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A RUSSIAN NATIONAL ARTIST.

WITH PICTURES BY ÍLYA RÉPIN.



THE ATAMÁN (CHIEF) OF THE COSSACKS.

A NATIONAL artist—an artist who is equally at home in historical subjects; in scenes from modern life, ranging from the court to the peasant; in portraits, in interiors, and outdoor lights, provided only that he be not asked to conform to the style of any set “school,” or to seek his inspiration outside of his native land—this is a rare phenomenon at the present day, when many men first cultivate assiduously a certain school, too often foreign, and then proceed to seek their subjects in all lands except their own.

But this phenomenon we meet in the most famous of Russian painters, Ílya Evfímovitch Répin. Even Répin, however, has a predi-

lection for certain parts of his country, and his heart and brush are chiefly dedicated to that Little Russia where he was born and where the days of his humble childhood were passed.

Little Russia is not much more than a name to those who regard St. Petersburg and Moscow as representing the vast empire of the Tzar, but its history is so full of poetry and chivalry that it may be classed with romance even for those who find facts dull and information heavy. Far from the modern center of Russia's life, from the capital of its commerce, its machine-organized army, its conventional court and officials, from the snows and the birch and fir forests of the full-fledged empire of the North, lies the ancient capital of the infant nation, in the far South, the land of poetry, of legend, and of song. Kieff, cradled in the wide steppes, amid vivid sunlight and waving plume-grass, guarded by stiff, sentinel poplars, and raised high in air upon green hills, above the broad blue Dnyépr, still remains, in the hearts and the reverent affection of Russians, the “Mother of all Russian Cities.”

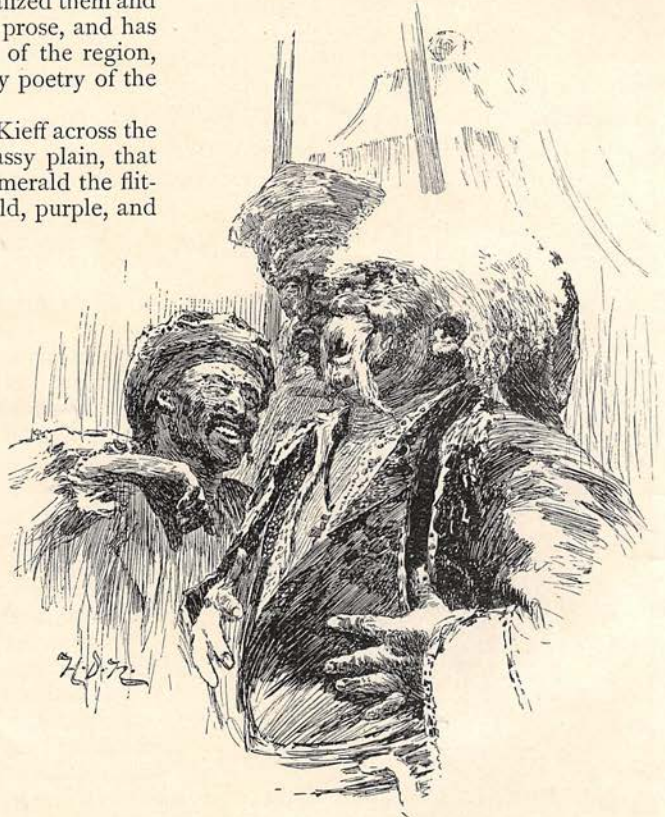
From the ninth century Kieff has been the heart of the steppes. For a very long time the steppes of the southwest, which bear their pedigree in their name of Little Russia, formed the chief portion of the Russian sovereign's realm, and its ownership carried with it the much-coveted, hotly contested title of Grand Prince

(Grand Duke, as it is usually translated), and supremacy over the myriad other warring, petty princes of the growing empire's early days. Across the steppes surged the hordes of Asia, which overran Europe in the dark ages; and, in later centuries, when Kieff, the sacred city of monasteries and churches, the goal of pilgrimages, had been set like a gleaming jewel in the Dnyépr's rare crown of wooded hills, its possession was fought for, in many a bloody battle, by Poles and Russians, by Turks from Stamboul and by Tatars from the Crimea, the Volga, and the Don. "Devil take you, steppes; how beautiful you are!" cries Gógol, the child of the steppes, who has immortalized them and their wild cavaliers in musical prose, and has given us exquisite descriptions of the region, and tales filled with the dreamy poetry of the Ukraine.

As we gaze from the cliffs of Kieff across the Dnyépr, and out over that grassy plain, that mainland ocean, upon whose emerald the flitting clouds cast shadows of gold, purple, and bronze, and which hardly yields in inexhaustible fascination to what the Russian ballads term expressively the "ocean-sea," we feel as though, at any moment, we might behold Táras Búlba and his gallant sons ride forth from the lower town at our feet. There still lies the monastic academy where those young hawks had completed their curiously mixed education, at which their father mocked until the younger, Andriú, pummeled him into respect, as was supposed to be fitting, in view of the fact that they were on their way to the Setch, where education of any sort was nearly superfluous, and where well-aimed blows were rated at their proper value.

Some distance below Kieff, the Dnyépr descends in falls. At this point the kazáks, centuries ago, established their military republic of Zaporózhyia ("Beyond the Falls"), whose barrack capital, the Setch, wherein no woman might set foot, lay on an island in the stream. The famous band of Zaporózhtzi was a motley crew of braves, composed of discontented men from all parts of the country—of those who had fled from towns to escape petty oppressions or taxes; of those who had fled from the country to evade land-service, or other impediments to the absolute liberty which their souls craved; of those who merely wished to indulge in the inborn

Russian love of a roving life in the open air. "Be patient, kazák, thou shalt be Atamán [chief] some day!" was the democratic motto which their rough elections fully bore out, and which corresponded to the American boy's motto touching the Presidency. They owned allegiance to no ruler for their debatable land between many kingdoms; but the Sultan of Turkey, the King of Poland, and the Tzar of Muscovy alternately sought and betrayed their friendship, while the kazáks, in turn, as blithely changed their loyalty, according to circumstances and booty. Southern Russia lay unprotected on the



A FRAGMENT FROM "THE ANSWER TO THE SULTAN."

east, and suffered severely from the incursions of the Turks and Tatars, who carried orthodox Christians away into captivity by tens of thousands, and sold them like cattle in the marts of Stamboul, Trebizond, and other Eastern towns. The songs of the Russian people at this epoch bewailed the lot of their brethren in captivity, waxed wroth over the Christians who betrayed their faith, and rejoiced over those who made their escape by all sorts of wiles. Succor came only from the Zaporózhtzi. These braves formed a stout defense for their peaceful brethren, and not only protected their boundaries from in-



ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

A MAID OF LITTLE RUSSIA (KHÁRKOFF GOVERNMENT).



ENGRAVED BY A. WALDEYER.

TOLSTOY READING ON THE COUCH ON WHICH HE WAS BORN.

cursions by the Mussulmans, but frequently descended the Dnyépr, in light barks, to the Black Sea, and fell upon the enemy's coast towns. Having plundered and set fire to them, they rescued the captive Christians and brought them back to their native land.

It is an incident in the life of a later date that Répin has chosen for his great picture, which was shown in the Perambulatory Exhibition this spring, and immediately bought by the Emperor. Toward the close of the seventeenth century, Iván Dmítritch Syerko was the Atamán of these modern knights-errant. The Zaporózhtzi were at the zenith of

and types which, though assimilated, in a measure, to one warlike type, are as varied as their garments, the fruits of many a foray, which range from gold-embroidered velvet to homespun, or as their accoutrements, which run the complete gamut, from Turkish matchlocks inlaid with gold, mother-of-pearl, and turquoise, to brass-capped pipes of Karelian birch-root, such as can be bought at the present day for a few cents in the popular markets of Kíeff and other towns. The only uniformity about the company consists in the obligatory tuft of fluttering hair, a sort of scalp-lock, which recalls the Tatar queue of the Chinese.



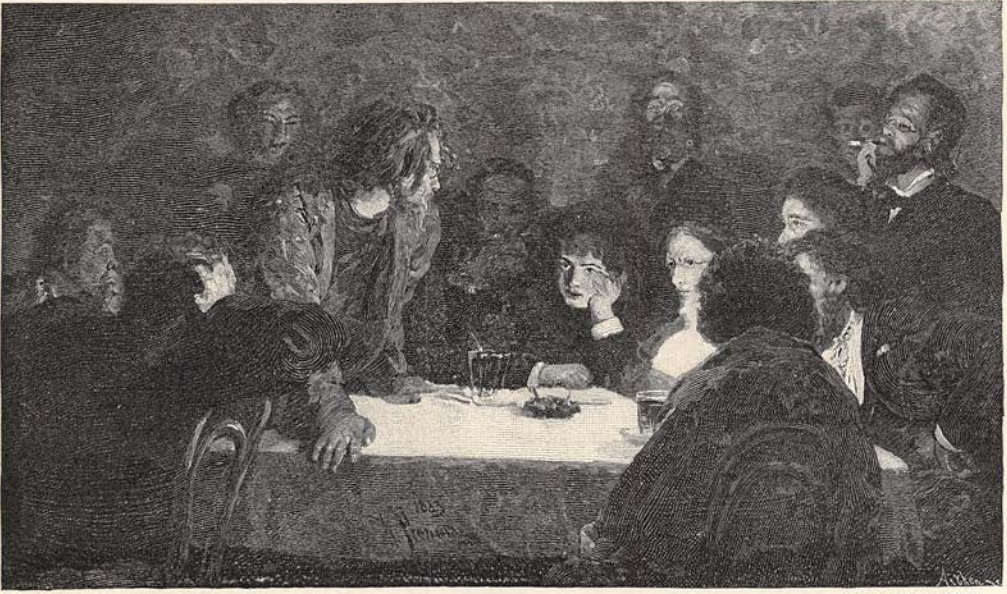
A COSSACK OF THE STEPPE.

ENGRAVED BY P. AITKEN.

their power. Fifteen thousand picked janizaries had perished by night, under the walls of Zaporózhyia, having been abandoned by their frightened allies, the Tatars. In 1680, the Sultan Mohammed IV. sent the Zaporózhtzi a formal threat that he would make another descent upon them, which, this time, should be annihilating. They replied in a letter filled with taunts and rude jests, and it is the inditing of this "Answer to the Sultan" which Répin has represented in his spirited painting, and which gives us a vivid idea of the personality and the characteristics of this noted band. In the center of the group, the regimental scribe—an important functionary where so few were skilled in the art of letters, like old Táras's sons—is seated at a rough trestle table. At his left, Syerko presides over the assembly with a sort of amused gravity. The scribe's face is puckered with suppressed mirth at the impertinences which the assembled company is engaged in dictating to him; the kazáks are screaming with laughter over their literary exercise, and present an array of countenances

It is not difficult to divine that the letter begins with the proverb "An unbidden guest is worse than a Tatar," which, under the circumstances, was a biting insult; and, judging from the gestures directed toward the steppe where other members of the band are performing their celebrated feats of horsemanship beyond the line of tents,—since they were, evidently, on an active campaign,—it proceeds with a counter-threat of a prompt and businesslike visit to Stamboul. It was a bragging-match, the exact counterpart of those which we find described in the epic songs of the tenth century as taking place between the paladins of Prince Vladimir's Table Round and the Tatar khans, before the walls of Kíeff.

These latest exponents of Russian chivalry—who occupied very much the same ground which was occupied by infant Russia in the tenth century, and rendered to western Europe the same service in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which Prince Vladimir and his *druzhína* rendered in the tenth—are gone. Those days of Zaporózhyia's glory have passed



THE CONSPIRATORS.

ENGRAVED BY P. AITKEN.

away forever. Hetman Syerko's men carried his hand with them on all their expeditions for the period of seven years after his death, and that withered hand led them always to victory. But, early in the eighteenth century, soon after Hetman Mazeppa's treachery to Peter the Great, the power and prestige of the *kazáks* declined. Since then, the rich virgin soil of the steppes has been gradually dedicated more and more to agriculture, their extent has been greatly curtailed, and the days of the last Russian chivalry, in the medieval sense of indiscriminate and reckless warfare, have vanished.

Répin himself is half a *kazák* of the modern style. His father was one of the *kazáks* whom the Emperor Alexander I. settled, as military colonists, in the government of Khárkoff, among the steppes, on their return from the European campaign of 1814, rechristening them Uhlans. The father served the old long term of twenty-five years, and our artist ranked in his youth as a military colonist. He began his education in the Topographical Institute. When Alexander II. abolished these economico-military colonies in 1856, after they had done much involuntary service as cultivating agencies, and transferred the Institute to another part of Russia, the little colonist, then twelve years of age, went to learn painting from a painter of church images. It was, no doubt, the best thing that he could do, under the circumstances, but this instruction by no means explains, to one accustomed to the conventionality of feature and coloring imposed on image-painters, Répin's present status as the finest portrait-painter Russia has ever had. For three years

the lad painted images and small portraits from nature, the latter evidently without suggestion or instruction from his master, and distinguished himself to such a degree that contractors for churches came from a hundred versts round about to seek his services. In his leisure hours, on holidays, the ambitious young artist read and studied to prepare himself for the goal of his ambition, for which he was also hoarding his earnings—the Academy of Arts. His dream was realized when he reached St. Petersburg, in November, 1863, with only twenty dollars in his pocket, and found himself face to face with the problem of existing through the severe winter, and getting his instruction.

He has given us a glimpse of his extreme poverty, and of the sufferings which he endured in the years which intervened between his entrance to the Academy in 1864 and his graduation in 1871, in his account of the hardships of his fellow-student, Antokólsky, the most noted of Russian sculptors. That is a period over which it is best to pass lightly. It ended when his picture, on a theme of his own selection, and painted in addition to the Academical program, was bought by a Grand Duke. This picture, his famous "Towers of Barks on the Volga," shows the influence on his career of the progressive and talented artist Kramskóy, who had been his master, without pay, all this time, since Répin cared nothing for the professors at the Academy, and used that building only for working and for the lectures. Kramskóy was a young artist who had rebelled against the antiquated, conventional Academy,

and had founded the Society for Perambulatory Exhibitions, which still thrives, and to which Répin is a distinguished contributor. During the three years which he spent abroad at the expense of the government, chiefly in Paris, he felt a lack of power, an uncertainty as to what he should undertake, and he pined for his native land. He seemed to have an intuition that national subjects were to be his strong point. Of the two paintings which (with studies) date from this period, a fantasy from one of the most charming of the Epic Songs, representing "Sadkó the rich Guest (merchant) of Nóvgorod," in the submarine realm of the Water King, hangs in the private apartments of the Empress of Russia, in one of the summer palaces. In fact, if one wishes to study Répin's works, one must seek them in the Imperial palaces, and in the gallery of Mr. Trétiakoff, the merchant prince of Moscow, who is the Mæcenas of Russian painters. Who that has seen them will ever forget "Ivan the Terrible Killing his Son Ioann," "The Return of the Exile," or the striking por-

author, immersed in a book, and stretched out on the couch on which he was born, is one of many made at the Count's country estate.

In this unpretentious country home, at Yásnaya Polyána, this leather-covered couch harmonizes with the rest of the severely plain furnishing of the whole house, and, in particular, of the famous study in which it stands. This study clearly shows that it is the central point in which all the great author's varied interests meet. Under the whitewashed vault of the ceiling stand bookcases, a scythe, a spade; a miscellaneous collection of rude footwear is piled on the rough floor of boards; a whetstone in a leather case and a saw hang on the plain white wall, in company with several crumpled felt hats and peasant coats of yellow and brown homespun, and the portraits of William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Dickens, and other celebrities who are favorites with the owner of the room; the writing-table is loaded with correspondence, books, pamphlets, and newspapers from many lands, as well as with his own manuscripts—



ARREST IN A VILLAGE.

ENGRAVED BY C. SCHWARZBURGER.

trait of Sutáieff (the peasant secretary whose chief disciple is Count Lyeff Tolstóy), with its pitilessly truthful rendering of the narrow head, long, blond locks falling over the small, penetrating but not remarkably intelligent eyes, of a typical Great Russian peasant? Inimitable portraits of Count Tolstóy keep them company, and the present unpublished sketch of the great

such are the surroundings among which Répin introduces us to Count Tolstóy. Albeit the small, piercing eyes are concealed, his earnest face is sternest when he is engaged in reading the multitudinous publications which feed his omnivorous appetite for literature of all sorts and his universal interest in his fellow-men. His hair is becoming gray, and rarely conde-



ENGRAVED BY M. HABER.

THE REVEALED IMAGE (LITTLE RUSSIA).

scends to lie smooth above the prominent brow, under any circumstances. Assuredly, he was never known to take such heed of his somewhat delicate health as to throw across his legs the rug which we see in the picture. The artist, for purely decorative purposes, must have seized a blanket from the bed—one of those highly colored and patterned blankets which are used everywhere in Russia, and which the inexperienced foreigner, on first acquaintance, invariably dubs "horse-cloths." Whatever the Count may have been reading, when Répin drew him in such apparent repose,—poetry, philosophy, theology, or fiction,—we may be sure that his mind was active, and that his judgment on the work was keen and sure, so far as its literary value was concerned. Even the moral and theological views, which bias his judgment in other respects, are precious for their property of arousing thought and discussion.

If ancient military Russia has vanished, ancient religious Russia has not, and Répin is equally happy in rendering a characteristic scene from this same historic Little Russia whence he springs,—and which he loves,—that bridges over the gap of centuries between his fierce but pious Zaporózhzti of the steppes of old, and the peaceful and pious inhabitants of the steppe towns of the present day. The procession of "The Revealed Image," also from this year's exhibition, has walked bodily upon the artist's canvas from the government of Khárkoff. The glowing heat of summer broods over the scene. A "wonder-working" ikón has been revealed as such by a miracle; a procession of honor has been formed, and the sacred image is being carried about reverently to all the prominent houses and points in the neighborhood. The neighborhood has received a liberal interpretation as to boundary, and the image is now on the highway, passing through a bit of forest. Similar processions are common everywhere in Russia, especially during the summer months. All the sacred images of a town or hamlet, headed by the most noted of them, and accompanied by church banners, lanterns, intoning priests, and chanting choir, are borne in a Procession of the Cross on a long round, in commemoration of some notable interposition of Providence in bygone years—such as the departure of the French from Moscow in 1812, which is thus celebrated in the Krémelin, with great pomp, on the 12th of October of every year. The inhabitants look upon these occasions as holidays, and people from all ranks in life fall in in the rear, join in the prayers at the stations where the procession halts, sip the consecrated water—"for health"—of the stream which is blessed, contend for the honor (which is granted as a signal favor) of carrying the

heavy images, or of seeming to do so by touching them with the tip of the finger as they walk close beside them. With the procession of "The Revealed Image" the case is slightly different, but only in the fact that miracles and cures are awaited from moment to moment. The halt and the lame bow before the wonder-working ikón, with heads laid in the dust of the road, that the Virgin (the Revealed Image is always, or nearly always, a Virgin) may pass over them and heal them. The devout general, without whom no Russian scene is complete, pants along mopping his heated brow, and the sturdy religious tramp, *alias* "pilgrim," who is as indispensable to a landscape as the general, strides on with unwearied enthusiasm in his crash foot-cloths and linden-bast sandals. It all forms part of his nomadic enjoyment, in company with the sun, wind, and dust, rain, mud, and open air, with a crust begged here and a copper begged there, *Khristi rádi* (for Christ's sake), to be expended in fiery "cold tea." The prominent ladies of the town, those who, by birth and position, are entitled to the privilege of bonnets and parasols, assert their rights to a leading place in the procession; while the peasant maids and men, in their gay, picturesque costumes, break their way through the underbrush on foot, or in their rude *teyéga*. The gigantic deacon swings his censer of silver gilt, and from his mouth, round as Giotto's O, framed in massive cheeks and long, crisp locks, his stentorian voice rolls forth in the rich intonations of the ancient Slavonic ritual, which are a perpetual delight to the musical ear.

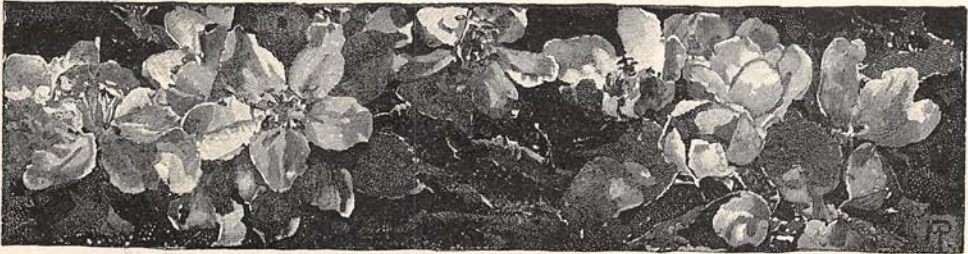
But there is a darker side to this sunny, outdoor life of Little Russia,—the midnight side. The old restless spirit remains unchanged. These regular-featured, level-browed, glowing-eyed men and women of the Úkraine,—much handsomer than those of the North,—such as Répin depicts for us in his "Maiden of Khárkoff," are still addicted to fighting against all government, in modern, underhand ways, which are not an improvement upon the bold, open methods of warfare of the Zaporózhzti. Ever since the hatching of the conspiracy against Alexander I., which broke out in the Decembrist riots in St. Petersburg on that sovereign's death in 1825, when Nicholas I. came to the throne, Little Russia has been noted for its secret societies and plots. There is no line of painting in which Répin, fine in all lines, excels more than in seizing the very heart of popular types and events. In his "Arrest in a Village," and his "Conspirators," he introduces us to some of the organizers of these plots. There is nothing, it is true, to show us the exact locality of these scenes. But, while the types are national, it is more

than likely that they come from the artist's favorite Little Russia. The roughly floored, low-ceiled, ill-lighted room, in which the officers of the law are unearthing treasonable documents, is the ordinary dwelling of the peasants of almost any part of Russia. The prisoner, with his delicate, determined face, which is familiar to every one who has observed, let us say, the throng of readers at the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg, or any similar assemblage, has been hiding in some peasant's *izba*, and probably carrying on his hopeless propaganda in a quiet village, after assisting at some such midnight council of conspirators as Répin shows us. The very hair of the earnest speaker, and of his intent hearers, whose faces are illuminated, prudently, by the faint light of a single candle, is suggestive; for although most Russians, with the exception of the close-trimmed army men (not including some favored kazáks), still believe that the Lord provided man with hair for warmth and ornament, not for the purpose of clipping it to the scalp, there are as many styles of wearing it long as there are of getting rid of it. Who that has had occasion to visit Russian post-

and telegraph-offices does not recall with delight the inevitable pretty man, with the eccentric coiffure, who is to be found in every station? The droop of these conspiring locks is as significant as are the faces, or as is the official in another picture, who is inspecting the village school, and driving both master and pupils to confusion with his examination.

For ten years Répin has lived in St. Petersburg, having found Moscow too narrow, when he tried it for a short time on his return from Paris. His charming studio, at the junction of two of the picturesque canals by which the city is intersected, and not far from the scene of Gógol's tale, "The Portrait," is filled with objects of Russian manufacture, and its walls are hung with portraits of the most famous men of the day. What next will come from the busy brain and hand of the quiet, gentle genius, as different from the wild kazáks and tragic personages of his imaginings as well could be, is a question which enlists the interest of the Russian critics and public every spring, and which, in the future, may evoke the sympathy and interest of a wider public.

Isabel F. Hapgood.



BEYOND THE LIMIT.

A DREAM lay on the rim
Of the horizon far and dim,
Where the sea and sky together
Shut in the golden weather;
The ships with stately ease,
Close to the steady breeze,
Drew on, and on, and on,
Pierced the limit and were gone.

The headlands in the sheen
Of orchards waxing green,
Were like billows of rare bloom;
The air was all perfume;
Great sea-birds overhead
On silent pinions sped;
All was so sweet and calm
That mere living was a balm.

But somewhere, far away,
A hint of sorrow lay;
A vague, deep longing stirred;
Some strain, as yet unheard
(Of music strange, to shake
The heart till it should break),
Was just beyond the rim
Of the horizon far and dim.

O land! O sky! O sea!
Is there no peace for me?
What shadowy dread is this
That hovers round my bliss?
Far as my vision goes
My tide of pleasure flows;
What lies beyond the rim
Of the horizon far and dim?

Maurice Thompson.