's. The journey is an eventful one; master and pupil find it hard to agree, and the internal discord which is the general and characteristic feature of contemporary literature becomes very evident. The strife and distressing contradiction between what the writer has culled from every foreign hand, and what he desires to retain of his own native possessions, is still more visible in the *Douchenka* ("Little Psyche") by Hippolytus Fiodorovitch Bogdanovitch (1743-1803), a poem which made a tremendous stir at the time of its appearance, and had the honour, at a later period, of inspiring one of Pouchkine's first poetic efforts.

The *Douchenka* proves, on a closer examination, to be nothing but a versified adaptation of the "Amours de Psyche et de Cupidon" of La Fontaine, who, as we know, borrowed his subject from "The Golden Ass" of Apuleius. To this Bogdanovitch has merely added a few episodes of revolting obscenity, together with a certain personal sentiment in his conception of Psyche. *Douchenka* is a depraved and vulgar flirt, to whom Zeus consents to restore her physical loveliness for the sake of the beauty of a soul which charms him, even as it is, and does not appear to be without charm in the poet's eyes. Bogdanovitch lived on intimate terms with Khéraskov, Novikov, and Schwartz. Vassili Ivanovitch Maïkov (1728-1778), who, writing in the same heroicomic style, has descended to indecent parody, was also a member of this circle. His *Iélssei* (or "Angry Bacchus") is a mere piece of filthiness.

La Fontaine had a better pupil in the person of Ivan Ivanovitch Khémnitzer (1745-1784), the first of the Russian fabulists, if the fables of Kantémir and Soumarokov are taken for what they really are—satires.

This foreigner—he came of a German family, probably belonging to Chemnitz, in Silesia, who wrote German verses in his youth, and developed into a mere *dilettante* in Russian literature in his riper age (he was Consul-General at Smyrna when he died)—shared his French master's peculiarities, his almost childish nature, his shrewd intelligence, and his simple good-heartedness.

Simpler, less of an artist than La Fontaine, less sentimental than Gellert, he is almost the only Russian fable-writer who possesses a touch of originality.

Foreign literature was at that time rolling into Russia like the flood after a storm, in foam-flecked waves, which stirred the mud upon the soil beneath, and hollowed out great pits upon its surface. From the year 1768 onwards, Catherine allotted 5000 roubles yearly from her privy purse, for translations from foreign languages. She put a hand to the work herself, in a translation of Marmontel's *Bélisaire*, and Von Visine, Kniajnine, and Khéraskov shared the labour. A permanent committee of translators sat at the Academy of Sciences. Various societies were formed for the same purpose. Rekhmaninov, a land-owner in the Government of Tambov, translated and published the works of Voltaire. The director of the College of Kazan, Verevkine, undertook the whole of Diderot's *Encyclopædia*. Russian extracts from French authors, *The Spirit* of Voltaire, of Rousseau, of Helvetius, had a large circulation. This propaganda had no political effect, and its humanitarian value strikes us, at this distance of time, as utterly insignificant. The very noblemen who crowded to pay their court at Ferney, and pressed their own hospitality on Rousseau, protested against the enfranchisement of the serfs, prematurely proposed by

two members of the "Legislative Commission," Korovine and Protassov. The negative side of French philosophy, its religious scepticism, was the only real attraction it held for them. This involved no sacrifice on their part. At the close of the eighteenth century nothing in the political and social organisation of Russia had changed, but the country swarmed with free-thinkers, and this state of mind brought about a natural reaction, a sudden swelling of the mystic current which accident had momentarily driven into the muddy bed of local Freemasonry. Radichtchev and Novikov personified these two phases of the intellectual life of the period.

Born of a noble family, and educated in the Pages' School, ALEXANDER NIKOLAIÉVITCH RADICHTCHEV (1749-1802) is a typical though somewhat eccentric specimen of a generation of well-born men, who drank from the goblet of philosophy, and turned giddy in consequence. At Leipzig he spent four years. While lending an inattentive ear to the instructions of Gellert and Platner, he was applying his whole strength to the study of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, and Mably. After his return to Russia, a perusal of the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire des Indes* and of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* threw him into a state of violent excitement, wherein good judges, Pouchkine among the number, have thought they perceived symptoms of madness. His *Journey to St. Petersburg and Moscow*, published in 1790, was the expression of these feelings. The author has borrowed the general form of his narrative, and even some characteristic episodes—such as that of the monk of Calais, easily recognised under the lineaments of a philosophic church chorister—from Sterne. From Voltaire he draws his libertine scepticism, his hatred of

fanaticism, and scorn of prejudice. His philanthropy comes from Rousseau and Raynal; his cynicism from Diderot. If to these we add, and reconcile as best we may, his professions of orthodoxy, joined to tirades against the priests and their never-ending impositions on human credulity, and his apologies for autocratic power followed by revolutionary outpourings, we obtain a complete idea of the book.

Radichtchev goes farther than Voltaire and Rousseau. He would grant the freed serfs the ownership of the soil they till, but he leaves the carrying out of this reform to the *Samodiérjavié*, and, except in the matter of date, he proves himself a true prophet. He shows a great deal of sympathy for the lower classes, declaring his conviction that their morality is higher than that of their superiors; but this does not prevent him from expressing astonishment when a peasant woman is faithful to her word. Such a case, he avers, is rare in that class. He is full of contradictions, and the object to be attained never seems to be clear before his mind. But had he really any object at all? He cannot have believed that Catherine would permit the circulation of his treatise in the year 1790. The days of her dalliance with philosophy were long gone by. She might have suppressed the book without touching the writer, who was, as he afterwards proved himself, harmless enough. But the widow of Peter III., a very woman at times, in spite of her fondness for being called Catherine the Great, crushed this fly with a sledgehammer. Radichtchev spent ten years in Siberia, where he employed his time, after permission to write had been restored to him, in composing another work, filled with quotations from Locke, Newton, and Rousseau, entitled *On Man, on Death, and Immortality*, and which might

surely have sufficed to mollify the sovereign. He was recalled to Russia by Paul I., and Alexander I. appointed him to a new Commission on Legislation, for which he drew up a plan of judicial reform, embodying trial by jury. It was his fate to be always either before or behind his time. Zavadovski, president of the commission, inquired with a savage smile, whether he pined for the Siberian landscape. The unhappy man, whose imagination was overwrought, and whose nerves had not recovered from his past sufferings, lost his head. He went home and poisoned himself (September 2, 1802) by swallowing a huge glass of alcohol at a draught.

He had wielded no influence. When he was sent to Siberia, hardly any one noticed the disappearance of the humble Custom-House employé. His work had lain in those regions. His departure made no more stir than a stone when it falls into the water. Pouchkine was to pass through a short period of youthful infatuation and enthusiasm for the *Journey*. On cooler reflection, he compared the work to a broken mirror, which deforms everything it reflects. He made reservations as to its substance, and applied harsh judgments to its form, which was perhaps superfluous. Radichtchev did not know how to write, and had never given himself time to learn to think. He was always a *dilettante*, and a man of ill-balanced intellect, quite unfit to perform the work of an apostle.

A genuine apostle, with all the faults and all the virtues of his office, was NICHOLAS IVANOVITCH NOVIKOV (1744-1818). He was a born preacher. He began by preaching a crusade against the enslavement of the national intellect by its Western teachers. But he met the fate which was inevitably to overtake the members

of the extreme Nationalist party. His absolute and vehement denial of the existence of any loan borrowed from a foreign source led him, by way of the clear sheet he insisted on, to utter vacancy. He took alarm, and retired for refuge into religious mysticism, without caring this time to inquire whether the edifice which sheltered him had been built by foreign hands or not. At the same time he realised that before Russia could possess any original culture, the national soil must be stirred to its very depths. Under the influence of this idea, the theorist in Novikov made way for the man of action, the publisher bowed before the educator, and thus began the finest period of a career which, if it had lasted longer, might have advanced the progress of a work which is still in its preliminary stage, by a good half-century. But Novikov was stopped half-way. I will endeavour to sum up his history; it was full of incident, and much of it is still obscure.

I have already described the early disagreement between the editor of the *Drone* and Catherine II. Novikov, a man of noble birth, like Radichtchev, had previously served in the army, and had acted as Secretary to the Commission of Legislation. In 1769, journalism began to attract, and soon entirely absorbed him. The Russian periodical press of Elizabeth's time, although modelled on that of England, France, and Germany, preserved an officially academic character, which confined it exclusively to literary and scientific subjects. Catherine cast it headlong into the social and political vortex. The first blows exchanged between these inexperienced warriors missed their aim. With arms borrowed from Addison and Steele, they fought against windmills—I mean for or against men and things who

belonged to a foreign and absent community. If, taking Catherine's *Miscellanies*, we look closely at the list of prejudices to be eradicated in the *Zamoskvoriétchié* (a suburb of the ancient capital, beyond the Moskva), we shall find it a hastily arranged plagiarism on the *Spectator*, wherein the embroidery swears with the canvas of its foundation. Novikov was the first to touch the raw place. In his *Drone* (1769-1770) he attacked actual and surrounding realities, official venality, judicial corruption, the general demoralisation. His hand was heavy, his drawing coarse. "A Russian sucking-pig, who has travelled through foreign countries to improve his mind, is generally no more than a full-grown pig when he comes home." His blows fell in such a pitiless shower that Catherine thought it time to interfere. As soon as the game grew earnest, it ceased to entertain her; and besides, Novikov forgot to spare the sovereign's friends the philosophers, whom she still regarded with affection. When he tested their doctrines by his own half-savage common-sense, he made discoveries which were very annoying to Voltaire's imperial pupil. A truce was commanded; and that over, the fight, favoured by fresh intermissions in the Tsarina's liberalism, went on from 1769 to 1774, supported on each side by an almost equal number of combatants, some of whom, indeed, frequently passed over from one camp to the other. The whole of this satirical press, the literary vassal of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, was swept in one direction by the same insurrectionary tendency. Just as in England there was a general uprising against Pope and Dryden, so in Russia there was a revolt against Gallo-mania and French classicism, and in this matter both parties stood on common ground. After 1774 there was



another truce, for which Novikov himself was responsible. He was passing through the mental convulsion to which I have already adverted. In the last numbers of *The Purse* (*Kochélek*) he had reached practical Nihilism. Happily Schwartz stood close beside him, ready to hold out the hand which saved him at the very edge of the abyss.

The introduction of Freemasonry into Russia dates from the time of Elizabeth, but the first Grand Lodge was not opened in St. Petersburg until 1772. It was connected with the Scottish Masons, and the rites followed the Scottish form, the simplest and purest of all. Schwartz introduced Continental forms, which, though stained with illuminism and charlatanism, were better suited, by their mystic tendency, to the bent of the Russian nation. Novikov had been affiliated to the English brotherhood since 1772, and its influence had already directed him into that path of fruitful activity which has rendered him the most meritorious toiler of an epoch the relative value of the workers in which has not yet been fairly apportioned. He had made some attempts to popularise knowledge, had published an *Historical Lexicon of Russian Writers*, a *Russian Hydrography*, and, under the title of *An Ancient Russian Library*, a collection of historical documents. Schwartz, whose acquaintance he made in 1779, after his removal from St. Petersburg to Moscow, was the very guide needed to draw out his best efforts and full powers in this direction. The spark which fires all grand enthusiasms was kindled in the Russian's breast by the enthusiastic German dreamer.

Of a sudden, Novikov began to found schools, printing-works, and bookshops, and to disseminate religious

handbooks. He was a forerunner of Tolstoï, and more practical than he, for hospitals and dispensaries were included in his programme. At the same time he managed the *Moscow Gazette*, and saw its subscribers increase from 600 to 4000. In 1782 he founded the "Society of the Friends of Learning," which, taking advantage of the short period of literary freedom, inaugurated in 1783 by a ukase soon to be rescinded, was transformed, two years later, into the "Typographical Society." There were swarms of printing-presses at Moscow, and Novikov used them to produce an enormous mass of pamphlets, which inculcated his new tenets: the possibility of agreement between faith and reason, between intelligence and sentiment, the necessity of agreement between religion and instruction. To this anything but original doctrine he added some bold and novel ideas of his own, proclaiming, amongst other things, the right of the weaker sex to a superior education. His own belief, as a whole, always lacked clearness and consistency, while his brother-masons, among whom Ivan Vladimirovitch Lapoukhine (1756-1816) was the most remarkable, lost themselves in a heavy fog of theosophic fancies and obscure, though artistic, allegories. Yet, taken altogether, they did introduce a vivifying and healthy principle of self-examination, mental effort, and independence, into the national existence.

Catherine herself encouraged their exertions, until the day when she fancied she perceived a mysterious correspondence between them and the revolutionary movement beyond her borders. It was a grievous and unpardonable mistake in a woman who piqued herself on her clear-sightedness. The Freemasonry of that period, essentially international here as elsewhere,

assumed in Russia a frankly reactionary character, the fervent pietism of its members driving it in exactly the opposite direction to the philosophic and humanitarian current which was to bring about the Revolution. Catherine, who was quite at her ease, and sure of her way amidst the shabby windings of ministerial chanceries, was utterly incapable of steering a course amidst the far more complex mazes of the moral phenomena that shook the very soul of her century. The moment came at last, when agitation of every kind grew hateful to her. Orders were given that nobody should budge. And in January 1792 Novikov was arrested at his country-house at Avdotino, whither he had gone to rest, and conducted, between two hussars, to the fortress of Schlüsselburg. His philanthropic institutions, his printing-works, his bookshops, were all forcibly driven out. Paul I. at the beginning of a reign which was to increase the population of the Russian dungeons, was moved to open the noble martyr's prison doors. Legend goes so far as to assert that he implored his pardon on bended knee. Extravagant the story sounds, and it can hardly be true, for of all he had lost, the only thing Novikov recovered, besides his liberty, was leave to end his life in idleness at Avdotino.

He had no forerunners, and no direct heirs, in his own country. A fraction of his inspiration, *minus* his high morality, descended to that friend of Catherine's better days, Princess Dachkov, who was another of her victims, and on whom, nevertheless, devolved the honour—a strange one—of leading the scientific movement of her time.

The movement to which I refer was restricted in scope and poor in result. Although the reactionary

current had triumphed at the St. Petersburg University, and native teachers, Sokolov, Zouiev, Oziérétskovski, Protassov, Devnitski, Zybéline, Véniaminov, Trébotarev, Trétiakov, and Strakhov, had taken the place of the old foreign staff, no literary works appeared to replace those of Müller and Bernouilli. Speeches on great occasions, and the scientific propaganda of the periodical press, exhausted the efforts of these new *savants*. Yet the existence of a scientific press, and the creation, in 1785, of the "Russian Academy" for "the purification and perfecting of the national language," constitute a considerable step forward, for the times, and in this progress the chief share belongs to CATHERINE ROMANOVNA, Princess DACHKOV (1743-1810).

This lady, the daughter of General R. I. Vorontsov, and the intellectual pupil of Bayle, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, had galloped at Catherine's side, in 1762, along that road from St. Petersburg to Peterhof which was to lead the future Semiramis of the North to power and glory. She subsequently contributed to several newspapers, wrote a comedy by command of the Empress for the Hermitage Theatre, and, without any such command, dabbled feverishly in politics, a department in which Semiramis considered herself all-sufficing. A coldness resulted, and in 1769 the Princess was seized with a strong inclination for foreign travel. She visited Paris, made a longer stay in Scotland, where she knew Robertson and Adam Smith, and where her son obtained a University degree. In 1781 she returned to Russia, and, as she began her meddling again, Catherine, in 1783, offered her, as "a bone to gnaw," the Presidency of the Academy of Science. She showed considerable coyness, but ended by accept-

ing, and held the post for twelve years, combining with its duties those of the editorship of the *Interlocutor*, and, at a later date, those of the Presidency of the "Russian Academy," which was, in a sense, an offshoot of the journal in question. The *Interlocutor* caused fresh disagreements between the Princess and her sovereign, and the publication of *Vadime*, in 1795, completed the quarrel. The Tsarina's quondam friend retired to the country in disgrace, and there wrote her Memoirs, the French manuscript of which was preserved by Miss Wilmot (later Mrs. Bradford), a *dame de compagnie*, whom she had brought back with her from Herzen. She published an English version of the work in 1740.

The author of these Memoirs is remembered as having possessed a disagreeable temper, but a soul open to all noble feelings. She did all that lay in her power to encourage a school of history, of which, at this period, Chtcherbatov and Boltine were the most eminent exponents. I have not mentioned her beauty, because I have nothing agreeable to say on that subject.

The school to which I have just referred was more controversial than scientific in its essence. Its chief function was to support the author of *The Antidote*, by defending the defamed past of the nation against all the Abbé Chappes of the West. Prince Michael Mikhailovitch Chtcherbatov (1733-1790) was, as his *History of Russia from the Most Ancient Times*, and more especially his more popular essay *On the Corruption of Russian Manners* (which did not see the light until 1858), will prove, the theorist of the group. And his theories led him much farther than the author of *The Antidote* desired—even so far as the wholesale condemnation of the

work of Catherine and Peter the Great, the defence of which was forthwith undertaken by another historian, Golikov, in ten huge volumes, flanked by eighteen supplements. Chtcherbatov's point of view is very much that of the modern Slavophiles, and also that of Diérjavine, as exemplified in some of his odes. As for Golikov, he is nothing but another *dilettante*, without knowledge, method, or critical instinct. Chtcherbatov has a certain amount of knowledge, and a great deal more judgment. He has studied the history of other nations, and introduces the comparative method into the historiography of his country. He has kept company with the best authors, and can quote Hume more or less appropriately; but his judgment is obscured by his uncompromising dogmatism, and his knowledge is counterbalanced by a style at once incorrect and insufferably dull.

Ivan Nikitich Boltine (1735-1792), Patioumkiné's favourite comrade, has added lustre to his name by the publication of two volumes of notes on Chtcherbatov's *Russian History*, and two more on the *Ancient and Modern Russian History* written by a French physician named Leclercq. He belonged to an ancient family of Tartar origin, was an eager collector of ancient manuscripts, edited the *Rousskaïa Pravda* (Ancient Russian Code) with Iélaguine and Moussine-Pouchkine, and may be described as the sophist of the Slavophilism of his day.

The Slavophil theory had fervent advocates at this period, but its opponents were not less passionately eager. Among these, the youthful Karamzine, who was ultimately to change his views, was a prominent figure. Partial justification of the theory certainly exists in the numerous memoirs which have come down to us from

the period of the great Tsar's reign, and give us an instructive picture of a moral corruption which might well invalidate the idea that any good was likely to result from the labours of Peter and Catherine. The recollections of Princess Dachkov and of Diérjavine present particular interest in this connection, but their statements must be accepted with caution. The memory of Catherine's former friend may have been confused by anger, and that of Diérjavine by the weariness of old age.

Taking it all in all, this "Golden Age," except in the department of history, can only be marked in the annals of learning by leanings, presumptions, and pretensions, none of which it ultimately justified.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRANSITION PERIOD—KARAMZINE AND JOUKOVSKI

ACCORDING to the terminology sanctioned by long use, the period at which we have now arrived is currently denominated the Romantic Epoch. I still have some difficulty in admitting the appropriateness of this title. The literary evolution so described in Western countries does, indeed, possess certain analogies and affinities with the current which tended, at the same period, to drag Russian literature out of the classic rut and borrowed paths in which it had hitherto trod. But from the very outset this current took, and kept, a quite special and distinct direction. My readers know what the Romantic movement was in England, in Germany, and in France, and how it successively and contradictorily combined a return, purely literary in the first instance, to the traditions of chivalry and of the Middle Ages, with the defence of the liberal and humanitarian ideal against the anti-revolutionary reaction, in the first place, and with the defence of the national principle against the cosmopolitanism resulting from the Revolution, in the second. None of the elements of this combination existed in Russia, or, at all events, none of them had the same character there. To the Russians chivalry was only known through French romances, and their sole memory of the Middle Ages was



of a gloomy abyss in which the national existence was engulfed, and suffered agonising trial.

The conflict between the liberal and the reactionary principle also assumed quite a different complexion in Russia. Instead of working from the bottom upwards, as was the case elsewhere, the emancipating current flowed from the upper strata of society to the lower. We have seen Catherine at the head of the philosophic propaganda. Alexander I. was to follow her in the part, during the earlier portion of his reign, and the opposition he then met with came from the literary circles of the country. In Russia, until towards the middle of the present century, literature was the special field of a small class, imbued, by its aristocratic origin, with a strongly conservative spirit. And finally, both the point of departure and the general direction of the nationalist current in Russia were totally different from those taken by the same movement in other countries. This current was evident even under Catherine's rule, when the political integrity of the empire was not threatened in any way. It corresponded, not with the need to defend the house against intruders, but with the desire to possess a house at all. Of the three literary leaders who, at the moment now under observation, were preparing the way for Pouchkine—Karamzine, Joukovski, and Batiouchkov—the first two belonged, for political purposes, to the camp of reaction, while the third belonged to no camp at all. In literature, the first was a pupil of the sentimental school, the second was an eclectic, the third a classic of a special type. All three really belong to a period of transition, which was to lead up to the evolution of the approaching future.

The intellectual life of Russia is so closely interwoven

with its political and social existence, both in this period and that which follows upon it, that this chapter must begin with a comprehensive glance at the incidents common to them all.

#### INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION.

We all know how Paul I., after having been carried away, for a moment, by that wave of chimerical liberalism on which his frail bark had floated in the days of his presumptive heirship to the Russian crown, promptly cast anchor in a shallow which proved to cover the most dangerous of reefs. The history of this eccentric sovereign has yet to be written, and his real personal psychology evolved from the present chaos of contradictory interpretations. One fact seems clear. But for the *coup d'état* which strangled his régime, that régime would have choked the intellectual life of Russia. The death-rattle was already in the throat of the latter. Alexander I. inspired it with the breath of his young enthusiastic soul, so ill prepared for the responsibility power involves, and gave it air. Europe, long exiled, returned once more to the house she had for a moment thought her own. But the expression of her face had changed, and so, she fancied, had the expression of her host's. On both sides, ideas which had formerly hovered in the spiritual regions of the absolute were suddenly embodied in the real and contingent, rendering every contact more tangible, every inevitable shock more painful. Then came hostile meetings and bloody encounters on other battlefields than those on which preceding generations had exchanged innocuous blows.

Nothing is so realistic as war, and for a long time

Alexander I. was almost the only person who did not realise the new, positive, concrete element imported by it into the national life. He dallied with his dream. Up to about 1821 he played with liberalism, much as Catherine had played with Voltairianism. Until 1811 he defended Spéranski and his reforms against the military party, which represented the conservative element, and was supported by the whole, or very nearly the whole, of the best intelligence of the country. Spéranski was always an isolated figure, and when the passage of the Niémen and the conflagration of Moscow had proved the triumphant military party in the right, all sides were soon fused in one outbreak of warlike enthusiasm. Conservatives, liberals, nationalists, mystics, all rubbed shoulders in the ranks of the army that marched on Paris. At Paris Alexander I. held on his way, and publicly announced, in Mme. de Staël's drawing-room, the approaching abolition of serfdom. At the Congress of Aix, in 1818, he was still full of his dreams, and openly expressed his idea that Governments should place themselves at the head of the liberal movement. That very year he caused Novossiltsov to draw up a plan of liberal institutions for Russia. At the same time he favoured the diffusion of knowledge and the creation of popular schools on the Lancaster model. The English agents of the Bible Society, which had established itself in Russia, had given him the first idea of these institutions, in 1813.

From this epoch we may date the predominance of English influence in the literature of the country. It was exercised, in the first instance, in a manner more practical than literary. Nicholas Tourguéniev and Admiral Mordvinov studied English authors—the one

for the preparation of his *Essay on the Theory of Taxation*, the other for his widely-known plans for economic reform. Walter Scott and Byron followed, in Russia, the footsteps of Adam Smith. German poets and philosophers—Posa with his humanitarian tirades, Kleist and Körner with their political fancies, Schelling with his theories—travelled in their wake. There was a generation of Russian *Göttingenists*, and French influence had for the moment entirely disappeared. It was only to know a partial recovery in the persons of Béranger and Lamartine, of Paul-Louis Courier and Saint-Simon.

Until 1821, Alexander I. lived in perfect amity with this fresh irruption of foreign elements, and the consequent intellectual ferment within a somewhat restricted sphere. His tolerance, and even his protection, were extended even to those semi-literary and semi-political secret societies, the inception of which seemed a continuation of his own dream. There were more poets, like Ryléiev, than men of action in their ranks, and poets did not alarm him; they were comrades of his own. In fact, since 1811, Araktchéiev had taken Spéranski's place, and the Holy Alliance dates from 1815. The man and the facts ruled the situation, and the effort to reconcile their presence with tendencies which, elsewhere, the sovereign always appeared to regard with favour was singularly paradoxical. But Alexander made no such effort. He dreamt his dream alone, on the empyrean heights of his autocracy, and left the realities below him to fight it out, only stipulating that there should be no disturbance of his own personal peace. All the reforming projects, whether of Spéranski or of the foreign philosophers, were mere plans, and there-

fore, still and always, dreams. Not one of them, indeed, had been put into actual practice. It was not until 1821 that the military party succeeded in convincing the sovereign that Ryléiev and his friends would soon cease to confine themselves to chanting the dawn of a new era in inferior poetry. Then Catherine's grandson took fright, loosed Araktchéiev, like a watch-dog, on the harmless band of singers, and himself sought refuge in the arms of Mme. de Krüdener.

In this shelter death overtook him, and a fresh catastrophe was the result. Ryléiev and his friends convinced themselves that the moment for putting their dreams into action had arrived. Hence the unhappy incidents of December 25, 1825,—a childish attempt at a *coup d'état*, put down with a savage hand, a gallows or two, a long procession of exiles along the Siberian roads, and the accession of Nicholas I.

One of those who blamed the attempt and applauded its repression was NICHOLAS MIKHAÏLOVITCH KARAMZINE (1766–1826). Born of a noble Tartar family (*Karamurza*), he entered the halls of literature in 1785, by the gate of Freemasonry, the cloudy and sentimental aspect of which was to attract his feeble and undecided character. He was the friend of Novikov, and assisted him with his popular publications. Already his taste for English literature was increasing. Among the members of the *Droujéskoie Obchtchestvo* (Society of Friends of the Russian Tongue) he was nicknamed *Ramsay*. In 1789, he visited foreign countries, the bearer, it has been thought, of a Freemasonic mission and subsidies. He travelled through Germany and Switzerland, sojourned in France and England, and wrote some *Letters from a Russian Traveller*, the publication of which, in the *Moscow*

*Journal*, which he began to edit just at that time (1791), attracted considerable notice to their author. They prove his powers of observation to have been singularly scanty and hazy. All the traveller discovered in Germany was a succession of worthy individuals—not a symptom of the philosophic and literary life of the period. He met Kant, but confused him with Lavater, just as he confused Rousseau with Thomson. He turned his whole attention to the manners and customs of the *ancien régime* in France, and utterly ignored the Revolution. But wherever he went, he waxed enthusiastic and melted into tenderness, after the fashion of his time, and did not forget, while in Switzerland, to read *Héloïse* again, and drop tears upon the pages.

The spirit of the future historian is also manifest in these letters. We note a determination to look on the past history of the nation as the subject of a romance, and discover a succession of charming pictures in its incidents. He was convinced that the application of the methods of Robertson to the study of Nestor and Nicone would bring about a most alluring result. Russia had her own Charlemagne—Vladimir; her Louis XI.—the Tsar Ivan Vassiliévitch; her Cromwell—Godeònov; and over and above all these, a sovereign such as no other country had possessed—Peter the Great.

Two novels, published one after the other, in 1792, *Natalia, the Boyard's Daughter*, and *Poor Lisa*, are a partial exposition of this patriotic faith. In them Karamzine drew up a complete code of sentimentalism, inspired by Richardson and Sterne, and accepted by several succeeding generations. Nothing is wanting here: we have the correct love of Nature and of rustic life, scorn for wealth

and greatness, thirst for immortal glory, melancholy, tenderness. And all this is discovered in the daily life of the old Boyards,—the author deliberately overlooking the existence of the *Terem*, within whose narrow prison walls Natalia would not have found it easy to experience the sudden thunderclap of emotion which causes her to fall in love with Alexis. Historically speaking, all the characters and habits of life depicted in the first of these two novels are absolutely false, and the modest, dreamy Lisa, whose story is revealed to us in the second—the humble flower-girl courted by the great nobleman, who desires to cast himself and her into the arms of Nature, is not a vision very likely to appear on the banks of the Moskva. Yet Lisa has drawn tears from many eyes, and for many a year the lake near the Monastery of St. Simon, where her dream found its ending, was a place of pilgrimage.

Apart from the matter of truthfulness, to which, doubtless, the novelist hardly gave a thought, other good qualities, already evident in the *Letters from a Traveller*, justify, in a measure, his great success. These are a very lively and delicate feeling for Nature, a great charm in his descriptions of landscape, and, above all, a simplicity, vigour, warmth, and luminosity of style, such as no Russian pen had up to that date produced. On this account alone, the appearance of these novels, was a real event. Karamzine, like the true virtuoso he was, enriched the language of Lomonossov with a bevy of foreign expressions and phrases for which he discovered equivalents in the popular tongue and in the literary documents of past times. This attempt of his was not allowed to pass without vehement opposition, apparently led by Alexander Siémionovitch Chichkov (1754–1841).

He, however, was supported by authorities of far greater weight, among them the great Krylov himself, by a powerful organisation within the ranks of the Society of Friends of Russian Literature, and a militant newspaper. The reactionary order of things inaugurated, just at this period, by Catherine was another indirect support. The arrest of Novikov in 1792 brought about the suppression of the *Moscow Gazette*, in the columns of which paper Karamzine's first work had appeared. The author of *Poor Lisa* replaced his newspaper by publications of a more purely literary character—*The Aglaia* (1794–1795), *The Aonides* (1796–1799), both of them imitations of the poetic almanacs then common abroad. In these Pouchkine printed his earliest poems. But even the poets “found the censure, like a bear, barring their path” (the phrase is Karamzine's). He greeted the dawn of Alexander I.'s liberating rule with two odes. And meanwhile his talent was tending in a fresh direction, where it was to find a more complete and definite development.

In the *European Messenger*, published by the indefatigable editor in 1802, another novel, *The Regent Marfa, or the Submission of Novgorod*, appeared simultaneously with purely historic essays from the same pen. At that moment the young writer was still employed in translating Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* from Letourneur's French version, and the English poet's influence is visible in *Marfa*. But the novelist was already giving place to the *savant*, and the general direction of his thought was altering completely. Hitherto his published work had always, even when touched with republicanism, tended to the defence of liberal and humanitarian views. “The blood of a Novgorod burgher flows in my veins,” he would say. This liberalism, which was very genuine,



prevented him from leaning too pronouncedly in the nationalist direction. "We must be men, not Slavs, before all else," he was heard to assert. I believe, indeed, that his sincerity on this point was not untouched by that spirit of opposition which has always been a characteristic and generic trait in the most autocratically governed of all the civilised nations. As liberalism had reached the highest spheres of the government, the opposition must necessarily change its tone. And of a sudden, Karamzine came to regard Russia, past and present, as a world apart, which was not only severed from the European West by the special conditions of its historical existence, but which ought so to remain. And, aided by his power of fancy as a novelist, and his knowledge and feeling as a scholar, he set himself to transport that poetic and ideal view of the reality which had made the fortune of his artistic work, into the history and politics of his country. People talked to him of the abolition of serfdom. But was the condition of the serfs really so wretched? When the barbarity of the ancient customs which had forged their chain was blamed, he grew indignant. Safe in his triple armour of heroic optimism, soaring patriotism, and romantic hallucination, he took his way athwart the gloomy horrors of past centuries, to confound their detractors by calling up the national ideal in all the glory of an apotheosis.

Journalism had long been a weariness to him, but he had married without possessing any private fortune, and depended for most of his income on this source. He succeeded in obtaining the post of historiographer to the crown, with a salary of 2000 roubles, retired to Ostafiévo, a property belonging to his father-in-law, and

fell furiously to work. His course was somewhat uncertain, frequently diverted and driven into byways by contemporary events. In 1811, at the request of Alexander's sister, the Grand-Duchess Catherine Pavlovna, he presented his famous *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia* to the Tsar. This was a return to the militant and active policy invoked by all Spéranski's opponents. Struck, in the course of his studies, by the long periods of inertia which characterised his country's past history, Karamzine had erected this condition into a law of its existence. He was the author of that strange theory of "historic patience" which has since been incorporated with the Slavophil doctrine. The maintenance of the autocratic system was an integral part of this theory, which barred the way to all constitutional reforms.

Alexander was at once offended and flattered. Thanks to the influence of Catherine Pavlovna, the latter sentiment won the day, and Karamzine's intervention counted for something in Spéranski's fall, and the collapse of his plans.

In 1812, the historian's house at Moscow was burnt, and in it the library he had spent a quarter of a century in collecting. All he saved was a couple of copies of his history. "Camoëns has saved his *Lusiad*," he wrote to a friend. The Empress Marie Féodorovna offered him the use of one of the imperial country-houses near St. Petersburg. He hesitated. Now that his theories had won the day and were personified by Araktchéiev, they seemed less close to the ideal he had conceived. He allowed himself to be persuaded, however, and reached St. Petersburg in February 1816, with eight volumes of his *General History of Russia*, and a firm resolution to

ignore the all-powerful favourite of the period. But Araktchéiev was not the man to permit this. The Emperor refused Karamzine an audience, and the grant of 60,000 roubles necessary for the printing of his book appeared to depend on a preliminary visit to the favourite. Karamzine demurred at first. "We will sell our lands," he wrote to his wife. But he thought the matter over, and ended by doing more than submit. Another letter, written just after his visit to Araktchéiev, declares his conviction that he had found in him "an intelligent and high-principled man." He received his 60,000 roubles, and the ribbon of St. Anne into the bargain. And his recantation does not appear to have been indispensable, for in a little over three weeks the edition of the first three volumes of his History, numbering three thousand copies, was all bought up.

The historian's character resembles that of the man. An enormous amount of analytical labour, a very noticeable art in the employment of the material collected, and an excellent moral intention. These are the qualities we must place to the credit of his work. We find quite twice as many defects. His view of the past is invariably influenced by his present sensations; he is absolutely resolved on a sentimental idealisation—the optimism of Leibnitz as parodied by Thomson (Karamzine had translated *The Seasons*); and he is almost utterly oblivious of the internal development and the moral and intellectual life of the masses. From this last point of view, Karamzine is inferior to Tatichtchev. Yet his work, with its classic architecture and pompous rhetoric, holds a considerable place in the literature of his country. For many years it served as a model. It influenced Pouchkine, and even Ostrovski. Four more volumes appeared

between 1816 and 1826, carrying the story up to the accession of the first Romanov in the seventeenth century. A short time before the publication of the fourth volume, Karamzine passed quietly away, surrounded with marks of kindness from the imperial family. Nicholas bestowed a pension of 50,000 roubles on the widow and children, and on his tomb Joukovski's fervent verse celebrates "the holy name of Karamzine."

His influence on Russian literature may be compared to that of Catherine on Russian society. It was a humanising influence. He introduced a philosophic standpoint, a high moral sense, philanthropic views, and tender feelings: all this without any unity or ruling thought, and without any deep conviction. His direct literary heirs, who carried on in poetry the work his novels had sketched in prose, were Dmitriev and Oziérov.

IVAN IVANOVITCH DMITRIEV (1760-1837) has left an autobiography which reveals a curious two-sidedness in his career. On the one side we have his public life, on the other his literary existence, the two never mingling, as in Pouchkine's case, but each running its own course, and hardly ever coming into contact with the other. In 1794 we see the poet on the banks of the Volga, fishing and dreaming, and bringing home sterlets and verses to his sister, who copies them and sends them to Karamzine for one of his publications. Thus appeared the *Patriot's Voice*, the *Ode on the Capture of Warsaw*, *Yermak*—a narrative in rhyme of the conquest of Siberia—and a few fables. The following year the poet disappears, and until 1802 we have only the *tchinovnik*, employed first in the Senate, and afterwards as assistant to the Minister of Crown Lands. Then comes a change of residence,

a meeting with Karamzine at Moscow, and the Muses reconquer their adorer. He translates La Fontaine's fables. This is the pearl of his literary performances, and a considerable factor in the artistic improvement of the language. At this point a fresh whimsical adventure occurs to complicate the translator's life. He, Karamzine's pupil, finds himself suddenly adopted by Chichkov's circle as the champion of the classic tradition and the school of Diérjavine, against Karamzine and the new school, which he at that moment appears to represent! His absolute lack of individuality favoured this usurpation of his person. The worst of it is, that to it he owed a great portion of his renown, and even of his success in the administrative career. In 1807, he became curator of the University of Moscow, and in 1811, he was appointed Minister of Justice. He had then ceased to write, and he never was to take up the pen again.

LADISLAS ALEXANDROVITCH OZIÉROV (1769-1816) began by writing French verses, and afterwards produced Russian odes, epistles, and fables. These continued till 1798, when his first tragedy, *Iaropolk and Oleg*—a mere plagiarism of French models in the style of Soumarokov and Kniajnine—was performed. The cold reception given it by the audience was calculated to warn the author that he was behind his times. He fell back on Richardson and Ducis for his *Ædipus at Athens*, and next, in 1805, on Macpherson for his unlucky *Fingal*, and at last attained success, in 1807, with his *Dmitri Donskoï*. This is certainly the worst of all his tragedies, but it swarms with allusions to contemporary events. Every one recognised Alexander I. in the character of *Dmitri*, who successfully repulses the Tartar onslaught, and Napoleon I. in that of *Mamaï*. When 1812 came,

the work appeared prophetic, and was lauded to the skies. As a presentment of history it is utterly silly. Will my readers imagine a tender-hearted and philosophic paladin warbling with a virtuous and sentimental *châtelaine*, and then convince themselves that their appropriate names are Dmitri and Xénia, and their correct location and period somewhere between Souzdal and Moscow, during the fourteenth century?

Oziérov was never to repeat this triumph. Tried by many vexations, including an unhappy love affair, he buried himself in the country, wrote a play, *Polyxena*, followed by another entitled *Medea*, and passed away, at last, in a state of partial lunacy. It was only right that his name and work should be mentioned here. By his choice of subjects and his manner of handling them, and in spite of a very moderate talent, he contributed almost as much as Joukovski to the development of which Pouchkine was shortly to become the definite exponent.

The glory of having introduced Romanticism into Russia was claimed by VASSILI ANDRÉIEVITCH JOUKOVSKI (1786-1852). This was a mere illusion. Can my readers imagine a writer of the Romantic school who winds up his literary career with a translation of the *Odyssey*? The only features of that school which Joukovski was capable of understanding and assimilating, were those which, as exemplified by Tieck, Novalis, or Fouqué, corresponded with the dreamy melancholy of his own temperament. The great aims and objects attributed to the new poetry by the two Schlegels escaped him entirely, and the scepticism of Byron and the irony of Heine, in later years, were both sealed books to him. His love of vague distances, of the terrible and the fan-

tastic, his intense mysticism, which betokened an excessive development of feeling at the expense of reason, closed his eyes to these horizons of contemporary thought.

Practically, he simply carried on the work of Karamzine, whose political ideas and didactic and moralising tendency he shared. Thus it came about that in 1830 he found himself left out of the current on which the younger generation of literary men was floating. He misjudged Gogol, and only met the author of *Dead Souls* after the period of his intellectual bankruptcy, on the common ground of a pietism not far removed from madness. The only quality of the Romantic poet which he possessed was his subjectivity, but this was his to a remarkable degree, and in such a manner as to make him the first Russian writer who gave ideal expression to the subjective life of the human heart. In his eyes, poetry and real life were one—the external world and the intellectual world mingled in one matchless sensation of beauty and harmony.

The very birth of Joukovski was a page of romance. A country land-owner, Bounine, of the obsolete type of the ancient Russian Boyard, owned a Turkish slave named Salkha. A child was born, and adopted by a family friend, Andrew Grigorovitch Joukovski. The boy was afterwards entrusted to the care of his natural father's sister, Mme. Iouchkov, who resided at Toula. She lived in a literary and artistic circle, in which concerts and plays were frequently organised. Before young Joukovski had thoroughly mastered the principles of Russian grammar, he had become a dramatic author, having written two plays, *Camilla, or Rome Delivered*, and *Paul and Virginia*, both of which were duly performed.

In 1797 Mme. Iouchkov sent him to the University School at Moscow, and not long afterwards his first verses began to appear in the literary miscellanies of the day. They were sad and melancholy even then. The death of Mme. Iouchkov, which occurred just at this time, inspired the youthful poet with an imitation of Gray's *Elegy* under the title of *Thoughts on a Tomb*. But verses had a poor sale. The editors gave translations a far warmer welcome. To bring in a little money, Joukovski translated all Kotzebue's plays and several of his novels. After this he tried the administrative career, and failing in it, took refuge for a while with his adoptive family, returning to Moscow in time to undertake the editorship of the *European Messenger*. According to the custom of the period, he filled the whole paper with his own work—literary criticisms, more translations from Schiller, Parny, and Dryden, and a few original compositions, romances, epistles, and ballads. In 1810, the generosity of Bounine enabled him to buy a small landed property to which he retired, and there, for a while, he lived a splendid idyl. His near neighbour, Pletchéiev, a rich land-owner with a mania for music, was the possessor of a theatre and an orchestra. Joukovski wrote verses, which Pletchéiev set to music, and Mme. Pletchéiev sang. There was an uninterrupted series of concerts, plays, and operas.

Suddenly the idyl turned to elegy. The melancholy poet fell in love with one of his nieces, Marie Andréievna Protassov, and soon he was fain to shed genuine tears. The young girl's mother would not hear of an illegitimate son as her daughter's husband. The terrible year 1812 opened, and she insisted on his entering a regiment of the National Guard. He did not distinguish himself



at the Borodino, but after the battle he wrote his first great poem, *The Bard in the Russian Camp*, which opened the gates of glory to him.

It was only an imitation, and a somewhat clumsy one, of Gray's *Bard*, with a strange medley of romantic sentiment and classic imagery—lyres that rang warlike chords and warriors dressed in armour. But the public did not look too closely at such trifles, and its enthusiasm was increased, after the taking of Paris in 1814, by the appearance of an Epistle of five hundred lines addressed to the victorious Tsar. The Empress, surrounded by her family and intimate circle, desired to hear it, and the reader, A. I. Tourguéniev, could hardly get to the end of his task. His voice was drowned in sobs and plaudits; he was sobbing himself; and throughout the country the cry went up that another great poet had risen in the footsteps of Lomonossov, and there would be fresh master-pieces for all men to admire.

But the country waited long. Tourguéniev even went so far as to chide Lomonossov's poetic heir. "You have Milton's imagination and Petrarch's tenderness—and you write us ballads!" At that moment Joukovski was forced to play the great man rather against his will. In spite of himself, he was pushed to the head of the Karamzine party, then in full warfare with Chichkov's *Biéssiéda*, and became the pillar of the rival society of the *Arzamas*. He drew up its reports in burlesque hexameters, which seem to indicate that, in his case, melancholy was much more a matter of fashion than of temperament. But the great work which was obstinately demanded of him came not. Settled at court, first as reader to the Empress, and later as tutor to her children, Joukovski gradually

built up his reputation as an excellent pedagogue, and continued to prove his ability, conscientiousness, and good taste as a translator. From 1817 to 1820 he superintended the education of Alexander II. Between 1827 and 1840 he translated, from Rückert's German version, Magharabati's Indian poem, *Nal and Diamaianti*. In 1841, overwhelmed with kindnesses, and considerably enriched in pocket, he went abroad, married, at sixty, the daughter of the painter Reutern—she was nineteen—fell into a nest of pietists, was on the brink of conversion to the Catholic faith, and finally plunged into mysticism. His ill-starred passion for Mdlle. Protassov may have had something to do with this catastrophe.

In 1847, nevertheless, he gave the world his fine translation of the *Odyssey*, and two years later that of an episode in Firdusi's Persian poem (*Shah Mamet*), *Rustem and Zorav*—this also after Rückert. Death overtook him at Baden-Baden, just as he was beginning work upon the *Iliad*.

He was a distinguished scholar and a noble-souled man. Joukovski's was the hearth at which the flame which burnt and shone in the heart of the "Liberator Tsar" during the earlier part of his reign, was kindled. Did he possess and conceal a poetic genius the revelation of which was prevented by some unexplained circumstance? This has been believed. I doubt it. Joukovski's lack of originality amounted to an entire absence of national sentiment. The ancient chronicles of his country inspired him with only one feeling—horror; the Slavonic language of the sacred books, "that tongue of mandarins, slaves, and Tartars," exasperated him; and even that he used, with its crabbed *chas* and *chtchas*, sometimes struck him as barbarous.

He wrote no master-piece, but by interpreting and disseminating those of English and German literature, he largely contributed to the literary education of his country. And Alexander II. was not his only pupil. Pouchkine, after having risen in revolt against the blank verse adopted by this master, adopted it, in later years, as his favourite method of expression, and Batiouchkov owed more than mere instruction to the great poet, who never made his mark, but who was something better than a genius—a kind, and generous, and helpful friend.

Although CONSTANTINE NICOLAIÉVITCH BATIOUCHKOV (1787–1855) moved in the same orbit as Joukovski and Karamzine, he belongs to a separate category. As a prose writer he follows Karamzine, but as a poet, and even as a translator of anthological or erotic works, he goes his own way. He stands alone. He has none of Joukovski's sentimental idealism. He is a classic, but of the pure Greek type, in love with Nature as she is, conscious of her real beauty, treading the ground firmly, and enjoying life, even to its bitterness, like some intoxicating beverage. In his person, as in that of Krylov, soon after, the national poetry at last reaches the stratum of fruitful soil in which it was to take root and blossom forth. Batiouchkov only skims along the surface of this soil, but though his life was long, how short was his career! His was the first in that series of unhappy fates of which Joukovski's haunting thoughts of tombs and weeping shades would seem to have been the presage. He has himself compared his condition to that of the most unhappy of modern poets, and his lines on the dying Tasso are almost an autobiography.

First of all, war laid its hand on Batiouchkov, and

dragged him across Europe. He was of noble family, and therefore, of necessity, a soldier. He was struck by a bullet at Heidelberg; and at Leipzig, in 1813, he saw his best friend, Pétine, fall dead beside him. From time to time he had sent fine, though somewhat free, translations from Parny, Tibullus, and Petrarch to the *European Messenger*, and had also sung an unhappy love affair of his own, in verse still somewhat halting, and in which "slopes gilded by the hand of Ceres," and very archaic in form, look clumsy enough, wedded to the first expression of an exceedingly beautiful poetic inspiration. All through Germany, and afterwards in Paris, whither victory led him, he lived in a dream of triumph, celebrating the crossing of the Rhine or the ruins of some manor-house laid waste, and moved to pity for France, "who paid so dearly for her glory." His return home, after a short visit to England, was a sad one. Araktchéiev inspired him with the conviction that the net cost of victory is the same in every country. His dejection soon reached such a pitch that he felt himself incapable of giving happiness to the young girl he loved, and he betrayed the first symptoms of a mental distress which was destined to increase. In 1816 he published a few more verses in the *Messenger*, and in the following year a complete collection of his poetry; but he was already looking about for means of leaving a country the air of which, thanks to Araktchéiev and his likes, choked him—so he declared. In 1818, thanks to Joukovski's influence, he was nominated to a position in the Russian Legation at Naples, and returned thence, four years later, a hopeless lunatic. Joukovski took the tenderest care of him, but all his efforts were, unhappily, in vain. No ray of reason ever crossed the gloom, and

for three-and-thirty years the poet's miserable existence dragged on.

Though still farther removed than Batiouchkov from the literary group from which the genius of Pouchkine was to spring, IVAN ANDRÉIEVITCH KRYLOV (1768-1844) was nevertheless the undoubted product of the same sap, the same intellectual germination in the national soil, and is directly connected, in his best work, with the popular mind, of which *Frol Skobéiev* was an expression. Born of a poor family at Moscow—his father was a subaltern officer, and his mother, we are told, supported the whole family by reading the prayers for the dead in the houses of the rich merchants of the city—he belonged, by his origin, to the people. Yet, considering his surroundings, he was singularly precocious. His *Kofeinitsa* (fortune-teller by coffee-grounds), a comic opera which some critics think superior in originality to his later productions, was written before he was fourteen. This work, which did not at present attain the honour of publication, but was exchanged with a bookseller for a bundle of French books, including Racine, Molière, and Boileau, was to be the parent, some five years later, of a *Philomena* and a *Cleopatra*, both of them sad failures. The author, whose works were now printed, and more or less read, moved in the circle of Kniajnine and revolved in the orbit of Novikov, borrowed from foreign authors with the first, and decried them with the second. The two comedies signed with his name in 1793 and 1794, *The Rogues* and *The Author*, are nothing more than adaptations.

In 1797 we find him in the country, in the house of Prince S. F. Galitsine, where he occupied an indefinite position, half salaried tutor, half family friend. Four

years afterwards he was dismissed, and disappeared. He had, and always was to have, the instincts of luxury, something of that free-living nature so common among his compatriots. At this period, so the story goes, he began to gamble, in consequence of having won a considerable sum (30,000 roubles), and led a wandering life, going from the gaming-tables of one town to those of another. He was not to reappear till 1806, and then with his first three fables, imitations, it must be said, of La Fontaine. Like La Fontaine, Krylov was slow to find his true path ; like him, he was never to leave it, once found, except for some theatrical attempts which were not crowned with success.

Yet he resembles the French fabulist more by his career, his temperament, and character than by the nature of his intelligence. There was the same carelessness and improvidence in both cases. If the Russian fable-writer did not squander his fortune, it was only because he was born a beggar. La Fontaine's favourite weakness was a too great devotion to the fair sex. Krylov died of an indigestion, after living (riches came to him with glory) the life of a sybarite. He was lazy, greedy, selfish, careless in his dress, neither lovable nor loved, in spite of the popularity his fables won him. But he was never a dreamer, like La Fontaine. He was far more positive, and had not even the indulgent good-nature of his master. He is never taken in. He lifts all masks, and looks into the bottom of men's hearts. Finally, and especially, he is essentially a satirist, and this feature, which distinguishes him from most fabulists, seals him an original and national writer. Epigram, in La Fontaine's case, is a smile. Krylov's epigrams grind their teeth. The first are almost a caress ; the second are

something like a bite. The Frenchman's fables are quite impersonal; the Russian's teem with transparent allusions to contemporary individuals and things. Krylov shows us a "quartette of musicians"—a monkey, a goat, a donkey, and a bear—who only succeed in making a deafening discord. Nobody hesitates to identify the party with the "Society of Friends of the Russian Tongue," with its four coteries and its habitual quarrels. Then he gives us *Démiane* and his well-known soup, with which he plies his guests till they are sick, and every one recognises the most verbose poet of the day.

La Fontaine's archness is thus turned into asperity, and in this, again, Krylov gives proof of a powerful originality, more Russian than humane, and essentially realistic. Even in his imitations he remains true to the national spirit, to its simple, practical, commonplace conception of the world. With his very scanty education and very narrow intellectual horizon, he not only knows the life of the mass of the people down to its most secret corners, with all its habits, ideas, and prejudices, but all these habits, ideas, and prejudices are his own. His original fables are, as it were, a counterpart of the proverbs and legends of his country. His language, plastic and vigorous, with a touch of coarseness, is absolutely that of the people, without the smallest infusion of book lore.

This original quality of Krylov's was so striking, that when the question of his monument was mooted, it proved stronger than the classical tradition, in a country where even the effigy of *Souvorov*, that most original of men, was set up for the admiration of posterity, in a public square, disguised as the god *Mars*! Nobody dared to dress up Krylov as *Apollo*! Care-

lessly seated on a bench in the Summer Garden, his figure retains, even in the bronze, the massive features, the ungraceful outline, and the huge frock-coat which concealed his vast proportions.

Among his two hundred fables, not fewer than forty-six are borrowed directly from Æsop, Phædrus, La Fontaine, Gellert, and Diderot. At the head of most editions, *The Fox and the Raven* closely follows La Fontaine's text, with descriptive amplifications and poetic developments which greatly mar the simplicity of the original. Krylov, like Pouchkine, took great pains to find sources of inspiration, and equal pains to conceal them. The subject of *The Three Moujiks* has been detected in an old French *fabliau*, which had already enriched Imbert's collection. In the case of *The Braggart*, the original idea has been attributed both to Gellert and to Imbert. I do not feel disposed to blame the Russian fabulist on this account. La Fontaine himself drew on Æsop's fables, and, as for originality, those of La Motte, which are original, are none the better for that. Krylov has stamped his work, in a very sufficient manner, with his own personal genius. His best fables may be said to demonstrate certain ideas which can fairly be called his own. *The Lion's Education*, *The Peasant and the Snake*, and *The Ducat* reflect his ideas on education, which, as will be readily imagined, are not very broad. In the days of Araktchéiev and his acolyte, Magnitski, Krylov warned his fellow-citizens against the dangers of too much learning! A second category, to which *The Oracle* and *The Peasants and the River* belong, shows up the faults of the national administrative and judicial system. A third touches, in artless glimpses that bewray the philosophy learnt in



huts over which the tide of invasion swept, on current political events, and on the figure of the great Napoleon. Of this series, *The Waggon* and *The Wolf and the Dog-Kennel* are the most characteristic specimens.

I am forced to confine myself to these few remarks. Krylov's works have been translated into twenty-one languages—all the Indo-European and several Eastern tongues. There are seventy-two French translations, thirty-two German, and only twelve English. He was introduced to English readers by W. R. S. Ralston, but the most complete English version is that of Mr. Harrison (1884). The first national poet of Russia was also the first whose genius conquered the world at large.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NATIONAL EVOLUTION—POUCHKINE

THE first verses of ALEXANDER SERGUIÉIEVITCH POUCHKINE (1799-1837) were written in 1814. At that moment the whole literary and political world, from one end of Europe to the other, was in a ferment. In England, Byron—in whose voice spoke, if we may so say, the voices of Godwin, of Paine, of Burns, of Landor—was raising his mighty cry of liberty. In Italy, Manzoni and Ugo Foscolo were re-creating Dante's dream of unity. In France, wounded national pride and the rebellious spirit of independence sought consolation and revenge in the poetic fictions of Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant, Senancourt, and Madame de Staël. In Germany, a people still wild with pride and joy was celebrating its enfranchisement over Wieland's newly-made grave. All this was of the very essence of Romanticism, and of all this, in Russia, there was hardly a sign. There the world, intellectual and literary, had remained in a state of incoherence, wherein the gross sensualism and epicurism of the French sceptics, the naturalist philosophy of Schelling and Oken, Slavophilism, and mysticism, rubbed shoulders with the ideal humanitarianism of Schiller, the teachings of Adam Smith, and vague notions of constitutional liberalism. But in the midst of this chaos, a new language had arisen, a wondrous instrument, which only awaited the master-hand that was to attune it to

every voice, external and internal; and out of its bosom had sprung a new mental personality, with its own special method of being, thought, and feeling—Russia, already embodied in the genius of Krylov, and soon to be seen in Pouchkine, Gogol, and Tourguéniev.

Did Pouchkine really represent this personality? There have been prolonged doubts on the subject, even in Russia. With the exception of Gogol, the poet's contemporaries and his natural judges, like the first literary critics in Russia, Nadiéjdine and Polevoï, have not looked on him as much more than imitator, a Westerner. To a German, Varnhagen von Ense, belongs the honour of having declared his conviction of the falsehood of this verdict, and it has been reversed, by degrees, in the opinion of the country. Russia, as I write, is preparing to celebrate the poet's centenary, amidst a general concourse of enthusiastic homage, which has never been exceeded in the history of the glories of any nation. Nevertheless, a French writer has recently reopened the case, and has ventured to come to a definite conclusion, which, in his own words, "should sever the poet from his own nationality, and restore him to humanity at large."

M. de Vogüé will permit me to say that I fail to perceive the interest of such a restitution. I incline, in fact, to the opinion that the more personal, original, and national the creator of ideas and images is, the more likely is he to interest the human community in general, whatever may be the country to which he belongs. And it appears to me that to deny the possession of these qualities to Pouchkine, is simply to degrade him to the rank of such writers as Soumarokov. He deserves better than this. His work is, indeed, so heterogeneous,

so charged with foreign elements, and so naturally affected by the transition period of which I have just given a sketch, as to justify, to a certain extent, the contradictory judgments to which it constantly gives rise. But, on the other hand, it is ruled, and in a sense saturated, by one capital creation, *Eugène Oniéguine*, which alone occupied nine years (1822 to 1831) of a life that was all too short. Now failure to comprehend the essentially national character of this poem is, properly speaking—I do not fear contradiction on this point from any Russian living—failure to understand it at all. I will explain myself later on this subject. I must now begin with a few features of the poet's biography.

The poet's life is indissolubly bound up with his work. He lived every line he wrote. And indeed his character, his temperament, his racial features, are as powerfully evident in his origin as in some of his writings. He was a Russian with a trace of African blood in his veins. His maternal grandfather, as we all know, was Peter the Great's famous Negro, Hannibal, whose adventures he undertook to relate. The poet's father, Sergius Lvovitch, a typical nobleman of the time of Catherine II., with fine manners, varied knowledge, Voltairian opinions, and the perfect docility of the true courtier, gave him French tutors at a very early age, and these did their work so well, that in 1831, at the age of thirty-two, their pupil could still write to Tchadaïev, "I will speak to you in the language of Europe; it is more familiar to me than our own." This boast of his was a slander on himself. My readers shall judge. At ten years of age, when living at Moscow, in a very literary circle, and seeing daily, in his father's house, such men as Karamzine, Dmitriev, and Batiouchkov, the urchin, as was to be

expected, wrote French verses and borrowed from the *Henriade*. At fifteen, at the College of Tsarskoïé-Siélo, an institution devoted to the education of the youth of the aristocracy, he was still rhyming in French :—

*Vrai démon par l'espièglerie,  
Vrai singe par sa mine,  
Beaucoup et trop d'étourderie,  
Ma foi ! voilà Pouchkine !*

There were still French masters in this college, among them one De Boudry, who, under this name, concealed a very compromising kinship ; he was own brother to Marat, and his views coincided with his family relationship.

But in 1814 the *European Messenger* published imitations in Russian verse of Ossian and Parny, the initials at the foot of which scarcely concealed the identity of one of the most insubordinate pupils in the College. There was much more writing than studying done in that establishment. Even periodical sheets were edited by its members. Among a group of young men who subsequently made their mark either in politics or literature—A. M. Gortchakov, the future Chancellor, and A. A. Delwig, the future poet, both belonged to it—Pouchkine distinguished himself by his indefatigable diligence as a publicist, and his excessive idleness as a student. Karamzine and Joukovski thought highly of his verses, but his teachers opined that he “had not much of a future before him.” In his own family circle this latter opinion necessarily prevailed. When “M. de Boudry’s” pupil left college in 1817, he was at once received into the *Arzamas*, and so plunged into the thick of the political and literary fray. Ryléiev belonged to the coterie, and

the time he spent in it was by no means occupied in opposing Chichkov and his classic theories.

Yet Pouchkine's position in the clique was chiefly connected with literature. In 1818 he read his comrades the opening verses of *Rousslane and Lioudmila*. Joukovski and Batiouchkine were astounded. "This is something new!" they cried. The Chichkov party raised an indignant outcry. "A parody of Kircha Danilov!" they declared. But the poem was more than that. Some years previously, in a still childish effort entitled *The Little Town (Gorodok)*, Pouchkine, like Byron in the celebrated note published by Moore, had been moved to make a list of the books he had read, and of his own favourite writers. In it Molière is bracketed with Chénier, and Béranger with Ossian. All these are to be traced in *Rousslane and Lioudmila*, but with them many other things—reminiscences of Wieland and Herder, to wit, and the evident influence of the Italian poets. The groundwork of the poem is borrowed much more from Ariosto's humorous epic than from the Kircha Danilov collection. Mere marquetrie, on the whole, and only moderately good. Where was the novelty, then? Herein: the application of the Italian poet's ironic method to a national legend, an attempt at which had already been made by Hamilton and others in England; but Hamilton, in his fairy tales, had only made use of a fantastic element already worn thin by fashion. Pouchkine—and this was his mistake—undervalued the treasure he had just discovered. Growing wiser as time went on, he was to hit upon the true method of the popular story-teller—simplicity.

The poem was not published until 1820, and before

it appeared a thunderbolt had fallen on the young author's head. Numerous other manuscript verses of his were in general circulation, among them an *Ode to the Dagger*, suggested by the execution of Karl Sand, who had murdered Kotzebue, epigrams on Araktchéiev, and a *Gabriélid*, imitated from Parny's *War of the Gods*, which, for profane and licentious obscenity, far surpassed its model, but which departed from it, more especially, in its total freedom from any ulterior philosophic intention. Poetry of this description, simply and coarsely ribald, is, alas! of very frequent occurrence in Pouchkine's work, though it does not appear in any of the "complete editions." In these the erotic poems are either omitted, or so much expurgated, by dint of pruning and arbitrary correction, that the original sense is completely altered. Thus in the four-line stanza addressed to Princess Ouroussov, the line—

" *I have never believed in the Trinity* "

is turned into—

" *I have never believed in the Three Graces* " !

Some special collections of the poet's erotic verse have been printed abroad with his name on the cover; and however his biographers may have endeavoured to disguise the fact, it is certain that his disgrace in 1820 was largely connected with the *Gabriélid*. Parny's imitator narrowly escaped Siberia. By Karamzine's good offices, his punishment was commuted to banishment to the Southern Provinces, and the adventure, in the result, set an aureole of glory on the exile's brow. Pouchkine's Russian contemporaries, like Voltaire's in France, were disposed to confuse liberty with license. But the young

man's retirement from St. Petersburg had a most salutary effect, removing him from very harmful company, and replacing its influence by two others of a very different nature—the Caucasus and Byron. Between 1820 and 1824, the great poet of the future was destined to reveal his power in works which were to cast a merciful shadow over his early errors. All of these, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, *The Fountain of Baktchissaraï*, *The Gipsies*, and the first cantos of *Eugène Oniéguine*, are the result of this twofold inspiration.

It would be too much to say that the manner in which he has drawn upon them shows perfect discernment. He belonged too entirely to his period, his race, and his surroundings for that. He certainly had better stuff in him than that which goes to the making of a sybarite in life and poetry. He had noble instincts, splendid flights of enthusiasm. His education, his origin, his surroundings, were always to conspire together to clip his wings. From the Caucasus, this time, he takes the scenery of his poem, fascinating but cold, with no apparent hold either on the soul of the man who describes it, nor on the characters he sets down in its midst. From Byron he borrows elements of expression, occasionally elaborate, but still simple in form—subjects, phrases, and tricks. At Kichéniev and at Odessa he scandalised the inhabitants, and drove the authorities to desperation, by his eccentric demeanour and his pseudo-Byronic freaks, his adventurous rides across the mountains, his gambling, his duels, his excess and violence of every kind. There is a legend that during a duel with an officer (Zoubov) he ate cherries under his opponent's fire. This trait appears in one of the tales included in the *Stories of Biélkine* (1830), one of his



most popular works, and would thus seem to be autobiographic. The details of his last and fatal meeting with Dantès-Heckeren prove that he was quite capable of it. His physical courage was foolhardy and indomitable. He is also reported to have lived for some time with a tribe of gipsies. And in all this I see more extravagance and wildness—Abyssinian or Muscovite—than romantic fancy. Byron was never either a gambler or a bully. He would never have bitten a woman's shoulder in a crowded theatre, in a fit of frantic jealousy, nor punted at a gambling-table with *his own verses* at the rate of five roubles for an alexandrine! His Russian rival was always, for the reasons I have stated, to spend his vital energy in feats of this description, and reappear after them, worn out and exhausted, just when the noblest causes appealed to him for help.

*The Prisoner of the Caucasus* is a Childe Harold with more human nature about him, who allows himself to hold tender converse with a fair Circassian. The dramatic struggle between the harem system and a man's love for a single woman forms the subject of *The Fountain of Baktchissaraï*, and it is also the subject of the *Giaour*. Aleko, the hero of the *Gipsies*, who flies from the lying conventionalities of society, is Byron himself, but a disfigured Byron, capable of introducing all the weaknesses and prejudices of the world from which he has banished himself, into the gipsy camp. In this fact Pouchkine's apologists have endeavoured to discover a repudiation of the Byronian ethics, and the poet's conversion to nationalism. He never gave it a thought! Writing to Joukovski in 1825, he says, "You ask what is my object in *The Gipsies*? My object is poetry." He had imitated Byron *externally*, because he was

Byron-mad at that particular moment. He had not followed him in the *internal* development of his poem, because he never was to comprehend the real foundation of the Byronic inspiration.

The English poet was a man of the eighteenth century, in love with a humanitarian ideal, bitterly surprised to see it bespattered with blood and mud, and venting his disappointment on humanity at large. Pouchkine was a Russian of the nineteenth century, in love, for a passing moment, with liberty, because Chénier had sung its praises in verse which he thought beautiful; ready, when he left St. Petersburg, to overthrow the whole world because his banishment had been preceded—so it was said—by an application of corporal punishment, the reports concerning which, more than the thing itself, drove him furious; but who soon calmed down, confined his ambition to a constitutional monarchy, and, after 1825, became an unconditional supporter of the monarchical system—politically speaking, in fact, a thoroughgoing opportunist. From the ethical point of view, all that he was ever to assimilate of Byron's spirit was his individual independence with regard to social tradition and habits, and some tricks besides, such as the mania for not appearing a *professional*, the affectation of talking about cards, horses, and women, instead of about literature, and certain strong pretensions to aristocratic descent, concerning which he explains himself in the celebrated piece of writing entitled *My Genealogy* (*Moia Rodoslovnaïa*), in which he proudly claims the title of *bourgeois*, but of a line that could reckon back six centuries in the annals of his country.

*The Gipsies*, indeed, corresponds, in the poet's career, to a turning-point which was to lead him far alike from

Byron and from Southern climes ; and this coincidence is doubtless not merely accidental. The influence of surroundings always affected this impressionable nature strongly. When about to leave Odessa, he bade farewell to the sea, and to "the poet of the sea, powerful, deep, gloomy, unconquerable, even as the sea itself," in lines which are among the finest he ever wrote ; and thus he revealed the mysterious link which, in his poetic thought, bound the man and the element together. Fresh disgrace awaited him. At St. Petersburg he had outdone Parny ; at Odessa an English traveller introduced him to Shelley, and soon he went farther than the author of *Prometheus Unbound*. He felt strong leanings to "absolute atheism," and was so imprudent as to state the fact in a correspondence which, naturally, was intercepted. He was treated as a hardened offender, and sent in disgrace to the care of his father, who lived in a lonely village in the Government of Pskov.

This banishment was infinitely more severe. Mikhaïlovskoïé was very different from Odessa, and the elder Pouchkine took his responsibility as jailer quite seriously. The poet's letters were opened. He was obliged to give up seeing his friends. At last Joukovski interfered, and to such purpose that the son was at all events left alone in the village, his father taking his departure, and leaving the local police to watch the behaviour of his perverted child, with whom he refused to hold any intercourse whatever. Friends began to make their appearance, and the poet was able to mingle some entertainment with his literary labours, which still continued. His *liaison* with Mme. Kern dates from this period. At the same time he was passing *The Gipsies* through the press, beginning his *Boris Godounov* and carrying on

his *Eugène Oniéguine*. I am eager to reach this latter poem.

The subject is slight. Spread out over seven thousand lines, it gives us a confused sense of emptiness. In a country place, where Oniéguine has retired for the sake of solitude, he encounters the artless love of Tatiana, a young girl living in a neighbouring manor-house. He is inclined to look down upon her; she takes the initiative, and writes to him, offering her love. Here we have a first indication of national originality, the direct outcome of local tradition. See the *Bylines*. Oniéguine is not touched. In the most correct fashion, he contrives a *tête-à-tête* with the young girl, and sententiously informs her, "I am not the man for you." They part, lose sight of each other for several years, until, at a second meeting, the scornful hero finds himself in the presence of a fair princess, flanked by a gouty husband and surrounded by a circle of adorers. He recognises Tatiana. This time it is he who writes, and the sense of his letter may be easily divined. She replies in her turn, "I cannot give myself to you. I have loved you, I love you still. But I am married, and I will keep my faith."

There we have the whole story, if we add the episode of the duel with Lenski, Oniéguine's friend and the betrothed of Tatiana's sister, whom the hero kills, nobody quite knows why, unless it be to demonstrate that he could be odious, which might have been suspected without this incident. Can any one conceive an epic poem (for this is very nearly what we have here) in French, German, or English on such a theme? But it was written in Russian. It could not have been written in any other language. The subject is like those landscapes on the steppe, into which God has put so little,

and in which men who know how to dream can see so much.

Pouchkine's poem is full of digressions, a constant commentary on the story, apparently very Byronic, but in reality very different, both in substance and in form. Form and substance are affected, in the case of both poets, by the fact that one belonged to a country where men speak much and unconstrainedly, and the other to a country where expression is rare and reserved. The dwellers on the steppe are, as a rule, a silent race. Occasionally some special circumstance may unseal their lips; then comes something like a torrent which has broken its banks. They grow talkative and prolix to excess. But they are doomed to continue within the narrow and commonplace intellectual horizon that hems them in, with all the paltry ideas and interests it involves.

There was no Hellespont for Pouchkine to cross at Mikhaïlovskoïé. The only water he met with on his walks was a narrow rivulet, which he could cross dry footed. We see the consequence in a strong touch of the commonplace in parts of his work. To European readers the interest of his poem centres in the character of Oniéguine. Now this "Muscovite dressed up as Childe Harold"—as Tatiana is fain to call him, wondering whether she has not to deal with "a parody"—this disenchanted man of pleasure, is neither Childe Harold nor Manfred, neither Obermann nor Charles Moor; he is Eugène Oniéguine, a character so thoroughly and specifically Russian that no equivalent to it can be found in the literature of any other country. In Russian literature, on the contrary, it constantly appears. It appears under the name of *Tchatski* in the work of Griboïédov, as *Piétchorine* in Lermontov's, as *Oblomov* in Gontcharov's,

and *Peter Bezouchov* in Tolstoï's. And always we see the same man. What man? A Russian, I reply—a type which, under Tourguéniev's hand, again, is to incarnate a whole social category, the innumerable army of the *Lichnyiié lioudi*,—superfluous men,—outside the ranks, and unemployed, in a society within which they do not know what to do with themselves, and outside which they would know still less; a man of noble birth, whose ancestors were enrolled in the active service of the Tsar, and who, freed from that service, is as much puzzled how to use his liberty as an African native would be if he were presented with an instrument for wireless telegraphy. This Oniéguine, this Tchatski, this Piétchorine feels he is, and will be, a superfluity in the sphere in which his birth has placed him, and cannot conceive how he is to escape from it. He begins everything, and perseveres in nothing. He tempts life, and even death, with the idea that what lies beyond may be something better. He is always waiting for something; nothing comes; life slips by; and when, at five-and-twenty, he would fain fall back on love, the answer falls, "Too late! Look in thine own face. Already it is full of wrinkles!"

Dostoïévski, who identifies this type with that of Aleko, recognises in it, further, the eternal vagabondage of the civilised Russian, parted by his civilisation from the mass of his own countrymen. We see him wandering hither and thither, taking refuge in Socialism or Nihilism—like Aleko in the gipsy camp—and then casting them aside, in his pursuit of an ideal he will never attain. The character will bear many other interpretations, so expressive, so comprehensive is it, and at the same time so vague and undecided. Pouchkine, at all

events, has modelled it in the true clay, drawn from the very heart of the national life and history.

I cannot share Dostoïévski's opinion of Tatiana. Her figure is charming. Is it really and essentially typical, and Russian? In its mingling of resolution with grace and tenderness, it may be, although the famous letter in which she reveals her love is borrowed from the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. In several places Pouchkine has simply translated from Rousseau. In her profound devotion to duty, again, I will admit it. This trait in Tatiana's character is the legacy of distant ancestors. The obligatory and universal military service which for centuries called every man of the free classes away from his own fire-side, had, as its inevitable consequence, the development of certain qualities within the home, and the exaltation of certain virtues in the women of the country. But in Dostoïévski's view, Tatiana's great originality lies in the final feature, that of her heroic adherence to her conjugal fidelity; and I fear this presumption may call a smile to my reader's countenance.

Pouchkine, after he had composed the first few cantos of *Eugène Oniéguine*, wrote thus to one of his friends, "I have begun a poem in the style of *Don Juan*." A year later he writes, "I see nothing in common between Eugène Oniéguine and *Don Juan*!" These changes of view are common among poets. But Pouchkine was right—the second time! In vain do we seek, in the Russian poet's work, for the religious, social, and political philosophy which is the basis of all the English poet wrote. We do not find a symptom of Byron's vehement protest against the cankers of modern civilisation, poverty, war, despotism, the desperate struggles of ambition and appetite. The picture of the soldier robbing the poor peasant

of what remained in his porringer never haunted the brain of the recluse of Mikhaïlovskoïé. In him Byron's excessive individualism, at war with society, was replaced by a savage worship of his own individual self. In Oniéguine's eyes, as a Russian critic (Pissarev) has observed, life signifies to walk on the boulevards, to dine at Talon's, to go to theatres and balls. "Feeling" is to envy the waves the privilege of lapping the feet of a pretty woman. Looking fairly at the matter, the hero's disgust with life is very like what Germans denominate *Katzenjammer*. And if, as Biéliniski affirms, the poem is "an encyclopædia of Russian life," we must conclude that Russian life, in those days, consisted in eating, drinking, dancing, going to the play, being bored, falling in love out of sheer idleness, and suffering—either from boredom or from some love-affair. In the aristocratic sphere to which the poet's observation was confined, this picture may, historically speaking, be pretty nearly correct.

On the other hand, it was not *Don Juan*, but rather *Beppo*, which Pouchkine had in view when he commenced his work, not without memories of Sterne, and even of Rabelais. But by the time the first thousand lines were finished, he had forgotten Byron. At that moment there was a revulsion in the poet's ideas, arising out of his experiences at Mikhaïlovskoïé, and contemporary events in general. The catastrophe of the 25th December 1825 found him still in his enforced retirement. Most of its victims were his relations or his friends. If he had been at St. Petersburg, he would certainly have made common cause with them. Not content with blessing the providential chance which had saved him from this fresh adventure, he bethought himself that it would be as well never to run such risks



again. He tore himself finally away from the gipsies, "sons of the desert and of liberty," and sought shelter in the theory of *Art for art's sake*.

This was to lead him to Goethe, and from Goethe to Shakespeare. No more verses like those of *Solitude*, written at Mikhaïlovskoïé, were to brand the name of "serfdom" with disgrace. No more appeals for intellectual union with Sand or Radichtchev. The rupture with the past was utter and complete. Sometimes it was to cause the poet pain, as when the "enlightened despotism," of which he had become an adherent, laid its iron fingers on his own brow. "The devil," he was to write, "has caused me to be born, in this country, with talent and a heart." But in vain was the turmoil of thought and aspiration and revolt, in which he had once shared, to call upon him to return. He never descended from his Olympus.

*Silence, mad nation, slave of need and toil!  
Thine insolent murmurings are hateful to me!*

To the study of Shakespeare, into which he now threw himself with avidity, he added that of Karamzine. In the solitude of Mikhaïlovskoïé the poet laboured to supply the inadequacy of his "cursed education." An old nurse, Arina Rodionovna, guided him, meanwhile, through the wonderful mazes of the national legends. This resulted in the conception of *Boris Godounov*. In the figure of this throned *parvenu* Pouchkine has endeavoured to merge the features of Shakespeare's Richard III., Macbeth, and Henry IV. Certain scenes in the play—the election scene, and that in which Boris gives his parting counsels to his son—are directly taken from the English playwright. Taken as a whole, it is only a chapter out

of Karamzine, arranged in dialogue form after Shakespeare's style, and written in blank verse iambics of five feet—a metre familiar to English and German poets. But all that is best in it—the scenes in which Pouchkine puts his old nurse's tales into his own words, introducing the popular element, with its simple temperament and wit and speech, the only ones which stand out with real life and colour—must be ascribed to Arina Rodionovna.

The character of the impostor Demetrius, which has brought bad luck to every one who has attempted it, including Mérimée, whatever Brandes may say, is a complete failure. Side by side with that mysterious puppet Pouchkine had a vision—his letters prove it—of a Marina who may have been historically genuine, and who certainly is psychologically interesting. “*She had but one passion, and this was ambition, but this to a degree of energy and fury which it is difficult to express. Behold her! after she has tasted the sweets of royalty, drunk with her own fancy, prostitute herself to one adventurer after another, now sharing the loathsome bed of a Jew, now the tent of some Cossack, always ready to give herself to any one who can offer her the faintest hope of a throne which exists no longer . . . braving poverty and shame, and at the same time treating with the king of Poland as his equal!*” The portrait is sketched with a master-hand. Unfortunately, not a trace of it appears in the single scene, clumsy and improbable, wherein the poet brings the daughter of the Palatine of Sandomir face to face with her adventurous betrothed. The two figures in the play are the faintest of sketches, and, except for *Eugène Oniéguine*, the whole of Pouchkine's work, poems, plays, and novels, is no more than a series of sketches. *Poltava* was written in the course of a few weeks, the

author, it would seem, having thus endeavoured to rid himself of a remnant of his Byronian ballast, although his Mazeppa has nothing in common with Byron's. The only Mazeppa Byron knew was the Mazeppa of Voltaire. If the English poet had been aware—so Pouchkine himself declares—of the love, the mutual love, between the aged Hetman and the daughter of Kotchoubey, no one would have dared to lay a finger on the subject after him; but in *Poltava* this love, unexplained, without any psychological reason about it, merely gives us the sensation of being brought face to face with another irritating and useless enigma. All this time, Pouchkine was still working at his *Oniéguine*. He could only work when the work flowed easily. If inspiration failed him, he put the subject aside for a while, and looked about for another. Thus, at this moment, Shakespeare's Lucretia gave him the idea of a burlesque parody, which developed into *Count Nouliné*—a very displeasing story, as I should think it, of a nobleman who has his ears heartily boxed by a lady just as he lays his hand upon her bed. This incident caught the attention of the St. Petersburg censure. The Emperor himself interfered, and the author was forced to cast a veil over Count Nouliné's performances.

It was only a literary bauble, although, in later days, some critics have chosen to discover in it a deep intention, a prelude to Gogol's novels on social subjects, and a criticism of the habits of the day. In *Oniéguine* and *Boris Godounov* Pouchkine was putting out all his strength, and already a new life was dawning for him, at once an apotheosis and an abyss, in which his splendid powers were to be prematurely engulfed.

On 2nd September 1826, a courier from the Tsar

arrived at Mikhaïlovskoïé, made the poet get into a post-chaise, carried him off, full gallop, no one knew whither,—and the villagers wondered, filled with terror. Some weeks previously, Pouchkine had written to the sovereign, beseeching his forgiveness in humble, nay, even in humiliating terms. This was the Tsar's reply. The courier and his companion travelled straight to St. Petersburg, and once there, the poet was obliged, before resting or changing his clothes, to wait upon the sovereign. There was a story, in later days, that in his agitation he dropped a very compromising document—an affecting address to the Decembrists—upon the palace stairs. It is just possible. The poet frequently behaved like a madcap. And the verses are still in existence. They would not, I imagine, have affected the Tsar's inclination to mercy. Their optimism is anything but fierce. The author, having backed out of the business himself, was very ready to fancy it would turn out well for everybody concerned. The interview was courteous on the imperial side, humble and repentant enough on the poet's, and he received permission to live in Moscow or St. Petersburg, as best it suited him.

Alas! his admirers were soon to regret Mikhaïlovskoïé. He plunged into a life of dissipation and debauchery,—nights spent over cards and in orgies of every kind, with here and there, when disgust fell upon his soul, short periods of retirement to his former place of exile, where inspiration came no more to visit him. It was not till his betrothal to Natalia Nicolaïevna Gontcharov (1830) that he passed into a short period of meditation, and experienced a fresh flow of creative power. He was able to carry on his *Oniéguine*, and, while writing a great number of lyric verses, to pro-

duce those popular tales in rhyme of which so many illustrated editions now exist, and some of which, such as *The Legend of Tsar Saltane*, are master-pieces. The little dramatic fancies entitled *The Stingy Knight*, *Mozart and Salieri*, and *The Stone Landlord*, also belong to this productive period. Their value seems to me to have been overrated.

But once more, alas! The marriage proved disastrous. The poet, who so sadly described himself as an "atheist" concerning happiness, and cynically referred to his engagement as his "hundred and third love," was evidently not suited to domestic joys. After a curtailed honeymoon, the young couple plunged into the whirlpool of social gaiety, each going his or her own way, and seeking amusement that was less and less shared by the other. Soon anxiety was added to indifference. Pouchkine, who recklessly spent all he earned—very considerable sums for that period—was in constant financial straits. He accepted a well-paid sinecure, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and aspired to be Karamzine's successor as historiographer to the crown. His desire was attained, and he plunged into the archives, intending to produce a history of Peter the Great. But Catherine's more recent reign, and the dramatic episode of Pougatchov's rebellion were destined to take hold of his imagination. On this subject he successively produced an historical narrative and a novel, *The Captain's Daughter*. The narrative is dry. The novel has interest and charm, both arising from its great simplicity and intense feeling for reality. The figure, as exquisite as it is real, of the old mentor serving-man, Savélitch, has its niche in the gallery of types which will go down to posterity. But whether influenced by Walter Scott, or

out of respect to the official authority with which he had just been invested, the author never leaves the track of ordinary commonplace. Of the political and social problems which surged through the gloomy episode, of the eddies of popular passion which swept the "Marquis of Pougatchov" to the front, the poet either perceived, or hinted, nothing.

This period of Pouchkine's life was fertile in plans and sketches, wherein the influence of English literature seems decisive, but wherein the poet's own creative power and literary tact are too often at a loss. At one moment he had an idea of imitating Bulwer and his *Pelham* in a novel of contemporary manners, which, with its chronicle of the doings of several generations, would have been a precursor of *War and Peace*. Again, he drew up in French, and with many mistakes, both in spelling and grammar, the outlines of a play or poem with Pope Joan for its heroine. The play seemed too like *Faust*, so the author inclined to a poem, to be written in the style of Coleridge's *Christabel*. But the plan was never put into execution, and we are not tempted to regret it.

The author of *Eugène Oniéguine* was visibly approaching mental exhaustion. In his new surroundings, his inspiration was failing him, and his mental horizon narrowing. In 1831, the sympathy stirred in the West by the Polish insurrection inspired him with an apostrophe in rhyme, addressed to the "Calumniators of Russia," and this is all he can find to put them to silence: "Know you *how many we are*, from the frozen rocks of Finland to the burning sands of Colchis?" A mere appeal to brute numbers, such as the present Emperor of China might be tempted to make against a European coalition; and,

after all, no more than a paraphrase of the well-known sally by the same author, "Naturally I despise my country, from its head to its feet; but that foreigners should share this sentiment displeases me!"

In the course of the following years a few rare flashes of powerful and original inspiration, such as the *Bronze Horseman*, dedicated to Peter the Great, are preceded and followed by more and more frequent returns to imitation and adaptation. Meanwhile, the poet's letters, like his verses, prove him to be in the grip of a steadily strengthening despair, and haunted by the gloomiest fancies. He chose the place for his grave; he prayed God not to deprive him of his reason—"anything rather than that." In 1834 he wrote *The Queen of Spades*, a fantastic tale after Hoffman, and the weakest of all his works. In 1836 he tried militant journalism with a paper, *The Contemporary*, the editorship of which he undertook. It was a barren sheet, uninteresting, colourless, and flavourless. The Government historiographer, who frequently solicited pecuniary assistance, which never seemed to get him out of his difficulties, champed his bit, and often flew into a fury. His pleasures, his passions, his bad companions, could not blind his eyes to the degradation of his position as a self-surrendered rebel, and a domestic prophet. It drove him frantic, and yet he had not sufficient energy to shake himself clear. This tempestuous condition of mind was sure to end in a catastrophe. It might have been that plunge into mental darkness at the idea of which he shuddered, thinking, doubtless, of Batiouchkine; but it came by the bullet fired by Dantès, a French Legitimist of Dutch origin, the adopted son of the Dutch Minister, Baron von Heeckeren. On January 27, 1837, after having received

anonymous letters reflecting on his domestic honour, Pouchkine went out to fight his last duel. Mortally wounded, he still had strength to deliver his own fire, and to give a cry of triumphant rage when he saw his adversary drop upon the snowy ground. At the risk of being dubbed sacrilegious by many of my Russian readers, I venture to express my conviction that this tragic end of a career that was already hopelessly compromised did not rob Russia of a great poet, and this, too, was the opinion of the best informed among his contemporaries. Biéliniski had declared that career closed in 1835, from the artistic point of view, and had indicated Gogol as the writer destined to replace the author of *Eugène Oniégine* at the head of the literature of his country. He never retracted this opinion.

In his own country, Pouchkine's glory, though unrivalled during his lifetime, has, like that of his predecessors, undergone various vicissitudes since his death. In the first instance, there came a period of natural and inevitable obscuration, during the great political and intellectual crisis that filled up the years between 1860 and 1880. It then necessarily became evident that the poet had given no thought to the essential problems which, even in his lifetime, had passionately interested an increasing number of the best intelligences. At that period, in the eyes of the eager youth who followed the teachings of Biéliniski and Dobrolioubov, Pouchkine took on the appearance of a sybarite, at once scornful and puerile. Later, when the theory of *Art for art's sake* had recovered some followers, in a calmer condition of society, where the delicate joys of existence were once more enjoyed, his star rose again. It is now in its full zenith.



When we compare Pouchkine with his peers, we must acknowledge that he certainly does not possess either the depth of Shakespeare and Goethe, the strength of Byron, Schiller, and Heine, the passion of Lermontov and De Musset, the fulness of Hugo, nor even that gift of communion with the very soul of the nation which enabled Mickiewicz to say, "I am a million!" Pouchkine frequently, however, surpasses them all in the exceptionally perfect harmony between his subject and his form, a miraculous appropriateness of expression, a singularly happy mingling of grace and vigour, and an almost infallible feeling for rhythm. Once or twice he almost touched the sublime, but he never ventured to cross the terrible threshold where so many poets have stumbled on the ridiculous. Except for a few fragments such as *The Prophet* (1826), a superb though somewhat incoherent paraphrase of some verses from Isaiah, which Dostoïevski was fond of declaiming, he is essentially a "graceful" poet.

His ardent, violent, impetuous nature was mysteriously combined with a singularly calm creative power, which had complete control of itself and its subject. The very act of creation freed the poet from all his other intoxications. The classic ecstasy, the romantic over-excitement, were replaced, in his case, by "the cold-blooded inspiration" of which he speaks in an address to Joukovski. And it is in this that he was essentially a realist. In Shakespeare's work, he set Falstaff above every other character, because it appeared to him the crowning type, that in which the poet had most thoroughly displayed the scope of his genius; and the effervescent temperament and sceptical demonism of the Don Juan of the Southern legends were transformed, in

his conception, into a voluptuous enjoyment of existence, and a tranquil consciousness of beauty.

Did his work indicate, and even incarnate, the true destiny of the Russian people, that harmonious fusion of various and conflicting elements which is the dream of some contemporary prophets? Dostoïevski thought so. Grigoriev believed that nothing but the poet's death prevented him from realising this compromise, the formula of which, through gentleness and love, the national genius would have been called to furnish. It is curious that in this connection Dostoïevski should have appealed to *The Banquet*, which is merely a fairly close translation by Pouchkine of some scenes from John Wilson's poem *The City of the Plague* (1816). The aptitude and ease with which the Russian poet reproduced these pictures of English life, indicated, in his compatriot's view, an exceptional gift of comprehension. But among the couplets with which the translator has enriched the original text, I find a comparison of the plague with winter, which certainly has no British character about it.

Pouchkine's universality, which has so exercised the minds of some of his Russian admirers, is nothing more, as it seems to me, than a feature of his Romanticism. Romanticism, when it gave birth to historical poetry, evolved a general conception that beside our present ideal of beauty others may exist, in the limits of time and space. This programme has been realised by Goethe with his *Tasso*, his *Iphigenia*, his second *Faust*, the fellow-citizen of every nation, the contemporary of every age; by Thomas Moore—with his descriptive odes on the Bermudas, his sentimental Irish Melodies, his poetic romance, the scene of which lies in Egypt, his romantic poem on a Persian subject,—with a fulness which Pouch-

kine does not even approach. None the less, he was one of the greatest artists of any time, and to have possessed him may well be a sufficient glory to a young nation, and a literature still in its beginnings.

His language, rich, supple, and melodious as it is, still betrays the nature of his education. M. Korch has lately pointed out its numerous inaccuracies and frequent Gallicisms. The influence of French models is less apparent in his verse, than in his prose narratives. The wording of *The Captain's Daughter*, curt, clear, a little dry, is essentially Voltairian. The line generally used by the poet is an eight-syllabled iambic, a metre common to much popular poetry. He also frequently uses rhyme, and even the alternate masculine and feminine rhyme, marked by the tonic accent (*jènà*, masculine rhyme; *kníga*, feminine rhyme), but in this respect he has not shown remarkable artistic skill. As early as 1830 the author of *Eugène Oniéguine* was surrounded by a compact group of pupils and imitators. Very severe on himself, inclined to be indulgent to others, affable as a rule, except to a few St. Petersburg journalists, he considered Baratinski's work superior to his own, and submitted what he wrote himself to the judgment of Delwig.

Baron ANTONY ANTONOVITCH DELWIG (1798-1831) left the College of Tsarskoié-Siélo at the same time as Pouchkine, and after an examination the results of which were almost as unsatisfactory. He, too, had spent his time in rhyming verses, and, in 1814, made his first public appearance in the *European Messenger*, with an ode on the taking of Paris. Aided by the good-natured Krylov, he found shelter for his unconquerable indolence and precocious epicurism in a modest appointment as sub-librarian, and continued to feed the almanacks with his

lyric poems, of which Pouchkine held a high opinion, on account—so he averred—of their wonderful divination of Greek antiquity, through German translations and Italian imitations. Delwig, of course, had learnt neither Greek nor Latin at the college. In 1829, he was proposing to publish a newspaper of literary criticism, but his health, already weak, gave way completely, and he died of consumption in quite early manhood.

Eugène Abramovitch Baratinski (1800–1844) began life in stormy fashion, being obliged to leave the Pages' Corps, and forbidden to follow any profession but that of arms, and only as a private soldier. He was serving in the Light Cavalry of the Guard when Delwig, without even giving him notice of his intention, published some of his verses. They were inspired by that specifically Russian form of Byronism, mingled with Anglo-French sentimentalism, which had been introduced by Joukovski, and adopted by Pouchkine in his first productions,—a dreamy, disenchanted, melancholy form it was. The condition of things imposed on the country by the rule of Araktchéiev was eminently calculated to encourage a form of inspiration destined, in Lermontov's hands, to attain such remarkable power and fulness. Before Baratinski was promoted an officer, he was hailed as a great poet. This did not take place until 1825, after he had done a long spell of garrison duty in Finland, where he wrote his poem *Eda*, which has a Finnish heroine. He was never to lose the impression of the severe scenery which had inspired this work. Two other poems of an epic nature, *The Ball* and *The Gipsy Girl*, are dated from Moscow, whither the author—having married a wife and left the service—was able to retire, in 1827. But, after his stern experiences in his own land, foreign countries

had an irresistible attraction for him. He had the delight of spending the winter of 1843-44 in Paris, in intimate intercourse with Vigny, Sainte Beuve, Nodier, Mérimée, Lamartine, Guizot, and Augustin Thierry, and even of seeing Italy,—a dream he had cherished ever since his childhood. He wrote little in those days, and that little entirely in the lyric style. On his road to Naples he wrote *The Steam-Boat*, one of his last poems, and perhaps the best of all, and he died happy, as if in realisation of the popular saying, on the shores of the famous bay.

Pouchkine called him "our first elegiac poet." The ingenious mingling of playfulness and passion, metaphysics and sentiment, in *The Ball*, filled him with admiration. "No writer has put more sentiment into his thought, and more thought into his sentiment," he declared, and twitted the public of his day with not appreciating at its proper value a work the maturity of which placed it above that public's level. The poet of *The Ball* was, in Pouchkine's judgment, a thinker, and on this account, especially, he held him to be a very great and very original intelligence. This judgment we may fairly ratify, although we must not overlook the surroundings amidst which it was pronounced. I doubt whether Baratinski's originality would have been much admired in Paris.

Russia possessed, just at this time, another thinker, of very different powers, who had not the good fortune to be admired by Pouchkine. The orbit of this short-lived star was not that in which such men as Baratinski and Delwig revolved. He might, perhaps, have drawn closer to them, had not his course been so suddenly interrupted. My readers will have guessed to whom I refer.

ALEXANDER SERGUIÉIÉVITCH GRIBOIÉDOV (1795-1829) had one advantage over Baratinski and Delwig, that of a very thorough education. The year 1812 did, indeed, break up his studies, and forced from him the subsequent remark that it had taken him four years to forget the four he had spent in a hussar regiment. He cast aside his uniform in 1817, but did not leave the social circle in which his birth and his uniform had placed him. And thus, when he began to think and write, he naturally found himself far removed from the brilliant constellation of which the *Arzamas* was the centre, and Pouchkine the bright particular star.

The *Biéssiéda* held out inviting arms to him. Prince Chakhofskoï, that insipid and prolific playwright, assisted him in his first attempts, and the whole sheeplike band of the *Chichkovists* attended on his steps. Before these bonds could be broken, he was to leave St. Petersburg, and enter the diplomatic career.

He went to Persia, then to Georgia, found time for labour and meditation, and in 1823, the manuscript of his comedy *The Misfortune of being too Clever* (*Gore ot ouma*) was passed from hand to hand in St. Petersburg. The effect may be compared to that produced in France, forty years previously, by *Le Mariage de Figaro*. The circumstances, too, were similar. The play could not be performed in public; it was played in private houses, and during the Carnival, the students gave scraps of it in the open streets. For a moment, the success, brilliant as it was, of the first cantos of *Eugène Oniégue* found a rival, and Pouchkine seems to have felt some annoyance; for, prompt as his admiration for his fellow-poets generally was, he spoke of this work with great severity. His criticisms found a speedy echo, and

Griboiédov, disheartened and embittered, betook himself back to Georgia. He was arrested in 1826, on suspicion of having connived at the attempt of the Decembrists, was set at liberty, served as Paskiévitich's *attaché* during the Persian campaign, and only returned to St. Petersburg in 1828, armed with a treaty of peace and a tragedy—*The Georgian Night*, inspired by Shakespeare, and a very ordinary performance. He was sent back to Persia as Minister Plenipotentiary, and was stabbed to death during a popular insurrection at Teheran, on January 30, 1829.

He had made his first appearance as a Shakespearian translator, and long nursed a plan for adapting the whole of the English playwright's work to the Russian stage. But even as a schoolboy he was dreaming of the comedy which has shed glory on his name, and noted its analogy with Wieland's *Dwellers in Abdera*, and Molière's *Misanthrope*. The close of *The Misfortune of being too Clever* is in fact copied, almost wholesale, from the French dramatist's master-piece. "*I go to seek some spot in the universe where I may find a corner which will shelter a feeling and wounded soul. My coach! my coach!*" And yet Tchatski, who speaks these lines, is not a misanthropist. He is rather, as the modern critic puts it, a *misotchine*. If, like Alceste, he has conceived a "fearful hatred," it is less a hatred of humanity, than a hatred of a certain social condition, local in its essence, limited, and remediable. What offends him in this condition, is the craze for foreign importations, and the tyrannical influence of the *tchine*, both of them absolutely contingent peculiarities, and which strike him as odious because he has seen other states of society in which these things do not exist at all, or

at all events are not considered elements of happiness. He is five-and-twenty, and has just left Germany and France behind him. Alceste is forty, and has left life behind him. Molière's comedy, besides, may be summed up as a study of character. The special feature of Griboiédov's piece is its presentment, strongly caricatured, of a fashionable Muscovite drawing-room in the year 1820. Into this drawing-room Tchatski falls like a thunderbolt. What ideas does he bring with him? A confused medley, the pattern of the intellectual ferment of that period. Thinkers and artists alike, in the fatherland of Tchatski and of his creator, were then attaining a more and more vivid perception of the truth, and a more and more simple interpretation of what they saw. It was the birth of original literature and of the natural school—I do not use the word *naturalist*, for that, in Russia, would be a heresy. But reality, in this case, was not attractive. The clearer the consciousness, the more evident became the sense of the national deficiencies and blemishes, and the more eager the longing to supply the first and wipe out the last. But how? A twofold answer came from the two currents, Western and Nationalist, which still swayed men's minds.

Should there be a concentric movement towards European civilisation, with an appropriation of the traditional rules of its development? Or should that civilisation be equalled, and even surpassed, by an independent application of internal formulæ? Men hesitated as to which horn of the dilemma should be grasped, but the certainty and agreement as to the impossibility of maintaining the *status quo* were absolute. Outside the walls of Muscovite drawing-rooms, where idolatry of the *tchine*



still reigned, the call for reform was universal. The programme of both parties included the raising up of the lower classes, now wedded to ignorance and barbarism, under the bondage of serfdom. And thus the movement towards the emancipation of the national literature was complicated by social and political elements. Many minds confused the intellectual current with the projects of social reform it bore upon its bosom. Griboïédoï, who makes his Tchatski proclaim his preference for the national dress, his love for the past history of his country, his admiration for the instances of heroism and moral nobility it contains, bore the reputation of being a forerunner of Tchadaïev, that earnest *Westerner* whose voice was shortly to be heard. In opinion, if not in fact, he was certainly a Decembrist, the comrade of Ryléïev in that secret society "The Salvation Alliance," which at one time numbered all the best intelligences of the day within its ranks. Here young officers, Pestel, Narychkine, Muraviov, Orlov, elbowed popular poets like Ryléïev and Bestoujev, and aristocrats such as Obolenski, Troubetzkoï, Odoïevski, Volkonski, Tchernichev—all soon to be proscribed.

Ryléïev, when he joined the Russian army in Paris in 1813, seriously took himself to be a liberator. Some years later he was to protest, in lines which, though poetically weak, were full of ardent feeling, against the infamy of the Holy Alliance, and appeal from Araktchéïev to the free burghers of ancient Novgorod. The suppression of the secret societies in 1821 had the natural result of accentuating the political character of the tendencies apparent in them, and which, as a rule, went no further than a hazy constitutional liberalism. That presided over by Ryléïev was secretly reconstituted and

ramified in the provinces, in all directions, until the ill-starred attempt of 1825.

A little of all this appears in Griboiédov's comedy, though the medley is somewhat incoherent, and excessively obscure. Any satisfactory examination of it presupposes the use of a powerful lantern. I regard it as an impossible play, for acting purposes, at the present day, and one not easy even to read. It came too early for its own contemporaries. In the Russian drawing-room, where Tchatski breathlessly pours out his confused notions, he is taken for a madman. Herein lies the comic element of the piece. And it is a prophetic element as well. Before very long, Tchadaïev was actually to spend some months in a madhouse, and before that time came, Ryléiev was to expiate on the scaffold the "misfortune of having been too clever," in a society not yet ripe for the shock of revolution.

Ryléiev himself was really no more of a revolutionary than Griboiédov. Revolutions are not made with speeches, and, like Tchatski, neither of them knew how to do more than preach. From 1823 to 1824 the famous Decembrist was quietly occupied in editing, with Bestoujev, a literary paper call *The Northern Star*, which reproduced the artistic theories of the *Globe*, in the articles by Sainte-Beuve and Jouffroy, then appearing in that paper, and paid a periodical tribute to the "practical liberalism" of the French and English Romanticists. Chance had a great deal to do with that armed attempt, which was no more than a scuffle, in the year 1825.

Griboiédov, more prudent, more easily disheartened, too, having felt his way by means of his comedy, retired discreetly into the background. It was not till after his death that the piece was staged, and then only after

liberal cutting. If the truth must out, the friendly reception it received from the general public, both on its first appearance and subsequently, was chiefly due to its ludicrous qualities, the caricature it offered of a well-known social circle, the satisfaction it gave to the satirical instinct of the majority.

But other prophets were at hand, less prone to failure and compromise. Soon, over Pouchkine's tomb, the voice of Lermontov was to rise, expressing, in more virile accents, a new spirit of independence and revolt. The current of emancipation, checked for a moment, was to flow without further stoppage, in a stream of steady development, towards undoubted if partial triumph. From 1830 to 1870 the whole literary and political history of Russia is summed up in the victorious stages of this march of justice, light, and liberty. I shall now endeavour to indicate them briefly, turning my attention, in the first place, to those labourers in the great work who have lavished on it the most arduous and most conscious effort. Scientists, philosophers, historians, literary critics, or artists, poets, and novelists, I shall show their common endeavour to seize and retain the truth, under its thick-laid covering of ignorance and false conception, and watch them as they gather, in the literature (now become legendary) of *divulgation* and *accusation*, a sheaf of truths—poignant, cruel, cutting as rods—which, day by day, and year by year, are to uncover and probe and wither the miseries, the baseness, the shameful spots, that stained the nation's life. Then, following on these inquisitors, these accusers, these judges, I will show the bearers of a message of clemency, of peace and faith, preachers who reply to these violent and despairing negations with their own sure and resolute affirmations—prophets

of a new religion, which, they are firmly convinced, is not only to raise the whole level of the nation, intellectual and moral, but to lift it to a destiny far exceeding that to which any other nation has yet aspired.

Chronologically speaking, the succession of phenomena I have described is certainly not absolute. Yet it is exact enough on the whole, and I shall adhere to it, so as to bring out features which might otherwise appear confused, and to give more clearness to the general process of an evolution which has endued the fatherland of Pouchkine and Lermontov with the intellectual and moral physiomy it now wears in the eyes of all the world.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE EMANCIPATING MOVEMENT— THE DOCTRINAIRES

THE intellectual ferment which had preceded the accession of Nicholas, and prepared the way for the attempt of the Decembrists, was quenched in a flood of blood, and hidden under a heavy stone. Seventeen distinct offices of censure laboured in concert to bury the ferment of budding thought. All discussion of political and social questions was forbidden, and learning was hemmed within the boundaries of official history, and a closely-watched literary criticism. A most unnecessary precaution! Criticism, represented on the *Northern Bee* by two renegade liberals, Griétch (1787–1867), and Boulgarine (1789–1859), and on the *Reader's Library* by a literary clown, Senkovski (1800–1858), who signed his articles with such pseudonyms as "Baron Brambaüs" or *Tioutioundji-Ogla*, did much more in the way of official service than in that of pronouncing literary verdicts. Its whole endeavour was spent in combating liberal ideas, and every manifestation of art or literature which appeared to be connected with them.

Such were the first-fruits of the new régime. These three stars long reigned over the official world of letters in St. Petersburg. But at Moscow a nucleus of liberal and pseudo-romantic opposition continued to subsist.

In *The Son of the Fatherland*, Alexander Bestoujev (1795–1837), the friend of Ryléiev, and author—under the *nom de plume* of Marlinski—of novels which caused the sentimental maidens of the period to quiver with delight, fought, and fought actively, in the cause of Pouchkine and the younger literary school. In *The Telegraph*, a wonderful self-taught writer, Nicholas Aléxiéievitch Polévoï (1796–1846), who, until a ripe age, traded as a Siberian merchant, and then suddenly felt the call of a literary and scientific vocation, held lively controversy with Nicholas Trofimovitch Katchénovski (1775–1842), a professor of history, and founder of an historical school steeped in scepticism, yet the official champion of pseudo-classicism and of the *statu quo* in literature, politics, and social matters.

Polévoï's scepticism went further,—too far, indeed. His encyclopædic excursions, just touched with liberalism, into literature, history, jurisprudence, music, medicine, and the Sanskrit tongue, often led him to confuse pedantry with knowledge, and then heap scorn on both. Nevertheless, his *Sketches of Russian Literature* mark an era, for they let in a first breath of fresh air upon the mildewy routine of the old-fashioned æsthetic formulæ. His attempt at a history of the internal development of the Russian people, after the manner of Guizot and Niebuhr (*History of the Russian People*, 6 vols. 1829–33) is, on the other hand, a failure.

And its author was not to remain true to his colours. In 1834, *The Telegraph* was suppressed, in consequence of an article which declared a play by Nestor Koukolnik to be a bad one. This Koukolnik (1809–1868) was a poor playwright and a worse novelist. His piece, *The Hand of the Most High has Saved the Fatherland*, was cer-

tainly not worth all the evil Polévoï took the trouble to say of it. But Koukolnik, with his inflated rhetoric and pompous patriotism, held the favour of the powers that were. Polévoï had a family to support, and four thousand subscribers whom he must keep, to that end. He made up his mind to hide his colours in his pocket, departed to St. Petersburg, and there rallied the band comprising Boulgarine and Griétch to the support of another review.

Moscow lost nothing by his desertion. *The Telegraph* was speedily replaced by *The Telescope*, which, in 1836, published Tchadaïev's famous philosophic letter. Already, since 1825, in the ancient capital—where the terrorism of Nicholas I. was less apparent than in St. Petersburg—a certain current of philosophical ideas and studies, issuing from the great flow of contemporary German thought, had been growing amidst the youth of the university. The frontiers were not so well guarded against the entry of contraband literature as to prevent the doctrines of Kant, Schelling, and Hegel from eluding the vigilant eyes of the officials, and under their influence, the struggle between Occidentals and Slavophiles woke again, and grew hotter than ever. Not a symptom of this appeared in the press. The secret was concealed in whispered conversations, and in the more or less inviolable intimacy of personal correspondence. Then all of a sudden the voice of Tchadaïev broke, like a clap of thunder, on the silence. Was it a cry of religious terror only, as some have asserted? Not that, indeed! It was also, and above all other things, a cry of protest against the conventional optimism of a society insufficiently aware of its proper destiny, against the official fiction of a civilisation still barren of ideals. It is

impossible to overrate the sensation which this new and surprising voice created in the coteries of Russia.

A man of the world and a traveller, like Tchatski, PETER IAKOVLÉVITCH TCHADAÏEV (1793-1855), had for some time been carrying an intellect much inclined to paradox, a discontented temper, and a brilliant humour, from one drawing-room to another. Under cover of a correspondence with a friend, a lady, he had already made a partial sketch of his ideas. The letter published by *The Telescope* was not his first. Others were already being handed about in manuscript. In them their author posed as the representative of the second great current of French influence, which La Harpe, the teacher of Alexander I., had been the means of introducing into Russia, and which had impressed its mark on that monarch's youthful liberalism, as well as on Spéranski's plans for reform. It contained the germ of a bitter scepticism with regard to Russian life, combined with a decided leaning to Catholicism. The Catholic propaganda, which may be reckoned back to the reign of Peter II., in the persons of the Abbé Jubet, Princess Dolgoroukaïa, and the Duke of Liria, had its hour of brilliant triumph under Paul I. It had succeeded in planting the influence of the sons of Loyola in the sovereign's own circle. The split between the upper class of society and the clergy, engendered by Peter the Great's reforms, the religious and moral disorder which produced the *Raskol*, favoured its action, and in the minds of Russian readers of Le Maistre, Bonald, and Châteaubriand, the Jesuit's doctrine was blended with the idea of civilisation, and even with a certain liberalism in which they would gladly have sought satisfaction.



Tchadaïev had fought through Napoleon's wars. He had spent the years between 1821 and 1826 abroad, had lived on intimate terms with Schelling in Germany, and entered into friendly relations with Lamennais, Ballanche, and the Comte de Circourt, in Paris. The conception of the past and future of his country, to which he had allowed the influence of these surroundings to lead him, may be thus summed up: Up to the present, Russia has been no more than a parasite branch of the European tree, which has rotted because it drew its sap from Byzantium, useless to the cause of civilisation, a stranger to the great religious structure of the Western Middle Ages, and afterwards to the lay enfranchisement of modern society. "*Alone in the world, we have given it nothing, taken nothing from it, we have not added one idea to the treasury of thinking humanity, we have given no help towards the perfecting of human reason, and we have vitiated everything that wisdom has bestowed upon us. . . . We bear in our blood a principle that is hostile and refractory to civilisation. We have been born into the world like illegitimate children. . . . We grow, but we do not ripen. . . . We advance, but sideways, and towards no special goal. . . .*"

Never in the history of the human conscience did the instinct of self-study lead up to so severe a verdict. I have related how and wherefore, in pamphlet or satire, *detrac-tion* was destined to preside over the first lispings of free thought in the midst of that great workshop of moral and social reconstruction, which the Russia of Peter the Great had now become. Everywhere the labourers who pull down walls clear the way for the architect. Even Gogol and his comrades belong to the first-named category.

Yet Tchadaïev's pessimism was confined to that which

concerns the present and the past. Russia, in his view—I quote from one of his letters to Alexander Tourguéniev—“is destined to supply, some day, the solution of all the intellectual, social, and moral questions which Europe now discusses.” Already, in this *Occidental*, we note the haughty schemes of the Slavophil, and the gorgeous dreams of Dostoïevski. Still one condition must be fulfilled, he thinks, before this mission can be accomplished—to enter into communion with the nations of the West. But how? By union with the Western Church. This reconciliation, indeed, appears to his imagination on a mighty scale, borrowed from the vision of Dante; he dreams of a pope and an emperor, of equally enlightened faith and wisdom, who should join hands, and so govern the whole world.

It might have been objected that his conception of a European progress based on the unity of the Christian Churches, had proved a failure as early as the sixteenth century, and that Russia, in adopting a principle already abandoned by a good half of Europe, ran a grave risk of losing her bearings. But nobody argued. It was thought simpler to take strong measures with him. *The Telescope* was suppressed, the editor exiled to Vologda, the censor who had allowed the letter to pass dismissed, and its author made over to the care of a mad-doctor. And even all this severity did not allay the almost general irritation. Freed from his strait-waistcoat, the philosopher sought refuge in Paris, and in *A Madman's Apology*, and other writings, which were not published till after his death, he endeavoured to justify his conclusions, while he somewhat diminished the excessive bluntness and paradoxical fulness of their expression. He had taken such pains to strike hard, that he had

certainly failed to strike home. Even in the ranks of the university students, his doctrines encountered passionate resistance and contradiction. But out of the very crash a spark sprang forth which was to illumine the intellectual horizon of that epoch. Herzen, Biéliniski, and the Slavophiles of the future, Khomiakov, Kiriéiévski, and Akssakov, all felt the shock, and caught the flame. A new impulse was imparted to the study of the national history and of philosophy. After the year 1840, Moscow had two Hegelian parties, and the national literature, in the persons of Nadiéjdine and Biéliniski, soon mounted to the highest peaks of contemporary thought.

Meanwhile the school of the independent Slavophiles—Khomiakov, the two Kiriéiévskis, and the two Akssakovs—formed another body of teaching, the legacy of which was to be gathered up and increased by two generations of thinkers. The current of ideas thus developed was first of all to find its strongest and highest expression in the domain of critical literature, because all other fields of investigation were vetoed by the censure, and because, under its watchful eye, discussions on artistic subjects lent themselves better than any other form of writing to that intellectual cryptography which even now remains a law of necessity to the Russian press. For the same reason, and with the same object of finding a necessary outlet, the Russian novel has held, and still holds, an exceptional position, by no means in harmony with its natural destiny, in the national literature.

In 1836 *The Telescope* was edited by Nicholas Ivanovitch Nadiéjdine (1804–1856). He had made his first appearance as a writer in the *European Messenger*, under the pseudonym of Niédoumko. His encyclopædic knowledge, guided by a mind of excessive clearness, penetra-

tion, and strength, soon permitted him to treat various branches of science, and almost to equal the best European specialists of his day. The most varied subjects, ethical and historical studies, philosophy, ethnography, were handled by him with equal success. As a literary critic, he long bore the reputation of being an impostor, the savage and pedantic detractor of Pouchkine. He did, in fact, judge that poet's earlier works, inspired by his passion for Byron, with great severity. But he was one of the first, on the other hand, to applaud *Boris Godounov*. He was the pupil, in philosophy, of Oken and Schelling, and was the first Russian who spoke of thought as the soul of all artistic creation, and of art as the association of thought with form. He was the first, too, to conceive the idea that literature, as the expression of the conscious feeling of a nation, is one of the powerful forces which leads a people along the path of its natural development. He was little understood; he was another Tchatski.

Stephen Petrovitch Chévirev (1806-1864), Professor of Russian Literature at Moscow University, and fellow-editor, with Pogodine, of the *Muscovite*, embodies the very opposite extreme of contemporary criticism and the philosophy of art, as then existing. His surroundings and natural inclinations connected him with the Slavophiles. His lectures contain a well-balanced mixture of fact and hypothesis, to both of which he attributed the same dogmatic value. He asserted, with equal assurance, that Vladimir Monomachus was the author of a curious *Precept* intended for the use of his children, and that Hegel's teaching was founded on a set of ideas developed by Nikifor in an epistle to the said Vladimir. His *History of Poetry among Ancient and Modern Nations* (Moscow, 1835)

would be a useful compilation, if it were not marred by a fantastic judgment and love of paradox, both of the most disconcerting nature. These peculiarities Chévirev applied, with equal severity, in his appreciations of contemporary literature. Pouchkine, he said, would have done better to compose such an one of his poetical works in prose. Gogol's talent, he averred, had sprung from the influence of the Italian painters. Italian art was this learned oddity's favourite hobbyhorse. To put it plainly, he talked random nonsense.

The task of covering, under the guise of literary criticism, the immense field thus opened, and in which general intellectual chaos reigned, was too heavy for the mind of the average man. Even the great VISSARION GRIGORIÉVITCH BIÉLINSKI (1810-1848) had difficulty, for a while, in finding his true path.

The son of a military surgeon, he was a far from industrious student at the Moscow University, and an assiduous frequenter of the literary and philosophic coteries which swarmed in and around its walls. The largest of these was presided over by young Stankiévitich—a rich man, delicate in health, a dreamer, bitten with art and humanitarian notions. The members met in his house, and talked philosophy over the *samovars*. The kindly host knew his Schelling and Hegel by heart, and guided his guests through that world—so new to them—of abstract conceptions. His works, in poetry and prose, were not published until 1890. They prove his possession of a lofty spirit, a generous soul, a moderate intelligence, and a middling talent. According to the memory of him preserved by his contemporaries, Stankiévitich's ruling qualities were simplicity and kind-heartedness. Herzen wrote of him that even Tolstoï could have de-

tected "no *phrases* in his mouth." He wrote little,—had no time, alas! in his short life, to pile volume on volume. But he was the Mæcenas, and the intellectual interpreter, of a whole generation.

From 1834 onwards, Biéliniski, with the Akssakov brothers and the poets Kliouchnikov and Krassov, was numbered among Stankiévitsh's guests. Biéliniski was at that time making his first appearances in literary criticism in *The Molva* ("Rumour") and *The Telescope*. He might have been taken then to be a mere successor of Polevoï, with the same romantic spirit, the same fashion of looking on the artist or the poet as a being apart,—a believer struggling with his own imagination and the general stupidity; the same instinct of general denial.

This, the great critic's first campaign, insufficiently prepared and ill directed, was checked, in 1836, by the suppression of *The Telescope*. The catastrophe left Biéliniski without any means of support whatever. He fell sick, contrived—thanks to the help of friends—to go through a cure in the Caucasus, and did not reappear in Moscow until 1838. During this interval, a little revolution had taken place in the coterie of which Stankiévitsh still remained the centre. Schelling had been dethroned by Hegel and Fichte, and every member was expected to pay his homage to "concrete reality."

Dazzled by the brightness of the new revelation, conquered by the powerful logic of its arguments, unable to recognise the essential contradictions it involved, Biéliniski submitted blindly, took Chévirev's place as editor of the *Muscovite Observer*, and set himself to spread the new tenets. He took the famous phrase, "Everything which is, is reasonable," in its literal sense, and worshipped every manifestation of reality, including

despotism and serfdom. He preached the doctrine of "Hindoo quietism," and the avoidance of all protest and every struggle. He proscribed, in artistic matters, all direct participation in surrounding life, whether political or social. He would have excluded all satiric and even all lyric poetry. The only works of art to which he would ascribe an artistic value were those which embodied the expression of an objective and Olympian view of life. But he was soon to be forced to the conviction that this doctrine was creating a void in the neighbourhood of *The Observer*. In 1839 there were no more subscribers, and the review ceased to appear. Biéliniski, to support himself, left Moscow, and accepted an invitation to become a contributor to the *Annals of the Fatherland*, in St. Petersburg. But yet another revelation awaited him in the chief capital city of the Russian Empire.

There he saw and touched a reality which nothing on earth could make ideal, and which had not an adorable quality about it. His first struggles with it wounded him sorely, and broke down his faith. Biéliniski was of an age and temperament which made any conversion both swift and easy. Suddenly the literary critic took on the functions of an eager publicist, who, from analysing works of art, proceeded to analyse the society of which those works are but the expression, denouncing and stigmatising its lack of intellectual interests, its spirit of routine, the narrow selfishness of its middle class, the dissipation of its provincial life, the general dishonesty of its dealings with inferiors. A not less radical but logical change also occurred in his æsthetic views, and in his literary sympathies and antipathies. He was observed, not without astonishment, to praise contem-

porary French writers for the interest they took in current events, to fall into admiration before the works of George Sand, whose talent he had hitherto utterly denied. He went further ; he actually extolled Herzen ! He was a follower of Hegel still, but with a new interpretation of his doctrine, a new conception of the elements which go to the constitution of any reality, and a new power of making the necessary distinction between the evil and the good therein. The doctrine, thus modified, gave him the historic sense, taught him the laws of literary development, of which he had hitherto been ignorant, and made him repent of having so lately proclaimed that Russian literature had no real existence. By the year 1844, he was in a position to appreciate Pouchkine's work, and that of several of the poet's predecessors, at their proper value ; and the eighth volume of his works, which corresponds with this date, comprises a complete history of the national literature from Lomonossov's time down to that of the author of *Eugène Oniéguine*.

At this point he wielded considerable influence. It may fairly be said that the constellation of great writers of the day, among whom are numbered Gogol, Grigoro-vitch, Tourguéniev, Gontcharov, Nekrassov, and Dostoïevski, was trained in his school. And this school, by virtue of the realistic tone which governs it, is likewise the school of the great German philosopher, although in Gogol's case, realism, as I have already endeavoured to point out, must be regarded as being for the most part an indigenous product of the author's nature.

The two currents met. In 1846, after a fresh visit to Southern Russia, necessitated by the state of his health, which was going from bad to worse, Biéliniski



gave his assistance in editing *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*), which now employed the best literary talent of the country, under the direction of N. A. Nekrassov and I. I. Panaiev. In its columns, he broke several lances in defence of Gogol, and the new artistic formula of which he took the author of *Evenings at the Farm of Dikanka* to be the bearer. But all this time, he was drifting into sour and violent radicalism. His enforced and unpleasant relations with official circles in St. Petersburg, together with a longer and more practical acquaintance with his own profession, made him more and more clearly aware of the incompatibility between an influential and independent literature, and the despotic power of which he had formerly declared himself an adherent. And as he could not renounce any principle without deducing all that was consequent on the act, he was led to adopt the demeanour of a revolutionary. He was nicknamed "The Russian Marat," and the commandant of St. Petersburg never met him without jokingly inquiring, "When shall we have the pleasure of seeing you? I am keeping a good warm dungeon for you!"

The last years of his life were haunted by the terror of this fate, and but for the consumptive malady which carried him off in March 1848, at the age of thirty-eight, it would certainly have become a reality. His was an eager passionate nature. He always followed his convictions to the bitter end, and they were not less sincere for being so often changed. According to the testimony of his friend Panaiev, he never could see his own articles of the previous year in the columns of the *Annals of the Fatherland* without falling into a fury. He was *par excellence* an idealist and speculative theorist. One day,

in answer to a friend who reminded him of the dinner hour, he broke out, "What! we have not yet settled the question of God's existence, and you talk about eating!" In his first stage, Romanticism led him to the exaltation of individualism in himself and others, and to a contempt for humanity. Then he lost himself in Hegelian philosophy, as though in a forest. He may well be excused. The whole of Germany shared his condition for a while, and first-class intellects in every country have hesitated as to the interpretation of a system which, while it made art consist in the realisation of the ideas of beauty and truth—that is, in an abstraction—claimed to establish the fact that beauty and truth could not exist, except in concrete phenomena. Such contradictions caused no difficulty to Skankiévitch and his friends. They were all young men, drunk with philosophy. They accepted everything together—the concrete nature of truth, the logical method of thought, the law of logical development which was to unify all the phenomena of life—and never troubled themselves about the details. In the end Biéliniski showed more discernment; but, after the obscurity of the doctrine had kept him oscillating between absolute indifference to social problems and passionate interest in them, it drove him, at last, to confound society itself with literature.

He was always convinced he was right, and that, when he altered his opinion, he was, in his own words, "changing a kopek for a rouble." And amidst all the chops and changes of his mobile, restless, and ill-controlled mind, he succeeded not only in making great individual progress, but in causing considerable progress in those about him. To understand the relative value of

such a man as Diérjavine, and make others understand it, was a great thing in itself. He did more. By his own unaided intellectual labour he provided his countrymen with a starting-point on every ulterior line of literary criticism and artistic philosophy—the idealist and metaphysical Hegelian School, of which the most striking figures were Droujinine, Akhchsaroumov, N. Soloviov, and Edelsohn ; the theory of organic criticism, wherein some of the Slavophiles, I. Kiriéievski, C. Akssakov, and especially A. Grigoriév, endeavoured to reconcile art and the national element ; and the doctrine of the critical publicists, which Dostoïevski was to raise to the level of his own talent, and which Pissarev, following after Tchernichevski, was to cast into the lowest depths of ribald controversy.

Two writers of very dissimilar value succeeded him on *The Contemporary*. NICHOLAS GAVRILLOVITCH TCHERNICHEVSKI (1828–1889), philosopher, economist, critic, and novelist, has been called “the Robespierre of Russia.” He might have been more fairly compared with Mill, Proudhon, or Lassalle. The man so described has left us, in his scientific treatises, the theory or compendium of Russian radicalism, and in a heavy novel written in his prison, he has left us its poem or gospel.

For some time the Censure took no notice of him. In face of the philosophic propaganda of which Herzen had made London the centre, the Government had realised that scissor-thrusts and sentences of banishment were but a poor defence. To equalise the struggle, it had become necessary to unbind the hands of the writers already beyond the frontiers, and use them against the terrible assault now being delivered from without. Thus the press enjoyed a relative amount of

liberty, and Tchernichevski, ungovernable as he was, made heavy claims on the common freedom. As a result, there was a fresh contact with the West, and a further influx of foreign influence—principally English—in consequence. Thanks to Herzen, still, London was for some time the intellectual centre, whither men betook themselves in search of light. A considerable number of novels on social subjects, and the works of Mill, Buckle, Vogt, Moleschott, Ruge, and Feuerbach were translated.

Tchernichevski did all he could to stimulate this current, and, with the turn of mind to which I have referred, the use he made of it may be easily divined. He progressively emphasised Biéliniski's radicalism. In some of his pamphlets, published at Vevey and Geneva, he even went so far as to preach the annihilation of individual property, the suppression of the aristocracy, and the disbanding of the army. He was willing, as a provisional arrangement, to maintain the existence of the throne, but he would have hedged it round with democratic institutions. These pamphlets were not allowed to reach the eye of the Censure, but a certain amount of their teaching became apparent in articles in *The Contemporary*, and the Government made up its mind to take proceedings. In 1862 the daring editor was sent to Siberia, and there, in prison, he wrote his novel *What is to be done?* which was for years to be the gospel of the revolutionary youth of his country. The only value of the work, which is equally devoid of poetry and art, lies in the doctrines it evolves, and these possess neither originality, moderation, nor practicality. They are all in the sense of equality and communism, and drawn from German, English, or French authors, their only spice of special flavour

being due to that kind of mystic and visionary realism which has since become the characteristic mark of Russian Nihilism. Tchernichevski may fairly be considered, if not as the creator, at all events as the most responsible propagator of that mental condition which is born of the two contrary leanings of the Russian national temperament: I mean realism, and the taste for the absolute.

This book was also his literary and political Will and Testament. After twenty years in Siberia, seven of them spent at hard labour in the mines, and the remainder in one of the settlements nearest to the Polar Circle, there could be no question of any recommencement of his literary career when he was released in 1883. Aged, broken in health, he spent the closing years of his life in translating Weber's *Universal History*. By his literary criticisms he had contributed to destroy that Hegelian philosophy of beauty of which Biéliniski himself had already undertaken the destruction, after having pledged it his faith. But he was totally devoid of the æsthetic sense, and, after 1858, his contributions to *The Contemporary* in this department had been almost entirely replaced by those of another person.

It was NICHOLAS ALEXANDROVITCH DOBROLIOUBOV (1836-1860) who followed him, for all too short a period. His was one of the saddest destinies to be discovered in the history of any nation. His childhood was joyless, his youth knew no pleasures; he led the life first of a convict, and next of an ascetic. And then, after a few years of excessive toil, which was to wear out the frail husk of his over-eager spirit, death came. The knell of every ambition sounded for him, just as the first rays of glory touched that long-despised brow.

The writings of this unhappy man, gloomy and exag-

gerated in tone, bear the impress of this excess of misfortune. It is the work of a monk who would fain draw down the whole of humanity to the level of his own renunciation. Dobrolioubov, to whom life had never given anything, never seemed to realise that it might have something to bestow on others. Self-immolation for the common good was in his eyes not only an ideal, but a law, which he desired to impose on every one. His æsthetic notions lacked clearness, consistency, and, as a rule, novelty. From Biéliniski he borrowed his last formula, "Art for art's sake"; from Tchernichevski his conception of an art ruled by science, and was inspired by it to raise up poets who, like Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, and Byron, each represents, in his own epoch, a level of human consciousness far above that of common men.

But he had some original views of his own, as, for example, on the permanent existence in analogous social formations of certain social types. In this connection his analysis of Gontcharov's novel *Oblomov*, and his two articles on Ostrovski's plays, should be mentioned.

In his case, too, literary criticism was no more than the dust-coloured mantle under which those who attacked the social and political world of that period endeavoured to escape the vigilant eye of the police. In this matter he atoned for the frequent excesses of a judgment which was severe and implacable even to injustice, by an intense depth of feeling, and an admirable sincerity. It was as though he had dipped his pen in his own blood. And if there is something irritating and childish about his system of perpetual denial, applied to all the hallowed formulæ as well as to every established authority—Pouchkine's in literature, Pirogov's in science

—his not less constant pronouncements in favour of an ideal world, to be reconstructed on the basis of reason, nature, and humanity, mark out a programme which has not proved utterly utopian. It was to be partly realised by his own generation. The reform of social relations in Russia meant, before and above all other things, the emancipation of the serfs. And Dobrolioubov died in the very year during which one stroke of the pen called twenty-five millions of slaves to liberty.

Fault has been found with the *utilitarian* nature of his criticism ; and indeed this regrettable but inevitable result of the forced marriage between art and politics was to be perpetuated in contemporary journalism, and to be carried therein to the worst and most extravagant lengths. Dimitri Ivanovitch Pissarev (1840–1868), who pushed this system of judging artistic production solely by its social or political value—from the publishing and not from the æsthetic point of view—to the utmost limit of its necessary consequence, ended, like Dobrolioubov, in æsthetic nihilism. In the eyes of this pamphleteer, Lermontov and Pouchkine were “caricatures of poets,” “rhymesters for consumptive girls” ; and Goethe was “a bloated aristocrat, who reasoned in rhyme on subjects which possess no interest.” The progress of natural science he held to be the only thing that really concerned the human race. The expressions “art” and “ideal” were senseless words to him. This was to be very nearly the standpoint taken up by *Bazarov*, the famous prototype of the Nihilists in Tourguéniev’s novel. When it appeared, Pissarev did not fail to undertake the defence of this character. He complacently played the part of the journalistic *enfant terrible*, and therein displayed considerable talent, a fact which may be accepted

as an excuse for the huge success which greeted his performances.

At the moment of his greatest popularity, which coincided with that period of extreme agitation, political and literary, known as that of "the Sixties," the nature of which I shall later endeavour to define, he had rivals, and was exposed to the literary criticism of such men as Pypine, Galakhov, Tikhonravov, men of a very different type, and of far more serious weight.

I shall endeavour to do them justice at the close of this book, when I give my readers a general view of the latest manifestations of intellectual life in Russia. I must now return to the period preceding "the Forties," in order to examine briefly another current of the great march of ideas of which it witnessed the development—I mean "Slavophilism."

#### SLAVOPHILISM.

I have already referred to the presence of Kiriéievski and Akssakov in the coterie of Stankiévitsh and Biéliniski. The two schools possessed, in fact, one common starting-point—the study of German philosophy and the worship of the national element. This worship, of ancient origin, was quite independent of the Nationalist movement, properly so called, which was diffused through Europe in later years by the agency of the German philosophy. But when the philosophy of Hegel and its conception of the "National idea," which was to be the basis of the historical development of nations, took root in the University of Moscow, it necessarily drew the local patriotic feeling closer to the great European current. After 1820, this idea revolutionised the whole



Continent, and even stirred the semi-barbarous populations of Greece. Was Russia to be the only country that did not feel the concussion? Was not she, too, to find an *idea* to develop—*her own* idea—her intellectual and ethical birthright, to be claimed in the face of all the world?

There is this peculiarity about the abstract world, that we are always sure of finding what we want in it, because imagination can always supply what reality lacks. Trouble was lavished on every side, but by the time success crowned the search, it had become evident that no concert existed between the parties. The great schism between the Occidental and the Slavophil had come into existence. In Tchadaïev's eyes, as in those of Biéliniski, the separation between Russia and the other European countries amounted purely and simply to a difference of level, and the object they would have pursued was to regulate this difference, not by assimilation of the external forms of European civilisation, but by appropriation of the inner principles of its development. The pride of the founders of the Slavophil school could not stomach this solution. They desired an *autonomous* ideal. Just at this moment the group accepted, with some grumbling, a new disciple of the Hegelian doctrine, the youthful Timofér Nicolaiévitch Granovski (1813-1855), a friend of Biéliniski and Herzen, who, on his return from abroad (1843), had made a sensation in Moscow by his public lectures on the history of the Middle Ages—a history in which the ancient glories of Moscow and of the Orthodox Church found no place at all. Might not Russia, if she grasped the meaning and sense of her own existence, Slav and Orthodox, lay the foundation, on her own account, of a

new phase in human development? Might she not more legitimately aspire to the realisation of that combination of the elements of national culture to which Germany alone, according to Hegel, had been called? But why Russia? On this point there was grave disagreement, even in the bosom of the budding school. Because, said some, she was *tabula rasa*, with no historical traditions to stand in the way of unification. Because, suggested others, the democratic and humanitarian ideal to be attained agreed with those historical traditions whereby the Russia of Rurik, of Vladimir, and Ivan, equally escaped the religious autocracy of Rome and the political autocracy of the Western states, and rather approached the communistic system on which the social structure of the future will be based.

The providence which watches over all faiths prevented an initial contradiction from prejudicing the advent and doctrinal unity of this one. I. Kiriéievski declared his adhesion to the theory; Khomiakov undertook to state it dogmatically; Valouiev, Samarine, and C. Akssakov to justify it historically. The speculative elements of the new belief were to be found in abundance in the teachings of Schelling and Hegel. For dogmatic questions, the Byzantine theologians were brought under contribution. Karamzine's optimistic treatment of history did the rest.

In *The European*, a publication which he edited from 1831 onwards, Ivan Vassiliévitch Kiriéievski (1806-1856) had made his first appearance in the character of a confirmed Occidental. The very name of his newspaper proved the fact. The suppression of this sheet, owing to the over-bold reflections on the future of the nineteenth century, and the general influence of his brother,

Peter Kiriéíévski (1808–1846), an ethnographer and collector of popular songs, drove the silenced publisher in the direction of the Slavophil party. After 1856, this party had its own special organ, the *Russian Discourse* (*Rousskaïa Biessiéda*), and in two important critiques—"On the Nature of European Culture" and "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Philosophical Principles"—published in its columns, Ivan Vassiliévitch formulated a kind of Greco-Slav neo-philosophy. European culture, he held, had reached the end of its career and the limit of its development, without having succeeded in giving humanity anything beyond a sense of self-discontent and a consciousness of its inability to satisfy its own longings. The antique world had already found itself in the same condition of internal bankruptcy, and had endeavoured to escape by borrowing fresh vital principles from nations whose past history possessed no glorious pages. The modern European world was to recommence this experience, and cast itself into the arms of the Slavo-Greek, Russian, and Orthodox communion.

Thus prophesied Kiriéíévski. Alexis Stéfanovitch Khomiakov (1804–1860) followed him, in an endeavour to state the reasons of the prophet's dictum. Khomiakov was a poet, and poets are never short of reasons. His tragedies *Yermak* and *The Mock Demetrius*, written in his youth, almost place him on the same level as Koukolnik. We note the same pompous enthusiasm for ancient Russia, with all its silly tendencies, and the same stiff rhetoric. His poems give proof of greater maturity, but of an utter absence of sentiment and art. Those which attracted most attention were written during the Crimean War, and contain an assortment of disserta-

tions on the theory of the union of all the Slav races and the repudiation of "the Western yoke." The poet loved argument. He was born to be a theologian. After 1855 he devoted himself entirely to that line, and published abroad, in French and English, a series of books and tracts, such as *Some Words on the Western Churches, by an Orthodox Christian* (Leipzig, 1855); *The Latin Church and Protestantism from the Standpoint of the Eastern Church* (Leipzig, 1858, and Lausanne, 1872). I. Samarine, who was his publisher, treated the author as a "Doctor of the Church," and in his own way, Khomiakov deserved the honour. To the moribund world of the Romano-German (Catholic and Protestant) civilisation, he opposed the "idea," still in course of development, of the Greco-Slavonic world, which was shortly to found a religious community within whose bosom all the children of Europe should find shelter—the heaven-sent instrument of a fusion which was to harmonise all the bitter antagonisms of Russian life. And as a further demonstration of the merits of this perfect agreement with the traditions and habits of his country, Khomiakov openly blamed the reforms of Peter the Great, and boldly wore the *kaftan* and the *mourmolka*, the symbolic value of which articles of dress he had learnt from his friends Valoniev and I. Samarine.

Dmitri Valoniev, who was prematurely cut off by death in 1845, was the statistician and ethnographer of the group. His study of comparative statistics had brought him to the conclusion that the natural outcome of Western civilisation must necessarily be moral sybaritism, and from this conclusion he deduced the necessity for Russia to move along some other path. There was plenty of choice before her. At the very

starting-point of her history she had realised the true principle of a Christian society and a Christian state, of which the Western form was a mere deformation. This theory, sketched out by I. Samarine in *The Muscovite*, in the course of a controversy with C. Kavéline, one of the contributors to *The Contemporary*, was to take definite shape under the pen of C. Akssakov.

According to Samarine (died 1876), Russian organisation has always been essentially based on the communal system (*obchtchina*), and thus assumed spontaneously, and from the very outset, the form which only now, when it is too late, is becoming the object and ideal of Western society. This conception of the part which the ancient Russian "commune" is destined to play in history was to exercise considerable influence over the solution of the numerous problems connected with the emancipation of the serfs, and it is on this ground that Occidentals of the type of Herzen met I. Samarine, who, as is well known, was one of the most active promoters of this great work of freedom. He played his part both in the labours of the Commission appointed by Alexander II. in 1858, to study the reform, and in the controversy on economic and social questions it engendered. He was more a man of letters than a historian, was too apt to supply the place of knowledge by imagination, and was thus incapable of giving the doctrine that appearance of solidity indispensable to its acceptance by the masses.

This work was accomplished by Constantine Serguiéievitch Akssakov (1817-1860). This man was an idealist *par excellence*, who looked at his idea with a lover's eyes, and gave it all his devotion. The story goes, that he never possessed any other mistress. The idea which he

has succeeded in embodying, in a marvellously subtle mixture of hallucination and real knowledge, is as follows. It strikes one as a desperate paradox ; the word, perhaps, is scarcely strong enough, but that is no fault of mine. The Russian State, the outcome of a twofold act of free-will—the appeal to the Varegian princes and the acceptance of the Christian faith—is, of all the European states, the only one founded in its essential existence and principle on liberty ! Unlike the Western states, which all proceed from violence, and are led, by violence, to political revolution and religious schism, the Russian State, alone, owes the maintenance of the unity of the faith and the willingly respected unity of power, to its own liberty. It was Akssakov's pleasing task, as he travelled over the whole history of the nation, to shed light upon the successive manifestations of this exceptional phenomenon, the childlike docility with which it accepted baptism, and the constant exemplifications of the close union between the sovereign and his people, bound together in a common faith and common customs.

To put life into his theory, he had recourse to poetry and the drama, drawing in *The Prince Loupouvitski* and in *Moscow Delivered in 1812*, the contrast between the healthy naturalness of the people, and the corrupt culture of the upper classes. There is more poetic talent in his studies of history and literary critiques. He died of consumption in the island of Zante, and left the leadership of the Moscow group of the Slavophil party to his brother Ivan (1823–1886), the least gifted, certainly, but yet, thanks to his practical mind and first-rate talent as a writer, the most popular and influential member of his family.

Ivan Serguieiévitch Akssakov, too, began as a poet, then

collaborated with the Imperial Geographical Society, and published an excellent monograph on the Ukraine fairs. In 1861 he became editor of a succession of Slavophil publications, all democratic and Panslavist in their tendency, such as *The Day, Moscow, &c.*, which disappeared, one after the other, under the rod of the Censure. Not that they contained revolutionary teachings. The fault found with Ivan Serguïéévitch was rather that he was more royalist than the king himself. He was banished in consequence of a speech made on June 22, 1878, at a meeting of the "Slav Committee" of Moscow. In it he had thundered against the "infamy" of the Berlin Congress and the "treason" of the Russian diplomats attending it, who had plotted the shame of their country. After 1880 he directed *The Rous*, a weekly publication, in which he principally occupied himself in waging war with the Liberalism of St. Petersburg.

The fundamental error of this school consists, as it seems to me, in the origin it attributes to the "National idea."

The Kiriéévskis have fancied they discovered this in the reality of an historical past which had been carelessly studied, whereas it really was an abstract product of their own imaginations, and more than half Western, to boot,—the fruit of their intercourse with foreign philosophy. Tchernichevski had undertaken to convince them that this very portion of their theory, which insisted on the corruption of the West and its incapacity for any ulterior development, was itself of Western origin, not borrowed, indeed, from the great thinkers of France and Germany, but from the second-rate philosophers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the *Revue*

*Contemporaine* and the *Revue de Paris*. An idea, supported by arguments drawn from this doubtful source, could not stand the test of a more thorough study of the past. No sooner did it come into contact with the truth of the national history, as unveiled by Karamzine's successors, than it faded out, killed by such facts as *The Raskol*, which expressly demonstrates the impossibility of the supposed existence, centuries old, of a state of religious unity. And the only manner in which the Slavophil school has been able to maintain its ideal, and deduce a civilising principle from it, is by abstracting these realities and turning history into romance.

Every nation, indeed, has passed through the same ideological crisis; it is a disease connected with the growth. In France it was very apparent during the sixteenth century, when Hotman, a Swiss, advocated a return to the traditions of ancient Gaul. Russian Slavophilism is also connected, by sympathy and synchrony, with a huge wave of European movement;—the national renaissance in Bohemia, inaugurated by Dobrovski, Szafarzyk, and Kollar; the Illyrianism diffused among the Southern Slavs by Louis Gay; the patriotic mysticism of Mickcewicz, Towianski, and Slowacki; Germanophilism, a century and a half old, but active still; and the struggle of the old national party against liberalism in Denmark. Khomiakov had wound up his European tour by a visit to the Slav countries, and had entered into personal relations with the principal leaders of the national propaganda there.

His efforts, and those of his fellow-believers, have not been entirely barren. If they have not, as some of them have too ambitiously boasted, made the study of the fundamental features of the national character



an indispensable feature of this period, they have, at all events, imparted a fresh impulse to their consideration. We have already noted that in artistic literature a movement in that direction had taken place, previously and independently. And with the exception of Dostoïevski, the school has not, as yet, produced any good writer in this particular line. Tourguéniev did not belong to it, and when Gogol joined it, the sun of his artistic power had set. But from the social and scientific point of view, the Kiriéïévskis and the Akssakovs may claim other titles to glory. It is much to have pointed to the popular element as the basis of social development, and the vital principle of the national life, at a moment when the people of the country actually possessed no legal existence. The assertion caused a change in the direction of the study of the nation's past, and the great school of history, which, in the period between 1840 and 1870, brought this science in Russia to a level with that of the West, was the result.

To this Slavophilism has contributed, even by its errors. Its wanderings through the mazes of an imaginary and fanciful history necessarily induced historical criticism and reconstruction. Thus it was perceived, at last, that Karamzine's work must be done again, and also that of M. Pogodine (died 1873), the defender of the "Norman theory," that is, the Norman origin of the first Varegians, against Vénéline (died 1839), and his disciples, Savéliév-Rostislavitch and Morochkine. A Slavophil, a Panslavist, and yet as fervid an admirer of Peter the Great as N. Oustrialov himself, Pogodine, that "Clio in uniform, with the collar of knighthood," as a German critic called him, is the vassal, in some respects, of the patriotically fervent mysticism which seems more or

less to saturate every contemporary school in Russia. Oustrialov has the advantage over him, in being almost free from it. In his *History of Russia* and in his six-volumed biography (unfinished) of Peter the Great, both of them carefully prepared, but devoid of any critical instinct, he contents himself with being official. The seven volumes of Pogodine's works published between 1846 and 1859 are exceedingly entertaining reading, but bear traces of insufficient scientific preparation.

A great work was begun in this respect by the establishment, under Nicholas I., of an Archeographical Commission and Expedition; by the institution of professorships of Slav philology in the Universities, and by the use made of foreign, and especially of German Universities, for the training of such professors. The result is seen in a new generation of historians, of whom the most eminent were Kalatchov, Kavéline, Afanassiev, Bousslaiev, Zabiéline, S. M. SOLOVIOV (1820-1879), and N. I. KOSTOMAROV (1817-1885). This was their programme: To regard history as an organic whole, capable of development according to certain laws to be fixed; to give the foremost place in the study of this organic whole to the examination of its modes of existence, political institutions, laws, economy, manners and customs. C. D. Kavéline (1818-1855), who strove to carry out this programme in a series of brilliant treatises, has touched on the most interesting questions of the political and economic life, and also on the general culture of his country. F. I. Bousslaiev (1815-1870) not only imported the comparative method into the study of the national language, but also brought the moral basis of the popular feeling, as expressed in the national poetry, into strong relief.

Soloviov's treatise on *The Relations between the Russian Princes of the House of Rurik* (1847) marked an era in Russian historical literature. His great *History of Russia* in twenty-nine volumes, begun in 1851, is to this day a mine on which we all draw. The last volumes, especially, are no more than a hastily arranged collection of material. Like a great number of his Russian rivals, the author planned a task that was beyond human power. His conception was too vast, and his strength giving out before the work was completed, the house that he began like an architect was finished as by a bricklayer's labourer. But the material is of the finest, and in the earlier volumes we see that it has been collected by a master-hand. The writer, in fact, belonged to no party except that of truth. There was nothing of the professional political writer about him, no pushing of special tendencies and doctrines. Coldly, conscientiously, calmly, he draws up his statement; and his style suits his method—a little dry, but admirably clear, sober, and tranquil. His life matched his work; it was one of retirement and labour, utterly unconcerned with external events, shut in between his study, his professorial chair at the Moscow University, and his archives—the pure and noble figure of a learned man.

N. I. Kostomarov, who, with M. Pogodine, was the hero of the public tournament in the amphitheatre of the St. Petersburg University, which caused such a stir in March 1860, is a much more complex personage, with a far more varied career. Author of a treatise on *The Historical Meanings of Popular Poetry* (1843), and of a *Slav Mythology* (1847), he devoted many of his numerous monographs to literary and even dramatic subjects. At the same time, he attempted novel-writing, with *The*

*Son* (1865), a fairly pretty tale on the subject of Stenka Razine's Cossack rebellion, and *Koudliar* (1875), an important historical narrative, founded on the political troubles of the sixteenth century, which was a complete failure. But contemporary politics also attracted Kostomarov. Science, in his case, was an integral part of life. His studies of Little-Russian poetry enticed him for a moment into writing in the language of that country, and in 1847 he was suspected, like Chevtchenko and Koulich, of active participation in the separatist movement. This earned him several months of imprisonment, a prolonged banishment to Saratov, and, in the eyes of the youth of that period, the reputation of a defender of liberalism, and a martyr to its cause. He was pardoned in 1855, and proceeded to publish, in the *Annals of the Fatherland*, that fine series of monographs, *Bogdane Khmel'nitski*, *The Rebellion of Stenka Razine*, and *The Commerce of the Muscovite State in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, which has crowned his reputation with glory. A little later, after a stay abroad, Kostomarov took an active part in the labours which led up to the enfranchisement of the serfs. For a short time he held a professorship at the University of St. Petersburg, but was obliged to vacate it in consequence of the disturbances among the students in 1862. His active career was now closed, but the writer remained. He published, at the expense of the Archæographical Society, eleven volumes of documents bearing on the history of the south-west provinces, and continued to issue his monographs, which number thirteen all told. They have, for the most part, as much romance as history in their composition, and are written, as a rule, with the object of pushing some particular view. That de-

voted to *The Republics of Northern Russia* reveals the author's sympathy with free institutions, and the democratic ideal. In others he defends the ethnographic autonomy of Little Russia with arguments more passionate than sound, but his theories are always served by his first-rate talent as a story-teller.

Kostomarov supported the theory of the federative system in ancient Russia, in opposition to that of C. Akssakov, which attributed a preponderating share in the organisation of the country to the provincial parliaments. He broke more than one lance with Pogodine concerning Rurik's Norman origin. He joined with Slavophiles of every shade in defending liberal ideas. For from its earliest origin, the school was liberal and progressive, even in the person of that representative who, in our day and in its name, has waved the banner of reaction higher than all other men. I mean Michael Katkoff. And from this school was sent out, after 1860, that watchword, "Go out amongst the people!" which has since been so decried and ridiculed, but which then stirred all that was best in the social world—the expression of a deep and unerring instinct, the fruit of a true conception—that of the necessity for gathering every social force to labour for the common salvation. P. Kiriéievski's collection of popular songs was nothing but an excursion into the ranks of the people, and so were Rybnikov's later journeys through the province of Olonetz, continued by Hilferding, D. Rovinski's labours in the field of popular iconography, and Tolstor's legendary work at Iasnaïa Poliana.

A short view of the political evolution which accompanied and occasioned these enterprises, between 1840 and 1880, now becomes indispensable.

## POLITICAL EVOLUTION.

Slavophilism, when it recognised a manifestation of its "idea" in the twofold emancipatory movement which parted the national literature from the Western models, and at the same time brought the masses nearer to the hour of their comparative freedom, rendered service, direct or indirect, to each of these causes. Until 1860, Katkov and Herzen marched hand in hand, though the Russian frontier lay between them. That special form of the revolutionary movement which Tourguéniev is said to have dubbed, in 1862, with the name of *Nihilism*—the origin of which, however, dates from 1855—did not divide them. "Nihilism only appeared among us because we are all Nihilists," writes Dostoïevski. And indeed, before 1861, all the more important organs of the press had been gained over to the ideas on which the movement so described was founded. So long as it confined itself to mere speculation, it alarmed nobody, and seemed, indeed, to correspond with the common aspirations of all liberals.

The liberation of the serfs in 1861 involved a sudden leap from the empyrean heaven of ideas, into the world of concrete fact, and the moment conception took tangible shape it seemed alive with monstrous forms. Peasant insurrections in the Volga region; student riots at St. Petersburg, at Kiév, at Kharkov; the appearance of the "red cock,"—a rising *en masse* of incendiaries, followed by others bearing bombs—there was some cause for alarm. Meanwhile the press worked furiously. Following the current of European thought, it had, since 1840, moved towards a clearer conception of the problems calling

for solution. It had assimilated the successive developments of the Hegelian theory, the teachings of the Positivists, of political economy, and sociology. It had now reached the stage of practical application. The newspapers were not sufficiently numerous for the work to be done. Besides the liberal or radical periodicals, such as I. Akssakov's *The Day*, and Dostoïevski's *The Times*, revolutionary pamphlets and booklets poured forth in streams—the echo of the tocsin which Herzen continued to ring, deepening the universal mental confusion and agitation. The Government strove to create a reaction, sent out still more severe instructions to the Censure, suppressed three newspapers, and arrested Tchernichevski. It was all in vain. The local press was silenced, but the tocsin beyond the frontier rang more furiously than ever, and the circulation of numbers of *The Bell* throughout the country, and even in the sovereign's own circle, proved a secret understanding with English publicists. The very silence of the press organs gagged by the Censure, which soon became voluntary and systematic, tended to throw the public yet more completely under the influence of this propaganda from without.

At this moment, MICHAEL KATKOV (1820–1887) revealed himself in a new and unexpected character. He had begun in the teaching career as a professor at the Moscow University, and had taken up journalism as the editor of the *Russian Messenger*, the most liberal and Anglomaniac organ of the period. This editorship he combined, in and after 1861, with that of the *Moscow Gazette*. In his paper he defended the cause of progress, expatiated on the advantages of *self-government* and decentralisation, and denounced the vices of despotism,

with unprecedented boldness. He now became convinced that Herzen, with his friends Ogariov and Bakounine, were leading liberalism astray. And resolutely, formally, he broke the alliance which had so long bound him to the too adventurous champions of a cause which, he believed, they were endangering. He openly denounced them as being responsible for the unjustifiable violence into which a portion of the progressive party had allowed itself to be drawn, and also for the measures of repression, too justly deserved, which had been elicited by it. He laid passionate stress on the utopian and chimerical nature of the conception of society they promulgated.

The effect was striking. Instantly a nucleus of conservative resistance gathered round the bold controversialist. The Polish insurrection, which occurred in the course of the following year, furnished him with fresh arguments and a solid fulcrum, that of the resistance and rebellion of the national feeling. At the same time, it accentuated the retrograde tendency of his group. Herzen, faithful to his own principles, risked his popularity on the most dangerous of hazards, by making common cause with the insurgents. The few liberal organs spared by the Censure, true to their mutual understanding, betrayed a similar sympathy by their continued silence. In the midst of the lull, Katkov's voice was raised once more. In eloquent language he affirmed the existence of a criminal, and, indeed, a somewhat fictitious, agreement between the events actually taking place at Warsaw and those with which the revolutionary agitation nursed by London and Paris fanatics threatened the peace of Russia. In the name of the national ideal, the future of which was threatened, in the name even of



the ancient popular rights, the reconstitution of which in the Lithuanian provinces would be prevented by the triumph of the Polish element, he demanded the suppression of the insurrection, and the complete annexation of Poland.

Such a suggestion as Katkov's was sure to find numerous and willing hearers. It was echoed even in the foremost ranks of the liberal party. Before very long, the Russification and nationalisation of all the heterogeneous elements composing Catherine II.'s mighty inheritance was to be the common war-cry of all liberals, and at their head, Katkov, whose neo-conservatism was gradually gathering strength, exercised powers resembling those of a dictator. The Government itself had to submit, and did it, indeed, with a good grace. The pretensions of a nobility which had suddenly fallen in love with representative institutions, and the continuation of the enterprises of the revolutionary party, which culminated, in 1866, in Karakazov's attempt, forced it into the most absolutely reactionary course. Mouraviov had no sooner finished his work in Poland, than he was summoned to repeat it on the Nihilists in Russia. Ministers and functionaries of moderate views, Valouiev, Golovine, Prince Souvorov, made way for others of the most retrograde opinions, such as Prince Gagarin and Count Chouvalov. An abyss yawned, into which the whole of Katkov's past liberalism fell, and left not a trace behind. The dictator was forced to obey the common law of popular movements. Soon, leader though he was, he had to follow his own soldiers, and he ended, from the fervent autonomist he had once been, by being the proscriber of all local initiative, as a sin against the rights of absolute monarchy, as the sacrificer of every

ethnographic autonomy on the altar of national unity, and finally, alack ! as an officious informer, who scented revolution and treason everywhere, and, with C. Léontiev, as an educational reformer who would have all teaching brought back to the classic traditions, and the superannuated methods of a bygone period. So thoroughly did he do his work, that not a sign remained, in his contemporaries' eyes, of the brilliant furrow he had traced, in the early part of his career, across a period to which I shall rejoice to return, in order to call up the memory of its artistic and intellectual splendours.

Yet in so doing I shall not escape from some of those political and scientific problems to which I have just referred. One of the consequences of the régime imposed on the Russian press has been, and is, that all investigations and discussions of this nature are forced into a province not entirely fitted for them, that a veil of romance or poetry must be cast over things and subjects most unsuited to this treatment, and that the imagination, and all the temptations connected therewith, must be mixed up in questions which should be treated by methods of the severest simplicity. Art itself has had reason to murmur against the authors of these adulterous unions, even when their names were Gogol and Tourguéniev. Reason and truth have suffered even more, when the writer who thus disguised them bore the name of Tolstoï.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LERMONTOV, GOGOL, AND TOURGUÉNIEV

LAST winter, in the Parisian drawing-room of a great Russian lady, I was present at the reading of a French translation of *The Demon*. The author's name was unknown to half of the assembled audience. The translation, graceful and faithful as it was, could only very partially render the beauties of the work. At first the attitude of the company was somewhat careless, though polite. But as the incidents of the drama were unfolded, I read in the shining eyes and parted lips about me, that the poet and his interpreter had won over that elegant swarm of gay and *blasé* beings. "What passion!" one lady murmured. And she spoke truly. Called from the wild slopes of the Caucasian mountains, by the vivid imagination of Lermontov, a torrent of burning lava flowed in waves of harmony into the hearts of his hearers.

Even prior to this experience, I had always declined to follow tradition by placing this particular poet in the same pleiad with Pouchkine. To me he seemed evidently to belong to another intellectual group, that of Biéliniski, of Gogol, and of the Slavophil school. With a somewhat childish instinct of defiance, he has chosen to take up a certain number of the subjects already treated by the author of *Eugène Oniéguine*. He, too, was resolved to conjure up his *Prophet*, who has proved less of an Isaiah than of a Jeremiah or an Ezekiel—the disregarded bearer

of sublime truths, at whom men cast stones, and at whom the old point with their fingers, saying to the children, "See how he is despised!" Like Pouchkine, and within similar limits, he has felt the Byronic influence, but, unlike Pouchkine, he has never cut himself off from the political and social progress of his time, and from the problems therein to be found. His despair and melancholy arose, in part at least, more out of the common sadness and alarm than out of his own selfish disgust, and I am not inclined to think that if his life had been prolonged, he would have accepted clemency, and even favours, from Nicholas, nor would have appeared a domesticated, submissive, and contented subject of the Tsar.

But for Byron, Lermontov might perhaps have provided the Slavophil faith with that complement of artistic expression it still lacks. The poem—I regard it as his master-piece—in which he conjures up the figure of Ivan Vassiliévitch proves his possession of the requisite powers. In those of his works (such as *Ismail-Bey*) which are more directly inspired by the English poet, the *Nationalist* tendency is still visible; the West, doomed and depraved, gives way before the regenerating East. In *Sacha*—a posthumous work, probably dating from about 1838—the 147th and 148th lines contain imprecations against Germany which might have been written yesterday. Yet the poet never wholly accepts the doctrines of Kiriéievski and Akssakov.

Nor did it ever occur to him to calculate the greatness of his country on the number of swords she could draw, nor to become "the patriot of brutality," as Brandes powerfully describes Pouchkine. But he was proud of his race to the highest degree, and this in spite of the

fact that a pretentiousness—also the result of Byron's influence—induced him to claim descent now from the Spanish family of *Lerma*, and again from the Scottish Learmonths, who owned an ancient tower on the Tweed, near Sir Walter Scott's house of Abbotsford. But though he was fond of talking about "leaving the country of snows and police-agents" and going back to "my Scotland," he had all the distinctive features of the Russian—his uneasy sensitiveness, his lofty imagination, his infinite sadness. Tourguéniev remarked upon his eyes, "which never laughed, even when he laughed himself!"

The parents of MICHAEL IOURIÉVITCH LERMONTOV (1811–1841) possessed no castle, either on Tweed banks or elsewhere. They were small nobles in the government of Toula, and were really, if we may trust the poet's biographers, of Scottish origin. One of their ancestors, George Learmonth, is said to have left his country in the seventeenth century, and taken service with the Tsar Michael Fiodorovitch. Michael Iouriévitch received a careful education, as those times went. He had a German nurse, and even a French tutor, who taught him to worship Napoleon, and inspired him with a taste for French poetry, but who did not prevent him, in later years, from envying Pouchkine his *Arina Rodionovna*, and the old nurse's folk-tales, "which had more poetry in them than the whole of French literature." Dismissed from the University for some trifling escapade, he spent two years in the military school, and lived the life of the ordinary officer of the day, save that he put "a little poetry into his champagne." His earliest efforts, *The Fête at Peterhof* and *Oulanha* (the handbooks of Russian literature describe them as "epic"; I should rather have called them indelicate), belong to this period (1832–1834)

and bear its seal. He was a cornet in the Hussars of the Guard when a St. Petersburg review published his first Oriental sketch, *Hadji-Abrek*, which is essentially Byronian in form.

In Russia the study of English literature and poetry was always somewhat inadequate and fragmentary. The subject was not considered in its completeness, nor was any individual work studied in its entirety. Before the advent of Byron, Walter Scott was for many years the only English author at all generally known: At the time of Lermontov's greatest devotion to Byron, he was unacquainted with Shelley, and even of Byron himself; neither his imagination nor his inspiration imbibed more than some special features. No Russian Anglomaniac of that period ever dreamt of sacrificing himself, like Byron, like Shelley, for Greece or for Ireland, or like Landor, for Spain. And if there was no sign in the pages of *Eugène Oniéguine* of that mighty panorama of satire in which the author of *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold* pilloried the European world, with all the hypocrisies of its morals and social organisation, neither do Lermontov's Oriental sketches, nor even the more matured works of his later days, such as *The Demon* and *The Hero of our Own Times*, reflect more than some explosive flashes of the Byronic sun—pride, free thought, sardonic laughter, and an artificial cynicism and demonism. The humanitarian ray is lacking.

The Russian and the Englishman could not fully agree, even in their common worship of Napoleon. While Byron reproached the "god of battles" for his falsehood to the revolutionary idea, and really only succeeded in adoring his idol after its fall, when he was inspired with scorn and rage against the "jackals preying

on the dying lion," it never occurred to Lermontov to discuss his deity, and after the catastrophe he lays the blame, naïvely and flatly, on the French nation, which he holds guilty of having betrayed and forsaken its glorious hero, or rather—and how Russian is the touch!—its sovereign! The pessimism of the author of *The Demon* sprang partly from another, and, we must confess, a less noble source. The cornet of hussars possessed none of the elegance and charm of his English model. Ill-made, awkward in society, where, by his own confession, he "could not utter a word," his inferiority, bitterly felt, made him sulky, cross-grained, and vindictive. Men, as a rule, detested him. He made love to the fair sex, but more especially, it would seem, for the sake of the spiteful pleasure of forsaking the woman whose favour he had won. Though quite as self-conscious and self-centred as Byron, quite capable of saying, "The person whose company gives me most pleasure is myself . . . I am my own best friend"—quite as ambitious, "desiring to leave traces of his passage everywhere"—Lermontov was utterly incapable of saying, like Byron, "I love, thee, man, not less, but Nature more!" or that to desire "to fly from, need not mean to hate mankind." On the contrary, he deliberately gave himself out to be a man-hater. The bits of blue sky overhead, to which the English poet loved to raise his eyes, had no existence for his Russian *confrère*. His horizon was always gloomy, laden with clouds, heavy with thunder.

We have been told that this deformed and half-starved Byronism, by giving Lermontov, from the purely æsthetic standpoint, a taste for the brilliant imagery, the sonorous language, and the humour and pathos of the English

poet, did him the service of snatching him from the habits and surroundings of a mere cavalry officer, and revealing to him a higher world of feeling and thought. I should be much more disposed to blame it as having tempted the Russian poet away from other springs of inspiration, more suited to his powers and natural temperament. He drew nearer to these, for a moment, at the time of Pouchkine's death. He had "Byronised" up till that time without much success, and led, meanwhile, a foolish roistering life, some incidents of which he has chosen to relate in *Mongo*, and in *The Princess Ligovskaia*. The tragic end of his rival, done to death by a drawing-room conspiracy, roused him into a transport of rage and judicial indignation—"The poet is dead, the victim of honour!" The verses, which, like Pouchkine's epigrams, were circulated in manuscript, earned Lermontov a year of exile to the Caucasus. Here *The Demon*, the plan of which had been conceived and sketched out some years before, was recast. The subject is evidently suggested, indirectly, by Byron's *Heaven and Earth*, and more directly by De Vigny's *Eloa*; but in the hands of the Russian poet the characters and the setting of the story have both undergone a complete transformation. For the fanciful and, to some extent, abstract landscape of the French writer, he has substituted the real magnificence of Nature in the Caucasus, which had already cast its spell over Pouchkine. But the scenes which by the latter were coldly, and we may almost say topographically, described, rise lifelike before us under the pen which, in Lermontov's hand, seems to tremble under the breath of love. And the heroine of his poem is no longer the symbolic virgin, born of a tear dropped by the Christ, who held De



Vigny's enamoured fancy, but a living passionate being—a Jewess of the Babylonian Captivity in the first sketch of the work—then a Spanish nun, and finally a Georgian princess. She has less ideal nobility about her than De Vigny's heroine, but she has more human reality. She does not yield to the compassionate longing to save her seducer by her love. She obeys the imperious behest of love itself, the cry of her own heart and senses. And she is only the secondary figure in the poem. The leading part is that of the Demon himself.

It is somewhat difficult to judge of the poet's conception on this point. All we have, indeed, is the mutilated form to which it has been reduced by his own precaution and reticence, with a view to the Censor, and by the subsequent pruning executed by that functionary. The hero, as he thus appears to us, has nothing in common with Byron's "Lucifer" and Milton's "Satan," both of them personifications of the *Demon-thought* which raises man while it torments him. The seducer of Tamara, the fair Circassian, though he calls himself "king of knowledge and of liberty," does nothing to justify his title, in no way proves his superiority in the sphere of intellect, and gives no sign anywhere of that spirit of revolutionary protest, that longing for power and activity, which have set Byron's "Lucifer" at the head of all the agitators and national leaders of the nineteenth century, just as Milton's "Satan" incarnates the intellectual struggle of the seventeenth, and Carducci's *Inno a Satana* represents the *forza vindice della ragione* of our own day. This sensual demon approaches much more nearly to the type created by De Vigny. "*J'ai fondé mon empire de flamme—dans les désirs du cœur*

—dans les rêves de l'âme—dans les désirs du corps—  
*attraits mystérieux.*" But in Lermontov's *Demon* this  
 last feature is worked up into an over-mastering eroti-  
 cism, which appears to have been the dominant note in  
 the poet's own temperament.

I must repeat that *The Demon* is a poem which should  
 not be judged unreservedly on its mere outward appear-  
 ance. Lermontov's general attitude was one of protest  
 couched in the form of literature, and under other con-  
 ditions he would certainly have been capable of giving a  
 much less commonplace expression to his thoughts.

To St. Petersburg, whither, thanks to powerful in-  
 tervention, he returned in 1838, he brought back, to-  
 gether with his *Demon*, his *Song on Ivan Vassiliévitch*,  
 which belongs to quite a different order of inspiration,  
 and seems to emanate from some far-away region, some  
 mysterious and inexorable corner of his gloomy and  
 storm-tossed soul. In it, the figure of Ivan the Terrible,  
 with the features bestowed on him by popular legend  
 and verse, and the world of ideas and feelings with  
 which both have surrounded it, stand out in extraor-  
 dinary relief. At a tournament over which the Tsar  
 presides, a young Moscow merchant, Kalachnikov, chal-  
 lenges Kiribiéiévitich, one of the sovereign's boon com-  
 panions, who had violated his wife, to single combat  
 with their fists. Struck on the chest, according to the cour-  
 teous rules of the combat, Kalachnikov responds with a  
 fearful blow on the temple, which lays his adversary stone  
 dead at his feet. "Didst thou do the deed intentionally?"  
 queries the Tsar. "Yes, orthodox Tsar," replies the  
 merchant; "I killed him with my full will. But where-  
 fore—that I will not tell thee. I will tell that to God  
 alone." "Thou dost well," answers Ivan, "my little

friend, bold wrestler, merchant's son, to have answered me according to thy conscience. Thy young wife and thy orphans shall receive largesse from my treasury. To thy brothers I give permission from this day to traffic over all the Russian empire, this huge empire, without paying tax or toll. As for thee, my little friend, go to the scaffold—take thither thy rebellious head. I will cause the axe to be ground and sharpened—I will have the headsman dressed and adorned—I will order the great bell to be tolled, so that all the folk of Moscow may be sure to know that thou, too, hast shared my mercy.”

And so it comes to pass. Kalachnikov, having bidden farewell to wife and children, goes to the place of execution, there to die, cruelly and ignominiously. The poem does not say “unjustly.”

The story, the dialogue, the setting, are all admirable, perfectly natural, exquisitely simple, powerfully original. St. Petersburg, unfortunately, was to tempt Lermontov back to his earlier and more artificial style, and at the same time to a disorderly and empty mode of life which soon weighed on him even more heavily than on Pouchkine himself. He was in despair, grew furious, declared he would rather go anywhere, “to his regiment or to the devil,” was haunted, like Pouchkine, by a presentiment of, even a desire for, a speedy death, and composed that series of prose narratives which, collected together under the title *A Hero of our Own Time*, have been taken for his autobiography. I think it would be both cruel and unjust to accept this supposition absolutely. Just as Pouchkine has put some of himself into both Oniéguine and Lenski, without exhausting his whole personality in either character—so Piétchorine, the “Hero” in ques-

tion, is certainly not wholly representative of Lermontov. The author of *A Hero* did certainly intend, like Musset in his *Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle* (a book which doubtless influenced him), to lay bare the soul, generically speaking, of the man of his own epoch, and in it a portion of his own. In this respect his work is interesting as being an attempt at the psychological novel. But Lermontov possessed neither the sincerity, the subtlety, nor even the broad-mindedness of De Musset. His *Piét-chorine* does certainly bear traces of the moral uneasiness which tortured the best minds of that period. That it is which makes him, like Oniéguine and like Tchatski, appear an exile from his country and from his own self, unable to find shelter or repose anywhere on earth. But he lacks both the judgment which would enable him to recognise the causes of his mental disturbance, and the determination to suppress such of them, external or internal, as depend on his own free-will. At bottom he is a military dandy, almost an English lord suffering from the spleen, aristocratic and sentimental, and at the same time a barbarian, capable of all the coarse and violent passions of the Tcherkess tribes, among whom he took refuge; a "Romantic" with a delicate feeling for Nature, a passionate love of liberty, and his mouth full of quotations from Schiller and Walter Scott; a Don Juan filled with a vague longing for some ideal mistress, and avenging on every woman he meets, be she Russian princess or Tcherkess peasant, the disappointment he finds in her; a lover who knows neither faith nor honour, a detestable comrade. His temperament, his disposition, and even his external appearance are absolutely in accord with the unpleasing memories which St. Petersburg belles, and his own brother officers, retain of

Lermontov. Read the portrait of his adventurous guest traced by one of the heroes of the book, Maximus Maximovitch, after having given him shelter on the steppe, and compare it with Bodenstedt's hasty sketch of Lermontov, after a chance meeting. "Strongly built, but exceedingly slight; disorderly dress, but dazzlingly white linen." The resemblance even extends to material details.

Such is the visible and apparent aspect of this personage, and I am willing to admit that it seems to conceal something. But what that may be, remains an unfathomable and deceptive riddle. Piétchorine may possibly be a Manfred. When, after reading Moore's Life of Byron, Lermontov exclaimed—

*We have the same soul, the same torments;  
Would that I might have the same fate!*

he expressed—of this I am convinced—a genuine feeling. But his Manfred was always to stay on his mountain. Never does his hero's disdainful pride seem touched with an aching compassion for those below. Once we see him weep over the corpse of a horse, and this is all. And his adventures, his seductions, his abductions, his duels, are all pitifully commonplace.

They interest us? Yes, just as certain not particularly pretty women interest us—doubtless on account of the exquisite naturalness of the story and the Caucasian colouring, which is entirely beautiful. There is not a trace of composition about the work. It has neither beginning, nor middle, nor end. This peculiarity will presently be noticed as belonging generally to the novels of Gogol and his emulators.

Yet we must not forget that Lermontov was only five-and-twenty when he wrote this book, that he was

living the life of a hussar, and that to all appearance he had not spoken his last word, nor even found his true path in literature. Alas! the moments left him to search for it were numbered. In 1840 he fought a duel with the son of Baron de Barante, the well-known historian, then Minister of France at St. Petersburg, and for this prank was sent back to the Caucasus. Sullenly he bade farewell to "unwashed Russia, to the country of slaves, to blue uniforms, and the people who submitted to their law." "Perhaps," he added, "beyond the chain of the free mountains I shall escape, O my country! from thy pachas, from their eyes that see everything, and their ears that claim to hear everything!" The next year he reappeared for a short time at St. Petersburg, and was killed in another duel with Martynov, his own brother officer, of whom he was supposed to have drawn a somewhat spiteful portrait in his *Hero*, under the title of Grouchnitski.

Taken as a whole, the work of Lermontov is that of a literary apprentice who drinks at every spring, and attempts every style. In his tragedy called *Ispantsy* (the Spaniards), written in 1830, we find reminiscences of *Nathan der Weise* and *Kaball und Liebe*. In *The Masquerade*, a play written in 1835, he appears to have laid Shakespeare under contribution. On another play he has seen fit to bestow a German title, *Menschen und Leidenschaften*. But in all his work, and especially in the short sets of verses, most of which were not published till after his death, there is strong evidence of personal inspiration: the cry of distress, the despairing complaint of a soul that pines for a better world, and thanks God for everything, "for scalding tears, for poisonous kisses," so long as it may soon "cease to be thankful altogether."

This is not Pouchkine's sceptical and often ironic melancholy; it is an anguish that is bitter to madness, a rebellion violent to fury, occasionally combined, as in the figures of Piétchorine and of the modern Othello in *The Masquerade*, with a power of analysis which, though still somewhat limited, has a subtlety and penetration that remind us of Stendhal. As regards workmanship, the distinctive peculiarity of his writing is its stereotyped quality. Subject, expression, phrase, general form, are constantly reproduced, in every one of his works. Thus the comparison of a human heart to a ruined temple which the gods have forsaken and where men dare not dwell (which had already been used by Pouchkine, who may have borrowed it from Mickiewicz), is reproduced by Lermontov in *The Confession* (1830), in *The Boyard Orcha* (1835), and in *The Demon* (1838). His language, though less unvaryingly correct and apt than Pouchkine's, frequently rises to a pitch of sonorous music even more wonderful than his. He bore a seven-stringed lyre, not a chord of which rang false. Of what splendid hopes was Russia bereft when a senseless bullet crashed into the instrument!

Meanwhile, from popular depths unknown to Piétchorine, and even to Lermontov himself, other chords, modulated in the same tones of complaint and mortal sadness, though gentler indeed, and more resigned, began to rise.

In 1809 there was born to a small cattle-dealer (*prassol*) at Voronèje, a child who seemed destined by fate to assist his parents in their humble and rustic vocations. For four years he attended a local school; then he departed on to the steppe, to mount guard over flocks of sheep and herds of oxen. But with him

he carried a collection of popular verse, which was to while away his long hours of solitude ; and in his breast, too, he bore, as it proved, a poet's soul.

This youth was ALEXIS VASSILIÉVITCH KOLTSOV (1809-1842). The good-nature of a bookseller placed other volumes within his reach, quite a little library, including the works of Dmitriev, of Joukovski, of Pouchkine, of Delwig. The first effect they had on him was not to make him write verses, but to make him fall in love. The heroine of this first idyl was a young serf called Douniacha. The hero's parents considered such a marriage a *mésalliance*. They sent the heir of their flocks and herds to a distance ; they sold Douniacha for a sum of money and a bonus in salt meat, and she utterly disappeared. Two years later, after cruel treatment at the hands of her new proprietor, who lived on the banks of the Don, she died. Koltsov never saw her again.

In the midst of his sorrow new friends appeared on the scene, holding out helping hands to him. First we see Andrew Porfirévitch Sérébrianski, a young poet, whose melancholy song, "Swift as the waves flow the days of our life," had its hour of popularity. Then came Stankiévitich, whom we know already, and whose father was a land-owner in the neighbourhood of Voronèje. Once more he played the part of Mæcenas. By his kindness the young herdsman was suddenly brought into contact with the literary world at Moscow, and in 1835 a selection of his poetry appeared, published at the expense of his generous protector. It was a revelation ! The link which had hitherto existed between popular and artistic poetry had been purely artificial. Koltsov made that link a living bond. Under his pen the rustic



songs—fresh, simple, whether with their brilliant colours and bird-like warbling, or with their gloomy shadows and melancholy voices—retained all their originality, and gained an exquisite form. This was art, and at the same time it was Nature to the very life. It was like breathing the air of the meadows and drinking straight from the rivulet. These verses should not be declaimed. They must be sung to the music of some *balalaïka*.

Koltsov did not, as may well be imagined, at once attain a perfect mastery of this new art—this marvellous fusion of diverse elements. In his earlier attempts, he did not fail to drop from time to time into an imitation of the Romantic style, and so did scurvy service to his own talent ; and how scant was the space of time allotted him wherein to establish and develop his gift !

In 1835 the young poet was able to make some stay in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and frequent the literary circles gathered there ; but until 1840, although he kept up his intercourse with Biéliniski and his circle, he was obliged to devote the greater part of his time to the business by which he supported himself and his family. Two years later Koltsov was dead—worn out, killed, at three-and-thirty, by hard work and sorrow.

He has been called the Russian Burns. The resemblance, to my thinking, is confined to some features of his personal history. Like the Ayrshire poet, Koltsov was born of the people, and knew what it was to be poor. His poetic vocation sprang from the same source—a thwarted love. He was more unhappy than Burns, for he never married his Jean Armour. He was less hot-blooded, and never stooped to debauchery ; his life and his poetry were both chaste. But the work of Burns is not a mere artistic transmutation of popular subjects.

The Scottish poet is a great poet in the full sense of the term—a leader in the twofold domain of art and thought. Properly speaking, his work was not popular poetry : he was ashamed of his origin ! He produced a new poetry, wherein feeling, thought, and soul prevailed over form. By this, as well as by the accent of rebellion and bitterness which pervades his verse, he prepared the way for a revolution ; he outstripped his century by forty years ; he ushered in the advent of Byron. The peaceful bard of Voronège has nothing in common with these things.

Koltsov sings of poverty, of the fight for existence, of the cruelty of unkind Fate. But all this in tones of perfect resignation, and within a very narrow imaginative sphere. When he leaves this and indulges in his *Meditations* (*Doumy*), he loses himself in the most cloudy and childish mysticism.

The philosophic and social import of this poetry lies in the very fact of its existence. Von Visine's heroine, Mme. Prostakova, could not conceive, but a short time previously, that the peasants should dare to be ill. Yet here we see them actually falling in love, and, interesting people in their love affairs ; they venture to be poetic, and even touching. And these are not the be-ribboned shepherds of Florian, but Russian *moujiks*, redolent of brandy and tar, rugged, often savage, always sad. Koltsov, by virtue of the gift which enabled him to raise, to enoble, to idealise these boorish elements, has his share in the twofold current of emancipation of that period. His method may be summed up as follows : The popular song invariably deals with the external aspect of things alone. It has no conception of their internal meaning. It makes a clumsy use of metaphors which it cannot coherently develop. It gives rugged expression to rugged

feelings. All this is transfigured in Koltsov's hands. He lights up the facts by revealing the psychological element they contain: he purifies the metaphors, he idealises the sentiments. We see a poor "mower," for instance, who loves Grouniouchka and is loved in return. His request for her hand is refused. The daughters of rich peasants are not for penniless fellows such as he. He empties his scanty purse to buy a well-sharpened scythe. Is he going to kill himself? Oh, no indeed! He will go out into the steppe, where the harvest is richest. He will toil bravely, even cheerfully. He will come back with his pockets full. He will rattle his silver roubles, and we shall see whether Grouniouchka's father will not give in at last! What have we here? A love story such as may be found in any country place. Clothed in Koltsov's language it is a splendid poem.

This language always adheres as closely as may be, without actual coarseness, to the popular speech. It is full of wonderful treasures in the way of words and striking imagery, as, for instance, in the *Season of Love* (*Poraloubvi*), where a young girl's white bosom is seen heaving tempestuously, though she will not betray her secret. "She will not cast up her foundation of sand," says the poet.

I have before me, as I write, a still unpublished correspondence between Tourguéniev and Ralston. This privilege I owe to the kindness of M. Oniéguine, the owner of this inestimable treasure. In its pages the great novelist congratulates the English critic on having introduced the public of his native land to a work which very probably has no parallel in any literature. "As long as the Russian tongue exists," Tourguéniev writes, "certain of Koltsov's songs will retain their popularity in

his own country." He doubtless had in his mind the poems entitled *The Harvest*, *The Labourer's Song*, *The Winds Blow*, and *The Forest*. Other Russian critics have, in my opinion, ascribed too much importance to certain more ambitious compositions, such as *The Little Farm* and *Night*—incidents of women surprised by jealous husbands or lovers, scenes of savage anger and murder, in which the author's dramatic power strikes me less than the poverty and childishness of his execution. Koltsov was quite ignorant of his *craft*. He knew no more of the art of composition than of that of prosody. He depended entirely on his ear and his intuition, and this could only serve him in simple subjects. Intellectually the poor *prassol* poet was always half-absorbed into that "empire of darkness" from which Ostrovski was to draw his most powerful effects of gloomy terror and pity.

Not long after the death of the young poet, another made his appearance in Voronèje. Ivan Savitch Nikitine (1826–1861) also sprang from a commercial family, but from one having some connection with the Church. He attracted notice in 1853 by a patriotic poem, *Russia*, inspired by the opening events of the Crimean War. A collection of his lyric poems, published in 1856 by Count D. N. Tolstoï, was somewhat coldly received. But two years later the fame of Nikitine was established by a great poem, *Koulak*, which bore testimony to his deep knowledge of the life of the people and his remarkable powers of expression. The word *Koulak* means "peasants' money-lender." The poet's friends helped him to open a bookshop in his native town. His business prospered, and enabled him to work and create more freely. He perfected his style, for, unlike Koltsov, Nikitine was a

scholar. He turned his attention to the *roman de mœurs*, had prepared and half-completed two works, *The Mayor* and *A Seminarist's Journal*, when consumption seized him, and he died, like Pouchkine, at the age of thirty-eight.

Lermontov and Koltsov were not destined to have any direct successors; and in making this assertion I do not think I shall offend the shade of Countess Eudoxia Rostoptchine (1811-1858), nor even that of Nicholas Platonovitch Ogariov (1813-1877). This writer, the friend of Herzen and collaborator in *The Bell*, published, in London, some poetry which has been highly appreciated by the Russians, who delight in forbidden works, and which, in the eyes of some hot-headed critics, places him on a higher level than Nékrassov. In my judgment it betokens more fierce enthusiasm than poetic feeling, and the author's best works, his *Humour*, his *Nocturne*, his *Soliloquy*, his *Winter's Day*, present a strange medley of Byronian pessimism and of an equally ill-founded optimism.

As for Countess Rostoptchine, her poems, which hardly anybody reads nowadays, and her novels, which never found many readers, are full of elevated sentiments and intellectual breadth.

The transition from poetry to prose, from the romantic struggle against reality to the deliberate observation of that reality which was unconquerable, is a feature common to the literary evolution of this period in every European country. In Russia, where the reality is tougher and more repulsive than elsewhere, this evolution was accomplished with special rapidity; and to this result the essentially realistic temperament of the nation was peculiarly favourable. The spirit of nature which had been

driven out by the pseudo-classic invasion swiftly came home again. Between 1830 and 1840 the novel, as exemplified in the works of Zagoskine, Lajetchnikov, Dahl, Weltman, N. A. Polévoï, Prince V. Odoïevski, Pavlov, Bestoujev, and Pogodine, drew more and more to the front in literature. Some of these writers were still unconscious Romanticists, imitators of Sir Walter Scott; but in every one of them we notice a common tendency to the representation of scenes from the national life, whether historic or contemporary, together with a constant seeking after comic effect, of a satiric and somewhat humorous nature; and before Thackeray and Dickens had reached the Russian world, Gogol had risen up within its borders.

#### GOGOL.

We have arrived at the year 1831, and the literary existence of the country is passing through a season of sore difficulty. According to the system finally elaborated by Ouvarov, whom Nicholas I. has chosen to be his Minister of Public Instruction, an iron despotism and a censorship worthy of Metternich are appointed the national and traditional basis of the constitution and development of the Russian commonwealth. Here we have the inauguration of *official nationalism*, and both press and society, with some few exceptions, spontaneously adopt the formula. In the *Northern Bee* we see literature walking hand in hand with the police — Griétch, Boulgarine, and Senkowski, all exceeding each other in dulness, obscurantism, and servility. To a critic who accuses him of having written to order, Koukolnik, one of the contributors to this paper, replies, "I will play the part of an *accoucheur* to-morrow,

if I am so directed." One branch of the Slavophil school, under pretext of rehabilitating the national past, and finding fresh ideals within it, applies itself, with Chévirov and Pogodine, to transferring to that past the existing depravity of modern ideas and habits, and ends by deducing therefrom, as the traditional direction of all future development, the decrease of individuality! The culminating point of this teaching is the vehement repudiation of the elementary principles of all civilisation.

Such was the moral atmosphere which surrounded the cradle of NICHOLAS VASSILIÉVITCH GOGOL (1809-1852). By one of those seeming miracles so frequent in literary history, the future author of *Dead Souls* does not appear to have suffered from it.

Born of a small land-owner's family in the government of Poltava, where the old Cossack legends and traditions were still fresh and strong, he brought with him to his school at Niéjine the temperament, the imagination, and the intelligence of a true son of the steppe. He loathed mathematics, affected to despise Greek and Latin, and betrayed an equal objection to German. At a later period he was to bestow the name of "Schiller" on a character in one of his stories, a caricature of a German settled in Russia, whose stinginess made him ready to cut off his nose to save the use of snuff, and so methodical that, for physiological reasons, he measured the amount of pepper introduced into his food. This mania did not prevent Gogol from reading the best French and German authors with the help of dictionaries, and even going so far as to imitate them.

At Niéjine the fashions followed those of Tsarskoïé-Siélo. The pupils of the college prided themselves on having a journal of their own, and in it Gogol published,

in succession, a novel, *The Brothers Tviérdislavitchy*, the subject and form of which was borrowed from the German almanacs of that period, a tragedy, *The Robbers*, the source of which will be easily divined, and satires and ballads, all of them equally devoid of originality. When he left college in 1828, he was a young enthusiast of the purest romantic cast, who dreamt of accomplishing some mighty thing for his country, who looked on himself as an ill-used genius, and already claimed—at eighteen—to have suffered bitterly at the hands of his fellow-men! Two characteristic features, destined, as time went by, to attain prodigious proportions—his ascetic tastes and his love of power—complete this description of Gogol's moral physiognomy. He departed to St. Petersburg, to find employment. He secured a position as copying-clerk in the Ministry of Domains, left it, not until he had collected a number of bureaucratic types of which he was to make use later, was suddenly seized with a desire to take a long journey, started, armed with a sum of money given him by his mother for quite a different purpose, reached Lübeck, turned back, and began to form other plans. First he would be an actor, then he bethought him of writing a poem on the subject of a recent unhappy love affair of his own. This he called *Hans Kuchelgarten*, and, in spite of all its pretensions, it is no more than a debased transcription of Voss's *Louise*. The work, printed under the pseudonym of V. Alov, elicited some jeering remarks from M. Polevoï in the *Moscow Telegraph*. Otherwise it passed unnoticed. The copies sent to the booksellers' shops waited in vain for purchasers. Gogol took them all back, hired a room in which to burn them, every one, and was suddenly seized with a fit of home-sickness.



These ups and downs of feeling are common enough among beginners, but they do not always lead to so fortunate an issue. The issue in this case was a book called *Evenings at the Farm of Dikanka*, published in 1831. For a moment it struck the literary world into a kind of stupor. Nothing of the sort had ever been seen before. The Ukraine lived and moved in these stories, called up in a vision at once miraculously precise and exquisitely attractive, singing and ringing with the hearty laughter, just touched with a spice of archness, which is the embodiment of Little-Russian mirth. Was it a true picture? Not quite, as yet. Gogol had not been able, at the very first, to cast off all his romantic trappings. Here and there he over-poetised, and thus misrepresented his Ukraine. And one thing was lacking in his picture, sunny as it was, gay, alive with changing colour. There were no tears in it.

But close on these *Evenings* came another series—*Mirgorod*—and this time Pouchkine, in his delight, fell on the author's neck. Perhaps the truth had revealed itself to the young novelist on that morning when he knocked at the great poet's door, and learnt to his astonishment that Gogol was still sleeping.

"He must have spent the night in composing some fresh work!" Pouchkine said.

"He spent the night at cards," replied the servant.

In *Mirgorod* we hear the real human laughter of the man who was to write *Dead Souls*—a laughter with tears in it, and a note of irony. Yet the brilliant success of his work did not satisfy Gogol. Like Tolstor in later days—an unconscious artist like himself—he was always, from the heights of his dream-fancy, to cast off the children of his own imagination as being unworthy of it.

He now began to think of a *History of Little Russia*, and also of a *History of the Middle Ages*, which was to reach eight or nine volumes. He knew little beyond what his father, a great retailer of legends, had taught him of the past history of his native region. With feverish haste he began to collect materials. Fortunately his imagination proved too strong for him, and the result of his efforts was *Tarass Boulba*, a prose poem, still very romantic in tendency, based, historically and ethnographically, on a hasty perusal of Beauplan and Scherer, but instinct with powerful epic feeling, and full of striking and dramatic episodes. The opening scenes, where Tarass wrestles with his sons to try their strength, and where a young Cossack, to assert his scorn for luxury, rolls in the mud in the fine clothes which have been forced upon him, are vigorous and truculent reproductions of local manners.

Farther on, there are fights between Cossacks and Poles, who hurl defiance and long speeches at each other, quite in the Homeric manner. I am far less impressed by the much-bepraised episode of the scaffold, whereon the eldest son of Tarass, dying without a murmur under frightful tortures, which make his bones crack, is heard to whisper—

“Little father ! do you hear it ?”

And the old Cossack, standing disguised in the crowd, replies—

“I hear !”

This is a mere melodramatic trick.

The *History of the Middle Ages* was never to get beyond the planning stage. All Gogol did in this line was to insert in his *Arabesques* a few apparently learned essays, which Biéliniski thought so damaging to the

author's budding glory that he refused to look into them seriously. But the presumptive historian was allotted a professorial chair. His first lecture was very brilliant. He possessed some of the gifts which go to make an orator—fire and expressive declamation. But when the second lecture came, the matter was not there. The professor had come to the end of his knowledge! Within a year and a half he resigned his position. An attempt at a tragedy, founded on events in English history at the time of the Norman Conquest, dates from the period of this melancholy failure; after which Gogol gave himself up to his natural vocation.

Here he wavered, for some time, between the influence of the Romantics, as exemplified in *Viï*, a mysterious tale concerning a lover bewitched by a cruel mistress, and that of Hoffmann, as seen in *The Portrait*, a not over-successful piece of jugglery—fantastic and circumstantial. It was not till 1834 and 1835 that a new series of stories, almost uniform in character, and very different from their predecessors in their nature, proved his possession of a definite form, which was to be that of the modern Russian novel. These were *The Landowners of Old Days*, *The Quarrel of Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch*, and *The Mantle*. "We have all," writes one of his contemporaries, "issued from Gogol's mantle." And Sergius Akssakov, who, after having followed very different lines, set himself, when nearly sixty years of age, to begin his literary career afresh under the young writer's influence, might well apply the assertion to his own case.

In these tales every detail, from the wardrobe of Ivan Nikiforovitch, to the evil-smelling boots worn by the *moujiks* who stamped up and down the Nevski Prospect,

was drawn from nature. They give us a bit of real life in all its trivial circumstances, and seasoned, more dexterously than were the *Evenings*, with what some people have chosen to denominate Russian, but which, properly speaking, should be called English, humour—an equal mixture, as in Dickens's case, of irony and good-nature, of malice and wide sympathy, of sarcasm and intentional moralising. To this, Gogol adds a power of presenting things and people as they are, without appearing to care whether the effect they produce be good or bad. The hero of *The Mantle*, Akakiĭ Akakiévitch, is a scribe, with qualities both touching and grotesque. He has a genius and a passion for copying! "His copying work was full, to him, of a world of delightful and varied impressions. Some letters were his favourites. When these had to be re-written he felt a real delight."

It has been truly observed, that this type strongly resembles one of those created by Flaubert. But it has also been remarked that the French novelist falls furiously upon Pécuchet. He flouts and spurns him, pouring out all his hatred of human folly on the idiot's head. Gogol jokes with his simple fellow, and all the time we are aware of an undercurrent of tenderness, such as one feels for a child whose innocent ways amuse one, or go to one's heart. Those who have seen fit to perceive in this difference the abyss that lies between Russian and French realism, between the laughter touched with tears of the first, and the dry pitiless smile of the second, have gone, in my opinion, much too far. They have lost sight of the original genesis of each of these literary movements, which were neither synchronic nor parallel, seeing that the one sprang up in France, following on all the excesses of sentimentalism and roman-

ticism—on soil which centuries of Christian culture had saturated with idealism, and therefore naturally partook of the exaggerated character of all reactions, while the other appeared in Russia twenty years earlier, under the full blaze of the sentimental and pseudo-romantic literature of the period, and in surroundings which were the hereditary domain of the real, the simple, and the true. Special historical conditions, which I have already endeavoured to explain, had produced in the Russia of that period a peculiar mixture of idealism and realism. The realist element represented the national genius. The idealist doubtless corresponded with certain of its natural instincts—for the ideal exists everywhere—but it proceeded more directly from foreign sources. *The Mantle*—I fear this may have been forgotten, even in France—is contemporary with the first novels of George Sand, on whom Dostoïevski was to bestow the title of “divine,” because she perceived beauty in pity, in resignation, and in justice. And this, without the laughter, is almost the very principle of *The Mantle*. It had been left to George Sand to gather up the laughter, with all the rest, in the legacy of her masters, Sterne and Richardson. Laughter through tears! That is the great charm of the *Sentimental Journey*!

From the publication of *The Mantle* onwards, the development of the Russian novel has been comparatively autonomous, though always strongly influenced by the English realists on the one hand, and the French romanticists on the other. Gogol studied Dickens; Dostoïevski was to read Victor Hugo. Saltykov-Chtchédrine himself, referring to the author of *Consuelo* in an autobiographical fragment, wrote: “Everything good and desirable, *all our pity* comes to us thence.” And this

Russian realism, imbued with English sentimentalism, was also to end in the inevitable reaction which was to drive its last representatives first into the arms of Zola, even before the author of *L'Assommoir* had converted France to his naturalism, and then into the embrace of Maupassant. Look at Chtchédrine. He still recognises the value of pity, but he makes little use of it. Then look at Tchékhev. He seldom weeps, and hardly ever smiles.

In fact, if we are to admit that the tendency to pity is a Russian quality (and, as I have shown, I have nothing against the theory), if then, for this reason, the note of tenderness found easy admittance to the national literature, and has therein developed a great intensity, there is still something besides pity in the complex sentiment with which such characters as Akakiï Akakiévitch have inspired their authors. I will explain this matter later. *The Mantle* was published in 1835. A year later, *The Examiner* appeared on the scene, and the modern Russian drama came into being. The subject had been suggested to Gogol by Pouchkine, who, while travelling to Orenburg in search of information for his history of the rebellion of Pougatchov, had been arrested by an inspector making his rounds. It was a "vaudeville" story, on the whole, turning on a very commonplace blunder. Khlestakov, a good-for-nothing young fellow from St. Petersburg, on his way to spend his holidays with his relations in the country, finds himself stopped by lack of funds in a small provincial town. He is in imminent danger of going to the debtors' prison, when the lively imagination of the local officials turns him into a judge sent from head-quarters to demand an account of their various peccadillos.

Out of this scenario Gogol has constructed a masterpiece, filling it with figures which, in spite of their universal tendency to caricature, are admirably drawn, and attacking all the officialdom of the period. The Governor, with his reproaches to those who rob above their own rank, was particularly a figure which struck the popular imagination. Gogol flies boldly in the face of official optimism, and uncovers the gaping wound of its constitution—the venality and despotism which reigned all over the administrative and judiciary ladder, from the highest to the lowest rung—a thoroughgoing attack, the whole scope of which, as he afterwards proved, he did not thoroughly realise. He snatched the branding-irons of satire from the trembling hands of Kantémir, Von Visine, Krylov, and Griboiédov, and plunged them into the very quick of the wound. What now strikes us as extraordinary is that the operation made nobody scream. Nicholas allowed the piece to be played, attended the first performance, and led the applause. It was characteristic of the man who said “Russia is governed by the Heads of Departments,” and let them do as they chose. The public was merely entertained. The Governor and his followers struck it as simply funny. The idea that the order of things they represented was contrary to nature and capable of alteration was scarcely beginning to dawn upon it. And even nowadays the piece is frequently played, and always raises a laugh. Elsewhere, it would cause gnashing of teeth.

As I have said, the author himself shared, to a certain extent, the lack of perception of his public. Already, indeed, in his method of conceiving, and more especially of *feeling* the phenomena he described, another feature, to which I have already alluded—and which, as it be-

came general in the Russian novel, was to endue it with a particular and very national character—was making itself evident: I mean the satirist's indulgent attitude towards the objects of his satire. He caricatures them, even turns them into monsters; he conceals nothing of their ugliness and meanness; he rather exaggerates them; but such as they are, his monsters inspire him with no feelings of horror or disgust. He has a regard for them. Sceptical philosophy, it has been called, or tender pity. I should rather ascribe it to his being accustomed to the sight of the evil. Public life in Russia is still so stamped with this peculiarity as to leave no room for doubt upon the subject.

From the purely artistic point of view, *The Examiner* possesses no great value, nor any originality whatever. The only really well-written scene, the closing one, is directly borrowed from *Le Misanthrope*. Yet none the less, the effect it produced placed Gogol in quite a different position, and straightway the enthusiastic and mystic side of his nature rose to the surface, and he felt himself called to play a new part, that of a prophet and a preacher. He planned another work,—the crowning effort of which every writer dreams, at some period of his life. He travelled abroad, spent some time in Spain, then went to Rome, and published, in 1842, the first part of his *Dead Souls*. A *poem* he called it. The very word proves how unconscious the creative genius in him was. Any unwarned reader would surely expect an *elegy*. Tchitchikov, the hero of the "poem," is a scoundrel, a former custom-house official, dismissed for smuggling, who, to repair his fallen fortunes, plans an enormous swindle. The number of serfs owned by each proprietor is ascertained by means of a periodical census.



Between one census and another, the number is considered to be unchanging, and the *souls*—that is, the head of slaves tallying with it—are subject to all the usual transactions, such as buying, selling, or pawning. Tchitchikov's idea was to purchase, at a reduced figure, the names of the serfs who had passed from life into death, but who were still borne on the official lists, and to pawn them to a bank for a considerable sum of money.

It may well be imagined that this circumstance is only an excuse for describing Tchitchikov's progress in a *troïka*, driven by his coachman, Seliphane, among the various land-owners and officials with whom the purchaser of *dead souls* was to transact business. Gogol has enlarged his field of observation, so as to include almost the whole of the governing classes, and chosen his subject with a view to the satirical scope of the work. The new types which he adds to his gallery of social suffering and shame correspond with this idea. Among the serf-owners we have Manilov, who, with his family, represents that kind of man who belongs to no special category at all, without clearly-defined moral features, principles, convictions, or character; Nozdriov, the dashing man of pleasure, who is on the most intimate terms with everybody, cheats at cards, and has his guests thrashed; Sobakiévitch, the substantial man, who does not mind how doubtful a business is, so long as he finds a profit in it; and Kourobotchka, the old miser, who reckons up her serfs and her roubles with equal avidity. The officials and the middle-class folk are on a par with this company. Sobakiévitch says of the Procurator that "he is the only decent-mannered man in the town,—and even he is a pig."

The whole of provincial society, the whole of Russia,

or very near it, figures in the picture. "Heavens! what a dreary place our Russia is!" cried Pouchkine when he had read the book. The picture it presents is extraordinarily clear and brilliant. The author possessed a power of discerning everything, even the tiniest and obscurest details, in every fold and corner of existence; a matchless gift of reproduction, a dazzling humour, and a style, as a French critic described it, "that even Michelet might have envied, now popular, now eloquent, now exact as any picture, now shadowy as a dream."

The author himself bears witness to the fact that Pouchkine, by introducing him to the works of Cervantes, had given him his first inkling of his subject. At Rome, in 1840, a Russian traveller named Boutaiev noticed Gogol sitting, book in hand, apart from the gay group of artists in the Café Greco. The book was one of Dickens's novels. The frame of the picture was certainly supplied by the great Spaniard, the canvas, the groundwork of cheery good-nature, philosophic indulgence, and hearty gaiety, by the gifted Englishman. Only, the Russian novelist has altered the nature of what he borrowed from Dickens, by his false application of it. For nobody ever saw Dickens show indulgence, not to say sympathy, for "wretches" of the stamp of Sobakiévitch. Gogol suspected this, but, like the Romantic he always remained, and the theorist he was fast becoming, he justified this modification, and even set it up as a principle. In it, in fact, he perceived a trait of the national character—the sentiment of pity for a fallen creature, no matter the depth of vileness to which his fall may have lowered him.

"Remember," he wrote to one of his friends, "the touching sight our people offer when they bring help to

the exiles travelling to Siberia. Each brings something of his own, food, money, the consolation of a word of Christian kindness." The picture is a true one; but let us not forget that it represents a country in which *the death penalty only exists in cases of political offences*, and in which common-law criminals are consequently identified with all others, to an extent which naturally leads to confusion in the simple minds and elementary feelings of the populace. The idea that these exiles may be very honest folk, even heroes and martyrs, is one of ancient origin. The feelings with which it is connected are, happily, common to every country. Gogol, when he ascribed an exclusively national character to them, was making a concession to the Slavophil crotchet, and when he applied them to the vulgar scamps of his *Dead Souls*, he perverted them altogether. When M. de Vogüé describes them as an *original* feature, "evangelic brotherhood, love for the little ones, pity for the suffering," destined to appear all through the course of Russian literature, and to "animate the whole of Dostoïevski's work," he certainly falls into an historical error. The trait, as to Gogol, is derived from Dickens. In Dostoïevski's case it was to originate in a different, though also a foreign quarter, which I shall duly indicate.

Gogol has further allowed his gift for romantic caricature to distort the accuracy of his vision, and thus constantly exaggerate every feature. A society made up of nothing but such people as Manilov, Nozdriov, and Sobakiévitch, could not exist. The author needed the assistance of Biéliniski and Herzen, before he realised this aspect of his creation, and the meaning resulting from it. The two critics were more clear-sighted than Nicholas, who had bestowed a travelling pension

on the novelist. *The Examiner* and *Dead Souls* constituted the investigation and disclosure, which were to end in the condemnation, before trial, of a guilty society. It was some time before Gogol could grasp the reality of the part of public accuser with which his work had endued him. And when conviction came he was horrified. What! was this his work? This the end of his dream? He had sought to serve his country, and he had cast this shame upon her! Ever since his visit to Spain and Italy he had been sliding down the slope, as Joukovski had slid before him. Let not my readers forget that *The Examiner* had encountered Tchadaiev's letter, which was now arousing a recrudescence and outburst of fervent nationalism. Between the multiple charms of Roman Occidentalism, the seductions of Mysticism, and the blandishments of Slavophilism, Gogol's reason beheld a great gulf. At first he would have protested against the premature conclusions which were being drawn from his *Dead Souls*. The poem was to be in three parts, and it was a slander on Russia to pretend the first was a complete picture of the country. Other aspects, bathed in ideal beauty, were yet to be revealed. But before proceeding to that, he was resolved to have an explanation with his readers, and for this purpose he proposed to publish extracts from his own correspondence. "Put all your business aside," he wrote in 1846 to his friend Pletniev, "and busy yourself about this book; everybody needs it." The book thus heralded as a revelation, a new gospel, appeared in the following year, and proved a bitter disappointment. Gogol, while claiming that his previous book proved his prophetic authority and gift, actually repudiated the natural meaning of that work. He under-

took the apology of the political, social, and religious régime which had produced his Sobakiévitch and his Nozdriov. His *Letters to my Friends* were epistles full of ghostly advice, mingled with addresses on literary subjects. They glorified the *Tsar of Love* and his despotic power, which softened the harshness of the law, and healed the bitter sufferings of the people. They jeered at the vain fancies of the Western philosophers, and appealed from them to the National Church, the only legitimate source of the necessary virtues.

The book also contained a sort of literary testament. In it, the author announced his decision never to write again, because his whole future existence was to be devoted to the search after truth, both for the good of his own soul and for the common welfare. But he still held that what he had written deserved admiration, and gave a lengthy explanation of the reasons on which he based this opinion. He strengthened his argument by the ingenuous assertion that Russia would lose a great poet in the person of the author of *Dead Souls*.

Contrary to the Russian opinion of that day, which seems to me still to obtain, M. de Vogüé denies the mystic character of this protest, although he recognises it as an echo of contemporary Slavophil teaching. "M. Akssakov," he says, "and the leaders of the present Slavophil school, expound the same doctrines, with even greater fervour. Nobody in Russia accuses them of mysticism." I fear this is no argument. Words and ideas may well carry a different weight from elsewhere in a country where even men are in the habit of calling each other "my little pigeon"! In a gathering of Russian friends, most of them very practical men, I expressed my astonishment at having found in such a writer as Tolstor

the idea of the *feminine character* of the city of Moscow. They were all, without exception, surprised at my astonishment. "But it is quite natural. Moscow must be feminine, just as St. Petersburg is masculine!" It appeared quite evident to them. Gogol's last years suffice, I think, to settle this dispute. In spite of his solemn farewell to literature he wrote again, showed some of his friends the second part of *Dead Souls*, and once more his readers were disappointed. The reappearance of Tchitchikov, his coachman, and of the *troïka* with its three lean horses, was gladly welcomed. But the ideal Russia described, represented by the Prince-Governor, "an enemy of fraud," who confounds the dishonest officials, and brings back the law of liberty to the town; and by Mourassov, the rich and pious manufacturer, a millionaire and a lay saint, who preaches, pardons, and sets everything in order, is so unexpected as to be disconcerting. Mourassov has since been easily recognised as the M. Madeleine of *Les Misérables*, and one still wonders where the author found the rest of his story.

Gogol burnt his manuscript, wrote another, and burnt it again. Nothing remains but a few fragments, which were published after his death. At one moment he committed all his books and papers to the flames. At the same time he was giving the whole of his Government pension to the poor, and was himself in most distressing financial straits. In 1848 he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and returned from it in a condition of excitement which was steadily to increase. He began wandering from house to house. His chance entertainers used to see him arrive with a little valise stuffed with pamphlets, newspaper articles, critiques,

treatises relating to himself—his only possession. “He was,” writes one of his contemporaries, “a little man, with legs too short for his body; he walked crookedly, clumsy, ill dressed, and rather ridiculous-looking, with his great lock of hair flapping on his forehead, and his large prominent nose.” “A fox-like face,” says Tourguéniev, “with something of the air of a professor in a provincial town.” He had altogether ceased writing now, and scarcely spoke. He had periodical attacks of fever, and fits of hallucination. He died in 1852, worn out, according to many witnesses, by prayer and fasting, found lifeless, according to some, before the holy pictures, where he often spent his nights. He was in his forty-fourth year.

The event attracted but little attention. To the mass of the public he had long been dead, swept away on that fatal tide which so mercilessly pursued the writers of his generation. This fact has been wrongly regarded as a mystery. It was natural that a generation so suddenly brought into contact with an ocean of new ideas should turn giddy on the edge of the abyss, and lose its balance.

The *Letters to my Friends* have met with an unexpected piece of good fortune in these later days. Tolstoi took it into his head to constitute himself their apologist, and other admirers followed suit. M. P. Matviéiev has affirmed, in articles published in the *Russian Messenger* of 1894, that the book had outstripped its own times. A popular edition has recently appeared with the suggestive title, *Gogol as a Teacher of Life*. When he drew up this profession of faith, Gogol was certainly sincere. He has expressed what Carlyle calls a man’s “religion,” without attaching any dogmatic sense to the word. But he was quite devoid of any philosophical education, and

the favour in which he is now held only proves how insufficiently his posterity is provided in this respect.

Gogol's real merit is his plastic power. Nobody can take him to be a serious thinker. At Rome he had no eyes, no admiration, no sympathy for anything but the pomps of the Papacy, and the superannuated glories of its ceremonies and its street processions; for the streets themselves, narrow and dirty as they were; for their half-savage denizens; for the local aristocracy, with its noisy pleasures, its Corso, and its carnival. The religious excitement which swallowed up his closing years only accentuated and exaggerated, to the utmost extreme, a very old tendency, dating, as his correspondence proves, from his earliest youth. In his nature two contradictory currents, of artistic inspiration and ascetic leanings, always existed, doubtless derived, in this native of Little Russia, from some mingled Muscovite ancestry. To this first source of internal discord and mental disturbance must be added a further contradiction, that between his desire for social activity and the false conception of society which he owed to his family traditions. He was never to understand anything of the intellectual progress which the German philosophy had developed about him, and which, indeed, bore him onwards without his knowing how or whither. He unconsciously performed a work of revolution, while he himself, in his own soul, remained essentially patriarchal and submissive. Thus, for a prolonged period, he never cast a glance on the deep and organic causes of the incidents of corruption which he so artistically described. When his eyes were finally opened, the emptiness of his own philosophical ideas must have struck him, and moved him to accept the teachings of others. He wavered for a moment between



Tchadaiev and Akssakov, decided, finally, in favour of the latter, and ingenuously set himself up as a State moralist, in the childish conviction that it would suffice for him to reveal his scheme of morality to governors of cities and such men as Nozdriov, to prevent the first-named category from stealing, and the second from cheating at cards.

Need I add that among the French critics who have studied this writer, M. Hennequin, when he hails him as the inventor of the modern tale, seems to have overlooked not only all the English, French, and German prose writers of the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, but also a certain Boccaccio, who lived in the fourteenth century, and whose *Filicopo* and *Fiametta* certainly hold a place of some importance in the history of literature. Gogol did create the Russian novel, and that is a sufficient title to glory. In Russia, as a writer of prose and craftsman of style, he outdoes Pouchkine himself. *The Queen of Clubs* was written in 1834, and is a trifle. He won the race easily, and nobody has equalled him since it was run. Gontcharov and Grigorovitch were his direct heirs in the department of novel-writing. Ostrovski was his successor in the drama.

#### THE SUCCESSORS OF GOGOL.

IVAN ALEKSANDROVITCH GONTCHAROV (1814-1891) published his first book, *A Common Story* (1847), under the auspices of Biéliniski, who said of him, "He is a poet and an artist ; nothing more." He judged correctly. The author was to mark the difference between his work and that of Tourguéniev, Dostoïevski, and Tolstoï, by its

almost entire absence of reflection and analysis. His view of life is absolutely archaic, and his ideas are those of the time of the Flood. This first novel, which bears some analogy to George Sand's *Horace* (1841), is, in fact, a very common story of a young enthusiast struggling with the realities of life—something of Balzac's Rastignac, who brings his dreams and the freshness of his youthful soul as a sacrifice to the Moloch of Parisian life. The Russian hero's dream is modest, and the reality which runs counter to it is of a very commonplace description. Is he to write verses and sigh for the love of a portionless maiden, or is he to go into business and marry an heiress? The question is decided in favour of the second alternative, and the author's sympathies are with the first. The special feature and charm of his art are to be found in this opposition. Gontcharov is a realist, bent on reproducing Nature exactly, even in her least seductive aspects, but with a wonderful power of wrapping these last in a sort of poetic haze, which softens their more unpleasing colours. The hero of the book, Adouiev, has, indeed, no specifically Russian characteristics.

In 1848, Gontcharov published some fragments of a second novel, *Obломov*, which was not to be finished for another ten years. In the interim, the author travelled round the world in the capacity of secretary to an admiral, and indited the story of his voyage in two volumes; but his mind was always fixed on his *Obломov*. He was slow in conception, but prodigiously swift in execution. It is asserted that the work he took ten years to prepare was written in forty-seven days. And this time he, too, succeeded in creating a type—a personification of that generic apathy which was, and still is, the

common product of the material and moral conditions of Russian life, but which attained a special development in the heart of the *barchtchina*, amongst the rural land-owners, previous to the abolition of serfdom. The long Russian winters naturally predispose the *moujik* to indolence and inertia; the despotic régime proscribes all individual effort, which, since Novikov's time, is generally credited with a Freemasonic or revolutionary origin. But when the time for labour comes, the *moujik* is occasionally obliged to shake off his torpor. Nothing ever disturbs that of the land-owner. From his childhood he has been accustomed to avoid, and, in fact, refuse to undertake, any exertion which might appear to compromise his dignity, by diminishing the labour of the ten or twelve persons trained to make any effort on his part unnecessary. Here then we behold him, doing nothing, and having literally nothing to do. The influences of heredity, of education, and of the common practice of life have combined, by a fatal process of degeneration, to render him incapable at once of any spontaneous activity, and even of any save a purely passive resistance to external pressure.

There is indeed a hidden thought, or rather a hidden feeling, in this inertia. The Russian mind is full of such reservations. To indicate its meaning, we must have recourse to one of those infinitely comprehensive and plastic expressions which are the characteristic feature, and constitute the most precious wealth, of the language of the country. Imagine a man who finds himself on the railroad just as a train is rushing towards him. He sees it coming; he knows that if he stays where he is, he will certainly be killed, and that a slight movement will save him from the danger. And yet,

out of a sort of half-conscious fatalism, a vague and yet obstinate fancy that perhaps the train will stop or run off the rails before it reaches him, he does not budge. One single word, in the mouth of a slow and obstinate peasant, suffices to express the whole world of dim thoughts and unconscious feelings which correspond with this particular state of mind—*avos!*—perhaps? who knows? And the trait produced by the habit, common to both master and slave, of always depending on some one or something else for the government of their slightest action, occurs in both classes.

Gontcharov's first volume is entirely taken up with the story of one day, spent by the hero in resisting the various solicitations which conspire to drag him, first from his bed, and then from the downy couch on which he stretches his indolence and selfishness, both equally incurable; in getting rid of importunate visitors, and making impossible plans, which he more than half suspects will remain unfulfilled. The character thus drawn is not altogether a new one. It is Eugène Oniéguine in another incarnation, corresponding with another phase of the national life. And it is Piétchorine as well. He was a restless man, indeed, and Oblomov was an apathetic being, but neither the one nor the other have ever, or will ever, do anything, because there is nothing for them to do in the sphere in which their birth has placed them. Even in their intercourse with women their attitude is identical. They are both, like Oniéguine, very susceptible to the charms of the fair sex, and very enterprising indeed in their dealings with it. But both are inclined to give up all thoughts of love, the moment its claims threaten to encroach on their liberty, their indolence, or their selfish convenience. In the second

volume, Oblomov meets with the typical woman of the Russian novel, the being of intelligence, tenderness, and originating power, who alone would seem capable of rousing this sluggard into a burst of energy. For a moment she appears to succeed, but the organs of activity and volition which she stirs in the young man's soul soon prove hopelessly stunted, and withered by neglect, and Oblomov goes back to his couch and his *farniente*.

In addition to this brave and tender-hearted Olga, who will soon find somebody to console her for her failure, Gontcharov, like Gogol, has set himself to call up an ideal figure, the personification of masculine energy. My readers will be surprised to find he has gone to Germany for this type, and yet more so that all he should have discovered there is a business man, active and hard-working. Olga's marriage with Stoltz cannot be accepted as a final solution.

The first part of *Oblomov* produced rather a tiresome effect. In its pages the author had given the first specimen of that minuteness of description which has since been so much abused by the French realists. When his hero has to write a letter, you learn to know even the watermark upon his writing-paper, the colour of his ink, and the external qualities and intrinsic virtues of his pen. The second part made a great sensation. It was published on the very eve of a great act of emancipation, and constituted a fresh argument in favour of the reform. The habit contracted by the public, of reading between the lines, made it recognise many unspoken sentiments, of which the author would appear to have been quite unconscious. He proved it some years later, when he endeavoured to enter the intellectual

and political struggle of the day in the pages of his *Obryv* (precipice). It was an utter failure. After that period Gontcharov only published a few sketches, and an excellent analysis of *The Misfortune of being too Clever*.

As a painter of aristocratic or *bourgeois* society, DMITRI VASSILIÉVITCH GRIGOROVITCH (1822-1900) was a mere collector of *snapshots*, and his pictures lack both necessary precision and correct distribution of light and shade. The only department in which he rose above mediocrity was in his stories of the popular life. In these he was Tourguéniev's forerunner, opening the way before him, and making even a more direct and overt attack than his, on the abuses of serfdom. His *Village*, the first in order (1846) of a series of little master-pieces, more or less directly inspired by George Sand, is remarkable for its powerful expression and depth of feeling with regard to this subject. The young wife of a rural land-owner, just arrived in the country, has a fancy to see a peasant wedding. To satisfy her desire, the first maiden and the first young man to be found are desired to marry. They are not acquainted, they each have another attachment, they are quite unsuited to each other. But none of these facts are allowed to be of the slightest importance. This story, with *Antony the Unlucky* (1848) and the *Valley of Smiédov*, made Grigorovitch's reputation as a Russian Beecher-Stowe. In *The Fishers* (1853) and *The Colonists* (1855) he enlarged his borders, and set forth all the poverty-stricken existence of the peasants of the Oka River, all the dreariness of factory life, and all the detestable arbitrariness of the proprietors.

These studies still preserve their ethnographical value, and the figures of Gliéb, the fisherman, and Zakhar, the factory-worker, have long been accepted as the most

exact and expressive reproductions of the popular characteristics. But Grigorovitch was no psychologist. His great strength lies in his narrative talent, which, ill served as it is by a very poor skill in composition, is apt to fritter itself away and lose its bearings, when its field of execution becomes too extended.

I feel some embarrassment when I come to speak of the great playwright, Ostrovski. His pieces have held the Russian stage for half a century, and their reputation still stands high. In his own country he is currently accepted, not only as the creator of the national drama, but as the renewer of the scenic art from a more general point of view; and I clearly see that, even in the West, his theory is in course of acceptance. But in this theory, which consists in knocking down a corner of the famous "wall of private life," and revealing what lies behind it, in all the natural complexity and apparent disorder which go to make up this life, I recognise an absolute negation of theatrical art, and of Nature herself. And this, because it is founded on *an appearance* which is false, the impression of disorder in Nature being merely a mistaken estimate on our part. Ostrovski's characters come and go, talk on indifferent subjects, until the moment when, all of a sudden—for on the stage things must happen suddenly—the commonplaceness of their behaviour or of their conversation reveals the comic or dramatic elements of the "object of the scene." And I am told that this is the process of real life! Yes, indeed, of real life extending over a space of several years. But the playwright reduces this real period to one of a few hours. By so doing, he disturbs the natural balance of circumstance, and the only method of re-establishing it, and escaping a false presentment, is the use of art—that is to say, of

interpretation. The drama lives by synthesis, and it is going against its nature (for it has a nature of its own) to attempt to introduce analytical methods, which belong to a different order of creation, into its system.

The son of a general business agent at Moscow, ALEXANDER NICOLAIÉVITCH OSTROVSKI (1824-1886), was still devoid of even elementary education when he published his first dramatic efforts in 1847. He filled up this void by studying and adapting foreign models, and did not always choose the best. Living in the *Zamoskvoriétchié*, and mixed up, in consequence of his father's profession, in the life of the small Muscovite tradesmen, he set himself to study and reproduce the manners and customs of that class, and succeeded in attaining a point of realism similar to that of Gogol in another sphere. The subject of his first great comedy, *Between ourselves, we shall settle it* (*Svoï lioudi sotchiémsia*), published in 1850, but not performed till ten years later, was, like that of *Dead Souls*, the story of a swindle as mean as it was improbable. A shopkeeper, a kind of comic King Lear, takes it into his head to make over his fortune to his clerk, and to marry him to his own daughter—all to cheat his creditors by means of a sham bankruptcy. He arranges with his son-in-law to pay them 25 per cent., or more, if necessary. But the rascal, once in possession of the funds, refuses to pay anything at all, and allows his miserable father-in-law to be haled to prison. The elder man had no reason for committing the fraud; his business was a prosperous one; and the author, to make us realise the corruption of thought, the absence of principle, and the demoralisation touched with despotic fancy reigning in that sphere of underhand dealing, draws him as, on the whole, a worthy fellow.



Ostrovski's second great success, *Every one in his own place* (*Nié v svoi sani nié sadis*), played in 1853, gave rise to a great deal of controversy. It also is concerned with a *samodour* shopkeeper, that is to say, one who has preserved the features of originality and despotic fancifulness peculiar to the old Muscovite type—whose daughter elopes with a nobly-born fortune-hunter. The gentleman, learning that her father has disinherited her, leaves her to her fate, and the poor creature returns to the parental hearth, covered with confusion and disappointment. The subject, it will be perceived, is by no means novel, and the author's development of it is not over-clear. Some critics have taken it to be an apology for the patriarchal régime; others regard it as a condemnation of that system.

The treatment of a subject will not always atone for its commonplace nature. Ostrovski, in pursuance of a theory dear to Biéliniski, depended on his actors for the development of his characters, which he sketched very lightly. He left them a great deal to do.

The most celebrated, and certainly the best of all his plays, is *The Storm*. This brings us into the upper commercial class in the provinces. During the absence of her husband, who, both on account of business matters and to avoid the tedium of life in a home rendered odious by the presence of a severe and quarrelsome mother, leaves his wife far too much alone, Catherine, a young woman full of dreams and enthusiasms, is false to her marriage vow. Ostrovski makes her public avowal of her sin, under the influence of the nervous agitation caused by a thunderstorm, which stirs all her religious terrors and alarms, the culminating point and dramatic moment of his piece. This idea was to be repeated by Tolstoï in his

*Anna Karénine.* The unhappy wife, cursed by her mother-in-law and beaten by her husband, as is the custom in that class, goes out and drowns herself. In this play, Ostrovski's object was to depict the miserable condition of the Russian woman of the middle class, in which, in his day, the traditions of the *Domostroï* still held good, and the corruption existing in this class, due, in part, to a latent process of decomposition, under the action of the new ideas which were beginning to percolate from without. Catherine is a romantic, with leanings towards mysticism. She sins, and curses her love and her lover even as she yields to them. Her husband is a brute, with coarse instincts and some good feeling. His mother is a domestic tyrant, brought up in the school of Pope Sylvester. When, at the moment of her indifferent husband's departure, Catherine, with a presentiment of her impending fate, casts herself on his breast, beseeching him to stay, or to take her with him, the old woman interferes :—

*“What is the meaning of this? Do you take him for a lover? At his feet, wretched creature! cast yourself at his feet!”*

And so Catherine seeks in another man's arms the caress, the loving words, the tender clasp for which her soul—the soul of a modern woman—hungers.

Dobrolioubov claimed to see other things, and many more, in this play. According to him—he has covered seventy pages with the demonstration of his idea—the author has hugely advanced the literature of his country by realising what all his predecessors, from Tourguéniev to Gontcharov, had vainly attempted, responding to the universal and pressing demand of the national conscience, and filling the void in the national existence caused by

its repudiation of the ideas, customs, and traditions of the past. He has created the ideal character and type of the future. Which is it? A woman's figure, of course. A wonderful conception, according to Dobrolioubov, because woman has had to suffer most from the past; because woman has been the first and the greatest victim; because it was above all for woman that the state of things had become impossible. But who is this woman? My readers will hardly guess her to be Catherine. Dobrolioubov was only four-and-twenty when he formulated this theory—a somewhat disturbing one for the possessors of romantic wives and disagreeable mothers-in-law. His youth is his excuse. And here is another. Dostoïevski was to follow suit, and apply the same theory to Pouchkine's *Tatiana*, after a fashion yet more far-fetched.

After 1860, Ostrovski conceived the idea of walking in Pouchkine's footsteps, and attempting historical drama in the style of Shakespeare. He had already borrowed much from the foreign stage. In his *Lost Sheep* we recognise Cicconi's *Pecorelle smarrite*; in *A Café*, Goldoni's *Bottega del Caffé*; in *The Slavery of Husbands*, A. de Lérís's *Les Maris sont Esclaves*. His imitations of the English dramatist were less successful. Two years before his death, having early quitted an administrative career which brought him nothing but disappointment, he undertook the management of the Moscow Theatre. He was no *blagonadiojnyĩ* (a man possessing the confidence of the Government). Though not directly concerned in the events of his day, he shared in the general ferment of reforming ideas. He followed the same course as Gogol—the Gogol of *The Examiner* and the first part of *Dead Souls*. His earlier plays, until 1854,

seem to be systematically devoted to the representation of types of perverted morality. After that date, and influenced by the Slavophil movement, he betrays a budding sympathy for certain phases of the national life, the idealisation of which was henceforth to be his endeavour. In *Every Man in his own place* he allots the most sympathetic parts to persons belonging to the old intellectual and moral régime, such as Roussakov, the unpretentious and upright shopkeeper, and Avdotia Maksimovna, the austere and simple-minded middle-class woman. All the rest—Vikhorev, Barantchevski, Arina Fiodorovna—have been poisoned by Western culture, and have carried the elements of disorder and corruption into their own circle. When the reforms of 1861 drew near, the author's point of view underwent another change, and he strove to bring out the backwardness and excessive folly, the obstinate *samodourstro* of the *pamiéchtchiki* (rural proprietors), as compared with the enlightened spirit of the younger generation.

His plays, as a rule, are neither comedies nor dramas. Dobrolioubov called them "representations of life." The audience is not given anything to laugh at, nor yet anything to cry over. The general setting of the piece is some social sphere which has little or no connection with the characters we see moving in it. These characters themselves are neutral in tint—neither heroes nor malefactors. Not one of them rouses direct sympathy. They are all overwhelmed by a condition of things the weight of which they might shake off, the danger of which would vanish, if they showed some little energy. But of this they have not a spark. And the struggle is not between them, but between the facts, the fatal influence of which they undergo, for the most part, un-

consciously. A sort of gloomy fatalism presides over this conception of mundane matters, an idea that any man belonging to a particular moral type must act in a particular manner. The natural deduction from this theory is, that actions are not good or bad in themselves. They are merely life. And so life itself is neither good nor evil. It is as it is, and has no account to give to anybody. Ostrovski's pieces have generally no *dénouement*, or, if they have one, it is always of an uncertain nature. The dramatic action never really closes, it is broken off ; the author cutting it short, not by an effective scene or phrase, but frequently, and deliberately, at the most commonplace point, or in the middle of a rejoinder. He seems to avoid effect just where it naturally would occur in the situation. Ostrovski's admirers hold this to be his manner of typifying real life, which, in Nature, has neither beginning nor end. I have already made my reservations on this head ; and I am glad indeed to affirm that no other Russian writer, save Tolstoï, has painted so great a number of types and circles corresponding with almost every group in Russian society. His language, full of power and fancy, constitutes, with that of Krylov, the richest treasure-house of picturesque and original expressions to be found in Russia. Pouchkine had already declared that the way to learn Russian was by talking to the Moscow *Prosvirnié* (the women who make the sacred bread, *prosfora*). They taught Ostrovski precious lessons.

Tourguéniev also enriched the national stage with several pieces which cannot be reckoned among his master-pieces. Pissemski, in his *Bitter Fate* (*Gorkaïa soudbina*), endowed it with the first realistic drama founded on peasant life. I shall discuss it later. But,

next to Ostrovski, the man who shed most glory on the modern Russian stage was Count Alexis Tolstoï.

Even now the trilogy written by ALEXIS CONSTANTINOVITCH TOLSTOÏ (1817-1875), *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*, *The Tsar Fiodor Ivanovitch*, and *The Tsar Boris*, enjoys a great, and, in some respects, a legitimate success in the author's own country. Its historical feeling is deep and generally correct. The gloomy spirit of despotism and superstition hovers over these evocations of a distant past, and breathes icily in the spectators' faces. But the characters, as a rule, lack clearness, and the rhetoric of the never-ending dialogues and soliloquies strains the attention. In his *Don Juan*, dedicated to the memory of Mozart and of Hoffmann, Tolstoï has endeavoured to re-establish the French and Spanish type of this character. To my thinking he has only placed the mask of Faust over Don Juan's features, and the effect of the effort is not worth the trouble it gave.

Alexis Constantinovitch also made his mark in Russian literature as a lyric and satiric poet. Another Tolstoï, whose mighty work I shall presently approach, was to introduce some really new characters upon the national stage, and with them, a form of dramatic art full of originality and fruitful in expression. But before his advent, the national art had already attained its sovereign expression by the fusion, which Gogol failed to realise, of the artist's inspiration and the artist's conscious endeavour, in the novels of Tourguéniev.

#### TOURGUÉNIEV.

Ivan Serguieïévitch Tourguéniev (1818-1883) was born of a family of country nobles in the government of Orel.

Among his ancestors he reckoned that Peter Tourguéniev who was executed on the *lobnoié miésto* for having denounced the mock Demetrius, and that James Tourguéniev who was one of Peter the Great's jesters. In 1837, when he was passing through his third annual course of studies at the St. Petersburg University, Ivan Serguieiévitch showed his professor of literature, P. A. Pletniev, a fantastic drama in verse, *Stenio*, which that gentleman easily recognised as an imitation of Byron's *Manfred*. Though of no particular value, it showed some promise of talent. It encouraged Pletniev, a few months later, to publish some verses by the young author, which struck him as being better inspired, in *The Contemporary*. But very soon Tourguéniev departed to Berlin, there to complete his studies, according to the custom of the day. He describes himself as having "taken a header into the German Sea," and come up "an Occidental" for ever. In 1841, when on a visit to Moscow, where his mother resided, he came into contact with the Slavophil group, and at once experienced a feeling of hostility to it which was steadily to increase. Tsarism, even as idealised by the Akssakovs and the Kiriéievskis, was always to disgust him. He tried to adapt himself to the régime, and took service in the Chancery of the Ministry of the Interior. But he could not endure it. In 1843 the poet bade farewell to the *tchinovik*, cast away official documents, and published, over the initials T. L., a *Paracha* in rhyme, of which Biéliniski spoke in terms of praise. This resulted in a friendship, followed by some slight coldness. Biéliniski, and rightly, as Tourguéniev afterwards acknowledged, treated some other poetical attempts which did not as yet foreshadow the gifts displayed in *A Sportsman's Sketches*, in less tender fashion. A mere

chance, the difficulty in which Panaiev, the editor of *The Contemporary*, found himself, with regard to filling up one number of his publication, in 1847, acquainted its readers with a prose story, *Khor and Kalinitch*, for which Ivan Serguieievitch, who was already losing hope, had not dared to hope such good fortune. It caused general astonishment. To the title chosen by the author, Panaiev had added that sub-title of his own, *A Sportsman's Sketches*, which was to become so widely known, and thus the immortal series which was to lay the foundation of Tourguéniev's glory was begun.

Success did not reconcile the author to social surroundings in which his tender and dreamy nature was exposed to so much that gave it pain. In the following year he left Russia, without intending to return. The continuation of his *Sketches* was written in Paris. There is nothing original in the conception of the work. It recalls Berthold Auerbach's village tales, and the peasant stories of George Sand, of whom Tourguéniev used to say, "She is one of my saints!" Even in Russia it had rivals, in the shape of Grigorovitch's tales and Nekrassov's poems, all of them founded, like it, on the popular life, and saturated with the same spirit. But in this case the subject was transformed by a personal art, and an equally individual inspiration. The art was that of a miniature painter, with the exquisite gift of merging nature and man into one harmonious whole. The inspiration was that of a born revealer. Tourguéniev was the first person in Russia to see in the Russian peasant something more than a mere object of pity—a being who could feel and think, with a soul like everybody else, although his method of feeling and thought was especially his own. Thus the soul that Gogol, the Slavophil, never



recognised, was revealed to Russia by Tourguéniev, the Occidental; and thus it was that the author of the *Sketches* became one of the most active agents of the emancipation. Not that he approached the problem of the abolition of serfdom. He never referred to it. But after having drawn, in *Khor and Kalinitch*, two peasants who escape the consequences of their legal status,—one because he lives apart in a swamp, and avoids compulsory service by paying a fine, the other because he has become one of his master's hunt-servants; one of them a realist, the other a dreamer, but good-hearted, both of them; one faithful and tender, the other cordial and hospitable,—the novelist demonstrated, in a fresh set of types, the various deformations which serfdom could produce in the original character of the race, such as a return to the savage state, wild temper, brutality, ferocity, as in the case of *Iermolaï*, and stupid insensibility, as in that of *Vlass*.

After a short visit to Russia, which cost him a month in prison, for an article on the death of Gogol (1852), Tourguéniev, released by the good offices of Madame Smirnova—"The Our Lady of Succour of Russian literature," as she was called—settled at Baden-Baden, in a villa close to that occupied by the Viardot-Garcia family. He had met the famous singer of that name in St. Petersburg, in 1845, and the liaison then begun was destined to continue till he died. From this period onward, his production, tales, stories, or serious novels, flowed steadily and uninterruptedly. Up to the year 1861, they may be divided into two principal groups, purely artistic creations, love stories, true or invented, and somewhat commonplace, such as *The First Love* and *The Three Meetings*, without much moral

scope, and no common feature save a groundwork of scepticism and ultimate disenchantment; and works with a distinct tendency, which bring forward various varieties of the same type, *the superfluous man*. This personage, as he appears in *The Hamlet of the District of Chtchigry*, *The Diary of a Superfluous Man*, *The Correspondence*, *Faust*, *Rudin*, *Assia*, and *A House of Gentlefolk*, is a man in whom reflection overrides volition, and destroys the power of action.

The heroes of these stories are aristocrats, like Tourguéniev himself, Russian gentlemen, who have completed their education abroad—well-informed, well-mannered, well-bred folk, fit for nothing except for making love. And even that must not reach the point of passion; for if it does, they take flight at once, like the young man Assia met on the banks of the Rhine, and who may very well have been nearly related to the novelist himself. Rudin has more breadth, but, in my opinion, much less real value. The character of the hero has caused a great deal of discussion. His first appearance, as the habitual guest of the mistress of a country-house, whose daughter he seduces, is anything but glorious; and after this failure in uprightness, his courage fails him too, and he flies before his rival.

At this juncture we take him to be both vile and cowardly, and it is with a shock of surprise that we learn, shortly afterwards, that he possesses a superior cultivation of mind, and a soul full of the noblest aspirations. He proves himself a thorough altruist, to whom nothing is lacking save a practical spirit, and he dies like a hero on the barricades, which he has gone to Paris to seek, as there are none to be found in Russia.

Taking him altogether, he is something very like the deceptive phrase-maker whom Goutzkov has reproached himself with idealising in *Dankmars Wildungen*, with a touch, too, of Spielmann's problematical figures.

*A House of Gentlefolk* occupies a place of its own in Tourguéniev's work. In drawing the figure of Lavretski, the hero of this book, the author has entered a sphere of positive conceptions, to which, as a rule, he remained a stranger. He also proposed to supply an answer to Tchernichevski's famous question—What is to be done? Lavretski, a man of poor education, contrives to surmount this disadvantage by the strength of the national temperament. He has, or the author thinks he has, good sense, a well-balanced system of morality, a healthy mind, and an upright heart. How then does he contrive to commit follies and produce the impression of being an oddity? Because he cannot decide or act at the proper moment. Still, and always, he lacks energy.

Such types as Lavretski and Rudin are portraits. Did Tourguéniev succeed, as was certainly his ambition, in reproducing in them the features of the men of his own time? I doubt it. As the representative of the "Forties," I infinitely prefer Beltov, in Herzen's novel *Whose Fault?* The form of this work is very inferior and much too didactic; but, historically speaking, the character strikes me as being far more true. It seems to me to sum up the moral condition of the best intelligence of that period in a less imaginary outline—knowledge, honourable feeling, eagerness to serve the fatherland, disinterestedness, a well-directed and even bold intelligence—all jeopardised, alas! by an utter lack of wise management, a disastrous predisposition to swift despondency, and a total absence of the practical spirit.

Towards 1860, Tourguéniev, like Ostrovski and all the writers of their period, was swept away by the general current that carried them towards the study of social problems. In three successive novels, he made a fresh attempt to respond to the general call for an ideal. The response contained in *On the Eve* (*Nakanounie*) almost smacks of irony. In his search for the man who is wanted, after the series of men who were not, Tourguéniev, imitating Gontcharov, who went to Germany for his hero—sought his paladin in Bulgaria! And what a poor prize he finds there! Inssarov, a colossus of strength, and, in the moral sense, as resolute as a rock, must have his cousin Helen (feminine influence again!) to help him to reach his goal. And he does not reach it! He is only another Beltov.

The second novel of the series, *Fathers and Children*, stirred up a storm the suddenness and violence of which it is not easy, nowadays, to understand. The figure of Bazarov, the first "Nihilist"—thus baptized by an inversion of epithet which was to win extraordinary success—is merely intended to reveal a mental condition which, though the fact had been insufficiently recognised, had already existed for some years. The epithet itself had been in constant use since 1829, when Nadiéjdine applied it to Pouchkine, Polevoï, and some other subverters of the classic tradition. Tourguéniev only extended its meaning by a new interpretation, destined to be perpetuated by the tremendous success of *Fathers and Children*. There is nothing, or hardly anything, in Bazarov, of the terrible revolutionary whom we have since learnt to look for under this title. Tourguéniev was not the man to call up such a figure. He was far too dreamy, too gentle, too good-natured a being. Already, in the

character of Roudine, he had failed, in the strangest way, to catch the likeness of Bakounine, that fiery organiser of insurrection, whom all Europe knew, and whom he had selected as his model. Conceive Corot or Millet trying to paint some figure out of the Last Judgment after Michael Angelo! Bazarov is the Nihilist in his first phase, "in course of becoming," as the Germans would say, and he is a pupil of the German universities. When Tourguéniev shaped the character, he certainly drew on his own memories of his stay at Berlin, at a time when Bruno Bauer was laying it down as a dogma that no educated man ought to have opinions on any subject, and when Max Stirner was convincing the young Hegelians that ideas were mere smoke and dust, seeing that the only reality in existence was the individual *Ego*. These teachings, eagerly received by the Russian youth, were destined to produce a state of moral decomposition, the earliest symptoms of which were admirably analysed by Tourguéniev.

Bazarov is a very clever man, but clever in thought, and especially in word, only. He scorns art, women, and family life. He does not know what the point of honour means. He is a cynic in his love affairs, and indifferent in his friendships. He has no respect even for paternal tenderness, but he is full of contradictions, even to the extent of fighting a duel about nothing at all, and sacrificing his life for the first peasant he meets. And in this the resemblance is true, much more general, indeed, than the model selected would lead one to imagine; so general, in fact, that, apart from the question of art, Tourguéniev—he has admitted it himself—felt as if he were drawing his own portrait; and therefore it is, no doubt, that he has made his hero so sympathetic.

Nevertheless, the picture has been considered an insult and a caricature, and has exposed its author to furious attacks. It is true that Katkov, in a letter which was subsequently published, reproached him with having set Bazarov on a pedestal. And the first person the novelist met, on his arrival at St. Petersburg, addressed him with the words, "Just see what *your* Nihilists are doing! They have almost gone so far as to burn the town." He took up the glove, somewhat clumsily, and very unjustly, in *Smoke* (1867), picturing revolutionary diletteism and society conservatism, in presence of each other, in a manner which, this time, really did amount to a caricature. The persons and ideas in both camps are no more than smoke, but it is dirty and evil-smelling smoke. (One enchanting figure—Irene—perhaps the most exquisite bit of feminine psychology the author has ever given us, stands out luminous against the gloomy background—to which, nevertheless, she clings with the tips of her pink-nailed fingers,—the fingers of a coquette, selfish above all things, capable of sacrificing love to mean calculation, but capable also of loving a man,—a coquette who does not make her sacrifice without a struggle, and goes to the very edge of renunciation and of the abyss, and stirs our sympathy too, after all. Her character is a master-piece of analysis.) Goubarev, the dubious reformer, and Ratmirov, the mysterious official, are neither true nor sympathetic representatives of the generation of the "Sixties." The period was better than that. Before mixing himself up in the discussions in which he took so passionate an interest, Tourguéniev had been anxious to return to Russia, and there edit a paper in which all the problems connected with the coming reform might

have been ventilated. He met with suspicion and hostility on the part of the higher powers at St. Petersburg, remained abroad, and thus gradually lost clearness of vision as to men and matters in his own country.

In his last great novel, *Virgin Soil (Nov)*, he once more attempted to draw the figure of *the man who was wanted*, and who would be able to solve the crowning problem—that raised by the apparent impossibility of maintaining the actual régime, and the equal impossibility of its immediate overthrow. Salomine, the factory owner—a strange type of the opportunist, revolutionary, moderate, methodical, abstracted, a creature without flesh and blood—has not been considered satisfactory in this respect. His friend Niéjdanov, Rudin's own brother in *nolonté*, as Gambetta would have phrased it—seems to have more reality and life. This was because Tourguéniev had sketched him from Nature. Niéjdanov actually lived and breathed. He was one of the author's closest and most devoted friends. He is still alive. But in the novel he only gives us the impression of yet another "superfluous man," a chamber-agitator, who, when he undertakes to harangue the peasants in a tavern, falls, dead drunk, at the first all-round bumper, and kills himself afterwards. Some of his comrades are made of tougher stuff, but they none of them show us that extreme tension of will and energy of character which has been remarked, when the moment for action comes, in the real representatives of their kind. Two charming feminine figures, Machourina, the student, frightfully ugly and ridiculously in love, and Marianne, graceful and coquettish, endue the picture with the only artistic value it possesses. In one of his unpub-

lished letters to Ralston, Tourguéniev remarks that in his time most of the women who enrolled themselves under the Nihilist banner were physically more like Marianne than like Machourina. And he adds that, notwithstanding this fact, it was proved, in the course of the arrests made in their party, that most of them preserved their virtue.

Towards the close of his life, Tourguéniev, too, passed through his mental crisis. The colossus, healthy and hearty as he appeared, tottered, in his turn, on the edge of the giddy gulf which had swallowed up his elder's reason. The sudden breaking of his health certainly contributed to this condition. He had settled in Paris just after the Franco-German war, and there he soon felt the beginnings of a rare and cruel malady—a cancer of the spinal marrow. The constant expectation of death threw him, from that time forward, into a sort of fantastic mysticism, which steadily increased. This appears in two stories written at this period, *The Song of Triumphant Love* and *Clare Miltitch*, this last inspired, it is believed, by the tragic death of a famous Russian actress. They both somewhat recall Hoffmann's manner. If my readers will conceive a sceptic, desperately bent on penetrating the unknown, they will see Tourguéniev as he was in these last years. His *Poems in Prose*, which were partly written under the influence of the same feelings, have just been somewhat coldly received in Russia. Yet sometimes they give us back the Tourguéniev of his best days, with something beyond, in depth of thought and intensity of feeling, and a language such as no man, before or since, has spoken in Gogol's country. Gogol is more expressive, more picturesque, more full of life. Tourguéniev goes beyond life itself. These pages should



be read by those who desire to know the heart of the great poet and infinitely kind-hearted man who penned them.

Though some of Tourguéniev's creations, such as his *Faust*, *Moumou*, *The Living Mummy*, are absolutely original, his work as an artist is founded, as a rule, on that of the great English novelists Thackeray and Dickens. His humanitarian and democratic leanings mark him the pupil of George Sand and Victor Hugo, and his philosophical views betray the influence of Schopenhauer. The Russian does not possess the intellectual solidity and the virile strength of the Anglo-Saxon. His irresolute soul is easily washed away by every current. Like Dickens, Thackeray, and the German Jean-Paul, Tourguéniev, having begun with sketches and pictures of ordinary life, remained faithful to the *genre* style even in his larger compositions. He is superior to Dickens in the matter of proportion. With the English novelist, fancy often reaches the point of hallucination. The Russian novelist often declared that he himself had no imagination at all. Like most of his fellow-countrymen, he had the deepest feeling for Nature. He loved it, understood it, with the heart of a hunter, the passionate affection of a confirmed Rambler in field and forest. Compared with Dickens's descriptive master-pieces—the sea-storm in *David Copperfield*, the land-storm in *Martin Chuzzlewit*—Tourguéniev's descriptions appear somewhat pale. But this is atoned for by the Russian novelist's special gift of incarnating the spirit of a landscape in one or two realistic though fantastic figures, such as Kassiane (a brother, only still more wild and savage, of Patience in *Mauprat*), who lives in intimate friendship with the birds of the forest, imitates their songs, and

knows how to cast a spell over the hunter's fowling-piece, so as to save them from being killed.

Tourguéniev also gives us a fresh conception of Nature, which he shares with Schopenhauer. Their predecessors had lived more or less with Nature, but had always looked upon her as something foreign to themselves, with an existence separate from theirs. In Tourguéniev's case, this external intercourse becomes a fusion, a mutual pervasion. He feels and recognises portions of his own being in the wind that shakes the trees, in the light that beams on surrounding objects, and this gives him a pang of nervous terror which his readers share.

In spite of Schopenhauer, perhaps, after all, on Schopenhauer's account, any general philosophic tendency in Tourguéniev's writings will be sought in vain. One might as well expect to find it in a tale by Chaucer, Boccaccio, or Cervantes. And this peculiarity distinguishes him from the majority of the modern novelists in every country, his own included. He never attempts to discover the meaning of life, because he is convinced that none exists. Though a convinced and essentially realistic follower of Schopenhauer, both in this feature and also in the fact that he never touches, nor attempts to touch, on any subject of which he has not had personal experience, he is a far greater pessimist than his German master, as great a pessimist as Flaubert, though with this difference, that he loves humanity as heartily as Flaubert detests it. We may take him to be a *mourner*, haunted by the sensation of the nothingness of existence, yet hungry for happiness, and enjoying life with all its illusions. Thus, in the closing hours, there rose in his soul, weary of suffering and yet terrified by the dark

shadow which waits to swallow up our suffering, and our power of feeling with it, that final death-shudder so eloquently expressed in certain pages of the *Poems in Prose*.

Tourguéniev's pessimism is certainly not connected with his realism, for the greatest realists, Goldsmith in the last century, Thackeray, Balzac, Zola, Edmond de Goncourt, Daudet, in this one, are no pessimists, nor even Maupassant, at the bottom of his heart, nor Gontcharov, Ostrovski, and Tolstoï, in Russia. The pessimism of the author of *Smoke* does not confine itself to one particular idea of life. Its source seems to lie simply in the circumstances which have *rooted him up*, made him an exile. But it has doubtless contributed to his view of love as a malady, an organic disorder, which obeys no recognised law, inexplicable, incalculable. Tourguéniev's female lovers are, for the most part, creatures of impulse and caprice, like Irene in *Smoke*, and Princess Zen-aïde in *First Love*. They are enigmatic figures, too, though their creator acknowledges that their caprices are the result of internal conflicts, of the meaning of which they themselves are unaware. They are fond of playing with the feelings of others, because they are conscious of being themselves the playthings of their own. In the case of those female characters who have not this capricious quality—Marie in *Antchar*, Vera in *Faust*, Natalia in *Rudin*, and Elizabeth in *A House of Gentlefolk*—love comes to them in a flash, like a fever, and transforms these cold marble figures into blazing torches.

Tourguéniev's workmanship is superior to that of all his Russian compeers. Alone, or almost alone, among them all, he knows how to *compose*, to arrange his story and balance its different parts. In this respect, once more, he is essentially Western. But, on the other hand, and

this is according to the literary tradition of his country, he makes no attempt at finished style. Zola has told us, in one of his critical studies, how Flaubert had set himself one day to explain to him why Merimée's style was bad, and how the Russian novelist, who was present at the conversation, found it very difficult to understand anything about the matter. His great art lay in his power of evocation, of calling up clear, and, as it were; familiar pictures. He was served, in this matter, by an extremely well-developed psychological instinct, which extracted the full value of the very simple methods he employed. *"I go to Oka. I find his house—that is to say, not a house, a hut. I see a man in a blue jacket, patched, torn, with his back turned to me, digging cabbages. I go up to him and say, 'Are you such an one?' He turns, and I swear to you that in all my life I never saw such piercing eyes. Besides them, a face no bigger than a man's fist, a goat's beard, not a tooth. He was a very old man."* The portrait is there before us, thrust in our faces. Here is another of a man *"who looks as if one day, long ago, something had astonished him intensely, and he had never been able to get over the wonder of it."* Then we have the President of the Finance Office, who raves about Nature, *"especially when the busy bee levies its little tribute on every little flower!"* Elsewhere the method varies: by means of reticences, half-hints, special tenses, pauses, inflexions, introduced into his conversations, the artist builds up his sketch just as we have watched a painter build up his picture. For this, observe his portrait of Machourina.

Tourguéniev, like Balzac, has a splendid eye for detail, but he never uses Balzac's microscope. And he does not pose his characters; he has no desire that they should form a tableau. *A Lear of the Steppes,*

the tragic story of a small country land-owner, who, stripped and turned out by his daughters, avenges himself by destroying the house they have stolen from him, is a typical specimen of the mighty results of epic dread obtained by the most natural means.

Tourguéniev, like Dostoïévski (though by a more laborious process), obtains a perfectly natural expression by means of a sort of decomposition of successive movements, which recalls the system of the cinematograph. The recomposition works of itself, and without any effort on the reader's part. To explain Tourguéniev's success in escaping the two reefs which endanger the Realist school—the weariness consequent on the abuse of description, and the disgust inspired by the mediocrity of the individuals represented—M. Bourget has cited “the profound identity existing between the outlook of the Russian author and that of his heroes.” Dostoïévski, on the other hand, has complained of this feature in Tourguéniev's work, as being false to the principle of realism, and leading up to the construction of artificial landscapes, blue skies that smile on scenes of love, and other absurdities of that description.

M. Bourget has further imagined a distinction between “the failures” (*les ratés*) of the French, and the “superfluous men” of the Russian novel, the latter class striking him as less tiresome, because they are not so much men who have *failed*, as men who are *not complete*. This shade appears to me subtle, and hardly correct. A commonplace individual is always likely to prove uninteresting. The difference noticed by the French critic arises entirely, I am disposed to think, out of a question, not of subject, but of the manner in which the subject is presented—in other words, of talent. A Russian

critic, M. Boborikine, has also justly observed, that such men as Roudine and Lavretski may very well pass, in the West, for persons of average calibre, consequently commonplace and not particularly attractive. But in Russia, where social conditions are far less highly developed, it is quite a different matter, and there they are regarded as being quite out of the common. Roudine, indeed, is not an essentially Russian type. There is nothing specially national in a predominance of thought over volition. That trait is rather Western in its origin. The specifically Russian form of want of will, as seen in the case of Oblomov, is quite a different thing.

This leads me to another inquiry. Was Tourguéniev a creator of types in the sense of that synthesis of certain general and permanent features of humanity which has made the glory of Shakespeare and Molière? The question would be settled at once, if, according to the opinion of Taine, registered by M. de Vogüé, the author of *Smoke* is to be regarded as one of the most perfect artists the world has possessed since the days of the ancient Greeks; but I venture to put forward some objections. Tourguéniev's care for true detail, and his powers of evocation, have ensured him a high rank among the great artists and the great realists of every period. But with these qualities he united an equal care and anxiety concerning things mysterious, unfathomable, and fantastic, and a strong proportion of individuality. Thus all his creations contain a certain amount of purely subjective reality, and a certain amount of fancy. His characters are compacted of the result of his observation, together with all his own inner feelings, his loves and hates, his angers and disdains. Listen to Potoughine in *Smoke*, wearing himself out

with passionate tirades against the Slavophiles! Tourguéniev himself speaks by his mouth. His gallery of feminine portraits is exceedingly rich and attractive. I do not share M. Boborikine's opinion that it represents the average of Russian women. I have reviewed all the female figures that attend upon Irene. I cannot find one to be compared to Marguerite or Juliet.

Tourguéniev is a fascinating artist. His chief characteristics are his tenderness and grace, with a certain Northern mistiness of colour, and an extreme daintiness of touch, which has enabled him to approach the most difficult subjects without any sign of indelicacy. What subject could be more dangerous to handle than the rivalry between the father and the son in *First Love*? In *A Sportsman's Sketches*, the novelist's delicate touch and his extreme intensity of restrained feeling have worked marvels. Look at the serf who has not even a past. "He was forgotten in the last census of 'souls'!" and that other, the hero of *Moumou*, whose only possession and love in life is a dog, which he goes out to drown at his mistress's command. And the author has barely sketched them in outline. Then read the scene in *A Lear of the Steppes*, where the peasants of a village are officially informed that their master is to be changed. The magistrate, for formality's sake, inquires—

"Have you any objection to make?"

A dead silence.

"Come, sons of the devil, will you not answer?"

At last an old soldier ventures to come forward.

"None, surely, your honour!"

And his companions, gazing at him with admiration, not unmixed with terror, whisper—

"There's a bold fellow!"

Does not a whole world of misery and moral degradation rise up suddenly before your eyes? And it is done out of nothing, and magnificently done! But even this is not the last word spoken by art, either in Russia or elsewhere. Tolstoï is yet to come.

Tourguéniev's work has not enshrined the historic moments and great events of modern life, even as it has not embodied, in the true sense of the word, any general, comprehensive, lasting type of character. In this connection I must briefly point out the appointed office of the historical novel in his country. It came into existence after 1830, under the influence of Western Romanticism, and more particularly of Sir Walter Scott. Its first period, as exemplified by Zagoskine, Lajetchnikov, Koukolnik, and Zotov, was spent in bondage to this influence and to that of the historical school of Karamzine. At that time, in novels as in history, the evocation of the past came to a full stop at the impassable barrier raised by the epoch of Peter the Great. Lajetchnikov's *The House of Ice*, which broke this rule by encroaching on the reign of the Empress Anne, was suppressed at its second edition. The Censure even interfered with books dealing with the earlier period, and Pouchkine and Gogol were the only writers who produced really interesting work in this closely-watched field. After 1850, the intense anxieties of so decisive a period in the national existence naturally turned men's minds from such subjects. Actual events absorbed every one. Yet, meanwhile, the great labours of Soloviov and Kostomarov were enlarging the circle of historical reconstruction, by the introduction of fresh elements, customs, traditions, habits, beliefs, sympathies, and antipathies, connected with the past life of the nation.



A little later the masses of documents published in and after 1860 in the *Russian Archives* (1860), *Russian Antiquities* (1870), *Historical Messenger* (1880), and the *Antiquities of Kiév* (1882), began to form a treasure-house of which art was one day to take possession. Yet the superiority of the later historical novel, thus richly dowered, only made itself apparent in a greater variety of subject, a freer method of treatment, and a more extensive knowledge of archæology. The observation of past history was just as superficial, and the mixture of reality and fiction just as incoherent. Kostomarov himself set a bad, and even the worst, example in his *Cremutius Cordius*, a play published in 1864, in which the story of Brutus and Cassius was mixed up with episodes in his own career; and in a novel to which I have already referred, and in which the hero, Koudeiar, an imaginary and very enigmatic personage, bears a preponderating share in events contemporary with the time of Ivan the Terrible.

In 1861, the *Russian Messenger* published a novel by Prince Alexander Tolstoï, the action of which passes in the same period. *Prince Sérébrianyï* had a considerable success. The character who gives his name to the book, the champion of the nobility against the tyranny of the Tsar and the excesses of his *Opritchina* (personal guard), has a fine heroic swing. The descriptions, in Walter Scott's style, of the sovereign's hunting-party, the camp of his opponents, and the flight and death of young Skouratov, a fugitive from the camp of the *Opritchiniki*, lack neither life nor truth.

But the admirers of this class of literature were doomed to return, with G. P. Danilevski and his *Mirovitch* (1879) to the sphere of whimsical fancies and

strange ramblings, as exemplified by the impressions of the unhappy partisan of the unfortunate Ivan VI., the victim of Elizabeth and Catherine II., *after* his decapitation ! It is true that, as early as 1867, *War and Peace* had appeared in the columns of the *Russian Messenger*.

The *ethnographical* novel, originally produced by Koltsov, Grigorovitch, and Tourguéniev, received a popular and fairly attractive form at the hands of P. I. Miélnikov (1819-1883), at one time better known under his pseudonym of A. Piétcherski. This writer made his first appearance in 1839, when he published some recollections of travel, which attracted great attention, in the *Annals of the Fatherland*. He afterwards taught history and statistics at Nijni-Novgorod, studied the *Raskol*, and in 1847, joined the staff of the Governor, Prince Ouroussov, to whom he had suggested very severe measures against the dissenters. After some unsuccessful attempts at psychological novel-writing, the experience thus acquired helped him, somewhat late in life, between 1875 and 1883, to the best of all his literary performances—two really interesting studies in novel form, which the *Messenger* placed in the hands of its subscribers. These narratives, entitled respectively *In the Forests* and *In the Mountains*, though devoid of artistic value and psychological truth, though strongly tinged with fantastic notions and a lamentable taste for the melodramatic, and written from an entirely official point of view, are nevertheless full of curious details, and are of great value as a source of information.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CONTROVERSIALISTS—HERZEN AND CHTCHÉDRINE

IN this chapter I propose to bring forward a group of writers in whose case the artistic note, although of considerable importance, is not altogether dominant. One of these, Chtchédrine, has in certain of his creations, surpassed Tourguéniev from the artistic point of view; yet even in his case, the artist has always remained subordinate to the militant author.

At the period when the adepts of German philosophy were gathering round young Stankiévitich at Moscow, a second intellectual current, as theoretical, though in a different direction, was rising within another circle of youthful students. This current, resulting, as in the case of the Stankiévitich group, from local conditions of existence, and external influences wherein the European movement of the first quarter of our century, Schiller's poetry, and the new Western literature, political and social, mingled in a confused and at first unconsciously assimilated mixture of directing impulses, gradually deflected towards the study of political and sociological problems. About the year 1840, the two groups drew towards each other, and well-nigh fused together. The Hegelian right was represented by Stankiévitich and Biéliniski; the left, by Herzen and Ogariov. In

other words, there was a Moderate and a Radical party. Finally the two groups definitely separated. Stankié-vitch and Biéliniski stirred up and propagated a fever of artistic creation which strongly affected Gogol and Tourguéniev. Herzen and Ogariov produced an intellectual ferment which, by the double means of the literary pamphlet and of political agitation, was to lead up to that effervescence of which the tragic incidents of the conspiracy of Pétrachevski and the persons accused with him, in 1849, was to be the first alarming symptom. Pétrachevski, in his *Dictionary of Foreign Expressions*, forged an engine of war which affected the over-excited minds of his contemporaries in the same way as the *Philosophical Dictionary* had once affected Voltaire's readers. The so-called "plot" of 1849, an echo of the February revolution, and the answer to the philanthropic dreams of St. Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon, called forth terrible reprisals. Dostoïévski went to Siberia with the author of the dictionary. Saltykov (Chtchédrine) was sent to Viatka, and a series of repressive measures helped to cast the country back into that condition of intellectual torpor which it had hardly shaken off. The scientific missions to foreign countries, the pilgrimages to German universities, were all suppressed. The price of passports was raised to the exorbitant figure of 500 roubles, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could be obtained at all. The number of pupils in the Imperial Universities was limited, and all teaching of philosophy was forbidden. The number of newspapers was reduced, and the Censure became so severe that the word "liberty" was forbidden, as being revolutionary! A man who lost a dog called "Tyrant" was obliged to advertise for it under the name of "Fido."

The idealists who had led the movement were sobered by its results. The rising tide of reforming ideas was followed by a violent reflux in the reactionary direction. The reformers of yesterday accepted a patriotism "to order," which found its natural outlet in the Crimean war (1853-1856). But here again disappointment was their portion. The result of this outbreak of ultra-patriotism soon revealed faults of organisation and elements of weakness hitherto quite unsuspected. The Slavophil idealists saw their proud dream shattered, and in its fall, official "nationalism" was broken to pieces. A renewed longing for self-chastisement seized on this society, already so bitterly wounded in its tenderest illusions. A fresh outbreak of reforming ideas and humanitarian impulses swept over the sovereign himself, and for the first time,—with the inauguration of a political era which in itself constituted a revolution, government and public opinion appeared associated in common action. The press, too, recovered a certain amount of liberty. But it had already acquired, from foreign sources, the means of speaking out and making itself heard. The greatest publicist of the period had for several years been living and writing in a foreign country.

## HERZEN.

The natural son of a rich nobleman named Iakovlev, and of a Stuttgardt lady called Louise Haag, ALEXANDER IVANOVITCH HERZEN (1812-1870), bore his fancy name as a love-token (*Herzen's Kind*, Child of the Heart). Even quite lately this name might not be printed within Russian frontiers. Exiled, first of all, to Viatka, in 1835, and then a second time to Novgorod, in 1841, sent into

the service of a former rope-dancer, whom imperial favour had transformed into the Governor of the province, the young man soon convinced himself of the utter incompatibility of his character with any career in the country ruled by the Toufiaiev,—thus was the Governor named. One day, sitting in this official's Chancery, he heard a poor serf woman, who besought the authorities not to separate her from her little children, treated with rudeness and contempt. He left the room on plea of illness, and never returned. He fell back on literature, publishing first, in the *Annals of the Fatherland*, and under the pseudonym of Iskander, some *Letters on the Study of Nature*, which attracted a great deal of attention; and between 1845 and 1846, two novels, *Whose Fault?* and *Doctor Kroupov*. The letters contain a brilliant exposition of every philosophical system down to, and including, that of Bacon, together with a searching criticism of these systems from the point of view of contemporary knowledge. The work is interesting, but incomplete. Herzen's intention, no doubt, had been to develop his own cosmic ideas on this foundation, but other interests turned him from the undertaking. In *Whose Fault?* we find, under the name of Beltov, the eternal "superfluous man," very much puzzled what to do with himself, until he meets with Liouba, who, by teaching him what love means, acquaints him with the secret of his destiny, but who is herself unfortunately bound to his friend Krouciferski. The struggle of emotions arising out of this situation is intended to indicate that the society producing it is badly constituted and needs a process of reconstruction. All the fault lies there. It is a work of social physiology and pathology, composed with extreme skill, and holds a position of capital impor-

tance in the history of the intellectual progress of that epoch. That personal and revolutionary fashion of regarding family and social relations, which Tolstoï was to make peculiarly his own, is already clearly indicated in its pages. From the æsthetic point of view, and in spite of the fact that the moral physiognomy of the little world of which it treats has been searchingly investigated by the author, the work has less value. The figure of Liouba, strongly marked out in the style of George Sand, is dry in drawing and poor in colour. Herzen shows himself less the painter than the surgeon, handling his instruments with impassive skill. The book owed the impression it made chiefly to the picture drawn in its earlier pages of the patriarchal life of ancient Russia, in its least honourable peculiarities, thanks to which Liouba, who is a natural daughter, and her mother, are both treated as *pariahs* in the house of Negrov.

Herzen was to do better work than this. At that very moment the death of his father placed him in possession of a considerable fortune, and he left Russia, never to return. In Paris he associated with French socialists and Polish emigrants, contributed to Proudhon's *Voice of the People*, was banished, and, in 1850, published—in German in the first place, and under the title of *Vom andern Ufer*—the first book of his which did not pass under the official censor's eye. This collection of epistles and dissertations, composed under the combined influence of the revolutionary notions of the time, and of the doctrines of the Slavophil party, proclaimed, in somewhat audacious fashion, the near and inevitable end of the political and social organisation of the old European, Christian, and feudal world, and

its regeneration by the agency of the Russian Community. Nothing else so paradoxical and so brilliant occurs in the revolutionary literature of the period.

Herzen, who had grown intimate with Charles Vogt and Herwegh, was at this time living at Nice. But a lamentable catastrophe—the death of his mother and two of his children, drowned between that town and Marseilles—was soon to render this place of residence too painful for him. In 1838 he had made a love marriage, preceded by an elopement. Paris being closed to him, he decided to go to London, but he found himself as isolated there, at first, as he had been in Russia. The Revolutionists of other countries could not swallow his Slavophilism. He endeavoured to justify it by the publication of a second book, *On the Development of Revolutionary Ideas in Russia* (1853), but he only succeeded in gaining the sympathy of the Polish democratic party, and of its London chief, Worcell. A printer belonging to the Polish printing-press in London, Czerniecki, helped him to found a Russian printing-press. But just at this time the Crimean war, with its proofs of the superiority of ancient Europe, began to shake the over-presumptuous convictions of the banished Slavophil, and counselled him to leave the “rotten” West to its fate, and to turn all his attention to questions affecting the internal economy of Russia. To this decision his Polish intimacies contributed, and the death of Nicholas in 1855, together with the political confusion resulting from it, combined to tempt him still further in this direction. Thus the publication of *The Polar Star* was decided on. With the first numbers of this periodical, wherein Herzen placed the emancipation of the serfs at the head of



the reforms he claimed, there appeared, in English, the author's own Memoirs (*My Exile*, 1856), which produced a great sensation. In 1857, *The Polar Star*, which was only published once in six months, became insufficient for its purposes, and on the 1st of July in that year, *The Bell*, which was destined to meet with such prodigious success, made its first weekly appearance. Five months later, on December 2, 1857, Alexander II. published his famous rescript, calling on the nobility to bring forward plans for the work of emancipation; and from that moment, *The Bell* took on, for some time, the appearance of an informally official organ, which supported the Government against the resistance offered to the projected reform by a certain section of the aristocracy. The paper, though officially forbidden, circulated all over the empire. Copies of it appeared even on the table of General Rostovtsov, President of the Commission charged with the preparation of the act of enfranchisement. When, now and then, the police thought itself obliged in decency to interfere, it would confiscate—as on one occasion at the fair of Nijni-Novgorod—a hundred thousand copies at once. Herzen, meanwhile, contrived to obtain the most trustworthy, the most precise, and the earliest information as to the affairs of the country. He would hold forth to his readers concerning state secrets which were not known to more than ten persons in the whole of Russia. He gave the names of prisoners shut up in the dungeons of St. Petersburg and the mines of Nertchinsk, whom their very jailers knew only by their allotted numbers.

When the emancipation became an accomplished fact, the 3rd of March 1861 was kept as a festival in Herzen's house in the west end of London. Over the

entrance two great flags waved, with these inscriptions, "Freedom of the Russian Peasants," "The Free Russian Press." Herzen little dreamt that he was celebrating the early downfall of *The Bell*. From this date the prestige of the newspaper rapidly declined. Herzen, very unadvisedly, sided with the peasant revolts which followed closely on the reform, and imperilled the benefits thereby obtained. At the same time, influenced by Bakounine, he entered on a course of excessive revolutionism, which was soon to cost him the great majority of his readers.

Michael Bakounine (1814-1876) had then just escaped from Siberia by way of America. He was a revolutionary of the type of Barbés, and loved his vocation with an artist's love. "The passion for destruction," so he averred, "is a creative passion." He had been an Hegelian of the right and of the left; he passed over into Germany towards 1841, found it too full of theorists to please him, moved on to Paris, joined the Polish emigrants, was expelled by Guizot, and did not return to the capital until the February revolution reopened its gates to him. Caussidière used to say of him, "The first day of a revolution he is a treasure; the next day he had better be shot." The authorities were content with turning him out. He betook himself to Prague, where he preached socialist Panslavism, fought with the rioters against the soldiers of Windischgrätz, slipped through the fingers of the Austrian police, and hurried off to take his part in the Dresden revolution. Saxony made him over to Austria, who abandoned him to Russia. He was sent to the mines, escaped, as I have said, and reached London in time to revolutionise Herzen's relatively moderate propaganda, and crack his *Bell*. At a later period his violence was to alarm Karl Marx himself,

and the workers of the International. After 1873 he was forsaken by every one, and returned to private life. Amongst his numerous publications, pamphlets, and books, the tract entitled *To my Russian and Polish Friends* (in French, Leipzig, 1862), and a study, published in German, under the title *Historische Entwicklung der Internationale* (Geneva, 1874), are the only two worthy of mention.

In the company of this dangerous acolyte, Herzen gradually lost all moderation and all political wisdom. He attacked the person of the Emperor, which he had hitherto always respected. "Farewell, Alexander Nicolaiévitch, good journey to you!" I have already related how he succeeded in provoking Katkov's vehement protests. *The Bell*, deserted by its readers, and removed to Geneva in 1865, degenerated, little by little, into an obscure pamphlet, which altogether disappeared four years later; and in the year after that, Herzen, too, died in Paris.

His was one of the most remarkable intellectual organisations of any country and any period. He could write correctly, and occasionally brilliantly, in Russian, French, English, and German. To the ten volumes of his works published in Russian at Geneva between 1875 and 1879, an enormous quantity of pamphlets must be added. In one of these, *France and England*, published in 1858, he discusses the problem of a Franco-Russian alliance. His own preference was for England,—the only school, he said, which suited Russia—"A country without centralisation, without a bureaucracy, without prefectures, without gendarmes, without revolution, and without reaction." In 1865, under the title of *Camiccia Rossa*, he relates a curious episode of his residence in

London,—his meeting with Garibaldi. He also touched on history, by his publication of the *Memoirs of Catherine II.* and of the *Princess Dachkov* (1859). In London he kept open house. Of affable manners and a brilliant talker, though by no means an orator, he attracted universal liking.

His character and his intellectual powers have been the subject of very contradictory judgments. His compatriots have taken him, at one time and another, to be either Hamlet or Don Quixote,—an idealist or a realist. I am disposed to share the opinion of Viétrinski (*Historical and Literary Sketches*, Moscow, 1899). Herzen was, above all things, an exceedingly personal writer, very impressionable, and very apt to change his impressions. One only has been durable and dominant with him,—a deep love of his country, of his country's spirit, of its manner of existence and its methods of thought, joined with a profound feeling of sadness, the reason for which will be easily guessed.

The Russian printing-press which he founded in London continued to work even after his departure and his death. From it issued, between 1860 and 1870, General Fadiéiev's *Letters on Russian Society and the Russian Army*, Kavéline's book *The Nobility and the Emancipation of the Serf*, Iélaguine's *The Russian Clergy*, Kochélev's *How can Russia Escape from her Present Position?* Samarine's *The Baltic Provinces*, theological studies by Gagarine and Khomiakov, various collections of historical and biographical papers, and a number of revolutionary newspapers and pamphlets, of a democratic and social tendency.

The literary tradition of Herzen, combined, however, with a marked leaning towards the school of Bakounine,

is carried on, in our day, by Lavrov, who edited the Anarchist and revolutionary newspaper *Forward* from 1870 to 1880; by Vera Zassoulitch, and by Prince Krapotkine, to whom the *Nineteenth Century* has had the courage to entrust the duties of scientific reviewer, in succession to the illustrious Huxley. The Socialism of Little Russia has found what I may call a kind of autonomous representative in the person of M. Dragomanovo, who died quite recently.

It should be noted that the great Russian writers of the middle of the present century, Tourguéniev, Gontcharov, Dostoïevski, and even Tolstoï himself, have really exercised a very restricted influence on the intellectual and social evolution of the years between 1860 and 1880. They were widely read, and even enthusiastically admired, but the public, for the most part, drew its ideas and sentiments from a number of writers such as Pomialovski, Sliéptsov, Mikhailov (pseudonym Scheller), Madame Khvochtchinskaïa (pseudonym V. Krestovski), who did not even occupy the front rank among the secondary novelists, and especially from the leaders of the literature of divulgation and accusation, romantic followers of Herzen, and, like him the confessors and merciless chastisers of a society which was tasting its hour of repentance and expiation. The most eminent representatives of this group are Saltykov (Chtchédrine) and Pissemski.

MICHAEL IEVGRAFOVITCH SALTYKOV (CHTCHÉDRINE) (1826-1889) made his first appearance in literature simultaneously with Dostoïevski, and somewhat later than Nékrassov. In 1841, he published some verses in the *Reader's Library*, and in 1847, under the pseudonym of Nepanov, a novel, imitated from George Sand, and

entitled *Contradictions*, in which the power of satire he was afterwards to evince is by no means foreshadowed. His wit and spirit were not to develop in this direction until a later period, under the influence of Socialist ideas, and probably, also, of the prolonged exile he had to suffer. His novel, though considered harmless in 1847, was looked on as criminal in 1848, and the author was whirled away in a *kibitka*. He owed his liberty, some eight years later, to the sort of liberal reaction consequent on the disasters of the Crimean war. Then appeared, in the *Russian Messenger*, his *Sketches of Governments*, which seem to be a continuation of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, with less humour and more bitterness—a cruel wit, that whistled and bit like the thong of a whip. The blows fell from above. The chastiser, who already belonged to one of the noblest families in the country, was now advanced to official dignity, first as Governor of Riazan and afterwards as Governor of Tver.

The administrative career, it must be admitted, did not retain him for long. It suited him ill, and he suited it still worse. In 1868 it came to an end, and Saltykov, the official, disappeared for ever behind Chtchédrine, the contributor to the *Contemporary*, and, after the suppression of that publication, the editor, with Nékrassov, of the *Annals of the Fatherland*, which, in 1884, ceased in their turn to appear. It is at this moment that his literary personality took definite shape. He became, and to the last stroke of his pen he was to remain, the executioner of the press and society of his time, who summoned every category, every shade of opinion, and every section of society (including his own) into the question chamber, where each culprit was duly castigated, or branded with hot irons.

In Chtchédrine's *Sketches*, the first group to pass under the whip was the provincial bureaucracy, *cujus magna pars fuit*. Note the historical incident of the *Boumaga* (business document) which the *tchinovniks* of the town of Kroutogorsk pass from hand to hand without contriving to understand a word of it. At last an archivist whom they call into consultation offers to help them out of the difficulty.

"*You understand it?*"

"*No; but I can answer it!*"

Peasants and merchants, upper and lower classes, judicial and religious customs, all have their turn. Listen to the confession of the examining magistrate. "*What right have I to a conviction? On whose account is it necessary that I should have one? On one solitary occasion, when speaking to the President, I ventured to say, 'as I understand it.' . . . He looked at me, and I never did it again. Why should I want to know whether a crime has really been committed or not? Is the crime proved? that is the whole question.*" Beside this realist magistrate we find another whose sympathy is with the culprits, and who would fain believe them innocent. His fancy brings him no luck. "*Why don't you thrash me?*" cries one of the rogues whom he is gently questioning. "*Do thrash me! then perhaps I will tell you something.*" Thus, from the top of the ladder to the bottom, he sets forth the same, or almost the same, signs of the perversion and degradation of the moral sense; a general lack of character, corruption and falsehood, reproduced in various forms and on every level; insolent tyranny above, crawling slavery below. Everywhere a life of mechanical formalism, with a thin varnish of civilisation to cover all its horrors. Saltykov's perma-

ment idea would seem to be that, at bottom, nothing has changed in Russia since the eighteenth century. Demoralisation, ignorance, and barbarism have all remained stationary, and even the liberal measures of 1860 have only served to induce fresh phenomena of moral corruption.

His usual method, in these sketches, is one of cold and unsmiling irony. Look at his inimitable picture of that idyllic and patriarchal existence which constitutes the delight of the inhabitants of Kroutogorsk. "*Heavenly powers! what a paradise it would be if it were not for the police-officers and the fleas!*" In his subsequent works, the author broadens his manner and extends his field of observation. After the Crimean war he falls foul of the kind of intellectual and moral *renaissance* evoked by that fiasco of official patriotism. He denounces its empty phraseology, and, progressive as he is himself, he makes game of its cloudy ideas of progress, mistily floating hither and thither. Between 1861 and 1867 he reviews the transition types created by the great reform. Landowners who do not know what to make of their new position; brandy merchants, railway contractors, and money-lenders, who turn the situation to account, and are the only ones to benefit by the act of emancipation; a ruling class terrified by the consequences of its own act, a literary class whose judgment of that act varies from one day to another. Russia, with her new representatives of the ruling classes—"the men of culture"—which she now possesses, is like a vessel which has been cleaned without, but which is full of filth within. Such is the meaning of the *Story of a Town*, of the *Faces of our Times*, and of the *Journal of a Country Gentleman*. Listen to the complaint of the



*Pamiéchtchik* (rural land-owner) who has to pay for his place in the St. Petersburg theatre to hear Schneider sing. The lady, pretty as she is, is not so fair as a *Palachka* of the good old times. What pleasure can he have in looking at her and listening to her? He cannot say to himself, "*She belongs to me; I can do what I will with her, to-morrow or at once. If I like I can have her hair cut off; or if I choose I can marry her to Antip, my shepherd! . . . Alack! we can do no harm to anybody now—not even to a hen!*"

Between 1867 and 1881, we have a new series of *Sketches*, in which the prevailing type is that of the *Gentlemen of Tachkent*, "men of culture" of a special kind, "champions of education without the alphabet," and seekers after fortune for which they will not have to work. At this period the town and neighbourhood of Tachkent had become a sort of Klondyke. These volumes are full of obscure allusions to contemporary events, which, together with frequent and tedious divagations, make them difficult and fatiguing to read, and indeed the author's wit occasionally strikes one as being somewhat forced. An exception must be made in the case of *The Golovlev Brothers*, which belongs to this series. This book is Chtchédrine's masterpiece. In it he rises to a height of tragic power which is almost Shakespearian. But at what a cost! The story of the Golovlev family is the most terrible accusation which has ever been formulated against any society. The author of *La Terre* and his French imitators have never ventured on anything like it. Chtchédrine has determined, on this occasion, to show the remnants of the old order, of the patriarchal form of life, and the special culture appertaining to it, as perpetuated, after the reform,

in the bosom of a family of *Pamiéchtchiki*. We see three brothers, left practically to themselves by an idiot father, and a mother whose sole idea is to increase the common patrimony. Once they are full grown, they are cast upon life, with but a scanty provision, and left to take their chance. If they fail, they will have food and lodging at the farm. The eldest, in despair, takes to drink and dies of it. The second follows his father, and falls into a condition of semi-madness. The third is the favourite son. His brothers call him "Little Judas" (Ioudouchka) and "Blood-sucker." He skilfully persuades his mother to divide the fortune she has amassed, obtains an undue portion in the first place, and finally succeeds in securing the whole. He has two sons, who, in their turn, have to make their way in the world as best they can. One of them desires to make a love marriage. "As you will," says the father. But as soon as the couple are united, he cuts off their means of subsistence. Another suicide! The second son, an officer in the army, comes home one night, pale and haggard. He has gambled away money belonging to his regiment. "*That's unfortunate,*" observes Ioudouchka calmly. "*Let us go and have some tea.*"

"*But what am I to do?*"

"*That's your business. I cannot know what resources you reckoned on when you began to play. Let us go and have some tea.*"

"*But three thousand roubles are nothing to you! You are a millionaire thrice told.*"

"*That may be, but it has nothing to do with your prank. Let us go and have some tea.*"

And the unhappy wretch, cashiered and sent to hard labour, dies in a convict hospital.

Ioudouchka has a mistress, the daughter of a Greek priest, whom he has employed, in the first place, as his housekeeper. He is warned that she is about to become a mother, and is very ill pleased at being interrupted in the middle of his prayers, for he is exceedingly devout.

*"But what is to become of the child?"*

*"What child?"*

*"Your child. Eupraxia will soon be a mother."*

*"I don't know, and I don't desire to know."*

And the child is sent to a workhouse.

Ioudouchka has two nieces, who, finding they must starve at home, become provincial actresses. The eldest soon turns sick at heart, poisons herself, and tries to induce her sister to do likewise.

*"Drink! coward that you are!"*

But the wretched girl's courage fails her, and when all other resources are exhausted, she takes refuge with her uncle. Ioudouchka brutally suggests that she should occupy Eupraxia's place. She turns from him in horror, and takes to flight. When she returns at last, she has lost all her charm, her health is broken, and she has taken to drink. One night, Ioudouchka surprises her alone with Eupraxia, drinking glasses of brandy, and singing filthy songs. He takes her away with him, and becomes the companion of her nightly orgies. These two sit drinking in his silent house, till they fall to quarrelling, and cast horrible insults in each other's teeth. In the fumes of the brandy, their past surges up before their eyes, full of abominable memories, of shameful deeds and crimes, of nameless suffering and humiliation, till, little by little, a sort of half-conscience rises up in the haunted soul of the "Blood-sucker," and he feels all the horror of the responsibility he has incurred. It is terribly magnificent.

loudouchka, as I have already said, is a devotee. All through the long lonely days, he never leaves his writing table, and the laborious reckoning up of his income and his gains, save to kneel, for long periods, before the holy pictures. Chtchédrine has desired to realise a sort of Tartuffe of his own, partly duped by his own hypocrisy, who believes in God, but is incapable of connecting his faith with any moral principle. The wild nights spent with the niece whom he has cast into such a horrible abyss, the reproaches with which she overwhelms him, and the remorse with which she finally inspires him, end by leading him first to the haunting idea of a necessary expiation, and then to an intense longing for it. And so one winter morning, after many prayers before a thorn-crowned Christ, loudouchka goes out and kills himself upon his mother's grave.

Such a picture only admits of one plausible explanation. We see the end of the whole social group it is supposed to represent—death without any possible return to life. The worms are crawling over it already—decomposition, and nothingness beyond it. The idea is false—at all events it is exaggerated. As a matter of fact, the country land-owners of the period were no more than a special category of "superfluous men," and this Chtchédrine himself has understood, and admirably demonstrated, in *The Spleen (Dvorianskaïa Khandra)*, in which he depicts the anguish of a *Pamiéchtchik* who suddenly finds himself useless, and buried alive, as it were, in his country home. He has lost the right to need his peasants, and his peasants have ceased to need him. He feels himself to be despairingly useless. But this is all. And this in itself is evidently a passing matter. The portrait of loudouchka, and the personality of the figures sur-

rounding him, present features of profound observation, and give proof of remarkable dramatic power. But the author reveals himself as a poet rather than a sociologist—the poet of caricature.

Yet he never was a novelist in the proper meaning of the word. He even goes so far, in the preface of his *Tachkentsy*, as to condemn this literary form, as being too limited, and no longer fulfilling the needs of the period. And his stories, as a rule, contain no element of romantic interest whatever. They are rather analytical essays, and essays of social criticism, tainted by a considerable amount of fancy, and an equal amount of deliberate exaggeration. Yet this does not lead me so far as to adopt Pissarev's opinion of his work, as being nothing but "laughing for laughing's sake."

After 1880, the prolific writer modified his manner once again. A calm had fallen on the intellectual and political turmoil of the preceding years. There were no more mighty movements, no more bitter conflicts. And when Chtchédrine composed his *Trifles of Life*, he seemed to harmonise his note to the general tone. He set himself to show the part played in life by those small details which absorb and eat it up. And after that, passing from analysis to synthesis, he considered, in his *Tales*, the general elements common to the existence of every nation, and every period. In spite of some too evident contradictions, this part of his work may be said to have placed him on an equality with the greatest of European writers. The general tone is that of a deep-seated scepticism and pessimism, a lack of faith in humanity, and an idea that the struggle for life is the supreme law of existence. This certainly seems to be the meaning, for instance, of the *Poor Wolf*, whom the author shows us

as being driven to steal and kill in order to live. Yet, in the *Christmas Tales*, with their deep pathos and profound religious feeling, the author strikes a very different note—that faith in the Divine Love which lifts humanity out of all its misery.

Towards the end of his life, Chtchédrine has seemed to desire to atone for former contradictions and errors of judgment by writing *The Chronicle of Pochékhone*—the Russian *Abdera*. This, again, is a picture of the life of rural proprietors before the reform, and this time we have a history wherein traits of true humanity and Christian love atone for very occasional failures, and a few absurdities. Both as regards its depth of thought and its artistic form, if not for its absolute reliability, the work is far superior to Akssakov's *Family Chronicle*.

The melancholy shade of Pissemski, and his numerous admirers, will perhaps reproach me with having here allotted him a position all unworthy of him. And I must admit that of all his creations, whether plays or novels, there is but one, and that not the best, to which we can attribute any personally combative design. All the author has ever set before himself, is to perform a true artist's work, as the faithful interpreter, "objective and naïve," as Dostoïevski said, of Nature. But the nature and scope of a work cannot be judged by the intentions of its maker. It has been said of Pissemski, as it has been said of Zola, "That he saw things through dirt," and the result of this is that he must be classed, however much against his own desire, amongst the most bitter detractors, and the most merciless accusers, of his period. The subjects and the heroes of his books frequently bear a close resemblance to those which were so dear to Tourguéniev, and even to Lermontov. The Batmanov of

the novel of that name, is closely related to Piétchorine, but you would take it for a picture by Rembrandt, repainted by Teniers.

Like Saltykov-Chtchédrine, ALEXIS FÉOFILAKTOVITCH PISSEMSKI (1820-1881) was born of an ancient noble family, originally settled in the Government of Kostroma. In 1582, one of his ancestors was sent to England by Ivan the Terrible, in connection with a proposed marriage between the Tzar and one of Queen Elizabeth's kinswomen. Alexis Féofilaktovitch belonged to an impoverished branch of this aristocratic race. He has himself related that his grandfather did not know how to read, wore sandals (*lapti*), and tilled his own scrap of land. His father, whom he has taken as the type of a veteran in one of his stories, began by serving as a private soldier, and never rose above the rank of major. These circumstances must have affected the education of the future novelist. Pissemski, like Gogol and Dostoïevski, never possessed much general education, and like them, not having been taught to think, he inclined strongly to mysticism. When he left the University, he found his father dead, his mother stricken with paralysis, and something very like destitution in his home. He attempted to earn his livelihood by literature, and wrote his first novel *The Times of the Boyards* (*Boïarchtchina*), a plea in favour of free love, inspired by *Indiana*. Its publication was forbidden by the Censure. Pissemski attempted the administrative career, but could make nothing of it, and finally, in 1855, he earned great success with a second novel, *The Muff* (*Tioufiak*), a study of a man without energy and without character, which he followed by a succession of tales relating to provincial incidents and touching, like those of Tourguéniev, on

popular life. In these, Zola's mania for trivial detail is aggravated by a peculiar stamp of pessimism, which ascribes the complex motives of human nature to two mainsprings and no more — cupidity in some cases, sexual instinct in the rest. But the peasants he conjures up are generally admirably true to life. In 1858 there appeared, together with the *Boïarchtchina*, which was now authorised by the Censure, the best of all Pissemski's novels, *A Thousand Souls* (*Tyssiatcha douch*), a gloomy picture, wherein the worst sides of Russian existence before the reform are thrown into as strong, and more cruel relief, than even in the work of Chtchédrine. The hero of this book, Kalinovitch, a man of talent and energy, climbs to fortune by sacrificing a young girl who has devoted herself to him, and marrying, according to a shameful bargain, the mistress of a prince. He becomes governor of a province, and endeavours to atone for his past by applying the rational theories he has learnt at the university; is stubbornly resisted by an administrative and social organisation founded on abuses of every kind; and finally comes to disgrace and ruin. He then meets once more with Nastienka, the woman he has so shamefully deserted, who has meanwhile become a provincial actress, marries her, and shares with her the remnants of an ill-gotten fortune, without any desire to attain anything more in life.

In spite of some apparent contradictions, the character of Kalinovitch is carefully studied, and logically constructed. The action of the story in which he plays the principal part is interesting and well planned. The author goes straight to his point, like a rifle-bullet, without any discernible regard for æsthetics or morality.



His gloomy figures are sketched with broad, dry, heavy, strokes, on a dark background. There is not a figure, except that of Nastienka, which has a touch of light upon it. And Nastienka herself, a provincial actress who preserves her virtue, strikes one as a somewhat paradoxical figure, even for Russia. The background, with its representation of provincial life, recalls Chtchédrine, but many of its features are still more repulsive. "A man must possess a great reserve of courage to be able to live in such society!" so says Pissemski himself, in a novel of a similar type, *An Old Man's Sin*.

Meanwhile, the author endowed the Russian theatre with a play entitled *Cruel Fate* (*Gorkaia Soudbina*), the first founded on popular life which earned any success in the country before the appearance of Tolstoi's *Power of Darkness*. This success must be more especially ascribed to the manner in which the subject is presented, and way in which the cruel fate of a half-emancipated serf, who goes to seek his fortune in St. Petersburg, and comes back to find his domestic happiness destroyed, his wife become his master's concubine, and the mother of a child who is the *Barine's* child, is described. Yet its success is certainly surprising, for it undoubtedly depends, to a great extent, firstly on melodramatic effects of a somewhat coarse nature, the murder of the child by the outraged husband, which takes place almost on the stage, and then on an interpretation of the law of serfdom and its consequences, which really is strained, and anything but true. All the figures in the play, whether owners or serfs, with the exception of the officials of every rank, are good, generous, and tender-hearted; and yet the infernal law leads them on into crime.

In his later works, Pissemski endeavoured to make amends for this lapse from his principles. The public blamed him. In Russia, the years following on the great act of emancipation were a troublous period, during which the sentiment of reality was entirely obliterated by a cloud of reforming dreams and Utopian fancies. When Pissemski endeavoured to react against these, as in his *Furious Sea* (*Vzbalamoutchennoie Morie*), he only succeeded in displeasing everybody. The Liberals accused him of apostasy, and, with the usual injustice of political parties, ascribed his attitude to personal motives which had no real existence. He was still showing things as he saw them, and he could see nothing practical in contemporary radicalism. Living in the midst of men saturated with bookish theories, he exemplified the commonplace spirit of the provincial *samodour*. His last years were saddened by periodical attacks of hypochondria. He had lived too long.

The general spirit of his work resembles that of Gontcharov, who, like him, struck a matter-of-fact note, in opposition to the somewhat romantic realism of Tourguéniev, and, like him, cast ridicule and reprobation upon people who have nothing to offer but ideas. In Pissemski's eyes, as in Gontcharov's, action is everything. They are followers of Gogol, just as Tourguéniev is the follower of Pouchkine. The difference between them and the author of *A Hunter's Memories* resides more particularly in the fact that this last is, on the whole, a describer of exceptional types, just as he is a painter of magnificent landscapes. They, on the contrary, resolutely bestow all their attention on common things, and ordinary men. Everything outside this category strikes them as being either false or ridiculous.

Like Tourguéniev, they consider the life of their own period both evil and unendurable ; but they do not share his opinion that these vices can only be corrected by men of special virtues, or by heroes. The everyday vulgar man should suffice, if only he were not indolent. Their favourite personages—Biélavine in *A Thousand Souls* and Peter Ivanovitch in *A Common Story*—are men who suit themselves to the times in which they live, set an aim before them, and succeed in reaching it. They bring in no new ideas ; they only bring in a manner of existence which is new to the Russian man, a spirit of practicality, of punctuality and energy. Thus they represent European culture far better than the great good-for-nothing idlers depicted by Tourguéniev. Unluckily, like them, they are only half-civilised men. They have the substance, the others have the form. And the result is very much the same, as negative in one case as in the other. Gontcharov himself seems to have recognised the failure of this generation of positive men, for his *Oblomov* only obtains the common fate of the traditional *legne*—idleness, inertia, a fatty heart, and apoplexy at the close.

I now pass on to an undeniable representative of the confraternity of literary chastisers of this period, a poet who, like Chtchédrine, possessed all the instincts of the executioner, and who at the same time was an extraordinary type of the *proletary*—one who bore in his soul, and vented on others, all the spites and furies and hatreds of an outcast race, to which he did not himself belong by right of blood. NICHOLAS ALEXIÉIÉVITCH NÉKRASSOV (1821–1876) was born in a small town in Podolia, where his father was quartered. The family circle was completed by a mother of Polish origin,

(Zakrzewska), and a dozen brothers and sisters. It belonged to the small provincial nobility. The father, having led the ill-regulated life of the gentlemen of his time, and dissipated a modest patrimony, had been obliged to undertake the humble functions of a rural police Commissary. Young Nicholas often accompanied him on his rounds, and thus became acquainted with the popular life, its habits, thoughts, and sufferings. When the child grew into a youth he was sent into the Corps of Cadets at St. Petersburg, but he was not to stay there. His mother, a dreamy, passionate creature, had kindled a spark within his heart, which the great city fanned into a flame. Instead of preparing himself for the career of arms, Nicholas Alexiévitch attended the university lectures, and mingled in literary circles. Treated as a rebellious son, and deprived of remittances, he gave lessons, corrected proofs, supplied compilations to newspapers, and often went hungry. "For three years I was hungry every day," he would say, later; and at the same time, with that cynicism which is one of the least attractive features of his talent, he reproduced in one of his poems the following autobiographical anecdote—that his mistress went out, one night, dressed in the gayest attire, and returned home carrying a tiny coffin for the baby which had just died, and food for the father who had been starving since the previous evening!

Encouraged by N. A. Polévoi, Nékrassov ended by publishing some lines in the *Literary Gazette* and in the *Annals of the Fatherland*. A little later a collection of poems, entitled *Dreams and Strains*, greeted with friendly appreciation by Polevoi and Joukovski, definitely opened the literary career before him. But up till 1845, he was to struggle with poverty, working ceaselessly at every kind

of style, and even attempting comic opera, under the pseudonym of "Perepielski." Between 1845 and 1846, the success of two other collections of his work, *The Physiology of St. Petersburg* and the *St. Petersburg Miscellany*, together with Biéliniski's eulogistic verdict upon them, brought him the beginnings of glory and ease. Before long he joined Panaiev in the editorship of *The Contemporary*, founded by Pouchkine, and in two years he had grown rich. But here came a fresh disappointment. As fortune smiled upon him, his friends forsook him. Various reports circulated concerning the origin and constitution of the wealth so swiftly acquired. A discord always existed between the poetic existence of Nékrassov, and his practical life, and some of his lyric compositions bear traces of the fact. The future held some compensations for him. The boldness he showed in a series of new works, in which he touched on the most sensitive sores of Russian life, the power of invective and satire which he there displayed, and the fresh poetic elements which he succeeded in introducing, were, towards 1870, to make him the idol of the youth of that period.

He says of himself, several times over, that the only source of inspiration known to him was indignation: "*I have no memory of any smiling and caressing Muse who sang sweet songs beside my pillow. . . . I owed my early inspiration to the Muse of sobs, of mourning, and of pain—the Muse of the starving and the beggar!*" And in one of his last poems, he speaks of his "*old heart broken down with hate.*" His satire is of the fiercest kind. He is capable of dropping his cruel irony even on to the cradle of a sleeping child. "*Sleep, baby, sleep! Good news has come into the country. Your father, with all his*

*crimes, has at last been brought to judgment; but your father, arrant rogue, will manage to escape. Sleep, youngster, sleep while you are honest—sleep, baby, sleep!*” His gloomy poetry occasionally recalls that of Crabbe. He pours forth a torrent of sarcasm, anathema, and reproach, on every rank of Russian society. Occasionally the lyric poet grows stronger than the satirist, and he calls up figures which are not ideal indeed—he is too realistic for that—but which possess a sympathetic reality: princesses, who remind one of the ancient Roman matrons; men of the people, humble and patient, but good and strong amidst the darkness about them, the darkness of an “*underground prison without a light,*” and such martyrs of the struggle for light as Biéliniski, Dobrolioubov, and Pissarev.

But these are rare gleams of light. Even when Nékrassov paints the popular life—his favourite subject, his great love, his passion—he follows the twofold line which corresponds in a manner to the positive and negative poles of his talent, and always ends in an abyss of the darkest desolation. In both cases the author’s method is the same. The initial theme is some corner of Russian country, dreary and flat, with little that is picturesque about it, the home of a certain number of human beings, none of whom are marked by any very striking qualities. On this subject the artist’s fancy seizes, and gradually landscape and figures fill with an intense life. They grow on us, taking on a mythical and legendary aspect, until the whole of mighty Russia appears before us in the frame of some rustic story. Thus, in the *Frost with the Red Nose* (*Morozk krasnyi noss*), we have a magnificent allegorical evocation of the Russian winter, that terrible lord who reigns over a whole world of

misery and suffering. In *The Troïka*, again, we have the complete legend of the destiny of woman under those humble thatched roofs. And in each case the picture leaves us with the same impression of sadness. Only in the first, Daria, the wife of the *moujik* who is dying of cold, is full of a calm and heroic beauty; whereas, in the second, the young girl whose eyes follow the post-chaise out of which an officer has smiled to her, is but a poor creature, the sport of a passing vision of happiness. And the ray of light which falls on her for that short moment, only to leave her once more in the shadow, merely serves to throw out, in merciless opposition, the two sides of a destiny of which the best is not for her: what that peasant girl might have become, if she could have driven away in that carriage, and what she must become if she remains in the village, soon to be the wife of some drunken and quarrelsome peasant, his slave and beast of burden, till a handful of earth is thrown "*on a bosom which no caress will ever have warmed!*"

Nékrassov has frequently been compared to Dostoïevski. Yet an essential difference does exist between this poet and all contemporary Russian novelists. This difference, while constituting an element of originality, is at the same time one of relative inferiority. We shall not find, in his case, that basis of submissive mysticism, and mystic love for those who suffer, which forms the basis of the work of his fellows. Nékrassov was as much of a publicist as of a poet, a man of positive and atheistic mind, and he is a revolutionary in the Western, and not in the Russian, sense. On this account it is that he frequently falls into declamation. This fault is very evident in the poem, *Who Finds it Good to Live in*

*Russia?*—one in which, having regard to its date (1864), one would hardly expect to find it. Some peasants sitting talking, when their work is over, complain of their sufferings. To whom in Russia does life bring joy and peace and liberty? To solve the problem, these ragged philosophers look hither and thither, search their native country up hill and down dale, question every one they meet—officials, landed proprietors, priests, merchants, their own fellow-toilers. From every one comes the same response, mournful and negative. Regarded as an accumulation of expressive pictures the work is a fine one, but in conception it is exaggerated, strained, and false. It reminds one of a newspaper controversy, and recalls *Chastisements*, rather than *The House of the Dead*.

When Nékrassov persuaded himself that his hatred was nothing but love for the people driven inward, he deceived himself. He did little practically to prove his love; and even poetically speaking, he has only given it reasonable expression in the eight couplets, written in 1861, to greet the new era inaugurated by the Emancipation. After that, he continued, as if nothing had happened, to rage and mourn and curse over an evil which had no further existence. One judge—the wisest and the least open to suspicion of his class—has not been deceived. Violent as they were, the verses written by this “Russian Vallés,” as M. de Vogüé has called him—a Vallés who grew rich by dubious speculation—were always spared by the Censor.

As a thinker, Nékrassov lived on one idea, and one only—the liberation of the serfs. He was so convinced the idea was his own, and so incapable of replacing it by another, that after 1861 he was very much



inclined to cry, "Stop, thief!" And then he fell to making fresh speeches on a topic which had lost all interest. As an artist, his great gift was his marvellous descriptive power. In the *Unfortunates*, into which he has put a great deal of his own personality, you will find a picture of St. Petersburg worthy to be compared with the best of the same kind in *Eugène Oniégue*. And I should not be surprised if Nékrassov had the best of the comparison. But both pictures are incomplete. Pouchkine saw nothing but the brilliant and splendid aspects of the capital; Nékrassov, on his side, only looked at the humbler folk, bowed down from early dawn under the burden of their daily task. In strength of drawing and power of representation the second picture may perhaps be thought superior. The "sick day," the slow foggy dawn which hangs over the crowd of labourers and humble employés, and guides them to their work, and the whole description of the early morning hours in the streets of the great city, is exceedingly striking and truthful.

The poet himself declared himself lacking in the creative genius needed for the substance of his work, and recognised his artistic inadequacies in the matter of form. "*I do not flatter myself that any of my verses will endure in the popular memory. . . . There is no bold poetry in you, O my fierce and clumsy lines! no touch of creative genius.*" Nékrassov has left a great name, but he has left no school behind him. Among his imitators, Iahontov, Borovikovski, and Fiodorov, this last, who wrote under the pseudonym of Omoulevski, and died in 1883 of starvation and drink, was the most original.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PREACHERS—DOSTOÏEVSKI AND TOLSTOÏ

OF the Pleiad which, after the year 1840, won so high a position for the Russian novel in European literature, three writers stand out and form a group apart. Sergius Akssakov, Dostoïevski, and Tolstoï. They form the strongest contrast with the group I have just endeavoured to describe. Instead of rising up in revolt against contemporary realities, they are full of sympathy with them. Far from dreaming of some ideal future, they perceive the accomplishment of their dream in a humble agreement with the present. Instead of searching hither and thither for men "such as we need,"—heroes in thought or action, who should rule the herd, and guide it to its proper destiny, they preach the insignificance of the individual in regard to the majority,—the impossibility of individual leadership,—the necessity that every unit should bow before the truths which the majority has accepted. This is the teaching of Akssakov's *Family Chronicle*, Dostoïevski's *Brothers Karamazov*, and Tolstoï's *Stories of Sevastopol*.

This fundamental idea has found a specially eloquent expression in the work of Tolstoï, but it is a common bond between all three writers, though Akssakov, both by his form and his expression, approaches nearer to Tourguéniev, and this in spite of his Slavophilism, though Tolstoï is apparently quite uninfluenced by the

Slavophil theory, and though Dostoïevski possesses none of that objective plasticity which gives Tolstoï so high a position among the great creators. All three have been moved by one common thought, expressed, in Akssakov's case, by his conception of a harmony of high qualities and virtues realised in the bosom of an aristocratic family ; in Dostoïevski's, by a moral and religious teaching saturated with mysticism ; and in Tolstoï's by his instinctive and half-conscious notion of a " truth of life " superior to all theoretical conceptions.

The author of the *Family Chronicle*, SERGIUS TIMOFIÉVITCH AKSSAKOV (1791-1859), was the father of the two famous Slavophiles. His *Memories of a Hunter*, which preceded those of Tourguéniev, give, with much simplicity and humorous good-nature, a delightful and highly idealised picture of the wild and romantic denizens of the forest and the steppe, where the author had spent his youth. He was close on old age when these stories were published, in 1847. Up till that time he had played a somewhat obscure part in the literary life of his day,—partly as the friend of Chichkov, partly as the resolute supporter of the classical traditions and forms, and partly as a Censor. Fresh acquaintanceships, and the enthusiasm of his son Constantine for the work of Gogol, impelled him in a different direction. The success which he attained seems to have acquainted him with the nature of his own talent, and, between 1856 and 1858, a fresh series of tales, *The Family Chronicle*, *The Childish Years of the Grandchildren of Bagrov*, and *Memories*,—which together make up a picture of patriarchal, and in a sense, of elementary life, such as may have existed at the beginning of this century in the government of Oufa,—earned him the title of the Walter Scott, and even of the

Homer, of Russia. A peaceful life, without conflict or struggle of any sort, was that over which old grandfather Bagrov wielded an absolute authority, founded not on any superiority either of mind or character, but simply and solely on tradition. It is, in fact, an idealisation of the old order of things, and the very quintessence of Slavophilism—which fact has not prevented Dobrolioubov from drawing, from these very pages, a picture of the “good old times” which does them extraordinarily little credit. Akssakov piqued himself on putting a certain amount of historical truth into this work, which holds an intermediate place between the novel and the memoir, and has introduced, with comments of his own, various facts from which the revolutionary critic was to draw quite different conclusions. But Dostoïevski and Tolstoï were already in existence, ready to endow art and religion with a new and broader formula.

The father of FIODOR MIKHAÏLOVITCH DOSTOÏEVSKI (1822–1881) was a military surgeon, and thus it came about that the future author first saw the light within the walls of a hospital. He had an elder brother named Michael, who earned some reputation for his translations of Schiller and Goethe, and his editorship of two reviews, *The Times* and *The Epoch*, both of which made their mark in the history of the Russian press. Though his childhood was sickly, subject to hallucinations, and, before long, to periodical attacks of epilepsy, he passed with brilliant success through the St. Petersburg School of Engineering, and took the third place in the final examination. A lucrative career lay before him. But the literary fever of the times had even reached the pupils of the military schools, and the young engineer could not resist the call of his vocation.

The strange and romantic opening of the literary life of one who was shortly to become a master of the realist school has been frequently related. Another beginner, Grigorovitch, introduced him to Nékrassov, who was then preparing to publish a review, and was looking about for contributors. Dostoïevski, put out of countenance by the poet's cold reception, thrust the manuscript of his first novel into his hand, and fled like a thief, without opening his lips. In his confusion and despair, he sought distraction at one of the gatherings very common at that period, at which a number of young men of his own age were accustomed to spend the night in reading the works of Gogol aloud. Coming home at dawn—it was in mid-May—and feeling wakeful, he sat musing by his open window till he was startled by the ringing of a bell. He opened his door, and found himself in the arms of Nékrassov and of Grigorovitch, who, on their side, had spent the night in reading his novel. Those were heroic days! The following morning, Nékrassov carried the manuscript to Biéliniski.

“Let me announce the appearance of a new Gogol!”

“They sprout like mushrooms nowadays,” was the critic's unencouraging reply. Yet he, too, read the manuscript, and asked to see the author.

“Do you understand what you have written yourself?”

The book was called *Poor Folk*, and was published, during 1846, in Nékrassov's Review. Its success was so great that the author at once became a celebrity. Dostoïevski's work was at bottom nothing but a replica of *The Mantle*. His hero, Makar Diévouchkine, was own brother to Akakii Akakiévitch. But Gogol had only shown the external features of his quaint and touching

figure, which never ceased to be comic, in spite of the pity it inspired. In Makar Diévouchkine we are shown the depths of a sensitive and suffering soul, and in this case the gentleness and patience of the poor creature, almost laughable in Akakiï Akakiévitch, become well-nigh heroic, and this although the author has not specially idealised the character. Diévouchkine is a drunkard, coarse in habits and dull in mind. When his official chief shakes hands with him, after having enriched him with a hundred-rouble note, he is in the seventh heaven. Yet even such a creature is capable, as the author conceives him, of inspiring us not with pity only, but with admiration ; and from this time forward the conception is to be the ruling one in all the novelist's work.

From the purely artistic point of view, *Poor Folks*, with its clumsy application of the epistolary form of novel, the letters passing between a humble employé, elderly and decidedly small-minded, and a *Héloïse* who burns her hand with her smoothing-iron, frequently fails both in probability and naturalness. But the details are charming. And what powers of psychology we see revealed by this writer, scarcely twenty years old ! What precocious observation in the unconscious selfishness of the young girl whose character he paints ! We behold her loading the unhappy wretch who lives only for her, and has stripped himself of everything for her sake, with reproaches, and even with threats. How quickly, when she hears of his spending a few coins at the tavern, does she forget everything she owes him, even in the matter of pecuniary sacrifices ! She sends him thirty kopeks, but she warns him never to do it again ! And the commissions, the purchases of trumpery and trinkets which she sends him to make, in view of a detestable

marriage to which she has agreed, and which is to deprive him of the last remnants of happiness left him by his miserable fate! "Don't forget! it must be good tambour work, and I'll have no flat stitches!" Then note her occasional revulsions of pity and affectionate indulgence, while he is all constancy, inexhaustible resignation, humble and unchanging adoration! There are miracles of intuition here, and marvels of delicate feeling!

Biéliniski understood the young author thoroughly. "He owes a great deal to Gogol, just as Lermontov owes a great deal to Pouchkine; but he is original. He begins as no author before him has ever begun." Dostoïevski, thus encouraged, set to work once more, with all that vehemence which was ultimately to endanger his health, and that haste which was always the characteristic of, and the drawback to, his creative power. He was only moderately pleased with his second attempt, *The Alter Ego*, which did not take its place in the complete collection of his works until a much later period. But he forthwith, and at one and the same time, undertook ten other novels. Already he was beginning to compare himself to a post-horse. But his course was suddenly checked. On the 21st of April 1849, the iron-bound doors of the dungeons of the Alexis ravelin in the citadel of St. Petersburg closed on him, and on thirty-four other members of the Pétrachevski circle.

This society, formed of young men who held the views of Fourier, and, like him, ascribed but very little importance to political questions properly so called, was not of a definitely revolutionary character. Dostoïevski's special function in connection with it was to preach the Slavophil doctrine, according to which Russia, sociologically speaking, needed no Western models, because in

her *artels* (workman's guilds) and her system of mutual responsibility for the payment of taxes (*Krougovaïa porouka*) she was already possessed of the means of realising a superior form of social arrangement. One evening, he had gone so far as to declaim Pouchkine's *Ode on the Abolition of Serfdom*, and when, amid the enthusiasm stirred by the poet's lines, some one present expressed a doubt of the possibility of obtaining the desired reform, except by insurrectionary means, he is said to have replied "Then insurrection let it be!" No further accusation could be brought against him, but this sufficed. On the 22nd of December, after eight months' imprisonment, he was conducted, with twenty-one other prisoners, to the Siémionovski Square, where a scaffold had been erected. The prisoners were all stripped to their shirts (there were twenty-one degrees of frost), and their sentence was read out—they were condemned to death. Dostoïevski thought it must be a horrible dream. He had only just calmly communicated a plan for some fresh literary composition to one of his fellow-prisoners. "Is it possible that we are going to be executed?" he asked. The friend to whom he had addressed the inquiry pointed to a cart laden with objects which, even under the tarpaulin which covered them, looked like coffins. The registrar descended from the scaffold, and a priest ascended it, cross in hand, and exhorted the condemned men to make their last confession. One only, a man of the shopkeeping class, obeyed the summons, the others were content with kissing the cross. In a letter addressed to his brother Michael, Dostoïevski has thus related the close of the tragic scene. "They snapped swords over our heads, and they made us put on the white shirts worn by persons condemned to



death. Thereupon we were bound in threes to stakes, to suffer execution. Being the third in the row, I concluded I had only a few minutes of life before me. I thought of you and your dear ones, and I contrived to kiss Plétchéiev and Dourov, who were next to me, and to bid them farewell. Suddenly the troops beat a tattoo, we were unbound, brought back upon the scaffold, and informed that his Majesty had spared us our lives."

The Tsar had reversed the judgment of the military tribunal, and commuted the penalty of death to that of hard labour. The cart contained convict uniforms, which the prisoners had at once to put on. One of them, Grigoriev, had lost his reason.

Dostoïevski was more fortunate. He was always convinced that but for this experience he would have gone mad. By a singular process of reaction, the convict prison strengthened him, both physically and morally. The Muscovite nature, full, as it is, of obscure atavism—the inheritance of centuries of suffering—has an incalculable power of resistance. At the end of four years the horrible "House of the Dead" opened its gates, and the novelist returned to ordinary life, stronger in body, calmer in nerve, better balanced in mind. He had still three years to serve in a regiment as a private soldier. When these were over, he was promoted to the rank of officer, and was allowed to reside first at Tver, and then at St. Petersburg. He contributed to *The Times*—the review managed by his brother Michael, published his collected works, and in 1860 sent forth another novel, *The Humiliated and the Injured*, which was somewhat coldly received by his readers. This may be easily understood. Vania and Natacha, the hero and heroine of this book, are near relations of Diévouchkine,

but they possess a peculiarity which makes the resignation and gentleness with which they endure their sufferings far less interesting—they are voluntary victims. Vania, who loves Natacha with all his heart, urges her, no one quite knows why, to marry young Prince Valkovski, whose mistress she has already become. The part he plays—that of the confidant who assists a love affair which is driving him to despair—is either dubious or ridiculous. Meanwhile, Natacha, though desperately in love with her Prince, agrees to marry Vania. Her behaviour is most confusing, and her lover's folly and blundering render him a most improbable figure. Old Valkovski, the father of the prince, fulfils the functions of the melodramatic villain. Little Nellie, his natural daughter, and his victim, is both graceful and charming, but, with her English name, she is an evident importation from overseas—redolent of Dickens. To sum the matter up, Dostoïevski, influenced by fresh and hasty perusals of various authors, has simply written a sentimental novel in the style of the eighteenth century, and introduced certain reminiscences of Eugène Sue, who was always one of his favourite authors. The book bears symptoms of a certain amount of personal reminiscence as well.

These did the author no good service. But he was soon to recover from this check.

Before long (1862) his *Memories of the House of the Dead* were to appear, simultaneously with Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The general admiration excited, even in the present day, by Dostoïevski's description of that gloomy place of suffering in which four years of his life were spent, renders this portion of my task somewhat difficult. I cannot, indeed, shake off the somewhat different impression which the perusal of his book left upon

me, now many years ago. I have read it again, and I still find admirable passages, and pictures of excessive power, though of a realism the coarseness of which is at times excessive, as, for instance, in the scene of the prisoner's bath, and in that of the arrival of those prisoners who have been beaten with rods, in the hospital. I, too, admire the author's deep probing of the human soul, simple and true in expression, to a point from which the author of *Les Misérables* has too often fallen away. But the rest of the book strikes me as being both false and unacceptable. This, in the first place, on account of the confusion—forced, I am told, but surely somewhat voluntary also—between the two categories of prisoners in the establishment—the common-law criminals and the political culprits. We are told that this confusion was imposed on the author by the Censure. That may be. Yet in every country the Censure leaves the author one resource, the use of which is well understood in Russia, that "home of silence." But the truth, and, if we chose to take it so, Dostoïevski's excuse, lies in the fact that he never for a moment dreamt of cloaking his martyrdom with a mask of infamy. He did not believe in his own martyrdom, just as he had no belief in the infamy of the common thieves and murderers who were his companions in durance. This confusion arose in his mind naturally, as the result of a general tendency which leads his fellow-countrymen to place the moral law and the political law on one and the same conventional level, and to ascribe the same relative value to each. In their eyes, infractions of either of these laws possess the same character, are of equal importance, and may be paid for by a system of forfeits, just as in a round game. Once the forfeit is paid, the

individual is clear, and neither crime nor dishonour remains. This feature reappears in *Crime and Punishment*. Note the behaviour of the examining magistrate once he is convinced that Raskolnikov is really guilty of the crime—a murder followed by robbery—which has just been committed. Afterwards, as before, he gives the assassin his hand, and treats him as his friend. Even Tourguéniev, Occidental as he is, thinks, and, on this point, feels as a Russian. No writer in any other country would dream of assimilating the social position of a natural child with that of the legitimate child of a father sentenced to banishment for theft. This is the case of Niejdanov and Marianne in *Virgin Soil*. The idea that crime is not a fault, but a misfortune, and the idea of the sovereign power of expiation, are the basis of this method of thought and feeling. They pervade the whole of Dostoïevski's work, and his residence in the convict prison only defined them more clearly in his mind, and drove him to adopt their extreme though logical consequences. The common-law prisoners whom he met never dreamt, on their side, of giving him the benefit of a superior position from the moral point of view. He had broken one law, and they had broken another. In their eyes it was all the same thing. This fact made a deep impression upon Dostoïevski. His imagination was romantic, his power of feeling was very keen, and he possessed no ground-work of philosophic education. He was very easily affected by the moral atmosphere of the place. It was full of floating ideas, religious and mystic, drawn from the common basis of Russian life in the popular classes. These influenced the author, and through them he entered into communion with the simple souls of a certain number of criminals

resigned to their fate. The man who had refused to make his confession on the scaffold, reads a Bible with his fellow-prisoners—a Bible given them by the wife of a Decembrist whom they had met on their road into exile, the only book permitted within the prison walls. He ends by not only submitting to his fate, but acknowledging his guilt. This is the second false note in the book.

By an error of interpretation which indicates the danger of the cryptographic artifices forced on the literature of the country, the passages which express this sentiment have been taken by certain critics to partake of the nature of a *protest*. The mistake is evident. Dostoïevski sympathises, that is clear, with his fellow-prisoners of every kind. He has a sincere admiration for the strength and brute energy of some of these wretches, and endeavours to justify it by dwelling on the qualities of goodness and generosity which he has discovered under their rough exterior. But this is a mere echo of the Romantic school and the humanitarian leanings of the West. Apart from it, the book is all submission. It presents the feelings of a man who not only uncomplainingly accepts a punishment which is at all events out of proportion to his offence, but who acknowledges its justice and equity. And the whole of Dostoïevski's subsequent attitude proves the fact. Not only did he never pose as a martyr, but he avoided all allusion to his painful past, like a man who regarded it as nothing but a stain, which had been wiped out and redeemed.

The subject of *The House of the Dead* has been recently taken up again by Melchine, in some sketches which have earned considerable success.

Between 1862 and 1866, Dostoïevski lived through a

somewhat difficult time. He made a prolonged stay abroad, and did not turn his first acquaintance with the Western world to the best advantage. Whither do my readers suppose that the curiosity of this man, dedicated twice over to the service of the ideal life by his talent and his suffering, led him? The barbarian that lay at the bottom of his nature, and the grown-up child he was always to remain, proved their existence on this occasion. He went to Baden-Baden! and left everything there, even to his wife's clothes! Dostoïevski was an incorrigible gambler, and until the period of his second marriage, he was destined to remain in constant and terrible money straits, which even his considerable earnings were not sufficient to remove. At Florence the first few moments in the Uffizi Gallery wearied him, and he left it. He spent his whole time at the *café*, talking to a fellow-traveller, and reading *Les Misérables*, which was then just appearing. He devoured the book, and memories of it are evident in *Crime and Punishment*.

In 1863 he lost his first wife, Marie Dmitrievna Isaïev, who has been identified with the character of Natacha in *Poor Folks*, and a year afterwards, the death of his brother Michael, which left him alone in the management of the Review they had edited together, brought about his ruin. He had no business talents whatever. He had come to the very end of his resources, when the success of *Crime and Punishment*, in 1866, lifted him for a time out of a position which had grown desperate.

Raskolnikov, the student who claims the right to murder and steal by virtue of his ill-applied scientific theories, is not a figure the invention of which can be claimed by the Russian novelist. It is probable that before or after reading the works of Victor Hugo, Dos-

toïevski had perused those of Bulwer Lytton. Eugène Aram, the English novelist's hero, is a criminal of a very different order, and of a superior species. When he commits his crime, he not only thinks, like Raskolnikov, of a rapid means of attaining fortune, but also, and more nobly, of a great and solemn sacrifice to science, of which he feels himself to be the high-priest. Like Raskolnikov, he draws no benefit from his booty. Like him, too, he hides it, and like him, he is pursued, not by remorse, but by regret;—haunted by the painful thought that men now have the advantage over him, and that he no longer stands above their curiosity and their spite,—tortured by his consciousness of the total change in his relations with the world. In both cases, the subject and the story, save for the voluntary expiation at the close, appear identical in their essential lines. This feature stands apart. Yet, properly speaking, it does not belong to Dostoïevski. In Tourguéniev's *The Tavern* (*Postoïalyi Dvor*), the peasant Akime, whom his wife has driven into crime, punishes himself by going out to beg, in all gentleness and humble submission. Some students, indeed, have chosen to transform both subject and character, and have looked on Raskolnikov as a political criminal, disguised after the same fashion as Dostoïevski himself may have been, in his *Memories of the House of the Dead*. But this version appears to me to arise out of another error. A few days before the book appeared, a crime almost identical with that related in it, and committed under the apparent influence of Nihilist teaching, though without any mixture of the political element, took place at St. Petersburg. These doctrines, as personified by Tourguéniev in Bazarov, are, in fact, general in their scope. They

contain the germs of every order of criminal attempt, whether public or private; and Dostoïevski's great merit lies in the fact that he has demonstrated the likelihood that the development of this germ in one solitary intelligence may foster a social malady. In the domain of social psychology and pathology, the great novelist owes nothing to anybody; and his powers in this direction suffice to compensate for such imperfections as I shall have to indicate in his work.

The "first cause" in this book, psychologically speaking, is that individualism which the Slavophil School has chosen to erect into a principle of the national life;—an unbounded selfishness, in other words, which, when crossed by circumstances, takes refuge in violent and monstrous reaction. And indeed, Raskolnikov, like Bazarov, is so full of contradictions, some of them grossly improbable, that one is almost driven to inquire whether the author has not intended to depict a condition of madness. We see this selfish being spending his last coins to bury Marméladov, a drunkard picked up in the street, whom he had seen for the first time in his life only a few hours previously. From this point of view Eugène Aram has more psychological consistency, and a great deal more moral dignity. Raskolnikov is nothing but a poor half-crazed creature, soft in temperament, confused in intellect, who carries about a big idea, in a head that is too small to hold it. He becomes aware of this after he has committed his crime, when he is haunted by hallucinations and wild terrors, which convince him that his pretension to rank as a man of power was nothing but a dream. Then the ruling idea which has lured him to murder and to theft gives place to another,—that of confessing his crime. And



even here his courage and frankness fail him ; he cannot run a straight course, and, after wandering round and round the police station, he carries his confession to Sonia.

This figure of Sonia is a very ordinary Russian type, and strangely chosen for the purpose of teaching Ras-kolnikov the virtue of expiation. She is a woman of the town, chaste in mind though not in deed, and is redeemed by one really original feature, her absolute humility. It may be inquired whether this element of moral redemption, in so far as it differs from those which so constantly occur to the imagination of the author of *Manon Lescaut*, and to that of all Dostoïevski's literary forerunners, is more truthful than the rest, and whether it must not be admitted that certain moral, like certain physical conditions, necessarily result in an organic and quite incurable deformation of character. Sonia is like an angel who rolls in the gutter every night, and whitens her wings each morning by perusing the Holy Gospels. We may just as well fancy that a coal-heaver could straighten the back bowed by the weight of countless sacks of charcoal by practising Swedish gymnastics!

The author's power of evocation, and his gift for analysing feeling, and the impressions which produce it, are very great, and the effects of terror and compassion he obtains cannot be denied. Yet, whether from the artistic or from the scientific point of view (since some of his' admirers insist on this last), his method is open to numerous objections. It consists in reproducing, or very nearly, the conditions of ordinary life whereby we gain acquaintance with a particular character. Therefore, without taking the trouble of telling us who Ras-kolnikov is, and in what his qualities consist, the story

relates a thousand little incidents out of which the personal individuality of the hero is gradually evolved. And as these incidents do not necessarily present themselves, in real life, in any logical sequence, beginning with the most instructive of the series, the novelist does not attempt to follow any such course. As early as on the second page of the book, we learn that Raskolnikov is making up his mind to murder an old woman who lends out money, and it is only at the close of the volume that we become aware of the additional fact that he has published a review article, in which he has endeavoured to set forth a theory justifying this hideous design.

Apart from the weariness and the mental effort involved in this method, the picture it produces is naturally somewhat confused. It has another fault, which is shared by the majority of Russian novelists. Their art resembles the architectural style affected by the builder of the church of St. Basil, at Moscow. The visitor to this church is astonished to see five or six edifices interlaced one with the other. There are at least as many distinct stories in *Crime and Punishment*, all connected by a barely perceptible thread. But this peculiarity is not exclusively national, and I should be inclined to ascribe responsibility for it to the English school. Observe George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. To conclude, all Dostoïevski's literary work bears traces of the method invariably employed by him, except in *Poor Folks* and some chapters of *The House of the Dead*. This is the method of the *feuilletonist*, who writes copy at his utmost speed. Even in the present day, the line so clearly drawn in France between the artistic novel and that other—the sole object of whose existence is to attract and keep up the number of general subscribers to widely circulated newspapers—cannot be said to exist in Slav coun-

tries. Dostoïevski, who was always short of money, and always behind with his copy, looked about at last for a shorthand writer, to help him to expedite matters. A young girl, Anna Grigorevna Svitkine, was recommended to him, and before long he made her his second wife. His urgent desire to keep up constant communication with the public, and his ambition to preserve his influence over it, drove him into a feverish productiveness which wore down his talent and his life. These drawbacks are evident in *Crime and Punishment*. Compare the two descriptions of Sonia in the beginning of the book; on the first occasion we think her pretty—on the second, she has grown plain.

And things grow worse in Dostoïevski's subsequent works, *The Idiot* (1868), *The Possessed* (1873), and more especially in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The first book bears traces of the influence of Tolstoi, and contains a somewhat singular application of the gospel preached by the prophet of Iasnaïa Poliana, and of the words of the Master, "Be ye even as little children!" The theory put forward in *The Idiot* is, that a brain in which some of those springs which we consider essential, and which only serve us for doing evil, are weakened, may yet remain superior, both intellectually and morally, to others less affected. To prove his case, Dostoïevski depicts, in the person of Prince Muichkine, a type closely resembling that of the beings known in country places as "Naturals," placed considerably higher in the social scale, and scientifically reconstructed on a physiological basis. *The Idiot*—and there is a curious autobiographical touch about this—is an epileptic. Here we have some elements of a serious problem, the normality of the phenomena of madness, and their classification in the order of the phenomena of

passion ; but we have also, and more especially, a great deal of childish trifling, and of those "psychological mole-runs" of which Tourguéniev has spoken, and in which Dostoïevski's fancy revelled.

*The Possessed* is an answer to Tourguéniev's *Fathers and Children*, and that writer, together with Granovski and some other representatives of Occidentalism, is depicted, and turned into ridicule, in its pages. Dostoïevski could not console himself for having been outstripped in the general interpretation of a social phenomenon such as Nihilism, of which his Raskolnikov had only been a partial, and a partially comprehended picture. He cannot be said to have entirely succeeded in the retaliation at which he aimed. Stavroguine, the principal hero of his novel, who turns revolutionist out of sheer idleness, is an archaic, and by no means a specifically Russian type. He is enigmatic and confusing, strongly tinged with Romantic features, which the author seems to have borrowed from every quarter—from Byron's *Corsair*, from Victor Hugo's *Hernani*, and from the aristocratic demagogues of George Sand, Eugène Sue, Charles Gutzkow, and Spielhagen.

The story is excessively complicated, and its close is extravagantly melodramatic. But Dostoïevski has contrived to see, and bring out, the essential feature which escaped Tourguéniev, I mean the element which has constituted the strength of active Nihilism. By showing that this lies, not in the vague, confused, and ineffective ideas of a handful of ill-balanced brains, nor in the fictitious or incoherent organisation of an unstable political party, but in the paroxysmal tension of a band of exasperated wills, he has done real service to the cause of history.

*The Brothers Karamazov* is a work that strongly resembles an edifice of which nothing but the façade has ever been built. The plan of this book had occurred to the author as early as 1870, during a residence of some months at Dresden. It was to have consisted of five parts, and, under quite a different title—*The Life of a Great Sinner*—it was to have represented the existence of several generations following on that of Tchadaiev. *War and Peace* had just appeared, and this time, Dostoïevski had to compete with Tolstoï. He finally reduced the five parts to two, and never finished but the first, which in itself consists of four thick volumes. In these he has endeavoured to depict the intellectual progress of “the Sixties,” with all its excitement and its revolutionary idealism. The two elder brothers are intended as a symbolical personification of the two morbid phenomena which marked this crisis—a sick will, as exemplified in Dmitri, a man without morality ; and a sick mind, in the case of Ivan, whose brain is deranged. The third brother, Aliocha—believed to be a portrait of the philosopher Soloviov, to whom I shall later refer—is the symbol of the healthy Russian, who through love, and through his national faith, escapes mental bankruptcy and moral perversion ; he is a creature of unfailing gentleness and indulgent goodness. Some readers (Dostoïevski has withheld all personal information) have thought they recognised, in the two elder brothers, a twofold representation of Russia Europeanised and Russia uncultured, and in the third, the picture of the Russia of the future, when she shall have harmonised the elements of her national culture with the humanitarian ideas borrowed from the West. But this idea was not to take clear shape until the second part of the work was reached. In the first

part, the figure of Aliocha still remains in the background, and the interpreter of the philosophical, religious, and social ideas preached by the author is Zosima, a monk belonging to the monastery in which Aliocha spends his novitiate. Now Zosima's desire is that the novice should begin by a preliminary experience of the world, and to this end, he advises him to marry. Here we perceive in the author's mind the fundamental principle of his teaching—the freedom of the moral and religious man, in his effort to reach personal perfection.

I do not claim any great clearness for this exegetical attempt of my own. My readers must excuse me. I know but little of mysticism, and it would surprise me very much if any one could prove that Dostoïevski's own views on the matter were very clear. Perhaps, if he had reached the second part of his book, and could have entered the seventh heaven with Aliocha, he might have found means to enlighten us further. But in this first part we are left in hell—a Dantesque hell, where concentric circles mark the various maladies of soul and mind, which struggle before the gates of the Paradise whereof Aliocha holds the key. Instances of moral perversion admit of a remedy, and a hopeful one—the humble acceptance of a chastisement which may be unjustly applied, but which has been earned by the crime of a whole life spent in debauchery. This is the fate of Dmitri, who is falsely accused of parricide and sentenced. In the case of mental maladies, on the contrary, the words *lasciate ogni speranza* are written in letters of fire. These infect the very conscience, and so block the way to salvation. Thus Ivan, who is, intellectually speaking, the accomplice of the crime of which Dmitri is to pay the penalty, appears far more guilty than he.

The book contains an immense wealth of psychical ideas. It is a complete symphony, which touches every chord of the human soul, and a most invaluable treasury of information concerning the contemporary life of Russia, moral, intellectual, and social. But I doubt whether this treasure may be accessible to the average European reader. Dostoïevski himself was conscious of the lack of measure and proportion which, from the very outset, endangered the balance of his work. Nevertheless, in the legendary episode of the Inquisitor, it contains what are probably the most powerful pages hitherto penned by any Russian author. Amidst philosophical and religious discussions saturated with the true Byzantine spirit, endless, complicated, full of quibbles and splitting of hairs, we come upon a Spanish Inquisitor, who has just given orders for an *auto-da-fé*, when Christ comes back to earth for the second time. The crowd on the public square, where the stake has been erected, recognises the gentle Prophet. He is surrounded and acclaimed. The Inquisitor causes Him to be arrested, and goes to see Him in His prison. In imperious language he reproaches Him with having left His disciples a precept which it is impossible to practise. "Thou camest here with empty hands! Thou wouldst have none of Satan's offers to turn the stones into bread! Thou hast claimed to govern men by love alone! Behold whither this has led them, and led us too! They scoff at love and cry for bread; we give them bread, and they accept our chains. To-morrow I will have Thee burnt! *Dixi.*" Only one answer does the Christ vouchsafe the merciless priest. He offers him His own pale lips, and the Inquisitor, opening the dungeon door, cries out, "Go Thy way, and never come back here—never!"

Thanks to his second wife, who, though devoid of any superior education, admirably understood her duties in life, and played the part of a real providence to the careless writer, Dostoïevski's closing years were relatively happy. He paid his debts, and enjoyed a comfortable home. At the same time, through his periodical publications of *An Author's Note-Book* (1873), and also by his contributions to Prince Mechtcherski's *Grajdanine* (*The Citizen*), he wielded considerable influence. The success of a speech he delivered in 1880, on the occasion of the raising of a monument to Pouchkine, reached the proportions of an apotheosis. Since his return from Siberia, the author of *The House of the Dead* had been alternately classed as a Conservative and as a Slavophil. As a matter of fact, his democratic leanings parted him from the first, and the complete absence, in connection with his literary creations, of any historical element and any regard for idealism, from the second. He made no attempt to endue the Russian with any beauty; he loved him, without claiming lovable qualities for him, not for his way of life, which he held reprehensible in many respects, but for a nature which he believed susceptible of something like perfection, capable, above all things, of forgiveness as of repentance, and thus rising to a moral dignity which the sordidness of his material existence could not affect.

In the speech to which I have referred, this idea was eloquently expressed, and Dostoïevski added some novel ideas which seem to have been inspired by his enjoyment of a budding popularity; for they bear a close resemblance to bets on probabilities, and are in contradiction with some of his own most frequently expressed opinions. One of these paradoxes consists in the claim to moral



superiority, based on the humility and gentleness of the Russian race. I have already set forth, in the earlier pages of this book, my views as to the effect of the historical, social, and climatic conditions of the national development on the contradictory elements of a temperament still in course of formation. The new "elect nation," called to realise the kingdom of God on earth,—because she does not isolate herself proudly within herself, because she is disposed to see a brother in every foreigner, and an unfortunate, rather than a malefactor, in the greatest criminal, because she alone incarnates the Christian idea of love and forgiveness,—the heiress presumptive of the tribe of Judah, as described in Dostoïevski's speech, simply belongs to that cycle of Messianic ideas in which the theory of Panslavism has become finally merged. Yet on one point the orator accentuated his disagreement with the Slavophiles, by extolling that national gift for assimilating foreign culture whereby the Russian had succeeded, or was to succeed, in realising that type of the *Vsiétchéloviék* (universal man), who has since become the object of a good deal of joke, but who, at that moment, thanks to Dostoïevski's burning words, evoked a transport of enthusiasm. This was shared even by the Slavophiles themselves, who forgave the orator's lapse from the common creed, for the sake of the share attributed to the Orthodox Faith in his conception of the mighty destiny the nation was yet to attain.

Ivan Karamazov, the martyr of doubt, would, however, seem to have originally represented some conscious internal experiences of the author's own. There is something doubtful about the orthodoxy of the legend of the Inquisitor, and there is something still more

expressive, in this connection, in the dialogue in *The Possessed*, when Chatov asks Stavroguine whether he believes in God.

"I believe in Russia; I believe in the Orthodox Church. . . . I believe in the Body of Christ. . . . I believe that Christ's second coming will be to Russia. . . .

"But in God—in God?"

"I . . . I will believe in God as well!"

At bottom, the *Pravoslavie* (Orthodox Faith) seems to have been chiefly valuable, in Dostoïevski's eyes, as an element of the national consistency. Chatov says this clearly: "*There is no great historical people which does not possess a National God.*" But it is quite certain that either before or after his residence in *The House of the Dead*, the novelist had absolutely broken with the intellectual *Sturm und Drang* of "the Sixties" and its accompanying materialism.

There was but one bond of union between him and the revolutionaries of his period—a desire to find some new truth, apart from the old tradition. This truth Dostoïevski claimed to discover in external forms and social habits, and thus it was that in his eyes, as in those of Tolstoï, a public courtesan was capable of moral superiority over a woman whose conduct, as regarded all her external duties, was irreproachable. Raskolnikov, Sonia, Dmitri, and the convicts of *The House of the Dead*, exemplify almost every variety of vice or crime; yet they are all dear to the author. All his hatred is concentrated on individual pride, presumption, and falsehood. And even these he is willing to pardon. He forgives every one. He nearly forgives Smierdiakov, the real parricide. And all this plenary indulgence constitutes his real teaching, a new gospel, almost reduced

to the three parables of the Repentant Thief, the Prodigal Son, and the Woman taken in adultery.

The speech which made so much sensation was published in the penultimate number of *An Author's Note-Book*. The last appeared in January 1881, on the very day of the great writer's public funeral. For a considerable time previously, his existence had been that of a bundle of nerves in a condition of ceaseless excitement, supporting a body worn out by perpetual overwork. The end came in the shape of a sudden and fatal stroke. The students of St. Petersburg desired to carry his convict chains behind his coffin. Nihilist attempts were at that period very numerous. Only a month later, one of them was to cost the sovereign his life, and Loris Melikov's experiment in liberal government was just at its height. He had sufficient good sense to forbid the republication of a page of the author's life which his own hand had torn out. Nevertheless, by a kind of ironical contradiction, his burial was the occasion for a sort of review of the revolutionary army, which there displayed its strength, in preparation for the attempt which was soon to manifest its power, and prepare its ruin.

Dostoïevski's career may be divided, as regards his intellectual development, into two very distinct stages. Up till 1865, we have a period of progress and analysis, generally in accord with the intellectual movement of "the Forties." After 1865, we have a period of retrogression, and of controversial struggle with that very movement. From this point of view, the *Memories of the House of the Dead* occupy a special position. To begin with, they are much simpler in form than the rest of the great author's work, and in substance, they are free from any doctrinarianism whatsoever. The idea put forward

by the author in later days, that the convict prison may become an instrument of moral amendment, finds no place in them whatsoever. Quite on the contrary, Dostoïevski notes the absence of a trace of repentance in any of the prisoners. He even positively asserts that the prison is not calculated to improve them. This fact is susceptible of explanation. The book was written before the author came to St. Petersburg, and was there influenced by a group of Slavophiles, which attracted, though, as I have already mentioned, it never entirely absorbed him. He joined it in the endeavour to discover the renovation of the Russian by "national means," but he parted from it when he sought the elements of this renovation—not in the traditions of the past and the external forms of existence, habits, customs, and dress, but in the national soul, the purity and clearness of which he recognised under the coating of filth and the curtain of ignorance with which past centuries had veiled it. Yet in Dostoïevski and the Slavophiles and Tolstoi one common feature does exist. I refer to their repudiation of Western civilisation as the *one necessary principle* which must rule the development of the national culture, and their appeal to the faith of the popular masses as the indispensable complement of that development. On these lines Tolstoi has reached an evangelical theory of non-resistance to evil, and Dostoïevski an evangelical theory of atonement and rehabilitation through suffering. But at this point their roads were to part. By virtue of one portion of this doctrine—and one which, as we know, admits of a good deal of contradiction—Tolstoi is an individualist, whose supreme object is to bring his inner man to a state of perfection. If reasons of State are an obstacle in the way of this attain-

ment, he declares himself ready to abolish the State. Dostoïevski is a thorough Communist. He cares little for individual liberty and individual perfection, and is quite ready to sacrifice both on the altar of that humanitarian idea which, in his mind, Russia, "the elect nation," has been called to realise. This point of view is diametrically opposed to that of Tolstoï; yet, unlike the Slavophiles, with whom, in this respect, he would otherwise seem to agree, Dostoïevski feels neither scorn nor hatred for the West. His desire is to reconcile the two principles, the Western and the Eastern, and he holds it Russia's mission to carry out the compromise; and, unlike his latest friends, he believes in the early and almost immediate accomplishment of his dream. The idea appears both in the *Notice* which preceded the publication of *The Times* in 1861, and in the speech delivered in 1880.

This constant anxiety to discover a "national soul" in the moral distresses and dark places of ordinary existence, has caused Dostoïevski to become, above all things, an analyser of the human conscience. His novels contain but few descriptions of the external things of this world, and such as do exist are generally somewhat unreal; as in that scene in *The Idiot*, in which Prince Muichkine sees his country house surrounded by strangers, who insult him. Except in matters of psychology, Dostoïevski is nothing of a realist. On the other hand, he belongs to the Romantic school by his predilection for excessive and exceptional situations, and yet more by his incessant subjectiveness, which leads him to perpetually bring his own personality forward, even as an object of medical observation. Vainly did his doctors entreat him not to allow his mind to dwell

on his periodical attacks of epilepsy ! He regarded himself as an absolute and essentially objective realist, for if he drew everything from his own case, that surely was a reality ! He considered that the phenomena of moral degradation and depravation, which he delighted to analyse, existed in his own person, and this in virtue of the principle he was constantly proclaiming—that every man has something of the murderer in him ; and he was just as convinced that every man was at heart a ruffian or a thief. “These phenomena,” he would say, “are of exceedingly common occurrence, only we pay no attention to them.” This theory has recently been reproduced by Octave Mirbeau in *Le Jardin des Supplices*. In Dostoïevski’s case it was connected, as in that of Nékrassov, with his own need of personal confession, and his taste for playing on his readers’ nerves. He always declared that his sensation during the paroxysms of his terrible complaint was that of a great criminal enduring the chastisement due to some fault.

To sum him up, he was a man subject to semi-hallucinations, with a marvellous power of lucid observation of mental complaints, and a wonderful inspiration, which made him the true poet of “the fever of the mind.” Most of his chief characters are seers. Aliocha Karamazov can read men’s souls and discover hidden objects. Zosima, the monk, foreseeing that Dimitri will be accused of the most horrible of crimes, and moved by a feeling of Christian mysticism, bends the knee before him, as being the most guilty, and therefore destined to become the instrument of moral cure in the case of his own brothers. M. Tchij, the well-known psychological expert, has indeed admitted that quite one-fourth of these characters are simply madmen, and on this account he extols

the knowledge or intuition displayed by the author; while in a lecture delivered in 1881 before the Society of Jurists of the St. Petersburg University, one of the most distinguished of Russian criminalists, M. Koni, claimed him as a comrade.

Dostoïevski, the child of the city and of the proletariat, is less of an artist than the majority of his rivals, who were most of them connected with the provincial nobility. His workmanship is slack. Nothing delicate nor highly finished comes from his pen. His style is as confused as his cast of face—"masque de faubourien," as it would be called in France—roughly hewn, clever, vigorous, full of projections and folds, of lumps and hollows. One significant feature there is about his whole work: you will not find a single attractive female figure in it. His rivals all delight in depicting feminine beauty, physical and moral. Tourguéniev's women are perhaps the more energetic, Tolstoï's the more graceful; but in Dostoïevski's case all the women are coarse, if they are of strong temperament, and inconsistent, if they are gentle. He only excels in figures of young girls, such as Nelly in *The Humiliated and the Injured*, and Lisa in *The Brothers Karamazov*. And further, his mania for analysis leads him into dubious allusions to the precocious awakening of the sexual instinct in these young creatures, which betoken a touch of unhealthy thought, to which Tourguéniev, who had no affection for the author of *Crime and Punishment*, has alluded in his correspondence.

But for all his prolixity and incoherence, Dostoïevski was a very great writer; he had a noble mind, in spite of his hallucinations; and a proud spirit, although he did not succeed in realising or maintaining the idea of a certain kind of pride which is indispensable to every one,

and certain rebellions which are always legitimate. In the whole field of contemporary literature there is only one man, Tolstoï, who stands a step above him.

### TOLSTOÏ.

The master of Iasnaïa Poliana has been frequently likened to a mighty oak, which stands alone in the midst of the field of literature, and towers above all his fellows. This picture does not strike me as being entirely correct, and I shall endeavour to prove that the tree, majestic though it be, has drawn its sap from the same soil as its neighbours, and that its boughs touch the adjacent foliage. I cannot, indeed, give any complete judgment of a life-work which is not yet completed, which, even as I write, is in course of increase, which commands universal admiration by means of its last creation, and which, in certain respects, it is not my province to appraise. I shall divide it into three parts, and shall separate the artist from the thinker and the man of learning. The artist is one of the greatest who has ever appeared. To my mind, nothing can be found in any literature, whether as regards truth, charm, or intensity of restrained emotion, superior to certain of his pages, even to some in that *Resurrection*, the perusal of which we have not yet been able to conclude. As long as men live on this earth, admiration must, I believe, be felt for the description of that Easter Mass during which Katioucha appears beside Nekhlioudov, and the exquisite simplicity of the scenes of love and disappointment which follow on it. The thinker possesses great ingenuity, and, above all, great ingenuousness. He makes his entry into the world of thought with the air of a *conquistador* who discovers the wonders



of Mexico, and sometimes—too often—like a Vandal rushing over the plains of Rome.

It is curious that this last impression should be more particularly produced by his book on art. From its first page to its last, the author appears to be a simple-minded barbarian, engaged in sacking a gorgeous palace and throwing his booty hither and thither. He has no suspicion that his views on the social part to be played by art are a mere reproduction of the theories already put forward by Guyau, a French writer with whom he believes himself to be acquainted, and whose ideas he merely disfigures with his own paradoxical fancies. He does not realise that his own definition, according to which the object of the work of art is to awake identical or similar sentiments amongst men in general, is as old as art itself,—though it has never been applied except to those arts which the Greeks denominated “musical,” and in which they included poetry,—and never could, on account of the partially utilitarian functions which have devolved on them, be applied to the plastic arts, such as architecture and poetry. He does not realise that the mission he ascribes to art, that of realising the fraternal union of the human race, has been the watchword of a whole century of French literature, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau down to Victor Hugo. He does not realise that his conception of art, as a means of communion between men bound by the same feelings, may be just as well applied to religion, to morality, to science, to every form of action which has any social effect.

Face to face with a mighty problem which, so he assures us, has claimed his attention and occupied his wakeful hours for fifteen years, Tolstoï scarcely touches the historical side of the question, yields to the tempta-

tion of telling us the story (and wonderfully he tells it) of the impression made on him by a rehearsal of a play in the Moscow theatre, and then wastes his time in discussing the fancies of Papus or of the Sâr Péladan, authors whom he confuses in an equal admiration (or scorn) with Taine or Proudhon, just as he confuses, all in one great anathema, Greek art, which he calls coarse; Michael Angelo's, which he regards as senseless; Shakespeare's, Beethoven's, and Wagner's, which he describes as foolishness, with the whims and fancies of the *decadents*. If sincerity is to be accepted as an excuse in such matters, there can be no doubt concerning his. He does not refuse to apply the artistic criterion he himself has invented to his own master-pieces. This criterion is either the power of the masses to comprehend works of art—that is to say, the glorification of the Epinal painted statuette—or, occasionally, some individual and accidental impression. Returning one day in low spirits from a country walk, his sadness is broken by a chorus of peasant women singing (out of tune) before the balcony of his house. This he at once pronounces to be art! A moment afterwards, a first-rate executant performs a sonata by Beethoven, and is so unlucky as to keep the author waiting when he desires to go to rest. This, he declares, is not art! The *moujiks* of Iasnaïa Poliana understood nothing of the beauties of *Anna Karenina*, and forthwith he declares the book is rubbish, and begins to write popular stories. In these he strives after a simplicity and artlessness far beyond anything which has ever yet been seen. He will not grant the existence of the artistic quality in any writer who seeks for effect, and even goes so far as to invert the natural order of the story, so that the reader's attention may not be strained. But after

having formulated this fiat, and used it to support a whole theory, he takes up his pen to write the first chapter of his *Resurrection*, shows us Katioucha haled before the magistrates for murder followed by theft, and, through a hundred pages, leaves us in ignorance of the nature of the crime, the origin of the accusation, and the painful incidents which have cast the innocent young creature into this abyss of misery. We may be sure that at some near future day he will discover that this, too, is not art! Perhaps he thinks so already. He is unconscious, and "divinely artless," as one of his opponents has declared, in the course of the inquiry initiated by the *Great Review* into this work on art, which must be reckoned amongst one of the most curious and most deceptive manifestations of a mighty genius.

In presence of the learned translator and commentator of the Gospels, I must declare my own incompetency. I should, indeed, incline to the adoption of Max Nordau's opinion: "He speaks of science as a blind man might speak of colours. He evidently has no suspicion of its nature, of its duties, of its methods, and of the objects with which it is concerned." Such a blind man, present at a spectral analysis of the Milky Way, asks himself what use it serves, finds no answer, and declares it to be a folly. In 1894 Tolstoï opens his book on *Christianity, not as a Mystic Religion, but as a New Theory of Life*, with the candid acknowledgment that having ten years previously, in *What I Believe*, made a profession of faith which he believed to be original, numerous letters from Methodists and Quakers had informed him that his teaching had long been known and disseminated under the name of *Spiritual Christianity*. And he does not even now suspect the contradiction and the childishness which mark

this new attempt of his, in which he comments on the sacred text, denounces all previous commentators as sacrilegious, and founds a thoroughgoing attack on the authority of the Church on documents which depend for their validity on that authority alone.

But this is no affair of mine. The artist and the thinker are all I have to do with, and I am painfully certain that I am not worthy to do them justice. The life-story of the most famous of all living writers is as universally known as are his external appearance, and his somewhat eccentric methods of life, of dress, and of work. Thanks to the somewhat impertinent confidences of Madame Seuron (*Graf Leo Tolstoï, Intimes aus seinen Leben*, 1895), who had the good fortune of spending some years in the author's family circle, and the more recent work published by M. Serguienko (*How Count Tolstoï Lives and Works*, 1898, in Russian), we are superabundantly supplied with details on the subject. We have seen the great man walking along, carrying his shoes on the end of a stick, ready to put on again if he should be surprised by some indiscreet visitor; we have seen him on horseback and on his bicycle; in a workman's blouse, in a peasant's *touloupe*, and in a lawn-tennis player's jacket; we have seen him working in his study, which looks like a dungeon; wielding the carpenter's awl, and reaping his own, or rather other people's, corn.

The story runs, indeed, that Tolstoï wrote *The Power of Darkness* in bed, where he was kept by over-fatigue brought on by helping one of his humble village neighbours to save his harvest. We know that he is a vegetarian, and we know that he is forbidden to smoke, although Madame Seuron declares she has

caught him eating slices of roast beef on the sly, and has discovered cigarette ends thrown away in corners which could not escape the eagle eye of a governess. No one will suspect me of desiring to attach any importance to these details, whether true or false, concerning an individuality which stands so high above the common level. Not the less strange is it, that a man who has so passionately and so sincerely set the discovery of what is true, and simple, and natural before him, as the one and only object of his life, should have given rise, by his adoption of surroundings which are incontestably artificial and false, to observations of such a nature. I am willing to admit that family reasons may have prevented him from justifying this course by really taking his place among the class whose dress he has adopted, and whose habits and duties he occasionally chooses to assume. None the less are we forced to perceive that their result is a somewhat regrettable *pose*. But this is the usual price of every kind of human greatness, and in the case of this very great man, it is an atavic feature of the national *samodourstvo*, which has not been eradicated by education,—an education which, in his case, was originally of the most hasty and superficial description.

As every man knows, LEO NICOLAIÉVITCH TOLSTOÏ was born in 1828, at the village in the depths of the Government of Toula which he still inhabits, and whither visitors from every corner of the globe repair to pay him homage. The property originally belonged to his mother, a Volkonskaïa, whose figure is conjured up by the author of *War and Peace*, in the form of the Princess Marie. This noble lady died before Tolstoï was three years old, and a distant relative, Mdle. Tatïana Alexandrovna Ergolskaïa, took charge of him and of

his three elder brothers. Before long the father died too, leaving all his affairs in confusion. For reasons connected with economy, Leo Nicolaiévitch was removed from the house in Moscow which had sheltered the little family, and sent to the country, where his education was seriously endangered at the hands of German tutors and Russian seminarists. In 1841 his legal guardian, Mme. Touchkov, became aware of this fact, and took measures to enable the youth to continue his studies, first at Kasan and afterwards at St. Petersburg. He returned home in 1848, having obtained his University degree, but, according to his own testimony, as it appears in *Education and Instruction*, "with no correct knowledge of any subject." His literary vocation does not appear to have revealed itself until two years later, after a visit to the Caucasus, whither he went with his brother Nicholas, whose military duty called him there. In his desire to remain in a country in which he delighted, Leo Nicolaiévitch also entered the army, and at the same time he conceived the plan of a great novel, the subject-matter of which was to be drawn from his own family recollections. The idea of Akssakov's *Chronicle* pervaded the atmosphere of that period! The first chapter of this work, which was never to be completed, formed part of that autobiographical fragment known as *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*.

It was followed by a series of tales—*A Morning in the Life of a Landed Proprietor, Lucerne, The Cossacks*—all of them reproducing that type, so dear to Lermontov and Pouchkine, of the high-born dreamer, whose fanciful aspirations melt away to nothing at their first contact with reality. Olénine, the hero of *The Cossacks*, is another Aléko, or a second Piétchorine, only too happy

to distract his boredom and weariness of the great world in the depths of the wild beauty of the Caucasus, until Marianka, the half-barbarous girl, makes him realise the abyss that lies between his own civilised temperament and those primitive elements with which he would fain have mingled his existence.

This subject is identical, as my readers will recollect, with that of *Le Mariage de Loti*, though no suspicion of imitation can possibly arise. And this, besides, is of no great importance. It is quite evident that in his earlier creations Tolstoï depended on the common fund of the National Literature. His first impressions of mystic religiosity also date from this period, and are connected with an incident which he has confided to his friend Pogodine.

After having promised never to touch a card again, Tolstoï had played, and lost a sum which he could see no means of procuring. Worn out and despairing, he prayed fervently and fell asleep, trusting to Heaven to lift him out of his difficulty. When he awoke, a letter, which he had no reason of any kind to expect, brought him the money he so sorely needed.

He remained in the Caucasus till 1853, taking his share in every expedition, and bearing all the fatigues and privations of a private soldier. In 1854 and 1855 he fought through the Crimean campaign on Prince Gortschakoff's staff; he was at the battle of the Tchernaiïa and at the siege of Sevastopol. This page of his existence has been reproduced in three little masterpieces—*Sevastopol in December, in May, and in August*.

The author's mastery of his craft is already evident in these pages; his minute description of material details, and his close analysis of psychological motives,—even in the

midst of a bloody struggle,—are absolutely perfect. No one, either before or after him, not even Stendhal, has carried observation of the moral instincts on the field of battle to such a pitch of acuteness. Tolstoï even shows us how the very man who has behaved like a hero under fire, can, a moment afterwards, betray the meanest selfishness. In spite of its truthfulness, this view or presentation of things and facts already betrays an equal amount of fancy and ideology, both of them open to question; and I should not care to endorse the view of certain Russian critics, who compare the contemporary *Letters from the Crimea* of Sir William Russell, which had its hour of fame, with “Illustrated Almanacks for Children.” There is less high-flown philosophy, perhaps, in the *Times* correspondent’s letters; but was that any loss to his readers? I shall dwell on this subject later, and with all the frankness due to my own readers.

Tolstoï left the army in 1855, and, thenceforward spent his summers at Iasnaïa Poliana, and his winters between Moscow and St. Petersburg. The works to which I have already referred had placed his reputation on a level, in the public estimation, with those of Tourguéniev and Gontcharov, yet his attention to literature continued to be of an intermittent nature. While Alexander the Second’s Commission was preparing the great edict which was to emancipate the serfs, the *Pamièchtchik* of Iasnaïa Poliana had undertaken the task of solving the problem of the popular schools, which had never, as yet, advanced beyond the stage of empty project. With this object, it would appear, he went abroad twice over, between 1855 and 1861. The emancipation of the serfs was somewhat against Tolstoï’s personal convictions, and some sign of this was to appear in *War and*



*Peace*. Yet, after the 19th of February 1861, he was one of the few land-owners who decided to live in the country. He remained at Iasnaïa Poliana, which had now become his own property, zealously fulfilled the functions of an "Umpire of Peace" (*Mirovoï Possrédnik*), showed the deepest interest in popular education, and even undertook the publication of an educational newspaper, to which he gave the name of his own property, and in which he displayed great originality of thought. In it he mingled his ideas on national instruction with very paradoxical views on education at large, on civilisation and on progress. Progress, in his opinion, was only necessary to a very restricted number of persons, who could command leisure-time. For all others, he considered it not merely a superfluous, but an evil thing. In fact, he preached Rousseau's doctrines over again.

In 1862 he married the daughter of a doctor, Sophia Andréievna Bers, and gave himself up entirely to family life, certain charming features of which he had not yet begun to contemn. It was not till near 1870 that the first chapters of his great novel, *War and Peace*, began to appear in *The Russian Messenger*. My readers are acquainted with the immense and universal success of this work—a success which did not, however, tempt Leo Nicolaiévitch from his other occupations. While the whole of Russia was devouring and discussing the pages which had just immortalised his name, their author's time was spent in publishing alphabets and class-books for the primary schools. A consideration of this collection of pamphlets is full of interest. It is curious to observe that great intellect struggling with the infinite smallness of rudimentary intelligences, performing prodigies of elementary ingenuity, and producing master-

pieces of childish mnemonics. Not till the famine of 1873 brought desolation on the province of Samara, could the mighty writer turn his mind from these humble occupations. He travelled to the scenes of this disaster, and published the result of his personal inquiries in the *Moscow Gazette*. His report made an extraordinary stir. The Government had been endeavouring to hide the facts, so as to conceal its own responsibility. Tolstoï, without phrases or rhetoric of any kind, simply recounted what he had seen, and so forced the Government to join the public in the organisation of that succour which had become indispensable.

The publication, in 1875, of the author's second great novel, *Anna Karenina*, was followed, as my readers doubtless know, by a fresh rupture on his part with artistic literature. In *My Religion*, Tolstoï explained the reasons of the conversion of Levine, one of the heroes of his novel, and then applied all his energies to setting forth, in a series of pamphlets and books, the doctrines of the new faith held by the convert, with whom he appeared to identify himself. All hope of a continuance of the fine work which had raised him so high seemed lost, and Tourguéniev, lying on his death-bed, sent him this eloquent appeal: "*My friend, come back to your literary work! that gift has been sent to you by Him who gives us all things. . . . My friend, great writer of our Russian soil! grant this prayer of mine!*" The prayer was granted. There had been misunderstandings and collisions between these two men, each so well suited to value the other's work. Tolstoï had fallen asleep, in Tourguéniev's presence, over the manuscript of *Fathers and Children*; but at the moment of supreme farewell, Tourguéniev forgot it all, and Tolstoï seemed

to bow before the parting wish of his great rival. In spite of plunges, more and more risky, into exegesis, theology, and mysticism, the course of which I find myself less and less able to follow, the readers of the wonderful author of *War and Peace* have welcomed him back on such joyful occasions as those of the publication of *The Death of Ivan Illitch*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Master and Workman*, and *The Power of Darkness*. It would appear that we owe our present delight in reading *Resurrection* to the sect called the *Doukhobortsy*, and to the interest with which they have inspired its writer. For several years Tolstoï had ceased to claim his author's rights. He has reclaimed them in the case of this new novel, and has intended to apply the proceeds to assisting the emigration of this clan of strange eccentrics, concerning whom I shall have a few words to say. But I must first endeavour to lay the whole of that literary work, of which *Resurrection* is at present the last, and, I should be inclined to think, the highest expression, before my readers' eyes. They will realise that in so short a study I can only touch on the general aspects of the subject.

In Herr Reinholdt's very remarkable *History of Russian Literature*, he presents the author of *War and Peace* as an instance, which, he considers, may be possibly unique, "of the greatest artistic harmony, and of an absolutely straightforward continuity of development, joined to the highest possible degree of intellectual maturity." This judgment Tolstoï himself contravenes, when, in *My Religion*, he indicates, with the most perfect sincerity, the contradictions, flagrant indeed, into which the workings of his mind have previously led him. These he then ascribed to a mental crisis, the date of which he fixed as

being towards 1875. But it would be very difficult to accept this explanation. The lapses from that "straight-forward continuity of development," of which the German critic speaks, began at an earlier, and have recurred at a much later date. We could hardly, in fact, conceive a line more capriciously broken. The very artist who shows himself so full of the delight of life in his *Childhood or Boyhood*, and in many passages of his *War and Peace*, has gone further than any writer of his country in his description of the terrors of death. And this appears not only in *The Death of Ivan Illitch* and in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, but even in his earliest literary attempts. Thus, from the very first, the sincere optimist was as sincere a pessimist. And this is not all. Watch this acute analyst of the human soul, who discovers mere reflex action, physical and unconscious, even in its most violent transports; follow him when, on some page hard by, he depicts the almost instantaneous transformation of the most incredulous of men into a firm believer, under the influence of I know not what occult power; surely this is true mysticism! And this other conversion shows us Peter Bezoukhov, a favourite hero of the olden days, long previous to the mental crisis of 1875.

In spite of his world-wide reputation, Tolstoï has been, and has remained, an essentially Russian writer, and, as such, shares the general mental quality of his country, of which one characteristic feature consists in the inability to bring its beliefs and feelings into harmony. In my references to Dostoïevski's communistic feeling I have pointed out that the author of *War and Peace* is a dogmatic individualist; all his teaching, religious and philosophic, proves the truth of this definition. Nevertheless, the common feature of all his artistic creations

is, on the contrary, to be found in a constant feeling of distrust of the individual, arising out of the conviction that no individual is capable of attaining anything at all by his own strength. When Tolstoï declared, in a passage of his *Memories of Sevastopol*, that truth was his one and only hero, he certainly deceived himself. The true and only hero, that in which he finds his invariable delight, is the mob. In it, in its beliefs and tastes and ideas, he perceives that truth which he claims to serve. A good life is the ordinary life of the nation. To think well, we must think like the people, for wisdom lies not in knowledge, but in the unconscious feeling of the popular masses. We must not seek to guide these masses, we should rather be led by them, for man is only powerful inasmuch as he is borne on the waves of that great ocean. Those figures, fictitious or historical, which rise above the common level, can only win Tolstoï's sympathy if they represent a national idea, and make no attempt to impose their conceptions upon others. In his mind, Koutousov, who mistrusted himself and those who worked with him, and relied on the instinct of his own people, is far greater than Napoleon. For Napoleon, according to him, flattered himself for five-and-twenty years that he was leading Europe, whereas he was simply floating along, the mere toy of a mighty current of history.

Thus, in *Anna Karenina*, Levine, the good and simple-hearted, finds the truth—that is to say, the solution of the problem of life—while Vronski, clever and intelligent, only brings misfortune upon himself and those belonging to him. The uselessness of heroism and of struggling with life, and the necessity for resignation, form a realistic feature in which Tolstoï's work agrees with that of Dostoïevski.

But the instances of resignation portrayed by Dostoi-evski all occur in persons of high moral development who have been beaten in the battle of life, whereas Tolstoi makes the recognition of a man's nothingness in the face of Nature, in the face of society, and before God, not the highest wisdom only, but also the road which leads to happiness, and individual happiness, the only end to be attained—whence other contradictions arise.

In Tolstoi's nature there are, and always have been, several men, whose development runs on parallel lines. If the author has escaped that condition of internal conflict which has brought, and still brings, anguish to many of his fellow-countrymen, he owes it both to the wide embracing power of his talent, and also to the fate which has made him a creator of pictures. Had he been a man of action, he would have been drawn, like so many others, into the inevitable struggle between fact and idea. Being, as he is, an artist, he has reflected, even as in a mirror, faithful and unmoved, the life of his country in all its many aspects. His power of universal refraction is probably unequalled. He is just as much at his ease in a peasant's cot as in a St. Petersburg drawing-room. He is a born hunter on the marshes, where some readers of *Anna Karenina* may have been occasionally bored, but where all lovers of sporting exploits must have enjoyed the most delightful experiences; and he proves himself versed in every detail touching the horse and horsemanship when he takes Vronski into "Frou-Frou's" box. It is his plural personality which has enabled him to bring forward the most varied types, even though he works, like every artist in bookmaking, after a single model—his own self, analysed and reproduced *ad infini-*

*tum.* In this matter he is to be distinguished from his Western emulators, in that he makes no attempt to idealise the features of his own character, but is rather inclined to present them in the least favourable light. This tendency, which was apparent in Pouchkine's case, and is yet more evident in that of Dostoïevski, is common to the whole Russian school, and constitutes what may be considered its truest element of originality.

Tolstoï's characters, like those of Tourguéniev, may be reduced to a certain number of general types. The central type, which pervades his whole work, from Nikolenka, the hero of *Childhood*, down to Pozdnychev in the *Kreutzer Sonata*, and Nekhlioudov in *Resurrection*, is *par excellence* the autobiographical type. It possesses none of the brilliant qualities with which Byron delighted to invest his successive incarnations of his own haughty individuality. It rather embodies a being of ordinary and mediocre calibre, to whom life brings more evil fortune than good-luck; who not unfrequently makes himself ridiculous, and has not even the resource reserved to Tourguéniev's heroes, of joking over his own misadventures. Such figures as Vronski and Andrew Volkonski, with their beauty, their superior gifts, and the good fortune which attends their undertakings, are put forward in contrast to these outcasts from fortune. But the author's preference is by no means with them, and at some turn of the road, their lucky star is sure to fail them. An intermediate type is represented by Nicholas Rostov in *War and Peace*, and Stiva Oblonski in *Anna Karenina*. These are men who possess happiness because they do not look too high or too far to seek it; aimably selfish beings, in other words, on whom Tolstoï bestows a scornful smile. And now come

his favourites, the men who have found the real inward truth, who expect nothing from life, because nothing that life can give will suit their need. Their joy and contentment lies within their own soul—a soul full of simplicity, humility, and indifference to worldly things. Such are the poor musician in *Lucerne*, Platon Karataiev in *War and Peace*, and the old nightman Akime, in the *Power of Darkness*.

The setting within which the author makes all these figures live and move is a huge one. In his first beginnings Tolstoï revealed himself as possessing a marvellous and very realistic power of painting childhood. Even while Nikolenka weeps tears of the sincerest grief over his mother's tomb, he is thinking of many things which have nothing to do with his sorrow, deep though it be. Nikolenka's surroundings all belong to the aristocratic sphere, and the author's picture of this society, touched in with an air of the most complete indifference, bears no sign of that anxiety on social matters which was already stirring the contemporary mind. Tolstoï offers no reply to the endless questions, such as "Whose fault?" and "What is to be done?" put forward, just at this period, by Herzen and Tchernichevski. He does not seem to be aware of their existence. *The Two Hussars* and *Domestic Happiness* belong to this cycle, as well as *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*. ✓

In *Memories of Sevastopol, The Invasion, The Three Deaths, The Cossacks*, the scene changes. The stage broadens, and the philosopher, hitherto concealed beneath the author, makes his entrance. He attacks the real question and problem of life, how we must live if we will die worthily. And here begins the teaching of the theory of blissful unconsciousness. The true hero of



the Crimean war is the private soldier, who is heroic and great because he knows not how great a thing it is to die for his country. This doctrine appears yet more clearly in *The Three Deaths*, the agonising death of a nobly-born woman, the easy death of a man of humble birth, and the happy and unconscious death of a felled tree. Following on the art of dying well, we see the art of living well, as taught in *The Cossacks*, in which book Tolstoï, with his apology for elementary simplicity, begins to put forward the theory which is to be the last expression of his philosophy. Amongst all the forms of happiness, or, in other words, of the satisfaction of natural instincts, love of our neighbour and self-sacrifice are at once the most legitimate and the most easily attained. From this time forward, individualism and altruism are to wage eternal war in the author's intelligence.

The struggle is less evident in *War and Peace* and in *Anna Karenina*, because in these works, the thinker is frequently overshadowed by the depicor of incident. In their pages, deductions having a particular tendency only appear as excrescences on the trunk of a mighty tree; and this to such an extent that an attempt has been made to extract them from the original works and form them into a separate appendix. The theory of unconsciousness has a personal reason and justification in the case of this admirable artist. He himself is really great only when he creates unconsciously, by a process of internal and, as I might describe it, automatic transformation of his external impressions. When he endeavours to analyse these impressions, or to reduce any phenomenon to its elementary parts, or when, by an inverse operation, he attempts a synthesis of the elements which go to make up the diversity of life, he loses

himself in a maze of definitions, analogies, and demonstrations, the logic of which he himself seems to be the first to doubt. And at the same time, we notice in him a trait of feminine intellectuality—a tendency to mingle logical deduction with the sentiment of the moment, and confound his reason with the dictates of his heart.

The outcome of this is yet another contradiction. Now, from the point of view of general composition, *War and Peace* belongs, as a whole, to an order of creation which may be described as being in a sense instinctive. The author's object is not so much to prove any particular theory, as to show us Russia as she was at the time of the Napoleonic wars, and to reflect his country in a mirror of huge scope, and sympathy that is wide indeed, since it even embraces the law of serfdom. Everything that is Russian is dear to Tolstoï, as it is, and just because it is Russian. This must not be taken to be the Olympian indifference of Goethe, nor the impassibility of a French writer of the Naturalist school. It is rather a sort of indulgent acknowledgment of human weakness and of the nothingness of the highest life—a feeling which once more brings the author into kinship with Dostoïevski. Yet in Tolstoï's case this sentiment is more restricted, and does not extend to suffering and guilt. Not that the author is more inclined to severity, but that in his eyes suffering and crime are both very small matters, concerning which it is not necessary to disturb one's self. Here we have a sort of backward gleam of the old Greek plays, in which the faults and afflictions of the heroes are recognised to be only the result of the immutable will of the gods.

✓ After his own fashion, Tolstoï is a fatalist, and the philosopher of the *Memories of Sevastopol* reappears un-

fortunately, from time to time, and hews out a part for himself even in *War and Peace*, as when he deliberately intervenes in the description of those bloody encounters wherein the fortunes of Russia and Napoleon hung in the balance. The author's fundamental idea in this respect is indicated when Koutousov falls asleep at the council of war, during which the plan of the battle of Austerlitz is discussed, and is shown reading a novel on the very eve of the battle of the Borodino. This proves his wisdom, because he leaves events to work themselves out without making any attempt to guide them. And these events are accomplished, not by means of any individual effort, but by the unconscious action of the mass, which itself obeys a superior and superhuman will. Men are nothing but automata. Any pretension to guide them, or to find fault with them if they will not move in the direction we desire, is equally absurd. All we can aspire to is to analyse the psychological process which takes place within their souls under occult influences; and here we see Tolstoï taking up, on a far larger scale, the work he had already attempted under the walls of Sevastopol. It is a process of miniature painting and micrography which quite disconcerted the earliest readers of *War and Peace*—I mean, its Russian readers, for the book has been less discussed in the West than in the author's own country. It is certain that the resources at the disposal of the author of *Memories of Sevastopol* were quite insufficient to warrant his constituting himself the historian of the great Napoleonic wars. He looked at the battlefields of Austerlitz and the Borodino with the eyes, the experience, and the knowledge of the young artillery officer of 1854. No writer, indeed, ever knew better how to depict a battery of

artillery or a squadron of cavalry in action under fire.

But the young artillery officer had evidently failed to perceive the connection of this particular action with that of the other units engaged in the same struggle, and the ingenuous artist has come to the conclusion that no such connection existed. How was the battle of Austerlitz lost on one side and gained on the other? Napoleon knew nothing of that, any more than Koutousov. The head of a French column, which chanced to be on a particular spot, blundered, thanks to the fog which shrouded its movements, across the head of a Russian column which ought to have been somewhere else. The result was a panic, and all the rest. Tolstoï covers whole pages with irrational statements of this kind. From the military point of view it is mere childishness; from the artistic point of view it is over-generalisation, and leads the painter to fill the hugest canvas with a multitude of tiny sketches. His method is an absolute negation of serious art. I go further, and say it is the negation of truth. Here again we have the cinematographist's negative; but the cinematograph is not merely a process of decomposition; it recomposes, and gives us a mechanical representation of connected movement. Now, as I have shown, Tolstoï's idea, far from assisting his reader towards this recomposition, after the manner of Tourguéniev, formally forbids him to attempt it. And I will add that many of his snapshots lack accuracy and precision. The abuse of detail inevitably leads to such mistakes as these. He brings us on to a square in Moscow in 1812; a French cook, suspected of being a spy, has just been flogged. "*The executioner,*" says Tolstoï, "*unbound the prisoner from the stake; he was a big man with reddish whiskers,*

wearing dark blue stockings and a green coat." This detail is most circumstantial, but it must be incorrect, for at such a moment the culprit certainly had no coat upon his back.

Looking at it from the philosophical standpoint, the author's fatalist theory finds its most redoubtable contradiction in his own person. The characters in *War and Peace* may be divided into two categories—those who consciously pursue some aim, such as the two emperors, Prince Bolkonski and his old father, the Kouraguine family, and the heroine of the story, Natacha Rostov, and those who allow the current to sweep them away, such as Peter Bezoukhov, old Rostov, the Princess Marie, Platon Karataiev, and Koutousov. Happiness and final success are the portion of these last. But this happiness does not strike us, on closer examination, as being particularly tempting. When I look at Bezoukhov, married to a woman who plays him false, the ill-starred witness of the battle of the Borodino, an occasion on which he cannot discover either what he is doing or wherefore he is there at all, then a half-delirious wanderer in the streets of Moscow, where the French threaten to shoot him for incendiarism, and finally a fugitive, straying in the footsteps of Napoleon's army;—the idea of his condition offering any seduction to an imagination in quest of felicity would indeed surprise me.

And finally, from the historic point of view, Koutousov, who vanquishes Napoleon by dint of sleeping or reading novels, while his adversary plans his battles, is, fortunately for history, not only an improbability, but a downright falsehood.

In the composition of *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoï remained faithful to his own theory and method. We

find the same wealth of episode, in the more restricted setting of family life, and the same contrast drawn between the pride of individualism in its own strength, and a humble submission to a superior and occult power. A similar antagonism is brought into relief in the mental condition of the principal hero, torn asunder by an internal conflict, and in the comparison between the tumultuous existence of great cities and the peaceful conditions of country life. On one side we have men of intelligence and tact; on the other, men of simple heart and kind good-nature. But these last always win the day. Levine triumphs over Vronski. But Levine, the intellectual descendant of Bezoukhov, is destined, this time, to reveal the true prescription for the cure of moral suffering, the secret of which has just been discovered by the harvester of Iasnaïa Poliana—the healing virtue of physical labour. At the same time we observe the dawn of Socialist ideas, which seemed quite unknown to the author of *War and Peace*, as, more especially, in that famous hunting scene in which Levine, during a discussion with Oblonski, suddenly realises the injustice of making use of another man's labour. Here we have the germ of the whole of Tolstoï's later philosophic teaching, afterwards to be so brilliantly developed and put into practice. We may wonder that he should have chosen Levine as the channel through which he bestows these first-fruits on the outer world. This country gentleman, who forgets to go to the church on his wedding day, and, when the elections come round, begs every one to tell him how he should vote, is but a sorry prophet. Tolstoï, indeed, desires we should believe him to be a cultivated man, whose studies of German philosophy, for which he nevertheless professes a hearty scorn, have

imbued him with a deep-seated scepticism. How then is it that he presents such an appearance of brutish coarseness? And here is something which may astonish us yet more. When Levine, wandering through the mazes of intellectual speculation, utterly loses his bearings and knows not which way to turn, it is a peasant, with whom he falls into conversation, who arrives just in time to show him the true path. All he has to do is to go straight forward, in humble trust that God will guide him in the right direction.

How comes it that this dweller in the country has not already stumbled upon this peasant, or some other, just as capable of leading him on the right road? Their name is legion! We have met the very same individual in *War and Peace*; there he bore the name of Karataiev, and likewise preached a blind submission to the will of God. But to what God? A doubt was permissible then; but that is over now. The God to whom Levine is to make over the government of his life is not the Christ. This God is Buddha. I will not attempt to explain the manner in which Tolstoï contrives to combine the doctrine of *Nirvana* and the divine law of labour, in his own teaching. Regarding the case between town and country life, which the prophet decides, as a matter of course, in favour of the tillers of the soil, every writer since Pouchkine has taken the same line, following that of Rousseau and George Sand. Only Rousseau and George Sand have been careful to strengthen their verdict by more or less well-founded preambles. But Tolstoï is less explicit. When, even in his later and purely philosophical works, it becomes his duty to indicate the nature of "the falsehood of civilised life," he gropes and fumbles, sometimes formulating charges against science

and sometimes bringing accusations against forms of government.

The artistic qualities of *Anna Karenina* deserve the same praise, with the same reservations, as those of *War and Peace*. We observe the same sovereign mastery of detail, description, and psychological analysis, the same lack of unity, the same network of various stories which draw the reader's attention along as many confusing tracks, and the same fault of prolixity. The character of the principal heroine is dissected to its inmost recesses, with the most incomparable steadiness of hand. Her incapability of realising her position when, after having left her husband, she returns from abroad with her lover, insists on appearing at the theatre, receives an affront there, and turns upon the man who has done everything in his power to prevent her carrying out her whim; and the struggle between her affection for her lover and her maternal love, are miracles of observation and reproduction. There is little or no invention; the only situation a little out of the common is when the faithless wife, swayed by some violent emotion, brutally casts the acknowledgment of her sin in her husband's teeth; and this idea Tolstoï may have found in the work of Ostrovski, and even in that of Lermontov (see *A Hero of Our Times*). But what a wealth of cold clear-sightedness and burning emotion we find in the description of Kitty Levine's confinement and of the death of Nicholas Levine! How ingenious is the manner in which these two events—which place all those who take part in them outside the ordinary conditions of life, raising them to a higher level, carrying them into a mysterious sphere where they can hardly recognise each other, their faces convulsed, and their souls wrung by



their common anguish—are brought into close connection! The whole truth is here, and without a jarring word.

It has been remarked that Tolstoï's works, previous to *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, contain no feminine figures. But henceforward they come in crowds, and all of them are charming. This pleasure we owe, no doubt, to the author's marriage, and to the influence of Sophia Andréievna. But is it not strange, again, that in his second novel the author should have made a vulgar incident of adultery the foundation and starting-point of his theory of social renovation?

I have already said that, after this first expression of his theory, the novelist seemed to have given place for ever to the preacher. Since the publication of *My Religion*, the belief that the incident of Levine's conversion, in *Anna Karenina*, is autobiographical, forces itself upon us. In the course of a mental process experienced by many great minds—Schopenhauer, Hartmann, and Lewis, to quote no others—before his time, Tolstoï appears to have passed through rationalism into an immediate relation with Nature and Divinity. Up to this period, his reason had struggled with his heart, the first repeating the lessons learnt from the masters of modern philosophy, the second holding communion with nature, and drawing thence its faith in the immortality of the soul, and the idea of a God. I suppose, and I have already explained why, that the author has deceived himself as to the reality of this crisis, but nevertheless he has acted as if it had been real, and, having imagined that through it he had arrived at the perception of a new truth, he has used all his endeavours to shed its consoling light around him. While in the two books, entitled *My Confession* and *My*

*Religion*, he pointed out the origin of his teaching, and laid its foundations, he undertook two huge works, one a thorough criticism of dogmatic theology, and the other a new translation of the Four Gospels. The spirit in which he approached this mighty task finds ingenuous expression in the following passage from *My Religion*: "It was long before I could accustom myself to the idea that after eighteen centuries—during which the law of Jesus had been professed by thousands of human beings—after eighteen centuries, during the course of which thousands of men had consecrated their lives to the study of that law, I should myself have discovered it as some new thing." The conquest of Mexico over again!

To follow the author along this path, I am not qualified. A perusal of *My Religion* has led me to the conclusion that Tolstoï, following the example of Dostoïevski, has reduced the teaching of Christ to five commandments—"Never fall into a rage," "Do not commit adultery," "Take no oath," "Use no violence in self-defence," and "Make no war," and that from these he has deduced the necessity for the almost wholesale destruction of existing social institutions, with their constituent elements—justice, army, taxes, and so forth. This, too, would appear to be the explanation of *Resurrection*, the subject of which story—in which we see a man called to sit on a jury, and condemn a woman who has been his own mistress, whom he has forsaken, and thus driven into a life of vice—is said to have been suggested to the author by M. Koni, the criminal expert. The author's conclusion is that juries, as well as every species of legal tribunal, should be suppressed. In the same work we find a man called on to answer an accusation of having stolen some brooms; the owner of the brooms,

when summoned as a witness, declares that the legal action has already cost him twice the value of the stolen brooms in travelling expenses. The author concludes that thieves must be left to ply their trade in peace. But I am not sure that I have thoroughly grasped his idea, and, as far as *Resurrection* is concerned, I care not a jot, so entrancing is Katioucha's figure, in spite of the little cast in her eye! The uncertainty under which I labour with regard to the great writer's purely philosophical works is a more serious matter. But here again I console myself with the thought that it is very likely shared by the author himself; and, in fact, I have discovered, in looking over one of his latest publications of this nature, *Religion and Morality* (1893), that after having admitted the existence of two typical conceptions of the fundamental relations between man and the universe, he has been weak enough to discover, even as he wrote, a third conception, which, as deriving from the first, must naturally claim the second place; whereupon he has turned his back on all three, and plunged headlong into a refutation of an article by Huxley on Ethical Evolution, which he had no doubt been lately reading, and the memory of which had thrown all his other ideas into confusion.

The success, and a very relative success it is, of Tolstoï's preaching on these subjects is largely due to its affinity with that sectarian spirit so common in the huge empire, and also to the encouragement given by his doctrine to another ruling feature of the national character—its indolence.

After a certain fashion, indeed, this propaganda has served the interests of the State, by drawing revolutionary currents, far more dangerous than itself, into

its own channel. A doctrine which preaches abstinence from evil-doing cannot cause real anxiety to any government.

The author still shows the highest mastery of his craft in those novels and tales with which, happily for his readers, he occasionally breaks the series of his philosophical treatises and exegetical works, and in all of which the same teaching, though under a different form, is carefully instilled. He is too apt, indeed, to forget the precept which was Goethe's legacy to all artists, "Depict, but do not speak!" But we must make up our minds to that. And in spite of that drawback, the *Kreutzer Sonata* and *The Death of Ivan Illitch*—a two-fold plea against marriage—are, to my mind, superior to his preceding works. It has been denied that Pozdnychev, the hero of the *Kreutzer Sonata*, who murders, out of jealousy, the woman he has married in sheer thoughtlessness, can be regarded as his creator's mouthpiece. The selection may seem a strange one, but in the treatise entitled *Concerning Life*, which was published in the same year (1889), and in a postscript to the *Sonata*, published a year later, in which Tolstoï personally repeats and develops this Othello's arguments, he certainly seems to identify himself with the character. He points out the opposition between our inner consciousness of our own immortality and our material surroundings, which all speak to us of death, and from this he deduces, after a like fashion, the idea of the huge paradox of Life. Our only resource, if we would escape from this paradox, is to remove ourselves, as far as possible, beyond the borders of the material world, which serves as a temporary agent of transmission to that inner consciousness of ours, destined to survive

the world's destruction. If we betray any tenderness for the physical element of our being, we condemn ourselves to suffering and to the fear of death—which is only a physical fact. Therefore we must eliminate our animal life, and, as a first necessity, those sexual relations which are its foundation. This truth has already been revealed by the Christ, but it has not been realised. There can be no Christian marriage, just as there is no Christian worship, no Christian army, no Christian justice, and no Christian State. A Christian cannot regard any sexual relation except as a sin. He must not marry. If he is married already he may keep his wife, but he must treat her as his sister. Attractive as the theory may appear to some husbands, its strict application is certainly fraught with peril. But Tolstoï is delighted with it. He breaks off the rolling series of his paradoxes, all of which have already had their day in the novels of George Sand, to exclaim, by the lips of Pozdnychev, "All this was new, and astounded me sorely!" Yet what a wealth of psychological intuition we find side by side with this simplicity! "Ask an experienced coquette who has set herself the task of leading a man astray, whether she would rather be convicted in his sight of falsehood, perversity, and cruelty, or appear before him in an ill-fitting gown. She will choose the first alternative!" And then what superb touches of realism! Pozdnychev has just killed his wife, and is about to throw himself upon the lover, who has taken refuge in the neighbouring room, when he notices that he has no boots upon his feet. He has taken them off so as to creep unobserved upon the guilty pair. A sense of his ridiculous position overwhelms him, and he stops short. This is worth a whole essay on philosophy.

The *Popular Stories*, which were at one time Tolstoi's own favourite works, have been somewhat severely judged by Russian critics. They have complained that the author has failed to attain the simplicity at which he aimed, and I myself am inclined to think their artlessness somewhat artificial. One of the last tales published before *Resurrection*, under the title of *Master and Workman*, received a more kindly verdict. It embodies the antique teaching of the vanity of riches. A timber merchant—rough, coarse, and hard-hearted—goes to the forest with his man, loses his way, and is caught in a snowstorm. He unharnesses the horse, mounts it, and rides away, leaving his humble companion to his fate. The horse, failing to find its way through the tempest, brings him back to the sledge on which the workman is huddled, already stiff with cold, and half-buried in the snow. With a rush, the uselessness of the cowardly attempt he has just made to save his own life, and the vanity of all his past efforts to accumulate riches, which at such a moment have lost all value in his eyes, surge over the merchant's soul, sweep away the artificial layer of selfishness, and stir his underlying instinct of altruism and sympathy for his neighbour. His sole idea, now, is to bring back warmth, with his fur coat and with his own body, to the poor wretch to whom he had not given a thought, a little while ago. He stretches himself upon his body, and there, a few hours later, he is found, in the same posture; he has brought his last undertaking to a successful issue. Death has come to him, indeed, but the workman is alive. No one can fail to admire the substance of the story, and as regards form, it attains, in its descriptive portions, the very pinnacle of art. But is there any psychological

explanation of the revulsion which takes place within the merchant's soul? None, I fear, any more than in the case of Prince Nekhlioudov in *Resurrection*, who, being a retired officer of the Imperial Guard, a man about town and a debauchee, bent on comfort and luxury, is suddenly seized with a longing to marry his Katioucha, whom he must take out of a convict prison and a house of ill-fame. And what lack of proportion we note between the conception of *Master and Workman* and the means chosen for its expression! We have a whole volume to lead us up to that one incident in the forest, which embodies the whole substance of the book! The *Kreutzer Sonata* and *The Death of Ivan Illitch* both suffer from the same fault of construction.

I am much disposed, on the other hand, to recognise in *The Power of Darkness* one of the most perfect masterpieces which ever graced any literature, and to perceive that Tolstoï seems to have imported in it a new form of popular drama, and one capable of universal application. The idea that a fault may be atoned for by voluntary confession and expiation is certainly not a new one. But none of Tolstoï's predecessors has succeeded, so far as my knowledge goes, in expressing it in so dramatic a fashion, nor with so much true and simple grandeur. He gives us Nature herself, as she lives and moves, taken from the rustic life, without the smallest affectation, or the slightest touch of rhetoric. Figures and surroundings, methods of speech and ways of feeling, have all been observed, noted even to their most delicate shades, and rendered in a fashion that is miraculous. Though Nikita, the guilty peasant, speaks the ordinary language of the populace, he uses some phrases and expressions which reveal his knowledge of

circles other than those of his own village. You realise that a railway must have been made through the place, and that the foam of city civilisation has thus been cast, by way of the tavern, on to the threshold of the peasant's hut.

Great writer of the Russian soil ! give us more and more of such works as these ! Forsake those scientific inquiries and philosophic speculations for which Heaven never intended you. I am no Tourguéniev, but I know that when I speak thus, I speak for several millions of your readers ! By some miracle, your obstinate dallying with ideology has not dimmed your imagination, yet, believe me, you revolve within your speculations like a squirrel in its cage, and you never gain a step ! But what of your new revelation and its teachings ? you will cry. So far as I can discern anything in your doctrine, it seems to me to combine the two contradictory elements of your first philosophical ideas, those evident in your earliest literary efforts, the superiority of the masses over the individual, and the virtue of isolation. And to these, even then already, you were adding tirades against the depravity of the culture of city life. Remember your own Olénine ! The original theory has been developed, no doubt, but do you not realise that the least acceptable feature of your prophetic vocation lies in the fact that you are a prophet in perpetual motion ? Within your cage there is a wheel, and that wheel goes round and round. You have ended, in your *Kreutzer Sonata*, by condemning marriage, and preaching the renunciation of carnal love as the highest ideal. And doubtless you have never dreamt, in your divine simplicity, of the comic side presented by this tardy conversion to asceticism in the case of a man of your age and your position ! For you are, I believe, the father of twelve children !



I know, indeed, that no ridicule affects you, that you make but little effort to bring your own ideas into mutual harmony, and still less to bring them into agreement with your own life. The logic which extols physical labour as the only legitimate means of acquisition, while it brands any desire to increase possessions as illegitimate, is not exceedingly self-evident. What can those readers who recollect your *Popular Tales*, and the many and varied resources for adding to the pleasures of life therein indicated, think of these new precepts of life, with their almost monkish austerity? They may say the wheel has turned. But they also think, you may be sure, that the non-resistance to evil, which is the chief dogma of your later gospel, is merely a fresh application of your old theory of the superiority of the masses. The mass, which constitutes an elementary being, approaches more nearly to Nature than the individual, and Nature's submission to every incident is passive. This, surely, is your idea. Do you know that it comes perilously near utter materialism? You escape it, I admit, by your acknowledgment of a moral debt; but does not the fresh contradiction here involved occur to you? Contradictions are the most convenient things in the world for those who do not concern themselves about them. But such men stand on slippery ground, and thus it is that you have slipped into that Buddhism which constitutes, as I really believe, the only comparatively original phase of your various evolutions. Apart from it, you have simply unwound a skein which runs through Leopardi and Schopenhauer right back to the pessimism of Lord Byron. And to conclude, you have obeyed the watchword "Go out among the people," which has led some of your contemporaries into other and worse follies. In

your case, it is Buddhism, above all, which has cast you into the quagmire, by leading you to condemn the very principle of the State. It must certainly be wrong that the State should interfere in everything, if it be true that it should interfere in nothing. You would have no judges, no police officials, no soldiers. If men were not prevented from doing evil, they would not think of doing it at all. But perhaps I am wrong in ascribing these ideas of yours to Buddha. Should I not rather accuse Jean Jacques Rousseau? more especially when I see you labouring, scythe in hand, to save your neighbour's harvest. What are you doing there? What do you make of those examples which should be sacred in your eyes, of the Fakir and the holy man, sitting crouched, motionless, lost in meditation, and the contemplation of their own toes? But you are no Hindoo! Your northern blood, and the vital energy within you, carry the day, and triumph over your fancies for imitation and inertia. And again, I perceive that, according to your idea, the State should never intervene in an agrarian quarrel, to prevent the peasants from laying hands by force on the soil which suits their purpose best. This, if I mistake not, is the doctrine you expound in *The Kingdom of God is with You*—the most complete of all the treatises on religious philosophy to which your signature is appended. Here you stand forsaken both by Buddha and by Jean Jacques himself. And I will not say in whose company you remain!

To sum it up, when you condemn science, and economic and intellectual development, you condemn the very essential idea of progress. You claim the right to reduce us to live the primitive life of the Russian *moujik*, and to find all our pleasure therein, like the real Karataiev

whom you once knew. His name was Soutaiev, a stone-cutter, and he was your guest at Moscow some fifteen years ago. The *Bojié Lioudi* (men of God), the scanty adherents of one of the innumerable sects which swarm in Russia, looked up to him as their leader. In a very curious letter, addressed to one of your commentators, M. Schrœder—the letter itself, I believe, has never been published, but a rough draft of it in French has been sent me by one of your most fervent admirers, M. Salomon, whose kindness I here acknowledge—you deny that you ever were the disciple of this master, or that you ever accepted the teachings of Bondarev, another apostle of the same stamp, who is also supposed to have taught you his particular catechism. Not, you add, that you are unwilling to owe anything to a humble *moujik*, but that you are privileged to know and comprehend the teachings of the greatest of all Masters, Jesus Christ. When you quoted the names of these men of simple mind, your only object was to testify that their conversation had given you more glimpses of the truth than all the learned books you had ever read. But does not this justify the verdict of Max Nordau? At the present moment your preference lies with the *Doukhobortsy* (spiritual strugglers), although your prejudice against the union of the sexes would rather bring you into connection with the *Theodosians*, and your ascetic habits draw you closer to the *Molokanes* (milk-drinkers), another sect of the *Raskol*. You are aware that this latter party also claims to have rediscovered the true doctrine of Christ, and that the teaching of the *Doukhobortsy* is extremely vague, so vague, indeed, that when Professor Novitski, of the Ecclesiastical Academy at Kiév, succeeded, in 1882, in collecting some information on the subject, the book in which he

embodied it was immediately adopted as its catechism by the sect, so that the price ran up to fifty roubles per copy. One of the officers whose duty it has been to enforce reasonable behaviour on these unfortunate people, who, as is well known, refuse to perform military service and to pay taxes, and thus necessitate the employment of repressive measures which the Government itself regrets more than any one else, has described them to me in a manner which places them in a tolerably favourable light. They are a set of visionaries, not without sympathetic qualities, and capable, in their ingenuous simplicity, of a certain moral greatness. He related the following colloquy to me :—

“You will be sent to Siberia, a terrible country, where not even a dog can find a living !”

“Does God live there ?”

Send money to these honest folk if you will, but tell us of Katioucha !

I have said my say, and I well-nigh repent that I have ventured to address you. For memory tells me that, for the last twenty or thirty years, your teaching, if it has occasionally flown in the face of reason, has held its own against other and less patient authorities—authorities which command millions of wills and millions of consciences, and which no man before you has ever braved with impunity. And I remember that your ideas and even your art, marvellous as it is, count for little compared with the example you have set, and the date you have so nobly written in the history of your country. With it you inaugurate the reign of that mighty power of freedom which—whatever your Slavophiles may say, and whatever you yourself may think—has renewed the face of the Western world, and is predestined to transfigure

that of your beloved Russia. Your share in this work has been magnificently borne. You are a very great man, and my criticisms are infinitely small, but you will forgive them, for the sake, and in the name, of the very principle you represent.

A popular picture by Riépine represents the master of Iasnaïa Poliana, driving a plough drawn by a white horse, across the plain, and leading another horse, harnessed to a harrow, behind him. With his white *kaftan*, open at the breast, his fur cap and high boots, he looks like Ilia of Mourom, the great legendary toiler, the clearer of the national soil. And something of this there is in the reality with which the legend is fused;—waving harvests will grow, I doubt not, out of the furrow ploughed by Leo Nicolaiévitch. But what grain will he have sown, drawn from what heavenly granary? Doubt overwhelms me, or rather, I should say, an all too evident sense of nothingness weighs me down. And thus I reach the close of this too short investigation of the sphere of intellect in contemporary Russia. The French writer who preceded me in this work, now over ten years ago, built high hopes on its result. “Days of famine and weakness,” he wrote, “have fallen upon the country of Pascal, Chateaubriand, and Michelet. The Russians have come to us in the nick of time. If any power of digestion remains to us, we shall strengthen our blood at their expense. Let me remind those inclined to blush at the idea of owing anything to the *Barbarians* that the intellectual world is one huge association for mutual help and charity. . . . May Heaven grant that this Russian soul may do good service to our own!”

Years have rolled on, and no apparent response has

been made to M. de Vogüé's expectation. Another writer of the same nationality has lately pointed out, that though evident traces of the imitation of Russian models do exist, as regards form, in the work of Bourget, Maupassant, and some other novelists, there has been no corresponding incursion of fecundating thought into French intelligence as a whole. "Whose fault"? I would inquire, in the words which form the title of certain studies of society, popular in Russia. The answer seems to me to be contained in the closing pages of M. de Vogüé's volume—wherein, with a certain amount of contradiction, but with most meritorious frankness, the author casts away his earlier confidence, and registers his final disappointments. Should any, among all those creators of ideas on whose talents he had been led to found his belief in the regenerative power of the "Russian Soul," have justified his confidence so fully as Tolstoï? But here are his conclusions. "In vain do we seek a single original idea in the revelation offered to us by the apostle of Toula. We only find the first prattlings of rationalism in religion, and of Communism in social matters. The old dream of the Millennium, the tradition preserved since the earliest Middle Ages, by the Vaudois, the Lollards, and the Anabaptists. Happy Russia! where such chimeras still seem fresh and new."

Worn out chimeras, alas! and valiant repetitions! Tolstoï sends us back what we ourselves have been able to bestow upon his country, with a few rags of fresh finery cast over our old tattered garments. There is nothing surprising in the fact that under a disguise which is often whimsical, and occasionally absurd, the West failed to recognise some of the noblest fruits of its own loins, even that human compassion which many of us,

forgetful of the "divine" George Sand, have chosen to ascribe to her Russian imitators. The extraordinary thing is, that hideous caricatures should have been accepted as exquisite revelations. The Russians themselves make no mistake about the matter, and Dostoïevski, rather than deny the paternity of the author of *Consuelo*, has preferred to annex her to his own country, and deliberately call her "a Russian force." The expression will be found in his writings.

Yet, amidst the common poverty of this poor humanity of ours, the garment counts for something. And my closing and personal dictum shall be as follows. Modern Russia has produced men possessing a marvellous power of calling up pictures. She has not, as yet, produced an entirely original thinker. From the intellectual point of view, she has lived, hitherto, on the capital of the West, and even a century of effort has hardly enabled her to assimilate, with occasional perversions, the heterogeneous elements thus obtained. Yet, on her own side, she has contributed certain methods of thought, and more especially certain methods of feeling, which her European neighbours do not, up to the present moment, appear capable of incorporating. But what is a century, after all, in the evolution of a human race? and how much longer a period had to elapse before the West itself could recreate and appropriate the intellectual inheritance of ancient Greece or Rome?

Tolstoï has not founded any literary school, properly so called, in his own country. The Russian who, after having previously followed in the steps of Chtchédrine, appeared at one moment to have advanced farther than any other in the path marked out by the "Prophet of Toulou," is an author who is scarcely known to

foreign readers, and who deserves better fortune. N. S. LIÉSKOV (1831-1895), a very productive writer and novelist, made a somewhat tardy appearance in the world of letters. Until 1861, he travelled, both in Russia and abroad, as the agent of an English merchant, Mr. Scott. About this period he revealed his powers of literary criticism in a somewhat severe review of Tchernichevski's novel, *What is to be Done?* Shortly afterwards two novels, published under the pseudonym of Stebnitski, *The Blind Alley* (*Niékkouda*), and *The Islanders* (*Ostrovitanié*) proved him a resolute opponent of revolutionary ideas, against which he endeavoured to set up an ideal of practical activity. This ideal was somewhat misty in its nature, and is certainly not attained by the heroine of one of his stories—a modern Lady Macbeth, whose series of crimes, the object of which is to bring her nearer to her lover, lead her on to suicide. The general note struck in these early works is somewhat melancholy and pessimistic, and this deepens in *Good and Evil Fortune*, and in *The Bewitched Traveller* (*Otcharovannyi Strannik*), in which a curious figure, a kind of Russian Gil Blas, is made the pretext for an exceedingly varied and interesting, but by no means flattering, series of descriptions of the national life. In its pages we meet with an "Arbiter of Peace," who serves the cause of education by levying contributions on the schools, and a provincial Governor, whose dream is to conquer Europe, and transfer the seat of his administration to Paris! Gogol and Saltykov themselves could have given us nothing better.

Yet Liéskov is by no means a writer with a special and deliberate tendency. When he began the great novel which crowned his reputation, and endowed the



national literature with its first written description of the life of the orthodox clergy, he certainly had no deliberate intention of finding fault. He was rather disposed to sympathy and apology. In the person of the principal character of *The Priests* (*Soborianié*), the proto-pope, Touberosov, he desired to draw an ideal ecclesiastic, whose whole life and teaching were based on love of his neighbour. Yet when we read this model priest's journal, a painful impression of moral emptiness results. At the beginning we find a few noble thoughts, but after these, nothing but childishness, empty triflings, paltriness, and not one single act of Christian charity. As a whole, it constitutes a terrible bill of accusation. And Touberosov does not stand alone. Close beside him we perceive the deacon Achilles, a child of the Steppe, who hastily casts off his sacerdotal garments, to betake himself to the tavern, wrestle with strong men at a fair, or ride off stark naked to the bath. And the strangely low level to which this element of the national life appears to have fallen inspires us with a fresh sensation of sadness and disgust.

To escape from this himself, and satisfy his personal religious feeling, which was very deep, Liéskov has been tempted to go back to the earliest period of Christian history for the subjects of his fine Egyptian legends, *The Mountain* and *The Fair Aza*, and here he has found himself on the same ground with Tolstoï. At the same time, in a story entitled *At the End of the World* (*Na Kraïou Sviéta*), he sketched the subject of *Master and Servant* some twenty years before that tale appeared. But Liéskov never dreams of excluding modern science and culture from that practical activity of which he conceives altruism to be the true foundation. On this

point the divergence between his view and Tolstoi's is clear and unmistakable. His legends are nothing but allegories. He would like to see modern men full of the spirit which animated the Christians of the heroic times, but he believes this spirit can be adapted to the forms of modern life, the superiority of which he does not deny.

As a publicist, Liéskov showed particular activity in and about the year 1880. He handled a great number of questions, social, religious, and political; and his studies of the *Raskol* attracted particular attention.

To such of my readers as may desire a sample of his powers as a humorist, I would recommend *Dear Love*, an entertaining portrait of a Russian country bumpkin, who falls under the suspicion of Nihilism, because he has fled across the frontier to escape the advances of an English governess, who will insist on scenting him with eau-de-Cologne; with his wild beard, his mighty appetite, and his half-savage instincts, he wanders up and down the streets of Paris, discovering no charm whatever in the marvels of civilisation he encounters.

## CHAPTER XI

### CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

FOR the last ten years a sudden stoppage has taken place in that intellectual current which had previously flowed from Western to Eastern Europe, and whereby the East had been giving back, under a new form, the ideas drawn from the elder source. This system of exchange, in which Western Europe certainly found an advantage of its own, has now almost entirely disappeared. The works of Tourguéniev, Dostoïevski, and Gontcharov still are seen in the hands of French, English, and German readers; and Tolstoi's writings continue to find their way across every frontier. But, even in these, foreign interest is not so fresh and constant as in former days; while amongst the writers of the younger generation—and the impression his writings have produced has been of a somewhat mixed description—Tchékhov is almost the only one whose work has even found admittance to foreign reviews. All the rest remain utterly unknown. There is no demand for anything they write. Have they nothing worth offering? The question is thus answered by a very far-seeing critic, fellow-worker with M. Pypine in the great *History of Slav Literature*, which has gained so universal a reputation for its authors. In the *European Messenger*, March 1888, M. Spasowicz writes as follows:—

“We have grown very poor in the matter of talent. Our intellectual level has fallen. Our conception of the

simplest problems of general existence has narrowed. We have no ideal, whether in ethics or æsthetics; utter selfishness, naked and open, to the point of cynicism, reigns supreme in our world of thought."

But where is the reason of this downfall? I turn to another Russian writer, M. Milioukov, a first-rate historian, who acted for some years as literary critic to the London *Athenæum*. He likens the social life of his own country to a river, the bed of which has been suddenly choked by some irremovable obstruction. And to this he ascribes the consecutive phenomena of stagnation, sterility, and corruption, apparent in the intellectual and literary world. The existence of these phenomena is only too evident. Even literary criticism has broken with the glorious traditions of Biéliniski and Dobrolioubov. Messrs. Pypine and Skabitchevski forsake the ungrateful soil of present-day production, and turn back to the original sources of the national literature. Mikhaïlovski makes the character of *Ivan the Terrible* his special study. And these princes of the critical art are the elder men—the veterans of bygone literary battles. The young ones do not even care to seek employment for an activity which is steadily waning. Indifference appears to overwhelm their souls, and a premature senility seems the distinctive feature of their intellectual temperament. Their organs, *The Northern Messenger* and *The Week*, are devoted to the justification of this state of mind, and the establishment of a theory on which it may be based. One of them, M. Volynski, in a thick volume published in 1895, has invoked the teaching of Tolstoï in support of his repudiation of the impassioned work of the great literary ancestors whose names I have just mentioned, and his endeavour to steer

the younger generation into the path of the symbolists and the *decadents*.

Frankly speaking, I have no belief in the existence of the obstacle indicated by M. Milioukov—an obstacle the nature of which may be easily divined—or, at all events, I cannot admit the decisiveness of its effect on surrounding circumstances. My readers will not suspect me of any sympathy with the morally repressive system which, under the reign of Nicholas II., recalls the memories and examples left him by his dread ancestor. But the very evocation of that bygone time prevents me from sharing the view of the present held by the brilliant contributor to the *Athenæum*. It was the reign of Nicholas I., with all its severe measures, its Censor's scissors, its handcuffs and its muzzles, the "cosy dungeons" reserved for Biéliniski, the convict prisons that opened their doors to Dostoïevski, which witnessed the mighty intellectual expansion to which Russian literature owes its position in the civilised world.

His successor's rule has induced the recurrence of another phenomenon, the consequences of which, as regards the intellectual development of the country, are somewhat serious. We observe a fresh stream of emigration, similar to that which once carried such men as Tchadaïev and Herzen to London and to Paris. Milioukov, not so long ago, was teaching history at Sophia. Kovalevski, who, like him, was reckoned one of the most brilliant professors at the Moscow University, has settled in France. A literary circle, comprising a whole constellation of talent, driven far from its natural centre, has gathered in Paris under the roof of M. Ivan Chtchoukine, a young and learned man, whose future seems full of brilliant promise. Here M. de Roberty,

whom M. Izoulet, the eminent professor of the Collège de France, has lately hailed as one of his own masters, expounds a somewhat subversive doctrine of sociology, and a philosophy occasionally rather alarming in its nature. Here M. Oniéguine—the founder of a Pouchkine museum, which Parisian eyes have been the first to behold—explains and comments on the works of his beloved poet. Here may be met M. Skalkovski—a statesman of importance, a writer enjoying great admiration among his fellow-countrymen—with his spontaneous wit and inexhaustible stores of knowledge. Thanks to these gentlemen, I have had three of the richest possible Russian libraries at my command, on the banks of the Seine. And a fourth, at Beaulieu, has been collected by M. Kovalevski. I must not omit from this list of self-made exiles the distinguished geographer, General Vénioukov, and M. Vyroubov, who at one time collaborated with Littré, and edited the *Revue de Philosophie Positive* with Robin (1867 to 1883). M. Vyroubov, who is specially suited to the study of scientific problems, has devoted himself, latterly, to Natural Science. One of the few Russians who, in recent times, has acquired world-wide fame in connection with this last-named branch of learning, M. Miétchnikov, has also become a dweller in France. The Russian novel, too, has representatives in that country, and it is in Paris and in French that Countess Lydia Rostoptchine—daughter of the Countess Eudoxia, referred to in an earlier chapter—has published her latest stories.

But except for this resemblance, the present epoch has nothing in common, from the intellectual point of view, with the period the political traditions of which it has reproduced. And hence, I believe, I have the right

to conclude that these same traditions cannot be made solely and directly responsible for the literary decadence which has accompanied their present recrudescence. The essential causes of this decadence appear to me to be connected with a far more general order of things. The method of progress which consists in an alternation of forward leaps and stationary periods, is characteristic both of the nature and of the known history of the people once ruled by Peter the Great. In Russia, when the elements of the national activity have been worked up to an extreme point of tension and productive energy, a sort of spontaneous decomposition always seems to set in. The same phenomenon may be observed, though on a more moderate scale, in western countries. Recollect the period of comparative inertia and reaction which followed, after 1850, on the intense intellectual excitement of the preceding years in France. In Russia, even as early as just after 1861, when the relatively liberal system of Alexander II. was at its height, the Liberals and the *narodniki* (friends of the people), otherwise the agrarian socialists, who had marched shoulder to shoulder under the banner of emancipation, fell apart, under the influence of Slavophilism, which imparted its own special colour to that love of the people more ostensibly professed in one camp than in the other.

In the eyes of these Russian Socialists, who repudiate all the history of their country subsequent to the reign of Peter the Great, the populace, as it stands, constitutes the Alpha and Omega of the national life. The Liberals, on the other hand, look on the people as an ignorant and barbarous mass. The Liberals, therefore, sought *political* reforms, fitted to raise the intellectual level of the populace. The Socialists cried out for *social* reforms, and for the main-

tenance of the despotism founded on democracy. After 1871, a new group of Radical dissidents made its appearance. This party held that to claim social reforms before political reforms was to set the cart before the horse. It adopted the theories of Karl Marx, and put forward the principle that Capitalism was a necessary stage on the road to Collectivism. Matters stood thus, when the catastrophe of 1881 fell like a thunderbolt, literally choking the nation's breath, and suspending its normal existence for quite ten years, and the symptoms of decomposition already apparent grew worse and worse. In 1891, the strain relaxed; there was a kind of painful recoil, to which society voluntarily adapted itself. A fresh outbreak of famine, another intervention on Tolstoi's part, and the discussions arising therefrom, restored the public mind to life. But at once the underhand conflict recommenced, between Vassili Vorontsov, editor of *The Wealth of Russia* (*Rousskoié Bogatstvo*), Pypine, who contributed to the *European Messenger*, and Soloviov, who forsook the Slavophiles for the Liberals, and declared himself an agrarian individualist, a partisan of the system of great properties, and an enemy of Collectivism. Then fresh groups formed. There were Old Collectivists or New Collectivists, who, under Vorontsov's leadership, styled themselves *Populists*, and endeavoured to prove that Capitalism ruins the peasants by destroying their domestic industries; Individualists, followers of Marx and Engels, and supporters of a philosophic doctrine known in Russia as "Economic Materialism"; Individualists, again, of the new school of Soloviov, who preached a paradoxical combination of Socialism and Materialism, supposed to lead the modern world to a true understanding of the Christian doctrine; a philosophical Tower of Babel,



shaking on its foundations, and crumbling away in empty arguments. Not one really productive idea, not a formula that can be accepted by the general mind, always, and in all places, division, molecular disaggregation, and, as a necessary consequence, sheer inertia.

Another cause of this I see—also quite independent of the political order of the day; the development of industrial enterprise, and the sudden rush of almost the whole of the contemporary national force in that direction. The prodigies already performed are within general knowledge. The valley of the Don has been transformed into another Belgium; the steel ribbon of the Trans-Siberian railway rolls its length down to the very coasts of the Pacific Ocean! At the same time—and this is in agreement with the present system of moral pressure—the curriculum of the schools has been modified so as to increase the amount of technical instruction, at the expense of the time formerly given to general education; college pupils have no opportunity, now, for writing verses. The statesmen who produced novels and composed plays between two diplomatic missions have died out. Nowadays, everybody builds factories!

However that may be, at the present moment Russian literature subsists principally on translations. In a book published in 1892, and dealing with this decadence, which nobody dreams of denying, the poet Mérechkovski has made an effort of his own to lead the younger generation to adopt the esoteric formulæ of the French symbolism, in the hope that in them it may find the elements of a fresh season of springing growth. He appears to have converted a few young writers. But they have only found it still more difficult to catch the public ear. My readers will guess that of the threefold inheritance

left us by Pouchkine, Gogol, and Biéliniski, the legacy of the first-named author is that which has suffered the most noticeable loss. Speaking, in an earlier chapter, of Nékrassov and Koltsov, I referred to the great lyric current which issued from the intellectual whirlpool of 1840, and pointed out its limits. In the years between 1850 and 1860, a subsidiary current appeared in the satirical newspapers of that day—*The Whistle, The Spark, The Awakening*—which seemed for a moment to contain the germs of a school of political poetry inspired by Heine and Børne. Towards 1870 this flood, too, died away on the sand, and the whimsical work of Kouzma Proutkov (the *nom de plume* adopted by Count A. Tolstoï and the brothers Jemtchoujnikov), despite its popularity, is but a doubtful monument in its honour, full of jokes and ironical artlessness, the point of which is not always easily discovered. The editor of *The Whistle*, V. S. Kourotschkine—the Henri Mounier of Russia—has also won reputation by his translation of Béranger. This intellectual shrinkage, the symptoms and causes of which I have endeavoured to explain, has, on the other hand, given rise, in the domain of the national poetry, to a phenomenon of which the literatures of other European countries strike me as presenting no example.

In an out-of-the-way corner—a sanctuary hemmed about with silence and solitude—a knot of the elect still carries on the worship of which, towards the close of his career, Pouchkine had made himself High Priest. These exponents of “art for art’s sake,” as he himself described it, share his ignorance and scorn of the noise of the outside world—the feelings and passions of that general mass which, in its turn, knows naught of the mysteries

they profess. What is the number of these worshippers? I have made no close reckoning. The temple in which they carry on their secret rite is certainly not a large one. Our visit to it will not delay us long. On the very threshold, a memory comes back to me, and a shiver checks my forward course. Some years ago, I went to pay a visit, in St. Petersburg, to a member of the officiating priesthood of the tiny chapel. Just as I was about to cross his threshold, my attention was attracted by an inscription above the entrance-door. It ran, *Tiouremnoié Otdiélénie* (Prisons Department), and I was informed that the offices of the Prisons Administration shared the edifice with those of the Censure—and the Head of the Censure was the poet I had come to seek! Calling upon the shade of Lermontov, I beat a hasty retreat! I have been sorry for it since, for in doing so I had turned my back on the sanctuary itself. "What?" you cry, "are all of them Censors, jailers of human thought, carrying lyres in one hand and scissors in the other, turning about from the altar to sift out inappropriate pages?" Yes! Most of them, alas! and the most eminent! Their art is delicate indeed, but you cannot expect the sacred flame of their inspiration to burn very high, seeing one of their chief functions was to brandish the extinguisher! None of them are young at the present time. But were they ever young? Those in the first rank belong, or belonged—for death has made great gaps amongst them during the last few years—to Biéliniski's generation. But no one would suspect it, to so utterly different a world do they appear to pertain.

In 1803, when Pouchkine was four years old, FIODOR IVANOVITCH TIOUTCHEV was born, and he passed away in

1876. What was he doing in 1822, when the author of *Eugène Oniéguine* was passing into the starry orbit of romanticism, and following the steps of Byron? He had just entered the diplomatic service, and left Russia, whither he did not return till twenty years later, when he assumed the duties of Director of the Foreign Censorship. During the interval, he published a translation of Horace, and some poetry inserted in various periodicals, over the signature of "T. T."

Up till the year 1854, his talents and his name were equally unknown to the general public. But at that period, Tourguéniev encouraged him to publish a work which created a great sensation. Its dominant note, especially in the pieces entitled *Nature, Spring, An Autumn Evening*, and *The Deserted Villa*, is one of rigid and closely-reasoned Pantheism. The poet never drops this note, except in a few occasional pieces, in which his natural frigidity appears to melt under the breath of Slavophilism. In his address *To my Slav Brothers*, composed on the occasion of the visit of the Slav deputies to the Ethnographical Exhibition at Moscow, in *The Flag on the Bosphorus*, and in *The Black Sea*, he has given a bold support to Khomiakov. The famous dictum, "We cannot understand Russia, we must believe in her," is his. The verses in which it occurs lack neither strength nor beauty. Those in which he has described Nature as it appears in Russia, are almost equal to Pouchkine's best efforts in the same style. But, to my thinking, they do not possess that nameless something which constitutes the essential value of a work of art; there is no infectious emotion, no illuminating power. And how wretched are those political epigrams and aphorisms which have earned their author the reputation of a wit! To our modern ears, they

ring as false as an old-fashioned air played on a barrel organ.

I may be mistaken in my judgment, for, though the single volume which contains the author's complete work left me cold and unresponsive, I have seen a Russian reader shed tears over some of its pages. But the number of his fellow-countrymen likely to share this emotion is, I believe, a small one. Apart from his official functions, and even in his manner of discharging them, Tioutchev, so I have been assured, was a very honest gentleman. In Russia, and even in France, he still retains a certain following of admirers, who make up for the smallness of their number by their fervour. He has had a biographer, M. Akssakov, who has gone so far as to describe him as a national poet, *par excellence*. I should, no doubt, have some difficulty in convincing M. Akssakov that a man who wrote French so well as to possess a personal style of his own, and who neither boasted nor slandered himself, like Pouchkine, when he declared that he found it easiest to express himself in this language,—that such an *Occidental*, in fact, cannot, in spite of his undoubted talent, have been more than a skilful rhymester in Russian. And M. Salomon, who is now preparing to introduce the poet to French readers, by means of a translation into which he has put all the conscientiousness and the art of his delicate literary talent, will not thank me for expressing this conviction.

Last year witnessed the departure of one of Tioutchev's most brilliant followers, APOLLONIUS NICOLAIÉVITCH MAÏKOV (1821-1898), who resided in Italy at the period of the great literary struggles of the "forties," could not make up his mind whether he should take up painting or poetry, and finally decided in favour of—the Directorship of the

Foreign Censure ! Yet his study of the Roman antiques had inspired him with some attempts at art criticism (*Roman Sketches, 1842*), some anthological poetry, and even certain more ambitious compositions in the epic style, such as *Savonarola, Clermont Cathedral, and The Queen's Confession*. They are frank imitations. After his return to Russia, Maïkov was absorbed by his professional duties. The Censor's scissors were kept very busy just at that period, until the Crimean War drove his office into the background and brought the poet down off the top of the Column of Trajan, where he seemed to have fixed his home. He published a book appropriate to the occasion, which he called *The Year 1854*, fell out with the West, and allowed the Slavophil and Neo-Grecian current to carry him away. This new stage of his literary career is marked by the publication of two collections of Neo-Greek poetry, followed, between 1860 and 1880, by translations of old Slavonic poems. By insensible degrees, Maïkov was drawn into the contemporary conflict of political thought and passion. *The Princess*, the most original of his poetic works, bears witness to this fact. A great Russian lady has a daughter, the fruit of an intrigue with a Parisian Jesuit. The girl, brought up away from her mother, becomes a Nihilist. One evening, at a ball, the misguided young creature comes to her mother, insists that she shall supply her with certain important documents, and threatens, if she refuses, to reveal the secret of her own birth to the Third Section (the superior police). The great lady faints away and dies—in stanzas of the most correct description. I will not dwell upon the subject. The poet had certainly left his best inspiration on the top of his column. He proved it, before his death, by his completion of two lyric dramas, *The Three Deaths*,

and *The Two Worlds*, the rough sketches of which had remained among his papers since his Italian days, and which may fairly be considered his best works. In both these dramas, we see the struggle between the Greco-Roman and the Christian world. In the first we have the cold though well-modelled figures of three representatives of the expiring Pagan civilisation—Lucan, the poet; Seneca, the philosopher; and Lucius, the epicurean; all three condemned to death by Nero for their share in the conspiracy of Piso. In *The Two Worlds*, the chief characters are Decius, the patrician, who poisons himself in the midst of a banquet in his palace, and the tender and dreamy Lida, who represents the Spirit of Christianity. Between the two appears a witless Juvenal. It is a world of statues, with all the polish and brilliancy of marble, but soft and uncertain in outline. The artist's soul had travelled back to the walls of Rome, but his hand seems to have chiselled, not in the quarries of Carrara, but in the ice of the Neva. The atmosphere of his gallery is bitter cold.

Athanasius Athansiévitch Fœth (1815–1860),—his father's name was Chenchine, and he was a natural son—the author of translations, now forgotten, of Juvenal, Horace, Goethe, and Shakespeare, stands, in his greater delicacy and sentiment (French grace and German sentiment), a yet more isolated figure amongst the men and things of his period. He cheerfully tuned his little flute to the music of Petrarch, or Lessing, or that of the poet of the rose gardens, the Persian Saadi. Forgetful, in his retreat, of the tempest which was shaking most minds and consciences, or unaware of its existence, he sang, for thirty years, the beauty of fair women, the joy of life, the charms of summer nights and winter landscapes (*Even-*

*ings and Nights* and *Snow-covered Fields*), and wrote madrigals for *Ophelia*.

Silence has fallen upon him. It has fallen, now, on almost all those tuneful voices which till lately woke ever so feeble an echo of the mighty harmonies of bygone days. But a few months ago (October 18, 1898), death laid his hand on James Pétrovitch Polonski (1820-1898), the friend of Tourguéniev, the foster-child of the Idealist circle at Moscow. His earliest collection of poetry, *The Scales*, dates from 1844. Later he resided for a lengthened period in the Caucasus, where he edited an official newspaper, and published three more books, the last of which bears the Georgian title of *Sazandar* (*The Bard*). From 1856 to 1860 he lived in Rome and Paris, and prepared himself to imitate Tioutchev and Maikov by undertaking, in his turn, the duties of the Censorship of the Foreign Press, and sitting on the General Council of Press Management. This did not prevent him from sending poetical contributions to most of the literary organs of the period, all of which welcomed him heartily, for he belonged to no party. His earliest literary associations had left him with a vague belief in the progressive perfectibility of the national existence. He shared the general disappointment, but found a melancholy consolation in a world of dreams which his fancy peopled with ideals as delicate and fragile as children's toys. Several of his poems, full of melody and ring, very innocent, and so simple that the memory of a boy of twelve years old may easily retain them, run a fair chance of remaining popular. The most celebrated, which reminds one somewhat of Othon Roquette's *Le Voyage de Noces du Maître Forestier*, is entitled *The Musical Cricket*. The cricket falls in love with a nightingale's voice, con-



trives to discover the whereabouts of the bewitching bird, joins company with it, and is promptly devoured! In his more ambitious compositions, Polonski's breath fails him. He imitates Pouchkine's somewhat bourgeois style of describing epic subjects—the Russian method, since the publication of *Eugène Oniéguine*, but he possesses none of that conviction of the superiority of poetic truth over reflection which is the secret of the great master's power. When he follows his own inspiration and his natural humour, he occasionally stumbles on powerful and original ideas.

And now the temple, haunted by the shade of the great poet, takes on, more and more, the appearance of a necropolis. But a few short years ago some sound and tumult did re-echo across its dreary threshold. The guardians of the sanctuary cast out the intruders, whom the outer world would have borne in triumph beneath its roof, and for whom plaudits still rang without the walls. The face of one of these—reminding one of a Christ in agony—still hovers before my eyes. His name was Simon Iakovlévitch Nadsohn (1862–1886). Like his comrades, Minski and Frug, he was a Jew. The last edition of his poems, dated 1897, now lies upon my table. It is the *fifteenth*! So great a success is unprecedented in the history of his country. Is it justifiable? M. Bourénine would not forgive me if I said so. I will merely affirm that it is natural. There is no strong personality either in his ideas or in his poetic form, but he has fire, a ring of sincerity, a supple rhythm. The general public asks nothing more. Is it in the wrong? Are we in a position to judge of that? Nadsohn has won the public heart. He has one capital fault—monotony. But is that a fault, in Russia? We seem to listen to some

single-stringed instrument from which the musician can only draw one solitary note—a long-drawn sob. “*Ah! I ask but little of fate.*” . . . “*There is an anguish more terrible than torture.*” . . . “*I think I am going mad.*” . . . “*I have dreamed of death.*” . . . “*Muse! I die—a foolish and impious death.*” . . . “*I know a corner in the graveyard hard by.*” . . . Conceive four hundred pages of poetry all in this vein! but the poet was only twenty, and he knew himself doomed to the merciless and tragic fate of his peers—the fate of Lermontov, and Koltsov, and Garchine. He felt he was dying, and that mud would be cast upon his half-closed tomb. Not his talent only, but his honour was attacked. And further, what better excuse could he have had than the enthusiastic reception given him by the public? Has not M. Bourénine divined its true meaning? Can he hesitate to accept it as proof that the single note of a lyre so soon to be broken, that bitter cry of despair and death agony, touched a sympathetic chord, one which no criticism can silence, in many thousands of human souls. The unhappy young man betook himself to Yalta, to seek relief from a pulmonary malady. The treacherous attacks and insinuations showered upon him tended largely, so the doctors have declared, to hurry on his end; and by the first and last favour of that Fortune who was to him a cruel stepmother, the steamship *Pouchkine* carried back his ashes to Odessa. His grave, close to those of Dostoïevski and Biéliniski, swallowed up yet another vanished hope. And silence, darker and more gloomy than ever, fell round the forsaken temple.

The series of catastrophes, which, from Batiouchkov onwards, have checked the upward flight of so many brilliant careers, can hardly be attributed to mere chance.

They bear all the appearance of what we may call a regular phenomenon, induced by permanent causes, a wind of destruction, which sweeps across the huge plain on which Nadsohn's complaint found so persistent an echo. I turn from poetry, to follow the most recent exemplifications of the novelist's art, and once again I stumble across a grave.

When I said that Leo Tolstoï had founded no school in his own country, I did not dream of overlooking the influence he has exercised, more especially from the artistic point of view. This influence is evident in the first literary efforts of VSIÉVOLOD MICHAÏLOVÏTCH GARCHINE (1855-1885). I do not refer to an *Essay on Death*, a school-boy composition written when he was seventeen, and remarkable for a sense of realism astonishing for that age. "*Well, I must die! and then? it is time to go to rest. Only it is a pity I cannot finish my theme. Supposing you did it for me, you are a mathematician! . . . E. F. was dying of an illness which has been the death of many men, kind and clever, strong and weak. He was a terrible drunkard. . . . He was a very little man, very ugly, with a cadaverous complexion.*" . . . Garchine was an infant prodigy, and at a very early period the balance of his mental faculties was in danger. As a young man he was a prey to hallucinations, and fits of unhealthy excitement, interspersed with the noblest inspirations. He loathed war, and yet insisted on bearing his part in the campaign of 1876, so that he might share the fate of the unfortunate creatures sent out to suffer and to die. This was his manner of "going out amongst the people." He received a bullet wound at the battle of Aiaslar, and related his experiences in *The Four Days*, a work which has been flatteringly compared

with the *Memories of Sevastopol*. A few months later, an attempt was made on the life of Loris Melikov, and the gallows threatened one of the poet's friends. During the night before the execution, Garchine made desperate efforts to prevent it; he failed, and soon after it became necessary to place him in a lunatic asylum. He recovered, and married a young lady, who practised as a doctor, and employed all her skill to prevent a recurrence of his attack. But before long the readers of his *Red Flower* were forced to the conclusion that the young author was still haunted by memories of the time spent in the madhouse. The story describes a demented person, half-conscious of his condition, who wears himself out in superhuman efforts to gain possession of a red poppy—reddened, as he imagines, by the blood of all the martyrdoms of the human race. If the flower were only destroyed, he thinks, humanity would be saved. A few years later, Garchine threw himself over the staircase, and was killed.

Some of his works, expatiating on the uselessness and monstrous cruelty of war, are directly inspired by Tolstoï. To his master he owes his very elevated doctrine and his exceedingly delicate æsthetic sense. His *Four Days*, a terrifying picture of a wounded Russian left *tête-à-tête* with the rotting corpse of a dead Turk, is as full of detail as a picture by Vérechtchaguine, and he is believed to have been influenced by that master of pictorial realism. You will not find a single disgusting detail. Like Tolstoï, the author of *The Red Flower* delights in allegory; for assuredly, the execution of the bears condemned to death by the police, and executed by their masters, the wandering gipsies, described in the tale named after those harmless Plantigrades, is allegorical

in intention. We find another instance in the story of the *Attalea Princeps*, an exotic plant which pines to break the hothouse in which it is shut up. At the very moment when its end is attained and its proud crest shatters the glass dome which protects it from the frost, the winter sky chills it from above, and, at its base, it feels the sharp teeth of the saw, which, by the head-gardener's command, rids the conservatory of its too ambitious presence. The ideas thus symbolised are somewhat obscure.

In *The Coward (Trouss)*, Garchine goes even further than Tolstoï in the direction taken by the *Doukhobortsy*. He depicts a soldier who protests furiously against the necessity of being killed, or trying to kill his fellow-creatures, but who does his duty none the less, and dies, rifle in hand, in very simple and heroic fashion. The Russian talent for dying worthily was one of Garchine's favourite ideas from his youth up. His very wide humanity, his hatred for everything that causes suffering, his sympathy for life's failures, whether innocent or guilty, follows him into his novels on social questions. But his talent is marred by his excessive, though thoroughly honest, pessimism. The victors, the fortunate individuals whom he brings before us, are all, without exception, very shabby characters. Such are Diédov, in *The Artists*, and the engineer who has grown rich in *The Meeting*. Riabinine, Diédov's less fortunate friend, curses his art, and turns his back upon it, after seeing, during a visit to a factory, a workman crouched in a boiler, and pressing his chest against the rivets while his foreman strikes them with his hammer. Garchine's most attractive type (probably autobiographic in its nature) is that of a man who is doomed to suffering, and

who looks at life with a feeling of painful impotence; a man with no belief in happiness, no power of being happy, inspired by a deep love for the human race, and an equal and almost feminine horror of life's struggle. When he is forced to struggle, even to save the woman he loves from misery—as in the novel entitled *Nadiejda Nikolaievna*—he is incapable of anything but suffering without a murmur, until a pistol shot ends it all.

Garchine is no declaimer, he gives us no showy tirades or phrases. His humanitarian ideas connect him with the intellectual current of the sixties, and his preference for heroes who always stand out above the common herd, men either of high intelligence or a strong character, distinguishes him from Tolstoi, and draws him closer to Tourguéniev and the traditions of the romantic school. This feature, as well as his care for artistic completeness and his preference for short stories, in which that is more easily attained, he also shares with his imitator VLADIMIR KOROLIÉNKO.

This writer, who was born in 1860, has hitherto published only one really considerable story. It numbers 150 pages, and is entitled *The Blind Musician*. This, with his *The Forest Whispers*, and *Iom-Kipour*, forms part of a cycle of compositions, the scene of which is laid in South-Western Russia, whereas his *Tales of a Siberian Tourist* call up the snow-covered landscapes of the north, and the exiles and convicts there to be found. Koro-liénko himself made involuntary acquaintance with exile, brought about by the most trifling of political peccadilloes. In all these stories the moral teaching is identical, and strongly resembles that we have already noticed in the case of Garchine—sympathy felt with the weak and the

hardly used, and no clear distinction drawn between the innocent and the guilty.

The novelist's reputation dates from the publication of his *Dream of Macaire*, 1885—a fanciful story, which winds up with the judgment of a drunkard peasant by a heavenly tribunal. Whether the heaven be that of the Gospel or that of Siberian legend is not made abundantly clear. The Russian public thirsts for poetry; it eagerly quaffed the cup offered it by Koroliénko, without looking too closely at the bottom. That which lies at the bottom of the cup does not, in this author's case, possess a perfect lucidity. His figures are like Murillo's beggars. But he possesses the art of escaping triviality by never lingering over external detail longer than is absolutely necessary to the realisation of his types. Dostoïevski's influence is clearly visible in the *Tales of a Siberian Tourist*. To it we owe some very doubtful portraits of *good* ruffians. But this is a mere passing error. The tales entitled *The Old Ringer* and *An Easter Night*, which belong to the same group, betray nothing of this kind. The exquisite language, the transparently brilliant colouring, and the picturesque imagery of these stories recall Tourguéniev's *Poems in Prose*, and no greater praise can be ascribed to any author. The soldier of the guard, who, in spite of himself, becomes the murderer of the escaped convict, whom he brings down by a shot from his rifle, just as the distant bells ring out the Easter vespers, attracts our sympathy even more strongly than his victim. Koroliénko reached a height, here, which he was unfortunately not destined to maintain. The men of his generation soon lose their breath; it may be because they find so little air that they can breathe. In *Iom-Kipour* (the Jewish Day of Expiation), which relates how

a Little-Russian miller, good Christian though he is, narrowly escapes being carried away by the devil, in the place of the Jewish tavern-keeper Iankiel, because, like him, he has tried to make money out of the poor peasants—a very true and deep idea is embodied in a most delightful description of local manners and customs. But all the other pieces in the same collection are pale in colour and empty in conception. *The Blind Musician*, who attempts to reproduce the sensations of sight by means of sounds, is an attempt, and a fresh failure, to work out a psychological subject, which had attracted many writers before Koroliénko's time.

The Russian novelist has hoped to replace the lack of substance in his writings by lyrical fire; but his enthusiasm is cold and without emotion.

In *On the Road* and *Two Points of View*, Tolstoi's influence, following on that of Dostoïevski, impels the author in his search for some moral principle as the basis of our common existence. The traveller who has lately escaped from a Siberian prison, and is straining every nerve to escape innumerable dangers and regain his home, stops suddenly short. A doubt has overwhelmed him. Why should he fly? Why go there rather than elsewhere? and Koroliénko is soon deep in the analysis of the wavering spirit of the men of his generation. A young man sees one of his friends killed in a railway accident; so struck is he by this event that he arrives at last, through a series of questions, at a completely mechanical conception of existence. What is the use of thought or love? and he forsakes a young girl, whose affections he has won, until the unhappy creature's sufferings reveal the true meaning of life to his case-hardened soul.



All this, finished as it is as far as the form goes, is very incomplete in conception, and for some years past Koroliénko seems to have taken a fancy to a still more slipshod method of work. He has published notes collected in the Government of Nijni-Novgorod, in the course of one of those famines which from time to time afflict the provinces of the great empire; and after a journey to England, he made known his impressions of a stormy sitting in Parliament. But all this may not unfairly be called mere reporter's work.

The favour of the Russian public is now bestowed on another group of novelists, far removed from Tolstoi and his views of morality and art. The lovers of æsthetic delights, and the eager reformers of the forties and the sixties, have given place to a new generation of readers, whose chief desire is to be amused or startled, and who are not over particular as to the quality of the work which gives them the desired sensation. Messrs Boborikine and Potapiénko are amongst those who best understand how to satisfy this need. The first named (born 1836) is a bold follower after prevailing fashions. For a considerable period he has published a novel every year, and he has never failed to touch on the topic of the moment. In the last I have read, that published in 1897, and entitled *In Another Manner*, I find references to the latest fashionable philosophic formula, *Economic Materialism*. Except for the difference in talent, the author's method is that of Tourguéniev in *Fathers and Children*. But the spirit of the work is very dissimilar. It is affected by the indifferentist theories of *The Week*. In *The Turning*, which dates from 1894, my readers will find a very curious panorama of the variations of philosophy and literature since the year 1840. M. Boborikine makes no selection

of his own, and does not suggest that his readers should make any.

M. Potapiénko, whose celebrity only dates from 1891, is a great discoverer of dramatic situations. Generally speaking, he leaves them where he finds them. The failure of certain of his novels doubtless arises from this last peculiarity; for the author has naturalness, feeling, freshness of impression, and a delicate observation. Occasionally he shows a philosophic intention. In *Sins* (1896) he even strikes me, in his somewhat coarse exposure of the hypocritical virtue of a father, before the artless eyes of his children, as following up the furrow traced by the toiler of Iasnaïa Poliana. Like their rivals of the other group, these observers of life through a reversed opera-glass prefer very small frames for their pictures. If they do chance to choose a larger setting, they only succeed in bringing together a succession of tiny facts and exiguous impressions, which remind one of those strings of dried mushrooms that grace the shop front of every Russian provision merchant. The star of this school is M. TCHÉKHOV.

I am tempted to describe this young writer as having hitherto proved himself a first-rate artist in an inferior style. And further, he has been living, since 1885, on a promise which threatens to become a disappointment. Has he given us his last word? I cannot tell. The personal impression he left on me about a year ago, after all too short an interview, was that of a man of a very thoughtful and retiring nature. His first attempts, published in one of the least important of the St. Petersburg newspapers, revealed a most successful search after simplicity, a natural gift for fitting his form to his subject, a regrettable taste for coarse humour, and a dangerous tendency

to the drawing of arabesques upon an invisible background. In a collection of tales published, at a later period, in book form, the young writer's range of vision appears raised and widened. He touches on psychological conflicts (*The Sorceress* and *Agatha*) and even on social problems (*The Enemies* and *The Nightmare*),—elements in the drama of existence which he had hitherto seemed to ignore. These matters are glanced at, rather than squarely faced, in *The Twilight*,—such is the title of the collection. The half-tints, the vague hints, the hasty abridgments, of which the author makes use, were accepted, at that time, as an ingenious artifice, deliberately employed. But on this point Tchékhev's admirers were soon undeceived. In *The Steppe* he undertook a canvas on a larger scale, and it was noticed, with astonishment, that his method remained unchanged. He still gave sketches; passing impressions hastily noted down; scenes strung one after the other, without any apparent bond of continuity; vague outlines; and not one vigorous touch or clear-cut figure. No! not even that of Egorouchka, the principal character of the book,—a nine-year-old boy, whom his father takes to school across the Steppe, and who describes the landscapes seen during his journey. The method of describing the scene—quite that of Tourguéniev, a deliberate confusion of the child's ideas and sentiments with his feelings of nature and with his inner sensations—creates a still stronger impression of artificiality as seen in Tchékhev's work. Egorouchka hears a song, and cannot see the singer. At once he imagines this plaintive voice to be that of the grass, already half burnt up by the summer heat. The grass sings and weeps; it tells some

other invisible being that it has not deserved the fate which has overtaken it, that the cruel sun does wrong to devour it, so young as it still is, so fair as it might yet grow, so passionately as it clings to life! The effect of this lyric effort might possibly be considerable, but for the presence of Egorouchka, whom nobody can suppose capable of so much imagination. A moment's reflection detects the poet's artifice, and thus his endeavour is in vain. The story ends when the child reaches the town where he is to enter school. The panorama of the great Steppe, which thus fills the whole picture—with its huge plains, its picturesque encampments, its dirty taverns, and their heterogeneous crowd of travellers, rough drovers, filthy Jews, and elegant fine ladies—bears witness to a care for detail carried even into trifling minutiae. How is it that the truth of this laborious realism carries no conviction to my mind? It may be the Polish countess who has stirred my suspicion. Polish countesses receive, as a rule, but scurvy treatment at the hands of Russian novelists. And it is no part of my duty to defend them here. But I can assure M. Tchékhev that not one has ever addressed any man, whether her lover or another, by his *first two names*, according to the essentially Russian custom. The touch in itself is of no importance. But it is the importance ascribed in Tchékhev's work, and in that of the new school, to such touches, nine out of ten of which are utterly incorrect, which causes me distress. The author of *The Steppe* would have done far better if he had clearly indicated the general idea of his composition. Did he aim at the symbolisation of the general aspect of life, and the apparent absence of connection between the phenomena which go to

make it up? I have no idea. Perhaps he has none, either.

In the author's other stories, *A Melancholy Tale*, *A Stranger's Story*, and *Room No. 6*, I do, on the contrary, perceive an effort to seize the meaning of these phenomena, and throw them into striking and typical form. In the last-named work, Tchékhev even seems to take up arms in an unexpected revulsion of feeling against that indifferentism which constitutes the badge and the essential dogma of his school, and the affinity of which with Tolstoi's theory of non-resistance, nobody can fail to recognise. The hero of this tale is a hospital doctor, who treats his patients by scepticism. *Room No. 6* is set apart for persons mentally affected. It is a filthy hole, where nobody gets enough to eat, except the bugs. This does not prevent the sceptical *medico* from assuring his patients that they are just as well off there as anywhere else, seeing it is a matter of perfect indifference whether they dwell in the open air, or are shut up in a cell, and whether their food is good or bad, not to mention the thumps administered by Nikita, their keeper. A day comes at last, when, the doctor having been himself ordered to undergo his former patients' so-called cure, Nikita bestows the same treatment upon him, and he dies of it.

The *Melancholy Tale* has been the most successful of all these works (1889). My readers must imagine two persons of absolutely different character and condition, the man a savant, the woman an actress, whom chance has thrown together, who are soon still more closely bound by their common sense of the vanity of life, and whose communion leads them, on parallel lines, one to loathe his science, and the other to loathe her art. Such part-

nerships do not, fortunately, form part of Western habits. And their result, as presented to us by Tchékhev, is not conclusive. For Katia has no talent, and her protector strikes us as being a thorough simpleton. In the course of the book, the author makes an attack upon modern Russian literature. The savant reads nothing in his leisure time but French novels. They do not altogether satisfy him, but they are less tiresome than those published in Russia, and at all events they contain the essential element of all artistic creation—that sentiment of individual liberty, of which not a trace remains in the Russian writers of the last ten or fifteen years. But might not this learned man indulge in a more serious kind of reading? He does, but not in Russian. Russian books of the serious order are written in Hebrew, as far as he is concerned.

I have no intention of making myself responsible for this sally, but it may assist my readers in verifying the judgments I offer for their acceptance.

Tchékhev's capital fault is the absence of any natural and organic connection between the characters he depicts, and between the action and the dénouement of his stories. This drawback is evident even in *A Stranger's Story*, which—and this is a fresh surprise—almost carries us back to the literary school of 1840. This Stranger, who has mysterious reasons, the secret of which we shall never know, for his enmity against an exalted personage, takes service as valet with the great man's son, in order that he may kill the father. Instead of perpetrating murder, he commits abduction. His enemy has a mistress, whom he is just about to forsake. The Stranger, touched with pity, carries her across the frontier. But she has no love for him. He

is stung with remorse, and knows not which way to turn. Here we have another "superfluous man"; but who is he?

Tchékhov's latest works, *My Life* and *The Gabled House*, prove him to be less and less capable of supplying clear answers to the questions he is so fond of multiplying. It is now quite evident, indeed, that he has missed his path. Sometimes we find him following Tolstoï's latest movement, sometimes on the track of the French symbolists and decadents, and then suddenly, in *The Peasants*, he executes a step backward in the direction of Gogol and Tourguéniev. A waiter in a Moscow restaurant falls ill, travels home to his old village, finds there is no place for him there now, and dies in his despair. The coarseness and savagery of rural habits are here set forth with extraordinary power. But the picture is thoroughly repulsive. There is no artistic feeling in it. That feeling existed, unconsciously, in Gogol's case, and more consciously in that of Tourguéniev, in the impression they both give us that their *moujiks* possess hearts and souls, worthy of another and a better fate. Tchékhov's peasants are heavy brutes, without purity of moral sense, nor any thought of the hereafter.

Tchékhov has also written for the stage. He has published a drama, *Ivanov* (1889), a comedy, *The Seagull*, and several other pieces. These efforts of his have not been crowned with success. The two indispensable factors in any work intended for the stage, action, and the psychological development of character, are just those the total absence of which detracts from the value of his best stories. Clearness is indispensable in dramatic writing, and Tchékhov cannot cast off his twilight manner. Does he conceive his *Ivanov* to represent the young

generation, which sets to work furiously at twenty, and seems worn out by its exertions before it reaches the age of thirty? We may conclude that this is so. But where is the effort? Ivanov marries a rich Jewess for the sake of her fortune, and consoles himself for the inevitable disappointments she causes him, by seducing a Christian girl. This twofold performance leaves him so overwhelmed with debt, grey hairs, and hypochondria, that he shoots himself with a pistol, just as he is about to lead a second bride to the altar. The real meaning of this conclusion quite escapes me. That of *The Seagull* is similar in nature, which appears somewhat odd, as applied to a comedy. Everywhere, even in the young author's tales and stories, we behold the same strange assemblage of neurotics, lunatics, and semi-lunatics: well-born girls, rich and pretty, who suddenly, no one knows why, lose their heads, cast themselves into the arms of a man they have never seen but once, and whom they will certainly leave on the morrow, even if they do happen to marry him; young men of twenty who loathe life already; old men of sixty who have just found out that existence has no meaning. The society thus brought before us is really like a nightmare. All its members are bent on one thing only, the solution of the problem of life. Girls, young men, old men, all study it persistently. What is its meaning? They struggle desperately to find an answer, and suffer and die because none is forthcoming. I fear, indeed, that the mind of the world, as modern civilisation has made it, is largely occupied, even in Russia, with other subjects, and that when Tchekhov takes it to be absorbed by this particular anxiety, he is a prey, like Tolstoï, to a mere fanciful illusion.

Like all his young followers, the author of *The*



*Father*, and of several others of those equally short stories in which he seems to excel, soon loses his depth when he attempts larger subjects. Perhaps the responsibility for this should be ascribed, in a certain measure, to that pneumatic machine the rarefying action of which M. Pabiédonostsov daily increases.

The effect of this process of suffocation is very evident in those sketches of provincial life, *Ursa Major* and *After the Deluge*, in which Madame Khvostchinskaïa (born 1825) has won distinction, under the *nom de plume* of M. Krestovski. This name must not be confused with that of its rightful owner, Vsiévolod Krestovski (born 1820), an imitator of Eugene Sue's picturesque descriptions of the habits of the city populace.

My readers will divine how much greater must be the moral depression of scientific progress arising out of the same causes. Activity in scientific matters is confined to the domain of geography, ethnography, and history. The expeditions organised by the Imperial Geographical Society, and the publications of its Ethnographical Department, and the statistical and geographical studies pursued under the auspices of the General Staff and of the Minister of the Interior, have, during the last thirty years, imparted a considerable forward impulse to this branch of science. It is curious that this collective work, in which the names of Bouniakovski, Zablotski-Diéssiatovski, Bezobrazov, Buschen, Hagemaster, Halmersen, Bloch, Niébolchine, Thörner, Janson, and Tchoubinski are associated, has not brought any special individual effort into prominence. This is perhaps in agreement with the democratic spirit of the country, expressed in the proverb, "A body of men is one great man." The same fact is

certainly reproduced in the domain of historical investigation, in which "The Society for the Study of History and Antiquity," "The Archæological Society," "The Imperial Historical Society," and the periodical publications of the *Russian Archive*, edited by Barténiev; of *Russian Antiquities*, edited by Siémievski; of *The Archives of Prince Vorontzov*, *The Archives of Prince Kourakine*, *Ancient and Modern Russia*, and *The Antiquities of Kiév*, have done wonderful work, collected an enormous amount of information, and piled quantities of the best material ready to the worker's hand. But the workers, whose personal labour can alone utilise the said material, have not as yet appeared.

It is true that the present order of things would seem to preclude their appearance. The correspondence of the Empress Catherine has been published, even to its most private and least edifying details; but the first two volumes of the History, in which M. Bilbassov proposed to reproduce—and in the discreetest manner possible—the general features of the reign of the great Empress, were promptly suppressed; and the ten remaining volumes of this important work are still in the manuscript. M. Klioutchevski's lectures are only known, beyond the circle of his audience at the Moscow University, by means of a few lithographed copies. General Schilder has undertaken a great history of Alexander I. Amongst the documents therein quoted we find the condemnation of the autocratic principle expressed by the august disciple of La Harpe, and the exact list of the guests who assembled round the table of Paul I. the night before his death. But we shall not discover the smallest reference to the causes and incidents of that gloomy catastrophe, though the author, who commands the

School of Military Engineering, and occupies the very palace in which the occurrence took place, must possess special information on the subject. In the person of Milioukov, the younger generation has given us a man who is more specially gifted for this sort of study than almost any other I have ever met. I have just heard that he has been forbidden to teach even at Sophia. Kovalevski has been forced to produce his fine work in four volumes, on the origins of contemporary democracy, on French soil, and a fresh edition, in the French language, is now passing through the press.

Such of the national historians as have not found means to carry out their work, or publish their writings, abroad, fall back on subjects which, though exceedingly interesting, are less fitted to advance the study of the nation's past. M. Manouilov published, in 1894, a book on the Agrarian System in Ireland, founded on documents in the British Museum, and on his own local observation. In the following year, M. Kamienski gave us *Six Years of Tory Government in England, 1887 to 1893*. Quite lately I met, in Paris, a young Professor from the University of Kiév, who had come to France to study the organisation of the old provincial parliaments. The remarkable *Essay on the Representative System of the Provincial States of Ancient Russia*, published by M. Klioutchevski, strikes me as having been affected by the author's desire to avoid incurring the displeasure of the Censure.

In the field of literary history, the first place is held by a veteran of "the sixties," and comrade-in-arms of Tchernichevski, Alexander Nicolaiévitch Pypine (born 1833). He was obliged to leave his professorial chair in the St. Petersburg University in the year 1862, as a result of the students' revolts to which I have re-

ferred, and which are recurring at the present time. His writings are exceedingly voluminous. His great *History of the Slav Literatures*, in which he was assisted by M. Vladimir Spassowicz, was preceded or followed by a series of original works, and published documents, dealing with popular poetry and the older writers, the period of Alexander I., the literary progress of the years between 1820 and 1850, the life of Biéliniski, and, more recently, with Panslavism, and with the latest results of the study of Russian Ethnography. For the purposes of this book, I have consulted three volumes of a *History of Russian Literature*, which bear witness to the author's deep knowledge and finely-developed critical faculty. His literary reviews in *The European Messenger* carry authoritative weight.

Amongst his followers I must mention N. S. Tikhonravov (1832–1893), who published, between 1859 and 1861, five volumes of a work which has won many admirers, entitled, *Chronicle of Russian Literature and Antiquities*. This was followed by a swarm of detached studies, principally on the subject of the literary history of the eighteenth century. M. Tikhonravov was also the author of a critic's edition of Gogol, in seven volumes, which appeared in 1889.

I see no figure worthy to rank, as regards knowledge, broad-mindedness, and independence, with that of Pypine, save Nicholas Constantinovich Mikhaïlovski. A younger man—he was born in 1843—he does not belong to the latest generation, though he unfortunately shows traces of certain of its tendencies. He excels it in brilliance, wit, and artistic power, but his talent, like that of Garchine, is dimmed, in my opinion, by his deliberate pessimism. He never spares any one, seldom praises anything, and

carries his use of sarcasm into abuse. He has been called the Chtchédrine of criticism. He did, in fact, collaborate with the mighty publicist in the pages of *Annals of the Fatherland*, and seems to have annexed some peculiarities of his style,—with its wealth of incident and antitheses, its love of the comic and grotesque, and its swift changes from the humorous to the pathetic. A considerable number of Mikailovski's works are devoted to the English philosophers, Darwin and Mill, with a glance at Herbert Spencer.

The philosophers of his own country have so far given Mikailovski less occupation. The great national school of philosophy, the dream of the intellectual heirs of Khomiakov, remains a dream. Schopenhauer, whose jubilee was brilliantly celebrated at Moscow in 1888, did not endow his Russian disciples with that strong sense of discipline which their elders had imbibed from Hegel and Schelling. De Roberty may indeed, as his biographer, M. G. de Greef, asserts, be one of the most original thinkers of our day, but if it be true, as M. de Greef also avers, that "he is neither Mongol nor Russian, neither German, nor French, nor Belgian, though the blood of all these nations flows in his veins," it is equally true that his works have long since ceased to belong to Russia. Born in 1843, he contributed, from 1869 to 1873, to the *St. Petersburg Academic Gazette*, and supported liberal views. He was removed from the editorial staff of the paper by the personal order of the Tsar, who replaced the opposition writers by others devoted to the Imperial exchequer, if not to the Imperial cause. A short time later, his second and last work in the Russian language, on the *History of Philosophy*, was seized. The author had previously published a volume of *Studies on Political*

*Economy*, containing a critical and theoretical explanation of H. C. Carey's *Principles of Social Science* and Karl Marx's *Capital*. Since he has lived in Paris, De Roberty has only written in French. In his *Notes Sociologiques*, published (1876-1878) in the *Revue de Philosophie Positive*, and since collected into a book, and in a series of other volumes, which make their appearance almost annually—more especially in his *Essai sur les lois générales du développement de la Philosophie*—he has expounded the fundamental idea of his doctrine, according to which philosophy is a concrete fact, neither purely biological nor purely sociological, the constituent elements whereof must be studied through both of these sciences. The psychological object, that is to say, man himself, who feels, and thinks, and wills, is nothing but a product of biological and sociological conditions. Psychology, therefore, should be regarded as an appendage to, and a prolongation of, sociology. According to this hypothesis, for which the author coins the adjective "bio-social," and which M. Izoulet has appropriated in his *Modern City*, society "creates the psychic individual." But what M. Izoulet considers a revolution, M. de Roberty believes to be no more than a fresh scientific classification. Personally I fail to discover what either of them can find to change in the older definition given by Lewes in *The Physical Basis of Mind* (1860), where he affirms that the specially human faculties of intelligence and consciousness must necessarily be the product of the co-operation of social and biological factors. This idea strikes me as occurring even in the teaching of a much older philosopher, of the name of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Since De Roberty's voluntary departure into exile,

Vladimir Soloviov appears to me the only Russian who professes an independent and comparatively original form of philosophy. Born in 1853, the son of the famous historian, and brought up in the Ecclesiastical Academy at Moscow, he is connected by hereditary origin with the Orthodox Church and the Slavophil party. Since 1888, he has broken with both, and has risen in revolt against the exclusively national theory put forward by Danilevski in his *Russia and Europe* (3rd edition, 1888). He still believes, like Dostoïevski, in the universality of the historic mission the performance of which devolves upon his country, but thinks that to attain its realisation, through the universal organisation of human life on the lines of truth, his country should carry out Tchadaïev's theory, sacrifice itself, and consent to the union of the Greco-Byzantine and the Roman Churches. In Soloviov's eyes, the Eastern and the Western worlds represent the two highest phases of the development of the human organism ; Monism, in the first, fusing together the three vital principles, feeling, thought, and will ; Atomism, in the second, following on the other, decomposing these three elements of life into science and art, and stirring them up to conflict. The recomposition and rearrangement of these elements into a third and last phase of historic evolution, calls for the intervention of a superior conciliating principle. And this must needs be the destiny of the Slavonic, and, more particularly, of the Russian race, the only one free from all exclusiveness, and capable of rising above those narrow interests in which the energies of other nations are absorbed.

The strong opposition with which the philosopher's views have been received in his own country, would seem

to weaken the basis on which he claims to build this fanciful palace of our human future. His whilom fellow-believers of the Slavophil party have shown no aptitude, so far, for the exemplification of the "conciliating principle." The total absence of the exclusive spirit, and the abdication of every individual interest, have not as yet been evident and characteristic features of their moral character. And the would-be reorganiser of the human race has met with his least unfriendly reception in Paris, where his two great works, *Russia and the Universal Church*, and *The History and Future of Theocracy*, have both been published.

All these things are only a fair dream. And the reality is sad enough. Even close around Iasnaïa Poliana, the wild brambles have almost overgrown the furrow along which the great toiler still drives his plough. The seed he had hoped to have seen sprouting about him is carried far afield towards the setting sun, to a less barren soil. . . . But, yet again I say it, the space in which we perform our little task is but a tiny spot on the measureless face of what shall be. And the last sentence of this book of mine shall not ring with a note of despair. From Pouchkine's time down to Tolstoi's, Russia lived out certain years of literary activity and glory, which may be reckoned to her as centuries. Some fresh phase of her appointed destiny, so full of suffering and of splendour, will some day bring the spirit of those brief years back to her again.





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England is behindhand. Yet Prince Volkonski's studies have recently appeared in London, under the title *Pictures of Russian Life and History*. There is a German edition of this work, and a French one is just passing through the press. Some additional information will be found in an older work by Graham, *The Progress of Art, Science, and Literature in Russia* (London, 1865, 1 vol. 8vo), and in those of Morfill, *Russia* (London, 1881, 1 vol. 12mo), and *Slavonic Literature* (London, 1883, 1 vol. 12mo).

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*English.*—Ralston, *The great Fabulist Krilof and his Fables* (London, 1868, 1 vol. 8vo).

*French.*—Fleury, *Krylov et ses Fables* (Paris, 1869, 1 vol. 12mo).

*German.*—Seidlitz, *W. A. Joukoffsky, ein russisches Dichtersleben* (Mittau, 1870, 1 vol. 8vo).

*Russian.*—Grot, *Sketches of the Life and Poetical Works of Joukovski (Otcherki jizni i poezii, &c.)*, St. Petersburg, 1883, published by the Second Section of the Academy of Sciences, vol. xxxii.; Pogodine, *N. M. Karamzine, as shown in his Works and Correspondence, &c.* (Moscow, 1866, 1 vol. 8vo); and the works of Arkhangelski, Plétniev, Pypine, Sertchevski (on Griboiédov, &c.).

## PERIOD OF POUCHKINE.

*English.*—Turner, *Studies in Russian Literature* (London, 1882, 1 vol. 8vo). Translations of various selected portions of Pouchkine's works, with notes and commentaries, have been published by Buchan Telfer (1875), Lewis (1849), Turner (1899), Wilson (1887), and "A Russian Lady" (Princess Bariatinski), 1882. Pouchkine's prose works have been translated by Mrs. Sutherland Edwards and Mr. T. Keane.

*French.*—Prosper Mérimée, *Portraits historiques et littéraires* (Paris, 1874, 1 vol. 12mo). There are numerous translations, both French and German, of Pouchkine's works. The best are those of Tourguéniev and Viardot.

*German.*—Varnhagen von Ense, *Werke von A. Pouchkine* (*Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, October 1838); König, *Bilder aus der Russischen Litteratur* (Leipzig, 1838, 1 vol. 8vo).

*Russian.*—The most complete biography of Pouchkine is that in the first volume of Aniénkov's edition of his works (St. Petersburg, 1854-1857, 7 vols. 8vo). The first supplements to the incomplete texts of the Russian editions appeared in Herzen's *Polar Star*. Since that time Gerbel has published a whole volume of supplementary matter. A bibliography of works specially concerning the great poet has been issued by Miéjov (St. Petersburg, 1886, 1 vol. 8vo). The studies of Korch (very important from the technical standpoint), Niéziélénov, Spasovitch, and V. N. (Nikolski), should also be consulted.

#### PERIOD POSTERIOR TO THE TIME OF GOGOL.

*English.*—Gosse, *Studies of Gontcharov and Tolstoï*, prefixed to the English translations of some of their works (London, 1891 and 1894); Ralston, *The Modern Russian Drama, Ostrovsky's Plays* (*Edinburgh Review*, July 1868). Henry James, *Study of Tourguéniev*, in *Partial Portraits*, 1888. The majority of the works of Tourguéniev, Tolstoï, and Dostoïevski have been translated into English, French, and German. Much remains to be done in this particular for the other novelists and poets of this period.

*French.*—P. Bourget, *Nouveaux essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*, Paris, 1885, 1 vol. 12mo—(Study of Tourguéniev); Boborykine, *Tourguéniev, Notes d'un Compatriote* (*Revue Indépendante*, December 1884), and various other studies by Delaveau, Durand-Gréville, Hennequin, E. M. de Vogüë, &c.

*German.*—Bodenstedt, *M. Lermontoff's poetischer Nachlass* (Berlin, 1852, 1 vol. 8vo); Loewenfeld, *Leo N. Tolstoï, sein Leben, seine Werke . . .* (Berlin, 1892, 1 vol. 8vo); Zabel, *T. Tourguéniev, eine literarische Studie* (Leipzig, 1884); and the works of Althaus, Brandès, Eckardt, Ernst, Glogau, Seuron, Thörsch, Zabel, &c.

*Russian.*—Aniénkov, *Recollections and Correspondence, 1835-1885* (St. Petersburg, 1892, 1 vol. 8vo); Barssoukov, *Life and Works of Pogodine* (Moscow, 1880)—in course of publication—a collection of documents of the deepest interest to the student of this period, and that preceding it; Miller, *Russian Writers Subsequent to Gogol* (*Rousskiïé pisatieli poslié Gogola*), St. Petersburg, 1888-1890, 3 vols. 8vo; Pypine, *Biéliniski, His Life and Correspondence* (St. Petersburg,

1876, 2 vols. 8vo) ; Tchernichevski, *Sketches of Literary History in the Time of Gogol* (*Otcherki Gogolevskavo périoda . . .*), St. Petersburg, 1891, 1 vol. 8vo ; and the studies of Akssakov (on Tioutchev), Andréievski, Boukhakov (on Tolstoï), Bourénine (on Tourguéniev), Gromeko (on Tolstoï), Koulich (on Gogol), Koloubovski (supplementary to Herveg-Heinze's *History of Modern Philosophy* (St. Petersburg, 1890), Livov (on Katkov), Serguïenko (on Tolstoï), Smirnov (on Herzen), Soloviov (on Dostoïevski), and Ziéliniski (on Tolstoï). The best edition of Gogol, with notes and commentaries, is that of Tikhonravov (St. Petersburg, 1889). The complete edition of Ostrovski's works (St. Petersburg, 1889, 10 vols. 8vo) includes a biography of the playwright, by A. Nos. That of Dostoïevski's works (St. Petersburg, 1883, 14 vols. 8vo) contains some *Recollections* of the novelist, by N. Strakhov. The complete edition of Chtchédrine's works, published by Pypine and Arséniev (St. Petersburg, 1889, 3 vols. 8vo), is prefaced by a life of the writer, by C. Arséniev. The Russian editions of Tolstoï and Tourguéniev may be counted up in dozens.



# INDEX

- ABLÉSSIMOV, 105  
 Afanassiev, 218  
 Akhcharoumov, 203  
 Akssakov, I., 102, 195-197, 210, 214, 413  
 Akssakov, C., 102, 195, 197, 203, 213  
 Akssakov, S., 251, 330, 331  
 Alexander I., 128-132  
 Alov, pseudonym of Gogol, 248
- BACMEISTER, 97  
 Bakounine, 224, 285, 306  
 Baier, 54  
 Baratinski, 180-181  
 Batiouchkov, 129, 147, 176  
 Barsov, 67  
 Barténiev, 434  
 Bernoulli, 124  
 Bestoujev, 190, 246  
 Bezobrazov, 433  
 Bezsonov, 42  
 Biéliniski, 105, 195, 197-203, 300  
 Bilbassov, 434  
 Bilfinger, 85  
 Bloch, 433  
 Boborikine, 294, 295, 425  
 Bogdanovitch, 10, 114  
 Boltine, 126  
 Bondarev, 391  
 Borovikovski, 329  
 Boulgarine, 189  
 Bouniakovski, 433
- Bourenine, 417  
 Bousslaiev, 218  
*Bova, Legend of*, 11  
 Buschen, 433
- CATHERINE II., 46, 79, 87, 88-99  
 Chakhofskoï, Prince, 85, 182  
 Chévirev, 196  
 Chevtchenko, 220  
 Chichkov, 108, 135  
 Chouvalov, 70, 74, 82, 107, 110  
 Chtchedrine (Saltykov), 41, 79, 253, 299, 309-319, 399  
 Chtcherbatov, Prince, 125, 126  
 Chtchoukine, 405
- DACHKOV, Princess, 96, 123-127, 308  
 Dahl, 246  
 Danilevski, 297, 439  
 Danilov (Kircha), 10, 85  
 Danilov, 10  
 Delwig, 157, 179-180  
 Dierjavine, 105, 106-112  
 Dievnitski, 124  
 Dmitriev, 84, 109, 140  
 Dmitrievski, 84  
 Dobrolioubov, 6, 176, 205, 274  
 Dolgoroukaïa, Princess, 85-87  
*Domostroï, the*, 36, 54, 59  
 Dostoïevski, F., 4, 46, 102, 166, 200, 309, 330-360

- Dragomanov, 309  
 Droujinine, 203  
  
 EDELSONN, 203  
 Emine, 113  
  
 FADIÉIEV, 308  
 Feodorov, 36  
 Fiodorov, 329  
 Foeth, 415  
 Fotii (the Metropolitan), 35  
*Frol Skobiéiev, The Adventures of,*  
 45, 89  
 Frug, 417  
  
 GAGARINE, 308  
 Galakhov, 208  
 Garchine, 421  
 Gmeline, 74  
 Gniéditch, 68  
 Gogol, 21, 46, 99, 113, 143, 197,  
 200, 246-265  
 Golikov, 126  
 Gontcharov, 165, 200, 265-270, 309  
 Granovski, 209, 348  
 Griboiédov, 182-188  
 Griétch, 189  
 Grigoriev, 178, 203  
 Grigorovitch, 200, 270, 298  
  
 HAGEMEISTER, 433  
 Halmersen, 433  
 Herzen, 41, 195, 200, 222, 283, 299,  
 301-309, 405  
 Hilarion (the Metropolitan), 31  
 Hilferding, 10  
  
 IAHONTOV, 329  
 Iélaguine, 126, 308  
*Igor, The Band of,* 10, 13, 25, 29  
*Ilia de Mourom, The Legend of,* 10  
 Ismailov, 113  
*Ismaragd,* 31  
 Ivan the Terrible, 37  
  
 JANSON, 433  
 Javorski, 51-54  
 Jemtchoujnikov, 410  
 Joachim, 32  
 Joukovski, 108, 129, 142-146, 161,  
 324  
  
 KALATCHOV, 218  
 Kamienski, 435  
 Kantémir, 54, 60, 141  
 Kapnist, 21, 103, 109  
 Karamzine, 104, 108, 126, 129, 133-  
 140, 170, 210, 435  
 Katchénovski, 190  
 Katkov, 221, 224-226, 286  
 Kavéline, 213, 218, 308  
 Khalanski, 11  
 Khémnitzer, 114  
 Khéraskov, 68, 112, 115  
 Khliébnikov, 32  
 Khomiakov, 195, 210, 211, 308  
 Khvochtchinskaïa, Mme., 309,  
 433  
 Kircha Danilov. *See* Danilov  
 Kiriéievski, I., 202, 210, 215  
 Kiriéievski, P., 10, 23, 195, 211,  
 221  
 Klioutcharev, 111  
 Klioutchevski, 434  
 Klioutchnikov, 198  
 Kniajnine, 103, 115  
 Kochelev, 308  
 Koltsov, 200, 244, 298, 416  
 Koni, 359  
 Korch, 179  
 Koroliénko, 422, 425  
 Kostomarov, 218, 221, 296  
 Kostrov, 112  
 Kotiélnikov, 70  
 Kotochikhine, 41  
 Koulich, 220  
 Koukolnik, 190, 246, 296  
 Kourbski, Prince, 38, 39  
 Kourotchkine, 410



- Kovalevski, 405, 406, 435  
 Kozitski, 70, 82, 92  
 Krachennikov, 70  
 Krapotkine, Prince, 309  
 Krassov, 198  
 Krestovski, V., 433  
 Krestovski, pseudonym of Mme.  
   Khvochtchinskaïa, 310  
 Krijanitch, 41  
 Krylov, 21, 136, 147, 149-163, 179
- LAJETCHNIKOV, 246, 296  
 Lapoukhine, 122  
 Lavrov, 308  
 Léontiev, 226  
 Lermontov, 227-239  
 Liéskov, 399  
 Lomonossov, 67, 69, 71, 75, 76, 78,  
   81, 105  
 Loukine, 103  
 Lvov, 109
- MAGNITSKI, 72  
 Maïkov, V. I., 114  
 Maïkov, A., 413-415  
 Maksimov, 41  
 Marouïlov, 435  
*Margarit*, 34  
 Marlinski, pseudonym of Bestoujev,  
   190  
 Matviéiev, 263  
 Maximus the Greek, 35  
 Mechtcherski, Prince, 352  
 Melchine, 341  
 Mérechkovski, 409  
 Miédviédiev, 46  
 Miélnikov, 298  
 Miétchnikov, 406  
 Mikhailov, pseudonym of Scheller,  
   309  
 Mikhailovski, 404  
 Milioukov, 404-405, 435  
 Minski, 417  
 Mordvinov, 131
- Morochkine, 217  
 Moussine-Pouchkine, 25, 126  
 Müller, 85, 124
- NACHTCHOKINE, 85  
 Nadiéjdine, 155, 195, 284  
 Nadsohn, 417  
 Nekrassov, 200, 201, 245, 323-329,  
   410  
 Népanov, pseudonym of Chtchédrine,  
   309  
 Nestor, 27, 32  
 Nicone (the Patriarch), 40  
 Nicone, Chronicles of, 34  
 Niébolchine, 433  
 Niédouumko, pseudonym of Nadiéj-  
   dine, 195  
 Nikifor, 196  
 Nikitine, 244  
 Nossov, 84  
 Novikov, 10, 90, 91, 94, 118-123  
 Novitski, 395
- ODOÏEVSKI, 245  
 Ogariov, 245  
 Omoulevski, pseudonym of Fiodorov,  
   329  
 Oniéguine, 406  
 Ostrovski, 244, 271-277  
 Oustrialov, 217  
 Oziérétskovski, 124  
 Oziérov, 141-142
- PABIEDONOSTSOV, 433  
*Paléïa*, 31  
 Pallas, 97  
 Panaïev, 201  
 Pavlov, 246  
 Paul I., 103, 130  
 Perépielski, pseudonym of Nekrassov,  
   325  
 Peter the Great, 47  
 Piétcherski, pseudonym of Miélnikov,  
   298

- Piétrachevski, 301, 336  
 Petrov, 112  
 Pirogov, 206  
 Pissarev, 203, 207  
 Pissemski, 41, 277, 319-323  
 Pletniev, 260  
 Pogodine, 218, 219, 246  
 Poletika, 82  
 Polevoï, 155, 190, 246  
 Polikarpov, 41  
 Polonski, 416  
 Plotski, 44, 46, 72  
 Pomialovski, 309  
 Popov, 10, 67, 70  
 Possochkov, 54, 59  
 Potapienko, 425-426  
 Pouchkine, 21, 28, 67, 75, 77, 80,  
     105, 108, 111, 118, 147, 154-179,  
     195, 200, 228, 249, 258, 410  
 Prokopovitch, 51, 60  
 Protassov, 116, 124  
 Proutkov (Kouzma), pseudonym of  
     A. Tolstoi and of Jemtchoujnikov,  
     410  
 Pypine, 208, 404, 408, 435
- RADICHTCHEV, 91, 116**  
 Razoumovski, 70  
 Rekhmaninov, 115  
 Roberty, De, 405  
 Rostoptchine, Countess Eudoxia, 245  
 Rostoptchine, Countess Lydia, 406  
 Rovinski, 221  
 Rybnikov, 10  
 Ryléiev, 132, 133, 157, 185  
 Rtychtchev, 40
- SAKHAROV, 13**  
 Saltykov. *See* Chtchédrine  
 Samarine, 210, 212, 308  
 Savéliev-Rostislavitch, 217  
 Scheller, 309  
 Schilder, General, 434  
 Schlözer, 85
- Schwartz, 113, 114, 121  
 Senkovski, 189  
 Sérébrianski, 240  
 Serguïenko, 364  
 Siémievski, 434  
 Silvestre, the Pope, 36, 274  
 Skabitchevski, 404  
 Skalkovski, 406  
 Sliéptsov, 309  
 Smirnova, Mme., 281  
 Smotrytski, 40, 72  
 Sokolov, 124  
 Soloviov, S., 218, 296  
 Soloviov, N., 203  
 Soloviov, V., 408  
*Sophiïskii Vrémiennik, Annals of  
 Sophia, 34*  
 Soumarokov, 69, 75, 78-85, 88, 103,  
     114  
 Soutaïév, 395  
 Spasowicz, 403  
 Spéranski, 131, 132  
 Sréznievski, 11  
 Staehlin, 76  
 Stankiévitsh, 197, 202, 240, 299  
 Stebnitski, pseudonym of Liéskov,  
     400  
 Strakhov, 124  
 Sviatoslav, 30
- TATICHTCHEV, 32, 54, 56, 58, 61, 62**  
 Tchadaïev, 156, 191-196, 405  
 Tchékhouv, 254, 403, 426-432  
 Tchernichevski, 203  
 Tchij, 358  
 Tchoubinski, 433  
 Tchoulkov, 113  
 Thörner, 433  
 Tikhonravov, 208  
 Timoféiev, 36  
 Tioutchev, 411-413  
 Tolstoi, A., 297  
 Tolstoi, L., 5, 122, 197, 249, 273,  
     309, 330, 343, 300-399, 420

- Touptala, Danilo, St. Dmitri of Rostov, 41
- Tourguéniev, I., 18, 46, 155, 200, 243, 277, 278-297, 309, 322, 340, 370
- Tourguéniev, N., 131
- Trébotarev, 124
- Trédiakovski, 66, 72, 73, 82, 104
- Trétiakov, 124
- VALOUIEV, 210, 212
- Vasska, son of Bousslai, Legend of,*  
19
- Vénéline, 217
- Véniaminov, 124
- Verevkine, 115
- Viétrinski, 308
- Volkov, 79, 84
- Volynski, 404
- Von-Visine, 87, 96, 98-102, 115, 242
- Vorontsov, 408
- Voskressenskaïa, Chronicle called,*  
34
- Vyroubov, 406
- WELTMANN, 246
- ZABIÉLINE, 218
- Zagoskine, 246, 296
- Zablotski-Diéssiatovski, 433
- Zassoulitch, Véra, 309
- Zlatooust,* 31
- Zotov, 296
- Zouiev, 124
- Zybéline, 124, 218



THE END









