

that section of country more or less available—has individual characteristics of its own as to size and shape of fish, some apparently yielding none but the small fry, but all of them containing in their hidden depths much larger fish, to be got only with sinker and worms.

The third day, at noon, sees us packed up ready to start on our homeward drive, and we bid good-bye to the scene of many pleasant hours, our "record" consisting of the sport we had, the fish we had eaten and enjoyed, and a sufficiency to allow of a welcome treat being offered to our friends in their seaside quarters. The long drive seems, as it always does, shorter on going over it the second time; in point of fact, being mostly down hill, it takes us an hour and a half less to do the return journey. We bring up our craft in full sail with flying colours, somewhat battered but still in the swim; the crew are paid off, with an added bonus in the shape of some spare outfit, which is greatly appreciated, and the voyage is over.—*Samuel M. Baylis in June Outing.*

### CHARACTERISTICS OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE.

FROM the beginning of this century dates the sudden dawn and marvellous expansion of the singular literature which exerts over some minds so powerful a fascination. It requires very little insight to foresee that it is certain to exercise a still greater influence when all the significance of this manifestation of Russian thought is more generally felt and appreciated. To-day the Russians are our masters in a new school—we can sit at their feet and learn.

To many the name of Russia is associated only with crude ideas of Nihilism, of attempts to assassinate the Czar, of a people half-barbarous and plunged in utter ignorance, but of this Eastern giant slowly awakening to a consciousness of power, and destined perhaps to regenerate our old Europe by the divine gift of new ideas and a new religion, they know nothing. They may even peruse from curiosity some chance samples of this strange literature without seizing upon the sense of the mental and moral upheaval which either we ourselves or our children must witness. As yet, it is too early to prophesy events, we can only consider tendencies, and study to some extent the men who, as depositaries of the sacred fire, have been preparing the way for mighty reforms. Amongst these I shall refer only to the great names which stand out as types, and resume in themselves the development of Russia during the last half-century. In them we shall find concentrated and sublimed the tears and aspirations and patient yearnings of a whole people. If their joys are bitterly ignored and remain unnoted, it is because in truth they cannot be said to exist.

The Russian novel contains within itself examples of poetry, history, and psychological studies such as the world has never seen equalled for minuteness, accuracy and power. Mystical reveries, of infinite beauty and delicacy, satires so deadly true in their aim, so bitter in their hidden wrath, that the publication of one sufficed to overthrow the hideous anachronism of serfdom, an under-current of despair so subtle and profound that it manages to penetrate even our materialistic envelope, a probing into the mystery of existence with a persistency and intensity which are simply appalling in audacious conception; finally, the restless searching for an explanation to the cruel problem of life, the cry of the soul for a religion, for guidance, for peace. Nothing is sacred to these investigators, to these untiring searchers of the human heart, or rather all is sacred, but not beyond discussion; and these original minds, true products of a "virgin soil," have invested with new meaning all the old problems of existence.

The same adverse fate which, brooding over this unfortunate country, condemned it after a long and painful travail to give forth only the echoes of the anguish which tortures it, has, in like manner, inexorably maimed and shortened the lives of its most brilliant children. In no country could such a list of fatalities be enumerated, as overtaking contemporary talent almost as soon as their names began to be known, and to be carried from mouth to mouth. To mention only some of these. Rykief was hanged as a conspirator in 1825; Pouschkine, Russia's greatest poet, was killed, at thirty-eight years of age, in a duel; Griboiedoff was assassinated at Teheran; Lermontoff, a well-known and most promising writer, was killed in a duel in the Caucasus at the age of thirty; Vénévitinoff died broken-hearted at twenty-two, his end hastened by the insults and outrages to which he was subjected; Koltzoff, at twenty-three, died of grief, caused him by his family; Belinsky fell a victim, at the age of thirty-five, to misery and hunger; Dostoievsky, after sentence of death, was sent, at the age of twenty-two, for a slight offence, to the mines of Siberia forever; and, lastly, Gogol, who committed suicide when only forty-three. If, as is said, there comes "Misfortune to those who stone their prophets," then we can understand in some measure why the misfortunes of Russia are darker and deeper than those of any other land.

The Russians inaugurated the modern realistic or naturalistic form of novel, around which so many storms have raged, and it is they who, backward in all else, and indebted to the West for every intellectual stimulus, have produced and fashioned this marvellous instrument of culture and progress. Yet it must be noted, never have the Russians sullied their pages with the inartistic enormities which we owe to the pen of the French father of naturalism. Nothing in either French, German or

English literature can equal this particular product of the Russian soil. The novel with us Westerns has not had the same function to fulfil, and did not need to be at once an instrument of enlightenment, comfort, counsel and reform. Simple amusement is not even taken into consideration. As a result, an immense country has been gradually revolutionized, educated, uplifted to such an extent, and in so short a space of time, that it is impossible to forecast the splendid future of a race which can give birth to such sons and daughters under such conditions. In fact, in the enthusiastic opinion of some admirers, the *intellectual*, if not *material*, empire of the world will some day be divided between the Anglo-Saxon and the Slavonic races, two peoples as diverse in their aims and natures as it is possible to conceive. The Russian, dreamy, poetical, subtle, wonderfully receptive, and naturally devoid of prejudice, absorbing all learning with ease, possessing talents of a highly artistic order, ardent, though indolent, profoundly melancholy and religious. The Anglo-Saxon, straightforward, practical, energetic, prejudiced; not given to dreams, much more materialistic than mystical, with a passion rather for justice than for ideal goodness; a dominating, aggressive race, with talents not running in the artistic direction, taking a joyous if somewhat limited view of existence, and little tormented by conceptions of the Infinite.

To Gogol belongs the honour of having the first gathered together and enshrined, as only genius can, the most beautiful of the innumerable legends, tales and folklore in which Russia abounds. He it was who first translated the vague complaint of the crushed millions, their pathetic poetry, their measureless patience, their dim longings. The whole extent of their wrongs he perceived better than they themselves could, and, by such works as the "Revisor," a marvel of masterly sarcasm and irony, and "Dead Souls," he succeeded in overturning a system. Many abuses are still left, but some at least are dead or slowly dying. It is impossible for me, however tempted, in a short sketch like this, to enter into the method of treatment employed by the author in these two famous works. I must refer the student to the original. But, as evidence of his wonderful precision of detail, power of delineation, and ironical sallies, it suffices only to observe that in Russia scores and scores of passages have become proverbial—as, for instance, the reproof administered by a corrupt official to an underling, "You rob too much for your grade," which excites roars of significant laughter in Russia, where the allusion—owing to the widespread red-tapeism and corruption—is full of savour. Here, of course, where jobbery, bribes and misappropriation of public money are unknown, such a taunt would be pointless.

When Gogol read his manuscript of the "Revisor" to Pouschkine this latter remarked—so great was the sense of desolation which overcame him—"God! what a sad country our Russia is!" That was fifty years ago—it is still a sad country, as witness one of the last productions of Tolstoi's, "What is to be done?" One arises from its perusal no longer English or Russian, but a human being only, profoundly troubled, conscience-stricken, asking, "Is it possible such misery exists?" When we thought we knew the depths we find there are still greater depths. Yes, what is to be done? Who will answer, who will shed a ray of light on this gloomy picture? To Tolstoi there is but one answer—sympathy, help, but *intelligent* sympathy, *intelligent* help. I am sure any one who takes up this chapter of the Gospel of Despair and reads it, text by text, as I read it with the wind moaning among the firs on the mountain-tops and the rain flooding the mountain streams, amid the intense melancholy of Nature's most melancholy moods in the dark brooding of the silent night, will receive the same impression as I did, will absorb all the bitterness and yearning of Tolstoi's soul, and will relinquish that little volume no longer astonished that he should exclaim, "What is to be done?" For the moment one feels inclined to welcome rather a thousand revolutions, with blood running in streams, and a thousand crimes of reprisal against oppressors, sinning doubtless unknowingly in their crass obtuseness, than a continuance of such unmerited poverty and suffering. This is the attitude of mind which conducts us to what is vulgarly called active Nihilism, that is to say, to the stake or to Siberia. Tolstoi himself it has led to a voluntary renunciation of riches, but is his answer to the enigma the whole answer? In "What is to be done?" the author starts with bags of money to relieve the wretchedness with which he is being continually haunted in Moscow. It is not difficult to guess the result—deception—the misery not touched, nay, it is even intensified by his gifts. Then comes the harrowing pictures he knows so well how to draw—no mere artistic touches these, but true, profound, human, eternal. It is our brothers and sisters we see there before us, our own flesh and blood, palpitating, quivering, and, most pitiful of all, uncomplaining. Unknown heroisms, unwept, obscure martyrdoms. What wonder if Russian ears catch only the burden of heavy days? How can it be otherwise? Whether Tolstoi has or has not discovered the true remedy for this terrible state of things is open to conjecture. Enough that he is satisfied, that his soul has found peace through universal charity and brotherhood in Christ. He has borne his part nobly, and has sown seed which will bear fruit.

I have passed, not without reason, from Gogol to Tolstoi, to instance the similarity of spirit but dissimilarity of method which unite these two natures so opposite in other respects. Both are distinguished by an intense love of country and a keen appreciation of the causes which undermine and impair that country's greatness. I will here refrain from quoting those thrilling descriptions of

Gogol illustrative of the limitless, vast plains of Russia, and of their beauty, so real, so perceptible to the Muscovite soul. Amongst so many gems, each one more wonderful than the other, how is one to choose? "Night in Ukraine," "Invocation to the Steppes," "To Russia," and many more! Love of country has perhaps beyond and above all else excited man's best endeavours and called forth his highest achievements. There is one theme only which lifts us higher, and that is the love of *humanity*, comprising, as it does, the spiritual and material, a conception of which is impossible without intense devotion to man and to what some of us call God, others, high ideals.

No two masters can be more opposite in their styles and manner of proceeding than Tourgenief and Dostoievsky, whose names have been made familiar to all of us by means of French and English translations, more or less true to the original. And yet common to both is the same ardent desire to regenerate Russia and the same hopeless and helpless undercurrent of negation (of the utter vanity and nothingness of everything) which distinguishes all this group of writers. Nothing can be more suave, more poetical, more perfect than Tourgenief's descriptions of scenery. We have here neither the rugged strength of Tolstoi, nor the brilliant and bitter sarcasms of Gogol, nor the tormented if inspired ravings of Dostoievsky. Tourgenief has caught something of the Western spirit of harmony and proportion. His work is, as we say, more artistic. None the less is there a deep purpose underlying it? He was the first to foresee, to define and describe Russia's modern malady, Nihilism or Anarchism. He paints with rare skill the interesting physiognomies of his countrywomen. Gogol was perfectly incapable of portraying a woman. His women are mere shadows, none have the breath of life. But with what characters has not Tourgenief presented us? Indeed all critics concur in finding Tourgenief's heroines far superior to his male creations. They possess the courage, the determination, the fire, the practical ability wanting in these latter. They initiate and carry out the boldest designs without faltering, without repenting, without repining. And we should remember that these are not the mere creations of a poet's fancy—they are real, living portraits. These women, or others like them, lived, suffered, braved everything for the cause they held sacred. The names of the martyrs of "the coming Russia" are household words; we are proud to claim them as of our sex, to class them with the Madame Rolands, the Charlotte Cordays, and all those generous, noble spirits who have helped to keep alight the ardent flame which serves to feed ever and anon our cooling enthusiasm for humanity.

Every question is discussed in all its aspects by these so-called Nihilists. Nothing is considered too sacred. Old prejudices are swept aside as cobwebs. We have only, over here, advanced timidly to the point of enquiring whether marriage, as an institution, may not be a failure. These audacious iconoclasts demand boldly (in Tourgenief's "Fathers and Sons") whether "Marriage is a folly or a crime?" Now, whether we like them or not, such mental shocks are beneficial, and dispose us to ask whether—although, of course, the English are the most moral and advanced people in the world—we may not have something to learn even of our savage neighbours, the Russians. And I warn those who may feel tempted, from curiosity, and for no deeper motive, to study this people and their literature, that unless they really desire to understand and to learn and to admire candidly, they will be continually out of harmony with their novel mode of thinking and of dealing with the eternal problems of existence.

Dostoievsky introduces us to yet another world, where all our preconceived notions of right and wrong become confused and disorganized, and where all social conventions are set at naught. The most prominent figures in "Crime and Punishment" are a murderer and a prostitute; in the "Idiot," all the interest of the story centres round an epileptic, and always the poor and the humble and the diseased and the simple and the criminal are exalted, pitied, and uncondemned. And do not think for a moment that the murderer is not an ordinary murderer, or the prostitute any exception to her class. By no means. But by the simple and sublime power of genius, the workings of these minds are laid bare before us, and, comprehending at last these abnormalities, we do for a moment what is not done in real life, we forgive. We are led to see how any one of us, if unprepared by previous training, if placed in certain circumstances may be led to commit certain actions which we term immoral, just as we think every day certain thoughts which are immoral, but which, by force of will, habit or fear, do not develop into actions. Whoever denies this neither understands human nature nor the laws which govern it. There is no abrupt line of demarcation between health and disease, between physiology and pathology, between right and wrong. Indeed, is it not certain that what is right in one instance may be wrong in another? This is the vast field of analysis of motive and action lying before the modern romancer. There is a physiognomy of the mind as of the countenance. When Raskolnikoff, the murderer, throws himself at the feet of the unfortunate who feeds her parents with the price paid for her degradation—she who has led Raskolnikoff to expiation and rehabilitation—he cries out when she wishes to raise him: "It is not before thee that I prostrate myself, but before all the suffering of humanity," and these beautiful and touching words are the keynote to the whole of Dostoievsky's teachings: Dostoievsky, whose nerves had been shattered during those terrible moments when a youth of twenty-two, with breast bared and eyes bound, he stood awaiting the fatal bullet which was to end his existence. The death-