

lish dozers, beggars, prostitutes, artisans, thieves, peasants, horse-coopers, convicts, pedlars, dock labourers, lodging-housekeepers, navvies, etc., sketches, moreover, surcharged with a bitter philosopher's invective against the life of smooth conventional respectability and worldly success. Imagine the ordinary Englishman and his wife welcoming eagerly these harsh, realistic sketches, grim in their revelation of life's brutalities and of human nature's weaknesses, and wrongdoing, for the sake of their inherent sympathy with the weak and the suffering, and for the precious feeling of the common humanity between the cheat and the cheated, the oppressor and the oppressed, the murderer and his victim. The spiritual difference between the English public which waxed so enthusiastic over Rudyard Kipling and the Russian which acclaims Gorky, is characteristic of the profound abyss which separates the national life and moral ideas of the Anglo-Saxon and the Slav. All the Englishman's admiration seems to be directed to the attainment of moral strength, to the growth of his will, to worldly success, personal force, and so on to the attainment of righteousness, of being in a state of being "right" within himself; and all his contempt is reserved for weakness, for moral failure, for lack of character, for lack of force in the conquering of circumstances. And from this spirited ideal triumphing too much in action arises all that is odious in the English mind, complacent patronage of "inferiors," lack of charity, hard superiority to the "sinner," open or secret self-complacency and also—what is perhaps even more insidiously narrowing—distrust of our human impulses, dislike of letting the emotions go, perpetual self-distrust, fear of being ourselves freely and boldly—in short, intellectual hypocrisy and dishonesty. But the Russian perpetually discontented with his own actions, morally conscious of his lack of grit and will power, fatalistically distrustful of his own power to change the human nature within him, finds his relief in genuine self-abasement, in true brotherly love, in saying perpetually "I am not better than other men; we are

all brothers." Hence to be deposed, to be lowly and suffering, to be resigned to the will of God is a craving of the Russian mind, and we find perpetually in Russian literature that the Russian soul is deepened, made tender, lovable and broadly human by recognizing unflinchingly all the darkest and saddest strands of human life. The Russian's charity, in short, is a palliative for his own vices; the Englishman's practical commonsense activity is a palliative for his mental blinking of all the unpleasant and disturbing facts of life that he meets on his way.

Himself the son of unsuccessful and struggling people Gorky passed through a hard and bitter apprenticeship to misfortune before he emerged as a writer of picturesque sketches in a Russian newspaper at Tiflis, in 1892. Having learnt no regular trade, he had knocked about as a manual labourer, tramp and itinerant hawker, wandering, as a casual labourer from city to city, through Central and Southern Russia. He emerged at the age of twenty-three with a budget of strange experiences drawn direct from the life of those social strata of the community which are bounded by the life of the criminal outcast at the bottom and the respectable artisan at the top. An unflinching analysis of man's ugly egoism, pity for the suffering protest against slavishness, a mystical and tender love for the weak, the "unworthy" and the "sinner"—these elements formed the spiritual atmosphere of Gorky's writings and touched the Russian heart in its most sensitive place. The story *Konovalev* is a very profound study of the Russian temperament, and the reader who masters it will, once and for all, have got to the very roots of Russian human nature, in all its rich depths of spiritual life, in all its broad humanity, and in all its self-abandonment to the bitter gloom of its own erring weakness and moral paralysis.

In the novel, *Three of Them*, the first half of which is one of the finest pieces of work he has done, Gorky traces the lives of three poor boys attaining manhood, Ilya, Jacob and Pashka, the sons of typical Russian folk, a peasant convict, a barman,