THE RUSSIAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING

THIS WORK HAS BEEN TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL RUSSIAN BY

ABRAHAM YARMOLINSKY

NICHOLAS II

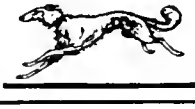
Valentine Syerov

THE RUSSIAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING

By ALEXANDRE BENOIS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
CHRISTIAN BRINTON

WITH THIRTY-TWO PLATES



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An Epistolary Preface

By

CHRISTIAN BRINTON

My dear Alexandre Benois:—

It is with a sense of pleasure and privilege that I assume the responsibility of commending your résumé of Russian painting to the American public. To you who are so familiar with the intellectual and artistic physiognomy of your country the preparation of these pages was a labour of love into which you put the full measure of your scholarly exposition and discriminating analysis. It was at your congenial quarters in the rue Cambon, Paris, during a memorable engagement of the Ballet Russe, where, as you doubtless recall, we first projected an English version of this work. The pressure of other matters prevented the consummation of our plans, which have meanwhile happily materialized, thanks to the discerning initiative of a young publisher who vies with us in the admiration of Slavonic letters and art.

When, my dear Benois, you and I met so fraternally in Rome, Paris, London, and elsewhere Russian art, and more specifically the art of the theatre, was at its

apogee. You were then *Directeur artistique* of the Ballet Russe, and not only were you officially allied with that incomparable assembly of mimes, musicians, and *metteurs-en-scène*, you were also co-author of such productions as Le Pavillon d'Armide and the racy and poignant Petrouchka. For the time being, indeed, the vogue of the ballet obscured the more substantial and not less significant triumphs of Russian brush and palette as seen in studio or on exhibition wall. The general public was ignorant of the fact that such men as Syerov, Roerich, Anisfeld, Golovin, Vrubel, and yourself were painters in the more explicit meaning of the term. And still less did the average person realize that the ballet was but a phase of certain deep-rooted æsthetic impulses which had been coming to focus during the past score of years.

The one thing, however, the public did sense when face to face with these stimulating spectacles was their effective fusion of motives Oriental and Occidental. The Slav looks eastward as well as toward the west, and this, you will assuredly concede, is characteristic of your country's contribution to the field of artistic endeavour. Despite the drastic Europeanizing process inaugurated by Peter and continued under Elisabeth, Catherine, and subsequent sovereigns, that typically Slavonic note which we instantly recognize and relish

was by no means obliterated. Changes took place along all lines of activity. And yet while Peterhof became a miniature Versailles, and French was prattled in the salons and beneath the protecting trees of Tzarskoye Sélo, much that was old continued untouched and echoes of the passionate, enigmatic East still persisted.

In art as in life a sturdy racial integrity is with each Russian an inevitable birthright. The Russ everywhere reveals his power of direct, concrete observation and his ability to grasp the vital aspects of a given scene or situation and to achieve in their presentation a convincing measure of actuality. It is such salutary tendencies that, my dear Benois, mark the earlier portions of your comprehensive and sympathetic monograph. The floodtide of realism whether historic or contemporary was, as you have indicated, reached with the work of Repin and his successor, Valentin Syerov.

The movement during the past two decades has been away from realism and naturalism and in the direction of decorative symbolism. The ideals of the "Mir Iskusstva" men have been continued by the younger spirits who to-day write for "Apollon." Your own contributions whether with brush or pen, as well as those of your colleagues Somov, Bilibin, Ostroumova, Lebedeva, and Lanceray follow logically in the wake of that striving for more purely æsthetic conquests which had

its inception in the early nineties. Colour, a distinct feeling for decorative design, and the free play of fancy and passion are the characteristics of the newer school. The particular group to which you belong has revived the graces of former days and transmuted the fragrance of the eighteenth century into something spirited and modern yet instinct with poetic sensibility.

It is, however, far from my intention to usurp your function as an interpreter of Russian art. In your triple capacity of writer, painter, and dramatist you possess unique qualifications for the task in hand. I can only add that you have here achieved your habitual success, and that I am particularly happy for the opportunity of acknowledging even a small portion of the debt I owe you and your ever complex and inspiring country.

Believe me, my dear Benois,

Faithfully yours,

CHRISTIAN BRINTON.

Ardrossan Park,
September, 1916.

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Foreword

If we follow, in the history of painting, the attitude of artists of different epochs and nations toward their art, if we consider what is to them more essential: painting itself or the ideas painting conveys, we notice two fundamental currents in artistic activity. One has sprung from an exclusive quest for beauty, the source of the other is the desire to impress, by means of painting, something amusing, or instructive, or denunciatory. Some artists gave expression in their works to their sentiment of beauty without any doctrinaire motive whatsoever; others used painting as a mere auxiliary for the purpose of expressing ideas of a completely non-artistic order. In the latter case painting was domineered by literature, philosophy, and religion; it played a subsidiary rôle.

Sometimes, however, these currents flowed together. In times of intense religious fervour, or in the art of isolated religious individuals the quest for beauty in painting mingled inseparably with the expression of their religious and philosophical views. It is in such epochs and by such men that there were created the

greatest works of art, quite as rich in extrapictorial thought as they were beautiful from the standpoint of purely artistic merit. On the contrary, in epochs of weakening faith the quest for beauty assumed a narrowly æsthetic, specific character, and little by little art swerved into scholasticism, or academicism. Finally, in epochs dominated by the capitalistic, non-religious pursuit of earthly welfare, painting was subjected to social demands. Casting away all thought of beauty, which by some theoreticians was confused with ethical and political principles, men forced art to serve social ideas—either as a denunciatory weapon or as an instructive amusement.

In each of these currents there appears much of what is curious and precious. Yet not everything is curious and precious to an equal degree. If some works are self-sufficient and eternally youthful artistic revelations, other productions seem, when compared with those to have sprung from the petty cares of life, which mirror the vanity of passing interests, or, it appears, are the fruit borne by a deadening scholastic routine. A considerable portion of Russian painting—of the Western type—is distinguished by these very traits and has so little in common with the true nature of beauty, that the question may even arise whether it ought to be considered from the purely æsthetic standpoint, and

whether this element ought to be given a place in the history of Russian art.

Iconoclasm of whatever sort, however, is not in accordance with the spirit of our times. He who in the name of service to a great and pure ideal would rise against petty worldly art or would ban those works which are too dependent on the scholastic model, would gain the name of a Vandal, of a narrow-minded and wild fanatic. The striking example of Hogarth corroborates the thesis that the history of art must include all the important artistic phenomena, even if they do not meet the purely æsthetic demands. Hogarth scoffs most unceremoniously at the precepts of Apollo; he came closest to the literary pamphlet and the facetious "novella." Yet, who will raise his hand to do away with this keen saucy buffoon? There is no question here of his great genuinely pictorial gift, to which, however, he paid too little attention and which showed itself so rarely in his pictures. Hogarth must maintain a place of honour in the history of art, which is but a part of the records of human culture. We owe him this —if for no other reason—because of the marvellous documentation of his pictures, which lends them the melancholy charm that only echoes of bygone times possess.

Likewise, we must not ignore works of purely scholastic merit. It is certain that the living ideal in

such works, turned into a dry-as-dust and dead pattern, has become petrified, but even on such works rests the faint reflection of beauty, and they are able to please, though not to transport with delight. If, however, nothing—not even what is of slight importance—is to be ignored, a just proportion must be preserved in the exposition, and works absolutely beautiful must be preferred to productions relatively interesting. The most impartial history must not lose sight of this proportionality—otherwise it runs the risk of forfeiting its fundamental character and dissolving into utter confusion.

In the exposition of the history of Russian art, more than anywhere else, it is important to be guided by these principles of many-sidedness, tolerance, and harmonious proportionality. The study of Russian painting from a purely artistic standpoint would bring us to such unexpected and odd conclusions that accusations of incompleteness and partiality would inevitably follow. For the number of purely artistic aspects is less in the Russian School of Painting than in any other. A considerable period of Russian painting passed under the sign of academicism, and scarcely did it free itself from its trammels, when it found itself involved in the complex mechanism of "the social movement." During the two hundred years of the existence of Western

art in Russia, it has produced very few phenomena of a purely artistic character. To dwell on the merits solely of this element would mean to narrow the task of the historian to a paradoxical degree. On the other hand, the most indulgent historian in his studies of Russian painting must not let slip through his fingers a definite ideal standard, by means of which alone he can clear up the purely artistic significance of each phenomenon. Only when assisted by such an ideal measure will he be able, after giving due credit to the local and temporary significance of a number of artistic productions, to single out and shed light on those phases of Russian artistic life, on which rests the reflection of the eternal and all-human enchantment of beauty.

THE RUSSIAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING

CHAPTER I

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE history of Russian Painting of the Western type begins with Peter the Great. The works of art belonging to Peter's times show almost no trace of the art of old Russia. Only in church painting did the old style persist for any length of time; but it is just this branch of Russian painting that, even before the time of Peter the Great, had already lost its original and traditional character. The Russian icon-painting of the seventeenth century, which had just begun to free itself from the Byzantine canon and to absorb elements of national taste, mainly in the choice of colours and the treatment of ornaments, turns aside at about the middle of the century, and, under the influence of South-Russian and Polish cultures, acquires an unmistakably "German" bent. The Church offered almost no resistance to this current. True it is that the Church sturdily upheld the integrity of Byzantine tra-

ditions as far as the outward demands of iconography were concerned, such as: the choice of subject matter, the postures, the grouping and, to some extent, the vestures. Yet the Church was indifferent to the fact that the very type of the saints, under the influence of German engravings, began to assume a sluggish character, and that the style of the icons became broken, flabby, as remote as possible from the stern grandeur of the Byzantine manner. About the age of Peter, and for some time after, this current became even stronger; and in the middle of the eighteenth century it degenerated into a bizarre mixture of the Byzantine pattern with the wild eccentricities of the German rococo. Academicism wiped out the last traces of Byzantinism from Russian iconography, and in the first half of the nineteenth century we find no traces of it. Only in the popular peasant arts and crafts has the ancient ecclesisatic art survived to this very day.

It is customary to begin the history of the Russian School of Painting of the Western type with two artists sent abroad by Peter for the purpose of study. This is not quite accurate, for neither of these artists had a decisive influence on the subsequent development of Russian art. Of far greater importance for the Russian School were the numerous foreign masters summoned to the country from foreign parts. In the choice of these,

Peter gave evidence, if not of taste, at least of great perspicacity. Among those invited to Russia were excellent artists of their time: the engravers, Adriaen Schoonebeck and Pierre Picart; sculptors, Andreas Schluter, Carlo Barthohomeo Rastrelli, Pinaud; painters, Tannhauer, Louis Caravaque, Tarsius, and Pillement; architects, Jean Baptiste Alexandre Leblond, Michetti, Maternovi; whole pleiads of excellent carvers, weavers, turners, etc. Toward the twenties of the eighteenth century, Russian court life exhibited a perfectly Western appearance. About that time Petrograd was built up; on the site of former huts there grew up the more or less magnificent houses of the Emperor and the most illustrious grandees; the gardens in the young capital and in its environs were decorated after the Italian manner with statues and fountains, and the walls and ceilings were covered with elaborate paintings.

To continue importing foreigners was, however, too burdensome. The Government was considerably worried by the fact that Russian gold flowed to foreign countries. Hence the attempts to create an art of our own, local and "less expensive." It was with this purpose in view that, among other things, several young men were sent abroad to perfect themselves in art.

Only two of these protégés of Peter became promi-

nent: Andrey Matvyeyev and Ivan Nikitin; but fate favoured neither them nor their works. So few of these have reached us that it is difficult to form a correct judgment about their authors. Andrey Matvyeyev, who returned home in 1727, lived ten years longer, and died in the prime of his life and talent. He received his artistic education in the Netherlands, under the guidance of Moor and Schoor. Several authentic works of his bear witness to the fact that he had mastered the technical methods of Western painting, but they are too few to give an idea of his personality as an artist. His portraits of Prince and Princess Golytzin, kept in the estate Petrovskoye (near Moscow), show fair draughtsmanship and a skilful touch. But what an immeasurable distance between them and the works of his contemporaries: Largilliere, Nattier, Rigaud, Troost and others. Matvyeyev's picture in Stroganov gallery, with its smooth painting and schematic composition, reminds one of a poor imitation of van der Werff; as to his icons in the Cathedrals of St. Peter and St. Paul and in the Church of St. Simeon, it is impossible to judge them, as they have been retouched in later times.

His unfinished portrait of himself and his wife, donated by the artist's son to the Academy of Arts, stands by itself in the common-place painting of the early eighteenth century; it is distinguished by a pro-

nounced individuality, a vigorous stroke, and its pleasant greenish-brown hue. All the rest of Matvyeyev's works have perished; some have disappeared—for instance, his portrait sketch, from life, of the Empress Anna, which as late as the middle of the nineteenth century was in the Academic Museum. A number of them have entirely lost their original character, owing to repeated retouching. His apocryphal "Kulikovo Battle," in the Museum of Alexandre III, completely confuses our notion of this master.

Of the works of Ivan Nikitin, who returned to Russia in 1720, there remain to us even fewer examples. Our opinion about him must be formed on the basis of a unique work which is fully authenticated. It is the portrait of Baron S. G. Stroganov, kept in Maryino, the Golytzin estate, near Petrograd. The portrait is, from a contemporary viewpoint, a fair but not an extraordinary piece of work. Although interestingly conceived and not devoid of elegance, it is not distinguished either by bright characterization or by any remarkable skill. Of a greater value for the revealing of Nikitin's character would be the portraits "Peter on his Death-bed" and "The Hetman" in the Academical Museum, painted very skilfully in rich colours in a pleasant and noble colour-scale, if it could be ascertained that these works really belong to the brush of Nikitin, and not to

that of Tannhauer. In the reign of Empress Anna Ioannovna, Nikitin, who was involved in the case of the monk Josiah, was knouted and transported to Siberia in 1736, whence he was recalled in the reign of Empress Anna Leopoldovna. However, it was not given to the artist, worn out by his long exile, to see his home again; he died on the way, in the fall of 1741. It is probable that many of his works are still in existence, scattered in different estates and palaces, but it will hardly ever be possible to ascertain what pictures are really his, as one authentic, although not very typical picture is not enough for the formation of a definite judgment about a painter. The single work of Roman, his brother, the portrait of Vassa Stroganov, is interesting only from the standpoint of costume.

The reign of Elizabeth opens a new period of Russian painting. The queen had a liking and a discriminating taste for luxury; she was dissatisfied with the dulness by which the court life of her predecessor, like that of the petty German courts, was marked; her conceptions were grandiose. From the artistic standpoint, the reign of Elizabeth was to Russia almost what the reign of Louis XIV was to France. In her reign and for a time under her personal supervision, the Anninsky Winter Palace was rebuilt. Later on she erected a new wooden palace and almost completed the new stone

palace of the Russian Emperors. In her reign a great number of vast and magnificent palaces were built, or completely rebuilt, in Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev and elsewhere. Under Elizabeth were erected the best and most luxurious Rococo style buildings in Russia: the Smolny Monastery, the Troitzky Hermitage, the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Kiev, and others. It was in her time that the Russian magnates, Stroganovs, Vorontzovs, Shuvalovs, Sheremetyevs, imitating the example set by the Queen, began to build in a magnificent and truly European manner. Toward the end of her reign Petrograd and its environs assumed the appearance which they have preserved to a considerable degree to this very day. In the talented Rastrelli, Elizabeth found her Lebrun. But new legions of masters were needed for the execution of his innumerable and always excellent projects—all the more since some of the artists imported by Peter were already in the grave. Others, Pillement and Pinaud among them, not finding enough work, had returned home; others again were so old that they could not keep pace with the feverish activity of the young generation. Among the artists imported in the reign of Elizabeth the most noteworthy are: G. H. Grot, a somewhat manneristic master, but an artist of an unusually delicate and soft brush; his brother, I. F. Grot, one of the best animalists of his time; Valeriani,

an expert in perspective, who proved very useful as an educator of the young Russian artists; the decorators Perezinotti, the Grandizzi and the Barozzi brothers. Toward the end of Elizabeth's reign the following artists were added: Stefano Torelli, the rival of Boucher, a somewhat monotonous, but excellent portraitist; Count Rotari, and the French artists, LeLorrain, Lagrenée, Tocqué and Develis. A brilliant, spirited artistic life, such as was to be found in the most splendid European courts of the time, unfolded both in Petrograd and in Moscow during the sojourn of the court in the capitals. Queen Elizabeth Petrovna considered it nearly the main task of her reign to lend to Russian life that illusory lustre of an ever blissful Eden, by which the high life of the West was distinguished.

After the agony of Russian culture under Peter II and Anna Ioannovna, a reawakening was presently felt. The seeds which were sown by Peter the Great and which for fifteen years had lain in the soil, soon began to sprout. In all fields of endeavour men of original and truly Russian genius began to arise; and there came other men who proved able to appreciate the native talent, to set them working and to support them. Among these the first place belongs to I. I. Shuvalov, the noblest of Russians, who more than any one else was

eager to revive all the educational projects inaugurated by Peter the Great, but whose views of art and artistic education, naturally, shared all the usual defects of those times. The fabulous luxury of those days necessitated the existence of our own artist-craftsmen, but nobody at that day thought of our own, original, national art. The prestige of scholastic æsthetics stood in the way of a deeper insight into the essence of art, into its pure, inspirational nature.

There is a peculiar trait of the Russian School of Painting in its early phase, which has also somewhat influenced its subsequent development. Painting in Russia came into existence not as a response to the demands of her entire society. It was rather the will of the Government and of the aristocracy, who longed for the externalities of life similar to those of the West, that called Russian painting into life. That is why it would be useless to look for an original national spirit even in the best representatives of the Russian School of the eighteenth century. We can find some ten gifted and very well educated artists, who on account of their purely pictorial merits may be placed alongside of the best names of the European schools; but these masters lack utterly the original, personal note, the specific "Russian" sensibility.

That is why the best that was done in Russian Paint-

ing of the eighteenth century is portraits; and, partly, landscapes, nature "portraits," as it were. Portrait painting demands great talent and technical knowledge, but it does not necessarily need a pronounced artistic individuality. The Russian artists of the eighteenth century possessed both knowledge and technical skill, but they lacked imagination and freedom. They had no taste for these precious gifts. Just as the caftans and gowns were imported from Paris, so the æsthetics of the Russian nobility was derived directly from the Parisian Academy. What held the interest of our noblemen was not Watteau or Lancret, or the more intelligible Boucher and Fragonard—those marvellous phantasts of the eighteenth century—nor even Chardin or Chodowiecky, those most delicate poets of the hearth—but rather that bombastic official art, which in the Academies passed for *Grand-Art.*

In the reign of Peter the Great there was founded a school of drawing at the Petrograd Printing-house. Later on, under Catherine I, an art department was organised at the Academy of Sciences, owing to the efforts of Avramov. In 1748, under Elizabeth, a statute was approved establishing the Academy of Fine Arts, at the Academy of Sciences. At its head was put a typical representative of his time, the "Professor of Allegory" Shtelin. Finally, in 1757, owing to the zeal of I. I.

Shuvalov, a completely organised Academy of Fine Arts was definitely established. Nominally, the new institution was connected with the University of Moscow, but its seat was in Petrograd, the centre of court and aristocratic life. The Academy was an artistic hothouse, similar in character to the entire group of Russian and foreign masters, who were independent of the Academy, and usually lived in the northern capital, leaving it only to follow the court in its migrations.

Under Elizabeth, a number of Russian artists became prominent before the Academy of Fine Arts was founded. Their appearance bears witness to the efflorescence of Russian culture in the forties and fifties of the eighteenth century.

Among these artists the following deserve our attention: Ivan Argunov, a serf of Count Sheremetev, A. Matvyeyev's relative; Alexyey Antropov, a master of design and perspective; Makhayev, Valeriani's disciple; and a group of icon painters, rather mediocre, but interesting for their quaint attempts to combine the demands of the orthodox canon with the cleverness of the Italian Rococo. The icons in the court chapels of Peterhof and Tzarskoye Selo, and those in the Cathedral of St. Nicholas of the Sea in Petrograd, are curious samples of this style.

Only Argunov and Antropov in this group of artists

deserve real attention. As to Makhayev, it is hard to pass judgment upon him, for it is uncertain what really belongs to him in the precious series of engraved views of Petrograd, which were published during the last years of Elizabeth's reign. The originals painted in oil are kept in the Hermitage: some of them,—for instance, the Summer Palace, are painted vividly and skilfully; others, like the great view of Neva, with dull timidity and in a mechanical manner. The first ones seem to be the work of Valeriani, the second, of Makhayev himself.

I. Argunov (1727–1797), despite the researches of S. Dyagilev, is a somewhat obscure figure. Like many other masters of his time he did not hesitate to sign portraits copied from other people's originals, and this mixing of copies with original works makes the estimation of his talent a difficult task. Thus, it is to be regretted that we cannot be certain of Argunov's authorship in regard to one of the best productions of eighteenth century Russian painting: the portrait of Countess Barbara Alexeyevna Sheremetyev, which can bear comparison with the portraits of Tocqué, Rotari and Van-Loo. Of course, all the interest of this characteristic and soundly realistic portrait would be lost if the work proved to be Argunov's copy from the forgotten original by one of these masters. Equally meritorious are the portraits of Count S. B. Sheremetyev,

Countess V. P. Razumovsky, and of the Kalmyk lady, Fatyanov. Incomparably poorer are the series of other portraits of Argunov, but even these, in addition to the charm of the past, interesting costumes, hair-dressing and poses, have many fine, purely pictorial sides. Among these are fairly good painting (I. Argunov was G. H. Grot's pupil) and sufficiently correct design.

Almost equally confused is our notion of the other prominent Elizabethan painter, Alexyey Petrovich Antropov (1716–1795). He was a person, it seems, of no ordinary calibre. His main merit consisted in the establishment of his own school of painting, which counterbalanced the official Academy, and which produced one of the greatest Russian painters, Levitzky. The descendants of the latter have to this very day preserved memories of Antropov, as of an independent man, who held in disdain the official artistic world and warned his young pupil against the pernicious influence of the Academy.

Another fact which speaks in favour of Antropov is the plasticity of his nature. He was all of 41, when, having become an admirer of the art of Rotari, who had just come to Russia (in 1757), he assimilated and made his own the firm and lucid manner of the famous Italian master. It is in this manner that Antropov's two best portraits are executed: the portrait of the unknown in

the Tretyakov Gallery, and the portrait of Countess Rumyantzev in the Museum of Alexander III. The latter work, dated 1764, corroborates, by its coarseness and simplicity, our estimate of Antropov as an energetic and highly independent man. Incomparably weaker are his portraits of the Czars, in which the artist, unable to paint from nature, had to have recourse to other people's data. Having neither virtuosity nor European schooling (he was a pupil of A. Matvyeyev, of the icon painter Vishnyakov and of Karavacci) he helplessly heaped up in these portraits all sorts of details, borrowing them from the works of Tocqué, Grot and Develis. Of greater interest are his icons, preserved in the church of St. Andrew at Kiev.

We do not possess enough documents to form a complete judgment as to what "Shuvalov's" Academy of Arts really was. It seems to have been something in the nature of a large art studio, where almost mature men were admitted, and where the teaching process was more or less free. In keeping with the purely practical spirit of Peter the Great's educational reforms, the aim of the Academy was not "to educate men," but "to form artists." It is natural, then, that what the Academy produced was a number of masters of considerable technical skill. The following artists became prominent: in architecture, Bazhenov, Starov and Ivanov;

in sculpture, Shubin and Gordyeyev; in engraving, Chemesov, Kolpakov and Gerasimov; in painting, Losenko, Rokotov, Sablukov, S. Shchedrin, Serebryakov and Golovachevsky.

Falconet, who knew Losenko (1737–1773) well, later on spoke about him in the following terms:

"The poor and honest fellow, degraded, starving, eager to leave Petrograd for some other place, used to come to tell me his troubles. Then despair drove him to dissipation, and he was far from guessing what he would gain by dying. It is written on his tombstone that he was a great man. It is evident, therefore, that in Russia, and in painting, people manage to make a draughtsman, a fairly accurate copyist and a painter of no talent, a great man, after his death. The Empress desired to encourage him, but at any rate, he had a fine epitaph."

These good-humouredly ironical words, very applicable to Russian art in general, are not altogether true of Losenko. Falconet made his acquaintance when the unfortunate artist was already completely worn out by the duties of the purely bureaucratic office he held in the Academy (he was its director). A few works executed by Losenko at the beginning of his activity present him in a different light. Even if it were absolutely necessary to deprive this master of the charming *genre*

picture in the Tretyakov Gallery, which is attributed to him, yet, owing to his excellent portraits of the actor Volkov and of Sumarokov, and his admirable studies from nature, Losenko must retain a place of honour in the history of Russian painting. Perfectly cheerless are his historical compositions, in which he painfully strove, but utterly failed, to approach the "noble" style of the Parisian Academy.

Rokotov's personality is even less known to us than that of Losenko, but his great pictorial gift is attested by his numerous works. Rokotov became prominent very rapidly. In 1760 he entered the Academy—not, surely, as a pupil; and as early as 1762 he was nominated adjunct-professor. In the same year he painted two portraits of the Emperor Peter III, hardly inferior to the best works of Rotari. Catherine herself, who never sat for Levitzky, graciously allowed Rokotov to paint her portrait from life. The third portrait of the Empress, in the Romanov Gallery, was considered in Catherine's life-time the most successful likeness of her. At the end of the sixties Rokotov settled definitively in Moscow, came back to Petrograd in the nineties, and died in 1812.[1] This is all we know about the master, in whom Russia may take no less pride than in Levitzky and Borovikovsky.

[1] This date is communicated to us by S. P. Dyagilev. (Author's note.)

PORTRAIT OF PRINCESS GOLYTZIN *Dmitry Levitzky*

In fact, some of Rokotov's portraits are in no way inferior to the famous works of these masters. Here belong the somewhat coarse-grained portraits of Pete III strongly reminiscent of Rotari, as well as the wonderfully painted and very bold portraits of Catherine II in white satin crinoline (the coronational—in the Academy of Arts). Here also belongs the somewhat motley profile portrait of the Empress, in Gatchina, the portraits of I. I. Shuvalov, P. I. Shuvalov, I. G. Orlov, and others. Sometimes Rokotov soared to a height which brought him near to the greatest European portrait painters: to Gainsborough, Nattier Latour. Such is his portrait of Countess Santi, one of the most astonishing productions of the eighteenth century both for the delicacy of characterisation and for colour, with its charming combinations of olive and pink hues. A corsage of modest field flowers on the bosom of the lady lends to the work an intimacy exquisite in its simplicity, such as can seldom be found in Levitzky and Borovikovsky.

The portraits of Levitzky (1735–1822) are equally interesting to the historian and to the painter. He painted a great many of the prominent leaders of the brilliant reign of Catherine, and he depicted them with perfectly convincing vividness. He succeeded, like no one else in Russia, in expressing the characteristic tone

and glow, the whole outward "manner of living" of the *beau-monde* of his time, and at the same time he created a series of superb specimens of painting, hardly inferior in their technical perfection to the best works of Western schools. One easily identifies Levitzky's works in a mass of other paintings by the totally peculiar "keenness" of the eyes of the persons presented, by their wholly distinct, slightly mocking smile, and finally, by the celebrated mastery with which silks, laces and jewels are painted. This son of a provincial clergyman, who received a wholly practical artistic education in the studio of Antropov and under the guidance of Valeriani, must have been possessed of an unusual artistic temperament to assimilate to such a degree all the splendours of the technique of the most brilliant epoch in the history of European painting. True, he was a native of the Government of Kiev, i. e., of that part of Russia where Western culture was implanted long before its appearance in Muscovy, and where it had had time to get more firmly rooted. Yet, in the matter of art, Southern Russia in the eighteenth century was not favourably distinguished from the middle and northern sections. The local engraving school, of which Levitzky's father was a representative, presents almost no artistic interest, as it was a poor imitation of German etching; and to consider such an accomplished

master as Levitzky, junior, a product of local Kiev art, is hardly correct. The quick-witted highly impressionable youth found himself in Petrograd late in the fifties, that is, in the very hey-day of the activity of the foreign masters imported by Elizabeth, and, in all probability, his taste developed under the sole influence of this activity. The portraits of Rotari and Erichsen taught him firmness and lucidity in drawing, the pictures of Torelli and Leprince—sumptuosity of composition and elegance of poses; finally, to Tocqué and Roslin he owes his wonderful, purely French technique in the rendition of details. That Levitzky, nevertheless, has avoided the pit of "salon" mannerism, and preserved all the freshness of his provincialism, that he remained the keen, somewhat ironical observer, that his portraits, despite the Parisian caftans and wigs, exhale a great sincerity—all this we owe probably to that simple-natured Antropov, who drew to himself the gifted youth at the time he was painting icons for St. Andrew's Cathedral, at Kiev. It was he who took the young man to the northern capital and shielded him against the influence of the Academy and its bureaucratic spirit.

We distinguish two manners in the art of Levitzky. For the first thirty years of his activity his manner was that which he acquired in his studies of the French masters. The works belonging to this period are, for their

pictorial merits, far superior to the later portraits, which partly show the change undergone by the taste in art. The rich, mellow colouring of the admirable portrait of Kakorinov and of the two portraits of Mme. Lvov remind one of the productions of Greuse at their best; the portraits of the pupils of Smolnoye in the Peterhof Palace are executed under the influence of Roslin's costume portraits, but with a vivacity and picturesqueness which reveal Levitzky's acquaintance with the works of Van Dyck. Other canvases of this period show resemblance to the portraits of Mengs, the older Tischbein, Torelli and Van-Loo, that is, of artists still bound up in their technique and manner with the great traditions of Venice, Flanders and France. Entirely different are the portraits of the second period, such as those of Lady-in-attendance Protasov, the knights of the Vladimir Order, in Gatchina, and others. Here intimacy is replaced by a pursuit of grandiose style; the rich colouring has turned into a dull, tedious colour-gamut, and the technique has, to a considerable degree, lost its vitality.

Borovikovsky (1757–1826), always quoted together with Levitzky, really belongs to another period of Russian painting, and is a representative of the "new taste." Borovikovsky, too, was a native of Ukraina. Catherine made his acquaintance—he was a retired of-

ficer and an amateur artist at the time—during her famous Crimean "progress" in 1787. The success of his first attempts led the young man to come to Petrograd. But there he found entirely different surroundings, entirely different tastes from those which reigned when Levitzky had moved to the capital. The imitation of the warmth and richness of the old Venetian masters, which lay back of all of Levitzky's models, was now replaced by an infatuation for classical reserve and grandeur. Highly coloured dresses, picturesque hairdressing, gorgeous combinations of gauze, tinsel and spangle, had gradually disappeared. Fortunately, Borovikovsky had the advantage of being in his early youth a pupil of Levitzky, the guardian of the old traditions. Owing to this circumstance, and also to the fact that Borovikovsky did not get into the Academy, he formed for himself, and preserved, that rich manner of painting and that picturesque design that redeem in his pictures the defects of his times: a certain coldness and stiffness, and also monotony.

Sometimes, however, this stiffness disappeared completely, and then Borovikovsky showed all his Southern good-nature, coupled with such a delicate understanding of life and beauty that these, unfortunately few examples of his work, are on the same level with the best portraits of Levitzky. Among these masterpieces the

first place is held by the poetical portraits of the beautiful princess Suvorov in the Tretyakov Gallery; to these there belong also the portrait of Countess Bezborodko with her daughters, that of the charming Mme. Lopukhin, and others. In former times, when historical and religious pictures were considered necessary for the title of a great artist, Borovikovsky was highly praised for his icons. We do not share this admiration. Borovikovsky's talent was not deep. All his portraits are superficial and have a hackneyed "family resemblance" about them. It is natural that in the field which requires the most concentrated feeling and the deepest penetration, in religious painting, he could produce nothing remarkable.

Around Levitzky, Rokotov, and Borovikovsky, there were grouped several other remarkable portraitists, who received their education partly at the Academy, but to a great extent developed independently. Unfortunately, we have to confine ourselves to the study of their works, as we have no knowledge of their artistic personalities. One of these portraits, that of Count Dmitriyev-Mamonov, by Shebanov (Museum of Alexander III), is worthy of European fame. This small, pictorially modest picture bears comparison with the most celebrated productions of the exquisite eighteenth century art, for its finesse of design as well as for its sure

and delicate technique. But who was Shebanov? We have only two authentic works by him: the portrait just mentioned and another masterpiece, the portrait of Catherine in a fur hat (the original is in the Kamennoostrov Palace). Shebanov appears on the horizon of Russian art like a fantastic meteor. It is certain that he was Prince Potyomkin's serf; it is supposed further that he was a student at the Academy, and, finally, we are told that it was in Kiev that he painted the portraits of Catherine and her favourite, Mamonov. Despite the success of these works, the name of the artist does not occur again in the annals of art.

Only three portraits are left from the work of Drozhzhin, Levitzky's disciple. Of these, one having the character of a self-portrait (in the Tretyakov Gallery) is especially good. The other two are also noteworthy: one is a curious family group (portrait of Antropov with wife and son, in the hall of the Council of the Academy of Arts); the other is an elegant portrait of the handsome dandy, Maltitz (*ibid.*). In addition to these there are known only a few icons of his, which are mediocre copies from famous originals. Fate has been even less favourable to Miropolsky (1759–1828), and Komezhenkov (born in 1760). Of the works of the first, only two portraits—that of the painter Kozlov, in the Academy, and that of Prince Vyazemsky, in the

Archives of the Foreign Office—have come down to us; the work of the second is represented only by a single portrait of doubtful authenticity. The portrait of Kozlov stands comparison with the best works of Levitzky and justifies the kind of fame which the artist enjoyed among his contemporaries. The portrait of the "animal painter" Grot, by Komezhenkov, is weaker in tone and less perfect in painting, yet it is a work of decidedly European merits. The work of other renowned artists of the times, such as Golovachevsky (1734–1823) and Sablukov (1735–1778) is represented only by copies.

Let us mention here also the portrait of the young Prince Shcherbatov in a hunter's dress, by P. I. Sokolov, who died prematurely (he is better known as an historical painter), an admirable pastel portrait of Count Rumyantzev, executed by Sazonov in the style of the eighteenth century; finally, an energetic oil self-portrait of the engraver Chemesov (property of Mme. Myatlev), and two excellent miniatures by Cherepanov (1765). These are the scattered particles and crumbs, left of the most brilliant period of Russian portrait painting, which developed owing to the influx of first-rate foreign masters, but was not duly appreciated by a society indifferent to art.

The luckiest of these masters was another serf-artist,

"owned" by the refined and sympathetic Count N. P. Sheremetyev. We refer to Nicholas Argunov, the son and pupil of the above-mentioned Ivan Argunov. N. Argunov had no great pictorial gifts. Compared with the portraits of his less fortunate, but more talented colleagues: Shebanov, Drozhzhin, and Miropolsky, Argunov's paintings seem coarse, dry, dull. They have few purely pictorial merits—correct, careful, somewhat mechanical drawing, respectable vivacity of expression, but alongside these are very dull colours and very dull painting. Argunov methodically copied what he saw, and owing to this quiet regularity, his portraits have a value as historical documents. Some of them are invaluable for the history of costume. Others render with perfect accuracy the appearance of curious personalities of those times. First among these is the family of Count N. P. Sheremetyev and his poetical wife, the former singer in the Count's domestic opera, recruited from among the serfs. Argunov's best portraits are kept in Sheremetyev's estate, Kuskovo, near Moscow.

A word must be said, in closing, about Shchukin, after Borovikovsky, the most talented of Levitzky's pupils. In his first-rate Portrait of a Lady, in the Tretyakov Gallery, he reached high pictorial perfection and created one of the most picturesque works of the Russian School; his portrait of himself in the Academy of

Arts, is painted throughout in an unusually harmonious and beautiful colour-gamut, which reminds one of Greuse and even of older masters; and his portrait of Alexander I is by no means inferior in pomposity to the official portraits of Borovikovsky or N. Argunov. Yet our conception of Shchukin is strangely unsettled: he is too versatile and, at the same time, never very pronounced, never very characteristic. He is a good artist of a vivid talent, impressionable, but superficial and vacillating. One masterpiece, however, he did create. It is the portrait of Paul I (in Gatchina), which is worth a whole historical treatise—the most characteristic and expressive of all the portraits of the tragical and enigmatical figure of Catherine's successor.

It has been mentioned already that along with the portraitists of the first period of Russian painting, the landscape painters also deserve the historian's attention. Indeed, some of the masters of landscape, who became prominent under Catherine, still preserve their importance. Already under Elizabeth we find Makhayev, whose works, if they do not reveal any talent, show that the teaching of perspective in the Academy reached a fairly high level. Another artist, Perezinotti's pupil, Alexyey Byelsky, who also became prominent under Elizabeth and who took part in the decora-

tion of the Tzarskoye Selo Palace, testifies even more eloquently to the height attained by the instruction in technique of the period.

Byelsky was in his time known as a stage decorator, but his oil paintings alone have come down to us. His "Ruins" (in the Museum of Alexander III and the Tzarskoye Selo Palace) are little more than an absurd accumulation of Bibiena's barocco. They have not a trace of the orderliness and grandeur, by which the compositions of Pannius and Hubert Robert are distinguished. And yet, Byelsky is an astonishing phenomenon in mid-eighteenth-century Russia. The very fact that he was able to master such a tremendous mass of forms, that he was able to glue together into one whole all these arcs, colonnades, pilons, and, thus, solve problems most difficult in their way, commands our respect.

Unfortunately, Byelsky had no worthy successors among his compatriots. Russian architectural painting produced one more artist, the feeble Farafontyev, and then fell into a state of complete oblivion. People were compelled to summon foreign stage decorators, of whom the most celebrated were the two Gradizzi, Tischbein, the older Gonzago, Canoppi and Coller. In the middle of the nineteenth century architectural painting disappears completely, as it found no appre-

ciation in a society which was growing coarser. As to decorative painting, it settles into that dull groove of archæological realism and cheap *féerie* effects in which it still runs.

A whole pleiad of artists continued the work of the topographer Makhayev. At that time there was felt a real need for them, born of the same impulse that made the Russian noblemen have their portraits painted. It was the time of proud self-immortalisation. Russia of the old régime, that is, before the reign of Peter the Great, was little more than one vast, uniform, wretched village, with the exception of Moscow, Kazan and, perhaps, a couple of other cities. Civil architecture was in the embryonic state. Even the czar's palaces were accumulations, picturesque, but absurd in their confusion. These home-bred surroundings did not rhyme with the caftans and wigs of the nobility. There arose an urgent need of a regulation of architecture and horticulture. Both Peter and his successors, especially Elizabeth and Catherine, took serious interest in the building of palaces and villas, and in cultivating gardens and parks. Following their example, the magnates began to build, and toward the end of the century all the nobility was seized by the building mania.

Of course, just as all these caftans, rapiers, and wigs

were something in the nature of a masquerade, so this decoration was illusory, but as the deceptive illusion had all the appearance of reality, it captivated and led astray the most sceptical travellers. It was necessary to keep up this valuable illusion to the very last detail; that is why Peter paid so much attention to the art of topographical engraving. Etchings of newly erected palaces and gardens recently laid out spread throughout the world, and everywhere they created the impression of extraordinary prosperity and of the extraordinary, perfectly European refinement of Russian life. Under Paul a special class was established at the Academy of Arts with the purpose of educating such landscape engravers, but soon after the need of that showy branch of art disappeared, partly because the building fever ceased, partly because of the deep change which occurred in European culture. The art of Merian, Silvestre, Lepautre, Perelle, Piranelli, Belotto and others died out together with the generation of the great artists who erected the magnificent palaces and villas.

Of the Russian architectural and landscape painters three gained prominence under Catherine, the older Shchedrin, Th. Alexeyev and M. Ivanov. Others, such as Prichetnikov, Sergeyev, Moshkov and Petrov were almost the equals of these masters.

Semyon Shchedrin (1745–1804) had no great talent. Some of his pictures and paintings in water colours are executed in an amateur-like and even childish fashion. His colours are dry and dark; the design is timid and betrays his lack of skill. Some of his works, however, are distinguished by haunting, although hardly artistic charm, and justify the fame he enjoyed among his contemporaries. Shchedrin knew how to handle a given landscape so as to produce a striking effect; he felt the fascination of fountains playing their jets among verdure, and he revelled in the favourite motives of the times, such as deserted nooks, exquisite meadows, white cottages mirroring themselves in crystalline ponds. At school he learned the now forgotten science of grouping landscape motives, and his naïve attitude toward nature developed in him, to a certain extent, the sense of colour. His best works in the Gatchina and Pavlovo Palaces, when compared with Hubert Robert's productions, look like parodies on the works of the latter, yet they are not entirely devoid of decorative beauty and even of intimate gentle poetry.

Mikhail Ivanov (1748–1823) is a greater master than Shchedrin. His water-colour views of Tzarskoye Selo and of sites visited by Catherine and Poty-

omkin (kept in the Hermitage, Tzarskoye Selo, and in Parlovsk) reveal a great, almost "English" knowledge of the intricate and troublesome water-colour technique. Besides, Ivanov drew figures very well, mastered perspective, and generally in contradistinction to the modest, home-bred Shchedrin, he came up to Western standards. His répertoire also was broader. He easily mastered complex scenes, even essayed military[1] compositions, and seems to have been a good cartoonist. Nevertheless, his works are less attractive than those of Shchedrin. There is too much skill and dexterity in them, and too little attention to nature. Ivanov, an artist of the manneristic type—in Paris he was a pupil of Leprince—had also all the equipment of a decorative artist, but works of this type have not come down to us.

Infinitely greater than Shchedrin and Ivanov in talent is Fyodor Alexyeyev (1753–1824), one of the best masters of the whole Russian school. Unfortunately, we are able to estimate the pictorial gift of this artist by no more than two or three productions—whereas the rest of his numerous paintings are routine and dull. Amongst Alexyeyev's masterpieces the foremost place

[1] The artist, who accompanied Potyomkin in his campaigns, painted, from nature, many episodes of the Turkish war, among others "The Storming of Ochakov." (Author's note.)

belongs to his first-rate picture in the Museum of Alexander III. It is the "Quay of the Neva," executed in glowing colours laid on thick, with a skill unusual even for Western art, in a wonderfully gorgeous colour-scale. The work makes it evident that Alexeyev diligently studied the landscape-painters of his times: B. Belotto and Hubert Robert, and his numerous excellent copies from these masters corroborate this conjecture. Of nearly equal merit are his Neva landscapes in the Winter and Tzarskoye Selo Palaces, and in the Tretyakov and Yusupov galleries. Far weaker are his Moscow and Crimea landscapes. Educated on the architectural forms of the classical West, having borrowed his noble, somewhat monotonous palette from Belotto, Robert and Guardi—he was dazed in the motley, grotesque Moscow and under the shining sun of the South. And so, quite in keeping with the spirit of his times, he lent Moscow the character of a romantic "Gothic" city. Nevertheless, even in these productions, Alexyeyev is superior to all his Russian colleagues and even such foreign masters as Paterson and Damame.

These pictures, too, are notable for the truly artistic temperament, the sense of colour, and the great technical knowledge they display. What lends a peculiar charm to Alexeyev's paintings are the human figures

PORTRAIT OF F. BOROVSKY — *Vladimir Borovikovsky*

enlivening them. The master delighted in noting realistic details in them, and this trait bestows upon his work a great historical interest.

It seems proper here to anticipate somewhat and to treat a group of artists who, although they lived in the nineteenth, kept up the landscape traditions of the eighteenth century. All these artists were by no means landscape painters in our acceptance of the term. Nature, her moods and colours held no interest for them; they, too, were typical, somewhat narrow "view-painters," to use the contemporary term, that is, portraitists of definite localities. Those, however, who were endowed with a more artistic soul could not help introducing some poetry into their copying. They also mastered, more or less completely, the delicate problems of light and colour.

Among these artists belong Galaktionov, Martynov, Maxim Vorobyov, Alexander Bryullov, partly also Silvestre Shchedrin and M. Lebedev, and finally, the distant epigones of the school of M. Ivanov and F. Alexyeyev: Fricke, the brothers Chernetzov, Erassi, Lagorio, Goravsky and numerous architects who practised water-colour painting. Especially noteworthy are the first four artists. As to Silvestre Shchedrin and M. Lebedev, we shall deal with them later on, in discussing the first steps of modern landscape painting.

Galaktionov (1779–1854) was S. Shchedrin's pupil, yet his works remind one of F. Alexyeyev, rather than of his teacher. This is probably because about the time Galaktionov reached the stage of independent development, "park painting," the typical phenomenon of the eighteenth century, had ceased to be. Alexander I took more interest in cities, camps and campaigns than in epicurean life in the lap of an artistically trimmed nature. Galaktionov evinces the urban, slightly official, slightly bureaucratic spirit of the time. In his drawings and lithographs—almost none of his pictures have come down to us—which are mostly views of Petrograd, we find none of the intimacy, silence, and cosiness of Alexyeyev's pictures. Galaktionov delights in painstakingly tracing the copingstones of streets, he depicts deserted squares and renders the cold, barrack-like spirit of the Petrograd of Alexander's times. But just because of this is he precious, and even, to some extent, poetical. The typical traits of the epoch found their expression in his productions, and these views, drawn intelligently, if, pedantically, are an image, melancholy in its accuracy, of days bygone. Great charm is added to Galaktionov's paintings as well as to those of Alexyeyev by excellent, well grasped figures.

Martynov (1768–1826), who travelled far and

wide in European and Asiatic Russia and who executed thousands of very common-place water-colour paintings, which are interesting only from the topographical viewpoint, would not perhaps be worth mentioning in the history of Russian art, if not for his water-colours and his coloured lithographs of Petrograd. As a matter of fact, even these discourage one by their childish design and poor technique, but the naïve simplicity with which they are executed, the well-aimed character of the chosen points and, especially, their astonishingly just, lucid, and even poetical colour tones, assign them a modest, yet honourable place. There is in them the true mood of the Petrograd summer which is not devoid of a great and elusive charm.

Among all our "view-painters"—Maxim Vorobyov (1787–1855) was a real master and one of the most renowned artists of his times. In fact, Vorobyov is distinguished from all his colleagues by his admirable skill, the many-sidedness and the poetical quality of his conceptions. His aquarelles, modest, but executed with a great deal of taste, his oil paintings, somewhat tenuous in design and ineffective in colour, but nevertheless of a very regular execution,—all this shows an excellent schooling. Vorobyov, too, was a devotee of Petrograd; like Alexyeyev and Galaktionov,

he was captivated by the granite might, the lonely majesty, and the exquisite snobbishness of the capital. At that time Petrograd was freshly built and its deterioration had not yet begun. For its unimpaired, well sustained magnificence, for the austere, harmonious style of its buildings, which mirrored themselves in the incomparable waters of the Neva, it had no peer even in the West. Foreigners considered Petrograd the eighth wonder of the world. The artists who were educated in the Academy on classical models, were well able to appreciate the beauty of architectural forms. They were naturally carried away by the newly built grandiose edifices, such as the Palace Square, the Exchange, and the Navy Office.

Vorobyov, however, did not content himself with the purely architectural side of Petrograd. Gifted musically—Vorobyov was a good violinist—he had a feeling for the fantastic charm of moonlight effects and for the melancholy of white June nights, stretching enigmatically over the noiseless waves of the Neva. And if in these pictures, abounding in most difficult colouristic problems, he now and then fails to master the colours and falls into black tones, the fault is not so much with him as with his age, which, generally speaking, had a poor sense of colour.—Later in life Vorobyov travelled much in the East and South. His

trip to Palestine is especially famous. Unfortunately, the numerous sketches he brought from these voyages are marked by that triviality and poverty of colour with which works superficially felt are stamped, and which damage most of the works of the pupils and followers of Vorobyov.

Among these landscape painters who aimed not so much at the expression of a mood, or, at least, at accuracy in rendition, but rather at striking effects and conventional colouring, who, in short, were, after all, what is aptly denoted by the French term "*pittoresque*,"—among these painters the most noteworthy for their excellent schooling and considerable skill were the following: Maxim Vorobyov's son, Socrates,—the two Chernetzovs, who gave many purely topographic models, in finesse of workmanship sometimes hardly inferior to the best drawing by Galaktionov,—Rabus,—Rayev,—Goravsky,—the water colour painters: Beine, Klages and Premazi. To this list must be added the name of the celebrated landscape-painter Fyodor Matvyeyev (1758–1826), who specialised in Roman views. The later followers of this school were: Bogolyubov, Lagorio, Meshchersky, M. Villier, N. Makovsky, A. Orlovsky, Sudkovsky, Klever and many others. This heterogeneous group of artists may be considered as a whole, for to all of them the main aspect of their artis-

tic activity was purely exterior, whether it was a display of a dexterous manner, or a desire to strike by picturesque effects. One should not look to them for an intimate, quiet mood or for a concentrated study of nature.

Apart from them stands Alexander Bryullov (1800–1877), a good architect and an excellent master of aquarelle portraiture. He executed a series of lithographical views of Petrograd, which are superior to those of Galaktionov and Vorobyov for correctness and accuracy of plan, as well as for the magnificent design of the figures enlivening the landscapes.

CHAPTER II

CLASSICISM

SHUVALOV'S ACADEMY did not last more than five years. The Empress Catherine, unfavourably disposed toward the founder of the institution, put at the head of it I. I. Betzkoy, who enjoyed her personal favour and bore the reputation at the court, of a great educator. Unfortunately, Betzkoy proved in reality little more than a naïve and rather stubborn dilettante, and the harm he did to the education of Russian youth was in no wise diminished by those good intentions, with which, a true son of his "idealistic" age, he overflowed. The effects of Betzkoy's incompetence were strongly felt in the Academy. In his eagerness to form fine characters, the new director lost sight of the main purpose of the institution as an art school. Something in the nature of a branch of the Foundling Hospital was established at the Academy. Here were presently accepted young children, who, in most cases, had no time to show any aptitude for art. As for the artistic part of the instruction, it was definitively subordinated to the æsthetic formalism, which

has retained the name of academic classicism. For many reasons, among which the discovery of Pompeii played no small part, the West at that time was passing through something like a second classical Renaissance. The characteristic culture of the eighteenth century—that strange, morbid, and yet charming blossom—was rapidly withering. The chilling approach of the nineteenth century was felt in the air. Roman republican ideas were pressing the monarchical principle hard; the gay, carefree rococo was pining away, giving place to the stern Vitruvius, and the graceful fashions of Watteau and DeTroy were being gradually replaced by "antique" tunics, while Lessing, Winkelmann, Mengs and David were expounding the æsthetics of the new age.

Academies had existed ever since the end of the sixteenth century, since the times of Carracci. But originally Academies were a wholly sane and desirable reaction against the dissolute mannerism of the late Renaissance. Gradually they became something in the nature of official departments of art. Here sat artists, well balanced, always ready to carry out, in strict conformity with the rules of the school, the bidding of the authorities, that is of the monarch and his court. Yet, for a long time the mediæval guild principle did not cease to guide these institutions. It was the best

and most skilful masters who gathered here. They accepted obediently the various changes in taste and fashion, but conferred upon everything a certain reserve and prudence. Æsthetics, in the sense of a theory of the beautiful, scarcely influenced them, as the plastic arts at that time had not yet become a subject of æsthetic theorising. It is natural that the Academies could not have a decisive influence on the course of æsthetic development. They exerted a salutary influence on art technique, for the educational institutions, supervised and directed by the academicians, were really excellent art schools.

The second half of the eighteenth century presents a different spectacle. For some time the Academies struggle against the new classical movement, but, later on, they accept it in toto and for a period of a hundred years become its main bulwark. The terms Academy and Classicism become synonymous. At the same time the centre of artistic taste and artistic opinion shifts from the court to the Academies. Rigid and elaborate artistic doctrines make their appearance, and find the firmest support in the Academies. The former court departments became something like oligarchical "parliaments," whose verdicts in the sphere of artistic problems are not subject to appeal.—Moreover, the artistic education, which remained in their hands, is entirely

dominated by the new state of affairs. What is now taught in the art schools is not how to surmount technical difficulties, but what to consider beautiful and therefore what subjects to treat. "Academic" education becomes permeated with the classical spirit.

Much has been said about this academical classicism. There is no doubt that the so-called "David" theories are responsible for a great deal of formalism and coldness, yet it would hardly be just to allow oneself to be blinded by hate of formal æsthetics to such a degree as to overlook its good sides. Classicism killed gracefulness and life, but together with these it also killed mannerism. To its credit is that thorough artistic education, on which grew up Ingres, and on which Dégas, Ingres' greatest admirer, was brought up. In Russia, too, classicism had rather beneficent effects. We cannot expect excellent results of a system which undertook to form artists out of men, many of whom were completely lacking in natural endowments. At any rate, this rigid education gave several masters an opportunity to become prominent. Although devoid of temperament, they accumulated at the Academy a great deal of well-digested knowledge, which they were able to transmit to their more gifted pupils.

Losenko was the first of these art teachers, who inaugurated and cultivated strict artistic schooling in Rus-

sia. He endeavoured to turn the artistic education from technical practice to æsthetic theory. This tendency becomes more intelligible, if we take into consideration the fact that Losenko studied in Paris under Vien, the forerunner and teacher of David. He even published an atlas of the proportions of the *ideal* human figure. Losenko's successors in the field of art education were Akimov, Ugryumov, Shebuyev, Yegorov and Andrey Ivanov.

Early in the nineteenth century this group of artists were looked upon as "the Russian School of Painting," and there were even patriotic enthusiasts who believed they would raise Russia above the West. But this was a naïve mistake. In reality, these masters were little more than imitators of no individuality. Their excellent schooling, unsupported by any considerable natural gift, was of little use for their own artistic efforts. This schooling, however, enabled them to furnish their pupils—Kiprensky, Varnek, P. Sokolov, Bryullov, and partly Bruni—with that thorough preparation to which the latter owe the prominent places that they will forever hold in the history of Russian art.

The art of Akimov (1754–1814) was at one time praised unreservedly: "one finger painted by him," it was said, "is worth an entire picture of another painter." But, of course, these ecstasies are to be ex-

plained only by the academic æsthetics of the time. The contemporaries, treated truly great masters, such as Levitzky and Borovikovsky, with little more than contempt, because their pictures reproduced—with consummate perfection—nothing but nature. On the contrary, people swooned before "Akimov's finger," because it was presented according to all the rules and regulations of the "noble style." Akimov, however, still belongs to the eighteenth century. Just like his comrades Kozlov, Puchinov, and P. I. Sokolov, who died prematurely, he did not completely side with the intolerant fanatics of classicism. He is in quest of graceful lines and gorgeous drapery, and does not disdain "opera-house" effects, such as curved helmets and baroco plumages. This artist, who at the age of ten entered the Academy to escape utter poverty, was too much steeped in the spirit of the epigones of rococo, the traces of which are also discoverable in the first two Russian "historical" painters: Kozlov and Losenko (it is enough to remember the "St. Peter" of the first in the Museum of Alexander III, and the "Hector and Andromaque" of the second in the Academy). During his travel abroad, Akimov took a long time before reaching Rome, and at Bologna, where he was ordered to stay, he could not improve his style by the study of the manneristic masters of the seventeenth century. On his

return from foreign parts, this son of a simple composer received, owing to his achievements and genteel manners, the highest honours an artist could possibly be granted at that time. He held the office of director of the Tapestry Manufactory, gave lessons to the sons of the crown-prince, and finally, in 1796, was elected director of the Academy.

"Akimov was an intelligent artist," says Ugryumov's biographer, in 1824, "but his manner of execution could not be instructive for the young artists. A man had to come who would call their attention to true beauty, and who, in his own creations, would set an example worthy of imitation." Such an example for the young appeared in the person of Ugryumov, the teacher of Yegorov and Shebuyev, who in their turn taught Kiprensky and Bryullov. Ugryumov was, indeed, a more *definite* representative of the new tendencies. Baroco art held no temptations for him. He devoted himself wholly to the imitation of the ancient works of art, the Farnese Hercules being his chief favourite. Few of his works have reached us, but his best painting—"Yan Usmovich"—in the Academy of Art—and several drawings of his are characteristic examples of his striving to approach the ancients in power and grandeur. It seems, however, that Ugryumov was no soulless, routine academicist. Those of his portraits—he

painted quite a few of them—which have come down to us are rather characteristic. For the Mikhailovo Castle he executed two gigantic compositions from Russian history: "The Capture of Kazan," and "The Coronation of Mikhail Fedorovich." Both of them are completely devoid of historical truth, nor are they distinguished by any artistic gracefulness. If they are remarkable at all, it is rather as monuments of an interest in the Russian past, inaugurated before the advent of Karamzin.[1] Moreover, these colossal canvases executed with perfect scholastic orderliness, testify to the progress made by the academic school of painting in Russia.

Two of Ugryumov's pupils were the true fathers in Russia of a strict classicism, in the manner of David, Carstens, and Camucini. These were Yegorov (1776–1851), who won the appellation of "the Russian Raphael," and Shebuyev (1777–1855), who was known among his contemporaries as "the Russian Poussin." Yet, even these masters, when compared with their western models, seem little more than poor imitators. What in David and his pupils was conviction and ecstasy, was replaced, in Yegorov and Shebuyev, by scho-

[1] Karamzin, Nikolay Mikhaylovich (1765–1826), the author of the monumental "History of the Russian State," was the first to arouse a popular interest in the Russian past. (Translator's note.)

lastic diligence and a blind faith in the incontrovertibility of the foreign æsthetic doctrine. All the stranger then, appears to us the delight of their contemporaries in this impersonal art. The enthusiasts of our national painting went as far as to prefer the "austerity" of Yegorov and Shebuyev to the "mannerism" of the French and Italian schools. In reality, these Russian masters were even colder, even more devoid of life than their models, but they were far from having the colossal knowledge of David, Guérin, Girodet, Ingres, and even of the Italians Camucini, Pinelli and others. Shebuyev's most refined compositions betray the Russian model and somehow reveal a distant connection with the feeble icon painters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As to Yegorov, there is in him more scholastic drill than ardour: all his works are rather school-room compositions than the result of free, significant artistic efforts.

These two masters are cold, common-place, and, to a considerable degree, impotent. Yet, despite their failings, it cannot be said that there is nothing agreeable in their works. Of course, their *most celebrated* productions are their worst. Such are: Yegorov's icons, his "Flagellation of Our Saviour," and Shebuyev's famous, but rather ineffective plafond in the Tzarskoye Selo Church. But their drawings, sketches and studies are

quite pleasant. There lingers on them the reflection of the never-fading beauty of classical antiquity and the Renaissance, and although the reflection is very faint and misty, it has retained, to a certain degree, its enchantment. Whoever is able to delight in a "beautiful" composition, whoever can be moved by the unassuming beauty of interweaving rounded lines, will find pleasure—a somewhat unsavoury pleasure, perhaps—in the innumerable drawings of the two masters, which are treasured in our museums and private collections.

Along with Shebuyev and Yegorov must be mentioned Alexander Ivanov's father—the excellent draughtsman Andrey Ivanov (1775–1848). He was not untouched by the influence of the eighteenth century. The symbolical figure of "Glory" in his picture, "The Duel of Mstislav and Rededya" looks as if it had just left one of Rastrelli's plafonds. His Pechenyeg, so properly stretched at the feet of the "youthful citizen of Kiev," petrified in the race, is doubtlessly akin to the Marses of the baroco mythology. But his knowledge of the human body was, perhaps, greater than that of his more famous colleagues, especially of Shebuyev. The figures of the naked youths in the above-mentioned picture as well as the stroke, firm, and to a certain extent agreeable in its sureness and smoothness, reveal in the master a great fund of technical knowledge. But

this found almost no application, partly because Ivanov was too much absorbed by his duties at the Academy and by casual icon orders—which plagued the life out of most of our artists,—and partly because, his knowledge remained mere knowledge and found no response in the inner world of the artist, who remained, to his dying hour, nothing but an old-fashioned bureaucrat. The seeds of the wonderful classical beauty fell in Russia, in most cases, on hard, sterile soil of provincial shallow-mindedness.

Count T. P. Tolstoy (1783–1873) and Ivan Ivanov (1779–1848) form an exception. The first, a highly educated and kindly man, illustrated Bogddnovitch's tale, "The Darling," with an understanding of feminine beauty and a delicate sense of antiquity, which reminds one of Prudhon. The second, distinguished by neither great talent nor vivid imagination, retains a place of honour in the history of Russian painting owing to his vignettes, delicate, exquisite, and, sometimes, witty. True it is that four of our best artists: Kiprensky, Bryullov, Bruni, and Ivanov—were alumni of the Academy and ardent followers of the doctrines they had been taught. But, at the same time their great native gifts made them, against their own will and consciousness, the most decided enemies of the Academy. Consequently, the discussion of their artis-

tic efforts and achievements belongs to another division of this study, devoted, not to the Russian Academicism, but to the sparks of Romanticism which flashed in their art, despite the connection of these masters with the Academy.

In addition to Ugryumov, Shebuyev, and Yegorov, the Academy sent out several other artists, absolutely faithful to its spirit. The paintings of these masters: Rodchev, Sukhikh, Bezsonov, Kryukov, Volkov, have remained on the walls in the Academic Museum. The organisers of the Museum of Alexandre III could not persuade themselves to transport this collection of decent, but really dull school-room exercises, to the treasury of the national art.

CHAPTER III

ROMANTICISM

IT is customary to apply the somewhat vague and nebulous term Romanticism to the singular efflorescence of European thought which occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. The materialistic philosophy of the eighteenth century was superseded by an enthusiasm for mysticism, poetry, and religion; the rigid ideals of neo-classical art gave way to a thirst for uncouth sincerity, for "beautiful ugliness"; the cult of the line was supplanted by the unrestrained worship of colour. In literature, Schiller, Hoffmann, Byron, Shelley, Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, Musset, Th. Gautier eclipsed the glory of Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot; in music, Beethoven, Schubert and Weber overshadowed the austerely classical Glück, and the fascinating Haydn and Mozart; in painting, Géricault, Delacroix, Decamp, and the Nazarenes diverted the universal attention from infinite repetitions of the patterns of classical beauty.

In Russia, the Romantic movement found an unexpectedly loud echo, but this was confined almost com-

pletely to literature. Young Russian literature—it made its appearance under Elizabeth—presently found itself represented by men who could compare favourably with the greatest European talents. Russian letters at one proud, easy sweep soared up to the highest summit of Western culture, but neither Russian life as a whole nor particularly Russian art, was able to keep pace with literature. The fabulous precocity of Russian literature can be explained by the fact that during the long reign of Catherine II the higher class of society achieved a remarkable degree of refinement and culture. With the exception of Krylov and Koltzov, that period did not produce any great literary talents or call forth any valuable creative efforts outside of the aristocracy, or the nobility, in general. But, while the ranks of the writers were filled from the higher classes, Russian artists, on the contrary, were recruited from the middle and lower classes, which at that time possessed very little culture. Small wonder that the artist could not come up to the level of such profound and mighty representatives of Russian literature as were Pushkin, Gogol, Zhukovsky, Lermontov and the pleiad of the minor poets, known as the "Pushkin Group."

The origin of our best artists was lowly: Kiprensky and Tropinin were serfs, Varnek's father was a cabinet-maker, Alexander Ivanov was the son of a foun-

dling, etc. This fact laid its seal on their entire life, and its effect could not be removed by either the Academy, or the French language, dancing lessons, and all the drilling and schooling they went through.

The stream of outside life could not penetrate beyond the high hermetically sealed walls of the Academy. At home,—the stifling atmosphere of middle-class vulgarity and coarseness; at school,—the arid and merciless grind of a rigid education. Men moulded by such an existence could not walk hand in hand with the inspired creators of Russian literature, who absorbed both the exquisite culture of the eighteenth century and the passionate striving for spiritual regeneration which seized aching humanity after the French Revolution. Only those among the alumni of the Academy who, owing to their foreign origin, possessed a culture superior to that of their Russian comrades, created something beautiful and daring. Such was the case of Bruni and Bryullov. As for Alexander Ivanov, the greatest of this generation of gifted artists, he succeeded in freeing himself from the influence of his surroundings only after many years spent abroad, when it was already too late, on the very eve of his death.

And yet, despite its secondary position as compared to literature, Russian painting, in the first half of the

nineteenth century, went through a period of efflorescence, which has not, since, repeated itself. Despite the trammels of the Academy, the lack of culture among the artists, and their humble position in society, despite the vagueness of their aspirations and the eternal compromise between the impulses of the mind divided between the general movement and the scholastic precepts,—despite all this, there rests on these Russian artists the reflection of Romanticism, and all of them, unconscious, weak, and bewildered, as they often were, are nevertheless true children of their time.

The series of these masters of the Romantic period begins with Kiprensky, who, despite his serf origin, is in artistic temperament one of the most truly aristocratic of Russian artists. Of course, Kiprensky's personality is not so clear, pronounced, and significant as those of some French masters, his contemporaries and brothers in spirit. It is nevertheless true that Kiprensky was drawn irresistibly to what it is customary to call Romanticism,—at least, to some of its characteristic aspects. Neither the Academy nor our bureaucratic society, indifferent to problems of art, was able to check this impulse. Regardless of the example of Ugryumov, Yegorov and Shebuyev, Kiprensky took a greater interest in the old colourists, than in the cold, white plaster-of-Paris casts. Colour was his main con-

cern; he preferred it to drawing. Yet, education is second nature. The Academy inoculated him not only with a practical knowledge of drawing, but also with a theoretical cult of it. This combination of a natural inclination for colour with a thorough scholastic training could have produced the most felicitous result,—that is, a truly great master, had only Kiprensky known toward what aim to direct his powers.

His misfortune consisted in that, though a possessor of great knowledge, he did not know what to apply it to. That is why his portraits are his best achievement, the most inspired and original part of his work. Here the subject-matter is supplied by nature, yet, strange as it may appear, he is freer in his portraits than in his "free" compositions, which his academic education taught him to approach with a stock of superannuated, dead ideas and patterns. Naturally, his best portraits are the portraits of himself, where his clients' demands were not in his way and where he could give free rein to his colouristic impulses. There exists a great number of these self-portraits, and none of them resembles the other,—a manifest proof that Kiprensky, like Rembrandt, was interested not so much in resemblance as in colour effects. The most curious ones are the two likenesses in the collection of E. G. Schwarz, which came originally from the collection of Tomilov, the

patron and friend of many artists of the early nineteenth century. A gloomy, greenish tone, glaring light with deep shadows, which lend Kiprensky's good-natured face an enigmatic and weird air, mellow colours laid on thickly, somewhat slipshod drawing,—all this betrays the fact that the artist was not greatly moved by the lucidity and transparence preached by Winkelmann.

In other portraits Kiprensky is more sober, probably in order to please his clients, yet he is ever overflowing with life and passion. With the exception of his last works, Kiprensky's canvases are never dull. In the portraits of Denis Davydov and in his incomparable numerous drawings of the heroes of the Fatherland War (with Napoleon, 1812) there lives a vivid reflection of that turbulent and beautiful epoch. In his portraits of ladies Kiprensky rendered the somewhat studied sweetness and the poetic delicacy of the fair readers of Karamzin [1] and Mrs. Radcliffe. Even his portraits of venerable and heavy statesmen arrayed in stern surtouts and propped with huge frills, owe to a magnificent combination of colour tones a certain agreeable softness and a great artistic value. Unfortunately, Kiprensky's career was just the reverse of that of similarly gifted

[1] Karamzin (see note to p. 62) was the author of tales, written in the sentimental manner which was fashionable at that time in Germany and in England. (Translator's note.)

Western masters. He began with bold and vital works, but little by little he grew stiff and lifeless. This change was undoubtedly furthered by his life in Rome, which he visited twice, in 1816 and in 1826, and where he died in 1836. In spite of his passionate temperament and his astonishing love of adventure, in spite of his fantastic romance, which resulted in his marriage with his own adopted daughter, Kiprensky was transformed, in Rome, into a pedantic, at times even a commonplace, worker. In the very heyday of Romanticism Rome was still the centre of classical theories which had already served their time in other countries. In the years which saw the creation of Delacroix's "Dante and Virgil," Rome still believed in the exclusive worth of the classics and of the rigid line; and, of course, the alumnus of the Petrograd Academy, the son of the house-steward Adam Schwalbe,[1] was not the man to set at naught this doctrine. On the contrary, it took hold of him, made him seek "more dignified subjects" than portraits, and bade him ignore "frivolous colour."

Together with Kiprensky there must be mentioned the Pole, Orlovsky (1777–1832), who came to Petrograd early in the nineteenth century, after a whole series of adventures, such as a duel, an escape with a

[1] Kiprensky was the natural son of A. S. Dyakonov. Officially he belonged to the family of Adam Schwalbe, Dyakonov's serf; his last name is derived from the village where he was baptized. (Translator's note.)

band of jugglers, service in the army in the capacity of a private, and the like. In Petrograd he found numerous patrons and admirers. A pupil of Norblin de la Gourdine,—who had taken up his residence in Warsaw and was one of the best French draughtsmen of the eighteenth century,—Orlovsky, nevertheless, completely broke off with Fragonard's exquisite style. He gave himself up to caricatures and grotesque devices, and he sketched untiringly everything ugly that fell under his eye. He seemed to have taken as his motto the words "*Le beau c'est le laid*," long before "Jeune-France" inscribed them on its banner.

Orlovsky must not be judged from his pictures. Most of them are dull studies from nature, servile imitations of Potter and Wouwerman, aimed at pleasing the Russian patrons, who were desirous of having specimens of the work of our "Russian Wouwerman." The real Orlovsky appears only in his drawings, sketches, aquarelles, gouaches and pastels. It is true that he is very uneven in them. There are among them dull, commonplace landscapes, coarse and hackneyed, rough sketches, and so on. But if this accidental portion of his œuvre is discarded, there remains a sufficient number of works in which Orlovsky appears with all the foibles and fads of a flippant adventurer, whom one would take either for a quack or for a buffoon, but who,

nevertheless, was really a poet and an artist. You find among his works caricatures ridiculing the snobbishness of Paul's reign and jeering at the faded grandeur of Catherine's age; you find also—long before Decamp—a great many Oriental types, and sundry most extravagant jokes in colour and line; and there are, in addition, portraits of the heroes of the Alexandrian epic, scenes from Shakespeare's tragedies, sensational landscapes, sketches of furious skirmishes and battles. Technically, many of these works stand comparison with drawings of old masters. Perhaps Orlovsky, too, was hindered in his development by the lack of understanding on the part of the society which surrounded him. It willingly pardoned him his entertaining pranks on paper, but it would never think of admitting that this "fooling" had a serious artistic value,—at any rate, a far higher value than all his academic exercises in noble style and all his timid plagiarisms of Dutch "parlour" pictures.

It is customary to mention in connection with Kiprensky's name that of Tropinin,—next to Kiprensky the best portraitist of the beginning of the nineteenth century. But the surname of the "Russian Greuse," bestowed on Tropinin, indicates with sufficient clearness that the two masters had very little in common. Tropinin (1776–1857), Count Morkov's serf, was set

free only in his mature age. He did not have the advantage of studying abroad, and his life was one of ceaseless misery and solitude, as he shunned his own rather coarse circle and had no access to higher society. The pupil of the most uneven of Russian painters, Shchukin, he borrowed from him the "pleasant" colouring and the soft stroke, which make Tropinin the heir of the eighteenth century school. But Shchukin could not give him either firmness or great technical knowledge. With Greuse, Tropinin has in common the choice of young, sentimentally pretty heads, and mellow, quiet colour tones. Unfortunately, Tropinin later on developed a cold and smooth manner, which, evidently, was more to the taste of his chief patrons, the Moscow merchants. However, with regard to local colour and costume his portraits of the thirties and forties are of considerable value, and in skill of characterisation many of them are quite excellent. In his *genre* portraits Tropinin is very much like Venetzianov. His "flower-girls," "lace-makers," and other pictures from the life of "Moscow grisettes" breathe a candour, homely, touching, and quite distinctive. This is the only Russian offshoot, weak and short-lived, of that branch of Romanticism which in France produced Béranger and Murger.

Kiprensky and Orlovsky may be looked upon as the

forerunners of Russian Romanticism in painting. The rôle of the Russian Delacroix was played by an artist of the next generation, Karl Bryullov, who, while still at the Academy, manifested a natural gift amounting almost to genius, and who, even before his trip abroad, attracted the attention of connoisseurs. To reckon Bryullov among the romanticists is, to be sure, to force the account. The precepts of the academic school were too deeply rooted in him; moreover, by nature he was rather light-minded and external. But the cycle of subjects he treated, his own life, burned up in a sort of bacchanalian whirlwind, his yearning for high ideas and eternal glories amidst the welter of workaday prose, his intimacy with the best Russian poets, and, finally, his irresistible gravitation toward wildest colour effects,—all this makes us consider Bryullov a representative of that same current of European art, which in Western painting brought forth Géricault, Delacroix, Decamp, and many others. Unhappily, Bryullov's colossal talent could not fully unfold itself in the Russian academy or society, nor could his life in Rome further his development. His excessive arrogance, coupled with the lack of thoughtful penetration in his attitude toward his surroundings was also responsible for his failure to produce an art of all-human significance and eternal beauty. The French would even

consider it strange that we rank Bryullov among the romanticists. They would rather classify him with Ingres or even Delaroche, Cogniet and Gallet. In fact, our "genius" Bryullov had too much in common with these masters of "Juste Milieu," in his subject-matter, as well as in the ensemble of his far too external technique.

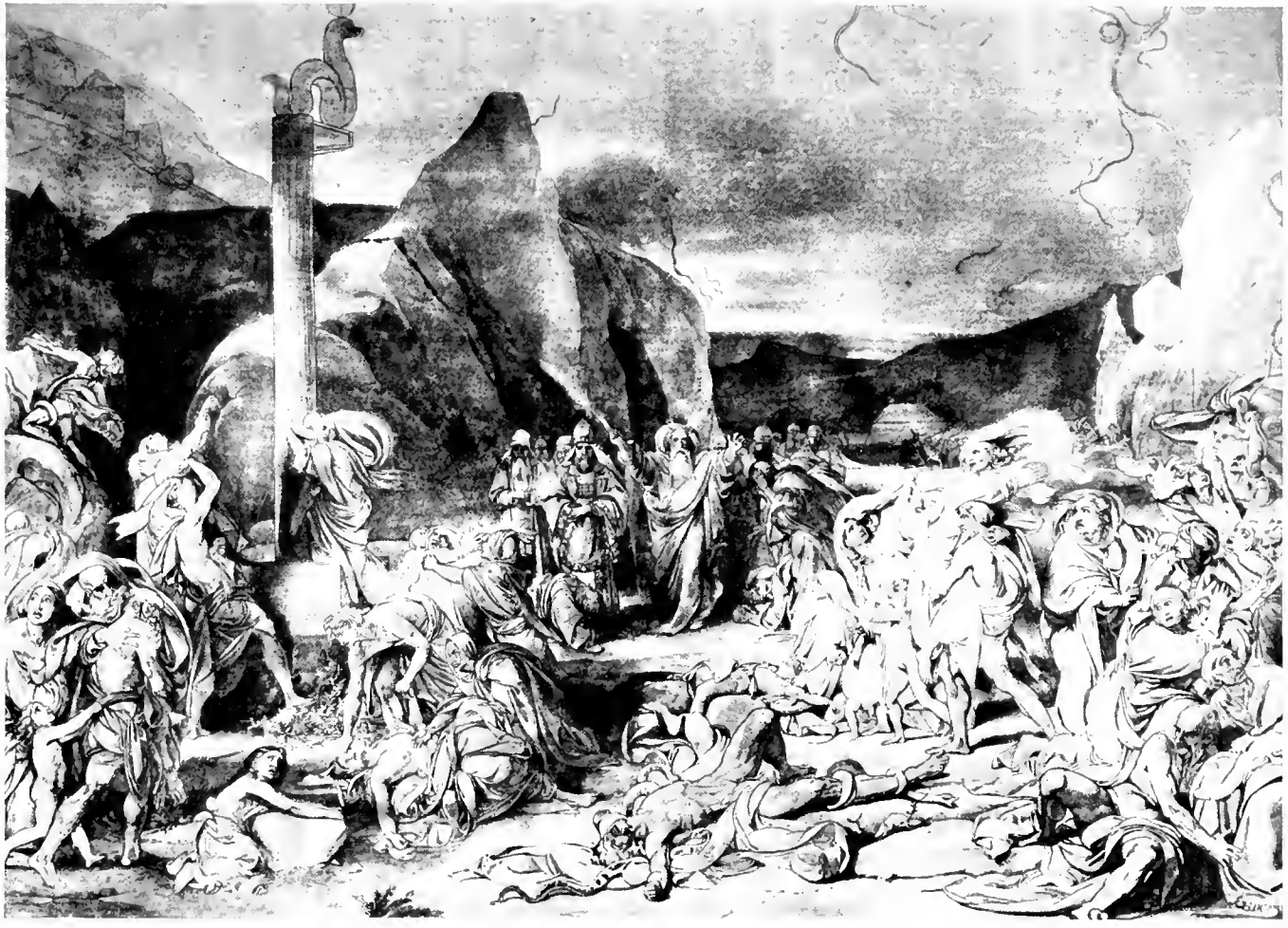
Karl Bryullov (1799–1852), the son of a skilled carver of Catherine's times, was a sickly and pitiable child, but very early he manifested a remarkable gift for drawing. His father developed this gift. Without taking pity on the boy, he forced little Karl to an unremitting study of nature, and punished him severely for laziness or blunders. Small wonder that, having passed through so severe a preparatory school, Bryullov outstripped his schoolmates at the Academy, and caused the whole Academic Areopagus to go into transports of delight. His immediate instructor, Andrey Ivanov, went so far as to buy with his own, hard-earned money, Bryullov's painting "Narcissus," an allegorical work of a purely academic character, not entirely devoid of eighteenth century affectation. A wholly mature master, but not a fully developed personality, Bryullov came to Italy, on a scholarship given by the recently established Society for the Encouragement of

Artists. The narrow æstheticism which the Russian Academy had taught him and which combined a worship of the ancient, as well as of the Bolognese masters, —screened from him living reality. He did not go beyond what the models of Piazza di Spagna gave him. He did not feel the sheer stupidity of that pink-coloured, mawkish idealisation, pleasant but trite, which made Italian life appear in the eyes of tourists as nothing but an illustration to their favourite operas, canzonettas, and romances. His compositions from Italian life differ little from the album and keepsake platitudes, supplied in hundreds by specialists in depicting "happy Italy." But, at the same time, ambitious plans tormented him, and he tried one theme after another, in his eagerness to justify the expectations founded on his talents.

Only eight years after his arrival in Italy Bryullov struck a subject which captivated him and led him to the creation of the long-expected chef-d'œuvre. The thought of painting "The Last Day of Pompeii" was suggested to him by his visit to the ruins of the buried city and by the opera of the now forgotten Paccini "Il ultimo giorno di Pompeii," which he saw at Naples. In three years Bryullov's masterpiece was completed, and, naturally enough, it reflected all the defects of his

nature as well as of his education. As a result we have a work rich in striking effects, full of studied arrangement, but superficial, and of dubious taste.

Nevertheless, "The Last Day of Pompeii" cannot be denied a considerable permanent artistic value. Its glaring, frigid colours, its smooth stroke, the classical triteness of the figures, the lack of movement and vitality in the composition,—all this is unable to do away with the general impression, which is one of great power, although, of course, it is the power not of Weber or Schubert, but that of Meyerbeer or Halévi. Whatever its failings may be, Bryullov's "Pompeii" is a good theatrical spectacle, *à grand fracas*, executed with an astonishing amount of technical knowledge and with contagious enthusiasm. It is true that this enthusiasm was the cold passion of an ambitious man, whose aim it was to astound the world. True fervour and genuine passion are alien to the beauty of this painting, but with the public at large this very peculiarity of "The Last Day of Pompeii" could pass for a merit,—for, genuine passion, the cry of a soul deeply wounded or transported with delight, is least agreeable to "reasonable" people. The best portion of the picture is the disorderly group of fugitives forcing the door of a falling house. In this intertwined knot of human bodies, among which the calm face of the artist himself stands



THE BRAZEN SERPENT

Fyodor Bruni

out, producing a striking effect, Bryullov exhibited such consummate workmanship, both in drawing and in painting, as it would perhaps be hard to find in the school of David or even in the works of the Bolognese masters. How true an artist dwelled in this painter is attested also by his numerous sketches for "The Last Day of Pompeii," all of them far more "Romantic" than the masterpiece itself.

It is as to a triumph that Bryullov came back to Russia, but, naturally, the artist who in his best, most ardent years had not freed himself from a compromise between the antiquated scholastic precepts and his own propensities, was not able now to create something more vital and beautiful. What awaited him at home was least favourable for the development of the artist: he found in Russia a society, at heart utterly indifferent to art; then along came honours, official orders, and an intoxicating cult formed by his pupils and other artists. Despite his many failings, Bryullov at once occupied the foremost place in the artistic world, and this kingly rôle put him in a false position, raised him above life, and cut off his connections with it. Bryullov made an attempt to create something even more magnificent than "The Last Day of Pompeii," but his "Siege of Pskov," the first manifestation of the ill-fated nationalistic and official current in Russian art, remained an

unfinished and absurd cacophony of the widest colours. In his decorations of the cupola of the St. Isaak Cathedral, Petrograd, he attempted to reproduce the swing of the Bologna masters, but he produced little more than a trite pastiche. Unnerved by dissipation, deeply disappointed in his own artistic efforts, he fell ill and died at the age of fifty-two, in Rome, his country by adoption.

The best of Bryullov's work that has remained is incontestably his portraits, as well as various, unfortunately too few, studies from nature, landscapes, types, especially those sketched during his travels in Minor Asia, in 1835.

His portraits undoubtedly belong to the best created in this branch of painting during the entire nineteenth century. Truth to say, even here he is not free from his habitual defects, such as somewhat motley colours and a composition rich in importunately sensational effects. Nevertheless, these paintings make a deep impression, owing to their vitality, to the great talent they reveal, and to the technical skill with which they are executed. In them, Bryullov, the virtuoso, appears in all his splendour. But, strange to say, this artist, external, and prone to histrionic effects as he was, is least successful in those of his portraits which are of an official, or, in general, of a grand, showy character.

They are too superficial and banal. On the contrary, his intimate portraits are of the highest merit, and among them the best are his aquarelles and pencil drawings, in which he rendered the features of his numerous friends with the delicacy and precision of an Ingres and often with a great charm of colouring.

In spite of Bryullov's success, which was unprecedented and has never since repeated itself, he did not create in Russia a real school. Yet his ascendency manifested itself in the entire academic art; moreover, it has outlived academicism by many years and has disappeared only in our own generation. Closest to him stood Count G. G. Gagarin and von-Moller—both amateurs rather than professional artists. Gagarin (1810–1895) was brought up, so to speak, on the cult of Bryullov. The latter frequented the house of his father in Rome, and the young count had the opportunity of watching, day by day, the development of the master and of assimilating his manner as it unfolded itself. Hence—the striking similarity of Gagarin's manner to that of Bryullov, noticeable more in drawing than in painting. With respect to colour Gagarin remained a dilettante given to glaring effects. His drawings, on the contrary, are among the best that have been done in the Russian school. His sketches of mountaineers, his Caucasus landscapes, his portraits, all kinds of odds

and ends—bear the imprint of high craftsmanship, of classical simplicity, and of a great power of characterisation. Equally superb are his water-colours, which are free from the customary defects of his oil paintings. Moreover, even his canvases illustrating different episodes of the conquest of Caucasus are, in spite of all their technical defects, probably the best war paintings of the reign of Nicholas I. At any rate, they overflow with ardent nervosity and romantic boldness, and have the convincing power of an eye-witness's tale.—In the second part of his life this big artist became enamoured of Byzantinism and began to preach, by word and deed, this beautiful, but incontestably superannuated art. It was then that Gagarin turned into that dull icon-painter and insipid architect, who is sufficiently known by his buildings and projects, as well as by the drawings which found hospitality alongside his magnificent sketches in the room of the Museum of Alexander III, which is devoted to the *œuvre* of the master. It must not be forgotten, however, that this enthusiasm for Byzantinism was a logical deduction from the romantic cult of the Middle Ages. The feeble and unsuccessful attempts to revive the Byzantine and Russian styles are nothing but a local version of the "Gothic Propaganda" of the West.

Von-Moller (1812–1875) won fame by a painting

PORTRAIT OF A LADY *Orest Kipnensky*

which Bryullov in his best days could have signed. It is the famous "Kiss," hackneyed by innumerable reproductions. This work, naive, and somewhat motley from the standpoint of colour, but fairly animated, breathing the youth of its author, belongs to that Italian, masked-ball variety, in which the European public took so much pleasure after the successes of L. Robert and Riedel. In the same spirit Moller executed a few other quasi-Italian and quasi-Romantic themes. Then came a change. Carried away by Overbeck's preaching, he devoted himself completely to his vast composition: "St. John Preaching at Patmos" (1857). The failure of this picture was the result of its ugly pink-azure colouring, of its conventional rounded composition, of its naïve contrasts and the mawkish expression on the faces of the personages.

With the exception of Alexander Ivanov, who stands somewhat aloof from the main stream of Romanticism, this movement did not produce in Russia a single great and original artist, but each of the romantic currents found there an echo. If Bryullov must be considered the representative of the historical tendencies of Romanticism, Bruni (1800–1875) is undoubtedly the echo of the Nazarenes. Only, however, a very faint echo. The mystical aspirations of the Nazarenes were mingled in his æsthetic formula, in a most bizarre manner,

with academic Classicism. He never emerged from this compromise: on the one hand, owing to his education, he was too strongly impregnated with Classicism, on the other hand, his inner nature did not allow him either to break off with the Nazarene art, or to devote himself to it, heart and soul. His very life was not favourable to the development in him of an all-consuming passion and of a singleness of purpose: it flowed too quietly. Hardly out of school, he became famous through his magnificent painting "The Death of Camilla," which he completed at the age of twenty-two, and which is the best specimen in the Museum of Alexander III of the classical Russian school. In Rome, he fell in with sympathetic and restful people, among whom he continued his studies quietly and methodically. Bryullov's fame and the importunities of his admirers led him to essay his powers in the field of "colossal" art. Bruni's "Brazen Serpent" came seven years after "The Last Day of Pompeii." Although its success was not so great as that of Bryullov's masterpiece, it was met with universal, though calm enthusiasm. Henceforward, the names of Bryullov and Bruni, strangely alliterative as they are, become inseparable, and are always uttered in the same breath. When the new Petrograd Museum, now the Hermitage, was built, these two giants of Russian Painting

found place on one wall. When, later on, they were transported to the Museum of Alexander III, they were again hung together, as if they were really twins. After the creation of the "Brazen Serpent" Bruni's life flowed on in an even and undisturbed stream. Struggle was unknown to him. He was overburdened with orders for church decorations; in addition, his small icons and images were immediately bought up by amateurs. The rest of his time he devoted to pedagogical activity at the Academy, where he held the office of rector for sixteen years. He was also in charge of the Mosaics Department, and of the Hermitage.

Bruni is looked upon in Russia as a mystic. In fact, this intelligent and keen man was not averse to the profundities of religious thought and religious poetry, yet it can hardly be asserted that his art possessed a great depth. Bruni is, above all, a decorator, a great master of grouping, colouring and painting, but all these merits of his are purely external. On the contrary, the types he created are mere conventional outlines, his pathos is theatrical, and his mystical "visions" show too clearly the threads they are sewn with, what the French call "*truc*." Of course, this in no way deprives him of the high place he occupies. Let us remember that Raphael's, too, was an external talent. In the magnificence of his well sustained and nearly flawless work-

manship, Bruni is far superior to the uneven and often insipid Bryullov; but, in his turn, Bruni is second to Bryullov in temperament. Herein lies the cause of the unpopularity of Bruni; his art completely satisfied the official demands and delighted the experts, but it was not given to it to impress the crowd,—a quality possessed by the works of Bryullov in an eminent degree.[1]

Bryullov's prestige was so great, that the number of his pupils was simply tremendous, yet there were no genuine artists among them. Tyranov (1808–1859), known by a charming, intimate picture, made the lovers of Bryullov's conventional manner very hopeful by his "Girl with a Tabourine," a worthy pendant to Moller's "Kiss." Kapkov (1816–1854) comes near to Bryullov in his portraits, but he remained a half-developed, lifeless artist. Petrovsky,—Rayev, a good

[1] The "Nazaritic" movement influenced also the art of von-Moller, who has been already treated, and of G. von Reutern (1794–1865). The latter was more of an amateur and produced a very limited number of paintings. His best works are sketches,—of extreme delicacy and executed in the spirit of the Dutch primitives,—and also portraits, characteristic and pedantically accurate. His painting, "Abraham's Sacrifice," in the Museum of Alexander III, is very popular among admirers of scrupulous accuracy in painting, but it is of small artistic interest. It must be admitted, however, that the angel on this picture would be a credit to any one of Dominichino's canvases.—It will be proper to mention here that the Nazaritic movement was first made known in Russia by two Germans, who settled in Petrograd in the twenties. These were the two bosom-friends, Hippius and Ignatius, both of them—tender, naïve romanticists without talent. (Author's note.)

landscape painter, who turned, for no reason whatever, to historical painting,—Lapchenko,—Zavyalov, and Shamshin, Basin's pupils, hopelessly dull official painters, who did not escape the contagion of Bryullov's sensational effects,—all these do not add any charm to this current of Russian painting. Greater values were contributed by the next generation. True followers of Bryullov were: Gay, who will be treated shortly,—Flavitzky (1830–1866), a master not without temperament, responsible for the touching "Princess Tarakanov," one of the most popular works of the entire Russian school,—Plyeshanov (1829–1882), known chiefly as the painter of "Ivan the Terrible and the Priest Silvestre,"—and P. P. Chistyakov, the painter of "Sophie, the daughter of Vitovt." Finally, Bryullov's influence can be traced in the last great representatives of our academic art: in K. Makovsky, G. Semiradsky, Mikyeshin, Polyenov and Iacobi.

The foremost among these masters is K. Makovsky, incontestably one of the greatest talents of the Russian School of Painting. Makovsky's misfortune lies in his age; the formative period of his artistic personality coincided with the reign of what may be termed "the décadence of Romanticism," and all his life K. Makovsky remained an epigone of Romanticism, in spite of his temporary infatuation with the civic propaganda of

the sixties, and the rare concessions he made to the æsthetic programme of the "Wanderers." He came too late to join the "school," which trained Bryullov, and it is as a half-schooled genius that he appears throughout his motley, multiform art.

In the fifties and sixties, when all of "Jeune-France" and "Jung Deutschland" had turned into venerable professors, the romantic currents degenerated into something decrepit and senile. The narrow, cold rationalism of Wilhelm von Kaulbach and Jean Flandrin replaced the ardent ecstasies of the Nazarenes; costume painting of the type produced by Piloty and Gérome flooded historical painting; frivolous and mawkish fancy took the place of Hoffmannesque fantastic flights, so characteristic of the twenties and the thirties; loose drollery supplanted the caustic satire on which was brought up the great school of political caricaturists with Daumier at its head. The spirit of true Romanticism continued to live, just as it lives in our own times, but the forms of its manifestation had changed. In a certain sense, Millet, all the Barbizon painters, Böcklin, the English Pre-Raphaelites, our own Ivanov —were romanticists, but in their own times they were apparently antagonists of Romanticism, for at that time it is such genuine decadents as Kaulbach, Delaroche with his numerous followers, the Düsseldorf mas-

ters, and the "Belgians," who considered themselves,—with the complete assent of the public at large,—the true heirs of the Romantic æsthetics. The genuinely great art of the West did not reach Petrograd. Neither Millet, nor Böcklin, nor the Pre-Raphaelites, nor our own Ivanov found a single vivid echo in Russia,—at any rate, not a single true follower. But this senile pseudo-Romanticism penetrated into all the pores of the culture of our higher classes, together with the fashions and morals of the Second Empire. Characteristic of those times is the great success in Russia of artists like the sugared Chopin, the mawkish Neff, and, especially, Zichy, who came to Russia late in the forties. The latter, a highly gifted master of a perfect technique is such a pronounced representative of the Romantic decadence that he would merit to be treated here at some length, did he not rank himself among Western painters.

It is in this atmosphere that K. Makovsky was brought up, and its reflection lies on the whole of his output. His colours are derived from the palette of Neff and Zichy, his themes have the insipidity peculiar to all "costume" painters; as a fantastic artist he does not go beyond the sensuality which marks all the salon art which flooded the art market in the middle of the nineteenth century, at the moment of the triumph of

materialism. In addition, K. Makovsky, we repeat, came too late to find a school. The Academy, once a secluded and inexorably rigorous educational institution, but now a free art-school, was no more the guardian of drawing and of strict and systematic technique, as in the days of Bryullov's youth. Masters like Yegorov and Shebuyev had disappeared. Bryullov, it is true, inaugurated something in the nature of a revival at the Academy, but this had only negative results, such as a neglect of drawing and a pursuit of cheap sensational effect. In the fifties, the Academy, despite the effort of the council headed by Bruni, was falling into decay, and it was then (in 1858) that K. Makovsky entered it.

Makovsky's vast canvases with their almost indecent nymphs, with their tasteless conglomeration of theatrical properties, with their glaring sugared colours, with their uncertain drawings—are far from making an agreeable impression. But in the course of time the attitude toward him is likely to change. For all his defects, Makovsky stands forth on the dull, grey background of Russian art, a vivid figure, an artist of a passionate temperament, and one who was able to infect other people with his enthusiasm. The patina of time will not shield his pictures from harm, for the patina of time beautifies only that which is beautiful in itself.

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

Karl Bryullov

At any rate, Makovsky's pictures will remain a monument of the tendencies of a definite period of Russian culture, and, as such, they will retain a great, though not purely artistic interest. Quite apart stand several of his *genre* pictures with subjects taken from Russian reality. These are the monuments of his temporary adherence to the camp of the "Wanderers." To them belong "The Show-booths at the Palace Square," a vivid and touching illustration of the old Russian carnival which is now a thing of the past.

Semiradsky (1843–1902) is, in comparison with Makovsky, a greater master. In some respects this artist could even pass for an innovator. The splendour of his colours, a correct rendering of sun effects, a beautiful, picturesque technique in places,—all this was a real revelation for the generation of Russian artists of the sixties and seventies. Unfortunately, in vitality of talent Semiradsky was inferior to Makovsky. His compositions on antique themes are little more than excellent landscapes and "still-life's," among which, to meet the demands of historical painting, are placed, for no apparent reason whatever, lifeless and dull figures. Only in those pictures where these figures, in comparison with the landscape and the accessories, play a subsidiary part, does Semiradsky retain a certain charm. On the other hand, in his vast and intricate

composition, the eye is struck by his lack of dramatic gift, the poverty of his imagination, and the schematic character of the faces.

Closely related to Semiradsky is V. Polyenov, who deserves the attention of the historian of Russian art, as a socially spirited leader and as a man of unusual refinement and culture. The best that he created are unassuming, but poetically conceived Russian landscapes. Much poorer are his celebrated Oriental sketches, which strike one disagreeably with their mawkish colours and amateur painting. Least comforting are his historical compositions, which, while having all the defects of Semiradsky's paintings, are inferior to them in colour and technique.

Mikyeshin (1836–1896), to be considered with K. Makovsky, is one of the most gifted Russian artists. He entangled himself in his own talent, so to speak, and his bootless imitation of Zichy turned him into a disagreeably dashing, trivial and superficial mannerist. A few drawings and sketches and some of his modest aquarelles—are the sole title to a place in the Pantheon of Russian painting of this monument-designer and "historical" painter. This cannot be repeated of Iacobi. The whole of his *œuvre* with its wardrobe of insipid masquerade costumes, and all its badly drawn puppets,—would have been relegated to the archives,

if not for his painting, "The Convicts at the Resting-place," one of the first Russian denunciatory pictures. It is true that its artistic merits are not great. Its colours and painting are below criticism. But the picture is too deeply characteristic and too cleverly arranged not to make us regret that Iacobi did not remain faithful to this realistic kind, in which he surely would have given Russian society many a successful and well-aimed illustration of the burning problems of his day.

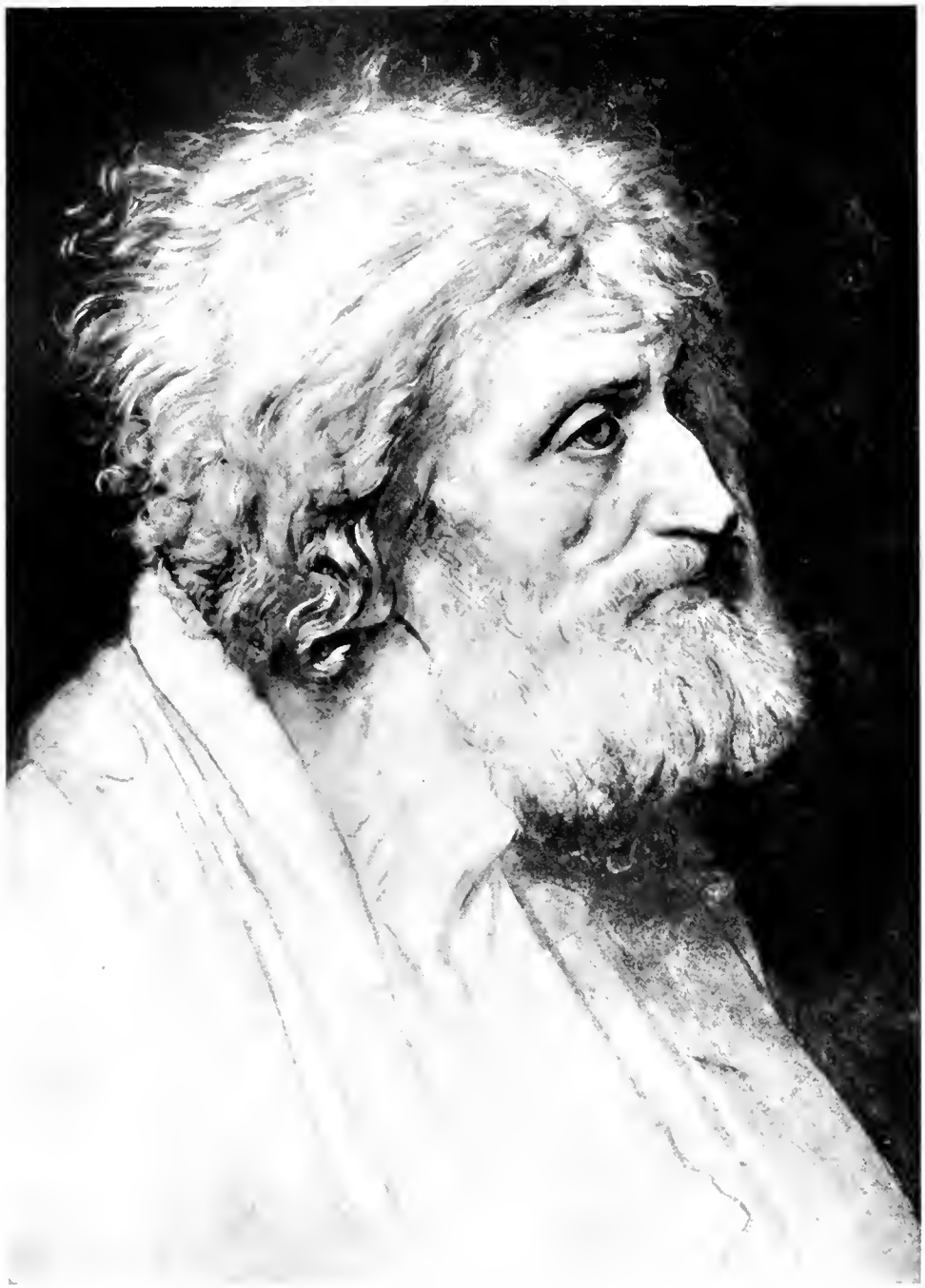
In addition to these masters, the following two groups of epigones of Romanticism are noteworthy: Bronnikov, Smirnov, the brothers Svyedomsky, and Bakalovich,—all followers of Semiradsky; Beideman, Vasilyev, and Wenig, the disciples of Bruni. Quite alone stands the curious, but undeveloped Lomtev, and the "sea poet" Ayvazovsky, a highly gifted, but somewhat monotonous Romanticist. We shall return to him in the chapter on Russian landscape painting.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS PAINTING

(ALEXANDER I. IVANOV, 1806–1858)

ALEXANDER IVANOV, too, belongs to Romanticism. As a man of unusual and lofty seriousness, of a truly mystical nature and of a penetrating inner vision, he deserves, more than the noisy Bryullov and the superficial Bruni, to be enrolled in the Honour Legion of true romanticists. His artistic views were undoubtedly formed under the influence of Overbeck's romantic art and Gogol's mystical preaching. Nevertheless, Ivanov must not be considered a true representative of Romanticism. In part he did not grow up to it, and in part he went beyond it. In whatever he accomplished, he remained too dependent upon the intellectuality and conventionality of classicism; in whatever he wished to achieve, in whatever he left unfinished,—half-ready, awaiting, as it were, the final consummation—Romanticism remained infinitely far behind him. He was the only one among Russian artists to approach in stature the giants of



THE HEAD OF THE APOSTLE ANDREW

Alexandre Ivanov

Russian letters: to the Slavophiles, to Gogol, and partly also to Dostoyevsky. At the same time he remained perfectly independent of literature, an artist in the full sense of the word.

The education Ivanov received is fully responsible for his lack of inward unity. The son of that stern classicist, Andrey Ivanov, who was sent to the Academy straight from the Foundling Hospital, and gradually turned there into a flawless professor, Alexander spent his youth in the suffocating atmosphere of academic scholasticism. Moreover, this classical system assumed in the austere, respectable middle-class family a peculiar coldly official character, impregnable, and extremely narrow. A humdrum existence, both at home and at school, was Ivanov's life before his trip abroad. To the Society of Encouragement of Artists belongs the honour of having saved this Russian master. Greatly encouraged by the striking success of their first travelling scholars, the brothers Bryullov, the Society decided to send Ivanov also to Rome, and in 1831 he left his native country, whither he was destined to return only a month before his death. The real Ivanov found himself and developed abroad, where he lived for upward of twenty-five years.

He did not assert his individuality at once. On the contrary, Rome, at first, nearly proved his undoing, for

it was in Rome that the decrepit classicism was living its last days; here were the headquarters of the international colony of artists who catered to the tastelessness and banality of the ever flowing stream of tourists. The energetic, wayward and highly cultured Bryullov, the keen, well-educated Bruni could afford to be subjected to this spirit, without running so great a risk as Ivanov did, of losing themselves in the insipidity and routine which flourished in Rome; what saved Ivanov was his own nature, which, although not very spirited and vivid, was deep, concentrated, and loathed the staleness of classicism. He owed much also to his acquaintance with the sincere and serious artist, Overbeck. Overbeck pointed out to him the ways which led him out of the straits of the academic formula, but once on the highroad, Ivanov left his mentor far behind and came near those revelations of mystery, which were utterly inaccessible to the somewhat limited Overbeck, who, besides, entangled himself in religious hypocrisy.

Unfortunately, Ivanov definitely found himself only in the very last years of his life, and the true Ivanov, the grandiose and excellent artist, is known to us by his Biblical sketches only, which he intended to develop into vast canvases upon his return to Russia. Throughout the twenty-five years he spent in Rome, he simply had no time to devote himself to free creative activity,

for he was brought to a deadlock by the two pictures which he deemed his duty to paint for the Petrograd connoisseurs. The first was "Christ Showing Himself to Magdalen" (1835, Museum of Alexandre III), conceived, though not executed, after the classical fashion. The second was the ill-fated "Christ Appearing Before the People," which tormented Ivanov for about twenty years, for he became entangled, from the very outset, in his efforts to combine in it various religious considerations with complete historical accuracy and a perfect observance of the classical traditions.

Yet in this work, too, there is the reflection of great artistic power. Separate portions of it, individual types, fragments of landscape—hint at what Ivanov could have been, had he not been crippled by his education. They show also into what a great master he could have developed, had not death taken him at the very moment when, having bidden farewell to the vagaries of his youth, he was entering upon a wholly independent and admirable road.

In the hall of the Rumyantzev Museum, where this canvas has found hospitality, all the walls are covered with Ivanov's innumerable studies for it. In the same way, as many, or even more sketches are scattered in the Tretyakov Gallery, in the collections of M. P. Botkin, and elsewhere. It is these sketches that show what

Ivanov aimed at. They show him not only as a wonderful master of design and an astonishing connoisseur of form, but also as a deep psychologist. Moreover, in some of his landscape sketches and in his studies in nude he is a bold innovator in colour, foretelling the achievements of Impressionism long before its appearance. In these studies nature is Ivanov's school to a degree which was scarcely attained outside of classic art. This schooling helped him to master, with astonishing ease, the most complicated compositions in the Biblical sketches, with which he busied himself in his leisure hours.

There exists an opinion that Ivanov's essential lack of preparation would have impaired his subsequent activity. Did he not, it is said, entangle himself in his early, somewhat naïve religiosity, echoes of which so strangely lingered in him afterwards,—despite his spiritual maturity? And did not his peace of mind come very near being completely unsettled by Strauss's sceptical conclusions, with which Ivanov grew enamoured in the last years of his life? Nevertheless, when one studies Ivanov's sketches, these doubts vanish of their own accord. The master who reproduced the most palpitating and grandiose passages of the Bible with such a convincing grandeur, the artist who was able to depict the evangelic events in such a super-

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHING IN THE DESERT

Alexandre Ivanov

natural, "magical" light, who gave some scenes the force of an eye-witness' tale—such a man could not betray all this overnight and return to the inconsistencies of his early life or to lose himself in the desert of unbelief. Ivanov was too original and powerful a personality for this. His very struggle with himself, long and obstinate, out of which he emerged a conqueror, full of hopes and plans, exhibits his tremendous power: that of tenacity, and that of progress. Strauss's doctrine itself would most likely have been transformed and borne fruits of beauty. A deeply mystical nature, like Ivanov's could not suddenly lose its mysticism and turn into a common-place, or, what is worse, weak-headed realist.

Death bore him away in the most significant moment of his life. . . . Probably death was moved by pity for the endless sufferings of this martyr, who, on his return home, would have undergone one more painful trial. Ivanov came back to Russia at a moment when all mystical preaching must have seemed a wild anachronism, when all that was fresh and young in Russian art broke off most resolutely with the æsthetics created by Romanticism, and turned to immediate depiction of reality and to the propaganda of civic principles.

Before passing to the history of realism in Russian art, we shall briefly mention several artists who may be

considered as Ivanov's successors in religious painting.

Gay (1831–1894) may be looked upon as Ivanov's nearest successor because of some similarity in their aims and problems. Despite the fact that Gay himself pointed out his dependence on Ivanov, his whole personality differs essentially from Ivanov's. When Gay, late in the forties, entered the Academy, he did not find there the old scholastic discipline and drill. This school, even though it tormented Ivanov with its pedantic requirements, laid in him that firm foundation of knowledge which is exhibited in every stroke of his brush and constitutes his distinguishing trait. Gay remained a half-dilettante. At times, through the power of his natural endowments he succeeded in attaining a certain perfection and beauty, but in most cases he did not meet the demands of painting. Gay's highest technical achievement is a certain brilliancy and originality of colouring, but the drawing in his canvases is, with rare exceptions, childish and sometimes even lapses into ugly slovenliness and grossness. There was another reason why Gay could not be the true successor of Ivanov. Gay absorbed all the poisons of Herzen's epoch, and his mind held a queer combination of sympathies for Bryullov's masked-ball art, of sincere rapture at the sight of absolute beauty, and of an enthu-

THE CRUCIFIXION

Nicolay Gay

siasm for Tolstoy's preaching, mingled with his own rather vague mystical views. His very themes, marked with the stamp of almost hysterical passion, were diametrically opposed to the holy tranquillity of Ivanov's aspirations.

Nevertheless, taken in himself, Gay appears as a well pronounced and brilliant artistic personality, especially in his last works, which express a peculiar, very "Russian" attitude toward the Evangel: namely, he views the New Testament as the gospel of exclusively *spiritual* beauty, and purposely emphasises the outward uncomeliness of both Christ and his surroundings. Had Raphael seen "The Crucifixion" and other of Gay's paintings, monstrous in their ugliness, he would have torn his garments in indignation, for to him, the heir of the Hellenes, the conception of God was inseparable from that of Beauty. Different would be the relation to Gay of Rembrandt, the son of the Reformation, in whose gloomy art the same notes sound as in Gay's. But Rembrandt was too much of an artist not to conceal the intentional ugliness of his images under the beauty of painting and colouring. Gay, however, with truly Russian straightforwardness, and with truly Russian nihilism, ever in quest of harrowing impressions, put aside artistic demands, and, burning with passion and zeal, strove to depict what appeared to him as "truth."

As a result, we have something in the nature of "official reports," repugnant, but quivering with life, and, therefore, inspiring terror, which, at any rate, will preserve for themselves a place of honour in the painting of the end of the nineteenth century. These works undoubtedly possess serious and rare qualities; they are absolutely devoid of triviality, they are luminous, wholly individual utterances, all white-hot with sincerity and noble conviction. This unbeautiful art of Gay's cannot be denied inner, spiritual nobleness, and in art, as in life, nobility is one of the rarest and most precious things.

This same rare quality distinguishes also Gay's portraits, probably the best Russian portraits of the second half of the nineteenth century. His faces are not only life-like to a truly startling degree, they also bear the imprint of the artist's noble mind. They are absolutely devoid of cheap emphasis,—the delight of Gay's colleagues, who were all educated on the civic rhetoric of the sixties, and were finally poisoned by it. Gay approached the portrait with immense curiosity and with the most palpitating, almost pious attention to his object. He, whose attitude toward Christ was so premeditated, relinquished all set intention, all "*arrangement*" in his portraits. These are not rich in striking effects, but on all of them lies the imprint of the living

poetry of the human soul. Future men will look on them with that mystic thrill familiar to all who come in too intimate a contact with the life of past ages. In this respect, by far the most impressive work will seem his "Tolstoy," in the Tretyakov gallery, the wise and gloomy titan, deeply absorbed in his great work. Some of his portraits have all the charm of intimacy and all the gracefulness of domestic happiness. Especially remarkable is the portrait of Mme. Petrunkevich standing at a window opening on the forest. The quiet mood of a summer day in the country is rendered in this picture with admirable sincerity. It must be also observed, that the pictorial element of the portraits is of a finer quality than that of the pictures. In some of the former, for example in the famous portrait of Herzen, Gay attains the splendour and the firmness of Bryullov's brush, without falling into cheap effects and without betraying his essential character of inward nobility.

Others who chose Ivanov's way were Kramskoy, V. Vasnetzov, Nesterov and Vrubel. All four would be unthinkable without their great master, but no one of them reached his height; the first three because of lack of talent, the fourth, because of purely external circumstances, which did not allow him to unfold all the splendour of his brilliant and rare gifts. Kramskoy (1857–1887) is known in the history of Russian

thought as one of the prominent representatives of the realistic tendencies which grew up in the favourable atmosphere of the positivistic philosophy of the second half of the nineteenth century, as a reaction against a turbulent and mystical Romanticism. A strict and sober realist is Kramskoy also in his portraits. Yet in his *inner* life Kramskoy was far from being an absolutely straightforward apostle of Russian realism. In the experiences of his own spiritual world Kramskoy's was not at all such a perfectly clear and well balanced mind as would appear from his portraits and social activity. The desire for spiritual freedom was not entirely unknown to him. There remained in his mind a living spark of religious intuition and mystical longing, and this lent his figure that peculiar, characteristically Russian depth, warmth, and complexity, which both Vereshchagin and Perov lacked. Unfortunately, neither time, nor education allowed him to develop all his possibilities. And finally the power of his purely artistic gift was infinitely inferior to those spiritual aspirations that dwelled in him.

Kramskoy's "Christ in the Desert" is the most convincing proof of what has been said. The subject-matter of this painting, closely resembling the themes of Dostoyevsky's revelations, held the artist's attention for many years, and, strange to say, also in his youth,

ST. NIKITA OF NOVGOROD
Victor Vasnetzov

that is, during the period of the highest development of the positivistic tendencies in Russia. And yet the picture "Christ in the Desert" strikes one because of its hollowness, the lack of conviction and the absence of a definite idea. Kramskoy approached his theme too cautiously, too calculatingly,—his mind stirred up by no inner tempest; he intended to lay bare mankind's greatest and most complicated notions by means of the plainest materials sliced out directly from life. Kramskoy forgot the specific laws of painting, the relative poverty of its means and, at the same time, he neglected its peculiar wealth. The human figure represented among cliffs which are scrupulously copied from nature, and draped in unbearably accurate folds, is wholly incapable—without verbal commentaries—of expressing the multitude of ideas that agitated and tormented the artist's mind, despite the suffering expressed on the face of the figure. So that this fairly satisfying work, though touching in its lofty seriousness, in no way indicates Kramskoy's dependence on Ivanov's deep revelations, although the former was rather fond of pointing out this imaginary dependence.

The same imprint of excessive reserve and cautious tameness lies on Kramskoy's other works, in which he took the liberty of deviating from the canon of realism. His "Ruslan," his "Nymphs" are minutely deliberate

and pedantic in their definiteness of composition. It is true that some of their peculiarities indicate the artist's quickness and wit, but, on the whole, these compositions, too, leave the spectator absolutely cold and indifferent. In these pictures his dry manner of painting, his dull colours, and exceeding realism obscure the splendour of the poetical conception. The demands of his education and surroundings did not fan into a real flame the spark that smouldered in Kramskoy.

V. Vasnetzov, universally idolised up to recent times, is an interesting and big artist, but he cannot be looked upon as the real successor of Ivanov. His very aim: to reproduce the "purely Russian," that is the limited and almost ethnographical attitude toward Christ, is infinitely inferior to the lofty "all-human" ideals of Ivanov. Vasnetzov's humble birth was credited in his favour, but, it seems to us, it is in this very origin, in the manifest lack of culture by which this otherwise very intelligent artist is distinguished, that there lies the cause of the ineffectiveness of his art. Of course, popular art, pure and simple, is eternal, being the living utterance of a vast social organism. But its value and interest are the greater, the purer and more naïve it is, and the more strongly there appears in it the element of peculiar, national civilisation,—however different this may be from the general con-

THE VISION OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW

Mikhail Nesterov

ception of culture. Less precious is "semi-cultural" popular art, because only slurred over by general culture, and least valuable are those works in which artists from the people endeavour to combine bits of general culture, of which they had tasted, with what they owe to their early education. As a result we have a vague, hybrid, compromising art, which has all the defects of its two component elements, rather than their merits.

Vasnetzov is a gifted, lively and impressionable artist. His energetic "Stone age," his decorative compositions, partly also his fairy-tale pictures,—the charm of which is marred by their size and their mawkish colours—sufficiently testify to a certain originality and, especially, liveliness, and impressionability of the master. Great is Vasnetzov's merit as a pioneer of neo-idealism, who came forward with his devotional canvases when all his colleagues sat at the feet of Proudhon and Chernyshevsky. But Vasnetzov's religious paintings, which made their appearance so opportunely in the reign of Alexander III, in the period of official Slavophilism, in the days of the celebrated "rebirth" of Russian Orthodoxy—this art is far from having that artistic importance which our society recently attributed to it. After all, Vasnetzov's religious painting is but a successful parody on the well established canons of By-

zantine and old Russian iconography, to which Vasnetzov applied, without much taste, a rather hollow pathos and fairy-tale effects. The Cathedral of St. Vladimir, at Kiev, decorated by him, cannot bear comparison with the ideal Christian temple, the dream of Ivanov. Just like Flandrin's attempt to restore the Roman-Byzantine painting, like the works of Steinle and of Cornelius' disciples, who endeavoured to return to the purely German style of Dürer,—Vasnetzov's efforts will hold in the history of art an honourable, though not very considerable place. These phases of the church painting of the nineteenth century are infinitely inferior to Ivanov's grandiose conceptions, to his lofty magnificence and prophetic might.

Besides, even in the purely pictoral respect, Vasnetzov's canvases are far below Ivanov's works. In comparison with Ivanov, Gay is a barbarian, yet, as his portraits prove beyond doubt, he did not completely forsake the artistic traditions. It was as though he disdained further development and would not take advantage of the achievements of his times out of conviction, rather than because of any other reason. But Vasnetzov was different. He was the true child of the seventies and eighties, the dreariest period in the history of Russian painting. Vasnetzov's technique is feeble and bears the imprint of a dilettante's timidity,

nearly always disguised by an illustrator's "dexterity."

Vasnetzov had no regular artistic school, and this lack of schooling is felt throughout his works. It is natural that Vasnetzov could not create his own artistic school. A few artists, however, who assimilated his manner and applied it in the decoration, in the so-called Russian style,—of numerous churches, seem to refute this statement. In reality, this group of artists,—among whom Nesterov is the only master of some independence and of a considerable artistic temperament,—does not constitute a school. The prerequisite for the appearance of a school are definite technical acquisitions, or a certain technical drilling, which these artists absolutely lack.

Nesterov, however, would have been one of the most pleasant of Russian painters, had he remained faithful to his talent, to his peculiar vocation. Nesterov could have been an excellent landscape painter. This is proved by the background of most of his canvases. Unfortunately beside the wonderful landscapes there is very little in his pictures to hold the eye, and the landscape plays but a secondary part. It is only in his "Vision of St. Bartholomew" that the figures do not spoil the admirable, truly Russian landscape, which unrolls behind them. On the contrary, they even emphasise its festal sorrow, and its poignant sadness is in keeping

with the downcast figure of the monk in the foreground. The rest of Nestorov's pictures—with fascinatingly conceived landscapes replete with quiet melancholy—are full of commonplace and badly executed figures, which try hard to seem sacred and touching.

The only artist who may be looked upon as something in the nature of a continuation of Ivanov, is Vrubel. Among all the artists of the second half of the nineteenth century, who approached religious themes, only Vrubel did so with the same burning passion and the same most delicate penetration into the mysteries of beauty, which distinguish the art of Ivanov. In addition, the two artists have in common prodigious technical skill. Vrubel is not popular in Russia; he is looked upon as a mad-brained "*décadent.*" His disease [1] has definitely discredited him in the eyes of "reasonable" people. Yet, in reality, of all the artists of the last two decades, Vrubel alone succeeded in forging for himself a real, an amazing technique. At the same time among our artists he is the only true poet, who hovers high above the common level. A bitter life, almost ceaseless failure, the unresponsiveness of society —all this sapped Vrubel's gift and lent a strange

[1] The last years of Vrubel's life (he died in 1910) were darkened by mental disease. (Translator's note.)

"grimace" to his works. But through it shines the true artistic flame, and so great is his technical knowledge, so colossal his skill, that one not only pardons him his grotesqueness, but begins to love it.

CHAPTER V

REALISM, AND "PURPOSE" PAINTING

IT is customary to consider Realism the chief aspect of Russian painting, the trait which distinguishes it from all other schools of painting. Since the time, however, that Realism has ceased to be a contemporary phenomenon and has been perceived in historical perspective, it has lost its supremacy in popular opinion and dwindled down to the normal proportions of a phase among other phases of Russian painting. Henceforward, Realism will be looked upon as one of the several significant currents of our school.

The origin of Russian realistic painting is to be sought among the amateurs and imitators of the eighteenth century, and also in the field of ethnological dabbling. A class of *genre* painting, termed "the class of domestic exercises," was established at the Academy of Arts for the purpose of forming Russian "Teniers and Wouwermans" for the lovers of native painting. More important for the development of our realistic painting were the works of various foreign ethnologists and the etchings of foreign artists, which were the first

to attract attention to the peculiarities of Russian life. Of course, these masters, such as Leprince, Geissler, Damame, Atkinson, and others were not realists in the true sense of the term. The motive of their artistic efforts was not the desire to depict the charm of every-day life; what they recorded was the peculiarities they noticed in the curious Russian customs and manners. At any rate, they attracted the attention of Russain society to the colourfulness and picturesqueness of the folk-life. A few Russian masters followed in their steps: under Catherine II—the curious, neglected Yermenyev, also Tankov, Mikhail Ivanov and the sculptor Kozlovsky; later on: Martynov, Alexandrov, partly Orlovsky, who has already been discussed, Karnyeyev, and the illustrators: Galaktionov, I. Ivanov, Sapozhnikov, and others. The most interesting among these artists is Tankov (1739–1799). He attacked complex themes, like "The Fair," "The Village Fire," and mastered them quite successfully by means of reminiscences of Dutch and Flemish paintings.

The first genuine Russian realist was, without a doubt, Alexyey Venetzianov (1779–1847), one of the most striking figures of the Russian school. As he did not become a professional painter until late in life, he escaped the levelling influence of the Academy. The

successes of his contemporaries Yegorov and Shebuyev in the field of classical art did not move him. He modestly chose a way of his own and, as he progressed along it methodically and quietly, he founded a small school of painters who considered it their main purpose to depict, unassumingly, their surroundings.

From the later phase of Realism Venetzianov's art is distinguished by a very characteristic and, from the artistic standpoint, highly valuable trait: it is not narrative. Not literary themes, not anecdotes [1] moved Venetzianov, but rather pictorial motives, sheer colour problems, directly put by nature. And Venetzianov was well enough prepared to master these problems with simplicity and artistic skill. He possessed more technical knowledge than many of his colleagues. He was lucky enough to have been at one time the pupil of Borovikovsky, and he learned from this virtuoso many a secret of the craft, which was later on forgotten. Venetzianov's best works are his portraits, his "Barn," where, following the example of Granet, he endeavours to depict the interior of a scantily lighted building; his "Housewife, Settling Accounts," reminiscent, in regard to light effects, of Pieter de

[1] His paintings with narrative themes, such as "The Last Communion," "The Recruit's Farewell," and "The Soldier's Return," do not belong to his best works. He is less veracious in them. The arrangement is awkward, and the pictorial element neglected. (Author's note.)

THE ARRIVAL OF THE GOVERNESS

Vasily Perov

Hooch, and his "Peasants." All these works have made good their claim to belong to the classics of the Russian School.

Venetzianov was fully aware of the importance of his efforts, and he strove to strengthen the art he inaugurated. He did not hesitate to defy the Academy when he found himself driven to it, and he founded his own Academy, with careful study of nature as its sole guiding principle. His enterprise found financial support, and at one time Venetzianov's school flourished. It sent out Plakhov, Zaryanko, Krylov, Mikhailov, Mokritzky, Krendovsky, Zelentzov, Tyranov, Shchedrovsky—all of them—modest, plain people, who, however, transmitted to posterity the true image of their times. Among them Krylov (died in 1850) and Tyranov (1808–1859) are distinguished by delicacy, but it is Shchedrovsky who accomplished most, leaving a long gallery of types, in which Petrograd of Gogol's times lives again. Unfortunately, Venetzianov's school could not get deeply rooted, and the master lived to see, in his old age, his best pupils, dazzled by Bryullov's success, desert him to pass into the camp of the painter of "Pompeii," where they rapidly lost their freshness and turned into cold, pompous academicists. Only one follower remained faithful to Venetzianov's precepts. This was Zaryanko (1818–

1870), a good technicist, but, unfortunately, a man of shallow mind, who turned the living precepts of his master into a rigid, lifeless formula. His portraits are faultlessly drawn and methodically painted, but by their dryness and lack of animation they remind one of coloured photographs.

In addition to Venetzianov, there worked in the first half of the nineteenth century several other realists, who, however, busied themselves almost exclusively with portraits. To these belong Varneck, a very spirited artist and an excellent draughtsman, who, unfortunately, used an unpleasant colour gamut; and the delicate water colour painters: P. T. Sokolov, M. Terebenev, and A. Bryullov. Several first-class *intérieurs*, executed entirely in Venetzianov's manner, belong also to the brush of Count T. P. Tolstoy. In these the stern empire setting is rendered graceful and snug by the intimacy of the execution. These belong to the most touching pictures of the Russian School.

In the twenties there came into prominence in the West the so-called *genre*, that is, sentimental, facetious or moralising stories, rendered in painting. This kind of painting was imported into Russia in the thirties. It attracted several followers among Russian painters, such as Sternberg, who died prematurely, Neff, to some extent, and, somewhat later, Ivan Soko-

lov, Trutovsky, Chernyshev, and others. Their art was different from that of Venetzianov in so far as their main concern was not painting itself, but this or that subject told by means of painting.[1] They laid the first foundation of narrative painting in Russia, and soon, repeating the evolution of the West, this was followed by realistic painting of the narrow, doctrinal type.

The so-called "tendency" took hold of almost the entire next generation of artists. Aside from the main current there remained only the faithful devotees of the Academy, as well as such artists as were, by the nature of their work, confined to a simple rendition of nature: the landscape painters and the portraitists—among the latter Zaryanko and the gifted, deft Makarov. A place apart is occupied by the magnificent, but very uneven Peter Sokolov (1818–1899). He was the only one among the artists of the period from the forties to the seventies to remain faithful to painting and its direct aims. Unfortunately, Peter Sokolov was of too loose a character, and this trait is most eloquently reflected in his works. Most of his paintings are improvised insipidity. Only some of his portraits and hunting scenes and some of his sad, typically Rus-

[1] In this same category can be classed several gifted illustrators and cartoonists of that time: Stepanov, Agin, and Timm. (Author's note.)

sian landscapes, show him as a great master and a true artist. Together with him may be named the unassuming Sverchkov (1817–1898), an artist who, although neither very gifted nor skilful, created a separate branch of painting for himself, where he gave ample expression to his artless love for the "Russian horse."

The father of Russian "purpose" painting was P. A. Fedotov (1815–1852), a poor army officer, and an ardent enthusiast for art, who turned to the "petty" kind of realistic painting, partly because, as a dilettante and self-taught man, he felt himself unequal to graver and higher tasks. The circumstances of his life played, however, a considerable part in the shaping of his talent. The son of a modest retired officer, Fedotov grew up in half-provincial Moscow, in a typical middle-class family. Here he became familiar with the every-day life of the residents of lonely city districts. Later on, in the military school and in the society of his comrades he acquired a familiarity with military circles which played so important a rôle under Nicholas I. Finally, when he came in contact with the artistic world, it was too late to go to school: he was already a fully formed man with well-shaped ideas and a manner of his own of perceiving and rendering things.

In the middle of the forties the "tendency" was al-

ready in the air. After the world-woe and the abstract æstheticism were gone, the first call to reshape reality was sounded. In Russia, the "intelligentzia" split into Westerners and Slavophiles, and recent friends became embittered enemies; the dazzling pleiad of our great writers, who were to contribute the Russian intellectual mite to the treasury of general culture, were coming of age, and despite the ruthless tyranny of Nicholas's government, the air was astir with revolt. The necessity was felt of changing the skin, of being renewed, regenerated, of amending one's ways.

These moods were to find expression in painting. But it is natural that the echo could not come from the Imperial Academy of Art, a bureaucratic, half-courtly world, nor was the methodical Venetzianov with his humble pupils in a position to produce the first samples of doctrinal propaganda painting. Fedotov alone was nearly fit for such a task, but even he, a retired officer, pensioned by the Emperor, a modest, simple man, intelligent, but childishly naïve, could hardly come up to the level of the literature. He limited himself to what Gogol did fifteen years earlier, that is, to a keen, but not very caustic satire of the foibles and follies of his compatriots.

It is as such a harmless satirist that he made his first appearance before the public in 1849 with his oil paint-

ings, of which "The Fop" is, for those days, a bold satire on the ambitiousness of the "chinovniks" (bureaucrats), and "The Major's Courtship" is a gay, rather than sharp satire on the life of the merchant class. Then followed the series of pictures where he ridiculed the first attempts at a feministic movement, the ludicrous sides of the petty gentry, the bureaucracy, and various similar subjects—all of which were extensively exploited in the humoristic periodicals of the time. A place apart is occupied by his last works, in which he seems to turn to a quieter, more poetic, and more artistic way of looking at things. Such are his "Widow" and the "Officer at the Village," extraordinary in its poignant sadness.

Fedotov was lost for art when still young, because of a grave mental disease, which was shortly followed by death. If we take into consideration that he was all of thirty when he began to devote himself seriously to painting, it becomes clear that his art is more a brilliant "introduction" than a complete ensemble. This wide-awake artist, who with a truly astonishing rapidity developed from an awkward self-taught man into a brilliant painter—some of the "still-life's" in his pictures are worth the "old Dutchmen"—died before giving expression to the best that was in him. His immediate successor was another man from Moscow, Perov,

who was, in keeping with the new spirit of the times, a bolder, but a less attractive and a less skilful artist than Fedotov.

Perov was born in 1833. His early life was spent in the country and at the city of Arzamas, where he started his artistic education at Stupin's Art School. Then he came to Moscow and attended the School of Painting and Sculpture. With Perov, the venerable old Capital definitely enters the history of Russian art. This happened not only because Moscow was the heart of Russian life in its most characteristic form, but also because the Capital possessed an art school where absolute freedom, at times degenerating into confusion and looseness, reigned supreme. The spirit of the fifties and the sixties, which hailed as its ideal the emancipation of human personality, was, naturally, inimical to all sorts of restraint, to all traditions binding the creative effort, and, consequently, to the Petrograd Academy with its Areopagus. Herein lay, however, a great danger for the young Russian art: it was becoming freer and more interesting, but, dazzled by the magnificence of literature, it was losing its "integrity," and at the same time it was turning away from its own inherent laws. A new period of Russian painting was inaugurated, the so-called "original Russian School" was coming into being, and at the same time

"school" in the technical sense was falling into sad oblivion.

Perov was a true child of his times. A man endowed with a great gift of observation—searching, daring, passionately devoted to his work, he is incontestably a fine manifestation of Russian culture, but his pictures are cheerless as such. They are stories in colour, which would be clearer and more impressive if told in words. What he was concerned with is not pictorial themes, but tales which can be told by means of painting. Even in Paris, whither he went as a scholar of the Academy, he missed the clash of the artistic currents, which was raging in the world city, and almost from the very day of his arrival he began to search in the Parisian streets for themes for narrative pictures, which made him famous in his own country. Of course, this search resulted in nothing, and having become entangled in his study of a world strange to him, he, with rare straightforwardness and conscientiousness, gave up his enterprise and applied for permission to return to Russia. This fact is a summary of a whole page of the history of Russian painting.

Unfortunately, not only for our art, but also for the whole of our culture, the feverish animation of our social life which followed the Crimean War and Alexander II's accession to the throne, too soon subsided,

THE MASS AT THE BATTLEFIELD

Vasily Vereschagin

and resulted only in half-measures, in tragic mutual misunderstanding of the Government and the intelligentzia, and in the relapse of the masses into a state of inert brutality. After a few "liberal" years, during which we seemed to be overtaking mankind in its progress, there ensued a gloomy reaction, which had the saddest effects on our art, as well as on other aspects of the national life. The germs of an original Russian conception of the aims of art, which were contained in the works of Fedotov and Perov, perished before they could sprout. Perov, who went abroad in 1864 after producing his coarse, but pleasant denunciatory pictures, came back at a moment when there could be no question of continuing such bold work. That is why his art, and that of many other painters of that time, has remained something in the nature of a half-uttered word.

Probably the least artistic among Perov's works are his first paintings executed during the "period of the great reforms." But at the same time, these pictures: "The Arrival of the Commissary of Rural Police," "The Village Sermon," "A Tea-Party," and, especially, "The Village Church Procession" are the most valuable portion of his œuvre. As is the case in the contemporary picture "The Convicts' Resting-Place" of Iacobi, the pictorial defects in them are redeemed

by their realistic faithfulness and their daring directness of vision. As paintings they are poor, as historical documents, invaluable.

Perov's later works often betray a delicate gift of observation, a touching sensitiveness and a sympathetic attention toward life, but, on the whole, they are inferior to his first productions. From Courbet's style Perov passed in them to sentimental caricature in the manner of Knaus, and as his pictorial technique did not gain anything in the meanwhile, the result was dull and insipid. In his former manner are executed "The Meal," and "The Arrival of the Governess," a wonderfully characteristic picture worthy of the best scenes of Ostrovsky. His last large paintings, in which he turned suddenly to Bryullov and commenced to picturise historical anecdotes on a huge scale—have hitherto remained puzzling. At any rate, they point to the lack of artistic culture in the master and the utter confusion in his views. Feeling the desire to bid farewell to doctrinal art, Perov found no other way out than hackneyed academicism.

In spite of all his failings, Perov is the most prominent figure among the artists of Alexander II's reign. Side by side with him and a few years after his death there worked several interesting masters, almost all of them collected by P. M. Tretyakov in his Gallery.

One circumstance welded a part of them together and shaped them into that nucleus which later on grew into the "Society of Wandering Exhibitions." This circumstance is known in the history of Russian art as the Secession of the Thirteen Contestants.

At that time the central figure among the academic youth was I. Kramskoy, vigorous, intelligent, incomparably more mature than all his comrades. He succeeded in grouping around himself the more gifted Academy students, and gradually the enthusiasm of this group for the new ideas, which at first was rather encouraged by the Academic administration, assumed the more conscious and concrete character of a "programme." The smouldering discontent finally broke out into an open conflict, and at the Academy Commencement of November 9, 1863, thirteen competitors for golden medals refused to take the mythological theme offered by the Academy, and, having failed to obtain freer conditions for the contest, left the Academy. Finding themselves suddenly in the gulf of life, the recent pupils of the Academy felt the necessity of uniting their forces, and they founded a sort of artists' community, which they called "Artel" (Workmen's Association).

The very fact of the secession from the Academy of a group of young and bold men was of tremendous im-

portance. They sowed the seed of protest against a scholastic formula forced upon the artists. Henceforward the most vigorous and independent part of Russian artistic youth will cling to the "Artel," feed on its theories, if not actually become members, and be sustained by the spiritual firmness which was generated and upheld by the first private artistic community in Russia. Later on, with the establishment of the "Society of Wandering Exhibitions" (in 1870) the rôle of such "headquarters" of the most advanced Russian art passed to the Society, and remained there for more than twenty years, until the appearance of the exhibitions of the "Mir Iskusstva" ("The World of Art").

And yet the most prominent of our preachers and denunciators in art was an artist who did not belong either to the "Artel" or to the Society. To the isolated figure of V. V. Vereshchagin belongs the honour of being, after Perov, the most pronounced representative of the new artistic views.

Vereshchagin (1842–1904) is a personality very typical of the sixties and seventies. Unlike most of his fellow-artists, who came from the people and were cut off from "society" by their lack of breeding, Vereshchagin, by his origin, education, and social position, belonged to this "society." That is why his art

was more conscious and influential, and his preaching bolder, more concentrated, and sustained. It is significant that Vereshchagin is the Russian painter who has achieved the greatest popularity outside of his country. He treated Russian themes from the viewpoint of a man of Western culture—in fact, from the viewpoint of a citizen of the world. There is not a trace in his painting of naïve nationalism, of a stubborn and stupid tendency to set himself apart from the rest of the world, characteristic of many of his contemporaries. Vereshchagin was a typical Russian nobleman, a man of broad views, of an open intellect, of an innate nobility of intentions, and absolutely alien to petty and narrow patriotism.

Unfortunately, this aristocratic trait in the character of Vereshchagin loses all its importance as soon as we turn to the study of his works. And this is very characteristic of the Russian painter. Vereshchagin was a "European" in his entire programme, in all his projects, but as far as execution is concerned he remained a barbarian. The fact that he belonged to the upper class did not save him. Naturally, he could not acquire correct views of art by associating with people of his circle, who, as a rule looked upon art with little more than contempt and perplexity. Even less could he gain as an artist by associating with his fellow-

painters, for they were entirely absorbed in social problems and exhibited an absolute indifference to matters of purely æsthetic import. True, Vereshchagin had the good fortune of coming to Europe when still a young man, but his scant preparation at home made his trip little instructive for him. Mentzel, Dégas, Manet, Monet, and many other masters, overflowing with vitality and vigour, remained absolutely unintelligible to him, though he, himself, did not lack either vitality or vigour.

Herein lies the cause of the cheerless impression which Vereshchagin's art makes. What is bad about him is not the fact that he was rather an ethnologist than an artist, or that he preached absolute sincerity and told in his pictures what he saw and lived. His main defect is that his œuvre is poor in purely pictorial merits. This artist achieved nothing but an intellectual culture. He was interested in ideas, but indifferent to form.

Nevertheless, Vereshchagin will hold an honourable place in the history of Russian art. To begin with, his pictures have not lost their interest, which signifies that they conceal a great power, a great artistic potentiality. It is true that they are poorly painted and childishly drawn, but they are cleverly planned and their composition shows Vereshchagin as a highly

gifted stage manager. This is a matter of no little importance in art. But even in the purely pictorial respect, Vereshchagin, despite his failings, is not entirely valueless. In his time he was a pioneer, and many of his light and colour discoveries have retained their value until our own day. Some of his Indian sketches are indeed all fire and glow, and some of his costume studies are dazzling.

Alongside Vereshchagin must be placed I. E. Repin, as the biggest artist of the generation of the seventies. When he entered the Academy Bruni was still its director, but, in reality, Repin was the most brilliant pupil and follower of Kramskoy. It is curious that Kramskoy, in his artistic endeavours, kept aloof from the movement which he encouraged. He was too intelligent and open-minded to devote himself soul and body to the naïve artistic programme of his times. But he was fully aware of the relative temporary importance of this programme, and he strove to secure the assistance of all those who could be of use to it. It is with particular zeal that he undertook the education or re-education of these recruits, heedless of the damage he might cause by forcing on them a narrow æsthetic formula.

One of Kramskoy's victims was Repin, undoubtedly a splendid talent, vigorous and broad, who, never-

theless, spent his life in roving over tracks which lie far from the true aims of art.

Repin was by nature a painter. He came in the period of the complete decline of our school of painting, when at the Academy there reigned supreme the precepts of Bruni, excellent in themselves, but absolutely out of keeping with the times; when the rest of the artists, following the example of Perov, cast away all thought of painting considered as such; when in our higher society the manneristic and mawkish Zichy held sway. Under such circumstances Repin succeeded in creating for himself an original and powerful manner, and in developing a true and fresh palette. It is noteworthy that in this sphere he remained absolutely independent of Kramskoy, of his pedagogical pedantry and timid copying of nature. At one stroke, Repin stepped quite aside, and reminded us in his painting of the old masters, who knew no other school than assiduous study of nature. Unfortunately, Repin, too, has been kept back by his lack of education. Repin tried hard to educate himself and left far behind him the churlish apprentice that he was when he first came from Chuguyev to Petrograd in 1863. Yet, at heart, Repin remained a painter, whose attitude toward his art is essentially unconscious. Like Vasnetzov, he went beyond the

THE BARGEMEN OF THE VOLGA

Ilya Repin

naïve conception of art, but he has never yet attained the conscious, cultural attitude toward it. The meaning of painting, in particular, has remained for him a sealed book. All his life he has been applying his splendid, but not completely developed pictorial gift to the solution of non-artistic problems, and, of course, neither Stasov's sermons, sympathetic in their sincerity as they are, nor the influence of Kramskoy, absorbed in political interests, could save him from his errings.

Nor was Repin corrected by his life abroad, where he was sent by the Academy, after he created his celebrated "Burlaki" ("Bargemen"), a work of great energy and of an excellent composition. In Rome he criticised into nothingness the classics of paintings with the candour of a barbarian, and in Paris, like all his compatriots, he became completely bewildered and started tossing about, unable to derive anything from sources which were the very ones to be of great use to him. Upon his return home, Repin could never quite come to himself. He painted all the prominent men of his time, created a series of denunciatory pictures, on subjects taken from the "nihilistic" and "gendarme" period; finally he tried his hand in the "historical variety," but almost never did he concern himself with the problems of pure painting. Everywhere

he made technique and colour effects subsidiary to rational, non-artistic considerations.

Repin's misfortune lies in that, having become a devotee of the formula of narrative painting, he also conceived the idea that he possessed a powerful dramatic talent. Of course, Repin was a great artist, and as such, a very impressionable man, with a gift for grasping things in an easy and interesting manner. Yet, his calling was not narrative painting, but painting pure and simple. By means of clever calculations, Repin succeeded in arranging his pictures so as to elicit sensational effects of great clarity (as in the "Church Procession"), or a truly tragical note (in "Ivan the Terrible"), or a broad humour (in "The Zaporogian Cossacks"). All these paintings betray great cleverness and dexterity, but there is no truly deep mood in them, no living revelations of the type we find in Ivanov and in Surikov.

Repin's best work are, surely, his portraits. But a certain coarseness mars even these. Repin is a purely external talent, yet in his portraits he tried his utmost to go into the depths of psychological analysis. Consequently, his portraits are insipid as far as colour tones and composition are concerned; they are drawn and modelled neglectfully, carelessly and painted without beauty; and, as characterisation, they are full

of gross and disagreeable emphasis. In this respect, they are far below the intelligent portraits of Gay, and even the precise portraits of Kramskoy.

Perov, Vereshchagin and Repin are the main bulwarks of Russian interpretative Realism, but alongside these there worked many artists of similar tendencies, whose works are of great interest for the history of art, and, above all, for the history of Russian culture. Especially typical representatives of Purpose Painting are the following: the stern Savitzky, the conscientious, dry Maksimov, and Yaroshenko, who immortalised the "nihilistic" youth of the seventies and eighties. Less powerful, but nevertheless typical works were produced by Shmelkov (1819–1890), by Korzukhin (1835–1894), Lemokh, Morozov and Zhuravlev (1836–1901), members of the group of "Thirteen Competitors," who seceded in 1863; also Zagorsky, Scadovsky, Popov, Solomatkin, M. P. Klodt and others. Finally, Bogdanov-Byelsky, Baksheyev, and Kasatkin are "the epigoni" of the movement, who keep on until this very day playing the tunes of the artistic programme of the sixties.

Among the epigones must be reckoned also Vladimir Makovsky (born in 1846), although he is only two years younger than Repin. Makovsky has all the characteristic traits of an epigone. His art has neither

the concentrated strictness of Perov, nor the cheerful convincing power of Savitzky or Yaroshenko, nor the mighty artistic temperament of Repin. Vladimir Makovsky, among all his surly, even gloomy and thoughtful fellow-painters, is the "jester," having always a smile on his face, ever tipping the wink at the spectator to make him laugh. But Makovsky's laughter is neither Fedotov's broad, hearty laughter, nor Perov's malicious grin. Makovsky's witticisms are those of a self-loving man, who deems it his duty to tickle the public and tries hard to attract people's attention even at moments when everybody is absorbed by a common heavy sorrow. Strange to say, this peculiarity of Makovsky's art became clear only gradually, and there was a time when he was considered just as full-fledged a champion of the "serious current" as Perov, Repin or Savitzky. Technically, Vladimir Makovsky was superior to many of his comrades, at least in the best period of his activity. Only later on, his colour gamut grew heavy and disagreeable, and the painting timid. The paintings: "The Lovers of Nightingales' Singing" (1874), "The Bank Failure" (1881), "The Acquitted" (1882), "The Family Affair" (1884), and a few of his portraits belong pictorially to the most perfect works of the "Wanderers." They possess a certain dexterity of brush and a pic-

torial workmanship, which are not to be found in the works of Savitzky or Yaroshenko.

One more painter of the realistic school deserves special consideration. This is Pryanishnikov (1840–1894). His first canvas "The Bazaar," painted a year after Perov left for the West is alongside "The Church Procession" and "The Arrival of the Governess" one of the most remarkable pictures of the sixties. Pryanishnikov is, however, even more interesting, because in course of time he strove to free himself from the fetters of purpose painting, and was one of the first to seek new paths. True, "Our Saviour's Day in the Country" (1887) strongly reminds one of a photograph and is far from being model painting, but it was important, that while Repin was busy with his version of the "Church Procession," while Vladimir Makovsky kept on telling his flat anecdotes, and all the rest endeavoured to paint something "useful," Pryanishnikov suddenly threw away all intentions to instruct, narrate, or force his thoughts on people, and turned to the depiction of reality. At that time this was a bold innovation, but before a decade had passed pure realism became the motto of the entire young Russian art.

CHAPTER VI

HISTORY AND FAIRY-TALE

ONE of the peculiar traits of Russian Realism was that the boldest and most resolute followers of an art based on the study of the surrounding world very willingly abandoned this reality and turned to history, that is to a domain where the immediate connection with actuality is, naturally, lost. Courbet, Monet, Dégas did not attempt historical painting, and it is even hard to picture how artists, so passionately enamoured of living life could seek for inspiration in the graveyards of the ages. True, Mentzel proved that a realistic artist could live at once in two epochs, and be equally successful in his portrayal of both the past and the present. But Mentzel is an exception, the most remarkable exception in the whole history of art. The Pre-Raphaelites cannot prove the compatibility of realism and history either, because history in their art was not a digression from the intended course, but rather the point of departure. Late offshoots of Romanticism, they grew up on historical painting. This they first refreshed bv the introduc-

tion of realism, but later on they gradually rejected the latter and made their way either to actuality or to free idealism.

Matters were different in Russia. Here, the evolution of the foremost artists went in the opposite direction, or, rather, their course consisted of confused digressions and inconsistencies. Perov and Vereshchagin did not begin with historical painting; they came to it only toward the end of their careers. Repin did not show in his academic years any serious disposition toward historical painting—the scholastic themes, forced upon him, are, of course, out of consideration. He began to treat historical subjects after the creation of his realistic pictures, or simultaneously. The same inconsistencies can be observed in the art of Gay and Kramskoy, and the cause of it is to be sought not in some peculiar "freedom" of the Russian artists, nor in the breadth of their views, but rather in the amorphous state of their theoretical outlook on life and in their subjection to the temporary interests of society. Many have seen in the ease with which Repin passed from nihilists and peasants to brocade vestments, to the wonderland of the sea, or to the depiction of Saint Nicholas and the "Third Temptation," simply the effect of his vivid temperament, impressionability, and impulsiveness. But it seems to us that these fits and

starts can be more properly explained by a certain "confusion" of which the artist was possessed.

Only two of Repin's historical paintings are not covered by this general characteristic: these are the "Ivan the Terrible and his Son" and the "Zaporogian Cossacks." However, neither of these pictures can, with any truth, be considered "historical." On the other hand, "human interest" is not the main element of the first canvas. It is true that this time Repin succeeded in raising the expression of pathos to the degree of genuine horror. Yet the dominating elements here are the colours and the painting. Swept away by his subject, Repin executed his picture with a fire, with a mastery of brush and colour, which are not to be found in his other works. Similarly, the theme of the "Cossacks," the story of how the Zaporogian Cossacks sent a jeering reply to the Sultan, has an interest for us inasmuch as it suggested his painting to Repin. One can fully enjoy this work without going to the catalogue for information. What the particular cause of the Cossacks' merriment may be, is of no importance whatever. It is not the *past* that Repin depicted this time. He is a Cossack himself, and he has observed similar scenes from his very childhood. He had only to gather together his impressions into one ensemble and make sketches from nature.

IVAN THE TERRIBLE AND HIS SON *Ilya Repin*

Repin's weak point, his inability to present famous historical persons and to render the flavour of the epoch—as betrayed by his "Sofya," "Don Juan" or "St. Nicholas"—had no occasion to show itself here. In the "Cossacks" everything was dictated by reality. A few historical details are made use of for the sole purpose of intensifying the colour effects.

Repin's historical paintings were, we repeat, inconsistent digressions in his art. This remark may be properly applied to Perov's historical canvases, to the works of Jacobi, Vereshchagin, and Kramskoy, and, finally, even to such pictures of Gay as "Catherine II at the Bier of Queen Elizabeth," or his "Pushkin." All these facts point to the conclusion that the representatives of the art of the sixties lacked firm foundation. But as early as the seventies alongside these artistic phenomena, another current made its appearance in Russian painting. Although it, too, chose history as its subject, it was based on different principles. It is by way of historical painting that Russian art passed from narrow, doctrinal realism to free creative efforts. Of course, the pictures of Repin, Polyenov and even those of K. Makovsky may be looked upon as signs of this evolution. But the art of these painters presents only faint reflections: other masters were to give genuine expression to the new spirit.

The father of specifically "national" historical painting in Russia was V. Schwarz (1838–1869). He was the first to revolt against the tradition represented by "The Siege of Pskov" and to strive to lift the veil which separates us from old Russia. Therein lies his great merit. But Schwarz was far from being a great artist. To him belongs the honour of having made numerous discoveries in the field of costume, furniture, manners, and general appearance of old Russia, but he lacked the necessary power to animate all this, to give convincing and vivid pictures of the past. Schwarz was a conscientious, attentive dilettante, who passionately loved his work. But he had neither a genuine pictorial gift, nor a real artistic temperament, nor a sufficient fund of technical knowledge.

But Schwarz broke the road, and he was followed by more powerful masters. The foremost among these is Surikov (born in 1848),[1] whose importance is not confined to historical painting. Surikov's mighty gift dealt the most crushing blow to the art of his colleagues, the "Wanderers." He showed how fascinating and significant is the sheer beauty of terrible events, as compared with any moralising interpretation forced upon them. He was the first to break off with the

[1] Died in 1916. (Translator's note.)

sentimentally humanitarian ideals of the sixties, which were so alien to the true problems of art.

We are not inclined to overlook the merits of the "idealistic realism" of Gay and Kramskoy, nor do we deny that Repin played an important part in the struggle with and the final defeat of the art of the sixties. Then, too, the change from painting subservient to social interests to a freer art did not occur without the influence of external circumstances, such as the political reaction under Alexander III, which stifled the progressive propaganda. But none of these factors was more significant or was of a more far-reaching influence than Surikov's pictures. They made the same stirring impression on our painters as Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy did in literature. It was as though the door was flung open, and fresh air rushed in.

We are not going to analyse Surikov's works. The depth of their tragical mood, their purely æsthetic import, their freedom, their convincing power, their historical value are sufficiently known. Nor is it proper to repeat here what we have pointed out several times: the "superb ugliness" of his execution, the "beautiful muddiness" of his colours, the passionate, unsystematic technique of his painting, which upsets all traditions. It is more important here, it seems to us, to indicate

Surikov's place in the general evolution of our painting. We have just pointed out the part played by him in the evolution from doctrinal realism to pure realism and to idealistic painting. It is proper to determine here also his technical influence proper. Surikov is to be credited with a distinctive, purely—Russian, colour gamut, which was made use of by Repin and Vasnetzov, and the traces of which are felt in the "gloomy" palette of Levitan, Korovin, Syerov, and all the young Moscow masters. He was also the first to discover the strange beauty of the old-Russian colouring, and of the real Russian decorative "style," so distinctive in its studied grotesqueness. These discoveries of his were utilised by the two Vasnetzovs, Sollogub, Polyenov, Malyutin, Ryabushkin and S. Ivanov. Finally, as early as 1882, in his "Menshikov," Surikov found a wholly distinct type of feminine beauty—one of unutterable sadness and deep sensuous charm, which was utilised by Vasnetzov an infinite number of times, and changed by Nesterov into something nauseatingly sentimental. In the eighties and nineties all of Moscow idolised Surikov, and it is natural, therefore, that echoes of his ideas, colours, forms and compositions are found in the works of artists who are furthest removed from him in their general tendency.

THE COSSACKS' JEERING REPLY TO THE SULTAN

Ilya Repin

Very close to Surikov are three prominent contemporary Russian artists. To our regret, Ryabushkin, the most gifted and interesting of them, is already dead. Taking Surikov as a point of departure, Ryabushkin found a sphere of his own. He was taken up with the everyday life of the past, rather than with its grandiose tragedies. It was as if he saw all these scenes of the past in reality, as if he strolled, in person, along all these remote nooks, and entered the attics of the old palaces, and all the curious and picturesque details he saw there remained fixed in his memory. There is not a trace in him of a desire to embellish his subjects. Plainly and without ceremony, like an eye-witness, he renders all the homespun spruceness, all the simple-hearted snobbishness of the times of yore. Ryabushkin did not strive to produce poetical impressions, yet a great poetical charm lives in his works. It is the fascination of ancient diaries, of antique objects and rooms, and of all that brings in its train the very fragrance of bygone days.

Two other artists, S. Ivanov and Apollinarius Vasnetzov, fell under Surikov's influence, and chose old Russia as their field. They are very attractive, though less significant masters, of less decided temperament and originality. Ivanov approaches Surikov pretty closely in his efforts to lend his composition an unex-

pected turn, as well as in his colour combinations and in his choice of costumes and details; but he absolutely lacks dramatic gift, and the episodical character of his pictures deprives them of all historical significance.

Apollinarius Vasnetzov started with Siberian landscapes, broadly conceived and strong in colour. Later on he became wholly absorbed in artistic reconstructions of old Moscow, which had great success among Moscowites, who, as a rule, are ardent worshippers of their ancient city. But, in reality, Vasnetzov only developed that which Surikov had given in the landscape backgrounds of his pictures. To this Vasnetzov added successful borrowings from more original painters, such as Miss Helen Polyenov, Korovin, Malyutin. There is one thing for which Vasnetzov must be reproved: he somewhat overdoes the grotesqueness which he considers the most characteristic feature of mediæval Moscow. His composition often reminds one of stage decorations, on which too many details are crowded closely together.

Here we must again mention the name of Victor Vasnetzov, for it is beyond doubt that to him, together with Surikov, belongs the honour of having first protested against the narrow realism of the "Wanderers" and made the initial steps toward a freer art. True, in comparison with Surikov the art of Victor Vasnetzov

may appear flabby and ineffective. But, in the first place, this does not apply to the whole of his output; and, secondly, in the evolution of art the most powerful works are not always those which are most significant. On the contrary, faint hints sometimes engender revolutions, and if Vasnetzov did not revolutionise Russian painting, he undoubtedly planted in it seeds which gave, and are still giving numerous sprouts.

This time we have in mind the "fairy-tale" and historical pictures of the master, on which we only touched in the analysis of his religious paintings. The former played a quite important part in the development of Russian art. V. Vasnetzov gave new motives and themes, he familiarised us with the Old-Russian forms and colours. It was he who popularised the old Russian "fairy-tale," and Helen Polyenov, Mary Yakunchikov, Golovin, and Malyutin, the most prominent Russian "fairy-tale" painters of the nineties, are undoubtedly indebted to him. Apart from them, and, especially, from V. Vasnetzov, stood only one artist, Vrubel. He had no need to recur to the narrow medium of Old-Russian forms for the expression of the fairy-tales, born of his spirit. A vigorous, broad, true genius, he drew his inspiration from everywhere and lent everything a splendour that was his own. Vasnetzov created a school of more or less close imi-

tators; Vrubel created no school, for his art was too original and complex. But Vrubel alone is worth an entire school. He was the sole true and beautiful idealist of the later period of Russian art.

V. Vasnetzov's most remarkable paintings are his: "Stone Age," "Ivan the Terrible," "The Bogatyrs" (Heroes), and "Alenushka." In these, the master rose to a considerable height; he freed himself from dilettante-like mawkishness, and exhibited a fine workmanship, which is difficult to find in his other pictures. This is especially true of "Alenushka." There is music in this picture: soft sobbing and tender, sad song. The landscape is replete with the mysteriousness of loneliness and all the fascination of deep forests, of marsh pools, and of a grey, pensive day. This picture shows that Vasnetzov housed the soul of a true artist, which could not come to expression and unfold itself owing to various circumstances, such as defective schooling, an insufficient understanding of the problems of art, orders unsuited to his talent, the success of his worst pictures, and an infatuation with false nationalistic ideas. Not possessing the strong character and the gift of complete isolation, which were Surikov's shield, V. Vasnetzov was all his life swayed by various influences, and herein lies the cause of the incompleteness of his art and of all its disagreeable defects.

BOYARYNIA MOROZOV

Vasily Surikov

Vasnetzov's ideas were utilised not only by the official world, which saw in him the awaited "truly Russian" national artist, but also by all that was vigorous and young in Russian art. The gauntlet was thrown down to "purpose" painting and Realism. The slogan of these protestants was the cult of Old-Russian culture, a somewhat Slavophile slogan, directly opposed to the school of the sixties, with its sympathies for the Westerners—and soon Vasnetzov was followed by a number of painters who in their art left far behind them the propaganda of typical "Wanderers." The fir-trees in "Alenushka," Savrasov's "Spring," and Surikov's landscape backgrounds resulted in Levitan; and Vasnetzov's "Snyegurochka" (1884) inaugurated our "fairy-tale" painting and led to the Moscow revival of our decorative art in the works of Miss Polyenov, Malyutin, Golovin, and others. Though this movement has not given us a single truly great artist, though it is essentially little more than impracticable dilettanteism, nevertheless, as a page of the history of our culture, it undoubtedly possesses a great interest.

CHAPTER VII

LANDSCAPE AND FREE REALISM

WE have seen that at the beginning of the nineteenth century Russian landscape was already in existence as an independent branch of painting, which had several remarkable representatives in the past and which promised further development. The evolution of Russian landscape followed two paths. One was the continuation of that somewhat official art of Alexeyev, Ivanov, and other artists who pursued definite "topographical" aims; the other was of a more intimate and poetical character. The main phases of the first current have been mentioned above. M. Vorobyov, Alexeyev's pupil, was the fountain-head of a school, which gave the numerous "parlour" artists, who painted mawkishly exquisite studies of places remarkable for their picturesqueness or historical associations. It is noteworthy, that earlier in the century these landscape painters showed a more rigorous attitude toward their work, and, therefore, their paintings are valuable as topography, if in no other respect. Such are, for example, the

works of the brothers Chernetzov and Rabus. On the contrary, in its subsequent development, this current acquired a manneristic and superficial character, as evidenced in the works of S. Vorobyov, Bogolyubov, and Lagorio. The second current of our landscape painting presents from the purely artistic standpoint an incomparably greater interest. Its significance kept on growing gradually until toward the beginning of the nineties of the past century it assumed a domineering position in Russian painting.

M. N. Vorobyov himself occupies a middle position, like his teacher Galaktionov, and Semyon Shchedrin. He painted views of Petrograd, full of charming poetry, but together with these he produced a great mass of dry topographical "surveys." In his Palestine pictures he is the father of a long succession of painter-tourists, who spent their lives in sketching, in a superficial and hackneyed manner, all the notable places of the globe.

The art of Silvester Shchedrin (1791–1830) differs little from the landscape painting of his time. Neither a poet at heart, nor an ardent romanticist, he was nothing more than a "view-painter," who copied beautiful sites. Only his early Petrograd pictures approximated, in their poetical conception, the paintings of his uncle Semyon and of his comrade, M. Vorobyov.

In Rome he contented himself with copying celebrated views and interesting historical monuments, without endeavouring to give expression to any mood whatever. Nevertheless, there is an abyss between Silvester Shchedrin and the rest of Russian landscape painters of the times, an abyss which separates a true pictorial gift from sheer diligence and an acquired manner.

Silvester Shchedrin, one of the first Russian masters, is just as truly a classic of Russian painting as Levitzky, Kiprensky, Venetzianov, Bryullov, and Bruni. He is a true painter by the grace of God, who knew the fervour of inspiration and who possessed a workmanship which is not taught in any Academy. Neither Alexeyev, nor Semyon Shchedrin can be looked upon as his guides; if he is indebted to anybody for his technical development, it is to the seventeenth century Dutch: to Berchem, Peinaker, Both, and I. B. Vinix, who alone could teach him that softness of the brush, that sharpness of drawing, that airiness and beauty of colours, which assure Silvester Shchedrin the foremost place in the European landscape painting of his time. Unfortunately, death took him away prematurely, and his last, unfinished pictures, where there is no trace of his original dryness and timidity, permit us to surmise, into how great a master he could have grown.

Fate was even more pitiless to the next great Russian

landscape painter, M. Lebedev, who died (in 1836) at the age of twenty-four. Elsewhere we set too high a value on his early endeavours, which betray the "provincial" helplessness of Russian technical preparation, the influence of bad models, and the pursuit of false refinement—all qualities natural in a young artist. In Rome, however, where Lebedev did not find Shchedrin, but where he was fortunate enough to meet Ivanov, the artist rapidly freed himself from his "Petrograd" defects and began to create works which display a deep knowledge of nature and lay bare the delicate musical soul of the painter. Only some details of his later pictures bear the imprint of the bad taste of his Russian instructors. But the general effect of his paintings, their mellow, almost "savoury" colours, their consummate technique point toward an amazing firmness of intention and a great artistic gift. To judge by some peculiarities of his manner, such as is exhibited in his works of the thirties, we may lament in him the loss of a Russian Corot or Rousseau.

The further development of Russian landscape painting until the seventies is not rich in great and remarkable masters. Bits of good landscape backgrounds we can find in the canvases of our great painters, such as Venetzianov and Bryullov; Ivanov and Count Gagarin have excellent studies from nature;

and among Sternberg's pretentious productions we meet, now and then, with modest sketches from nature, which approach Lebedev and the later paintings of F. Vasilyev. But, with the exception of Peter Sokolov, who stands alone, we do not find a single great independent landscape painter, who can even faintly remind us of the conquests of realism in the field of landscape, which, at that time, were achieved in France, and which came to expression in the art of the "Barbizon School." The most interesting figure among the Russian landscape painters of the forties and fifties is Ayvazovsky, who was swayed by a Romantic spirit stronger than his fellow-artists, and who is favourably distinguished from his moderate and reasonable comrades by his passion for the sea. But even Ayvazovsky does not stand comparison with the West. He is only a poor copy from such magnificent connoisseurs of the sea as Gudin, and Louis Isabey. As to his "grandiose conceptions" they repeat the setting and the style of Turner's follower, John Martin, who was one of the favourite painters of the Romantic epoch.

The triumphs of Realism in the fifties and sixties found their expression also in landscape art. Two painters were the pioneers of Russian realistic landscape: Baron M. K. Klodt, and Shishkin. This does not mean, however, that the merits of other artists must

be ignored. Something has been done for the "achievement of truth" in Russian landscape by manneristic, but skilful masters like Bogolyubov, Lagorio, and Hun.[1]

Baron M. K. Klodt (1832–1902) can hardly, however, without restriction be considered a pioneer of Realism. It is characteristic, both of his personality and his time that, like Perov, he had not the patience to stay abroad until the end of the time allowed him, and obtained permission from the authorities to return home for the purpose of devoting himself to the study of Russian nature. This study resulted only in a few pictures, poetically conceived, but very dryly executed. Most of his works are nothing but dry, sentimental landscapes, full of studied arrangement, such as Düsseldorf and München manufactured by thousands at that time. In most of his paintings, only the "izbas" (cottages), hurdles, and the costumes of the figures betray their Russian origin.

The figure of Shishkin (1831–1898) is more pronounced. Unfortunately, this artist, by nature energetic and wonderfully diligent, did not have the advantage of a "school," which would have made of him a real master of painting and would have opened his

[1] The latter is better known by his ineffective historical paintings which smell of the "costume class," and by his sentimental "genre" pictures. (Author's note.)

eyes to the advanced roads of contemporary art. Abroad, Shishkin went to school to the timid and feeble representatives of German landscape painting, and failed to appreciate both the school of Barbizon masters—which at that time had reached its full development—and the new-born Impressionism. He brought from Germany the painful and dry orderliness of his landscape plans, his cheerless colouring, as well as his proneness to "compose" motives, found in nature, into "pictures." It is hardly to be doubted, however, that his conscientious sketches and precise, firm pencil drawings have greatly furthered the education of the Russian painters' eye and taught them to see the nature of their native country.

Several painters of the seventies made considerable progress in the direction of a more original and poetical conception of landscape. The most extraordinary figure among them is Savrasov. He produced practically only one picture: his famous "The Rooks Have Come," but this first Russian "spring" picture came as a symbol, so to speak, of the entire regeneration of Russian painting. There is felt in this picture the fragrance of that soft poetry which blossoms forth in the wonderful "poems in colour" of Levitan, Syerov, and Korovin.

The art of Fyodor Vasilyev (1850–1873) has re-

THE WAVE

Ivan Ayvazovsky

mained something in the nature of a half-uttered word. The amazing maturity of his technique, a pictorial gift, and a serious view of art promised in him an excellent artist, a delicate painter and a poet, but his drawings and most of his paintings betray the fact that the youthful master was misled by the excessive praises of his fellow-painters and already entered the easy road of mannerism. Unlike Lebedev, Vasilyev's last works betray, more clearly than his first canvases, a pursuit of prettiness, and concessions to the bad taste of the public. At any rate, many aquarelles, drawings, and a few sketches in oil of this gifted artist probably played an important part in the development of our landscape technique, and present a great artistic value.

Here must be also mentioned B. D. Polyenov (born in 1844), whose merits in the field of landscape compel us to be more indulgent to his blunders in historical painting. His studies of the Moscow Kreml, his charming, genuinely poetical "Moscow Courtyard," and "Grandmother's Garden" were as significant for their time as Savrasov's "The Rooks Have Come." These pictures were the fountain-head of the poetic and pantheistic landscape which in literature is represented by Turgenev and Tyutchev. Despite the fact that their technique is not very good, they incon-

testably belong to the best productions of Russian painting of the seventies and eighties.

The rôle of a Russian impressionist was played by A. Kuindzhi (born in 1842),[1] a pupil of Ayvazorsky, from whom Kuindzhi unfortunately borrowed a too superficial technique and a proneness to cheap effects. Of course, Kuindzhi's "Impressionism" cannot be accepted without reservations. He achieved a remarkable brilliancy of colour, noted new points in landscape, and he was the first in Russia—forty years after Corot—to point out the necessity of simplifying forms; but, a man of little culture, praised to death by his contemporaries, he did not create anything absolutely beautiful and artistically mature. In technique he remained a dilettante, in his motives he indulged in striking effects, in his conceptions he did not get away from commonplaces. When abroad, he completely overlooked the emancipatory movement of artists akin to him in their temperament, and has remained all his life a "provincial," a spirited and, to a certain extent, bold, but a hopelessly gross and undeveloped artist.

In the heyday of his glory Kuindzhi exerted hardly any influence on his fellow-painters, and only in the course of years did he succeed in creating a certain school, which rapidly outstripped its master. Traces

[1] Died in 1910. (Translator's note.)

of Kuindzhi's influence can be found perhaps in the works of Repin, Levitan, and others. But his real followers are a number of young, energetic painters, among whom it is necessary to mention here: Rylov, Rushchitz, Purvit, Gaush, and Bogayevsky. They have all, however, gone far away from the precepts of their master.

The eighties are a transitional period in the history of Russian landscape painting. At that time alongside Kuindzhi and Shishkin the following painters achieved some note: Sudkovsky, a painter of little gift; the pretentious and insipid Klever; the "Russian Düsseldorfian" Dyuker; and Orlovsky, a feeble follower of Shishkin. It is at that time also that the signs of a renascence of Russian landscape painting made their appearance. We have in mind Dubovsky's pictures, poetically conceived, but old-fashioned in execution, and the water-colour painting of Albert Benois, very plain and unsophisticated. Toward the end of the eighties the movement came to a clearer and more definite expression in the works of Ostroukhov ("Bad Weather," "Golden Autumn")—of Svyetoslavsky, who painted corners of provincial towns and the flooded roads, which are the inseparable accessory of the Russian spring—of Tzionglinsky, the ardent follower of impressionism, who devoted himself to the

rendition of difficult pictorial effects in nature—and also in the first endeavours of Levitan and A. Vasnetzov. Finally, many new words were uttered and many precious discoveries made in the field of landscape painting by painters who did not specialise in landscape, such as Repin, Vereshchagin, Surikov, V. Vasnetzov, and Nesterov.

"The Quiet Convent" (1891) may be considered the first fully conscious and mature work of Levitan (1861–1900). Until then the master was only essaying his power, developing the themes which had been already exploited by Vasilyev and Polyenov. A trip abroad (in 1889), and especially the works of the Barbizon masters, which he saw at the World Exhibition, opened his eyes, and ever since then he found his way and saw his goal.

The younger generation now accuses Levitan of being a "literary" painter. But it is this very quality of his art which the "Wanderers," Levitan's first comrades, praised in him. Levitan, it seemed to them, created a new type of landscape painting: a landscape with a story. Gradually, however, Levitan began consciously and persistently to free himself from the inartistic programme of the "Wanderers," and even before he became connected with the group of the "Mir Iskusstva" ("World of Art"), he stood on a firm and quite

THE FOREST IN WINTER *Ivan Shishkin*

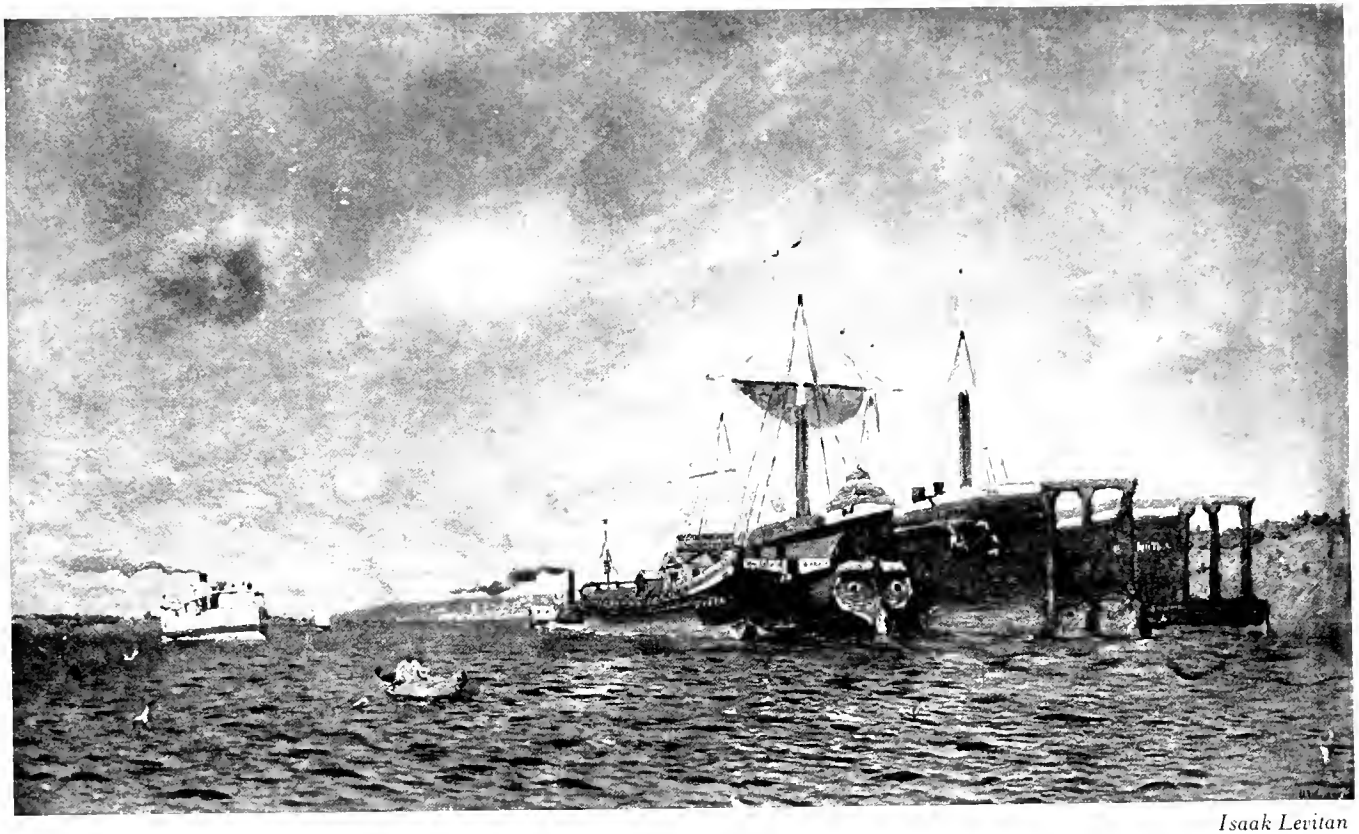
separate ground. To the "World of Art" belongs the honour of a true appreciation of this great artist and of that moral support, which Levitan felt in people, who really understood his art and desired but one thing—that he should express himself as fully as possible, without any admixture of literary ballast. If nowadays the younger generation disagrees with this appreciation, it is not because of Levitan's adherence to "literature," but rather because every phenomenon in art, be it ever so beautiful, must in course of time be replaced by another one, in most cases diametrically opposed to it.

Levitan might rather be blamed for other failings. The purely pictorial qualities of his earlier pictures, which seemed excellent, are no longer so highly valued. Not in vain was Levitan a Russian painter, the pupil of the dilettante Savrasov and of the Moscow Art School; not in vain did he spend his youth among people who were very advanced and sensitive, but had a scant artistic culture. There are in the "Quiet Convent," not to speak of his earlier paintings, traces of this school and of these influences. But it is to Levitan's credit that unlike some of his fellow-painters, he was aware of his failings and in his last years strove to free himself from them.

Levitan obstinately strove forwards, and in this

painful pursuit of the elusive ideal of beautiful painting he worked his pictures over and over, seeking for a manner which would be uniformly skilful, free, masterly, and at the same time absolutely "solid." And, in fact, his last pictures, by the beauty of their surface, the softness and tenderness of the stroke, by their "bodied," strong *pâte*—can rank with the best productions of nineteenth century painting, the works of Constable, Daubigny and Dupré included. It was a great step forward for the Russian School. Levitan renewed the connection with the West, disrupted since Lebedev's death.

Technical achievements alone do not, however, exhaust Levitan's importance in the history of Russian painting. Levitan is the father of an entire school of landscape painting, which constitutes one of the most attractive pages in the annals of Russian art. What Vasilyev aspired to, what the works of Savrasov, Polyenov, V. Vasnetzov and others foretold—that Levitan brought to final consummation. Levitan discovered the peculiar charm of Russian landscape "moods"; he found the distinctive Russian landscape style and created in painting worthy illustrations to the admirable poetry of Pushkin, Koltzov, Gogol, Turgenev, and Tyutchev. He rendered the inexplicable charm of our humble poverty, the shoreless breadth of



THE BREEZE

Isaak Levitan

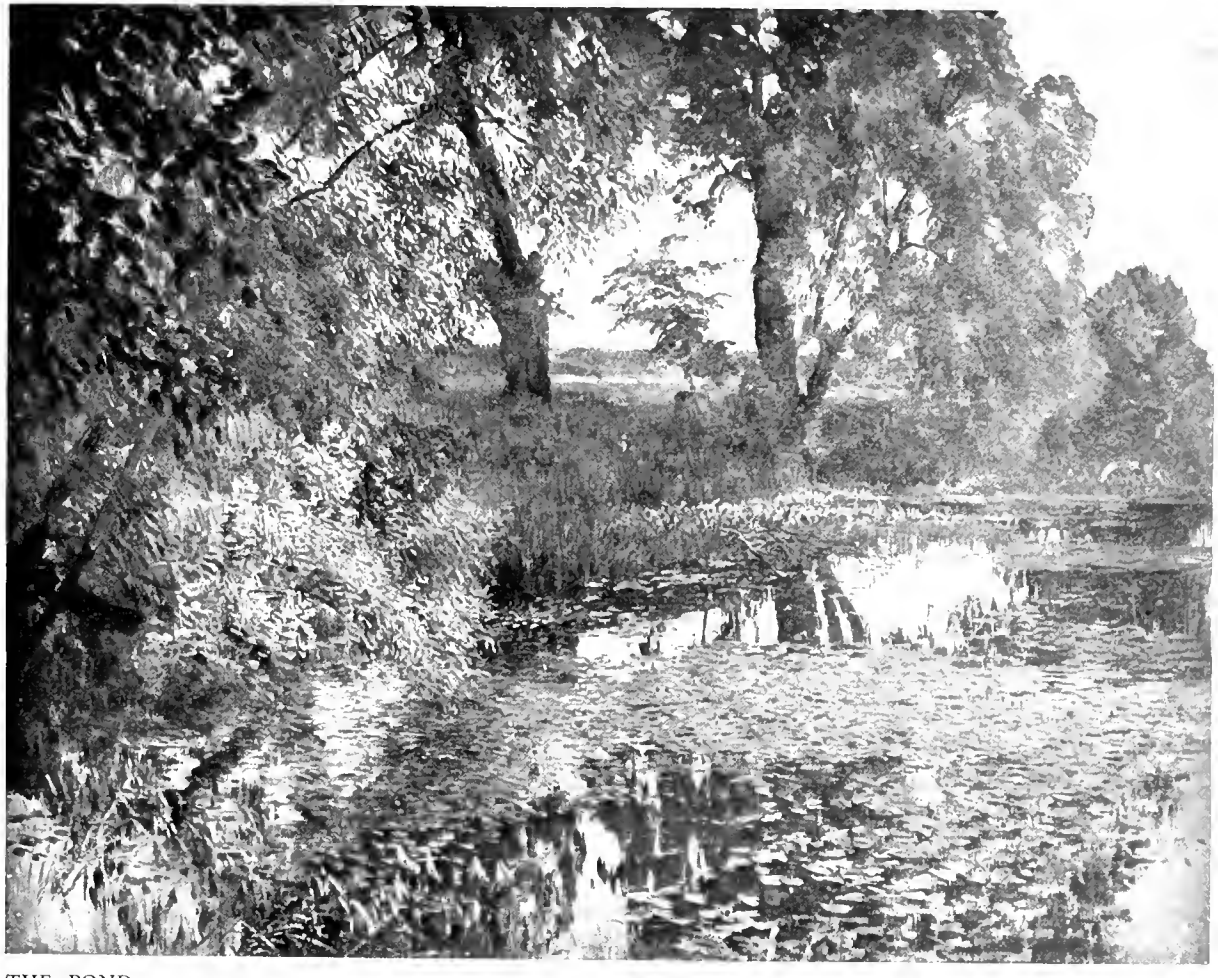
our virginal expanses, the festal sadness of the Russian autumn, and the enigmatic call of the Russian spring. There are no human beings in his pictures, but they are permeated with the deep emotion that floods the human heart face to face with the sanctitude of the Whole. Sheer beauty of form did not move Levitan; on the contrary, "classically" beautiful views left him indifferent; they disconcerted him, as the beautiful antiques disconcerted Rembrandt. Nature's very life—all that lives and praises the Creator—that is what Levitan was after.

The most gifted and pleasing among Levitan's followers are the following: Pereplyotchikov, Yuon, Zhukovsky, Dosyekin, Kalmykov, Aladzhalov, and Vinogradov. Levitan's art exerted also a strong influence on nearly all of Kuindzhi's followers, especially on Rylov, Purvit, Rushchitz, and Fokin. The dependence of these artists on Levitan is not, however, one of servile imitation. Levitan opened their eyes, as it were,—led them out into the open and showed them the fascination of the world. The best of them then chose their own way, and began to seek in nature for motives dear to their hearts, without forgetting, however, the precepts of the master, but without turning them into stiff formulas. Anyhow, the modern spirit of individualism would not allow them to submit

themselves to their model. Nature is broad and many-sided, and these artists endeavour, each working in his chosen field, to render her multiform and complex beauty.

In the eighties and nineties Moscow produced several other artists, who side by side with Levitan furthered the development of Russian landscape painting. All these masters worked in close connection with Levitan, and it is impossible to determine what they owe to each other. It was a common fireplace, where different artistic personalities burned, and kindled each other. True, Levitan's flame blazed most brilliantly and conspicuously, but it cannot be asserted that it set on fire the rest or that it had been kindled by them.

Nesterov, and especially Syerov and Korovin, were together with Levitan the creators of Russian landscape painting. Each of them brought into his art a peculiar light, a beauty, and a divination of his own. Nesterov, in the landscapes of his pictures, promised to be a great and poetic artist. He discovered the gloomy solemnity of the northern forest, the grey silence, the "moods" of Russian nature, replete with quiet emotion and suspense. In the backgrounds of his pictures devoted to St. Sergius there is rendered the pensive, religious aspect of our landscape, the softness of the rainy atmosphere, the frailness of the vegeta-



THE POND

Isaak Levitan

tion, and the freshness spread over everything. It might be expected that Nesterov would have given something more genuine than V. Vasnetzov. But these expectations were not realised, and in his last pictures full of dull hypocrisy, even the landscape element acquired a trite character.

On the other hand, the artistic life of Valentine Syerov (born in 1865) [1] represents nothing but steady, quiet development. Syerov was Repin's pupil, and his art brought to consummate expression what was only half uttered in the work of his teacher. Syerov is the strongest bulwark in Russia of "pure, free" Realism. He is a man of unusual sincerity, an absolute enemy of posing and of all preconceived tendency. Here was expressed Syerov's purely artistic temperament, the innate aristocracy of his nature, his natural æsthetic attitude toward things, his deep sense of beauty, and his striking ability to appreciate the artistic charm of phenomena. At the same time Syerov's personality is conditioned upon Russia's coming of age in the spiritual order, which became apparent since the middle of the eighties. Syerov was weary of the narrow æsthetic catechism of the "Wanderers" their limited outlook and elementary programme. He feels deeply the life of his country; he is a truly Russian painter,

[1] Died in 1911. (Translator's note.)

who has perceived and rendered the distinctive fascination of his fatherland and who has also grasped the psychology of the Russian mind, but there is not a trace in his manner of that premeditated, "literary" approach, which mars the art of his predecessors.

Syerov never painted "scenes from Russian life," but his landscapes, like the best ones of Levitan, in revealing the distinctive poetry of modern Russian art and in unfolding the master's intimate knowledge of Russian nature, testify to the depth of self-consciousness and to the maturity of Russian society. Only a mature personality can assume a conscious attitude toward the charm of the surrounding world. At the same time Syerov's portraits, utterly simple and direct, but of a consummate craftsmanship—are a genuine and multiform monument of the Russian society of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. For Russia of that complex and gloomy epoch Syerov's portrait gallery will be of the same value as van-der-Helst's portraits for Holland and those of Largillière for courtly France.

Syerov succeeded in painting a long series of prominent leaders of modern Russia, and this in spite of his surliness, excessive straightforwardness and unsociability, and in spite of the ignorance of our society in matters of art. This series starts with the Emperor

OCTOBER

Valentine Syerov

and the Grand Princes Mikhail Nicolayevich, Georgy Nicolayevich and Pavl Alexandrovich, and ends with the most characteristic representatives of the Russian "intelligentzia": rich patronisers, artists, musicians, authors. The value of these likenesses consists, in addition to the beauty of their painting and the noble splendour of their colours, in the sincerity and ease with which Syerov attacked his themes. With very few exceptions, he has never painted official portraits: this would be a perfectly impossible task for so "independent" a character. Syerov's portraits are always intimate, they give us the images of human beings, not of ideas with which the latter are connected. The expression of Syerov's artistic personality was not limited to landscapes and portraits. He is of too ardent and artistic a nature to remain within any limits whatever. He essayed his forces in the field of "historical painting," if it is possible to apply this term to the works of such a direct and sincere master as Syerov is. Unfortunately, he is not prolific. His historical compositions are few, and they are nearly all executed by Kutepov's order for the "Czars' Hunt." But these charming aquarelles are sufficient to assure Syerov the reputation of the "Russian Mentzel," of an artist who can render the life of dim ages with wonderful keenness and rare technical skill.

In this Moscow circle of artists K. Korovin (born in 1861) represents *le côté bohème*. He is "Apollo's favourite," a great and delicate talent, but rather unbalanced, reaching at many things but completing nothing. He is not the only one at fault, however. Like Vrubel, Korovin was not sufficiently appreciated by Russian society. It is astonishing that his magnificent panels for Mr. Mamontov and for the World Exhibition have remained unique in his work, and that no one else desired to utilise his eminent and original decorative talent.

V. A. Telyakovsky, the Director of the Imperial Theatres, is to be credited with having engaged Korovin in theatrical decoration and secured his material well-being. But wall painting and stage decoration are not the same, and we cannot see without sorrow that Korovin, and also Golovin, waste their energies on these ephemeral productions. The folly of this "work in the void" must be evident to the artists themselves, and in the consciousness of this fact lies perhaps the cause of the slovenliness and inconsistency which is noticeable in their work and which we have deemed it necessary to point out many a time.

In the purely pictorial respect Korovin occupies a place apart. He is the creator of a delicate and original colour gamut, in which grey and dim colour values

BOYS

Valentine Syerov

prevail. In Russia Korovin was taken, by misunderstanding, for an Impressionist; yet in his propensity to bitumen and "patina" effects he is just the reverse of the Impressionists with their quest for light. Korovin is a genuine colourist, that is, a painter not only able to render correctly the colours of nature, but also enamoured of the beauty of colours. Korovin's pictures and panels often delicately render an effect grasped by the painter in nature, but, in addition, even when they boldly depart from nature, their colours are beautiful. In those of Korovin's works which are most fantastic there is always high truth, i. e., harmony, well sustained style, and organic unity. With regard to the technique of his painting, too, Korovin stands by himself. His brush is fascinatingly nonchalant and the combinations of his colours are rich and give the effect of enamel work.

The historian of Russian painting cannot refrain here from expressing a fervent wish that a change may occur in Korovin's life, which would restore to us the former Korovin, which would allow him to create heartfelt works instead of dragging the chains of bureaucratic drudgery. Korovin—is by his nature the absolute negation of everything balanced, moderate, and dully conventional—and yet he has been for many years now an "official painter," the decorator of the

Imperial Theatres, the successor of the conscientious pedant Shishkov, and the pretentious Bocharov. Only in Russia can such strange things occur.

To "free" realists, whether or not dependent on the above-mentioned artists, belong: Braz, Kustodiev, S. Korovin, Pasternak, Arkhipov, and in part also the late Mary Yakunchikov, and Grabar. Braz is the representative in the field of portrait and realistic landscape of what is termed "kitchen." Braz "prepares" his pictures, and tries to give them a "savoury" and "juicy" colouring, and an agreeable pictorial surface. Braz would deserve the greatest success in our society, which looks at pictures mainly as wall decorations. If, however, such a society still exists in Russia, its taste has grown so coarse that it has become unable to appreciate the eminent qualities of Braz, who is a pleasant, correct, and at the same time a very conscientious artist—and gives its preference to works manufactured by Bogdanov-Byelsky, Sternberg, Kryzhitzky and Pisemsky.

Sergey Korovin (born in 1858) is a strange phenomenon among the plain, sane realists. In his themes he comes near the school of the sixties, but his attitude toward his subjects betrays the culture of a later, maturer epoch. In the same manner, his technique occupies a middle position between the "skill" developed

IDA RUBENSTEIN

Valentine Syerov

in the circle of Syerov, Korovin, and Levitan—and utter dilettanteism. Besides, it is hard to form a clear estimate of this artist who is so highly valued in Moscow, for only a very limited number of his works are known, mostly sketches and rough draughts.

Arkhipov (born in 1862) is a gifted artist, a keen draughtsman and a skilful painter. Unfortunately, he has been praised to death, as it were, by Moscow, which is so lavish of applause, and long since he ceased developing, subsisting on the repetition of hackneyed motives, in which a deft stroke and faded grey colours play the part of "modern" painting. Formerly, on the contrary, Arkhipov seemed to be an artist endowed with a gift of observation. His "Old Women on the Church Porch," and his "Troyka," are among the fine pictures of the nineties, and their success was deserved.

What has been said about Braz can be repeated, with a few reservations, about Pasternak. He, too, is able to "wrap up" his picture, and to lend his drawings an air of smartness and exquisiteness. At the same time Pasternak often succeeds in creating works which are attractive, or have an historical interest. To the first group belong his children scenes, to the second his curious pictures, representing Leo Tolstoy's "intérieur," and also a pastel, depicting one of the meetings of the "Union of Russian Artists." On the right sits the un-

seemly, taciturn Syerov; on the same line, to the left —the gloomy, nervous Ivanov; in the second row we see K. Korovin, who has stretched himself in a characteristic pose, and the reserved, quiet Apollinarius Vasnetzov.

Kustodiev derives from Syerov and Korovin; as to his landscapes, they are influenced by Levitan. In general, he is still very young, and rich mostly in promises, but we mention his name here because it seems to us that he clings wholly to our modern Realism and will hardly betray it in the future.

To "free" Realism belongs also the late Mary Yakunchikov (1870–1903) one of the most gifted, thoughtful, and poetical figures that Russian painting has produced for the last few decades. Yakunchikov essayed her forces in fantastic compositions and in applied art, and after her marriage she devoted a considerable part of her energies to the special sphere of "children" art. Yet it seems to us that these digressions were due to the example of Miss H. Polyenov and to the influence the latter exerted on her youthful friend. At any rate, the best and truly charming works in Yakunchikov "*Nachlass*," which is quite large considering her short life, are more or less close echoes of Levitan's elegies and idyls. There sounds in them the same note of sad resignation, there vibrates

PORTRAIT OF PRINCESS YUSUPOV — *Valentine Syerov*

in them the same infinite love for Russia's virginal rolling expanses, for her dear withered vegetation, the same "cult" of grass, bushes, birch-trees, buds, and field flowers. A peculiar charm is added to her pictures by the delight she takes in the past. In Levitan this motive is rare, and is not present in his best productions. Mary Yakunchikov, who for many years lived on an ancient estate near Moscow, entertained something like an adoration for the whole mode of living of the old country squires, and this adoration little by little spread to all the things of the dead past. She was moved to an equal degree by wretched crosses on village churchyards, by half-ruined cloister belfries, by empty rooms with furniture in summer covers, by the solemn walks of Versailles, and by the deserted "Cherry Orchards."

Grabar, who had spent many years studying painting in München and Paris, returned to Russia four years ago (1900).[1] Until then none of his works had appeared anywhere. He seems unable to find himself. Now he attacks themes bequeathed by Mary Yakunchikov, and renders the melancholy charm of deserted "Noblemen's Nests"; now, like Syerov, he paints landscapes replete with delicate country moods; now again, following the example set by Korovin, he

[1] Written in 1904. (Translator's note.)

goes north and brings from there views of uncouth provincial towns and bizarre village churches—typical, poetical pictures, of an excellent style. He is now absorbed by totally different themes, and if he will remain faithful to them in the future, there will be no ground for classifying him with the realists. One thing can be said with full assurance: the years Grabar spent in diligently studying his "trade" at München were not in vain. He is a master in the full sense of the word, knowing his business firmly and from all angles. He is one of the few Russian artists whose attitude toward their work is fully conscious. Consequently, whatever Grabar may turn to in the future, it may be confidently expected that it will be creditable work,—that there will be in it neither dilettanteism, nor bad taste, nor triviality.

THE DAEMON

Mikhail Vrubel

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONTEMPORARY STATE OF RUSSIAN PAINTING

WE ought to have ended our work with the preceding chapter, treating of the art of yesterday, which is sufficiently remote from us to be correctly estimated. The art of Levitan and that of Syerov and Korovin who are now in the heyday of their powers—already belong to the past, and we can discuss this phase of the history of Russian painting without running the risk of losing the right perspective. These phenomena have already reached maturity and completely crystallised; they have passed through the stage of negation, through the second stage of indiscriminate enthusiasm, and now they are entering the celebrated phase of "re-valuation." Besides, the quiet, balanced art of Levitan and Syerov hardly needs any special viewpoints or any distance for its appreciation.

This is not the case with a series of phenomena in our painting, which are just now being born, or which are just receiving a definite shape and becoming conscious of themselves. It would be absurd to demand

an "historical" attitude toward them. We ourselves are in the very midst of the whirlwind which sways our contemporaries, and we can neither analyse it nor foresee into what it may turn, nor divine its future significance. Besides, modern art criticism is just now raising the question whether there is any sense whatever in weighing and estimating artistic phenomena. The basic principles of æsthetic theorising, such as the conception of beauty, of formal perfection, of "workmanship," are not only shaken in their definitions, but their very necessity is denied. At the same time the new æsthetic definitions which are suggested are confused and incomplete.

Guided by this consideration, we have thought it proper to abandon in the conclusion of this work the critico-historical method of treatment which has served us throughout it. In these last pages we shall endeavour to stake out the highest summits of modern Russian painting, without attempting to determine their absolute value, or forecasting their significance "before eternity." It is probable that we shall discuss magnitudes which in some ten years from now will prove too petty to deserve mention in a "History of the Russian School of Painting." Yet it is our belief that, upon the whole, those painters upon whom the attention of the artistic world is now centred, will

THE DAEMON (FINAL VERSION, 1902) *Mikhail Vrubel*

also in the future be considered, probably with various reservations, the most typical representatives of the art of our times.

Is it possible to believe at the present moment in the existence of a "Russian School"?—Hardly. The school, in the sense of a uniform system or of a programme, does not exist any more. Individualism which furthered our emancipation from the fetters of the "Wanderers'" tendency and from the academic pattern—has at this time reached the moment of its extreme development, and has evolved its extreme conclusions. We have as many movements and schools as individual painters. And this is so not only in Russia, but throughout Western art. Each truly modern artist strives only toward one thing: to express as fully as possible himself alone. All influence, all borrowing is branded as plagiarism. The artist suffers if he notices that his manner recalls that of another.

Yet it is impossible that such a state of affairs should continue forever. Individualism as a protest is beautiful, but as a self-sufficient moral and æsthetic system it is bad, nay, horrible. Particularly, in the field of art, individualism leads to complete degeneration of forms, to ineffectiveness in work, and to poverty and ineptness of conception. However great our worship

of the individual human soul may be, this is nothing in comparison with the "psychic organism" of several souls. Only such an organic union of personalities possesses the real power, which can further the individual creation of works of true might, beauty, and usefulness. Proud isolation leads to impotence, hollowness, and nonentity. This is the great cosmical mystery. Only through Communion does Divinity manifest itself in us,—Divinity that gives us the necessary power for high deeds or guides us to revelations. But, of course, the mysterious laws of the "common soul" demand that this communion be one of life and freedom, that it should be neither a lifeless ritual like an Academy, nor an inner slavery after the manner of the "purpose painting" of the sixties.

It seems to us that individualism has served its time, and that it should cease to sway our art. This is all the more necessary because, though individualism is bad as a system, it is forever an attribute of human existence. In free communion the individual can by no means perish, for a truly masterful personality can at most be infected by another one, but never completely lost in it. We consider it desirable that the next phase of Russian art should restore the "School," that is, common work for a common aim. But, of course, we do not wish a programme forced upon our art even by

AT EVENING

Konstantine Somov

the most well-intentioned social movement. Art must remain self-sufficient, above all it must seek for its own God, who is but a distinctive revelation of "Universal Divinity." Then the rest will naturally be added to art. Only an art, self-sufficient, but unified for a common purpose, only a school, both as technique and as ideas, can bear fruits of beauty, which will be worthy of those borne by the famous "schools" of former ages, and even surpass them in nutritive powers and in fascination. It is hardly necessary to insist, however, that these wishes are helpless in the face of life's decrees, and that the future of Russian art depends upon the unrevealed destinies of the Russian nation.

Considerations of space compel us to give only a very brief sketch of the contemporary state of Russian painting,—that is, to enumerate and characterise those artistic personalities which are at present looked upon as most prominent, interesting, and valuable. Most of them must be considered as wholly independent phenomena, and we observe but rarely a certain involuntary influence on the part of the stronger artistic personalities, or a certain external grouping.

We have spoken already of Vrubel, as of Ivanov's sole worthy heir. But Vrubel's connection with Ivanov manifested itself only in his early religious

works; later on he came to occupy a totally separate place, and now the sphere of his art has nothing in common either with the artists of the past or with modern Western art. At the same time, Vrubel is, unlike his fellow-individualists, one of the greatest experts in his field. He is, above all, a master. But his craftsmanship has no definite connections with either the classics of technique or with the prominent masters of our times. In his academic years he was enamoured of Fortuny and rapidly became as skilful as the famous Spaniard; later on, in the period when he painted his icons for the Kirillov Monastery, he re-educated his taste and skill by the study of Byzantine mosaics; beginning with the nineties Vrubel chooses a new road, which leads him to a strange kingdom where everything: forms, colour, manner, images, are created by the artist himself. Vrubel's art can be likened to an enchanted garden where all the flowers, alive and fragrant, have been invented, created, and grown by the gardener-magician.

Vrubel paints everything. Along with most fantastic subjects we find among his works plain sketches from nature; alongside portraits—decorative patterns, alongside religious revelations—mythological "visions." At the same time, Vrubel is a sculptor, perhaps the best Russian sculptor of the last few decades,

A PORTRAIT *Philip Malyavin*

and an architect, a stage decorator, an original master of applied art. There are no weak points in Vrubel's artistic personality. He is everywhere the same magnificent virtuoso, the same phantast of a fiery temperament, the same genuine artist, never yielding to timid vulgarity, all flame and enthusiasm.

But at the same time Vrubel is a true *décadent*, and herein lies the cause of his failure to achieve success not only among the public at large, but also among artists. We do not mean to say that Vrubel ever played antics to please the fad of the hour, or that he purposely distorted his art. Vrubel is just such a décadent as Beardsley, Somov, Gauguin, as Tiepolo and Watteau in former days, as the art of Rococo, and as that of the "flamboyant" Gothic style and of Romanticism. Vrubel is excessively exquisite, too refined, too far removed from common understanding. At the same time,—and this is a feature of the end of the nineteenth century—his magnificent art is full of inconsistencies, of chasms and oddities. Many see in these deficiencies the first signs of his insanity, but it appears to us that his disease was to a considerable degree caused by the consciousness of these deficiencies, which he could not correct, and which were rooted in the entire state of contemporary art. The struggle of a soul of an artistic genius with the inability to express

itself,—thus can the tragedy of Vrubel's life be characterised. The horror in this duel was all the greater in that his impotence seemed to mock at him,—in that it was not an organic quality of his nature, but rather a demoniac principle, which unexpectedly invaded his work.

Under the sign of "*décadence*" is also the art of Konstantine Somov, who is one of the most delicate poets and one of the most refined masters of modern painting. Somov's sphere is more limited than Vrubel's immense domain. Somov exists in a secluded circle. His art may be termed "the art of old age," for it is rich in wonderful mellowness. Only old collectors of vast experience can appreciate the enchantment and the preciousness of objects as delicately as Somov does the beauty of colours, the exquisiteness of forms, the delicacy of lines. At the same time the subjects Somov treats are "senile." His works are like memoirs written by one who has lived many a hundred years on this earth. Only with the decline of a culture do such figures appear as that of Somov. Their glance is ever turned backward to a past, which although it has not been lived by them, is presented with the veracity and convincing power of something actually experienced. There is something mysterious and

fantastic in the manner in which Somov evokes the very flavour of the dim past.

Somov reproduces bygone ages without any scientific pedantry; his themes are taken from commonplace, everyday life. Somov's personages are not human beings that love and suffer, they are rather marionettes, but such marionettes as had partaken of life's enticements and "would not taste of death." Somov's art is steeped in quiet sadness and scepticism. He loves his world infinitely, and at the same time he mocks at its vanity. In Somov's presentation life is a brilliant and delicate game with a very strange beginning and a disconsolate, gloomy end. Somov's talent is all impregnated with the mysterious power of inspiration and divination, but at the same time there is a note of despair in it: to his mind the riddle of life conceals no lofty meaning.

Somov is a décadent not only in the philosophic import of his art, but also in his very technique and painting. But in applying to Somov the term "décadence" has the same meaning as it bore when characterising Vrubel's art. Somov is at one and the same time an ineffective painter and a virtuoso. At times we find in him something in the nature of intentional puerility, which is due to his proneness to satire, to

piquant ugliness, and in general to what it is customary in the artistic world to call by Hoffmann's phrase "scurrility." But sometimes Somov is as helpless as a child, unconsciously and against his own will, and this even in works where everything points to a tremendous skill, and to a consummate perfection of technique, a perfection unknown to the whole of Russian painting of the second half of the nineteenth century.

In virtue of all his merits and failings Somov may count together with Vrubel, upon one of the most prominent places in the history of Russian painting. It is highly probable that Somov's art, excessively spiced, suffocatingly perfumed, over-refined, and morbidly delicate as it is, will undergo a re-estimation in the future, but it can be safely predicted that no other artist of the beginning of the twentieth century has mirrored with greater faithfulness the peculiar charm of our super-refined epoch, which knows so much and believes so little. The very defects of Somov are but characteristic signs of the times: it is the reflection of the general senile decrepitude of our culture,—a decrepitude which has its immense horror and its most delicate fascination.

The third prominent Russian master is Malyavin. He is Repin's disciple, but he is to Repin as Goya is to Velasquez, or as Fragonard is to Watteau. The so-

ber, normal painting of Repin, his conscientious service of art, in the sense in which the school of the sixties understood it, his rationality have turned in Malyavin into a bacchic feast of colour, into most dashing display of skill, into a hazy and lax monomania. Malyavin has something in common with Bénard: by some peculiarities of his technique he approaches the Scottish artists; finally, his kinship to Zorn cannot be denied. Yet, technically Malyavin is weaker and at the same time more powerful and interesting than these artists. He has less conscious skill and culture; his views are more limited, the colours coarser, the painting more slovenly,—but there is more "authenticity" in his art; he is freer, more elemental; he is a true artist, savage, revelling in red fustian stuff like a Negro,—a genuine artistic temperament strange to cold calculations in his work. In this respect he approaches the Impressionists.[1] Yet Malyavin is by no means an Impressionist. He has never aimed at studying colours in nature, never endeavoured to render the delicate charm of relationships, the stir of life, the poetry of the unexpected. Malyavin, the true, mature Malyavin is nothing but

[1] As has been seen, Impressionism has not as yet appeared on the Russian soil. Only lately Russian residents of Paris and München, such as Tarkhov and Yavlensky, have been converted to the Impressionistic faith. The Impressionistic æsthetics guide Grabar, at least to some extent, in his latest pictures. (Author's note.)

"the singer of Russian peasant women." He paints them in all their ugly majesty and in all the richness of their dazzling colours. He loves the Russian "baba" (peasant woman) as the pagan does his idol; he worships her, with her red fustian cloth, her coarse coquetry, her haughty grin and all her clumsy appearance, which mocks all the canons of pulchritude and has yet a peculiar beauty. It is before this graven image that Malyavin kneels and burns incense,—a phenomenon marked with the imprint of spiritual degeneration, but not devoid of grandeur.

It has been already mentioned that Vasnetzov inaugurated a certain revival of the Old-Russian, "truly Russian" art. Vasnetzov's activity, like the entire movement started by the Slavophiles, has its obscure, recondite causes. One thing can be said with certainty: even here we don't stand quite apart from the West. Our Slavophilism was a somewhat belated reflection of the European nationalistic movement, which grew up in the shadow of Romanticism.

In architecture the return to old, mediæval Russia began—if we are not to reckon Ton's feeble attempts —with the buildings of Gornostayev, Hartman, Ropet, and Bogomolov. At the same time the first attempts were made—again, if we exclude the endeavours of Solntzev and Monigetti—to create furniture in the

Old-Russian style. All these efforts were, however, unsuccessful and bore no fruits of beauty. The artists have not succeeded in evoking the old, for it was inapplicable to modern life; it was simply outside the sphere of contemporary culture; and as for transforming the old into the new, they had not enough creative power and passionate love for the past. In the seventies and eighties the "Russian Style" meant something wildly grotesque, uncouth, motley, and by all means coarse. Only after Schwarz had restored in his illustrations the more or less accurate image of Old-Russian life, and a series of painstaking archeological investigations had been completed,—only after the Gagarin Museum at the Academy of Arts, and the Moscow Historical Museum had been established,—only then was the original beauty of Old-Russian life unveiled, and it became possible to create something artistically valuable on the basis of old authentic documents. This was done by V. Vasnetzov.

A worshipper of the Russian past and of all that is customary to term purely Russian culture, Vasnetzov, was well fit to undertake this work of the restoration of the past; he had the talent and the right attitude. Both this talent and this scrupulous, almost pious attention to his work are reflected in his paintings. He abandoned the superficial smartness of Hartman, Bo-

gomolov, and Ropet and pointed out several essential principles of Old-Russian beauty: its noble picturesqueness, purposefulness, strength, calmness, and simplicity. But even Vasnetzov could not achieve the impossible. Unable to resuscitate the dead, he made nothing but an approximate pasticcio, which for a time charmed all the dilettantes, eager for new impressions. Vasnetzov's art, respectable in its intentions as it is, was in the eighties and nineties nothing but a Moscow fashion. It was a more attractive fashion than the Petrograd fad for the works of artists like Ropet and Hartman, yet it was a fashion, that is, something essentially ephemereal and unreal. Nowadays—O irony of fate!—Moscow is enthusiastic over the Russian "Empire," the "décadent style," and Somov, as she was, yesterday, over Vasnetzov, Old-Russian palaces, cupboards, fairy-tales, and "bylinas" (old hero ballads).

Vasnetzov did not stand alone in his endeavour to evoke the Old-Russian beauty. In the eighties there worked in the same field the talented, but not very skilful amateur, Count Sollogub, responsible for amusing illustrations and several decorative works. Later on, the camp of painter-nationalists grew more populous. It included Miss Polyenov, Davydov, Malyutin, Korovin, Roerich, Golovin, Bilibin, and many others. At one time, Vrubel, too, fell under the in-

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST — *Sergyev Malyutin*

fluence of nationalistic ideas, but he either radically transformed them, or was swayed by them, and then created things that belong to his weakest works. Helen D. Polyenov (1850–1898) is one of the most honourable representatives of Russian art. An untiring worker and a truly cultured woman, she turned searchingly, like Vasnetzov, to the study of the principles of national Russian beauty. At the same time Miss Polyenov attentively followed the evolution of Western applied art. Following the example of the English and of Grasset she turned to nature. It is also the English who led her to study the Russian peasant art, in which the popular taste found its fullest expression. These studies resulted in her decorative experiments, which are not very successful and in her charming illustrations to fairy-tales, in which the decorative element plays a considerable part.

In the nineties Miss Polyenov's success was great. It is she who is partly responsible for the art industry of the "zemstvos," Abramtzev's Pottery, Stroganov's School, and the carpet factory of Mme. Choglokov. It is she also who inspired other artists, such as Mary Yakunchikov, Malyutin, Mme. Davidov, Roerich, Korovin, Golovin, and Bilibin. But nowadays her art seems old-fashioned. Her dependence on the Western *art-nouveau*, the excessive lightness of her execution, a

slight affectation in colouring, the superficiality inherent in illustrations, and blunders in drawing strike the eye which has grown callous to the merits of her works. Best of all are some of her illustrations to fairy-tales, and her purely realistic sketches, which reveal a delicate understanding of nature.

Malyutin has little in common with Vasnetzov, but it is beyond doubt that he was led by Vasnetzov in his search for "true Russia." At first Malyutin was a sober and direct realist, and only in the middle of the nineties he developed into that bizarre uncouth phantast-decorator, who at one time enjoyed an outstanding success among artists and amateurs, but who has now, like Miss Polyenov, lost a considerable portion of his charm because of a trite and frivolous repetition of the same rather hollow formula. Strangest of all, Malyutin, as a realist, was a genuine master. His landscapes, "intérieurs," and portraits of the eighties belong to the finest works of his time. But having entered the field of popular and fantastic art, he, for some unknown reason, took leave of all his technical skill and feigned, out of sheer conviction, to be but a half-witted, helpless, and puerile dilettante.

Candour possesses great charm. But studied naïveté especially if it lasts for years, becomes something quite intolerable. We don't mean to say that Malyutin is

ILLUSTRATION TO A FAIRY TALE BY PUSHKIN

Ivan Bilibin

a mime or a clown. A more sincere, enthusiastic artist can hardly be found. But, unfortunately, his sincerity and enthusiasm are misplaced. When one admires Malyutin's amusing fancy, his sense of colour, his true artistic character, one regrets that all these high qualities are absolutely distorted and maimed by a wholly wrong theory, which is deeply rooted in the artist's mind; namely, that the fundamental principle of the Old-Russian æsthetics is coarseness, absurdity, puerility, and superficiality. For many years Malyutin has been obstinately sticking to his "truly Russian" attitude, to this traditional manner of botching up, doing things at random. This feature in a talented, and naturally very delicate painter can be accounted for only by the general morbid state of our culture.

The same discouraging feature mars the art of another admirable Moscow painter—Golovin. He is one of the richest colourists of modern Russian art, less original, but perhaps more delicate than Vrubel. Golovin's favourite colour gamut, light, silvery, with fascinating streaks of fresh, vernal green, hazy azure, and patrician red, fascinates like soft music. But this music flows on not in the finished form of lucid accords or clear strains, but as an elemental, confused roar. Golovin's art is like a hint at a fascinating but veiled beauty.

Golovin is at his best in his stage settings. His decorations for the "Ice House," are admirable but especially beautiful, grandiose and poetic are his stage-settings for the "Women of Pskov." His sketches for Ibsens's "Lady from the Sea" are painted throughout in charming "northern" tones. Some of his stage-settings for "The Magic Mirror" and "Ruslan" are replete with that softness and musical throbbing that fills springtime evenings in old gardens and parks. In his inventions pertaining to theatrical costume he is a real virtuoso. He lavishes on his costumes all the splendour of his colourful fancy, invents fabulous fashions, and combines historical forms. But it can be said even about his best productions, that they are afflicted with annoying defects. Golovin is too dissolute; he is a typical representative of the Russian variety of the artistic Bohème. He will leave very little behind him: a few sketches, two or three paintings, several portraits. All this is distinguished by a genuinely artistic character, a splendour of colours, and a delicate taste, yet it is all nothing but hints and promises, which Golovin will hardly want to keep.

Golovin's stage settings are entirely different from those of Bakst. Golovin's work consists for the most part of improvised sketches, rash and superficial; Bakst's attitude toward his work is on the contrary, one

SPRING

Arkady Rylov

of strict and careful consideration. He ponders each detail and organises the ensemble. He undertakes most serious archeological investigations, without sacrificing the directness of the mood and the poetry of the drama. His mises-en-scène of the classical tragedies, though not so easy and brilliant in colour as Golovin's, can be considered ideal, so much careful thought and delicate understanding of poetry is in them. Of an entirely different type is his mise-en-scène of the ballet "The Dolls' Fairy," which Bakst transformed into a charming Hoffmannesque tale. Bakst is properly destined for a stage where his rôle would be one of an intelligent and arbitrary commentator. Unfortunately, the Imperial Theatre does not fully utilise Bakst, who is not only an excellent decorator, an intelligent and exquisite costumer, but also a resourceful stage manager, wide-awake, and rich in fresh ideas.

Beside his work for the stage, Bakst expressed himself also in the field of book illustration. But, strange to say, in this branch which demands the talent of a commentator above all, Bakst displays great independence and is often loath to accept the rule of imposed ideas. Hence, his illustrations rarely correspond to what he illustrates, but they always show him as a virtuoso and a master of style. Bakst is a wonderful,—the most wonderful next to Somov,—"calligrapher" of

Russian art,—that is why the best he did belongs to the field of purely ornamental illustration, such as vignettes and head-and-tail pieces. His ornamental resourcefulness is inexhaustible, and his firm knowledge of the human body enables him to master easily the most complex compositions. In addition, his gift for assimilation is wonderful: he mimics artistic manners with absolute precision. This trait reveals also the weakness of this highly gifted artist: he does not meet the first requirement of modern individualistic æsthetics, he is not original; he is rather something like a "Bolognese" master, a virtuoso speaking all the languages of the globe, but who has no style of expression of his own. It is difficult to forecast the future attitude toward Bakst. If times will change and the thirst for individuality in art will be quenched, then, perhaps, such personalities as Bakst, such masters of extraordinary technique, will be duly appreciated and given the praise which now only eccentric artists enjoy.

The same qualities of high culture and exquisite skill are possessed by several other young Petrograd artists. Therein lies the essential difference between Petrograd and Moscow art. It is also characteristic that all these artists: Somov, Bakst, Lanceray, Dobuzhinsky, Bilibin,—of Petrograd, and Zamiraylo and Yaremich, of

Kiev are almost exclusively book-decorators. They have brought a quickening stream of talent into the musty atmosphere of our book industry, and owing to them we are witnessing now a sort of rebirth, or rather birth, of the Russian book.

The most many-sided of these artists is Lanceray. The field of his art is large. He is very successful in purely decorative subjects, which he executes, either in some definite old style or in the manner created by himself by means of the most delicate study of nature. But Lanceray is equally a master in his illustrations,—figurative commentaries to the thought of a poet or scientist. In this sphere he reaches a keenness of impression, a dramatic power, a mastery of masses, and an historical penetration which remind one of Mentzel. His best illustrations have so far been those to Kutepov's "Czars' Hunt" and to our own book, "Tzarskoye Selo." Serious consideration should be given, also, to his scenes of old Petrograd, his various vignettes in the periodical Mir Iskusstva (*The World of Art*) and in other editions of Dyagilev's, and even the "Breton Tales"—the work of his youth.

Bilibin is the Petrograd version of the artistic current which was represented in Moscow by Miss Polyenov. Early in his career Bilibin even imitated her, acquiring from her merits as well as defects. By and

by, however, Bilibin found his own way, and, although Miss Polyenov's fairy-tales were his point of departure, he left his prototype far behind him; so that there is ground to believe that in the future this conscientious and gifted artist will succeed in creating a distinctive place for himself and in producing harmonious, original productions of a high degree of perfection. Meanwhile, Bilibin is passing through a transitory phase. He is gradually freeing himself from dilettanteism, and is developing his palette and technique; at the same time he drinks from the well of popular motives, which he studies with great assiduity. A few more efforts which would increase his effectiveness, dramatic power, and stylistic harmony, and which would help him to get rid of misplaced pedantism and a certain dryness in execution—and we shall have in Bilibin an admirable artist.

Roerich is also a Petrograd painter, but by his nature and his intentions he is closely related to V. Vasnetzov. By the intentional coarseness of his technique, by the character of his colouring which reminds one of Russian gingerbread and round loaves, he incontestably belongs to the Moscow group. Roerich is a very gifted man, but of an undeveloped taste, a half-barbarian like his prototype, Vasnetzov. He too readily recurs to cheap effects, certain that in the confusion of our artistic life

it will pass unnoticed. But sometimes he reaches a considerable height, and some of his works breathe a vigorous, truly epical spirit. Very good also are his unassuming, direct studies from nature.

The following Petrograd painters must be mentioned here: the decorator and landscapist Dobuzhinsky, whose modest but admirably delicate sketches present for the most part, views of Petrograd, or quiet, deserted nooks of provincial towns; the classically strict Yaremich, the greatest expert in printing-types, who is equally excellent in his printing works and in his placid, silvery landscapes; the admirable calligrapher and decorator Zamiraylo; the wood engraver Miss A. P. Ostroumov, whose prints present charming and pictorially delicate landscapes, of an admirable style, and another lady, Mme. Lindeman, who is a worthy successor of Mary Yakunchikov in the sphere of "*paysage intime*" and painting for children.

Here must also be named Musatov (died in 1905), whose art is the Moscow modification of the artistic formula represented in Petrograd by Somov. This excellent master chose the epoch of the forties and fifties of the past century as the object of his delicately fragrant and fascinating art. Despite a certain analogy with Somov, he followed a wholly distinctive road. Somov is the artist of intimate moods, and of over-

refinement, whereas Musatov housed the temperament of a fresco painter. His original and noble style, his silvery quiet colours waited for walls and broad surfaces, to unfold their full power and splendour. Untimely death has snatched away the artist and deprived Russian art of a master whom we could ill spare.

Here our investigation must be concluded. We shall not dwell on the latest phenomenon of Russian painting: the Moscow phantasts and symbolists, Sudeykin, P. Kuznetzov, the two Milioti, and others. Their artistic personalities have not crystallised as yet. One thing can be already said about them: they are all very gifted men, their art is absolutely genuine, and it is highly probable that in the nearest future they will come to hold the central place on the stage of Russian painting. In concluding this book on the Russian School of Painting, let us express the wish that these young artists do not forget the "school." Formed in the period of the wildest confusion in the field of æsthetic theorising, deprived of the guidance of well-tried principles, without either mature knowledge or firm intentions, they are doomed to perish, if they will not understand in time all the falsity of the artistic doctrine which confuses "school" with lack of original-

ity, scrupulous attitude toward art with pedantism, and preaches "free inspiration," forgetful of that fact that freedom without knowledge is the most bitter slavery.

THE END