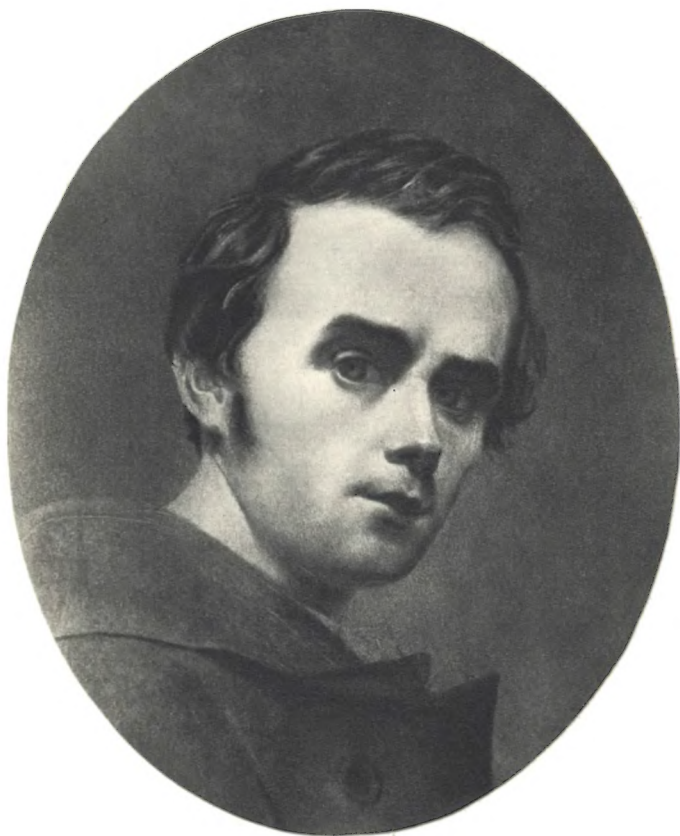


M. Ueberrig

TARAS SHEVCHENKO  
SELECTED WORKS





**Taras Shevchenko. Self-Portrait. 1840.**  
*Oil*







# ТАРАС ШЕВЧЕНКО ВИБРАНІ ТВОРИ

**ПОЕЗІЯ ТА ПРОЗА**

**Ілюстрації з оригіналів Т. ШЕВЧЕНКА**

**ВИДАВНИЦТВО ПРОГРЕС  
МОСКВА**

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## THE BARD OF THE UKRAINE

By *Yevgen Kirilyuk*,  
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Taras Shevchenko, the brilliant national poet of the Ukraine, is one of the classics of world literature. His all-embracing humanism, deep and genuine folk character, and revolutionary ardour make him comprehensible and close to the hearts of the people of all nations.

Shevchenko lived at the time when his homeland was split in two by the Russian and Austro-Hungarian monarchies, and the mass of the Ukrainian people—the peasantry—was in serf bondage to feudal landowners. The people waged a ceaseless struggle for their social and national emancipation.

Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) was born into a serf family in the village of Morintsy, in the Kiev Province. He experienced the severity of forced labour from earliest childhood, knew and felt the sad plight of “the poor, unsmiling muzhik”, surrounded by the magnificent ever-smiling nature of the Ukraine.

He lost his mother before his ninth birthday, his father died two years later. But while the masses of the serfs were illiterate, the orphan waif received an elementary education: in return for heavy task-work the boy did for a sexton, the latter allowed him to attend classes he conducted for boys of more favoured circumstances. Taras early began to display artistic talent. This was not simply the urge to draw, which is common among children, but an overpowering calling. Despite threats and beatings, he drew everything he saw or heard of, using a pencil, charcoal, chalk—whatever he could lay his hands on. Taras dreamed of studying art under a good teacher, but landed in his master’s manor instead, first as a kitchen-boy and later as indoor *kazachok* (lackey). When he was fourteen years of age Shevchenko was taken away from his native Ukraine by his master, Baron Engelhardt. They lived for some time in Vilno (Vilnius), where Taras was once cruelly punished for daring to light a candle and draw at a time when his master was away at a ball. Engelhardt later realised that Shevchenko would never make a good lackey, and decided to make him his “court” painter.

Shevchenko was seventeen when he arrived in Petersburg, then the capital of the Russian empire. Engelhardt apprenticed him for four years to a painter, Shirayev. In Petersburg he became acquainted with the outstanding artist Karl Bryullov, who was a professor at the Academy of Arts, the noted poet Zhukovsky, the artist Venetsianov,

the connoisseur of arts Vyelgorsky, and also his fellow-Ukrainians, the artist Soshenko, the writer Grebinka and others. They became deeply interested in the gifted serf youth and sought to have him admitted to the Academy of Arts, but he was barred because of his status as a serf. So they bought his release from bondage for a large sum of money, and on April 22, 1838, when he was twenty-four years of age, Taras Shevchenko received his certificate of freedom from serfdom.

In Petersburg, while he diligently applied himself to painting and graduated from the Academy of Arts, he devoted himself with mounting fervour to poetry, which (according to his own testimony) he began to write during the white nights of 1837. And this proved to be his true calling. While he was to be an artist by profession all his life and eventually was awarded the title of Academician in engraving, poetry was always his true passion, in which his artistic brilliance and revolutionary spirit found their clearest expression.

It was in Petersburg that Shevchenko's first Ukrainian verses were born: romantic ballads, lyrical elegies and songs (*The Bewitched, The Wild Wind, The Water Flows Into the Blue Sea* and others). In them the poet adopted and developed the chanting style and imagery of the kobzars (folk minstrels). He had often listened to them in his childhood as they sang folk songs of the legendary past of the Ukraine, of how the free Cossacks defended their homeland from its enemies, and of the heroic figures of the peasant rebels, the Haidamaki.

As a blind minstrel, plucking at the strings of his kobza, sings of the wide Dnieper River with the pale moon swimming in the sky above it, of the maiden abandoned by her lover, of the spacious steppe dotted with grave mounds under which lie the bones of heroes, of the military campaigns of the Cossacks and of the struggles of the people for freedom and right, so did Taras Shevchenko "talk with the people" in his verses. The struggle of the Ukrainian people with their enemies provide one of the main themes in Shevchenko's poetry.

In 1840 a small book of verse appeared in Petersburg, entitled *Kobzar*. It contained only eight poems, but that booklet shook all Russia and the whole Slavic world. Some of his early verses were also published in Yevgen Grebinka's Ukrainian almanac *Lastivka* (*The Swallow*). And in 1841 Shevchenko's biggest work, *Haidamaki*, an epic poem about the armed struggle of the Ukrainian Cossacks and peasants against the Polish feudal gentry in the eighteenth century, was published as a separate book.

Shevchenko was firmly rooted in the Ukrainian literary tradition. In his youth he had read the poet and philosopher G. Skovoroda, he

knew and deeply appreciated the works of Kotlyarevsky, to whom he penned an elegy, Osnovyanenko, to whom he addressed a poetic message, and others. He also studied the rich treasure trove of advanced Russian literature: Pushkin, Lermontov, Koltsov, Gogol, etc. (It is worth noting that even in his early period he was also writing poetry in the Russian language.) He was conversant with and learned from the gems of world literature. Thus, he could recite many of Mickiewicz's poems in the Polish original, and tried his hand at translating some of them. He knew Byron's works well. In his foreword to the projected new edition of the *Kobzar* in 1847 Shevchenko mentions Walter Scott and expresses his high esteem for Robert Burns. In his novel *The Artist*, written in exile when he had no library or reference book at hand, and in other novels written in that period he mentions Shakespeare (*The Tempest, Othello, Hamlet*), Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* in the French translation, Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Ossian, Edward Gibbon, Byron, Scott (*Woodstock, Kenilworth, The Fair Maid of Perth, Quentin Durward, The Antiquary*), Charles Dickens *David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby*) and others.

But even in his first ballad to come down to us, *The Bewitched*, Shevchenko was not an apprentice, not an imitator. There was no such period in his work. His early poem *Katerina* is a peerless work on the life of the people in his own time, just as the poem *Haidamaki* is an outstanding work on an historical theme. Shevchenko stepped to the forefront of Ukrainian literature from the very start. This was due not only to the young poet's brilliance, but mostly because he was a genuine people's poet. It is characteristic that the title of his first slim booklet of poetry, *Kobzar*, was later applied to all collections of Taras Shevchenko's poetry and to the poet himself.

Shevchenko was a true people's poet not only because he wrote in the Ukrainian language that was actually spoken by the people, thus laying a solid foundation for the Ukrainian literary language as a whole, and not only by the closeness of the *Kobzar* to the oral Ukrainian folk poetry (that trait was also common to the Ukrainian romanticists), but mainly because he expressed the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of the broadest sections of the Ukrainian people. At the same time his poetry is imbued with true humanism and internationalism. Let us examine, for example, *Haidamaki*, in which the struggle of the Ukrainian people against the Polish gentry is graphically described. In order to prevent enemies of the Ukrainian and Polish peoples from exploiting sections of the poem to foment national hatreds, Shevchenko wrote into it a ringing appeal for the unity and friendship of the Ukrainians, the Poles and *all* the Slavic peoples.

That appeal had nothing in common with reactionary Pan-Slavism which masked the expansionist policy of the Russian autocracy. In that same *Haidamaki* the young poet spoke in Aesopian language of Tsar Nicholas I, the gendarme of Europe, saying: "the executioner rules". Nicholas's censors passed those lines, but when the *Kobzar* was being republished in 1860 the "liberal" censors of Alexander II detected "sedition" in them and crossed them out.

When in 1843 Shevchenko returned to the Ukraine after fourteen years' absence, he heard his own songs and ballads from the lips of peasants and minstrels. Shevchenko visited his native district and saw his relatives and friends still bearing the heavy yoke of serfdom. He travelled a good deal through the Ukraine and was shocked by what he saw there.

On his return to Petersburg in 1844 Taras Shevchenko became acquainted with a number of free-thinking Russians who later formed the secret political circle of M. Butashevich-Petrashevsky. He became a consistent revolutionary democrat, an active fighter against serfdom and the autocracy. In the poem *The Heretic* (about the great Czech patriot and reformer Jan Hus) and other works Shevchenko developed still further the theme of Slavic unity and brotherhood. In the poem *The Caucasus* he enlarged this theme to call for the joint struggle of *all* the peoples of the Russian empire against the autocracy. He openly attacked the whole feudal-autocratic order (*A Dream*, 1844) and called for a people's revolution (*To the Dead, the Living and the Unborn, The Cold Ravine, My Testament*). Tsarist censorship ruled out the possibility of having his works published, so the poet neatly wrote them out by hand in an album entitled *Three Years* (1843-45).

Back in the Ukraine, Shevchenko joined the secret political Society of Cyril and Methodius, in which he advocated a consistently revolutionary policy. In 1847 the society was exposed and its members were arrested and taken to Petersburg for trial. The cruellest punishment of all was meted out to Shevchenko. He was made a soldier and banished to distant Orenburg, the tsar personally adding to the sentence: "forbidden to write and to paint". From Orenburg Shevchenko was sent to the Orsk battalion.

By banishing him and making him a soldier (the term of army service at that time was twenty-five years), the tsar strove to kill the poet and artist in Shevchenko. But Shevchenko continued to write his freedom-loving verses both in the dungeon of the Third Department (political police) in Petersburg and in the Orsk fortress. The poet fashioned miniature notebooks, wrote his works in them in the tiniest of handwriting, and kept them concealed in the legs of his boots.

There were humane people even among the officers. Captain-Lieutenant Butakov took Shevchenko along as an artist on an expedition to explore the Aral Sea in 1848, i.e., he disobeyed the tsar's orders. On his return to Orenburg the poet lived in private quarters and wore civilian clothes.

Shevchenko's poetry of the exile period reached a higher stage. In the brown, sun-baked steppe he nostalgically recalled his distant Ukrainian homeland, the wide, free Dnieper and the boundless black earth plains, the people and their sad lot. Again and again he conjured up his homeland's glorious past, its plight during the years of serfdom, and visions of the better days to be. He dreamed of a peasant rising, of final victory over the tsars and feudal gentry. In *The Princess, Marina, P.S.* (Pavlo Skoropadsky) he described typical feudal masters, in *Marina, The Outlaw* and *If It Should Chance* he presented types of the people's avengers. In *Kings* he openly called for the overthrow of the autocracy. In exile he continued to champion friendship among the nations, he made friends with Polish revolutionaries and addressed his poem *To the Poles* to them; he devoted many warm, friendly lines to the local Kazakh people, and also painted them.

In 1850 the poet was arrested again on charges laid by an officer, returned to Orsk for trial and then banished still farther away, to Novopetrovsk fortress on the Mangishlak Peninsula on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea (today Fort Shevchenko). During this second period of his exile Shevchenko wrote a number of novels in Russian, hoping to get them published in periodicals. Some of the novels have the same plots as his poems *The Servant Woman, The Outlaw* and *The Princess*, while others—*The Musician, The Artist* and *The Journey*—have new plots. They contain much autobiographical material. Not one of the novels by Kobzar Darmograi (Shevchenko's pseudonym) was published during the author's lifetime.

Shevchenko was not immediately amnestied, as were other political prisoners, after the death of Nicholas I. He was released from banishment only after long and insistent intercession on the part of his Russian friends. Even then he was long denied entry to the capital and was forced to wait at Nizhny Novgorod (today the city of Gorky).

When he learned that his release had been granted, Taras Shevchenko started his *Diary*, a wonderful human document which provides us with a living portrait of the implacable revolutionary and deep thinker. For example, watching the steam-engine at work on a boat, he voiced prophetic thoughts on the revolutionary significance of the development of engineering and science, which would inevitably bring an end to the old order.



On his return to Petersburg, Shevchenko drew close to the outstanding public figures of that time, the Russian revolutionary democrats Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, and the Polish revolutionary democrat Sierakowski.

In his last years Shevchenko's poetry reflected the flames of the peasant revolts, the revolutionary situation in the pre-reform Russia of 1859-61. The poet widely utilised Biblical settings and imagery for his passionate denunciation of the rulers and calls for a revolutionary uprising (*The Neophytes*, *Maria*, numerous "imitations" of Isaiah, Jezeziel and others). In the poem *I'm Not Unwell* Shevchenko appeals to the people not to place their hopes in the reform promised by the tsar, but to win their freedom with the axe. He dreamed of a republican form of government. In *The Half-Wit* he asks:

*When will we greet  
Our own George Washington at last  
With the new law of righteousness?*

For him Washington was a symbol—the president of a republic established on the basis of a constitution.

A notable page in Shevchenko's life was his friendship with the prominent British actor Ira Aldridge, an American Negro by origin, who came to Petersburg in 1858 to perform in several Shakespearean plays. Enthralled by his magnificent performance, Shevchenko and his friends greeted Aldridge with such enthusiastic applause that it evoked protests from prudish theatre-goers. Soon the Ukrainian poet-artist and the Negro actor met at the home of F. Tolstoi, the vice-president of the Academy of Arts, and became fast friends. Shevchenko painted a portrait of Aldridge, which bears the latter's autograph. Tolstoi's daughter wrote of this friendship in her memoirs: "These two individuals had more in common than just similar traits of character; in his youth one had been a serf, while the other was a member of a despised race; both experienced much bitterness in life, and both passionately loved their unfortunate peoples."

At this time, too, Shevchenko joined Turgenev, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Dostoyevsky, Marko Vovchok and others in an angry public protest against anti-Semitic diatribes in the journal *Illustration*.

In 1859 Shevchenko was finally permitted to revisit the Ukraine, where he again saw his relatives, who were still in serf bondage. He was soon arrested on charges of "blasphemy", however, and ordered to return at once to Petersburg.

Ten years of prison and exile had undermined the poet's health and he died when he was but forty-seven years of age. Shevchenko was buried in Petersburg, but later his remains were disinterred and borne

to the Ukraine, as he had willed in *My Testament*, and he was buried on May 22, 1861 on a hill overlooking the Dnieper near the city of Kanev, where he had dreamed of settling with his family. Mourners carried handfuls of earth in their hands to the grave, building a high funeral mound over it. In 1939 a magnificent monument was erected on this spot. Shevchenko's grave has become a veritable shrine.

The beloved bard of the Ukrainian people is deeply honoured in the Soviet Union. His works are published in millions of copies in the various languages of the U.S.S.R. There are several Taras Shevchenko museums and many monuments in the country, many cultural institutions and enterprises bear his name, which has also been given to localities, squares and streets in cities. Shevchenko prizes are awarded annually for outstanding contributions to literature and the arts.

Shevchenko is also widely known in other countries. His works were noted abroad already in the 1840s. His poems were translated into Polish (1860), Czech (1860), Bulgarian (1863), Serbian (1868), German (1870) and French (1876). Spanish periodicals wrote about him in the last century. A large number of translations of various works of Shevchenko has appeared in English.

A summary of an article on Shevchenko by E. Durand in the Paris *Revue des Deux Mondes* for 1876 was published that same year in the New York *The Galaxy* (Vol. 22) and a still more extensive one in the London journal *All the Round*, which was edited by Charles Dickens (1877, Vol. 18, No. 440, pages 220-24).

The British Slavist W. R. Morfill (1834-1909) did much to popularise Shevchenko. In 1880 he informed the English-reading public through an article in *The Westminster Review* (London) of the publication of the *Kobzar* in two volumes in Prague. Morfill read Shevchenko and works about him in the Russian, Ukrainian and German languages, himself visited both Eastern and Western Ukraine, and wrote an extensive article about him, entitled *Cossack Poet* in *Macmillan's Magazine* (1886), including a prose translation of two of Shevchenko's poems. And in 1903, in a review of an anthology of Ukrainian literature, printed in *The Athenaeum* (London), he dealt at length with the *Kobzar*, including a poetic translation of sections of *My Testament*.

A very valuable contribution was made by Ethel Lillian Voynich in her book *Six Lyrics From the Ruthenian of Taras Shevchenko*, published in London in 1911 as one of the Vigo Cabinet Series. The author of *The Gadfly* was particularly successful in translating the intimate-lyrical poems and her excerpt from *The Princess* is a model of profound penetration into the meaning of Shevchenko's imagery, creating correspondingly distinctive and poetic images in the English language. She also wrote a foreword, in which she presented

a detailed biography of the poet, enlivened with quotations from his diary and the novel *The Artist*, which she interpreted to be wholly autobiographical, and expressed high esteem and appreciation of Shevchenko, whom she likened to the bard of Scotland, Robert Burns, as a national poet. Ethel Voynich's translations of Shevchenko were reprinted many times in the English-speaking countries.

Percy Paul Selver presented some new translations from Taras Shevchenko in the journal *The Ukraine* (1914) and in the *Anthology of Modern Slavonic Literature* (1919), including the poet's autobiography. Selver strove to transmit Shevchenko's wording accurately, but failed to do it in terms of imagery that is specific to the English language.

In 1924 *The Slavonic Review* published an article on Shevchenko, written in 1914 by the Ukrainian writer and savant Ivan Franko (1856-1916) at the request of R. W. Seton-Watson.

Among contemporary British writers who have translated Shevchenko special mention must be made of Jack Lindsay, whose work was published in the magazine *International Literature* (Moscow, 1939, November 3).

In the United States of America the first free translation in prose of some lines from *The Caucasus* appeared in 1868 in *The Alaska Herald*, a journal of the Russian revolutionary émigrés, published by A. Goncharenko, who wrote Shevchenko's obituary for Herzen's *Kolo-kol* (*The Bell*) in London. In 1916 in New York the Canadian poetess Florence R. Livesay published a book, *Songs of Ukraina with Ruthenian Poems*, which included a free rewrite of several poems by Shevchenko. The American poetess Edna Underwood also published similar interpretations of three Shevchenko's poems. Percival C. Cundy and Ukrainians living in North America—Zahariychuk, Semenin, Ewach—also rendered some of Shevchenko's works into English, but they did not always adequately or accurately transmit the social content of those poems. The same shortcoming (together with difficulty in preserving the rhythm of Shevchenko's poesy) is noted in translations by the Rev. A. J. Hunter, whose book *The Kobzar of the Ukraine* was printed in Winnipeg (Canada) in 1922.

At the present time Shevchenko is being translated in Britain by Herbert Marshall, well-known author and translator of Mayakovsky's poetry, and in Canada by John Weir, whose collections entitled *Bard of Ukraine* (1951) and *Taras Shevchenko: Selections* (1961) were published in Toronto, and Mary Skrypnyk, whose translation of *Katerina* appeared as a booklet in Toronto in 1961. Herbert Marshall, John Weir and Mary Skrypnyk took part in the Shevchenko Jubilee Conference at Kanev and Kiev in 1961. (The translations in the present volume are the work of John Weir, Herbert Marshall, Irina

Zheleznova and Olga Shartse—the latter two being well-known Soviet translators into English.)

Deep appreciation of the great Kobzar's work was expressed in the article by the British publicist and literary critic Pauline Bentley in the *UNESCO Courier* (1961, No. 7-8) which appeared in the English, French, Spanish and Arabic languages.

Shevchenko's fame is also spreading in the Orient. The secretary of the Vietnamese Writers' Association, Nguyen Hoang Khoan, writes that Shevchenko is well known and highly esteemed in Vietnam. The Japanese poet Teisuku Shibuiya dedicated his collection of verses *Songs in the Field* to Shevchenko in 1924. The *Kobzar* was published in Japanese translation—without rhymes, but with the rhythm of the original, according to the poetical instrumentality of the Japanese language—in 1950, being Volume 12 of the series *Masterpieces of World Poetry*. A Shevchenko memorial meeting in Tokyo in April 1961 was addressed by Japanese writers and public figures and by Oles Gonchar, president of the Union of Writers of the Ukraine. Shevchenko is also known in India and China.

As we have already noted, Shevchenko is fairly widely known in the Western Hemisphere. There are two monuments to him and a Shevchenko museum in Canada. At a Shevchenko memorial meeting in New York in 1961 the American artist Rockwell Kent spoke of his profound admiration of the Ukrainian poet and pride in his works.

"Why is it that sometimes a poet of one language becomes a poet of all languages, although it is very difficult to translate poetry from one language to another, and the native language is one-half of the poetry?" wrote the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet. "It is because the other half of the poetry of such poets as Shevchenko is so national and yet so international and humanistic, so distinctive and yet so universal, that half of the apple of Shevchenko's poetry is to the taste of all peoples."

That is why Taras Shevchenko's fame extends to all parts of the globe. That is why he ranks with the greatest figures in world literature.



# POEMS





## THE BEWITCHED

The broad Dnieper is roaring and groaning,  
The angry storm-wind wails and whines,  
High willows downwards low are bending,  
While waves are raised up mountains high.  
And the pale moon at that moment  
From the clouds came peeping out,  
As if a boat in blue seas foaming,  
Now rising up, now sinking down.  
The third cock-crow had not yet sounded,  
No human being heard to speak,  
But in the copse the brown-owls hooted,  
Repeatedly the ash-tree creaked.  
At such a time beneath the mountain,  
By that spinney gloomy,  
Looming black above the waters  
Something white is roaming.  
Maybe it was a water-sprite<sup>1</sup>  
For her mother seeking,  
Or else she waits a Cossack lad<sup>2</sup>  
To rack to death with tickling.  
But no water-sprite emerged:  
It's a village maiden going,  
And doesn't know (for she's bewitched)  
What it is she's doing.  
Thus the fortune-teller spelled her,  
That her grief be eased,  
That midnight roaming, she slept on  
And yet still could seek  
In her sleep her Cossack lad,  
Who last year bade farewell  
And promised he'd return  
But who, maybe, has fell!  
No silk kerchief his eyes covered  
Nor his Cossack head,

O'er his pale white face beloved  
No maiden's tears were shed.  
An eagle pecked his soft brown eyes  
On some foreign field,  
His white body wolves devoured—  
Thus his fate was sealed!  
Every night that maiden fair  
Waits for him in vain,  
Her black-browed one will ne'er come back  
Nor greet her once again,  
Her long silk plaits he'll ne'er unloosen  
Nor her kerchief tie,  
Not on a bed, but in a coffin  
Shall that orphan lie!

Such is her fate . . . yet why, God of mercy,  
To a maiden so young, why such punishment give?  
Because she loved with her heart, so sincerely,  
Those Cossack eyes? . . . Oh, an orphan forgive!  
Whom then should she love, this orphaned one?  
Alone, like a fledgling on some distant shore.  
Send her good fortune,—she is so young;  
For strangers will mock her plight all the more.  
Is the dove to blame for loving the pigeon?  
Is that pigeon blamed the hawk dives to slay?  
Sadly billing and cooing, so weary of living,  
Searching and pondering he's lost his way.  
Yet that dove is lucky for she can fly high,  
Straight to God, to plead for her loved one she goes.  
But to whom can this orphan plead and implore?  
And who then will tell her, and who really knows  
Where her loved one is sleeping: in some dark green grove  
Or watering his horse by the Danube's swift stream.  
Or maybe there's another, another he loves,  
And she, the dark-browed one, is already a dream?

If she had the wings of an eagle to hover,  
She'd have found her beloved beyond the blue waves;  
Would have loved him alive, would have strangled her rival;  
Or if dead would have shared the very same grave.  
Not so does the heart love, to share with another,  
Nor content is the heart with what God deigns to give:  
Not wishing to live so, not wishing to sorrow.  
"Sorrow," says thought, devastating with grief.  
Such is Thy will, oh merciful God,  
Such is her fortune, such is her lot!

And still she is wandering, no word from her lips.  
And flows the wide Dnieper so silently:  
The wind has scattered the gloomy clouds  
And lain down to rest alongside the sea.  
And out of the sky the moonlight is beaming,  
Over the woods and the waters gleaming;  
And all is silence, as if holding breath,  
Then in a flash—from the Dnieper fly out  
Little children, laughing gay.  
"Come, let's sun-bathe!" they cry out—  
"The sun's long up!" (All naked they;  
With sedge-plaited curls, for they are girls.)

. . . . .  
"Are you all here?" their mother calls—  
"Let us search for our supper—all.

Let us play, let us have fun,  
And sing the song we've always sung!

*Water-sprite! Dancing light!*

*Dancing light! Water-sprite!*

When my mother gave birth to me  
Unbaptised she deserted me.

Moon above!

Our blue dove!

Come tonight and with us feed:  
A Cossack boy lies in our reeds,

In the rushes, in the sedges,  
A ring on his finger shines silver-bright;  
Dark of eyebrow, young of feature  
In the oak-grove found last night.  
Shine longer in the open field,  
So we still can sport at will.  
While the witches still are flying,  
While the cockerels still are silent.  
Shine upon us . . . see something shimmers!  
Beneath the oak-tree something glimmers.  
    *Water-sprite. Dancing light!*  
    *Dancing light. Water-sprite!*  
When my mother gave birth to me,  
Unbaptised she deserted me.”

The unbaptised burst into laughter. . . .  
The grove replied: and echoes after  
As if the Horde's<sup>3</sup> slaying. They rush  
To the oak like mad . . . . All is hushed.  
    The unbaptised ones came to a halt,  
    They look upward—something gleams,  
    Up the tree-trunk something climbs  
    To the very top it seems.  
    It's that very self-same maid  
    Sleep-walking sadly in the spinney;  
    From the spell upon her laid  
    By the fortune-teller's spinning.  
    On the topmost branch aquaking  
    She stood . . . heart abreaking!  
    On all sides she looked around  
    Then started climbing down.  
    Around the oak wait water-sprites  
    Await with bated breath  
    Then, poor soul, they seized her tight  
    And tickled her to death.

For long their eyes they feasted  
Upon beauty's daughter . . . .  
The third cock-crow: cock-a-doodle!  
They splashed into the water.  
The skylark then its warble trills,  
Soars up high and hovers;  
The cuckoo goes acuckooing still,  
'Neath an oak-tree's cover.  
The nightingale spills triple trills—  
Echoing through the spinney;  
The dawn grows red behind the hills;  
The ploughman goes by singing.  
Black looms the wood above the water,  
By Poles crossed long gone by;  
Along the Dnieper, blue and distant  
Rise dim grave mounds high.  
Through the oak-grove rustling creeps;  
Dense osiers whisper sighing.  
Beneath the oak the maiden sleeps  
By the foot-path lying.  
She sleeps so sound, she doesn't hear  
The cuckoo's call repeats,  
Nor counts how long she has to live. . . .  
So deeply now she sleeps.

At that moment from the oak-grove  
Comes a Cossack riding;  
Under him a raven-horse  
Haltingly comes striding.  
"My dear comrade, you are weary!  
We shall rest ere dusk.  
Nearby's the cottage, where a maiden  
Will open the gate for us.  
Maybe it's already been opened by now,  
For another, and not for me. . . .



Hasten, my horse, hasten, my horse,  
Let's hurry homewards and see!"  
The raven-black horse is completely worn out,  
It stumbles and almost falls,—  
Near the very heart of the Cossack  
It seems an adder crawls.  
"Why, there's our oak-tree, curly-leaved, . . .  
And that's she! Oh God above!  
See, tired with waiting she's fallen asleep,  
My dearest grey-winged dove! . . ."  
He leapt off his horse and rushed to her:  
"Oh God in heaven!" he wailed:  
He calls to her and kisses her. . . .  
But all to no avail!  
"Why then have they parted us,  
You from me?" he said.  
With a wild laugh he leapt at the oak  
With a crash that smashed his head!

Girls go by to reap the rye,  
And girl-like break into song;  
How mothers bid their sons good-bye,  
How Tartars they fought night-long.  
They pass and see 'neath the green oak-tree  
A worn-out horse stands lone,  
And by the horse a fine young Cossack  
And a maiden young lie prone.  
From curiosity (if truth be told)  
They crept up close, in fun;  
When they saw they were dead and cold—  
From fear they started to run!

Wiping away their flowing tears  
Her friends gathered around;  
His comrades to make a proper grave  
Themselves dug the ground.

With their icons came the priests,  
All bells tolled that day.  
By the whole village laid to rest  
According to ancient ways.  
Thus beside the road they raised  
Twin mounds amongst the rye.  
No one there to query then:  
Why did they have to die?  
They planted a fir and a maple-tree  
At the young Cossack's head,  
And over the grave of the maiden young  
A guelder rose of red.  
Over them the cuckoo hails  
With its plaintive cries.  
Over them the nightingales  
Warble all the nights.  
Sing and warble spilling trills  
To the new-moon's quarter,  
Till the self-same water-sprites  
Rise from Dnieper's waters.

St. Petersburg,  
1838

*Translated*  
by *Herbert Marshall*

## OH THOUGHTS OF MINE

Oh thoughts of mine, oh thoughts of mine,  
Grief we bear together!  
Why stand you in such sad black lines  
To the paper tethered? . . .  
Why has the wind dispersed you not  
Dust-like into flight?  
Why sorrow overlay you not  
Like her babe at night?

In this world to be mocked sorrow gave birth to you,  
Tears flowed in torrents . . . how were you not drowned,  
Not flooded to sea, not flushed into earth were you?  
None would have asked me, why so depressed,  
None would have asked why I'm sick of this world,  
Why curse I my fate? Nor have said in a jest:  
"You've nought else to do."

My child-flowers, my pride!  
Why have I loved you, cherished you best?  
In all the world has one heart ever cried  
As I cried with you? . . . Maybe, I can guess.  
Maybe a maiden's heart I'll find,  
A pair of bright brown eyes  
To cry, to mourn these thoughts of mine—  
For nothing more ask I . . .  
Just one tear from those brown eyes—  
And I . . . am king of kings! . . .

Thoughts of mine, oh thoughts of mine!  
Sorrow with us wings! . . .

---

Just for a girl's bright brown eyes,  
For those black brows of hers

My heart pounds, breaks into smiles  
And bursts to burning verse.  
Pours out in words as best it can,  
The dark of all the nights,  
The cherry orchards' pink and green,  
A girl's caresses light.  
For those fields and funeral mounds  
In our Ukraine grand,  
My heart was moved, it never wished  
To sing in foreign lands. . . .  
I did not wish to summon here,  
Midst northern woods and snow,  
Cossacks to their Council<sup>4</sup> meet,  
'Neath hetman<sup>5</sup> banners blown. . . .  
Let Cossack spirits stay down there  
In the wide Ukraine—  
Mirth is there and space is there  
From sky to sky again. . . .  
Like to that freedom we have lost,  
Dnieper wide, sea wide,  
Through endless plains, o'er rapids tossed,  
Where mounds to mountains rise.  
There Cossack liberty was born,  
Pranced proudly o'er the plains,  
With Tatars and with Polish lords  
The fields were sown—with slain,  
There the fields with dead were sown,  
Till all at last grew cold. . . .  
Then freedom rested. . . . But meanwhile  
New graves grew manifold,  
And over them an eagle black  
Like a sentry guards,  
And to the folk the past comes back  
In songs of their own bards.  
They sing about the long-gone-by,  
Though blind and pitiful

They can sing. . . . But I . . . but I  
Can cry but bitterly,  
Can only cry o'er my Ukraine. . . .  
But no words can suffice. . . .  
As for evil. . . . Let it be!  
Who knows it not in life!  
And he who thus looks piercingly  
At people with his soul—  
Finds this world a hell indeed,  
As for that. . . .

By grieving so  
Good to myself I cannot bring,  
If good I do not know.  
Let three days live the evil things—  
I'll hide them even so,  
The snake of grief I'll bury deep  
Near my very heart,  
So that enemies won't see  
How my sorrow laughs. . . .  
Let my thoughts, like those crows,  
Caw aloud and fly,  
While the nightingale of the heart  
Sings to itself and cries  
Quietly—so folk won't see  
And will not laugh at me. . . .  
Do not wipe away my tears,  
Let them flow in streams,  
Let them water foreign fields,  
All the days and nights,  
Until priests with foreign dust  
Cover up my eyes. . . .  
That's how it is. . . . What's to be done?  
Longing helps me not.  
Whoever envies orphan sons—  
Punish him, Oh God!

Oh thoughts of mine, oh thoughts of mine!  
Flowerings of my birth!  
I nurtured you, cared for you—  
But where's your home on earth?  
To Ukraine, my children, go!  
To our Ukraine fly!  
Like homeless orphans find your way,  
For here I'm doomed to die.  
There you'll find a heart that's dear  
And a word that's kind,  
There you'll find truth sincere  
And maybe fame you'll find. . . .

Welcome, them, my motherland!  
Oh, Ukraine mine own!  
These my foolish children greet  
As children of thine own.

St. Petersburg,  
1839

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

## PEREBENDYA<sup>6</sup>

Old Perebendya, minstrel blind,  
Is known both near and far.  
He wanders all the country 'round  
And plays on his kobzá.  
The people know the man who plays,  
They listen and are glad,  
Because he chases gloom away,  
Though he himself is sad.  
No matter what the weather holds,  
His days and nights he spends  
Without a shelter out-of-doors;  
Misfortune dogs his steps,  
And mocks his head with silver thatched,  
But he no longer heeds;  
He seats himself beside a hedge  
And sings, "Oh rustling leaves!"  
And singing, how he's all alone  
He thinks and bows his head,  
As melancholy sears his soul,  
Alone beside the hedge.

That's what old Perebendya's like,  
He's very changeful, too:  
He'll sing about heroic deeds,  
Then change to comic tunes;  
To maidens on the commons grass  
He'll sing of love and spring,  
And at the inn for merry lads  
Good rousing songs he'll sing;  
For married couples at a feast  
(Where mother-'n-law is strict)  
Such songs as tell of women's grief  
And hardship he will pick;

At market-place—of Lazarus,  
Or else, a mournful lay  
(So that the memory should live)  
Of how the Sich was razed.  
So that's what Perebendya's like,  
Capricious in old age:  
He'll sing a merry song and then  
To one of tears he'll change.

Asweeping freely o'er the steppes,  
The wind blows from afar.  
Upon a mound the minstrel sits  
And plays on his kobzá.  
The boundless steppes, blue as the sea,  
Reach out on every side;  
The grave mounds also stretch away  
Till they are lost to sight.  
His grey moustache and thatch of hair  
The wind blows every way,  
Then it subsides and lends an ear  
To the old minstrel's lay,  
His heart's wild beat, the tears of sightless eyes. . . .  
Then blows again. . . .

This is his hide-away  
Amid the steppe where nobody can spy  
And where his words are scattered o'er the plains  
Away from human ears, the sacred words  
Pronounced in free communion with God,  
The praises sung in homage to the Lord.  
His thoughts the while go floating on a cloud,  
Like eagles in the blue they soar o'erhead  
Till with their wings the very sky is churned;  
They rest upon the sun and ask where it  
Retires at night, how rises in the morn;  
They listen as the sea its tale unfolds,  
"Why are you mute?" they ask the mountain top,



'Then back to the sky, for earth's full of woe,  
In all the wide, wide world there's not a spot  
For him who all things knows and hears and sees—  
The secrets of the sun, and sea, and fields—  
No one to bid him welcome with his heart.  
He's all alone, as is the sun alone.  
The people know him and they let him be. . . .  
But if they learned how he, alone, intones  
Songs in the steppe, converses with the sea—  
They would make sport of words that are divine,  
And call him mad and from their midst they'd drive  
Him off to die. "Go to the sea!" they'd say.

You're doing right, my minstrel friend,  
You're doing right, I know,  
That to the grave mound in the steppe  
To talk and sing you go!  
Keep going there, my hearty one,  
Until the day your heart  
Falls fast asleep, and sing your songs  
Where you will not be heard.  
And that the people shouldn't shy  
You must indulge them, friend! . . .  
So dance the way the master says—  
The money's his to spend.

So that's what Perebendya's like,  
Capricious in old age:  
He'll sing a wedding song and then  
To one of grief he'll change.

St. Petersburg,  
1839

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## KATERINA

*To V. A. Zhukovsky<sup>7</sup>  
in memory of April 22, 1838*

### I

O lovely maidens, fall in love,  
But not with Muscovites,<sup>8</sup>  
For Muscovites are foreign folk,  
They do not treat you right.  
A Muscovite will love for sport,  
And laughing go away;  
He'll go back to his Moscow land  
And leave the maid a prey  
To grief and shame. . . . It could be borne  
If she were all alone,  
But scorn is also heaped upon  
Her mother frail and old.  
The heart e'en languishing can sing—  
For it knows how to wait;  
But this the people do not see:  
"A strumpet!" they will say.  
O lovely maidens, fall in love,  
But not with Muscovites,  
For Muscovites are foreign folk,  
They leave you in a plight.

Young Katerina did not heed  
Her parents' warning words,  
She fell in love with all her heart,  
Forgetting all the world.  
The orchard was their trysting-place;  
She went there in the night  
To meet her handsome Muscovite,  
And thus she ruined her life.

Her anxious mother called and called  
Her daughter home in vain;  
There where her lover she caressed,  
The whole night she remained.  
Thus many nights she kissed her love  
With passion strong and true,  
The village gossips meanwhile hissed:  
“A girl of ill repute!”  
Let people talk, let gossips prate,  
She does not even hear:  
She is in love, that’s all she cares,  
Nor feels disaster near.  
Bad tidings came of strife with Turks,  
The bugles blew one morn:  
Her Muscovite went off to war,  
And she remained at home.  
A kerchief o’er her braids they placed  
To show she’s not a maid,  
But Katerina does not mind,  
Her lover she awaits.  
He promised her that he’d return  
If he was left alive,  
That he’d come back after the war—  
And then she’d be his wife,  
An army bride, a Muscovite  
Herself, her ills forgot,  
And if in meantime people prate,  
Well, let the people talk!  
She does not worry, not a bit—  
The reason that she weeps  
Is that the girls at sundown sing  
Without her on the streets.  
No, Katerina does not fret—  
And yet her eyelids swell,  
And she at midnight goes to fetch  
The water from the well

So that she won't by foes be seen;  
When to the well she comes,  
She stands beneath the snowball-tree  
And sings such mournful songs,  
Such songs of misery and grief,  
The rose itself must weep.  
Then she comes home—content that she  
By neighbours was not seen.  
No, Katerina does not fret,  
She's carefree as can be—  
With her new kerchief on her head  
She looks out on the street.  
So at the window day by day  
Six months she sat in vain. . . .  
With sickness then was overcome,  
Her body racked with pain.  
Her illness very grievous proved,  
She barely breathed for days. . . .  
When it was over—by the stove  
She rocked her tiny babe.  
The gossips' tongues now got free  
rein,

The other mothers jibed  
That soldiers marching home again  
At her house spent the night.  
“Oh, you have reared a daughter fair,  
And not alone beside  
The stove she sits—she's drilling  
there

A little Muscovite.  
She found herself a brown-eyed son. . . .  
You must have taught her how! . . .”  
Oh fie on ye, ye prattle tongues,  
I hope yourselves you'll feel  
Someday such pains as she who bore  
A son that you should jeer!

Oh, Katerina, my poor dear!  
How cruel a fate is thine!  
Where, with a fatherless young child,  
A haven will you find?  
Who'll ask you in and welcome you,  
No husband at your side?  
Your parents now are—strangers too,  
It's hard with them to 'bide!

Now Katerina's well again;  
Again out on the street  
She gazes through the window pane,  
While rocks her babe to sleep;  
She looks in vain as days pass by. . . .  
Will it, then, never be?  
She'd to the orchard go to cry  
If people didn't see.  
At sunset Katerina goes  
To their old trysting-spots,  
Her baby cuddled in her arms,  
And whispers as she walks:  
"I waited here for him to come,  
And here we stood and spoke,  
While here . . . oh here . . . my son,  
  my son!"  
And then her voice is choked.

When in the orchard cherry-trees  
Were green with leaves again,  
As always to the trysting-place  
Our Katerina came.  
But now her heart's no longer light  
And now she sings no more,  
As waiting for her Muscovite  
She did the spring before.



**Shevchenko's Childhood Home in Kirilovka.**  
*Pencil drawing*



**Katerina. 1842.**  
*Oil*

Now Katerina does not sing,  
But curses her sad fate.  
Ill-wishers in the meantime give  
Free rein to spite and hate—  
They are preparing evil things.  
What can she undertake?  
Her lover'd put a stop to this. . . .  
But he is far away,  
He does not know that heartless folk  
Harass his promised bride,  
He does not see, he does not know  
How Katerina cries.  
Perhaps her lover's lying dead  
Beyond the Danube wide;  
Or maybe—back in Moscow land  
He has another bride!  
No, he's not killed, he is alive—  
It can't be otherwise!  
And where another could he find  
With such fair face and eyes?  
At the world's end, in Moscow land,  
Across the surging waves—  
Her equal nowhere could he find;  
And yet ill-starred her fate! . . .  
Her mother gave her a fair face,  
And lovely eyes bestowed,  
Yet how to give her happiness  
Her mother did not know.  
But beauty without fortune is  
A flower in the grass—  
Seared by the sun, bent by the winds,  
And plucked by those who pass.  
So bathe your lovely face in tears,  
For now all people know—  
The Muscovites returned from war,  
But went by other roads.



## II

Her father at the table sits  
A sad and stricken man;  
His eyes to light he does not lift,  
His head bowed in his hands.  
Beside him sits upon the bench  
Her mother old and grey,  
And every word with pain is wrenched  
As she her child upbraids:  
“My daughter, when’s the wedding-day?  
Where does your bridegroom rest?  
Where are your bridesmaids, tell me pray,  
And all the wedding guests?  
They are far off in Moscow land!  
So go and seek them there,  
And don’t tell anyone you have  
A mother anywhere.  
Be cursed the hour when you were born!  
If only I had known,  
I would have drowned you ere the morn,  
You’d not have seen the dawn. . . .  
Then you’d have been the serpent’s prey,  
While now—a Muscovite’s. . . .  
Alas, my daughter, blossom gay!  
Alas, my sunshine bright!  
So tenderly I tended you,  
So proud to see you grown,  
Yet all my care is brought to ruin. . . .  
Oh dear, what have you done?  
So that’s your thanks! . . . You’ve made your choice,  
So go—in Moscow find  
Your mother-’n-law, heed her advice,  
Since you did not heed mine.  
My daughter, go and seek her out,  
Ask her to take you in,

Be happy among foreign folk,  
And don't come home again!  
Do not come back to us, my child,  
From that land far away. . . .  
Oh who, without you, daughter mine,  
Will lay me in the grave?  
Who o'er my body will lament  
As but a daughter weeps?  
And who a guelder rose will plant  
There where my body sleeps?  
Who for my sinful soul will pray,  
Alas, when you are gone?  
My only child, my daughter dear!  
Now go, leave us alone,  
Go, go from us. . . ."

  With failing hand  
She blessed her for farewell:  
"May God be with you!" To the floor  
She then unconscious fell. . . .

Her grey-haired father then found speech:  
"What are you waiting for?"  
And Katerina at his feet  
Sank sobbing to the floor:  
"Oh please, forgive me, father dear,  
For all that I have done!  
My darling dad, forgive me, please,  
For what I did that's wrong!"  
"May God forgive you," whispered he,  
"May the good folk forgive;  
Now pray and go—for us 'twill be  
Less hard, perhaps, to live."

She rose with difficulty, bowed,  
And 'thout a word she went;  
Her father and her mother old

Now all alone were left.  
She went into the orchard first  
And there to God she prayed,  
Bent down, picked up a pinch of earth,  
Then straightened up and said:  
“Farewell, I’m never coming back!  
I know that far away  
By strangers in a foreign land  
I will be laid away;  
This little pinch of native soil  
Will on my grave be placed,  
It will my hapless fate, my woe,  
To strangers there relate. . . .  
Nay, let untold my tale remain  
When I have fled this life,  
Let folks forget my very name  
And speak no word of spite.  
You’ll not recount my sorry lot. . . .  
But he—oh, he will tell  
That I’m his mother! Oh, my God!  
Where can I hide myself?  
Beneath the waves my hiding-place  
I’ll find, I am afraid,  
While you my sin will expiate—  
A roving homeless waif  
Without a father!”

And she wept  
As down the village street,  
Her baby in her arms, she went  
With slow, reluctant feet.  
The village now was left behind—  
Her heart with sorrow ached;  
She turned to look, then like a child  
She stood and loudly wailed.  
Beside the road, a poplar tall,

She stood lamenting long;  
Her scalding tears fell fast as falls  
The dew before the dawn.  
She didn't see a thing for tears  
Were streaming from her eyes,  
She hugged her baby to her heart,  
And kissed it as she cried.  
The angel didn't understand,  
Just felt the fond caress  
And fumbled with its tiny hands  
To find its mother's breast.  
A flaming bowl, the sun went down  
Behind the leafy wood;  
She wiped her tears, then turned around  
And trudged along the road. . . .  
Then she was gone. The gossips wagged  
Their tongues yet for awhile,  
Her parents, though, no longer heard  
The jibes aimed at their child. . . .

Such are the wrongs that people do  
To people on the earth!  
One person's jailed, another slain,  
Himself destroys a third. . . .  
And all for what? Nobody knows.  
The world is large and wide,  
Yet some are homeless and alone,  
And can't a shelter find.  
Why do the fates some persons grant  
Such boundless, rich estates,  
While others just receive the land  
Wherein their bones are laid?  
Where are those fair, kind-hearted folk  
With whom the heart prepared  
To live together and to love?  
Alas, they've disappeared!

On earth there is fortune—  
On whom does it smile?  
On earth there is freedom—  
On whom does it shine?  
On earth there are people—  
All silver and gold.  
They seem strong and wealthy,  
Yet fortune don't know—  
Nor fortune, nor freedom!  
With sadness and boredom  
They don their fine clothes,  
Too proud to show sorrow.  
Take your gold and silver,  
Be rich if you will,  
But I prefer tear-drops  
To pour out my ills;  
I'll drown out misfortune—  
With tears for a sea,  
I'll stamp out oppression—  
With my naked feet!  
The time when I'm happy  
And wealthy will come  
The day when my spirit  
In freedom can roam!

### III

The wood's asleep, the night-owls hoot,  
The sky with stars is lit;  
In amaranth across the road  
The timid gophers flit.  
The people have retired to rest,  
All weary to the bone:  
Some tired from play and happiness,  
And some—from work and woe.  
The night drew over all a sheet,

The mother tends her brood;  
But where does Katerina sleep:  
Indoors or in the woods?  
Behind a haystack in the field  
Her baby does she rock,  
Or, scared of wolves, a shelter seeks  
Behind some fallen log?  
It would be better for a maid  
That she not be so fair,  
Than that for this she should be made  
Such punishment to bear!  
What fortune does the future hold?  
Alas, it will be bad!  
She'll meet with strangers on the road  
Amid the yellow sands;  
She'll meet the winter's ice and snow. . . .  
But him—ah, will she meet  
The one who Katerina loves,  
And who his son will greet?  
If she were with him, all her ills,  
Her woes would be forgot:  
He'd speak to her with tender words  
And hold her to his heart. . . .

Well, we shall hear and we shall see. . . .  
And I will rest awhile,  
The road which leads to Muscovy  
From people I'll inquire.  
Ah, brothers, it's a long, long road—  
Alas, that road I know!  
My very heart is gripped with cold  
When I recall that road.  
One time I trod that road myself—  
Would I'd not known that trail! . . .  
About that journey I would tell,  
But who'd believe my tale?

“The so-and-so is telling lies!”  
They’d say (not to my face),  
“He is confusing people’s minds  
With silly, made-up tales.”  
You’re right, good people, you are right!  
Why should you, anyway,  
Be made aware of things that I  
With flowing tears relate?  
What use is it? Each person has  
Enough of his own griefs. . . .  
So let’s forget it! Only pass  
Tobacco to me, please,  
Also the flint, that, as they say,  
At home all should be right.  
For if you’d hear my shocking tale,  
You’d nightmares have at night!  
So to the devil with it all!  
While I had better map  
The route our Katerina shall  
With tiny Ivan tramp.

Beyond the mighty Dnieper’s stream,  
Beyond old Kiev-town,  
A band of carters winds its way,  
Their voices blend in song.  
Returning from a pilgrimage,  
Perhaps, a woman nears,  
A matron young. But why so sad,  
Why are her eyes in tears?  
Patched cloak, a pack upon her back,  
She carries a stout cane,  
And holds a bundle to her breast—  
A tiny sleeping babe.  
She came up to the caravan  
And covered up her child:  
“Please tell me, where to Moscow land

The highway will I find?"  
 "To Muscovy? This is the way.  
 Is't not too far, my dear?"  
 "To Moscow. And for Jesus' sake,  
 Please help me to get there!"  
 She trembled as she took the coin:  
 Oh, it was hard to take! . . .  
 Why should she beg? . . . But there's  
   the boy—  
 Her child she can't forsake! . . .  
 She wept, then onward went. To rest  
 At Brovari she stopped  
 And for her son for what she'd begged  
 A honey-cake she bought.  
 A long time Katerina trudged,  
 And ever asked the way;  
 Full many nights beside a hedge  
 She and her infant lay. . . .

What use are eyes so beautiful—it's clear:  
 Beside a hedge with bitter tears to weep!  
 So look, and mend your ways, oh maidens fair,  
 That you some day should not be forced to seek  
 Some Muscovite, as Katerina seeks. . . .  
 Then do not ask why folks with anger speak  
 And do not let you in their house to sleep.  
     Oh maidens, do not ask them why—  
     The people do not know;  
     Whom God has punished in this life  
     They also rush to stone. . . .  
     The people sway like willow shoots  
     Are swayed by vagrant winds.  
     The sun shines for the orphan too  
     (But does not warm, just shines)—  
     The people would the sun erase  
     And banish from the skies,



That orphans be denied its rays  
To dry their streaming eyes,  
If they but could. And yet, good God!  
Why such a thorny lot?  
What harm to people has she done?  
What do the people want?  
That she should suffer! . . . Oh my dear!  
Don't, Katerina, let  
The people ever see your tears,  
Hold fast e'en unto death!  
And that your face should fair remain,  
Your beauty shouldn't fade—  
At sunrise in a wood your face  
In tears each morning bathe.  
Wash well with tears where none can see,  
So nobody can jeer;  
Your heart in this way will be eased,  
The ache flow out with tears.

Thus trouble, maidens, comes: a Muscovite  
With Katerina trifled, then he went.  
Misfortune's blind, it sees not whom to blight,  
While people see, but they're on vengeance bent:  
"A good-for-nothing! Let her die," they say,  
"Since she to guard her virtue didn't know!"  
Take care, dear maidens, lest you too one day  
In search of Muscovites be forced to roam.

Where's Katerina now?  
She slept beside the road,  
Each morn at dawn she rose,  
To Muscovy kept pressing on;  
Then! . . . Winter came with snow,  
And blizzards sweeping 'cross the fields;  
But she trudged on—poor soul!—  
With shoes of bast upon her feet,  
And in a shabby cloak.

Thus doggedly she onward went;  
When stop—what's that she sees? . . .  
They're Muscovites, they're marching  
men. . . .

Oh! . . . Katerina reeled. . . .  
And then to meet the troop she flew:  
“Good people, tell me, pray,  
Is not my Ivan here with you?”  
“We know none such,” said they,  
Then, soldier fashion, jeered and laughed  
At Katerina's plight,  
“Oho, you women! Know our lads!  
We fix the girls, all right!”  
She looked at them with scornful eye:  
“And yet you're men, you say!  
There, there, my baby, don't you cry!  
Let come whatever may,  
I will not stop, I will go on. . . .  
Your father I will find,  
I'll give you to him, darling son,  
And I myself will die.”

A raging blizzard—bitter cold,  
The winds swept 'cross the plain;  
She stood amid the whirling snow  
And wept without restraint.  
Tired out at last, the howling storm  
Gave way to fitful sighs;  
Our Katerina'd cry some more,  
But her tears, too, ran dry.  
She looked long at her sleeping son:  
The wee face, washed with tears,  
Was pink and looked as in the morn  
A dew-wet rose appears.  
She looked, then smiled down at the babe,  
It was a ghastly smile:

About her heart, it seemed, a snake  
Was writhing all the while.  
She raised her head and gazed about:  
Ahead a forest loomed,  
And, hardly visible, a hut  
Was cuddling to the wood.  
“Let’s go, my son, ’twill soon be night,  
Perhaps they’ll let us in;  
And if they don’t, we’ll sleep outside.  
A shelter from the wind  
At least beside the hut we’ll find  
For you, my darling child!  
Where will you spend your nights when I  
No longer am alive?  
Outdoors with dogs, my sorry mite,  
Without a bed or roof!  
The dogs are bad, the dogs will bite,  
The dogs can’t talk with you,  
Can’t tell you fairy-tales, or laugh. . . .  
With dogs you’ll scrouge for food. . . .  
Oh, what misfortune’s come to pass!  
Whatever shall I do?”

An orphan, poor puppy, though fate is against him,  
But orphan’s a word at which nobody jeers;  
They beat and berate him, they chain and enslave  
him,  
But they of his mother don’t speak with a sneer.  
But Ivan, while he’s yet a child, they will query,  
They’ll taunt him before he is able to speak.  
Who huddles ’neath hedges in tatters and hungry?  
At whom do the dogs all yap on the street?  
Who guides the blind beggar? The bastard, poor  
creature. . . .  
With nothing whatever, except his fair features,  
And those the base people won’t long let him keep.

#### IV

Where yawns a gully deep and wide  
At mountain foot, in quiet pride  
Stand ancient oaks like grand-dads old.  
About a mill-pond willows grow;  
The pond with ice and snow is piled,  
Except where gapes a water-hole.  
The wintry sun with sullen glow,  
A ruddy hoop, through clouds looks down,  
The north wind takes a breath and blows—  
All one then sees is whirling snow. . . .  
And hears the forest's mournful moan.

A snow-storm rages. Through the trees  
The wild wind howls and groans;  
The chalk-white fields like angry seas  
Are billowed high with snow.  
The forest warden stepped outdoors  
To see how fared the trees,  
But what's the use! In such a storm  
What could a person see?  
"Oh what a din! We'll have to let  
The forest mind itself!  
Back to the hut. . . . But wait—what's that?  
Well, may they roast in hell!  
It looks as though the devil's hosts  
Are trotting down the road.  
Nichipor, look! Those are not ghosts,  
They're horsemen white with snow!"  
"What Muscovites? Where Muscovites?"  
"There, there, calm down, my dear! . . ."  
"Where are the Muscovites, my friends?"  
"See for yourself, out there!"  
And Katerina flew outside  
Just as she was from bed.

"That Moscow's sure got 'neath her hide!"  
 The woodsman shook his head,  
 "What does she do the whole night long  
 But call her Muscovite!"  
 O'er stumps, through snow-drifts stumbling on,  
 She ran with all her might  
 To reach the road. Then breathless stopped,  
 Stood barefoot in the snow.  
 The troop drew close, at jogging trot  
 They all on horses rode.  
 "Oh my poor fate!" She ran ahead  
 To meet them. . . . Then she spied  
 The captain riding at their head:  
 "My Ivan dear!" she cried,  
 "My lover, you have come at last!  
 Where were you all this while?"  
 She ran to him. . . his stirrup grasped. . .  
 He looked, then turned aside  
 And to his steed he gave the spur.  
 "My love, why do you flee?  
 Don't you know Katerina more?  
 Don't you remember me?  
 Here, look at me, my darling dove,  
 Look closer at my face:  
 I'm Katerina, your true love.  
 Why do you turn away?"  
 But he kept spurring on his steed  
 As though he did not see.  
 "Oh, wait a moment, darling, wait!  
 D'you see—I do not weep.  
 You do not recognise me, dear?  
 Oh Ivan, it is true—  
 I'm Katerina, don't you hear!"  
 "Let go, you silly fool!  
 Here, men, drag this mad wench away!"  
 "Oh God, what's this you do?

You cannot cast me off this way--  
You promised to be true!"  
"Take her away! Why do you wait?"  
"Take who? Take me away?  
What have I done to earn that fate?  
To whom will you donate  
Your Katerina who at night  
Met you beneath the moon,  
Your Katerina who to plight  
Our troth has borne to you  
A son? Oh Ivan dear, at least  
Don't you reject me too!  
I'll be your slave. . . . Love whom  
                                you please,  
I'll say no word to you. . . .  
Make love to all. . . . I will forget  
I ever loved you true. . . .  
Bore you a son, became unwed  
A mother 'cause of you. . . .  
An unwed mother. . . . What a shame!  
Why am I thus undone!  
Then leave, forget me, but I pray,  
Do not forsake your son.  
You will not leave him?. . . Oh my dear,  
Don't haste away from me. . . .  
I'll bring your son to you out here."  
She dropped the stirrup free,  
Ran to the hut, then hastened back  
To give the precious mite  
To him, the father. Loosely wrapped,  
It wailed from cold and fright.  
"Here is your son, your bonny boy,  
Come see! Where have you gone?  
He's fled! . . . The father ran away! . . .  
The father spurned his son!  
Oh God! . . . My poor abandoned mite!



Young Katerina found at last  
What she'd been looking for!  
The wind puffed once—and e'en a trace  
Of footsteps was no more.

It's not the wind, the hurricane,  
That breaks the giant oak;  
It's not the mother's death that makes  
The very worst of woes;  
True orphans are not those who laid  
Their mother in the grave:  
Those have that grave, and their good  
name

From nasty jeers is safe.  
Ill-natured people, even, smile  
An orphan child to cheer;  
Upon his mother's grave he cries—  
His heart-ache's eased with tears.  
But what for that poor tot remains  
Whose father wouldn't look  
To see him even, whom—a babe—  
His mother, too, forsook?  
What's harder than the bastard's lot?  
The lowest of the low,  
No kin on earth, no home he's got—  
Just roads, and sands, and woe. . . .  
Patrician face with eyebrows dark. . . .  
What for? So he'd be known!  
She didn't hide the father's mark. . . .  
Oh, would there had been none!

## V

Beside the road to Kiev-town  
A kobzar sat to rest.  
With him his guide, a little boy



In rags and tatters dressed.  
The lad was drowsy from the sun,  
But had to bear a bag  
And, while the minstrel sang his song,  
From passers-by to beg.  
Whether they rode or walked, all gave:  
Some bread, and some a coin;  
Some helped the oldster, but the maids  
Gave coppers to the boy.  
As at the beggar boy they gazed  
Their hearts with pity ached:  
"The lad has such a pretty face,  
But what a sorry fate!"

Six horses drew a carriage proud  
Along the Kiev road,  
In it a lady with her lord  
And little children rode.  
In clouds of dust the coachman reined  
There where the beggars sat.  
The lad ran quickly, for the dame  
Had beckoned with her hand.  
She gave some money to the boy  
And watched with smiling eyes.  
The master glanced . . . then turned  
away. . . .

The monster recognised  
To whom that boyish face belonged,  
Those brows and those brown eyes. . . .  
The father recognised his son,  
But coldly turned aside.  
The lady asked the lad his name.  
"Small Ivan, ma'am," he said.  
"What a sweet child!" And then away  
In dust the carriage sped. . . .

The beggars counted what they'd got  
In alms so far that day,  
Turned to the sun to pray to God,  
Then went their weary way.

St. Petersburg,  
1838

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## THE NIGHT OF TARAS<sup>9</sup>

A minstrel sits at the cross-roads,  
On his lute he's playing;  
Around him lads and lassies go—  
Like red poppies swaying.  
The minstrel plays and sings away,  
Chanting out the words,  
How the Cossacks fought the Poles,  
The Muscovites, the Horde.  
How all the village gathered there  
One Sunday morning early;  
How they buried a Cossack young  
In a verdant gully.  
The minstrel plays and sings away—  
Making sorrow laugh. . . .  
"Once there was a Hetman-state,  
Ended now its sway!  
Once there was our own self-rule,  
Now we'll rule no more.  
But that fame of Cossack glory  
Enriches memory's store!  
Oh Ukraine! Oh Ukraine!  
Motherland so dear to me.  
When I ponder on your fate  
My heart weeps bitterly!  
Where have the Cossacks scattered,  
Where their jerkins red,  
Where have fortune, freedom, fled to,  
Where the banners, Hetman-led?  
Where have they gone? Are they burnt,  
Or has the blue sea drowned  
Beneath its waves your hills and dales,  
And your high funeral mounds?  
Mute are the mountains, dances the sea,

Grave mounds grow melancholy,  
And over the sons of Cossacks—see,  
Poland has ascendancy!  
Be silent, mountains! Dance, oh, sea!  
Wild winds, sweep the plains!  
Weep, sons of Cossacks, weep—  
Your destiny is plain!  
From beyond the fields clouds rise,  
Others from the Estuary,  
Our Ukraine in mourning lies—  
Such is her destiny!  
She is grieving, she is crying,  
Like a child uncherished.  
No one to her rescue's flying—  
Her Cossack host has perished;  
Perished glory, Motherland;  
No help from earth or skies;  
Now the children of the Cossacks  
Grow up unbaptised.  
Man and wife unmarried live,  
Without a priest interred;  
To the Jews<sup>10</sup> their faith is sold,  
From the Church they're barred.  
Like jackdaws cawing in the field,  
Uniates<sup>11</sup> and Poles  
Swoop down—and there's no one left  
To counsel and console.  
To the call rose Nalivaiko<sup>12</sup>—  
But he soon ceased to be.  
Up rose, too, Cossack Pavlyuk<sup>13</sup>—  
Likewise vanished he.  
Rose up Taras Tryasylo,  
With bitter tears came crying:  
"By the Poles my poor Ukraine  
Trampled down is lying!"

. . . . .

Then rose up Taras Tryasylo,  
 The faith to rescue goes,  
 Rose up the blue-grey eagle,  
 And now the Poles will know!  
 Rose up good Knight Tryasylo:  
 "We've grieved for ages past!  
 So now, my brothers, let us go  
 To fight the Poles at last!"  
 Days and nights, far more than three,  
 Tryasylo battled on.  
 Trubailo to the Estuary<sup>14</sup>  
 Were thick with corpses strewn.  
 The Cossack's strength was failing,  
 He was sore distressed,  
 And the villain Koniecpolski  
 Glee made manifest.  
 The gentry gathered he together—  
 And how he feasted them!  
 The Cossacks Taras drew together,  
 Good counsel seeking then.  
 "Comrades all, atamans,<sup>15</sup>  
 Brothers dear and sons!  
 Give me then good counsel, men,  
 What should now be done?  
 Our foes, the Poles, are feasting,  
 Convinced our end is willed."  
 "Let them feast themselves with boasting,  
 Let them feast their fill!  
 Let them, accursed, stuff themselves  
 Till down the red sun goes,  
 For mother-night will counsel give—  
 Cossacks will find their foes."  
 Behind the mountain sets the sun,  
 Starlight now enfolds,  
 And the Cossacks, like those clouds,  
 Encircled all the Poles.

High stood the full moon in the sky,  
Cannons roared around;  
The Polish gentry woke up sudden—  
But no way out was found!  
The Polish gentry woke up sudden,  
But rose not from the ground:  
The sun rose up—but Polish gentry  
Still side by side lay down.

A crimson serpent winding by,  
Alta the news is sending  
That jackdaws from the fields should fly  
To eat the Polish gentry.  
Came the jackdaws flying fast,  
To wake those noble lords;  
Assembled now the Cossack host,  
God to pray and laud.  
The black daws croaked and cawed,  
Pecking out dead eyes;  
The Cossack host together sang,  
A song of that red night—  
That fatal night of gore  
To Taras and the Cossacks brought  
Glory, honour, fame, and more—  
Brought sleep to Polish knights.

Above the river, o'er open fields,  
A black grave mound is seen;  
Where the Cossack blood once flowed,  
Grows the grass so green.  
A raven on the grave mound sits,  
From hunger he is croaking. . . .  
The Cossack recalls the Hetman-state,  
And from tears he's choking!  
Once Cossack fame and freedom lived  
Together for a time,

The fame's still bright, but freedom not  
A fate that was unkind.  
Once on a time we masters were,  
We'll never be again.  
But Cossack glory will not fade,  
It always will remain.  
The minstrel silently now grieves:  
Somehow his hands can't play.  
The lads and lassies cease to weave  
And wipe their tears away.

The minstrel passes down the street—  
From grief hark how he plays!  
The laddies dance the Cossack dance  
As he begins his lay:  
“Let this be the way it goes!  
Sit there, children, by the stove.  
And I, with grief, will to the inn,  
And my wife I'll find therein,  
Find my wife and stand a round,  
And all our enemies confound.”

St. Petersburg,  
1839

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*



**Poplar. 1840.**  
*Pencil drawing*





**A Gypsy Fortune-Teller. 1841.**  
*Water-colour*

## H AidamaKI<sup>16</sup>

*To Vassily Ivanovich Grigorovich<sup>17</sup>  
in memory of April 22, 1838*

All flows and all passes—this goes on forever. . . .  
Yet where does it vanish? And whence did it come?  
The fool does not know, and the sage knows no better.  
There's life. . . then there's death. . . . As here

blossoms a one,

Another there withers beyond a returning. . . .  
Its yellow leaves fall, to be green never more.  
But still the bright sun will come up in the morning,  
At nightfall the stars will come out as before  
To swim in the heavens, and then, gentle sister,  
You too, silver moon, will come out for a stroll,  
You'll glance as you pass into puddles and cisterns,  
And sparkle the oceans—you'll shine as of old  
You shone over Babylon's fabulous gardens,  
And as ages from now you will still be regarding  
What haps to our children. Forever you'll glow!  
I tell you my notions, my heart I unburden,  
And sing you the muses inspired by yourself.  
Oh, what shall I do with my onerous burden?  
Advise me, for I am not just by myself,  
I've children: what am I to do with my offspring?  
To bury them with me? That would be a crime—  
The soul is alive. Its ordeal may be softened  
If someone will read these word-teardrops of mine,  
The tears that were shed in the night, in seclusion,  
The tears that were poured from the heart in profusion.  
I'll not have them buried, for they are alive!  
And as the blue sky overhead has no limit,  
There's also no start and no end to the spirit.  
And where does the soul stay? Those words are but  
guile!!

May it on some heart here on earth leave an imprint—  
Because it is hard unremembered to die.  
Oh girls, to remember you first are obliged!  
For it always loved you, my roses, sincerely,  
And tenderly strove your sad lot to describe.  
So rest ye in peace until daybreak, my children,  
The while I consider who should be your guide.

My sons, my Haidamaki brave!  
The world is free and wide!  
Go forth, my sons, and make your way—  
Perhaps you'll fortune find.  
My sons, my simple-minded brood,  
When you go forth to roam,  
Who will receive my orphans poor  
With warmth into his home?  
So fly, my fledgling falcons, fly  
To far Ukraine, my lads—  
At least, if there you hardship find,  
'Twon't be in foreign lands.  
Good-hearted folks will rally 'round  
And they won't let you die;  
While here. . . . Well, here . . . it's hard, my sons!  
If you're allowed inside  
The house, it's only to be jeered—  
You see, they are so wise,  
So literate and so well-read,  
The sun they even chide:  
"It does not rise the proper way,  
Nor shine the way it should;  
Now, here's the way it should be done. . . ."  
So what is one to do?  
You must pay heed, perhaps indeed,  
The sun's not rising right,  
The way they read it should in books. . . .  
Oh, they are brainy, quite!

About you, then, what will they say?  
I know what fate is yours!  
They will poke fun and laugh their fill,  
Then throw you out of doors.  
“Let them stay there,” they’ll say, “until  
Their father will get wise  
And in our language tell his tale,  
His hetmans old describe.  
The fool, instead, is holding forth  
In language obsolete,  
And a Yarema in bast shoes  
Brings out for us to see.  
The fool! He hasn’t learned a thing  
Though he was soundly caned.  
Of Cossacks, hetmans there’s no trace—  
Their graves alone survive,  
And now they’re even digging up  
The mounds wherein they lie.  
And he wants us to listen to  
What the old minstrels say.  
Your labour’s lost, sir: if you aim  
To make yourself a mint  
Of money, and a lot of fame,  
Then of Matryosha sing,  
And of Parasha, charming witch,  
Parquet, gold braid and spurs.  
Then you’ll make good!! But here he sings,  
‘The wide blue sea’s disturbed’,  
And weeps the while; your rabble, too,  
Behind you come on stage  
In shabby coats. . . .” My thanks to you  
For your advice so sage!  
The coat is warm, but I’m afraid  
It’s not cut to my size,  
And your advice, perhaps, is wise,  
But it is lined with lies.

Excuse me, please! . . . Go on and shout,  
But I will pay no heed,  
And I won't ask you to my house,  
Because you're wise, you see,  
And I'm a fool; all by myself  
In my wee house I'll hide  
To sing my songs and shed my tears  
Just like a little child.  
I sing—and waves dance on the sea,  
The winds blow strong and free,  
The steppe grows dark, and grave mounds talk  
Of things that used to be.  
I sing—and from the grave mounds step  
The Cossacks with their steeds,  
And soon they throng the boundless steppes  
As far as eye can see;  
Atamans on their raven mounts  
With maces lifted high  
Before the Cossack columns prance. . . .  
Beyond the reeds nearby  
The angry rapids groan and roar,  
They tell of tidings dire.  
I listen and my heart is sore.  
Of oldsters I inquire:  
My fathers, tell me why you mourn?  
“No cause is there for cheer!  
The Dnieper's angry with us, son,  
Ukraine is all in tears. . . .”  
And I weep too; then they come forth,  
A glorious parade,  
Atamans, sotniks,<sup>18</sup> men of worth,  
And hetmans, all arrayed  
In gold; into my humble home  
I welcome them, and they  
Get seated and to me unfold  
The story of Ukraine,

How long ago the Sich was built,  
The fortress on the isle,  
How Cossacks in their stout canoes  
Once crossed the rapids wild,  
How sailed upon the open sea  
And how Skutari<sup>19</sup> burned,  
From fires in Poland lit their pipes  
And to Ukraine returned  
Their daring deeds to celebrate,  
To feast and to carouse.  
“Innkeeper, pour! Play, minstrel, play!”  
The Cossacks blithely shout.  
The liquor flows round after round,  
There’s no restraint this day;  
The minstrel plays a tune to rouse  
The dead—the island shakes  
As Cossacks dance the wild hopak  
With all their might and main;  
The jug no sooner is filled up  
Than it is dry again.

“Make merry, coatless gentlemen,  
As free as wind at play!  
Let’s have more music, more to drink,  
Make merry while we may!”  
Both youths and oldsters join the dance,  
Their feet like lightning fly.  
“Ah, that’s the way! Go to it, sons!  
You’ll make good bye-and-bye!”  
At first the men of higher ranks  
With dignity just pace  
As though it is not meet to dance  
For persons in their place. . . .  
Then their feet too begin to prance  
Despite their weighty years.  
I watch the dashing Cossack dance  
And laugh through brimming tears.

I look on with laughter, my eyes overbrimming. . . .  
I'm lonely no longer, I've friends at my side!  
In my modest dwelling the Cossacks make merry,  
The rushes are rustling, the steppe stretches wide;  
In my little cottage the blue sea is sounding,  
A poplar-tree whispers, a grave mound complains,  
A maiden sings softly of love in the springtime—  
I'm lonely no longer, I've plenty of friends!

That's where my gold, my wealth I find,  
That's where my glory lies!  
As for your counsel—you're too kind!  
Thanks for your false advice.  
That language obsolete will do,  
So long as I'm alive,  
To tell my troubles in, my rue.  
So I bid you good-bye!  
I'll go to see my children off,  
They must be on their way.  
Perhaps somewhere they'll come across  
A Cossack old and grey,  
Who'll open up his arms to them,  
Greet them with trembling tears.  
And as for me, I say I am  
A peer above all peers!

---

Thus, seated at the table's end,  
I think: Whom should I ask?  
Who will agree to guide my sons?  
The new day dawns at last;  
The moon retires, the sun is red.  
My Haidamaki wake,  
They say their prayers, then they dress  
And, standing 'round me, wait  
Like orphans who are leaving home  
To face the world alone:

“Give us your blessing, father, for  
Our time has come to go. . . .  
So wish that fortune we may find  
As o’er the earth we roam.”  
But wait. . . . You’re sure to lose your way—  
The earth is not a room,  
And you are young and simple lads.  
Who’ll show you where to go?  
Who’ll guide you? Who will walk ahead?  
My sons, I’m worried so!  
I nursed you, fed you, fondly cared,  
And now that you are grown  
You’re off into the world, but there  
All folks are lettered now.  
Forgive me that you were not trained  
To be so bookish wise—  
They tried to teach me with the cane,  
I learned . . . but otherwise!  
I know the alphabet, of course,  
But not the things they prize.  
What will they think of you, my sons?  
Come, let us find your guide!  
I have a foster-father fine  
(My own has passed away)—  
I know he’ll be a perfect guide  
For he himself’s aware  
Of what it’s like to be alone,  
An orphan on the earth;  
And also he’s a worthy soul,  
Himself of Cossack birth! . . .  
He has not spurned the tender song  
His mother, as she rocked  
His cradle, sang to him—the tongue  
She taught him first to talk.  
He has not spurned the stirring song  
A minstrel blind and grey



Sings by the road in mournful tone  
About our own Ukraine.  
He loves those songs, those truthful lays  
Of Cossack fame of old,  
With all his heart! So let us make  
Our way to his abode.  
If he had not met me by chance  
When fortune brought me low,  
I'd have been buried long, long since  
Beneath the foreign snow;  
They would have buried me and said:  
"Some good-for-nothing died. . . ."  
Oh, it is difficult indeed  
To suffer, nor know why.  
That's past and gone, so let it be! . . .  
Let's go to him, my lads!  
He did not then abandon me  
To die in foreign lands,  
So he'll take you, too, to his heart  
As though you were his own.  
And then, a prayer, and you start—  
Off to Ukraine you go!

Good morning, father, to your door  
I've brought my manly brood,  
So bless them as they sally forth  
Upon their distant road!

St. Petersburg,  
April 7, 1841

## INTRODUCTION

The nobles once ruled Poland's roost,  
A very haughty lot;  
With Muscovites they measured swords,

The Turk and Tatar fought,  
And Germans too . . . . Yes, once 'twas so. . . .  
But all things pass away.  
The high-born braggarts used to strut,  
And drink both night and day,  
And with their kings play ducks and drakes. . . .  
Not with Sobieski Jan,  
Nor yet Batory: those two were  
Not of the common run—  
But with the rest. And they, poor souls,  
In fear and trembling ruled.  
The conclaves, big and little, fumed,  
And Poland's neighbours viewed  
A spectacle—how Polish kings  
The Polish kingdom fled,  
And listened how the noble mob  
The sejms brought to an end.  
*"Nie pozwalam! Nie pozwalam!"*<sup>20</sup>  
The haughty nobles roared,  
While the big magnates stoked up fires  
And tempered well their swords.  
This lasted for a lengthy time  
Until to Warsaw-town  
The lively Poniatowski<sup>21</sup> came  
To occupy the throne  
And undertook to some degree  
The noble breed to squelch. . . .  
He failed! He wanted what was best,  
Or maybe something else.  
Only their veto—that one phrase  
To take from them he sought.  
And then . . . . All Poland burst in flames,  
The gentry ran amok. . . .  
"The king's a villian, scoundrel vile,  
A Moscow tool!" they cry.

At Pac's appeal, Pulawski's call  
The Polish nobles rise.  
A hundred leagues—Confederates—<sup>22</sup>  
All Poland they inflamed,  
Lithuania they overran,  
Moldavia, Ukraine;  
They scattered wide and they forgot  
That freedom was their aim—  
They joined with Jews<sup>23</sup> in compact foul  
To rob and devastate.  
They ran mad riot through the land,  
They churches set ablaze. . . .  
The Haidamaki then began  
To sanctify their blades.

#### THE CHURCHWARDEN

“The grove is silent,  
The wind is quiet,  
The moon is sailing,  
The stars are sparkling,  
Come out—I'm waiting  
For you, my darling;  
Come out and meet me  
Tonight, my sweetling!  
My dear, I'm pleading,  
Come to your lover,  
We'll hold each other,  
For I am leaving  
This night to wander.  
Come out, my darling,  
We'll share our sorrow,  
Dream of tomorrow,  
Cling to each other. . . .  
How sad is parting!”

Yarema sadly sang this song  
While strolling by the grove;  
He waited for Oksana long—  
Until he gave up hope.  
The stars came out; a silver ball,  
The moon shone in the sky;  
The willow gazed into the well  
And listened as nearby  
A nightingale gave all he had  
In heart-entrancing trill,  
As though he knew the Cossack lad  
Was waiting for his girl.  
But poor Yarema's heart was sore,  
He barely dragged his feet  
And did not look or listen more. . . .  
"What use are looks to me,

When only misfortune, no luck have I got?  
The years of my youth flit away all for naught.  
Alone in the world, I've no kinfolk or home—  
A straw in the field that's blown hither and yon.  
The wild winds soon carry away the lone straw:  
And that's how by people I'm buffeted too.  
Why do they thus treat me? Because I'm alone.  
There was but one heart on the earth that was true,  
One person that loved me, now that too is done,  
She too has forsaken me."

Tears filled his eyes.

The poor fellow wept there alone in the grove,  
Then said his farewells.

"Oh my darling, good-bye.

Out on the big highway my lot I'll improve,  
Or else I will perish. . . . And you will not cry,  
You won't know about it, and you will not see  
How ravens are pecking these brown Cossack eyes,  
The eyes which you fondly once kissed, oh my sweet!  
Forget this poor orphan—and seek someone new!

Forget that you promised that you would be mine—  
For I, a poor vagrant, am no match for you,  
A churchwarden's daughter. A better you'll find. . . .  
So take whom you will. . . . And, my darling, don't fret,  
Don't worry about me. . . for such is my fate.  
But if you hear tidings that I've met my death,  
Go off by yourself then and quietly pray.

Just you in all the world, my dear,  
Just you for me will pray!"

He bowed his head and heavy tears  
Came coursing down his face.

He leaned despondent on his staff. . . .

A rustle! . . . And he peered:

Like some woods creature slipping past  
The trees, Oksana neared.

He forgot everything and raced. . . .

"My sweetheart!" both exclaimed.

Hearts overbrimming, they embraced  
Again and yet again.

"Enough, my sweet!"

"A wee bit more. . . .

Some more, my turtle-dove!

Oh, hold me to your heart, my own. . . .

How tired I am, my love!"

"Sit down and rest, my shining star

That dropped down from the sky!"

He spread his cloak upon the ground.

With star-lit eyes she smiled.

"Then you must sit beside me too."

They held each other tight.

"My shining star, my sweetheart true,

What held you up tonight?"

"Tonight I couldn't come on time:

My father's ill, you see—

I had to nurse him all this while. . . ."

"And didn't think of me?"

“How can you speak about me so!”  
And tears came to her eyes.  
“Don’t cry, my dear, I only joked.”  
“A joke!”

Again she smiled.  
She laid her head upon his breast  
And seemed to fall asleep.  
“You see, Oksana, I just teased  
And you began to weep.  
Now don’t you cry, and look at me,  
Whom long you will not see.  
Tomorrow I’ll be far from here,  
Oksana, far away. . . .  
At Chihirin tomorrow night  
I’ll get my blessed blade.  
With it I’ll silver gain, and gold,  
And fame will be my prize;  
I’ll dress you rich from head to toe  
Like bird of paradise,  
And seat you on a tripod stool  
Just like a Hetman’s wife,  
And look at you. . . . My whole life through  
On you I’ll feast my eyes.”  
“Ah, but perhaps you will forget?  
When rich, in Kiev-town  
Yourself a high-born bride you’ll get,  
Oksana you’ll disown! . . .”  
“Is there one lovelier than you?”  
“I do not know. Perhaps. . . .”  
“Don’t anger God, because, in truth,  
All beauties you surpass!  
Not in the sky, beyond the sky,  
Nor yet across the sea  
Can one find beauty such as thine!”  
“Oh hush! You must not say  
Such crazy things!”

“But that’s a fact!”

Thus, far into the night  
Yarema and Oksana talked,  
And only stopped to plight  
Their love with ardent, sweet caress;  
Sometimes they wept with pain  
That they must part, and then embraced  
And pledged their love again.  
How they would live, Yarema told,  
When home again he came,  
How he’d obtain a lot of gold,  
How fortune he would gain,  
How Haidamaki planned to slay  
All Poles in the Ukraine,  
How he’d be master, not a slave,  
If he alive remained. . . .  
Oh girls, he talked till one was bored  
To hear him talk that way!  
“Go on with you! As though we could  
Be bored!”

So you may say,  
But if your dad or mother should  
By chance find that you read  
Such sinful tales, I’m sure they would  
Tell you what’s what, indeed!  
Well then . . . but no, it’s such a tale  
We cannot help but read!  
I know, you’d like me to relate  
How ’neath a willow-tree,  
Beside a pool, a handsome lad  
Tells of his hopes and love,  
How they embrace, how he is sad  
And she, a turtle-dove,  
Smooths out his brow, the while she feels  
As though her heart will break.  
“My dear, you’re everything to me!

You are my love, my fate!  
My all! . . ." The willows, even, bent  
The things they said to hear.  
Now there was talk! But I won't tell  
Those things to you, my dears,  
Especially since night is nigh—  
You'd dream about them yet.  
We'll let the lovers say good-bye  
The same way that they met—  
With quiet-spoken gentle words  
That nobody could hear,  
And none could see the stricken girl's  
And sad lad's parting tears.  
Leave them alone. . . . Perhaps they'll meet  
Again while they're alive  
Upon this earth. . . . Well, we shall see. . . .

But meanwhile, what's the light  
That makes all windows bright  
In the churchwarden's home?  
Let's take a look inside. . . .  
Oh would we had not known!

I wish we'd not seen it, did not have to tell!  
Because the heart's burning for humans with shame.  
Those are the Confederates—look at them well—  
Who banded together, with freedom their aim.  
Look how they are serving in fair freedom's cause. . . .  
May they all be damned, and their mothers be cursed  
Because they gave birth to such monsters on earth!  
Look what they are at in the churchwarden's house,  
The hounds from hell.

The roaring fire in the hearth  
The entire house lit up.  
Backed in the corner, Leiba shrank  
And cowered like a pup.  
The Poles roared: "Tell us where's the gold,



Or die!"

The warden never told.  
They tied his hands tight with a rope,  
Then threw him to the floor—  
But not a word.

"Bring red-hot coals!  
And bring some boiling tar!  
Drip tar on him! So! Are you cold?  
The coals now let him have!  
You rascal, will you tell or no?  
Oh, he's a stubborn knave!"  
They poured some coals into his boots. . . .  
"Drive nails into his head!"  
He stood all torture that he could,  
The warden then fell dead  
Without the holy sacrament!  
"Oksana! . . ." and he died.  
The frenzy of the Poles then ebbed.  
"What now? Let us decide  
What we're to do now, gentlemen,  
That he's out of our reach!  
Let's burn the church down!"

"People, help!"

Like some unearthly screech  
The sudden cry fell on their ears.  
The Poles were petrified.  
Oksana at the door appeared.  
"They've murdered him!" she cried  
And senseless fell. The leader waved  
His hand, and they slunk out  
Like downcast hounds. And then

the maid.

He lifted, left the house. . . .  
Yarema! But he nothing knows,  
And tramping, sings a song  
Of Nalivaiko's fight with Poles.

The gentry soon were gone,  
And took Oksana, still aswoon.  
The dogs barked some, but soon they too  
In silence their night vigil kept.  
The moon turned pale; the people slept,  
The warden too. . . . He won't rise soon:  
He's gone to his eternal rest.  
The fire died down, then flickered out. . . .  
The warden's body seemed to move,  
Then dismal sadness reigned throughout.

### THE THIRD COCK'S CROW

The frenzied gentry one more day  
Spread terror through Ukraine;  
Just one more day the country lay  
In torture and in pain.  
And then the Day of Maccabees,  
A saint-day in Ukraine,  
    Was past. . . . The Pole and Jew at feasts  
    With blood their liquor drained,  
    Complained the plunder was too poor,  
    Schismatics<sup>24</sup> they condemned.  
    The Haidamaki waited for  
    Their foes to go to bed.  
    At last they went—nor dreamed that ere  
    The dawn they would be dead.  
    The Poles soon slept, but Jews  
    Remained awake, without a light  
    To count their profits in the night,  
    Out of the public view.  
    Their heads, then, pillowed on their gold  
    They too dropped off to sleep.  
And so they slept. . . . Forever may they sleep!  
And then the moon came out to make a tour—

The sky and stars to see, the earth and seas,  
To watch the people and observe their deeds,  
And tell it all to God when night is o'er.  
The silver moon shines over all Ukraine,  
But does it see my hapless orphan maid,  
Oksana, snatched from her Vilshana home?  
Where does she languish, where in anguish weep?  
And does Yarema know? Well, we shall see,  
We'll find out later, but I now propose  
Another song to sing and tune to play;  
Malevolence will dance—not maidens gay.  
I sing the Cossack country's sorry fate;  
Now listen closely, later to relate  
It to your children, they to theirs, so they  
Should know how Cossacks made the gentry  
pay  
For their misrule, when Polish lords held sway.

A long, long time the clamour dread  
Resounded through Ukraine,  
A long, long time the blood ran red  
In streams across the plains.  
It ran in rivers, then it dried.  
The steppes are green again;  
In Cossack graves our grand-dads lie,  
Their grave mounds dot the plain.  
What of it that the mounds are high?  
Nobody knows they're there,  
Or whose the bones that 'neath them lie,  
Nobody sheds a tear.  
As it blows through, the wind alone  
A gentle greeting says,  
The dew alone at break of dawn  
With tender teardrops laves.  
The sun then turns its rays on them,  
It dries and makes them warm;



Will not give him her hand?  
Oh no, she pledged she'd be his bride  
Though he is dressed in rags.  
Why, then, with such heart-rending sighs  
His feet he barely drags?  
The Cossack feels that all's not well,  
That some ill-fortune waits.  
The heart can feel but cannot tell  
What's held in store by fate.  
The country 'round seemed not asleep  
But wholly desolate,  
As though no human life remained.  
Not even dogs or birds:  
Just from the woods, a mournful strain—  
The howl of wolves—is heard.  
No matter! For Yarema walks  
Not to Oksana's gate,  
Not to Vilshana for a talk—  
But for a bloody date  
In the Cherkassy. There the cock  
Will crow three times this night. . . .  
And then . . . and then. . . . Yarema walks  
And to the stream confides:

“Oh Dnieper, my Dnieper, you're wide and you're deep!  
Much red Cossack blood to the sea you have borne;  
More yet will you carry! You coloured the sea  
With crimson, and yet the blue sea thirsts for more;  
This night, my old friend, you'll be sated with blood.  
A revel from hell will be held through Ukraine;  
The blood of the gentry will flow like a flood;  
The Cossacks of old will arise once again;  
The hetmans will rise with their cloaks all in gold;  
Good fortune will smile to the Cossack refrain:  
'No Jews and No Poles!' And—oh God, to behold!—  
The mace of the hetman will flash once again!”

So, walking in his tattered coat, Yarema dreamed,  
And fondly in his hand caressed his blessed blade.  
The Dnieper seemed to hear him, for the mighty stream  
The waves upon its back like lofty mountains raised;  
Its teeth the wind in anger gnashed,  
The trees bent to the ground;  
The thunder rumbled, lightning flashed,  
And rents showed in the cloud.  
Yarema did not see a thing,  
He just kept marching on;  
One thought would come and smile at him,  
Another come and frown:  
“Oksana’s there, and though in rags  
I had a happy time;  
While here . . . who knows what yet will hap?  
Here, maybe, I will die.”  
And then the crowing of a cock  
Was heard from the ravine.  
“Ah, it’s Cherkassy! . . . Oh dear God!  
Let me alive remain!”

### THE RED BANQUET

Throughout Ukraine the clang of bells  
Proclaims the day of doom;  
The Haidamaki fiercely yell:  
“The gentry’s end has come!  
The gentry’s finished! We shall set  
A fire to sear the sky!”  
The very clouds are painted red—  
The province is on fire.  
Medvedivka’s the first to burn  
And heat the clouds above.  
Smila is next, the country ’round  
Well-nigh aflood with blood.

Korsun and Kaniv are ablaze,  
Cherkassy, Chihirin;  
Along the Highway spread the flames  
As far as the Volyn,  
And blood flows freely. Gonta's made  
Polissya his domain,  
While near Smila bold Zaliznyak  
Tests his Damascus blade—  
In old Cherkassy, where his dirk  
That has been sanctified  
Yarema, too, tries out. "Good work!  
The mad dogs all must die!  
Good work, my lads!" so Zaliznyak  
Shouts in the market-place  
Which now's a hell; and through that hell  
The Haidamaki race.  
Yarema—a blood-curdling sight—  
In battle-frenzy fells  
Three-four at once. "Good work, my boy!  
Their souls be damned to hell!  
Kill, kill! You'll either win high rank,  
Or go to paradise!  
Now, children, ferret out the rats!"  
The rebels in a trice  
Spread out to cellars, attics, nooks  
To search for hiding foes;  
They killed them all, all goods they took.  
"Now you may stop, my boys!  
You've tired yourselves, now rest a bit."  
The market squares and lanes,  
With corpses strewn, are flowing red.  
"More vengeance yet we claim!  
Go over them a second time  
To make sure, doubly sure,  
That the vile dogs will never rise,  
And never plague us more!"

The Haidamaki after that  
 Assemble in the square.  
 Yarema on the outskirts stands.  
 "Come closer, don't be scared,"  
 Shouts Zaliznyak. "I'm not afraid!"  
 With cap in hand he comes  
 Up to the chief. "Where from, my lad?"  
 "Vilshana is my home."  
 "Vilshana? Where the villains slew  
 The warden of the church?"  
 "What's that? They slew?"  
 "His daughter, too,  
 According to reports,  
 They carried off. You knew them well?"  
 "They took some girl away?"  
 "The warden's daughter, so they tell."  
 "Oksana!" Just the name  
 Yarema whispered and he fell  
 Unconscious where he stood.  
 "Oho! So that's what . . . . The poor lad!  
 Mikola, bring him to!"  
 Mikola brought him to. He cried:  
 "A hundred hands I need,  
 A blade in each, to extirpate  
 The Polish gentry breed!  
 Revenge, such terrible revenge  
 'Twill put hell in the shade!"  
 "Well said, my lad, to keep that pledge  
 There'll be no lack of blades.  
 Come with us to Lisyanka now,  
 We'll temper there our steel!"  
 "Oh father, quickly let us go!  
 I'll follow where you lead,  
 I'll follow to the ends of earth  
 I'd go to hell below  
 To tear her from the devils, sir!



To the earth's end I'd go. . . .  
 But I'll not find her anywhere,  
 I'll never see her more!"  
 "Perhaps you will. Don't give up hope.  
 Now tell us what's your name?"  
 "Yarema."  
     "And your surname, boy?"  
 "I have none!"  
     "No surname?  
 Were you a bastard? In the lists,  
 Mikola, put him down  
 As . . . let us find a name that fits—  
 How does Hasnothing sound?  
 Let's name him that!"  
     "No, that's not it!"  
 "Is Hardluck better, friend?"  
 "No, that won't do."  
     "Here, wait a bit,  
 Halaida,<sup>28</sup> that's the name!"  
 They wrote it down.  
     "Halaida, lad,  
 Now we'll go out to play  
 You'll find good fortune . . . maybe, bad. . . .  
 Well, boys, let's on our way!"  
 From extra horses in the camp  
 They gave one to the lad.  
 He laughed as on his horse he leapt,  
 And then again was sad.  
 Outside the city gates they rode;  
 Cherkassy was in flames. . . .  
 "All here, my sons?"  
     "Yes, every one!"  
 "Let's go then!"  
     Like a chain  
 Along the Dnieper's wooded banks  
 The Cossack column winds.

Behind them on a little nag  
The minstrel Volokh rides,  
And as from side to side he sways,  
He sings a new-born lay:  
"Oh, Zaliznyak his Cossacks brave  
Leads for an outing gay!"

Cherkassy's left behind, the flames  
Still leaping to the cloud.  
No one looks back. Nobody cares!  
They only laugh aloud  
And curse the gentry vile. Some talk,  
Some listen to the song  
The minstrel sings. While Zaliznyak  
Rides at the head alone,  
With glowing pipe, his ears alert  
To any night surprise;  
Yarema, too, without a word  
Behind his leader rides.  
The green groves and the darker woods,  
The Dnieper and the hills,  
The sky, the stars, the people, goods,  
And his o'erwhelming ills—  
All disappeared, all are no more!  
He nothing knows or sees—  
Just like a corpse. His heart is sore  
And yet he does not weep.  
He does not weep: the vicious snake  
That's coiled within his breast  
Drinks up his tears, his heart that aches  
It tears to tiny shreds.  
Oh, soothing tears! Oh, healing tears!  
You wash away all woes;  
Wash mine away. . . . I cannot bear  
This ache that's in my soul!  
Not all the water in the sea

Or in the Dnieper wide  
Can calm my heart and drown my grief  
Is nought but suicide  
Then left for me? Oksana, dear!  
Oksana, oh my own!  
Where have they taken you? I fear. . . .  
Perhaps the beasts have thrown  
Her in a dungeon where in chains  
She lies awaiting death,  
The gentry cursing and her fate  
With her last, dying breath.  
Perhaps Yarema she recalls,  
Vilshana, and her home,  
Perhaps in thought to him she calls:  
“Yarema, darling, come,  
Take your Oksana in your arms!  
Thus we’ll together sleep  
Forever. Let them work their harm—  
We’ll be beyond their reach we’ll be! . . .”  
The wind blows from beyond Liman  
And bends the poplar low—  
A maiden also may be bent  
Beneath misfortune’s blows.  
She’ll grieve awhile, but time will pass  
And all may be forgot. . . .  
Maybe. . . a lady, richly dressed,  
She with some Pole. . . . O God!  
The worst of tortures ever planned  
In hell for sinful souls  
I’ll suffer, but I could not stand  
That final fiendish blow:  
“My heart would break though it were stone  
If ever that came true!  
Oksana, darling! Oh, my own!  
Where have they taken you?  
Where are you held, where are you hid?”

Then tears began to flow  
In torrents like a summer rain  
Or like a springtime flood.  
Then came the dawn. Zaliznyak reined  
His horse beside a wood:  
"Here's where we turn off from the road  
And turn our horses free!"  
The Cossacks rode into the grove  
And soon were hid by trees.

### HUPALIVSHCHINA

The rising sun found all Ukraine  
In ashes or in flames,  
Just here and there behind locked doors  
The gentry trembling waits.  
Each village has its gallows-trees  
With corpses thickly hung—  
Just of the bigwigs, smaller fry  
Are piled in heaps like dung.  
At cross-roads and along the streets  
The dogs and ravens feed  
On human flesh and pecked-out eyes;  
And no one pays them heed.  
There's no one left, only the dogs  
And groups of children roam—  
The women, too, took oven-prongs,  
And Haidamaki joined.

Such evil 'twas that then engulfed  
The whole of the Ukraine!  
'Twas worse than hell . . . . And yet, what for?  
For what were people slain?  
They're so alike, one father's sons—  
They should as brothers be.

But no, they could or else would not,  
They had to disagree!  
Blood had to flow, fraternal blood,  
For one's with envy filled  
Because his brother's bin is full,  
His fields give handsome yield!  
"Let's kill our brother! Burn his home!"  
No sooner said than done.  
And all was over! But not quite,  
For there were orphan sons.  
They grew in tears—but they grew up;  
Their toil-worn hands they freed  
And turned to vengeance—blood for blood  
And hurt for hurt their creed!  
The heart is sore when you reflect  
That sons of Slavs like beasts  
Got drunk with blood. Who was to blame?  
The Jesuits, the priests!

The Haidamaki through ravines  
And forests made their way,  
Halaida riding in their midst,  
His heart in constant pain.  
Voronivka, Verbivka, too,  
Already are behind,  
And here's Vilshana. "What to do?  
Shall I stop and inquire  
About Oksana? Better not,  
So no one knows my woe."  
The Haidamaki meanwhile trot  
Along the village road  
Without a halt. Halaida hailed  
One of the little lads:  
"Is't true the warden here was slain?"  
"Why no, my father says  
The Polish lords burned him to death—

The ones that lie out there.  
 Oksana, too, was carried off,  
 My father says, somewhere.  
 The funeral. . .” He did not wait,  
 But gave his horse the spur.  
 “Why did I not die yesterday  
 Before I ever heard!  
 If I should die today, I know  
 I’d rise up from the grave  
 To take revenge upon the Poles.  
 Oksana! Where did they  
 Take you, my own?”

He bowed his head

And let his horse walk free.  
 Oh, it is hard for a poor lad  
 To hold in check his grief.  
 He catches up. The place they pass  
 Where inn and stables stood—  
 There’s nothing now but smoking ash,  
 And Leiba is gone, too.  
 Yarema smiled—a mirthless grin  
 That fearful was to view.  
 Two days ago here he had been  
 A slavey to the Jew,  
 And now. . . His heart began to pine  
 For those bad days of old.  
 The rebel band passed the ravine  
 And turned off from the road.  
 They came upon a stripling lad—  
 A patched coat on his back,  
 His shoes were bast, he also packed  
 Upon his back a sack  
 “Hey, wait a minute, beggar boy!”  
 “I am no beggar, sir,  
 The Haidamaki I have joined!”  
 “A sight you are, for sure!”

"From where, young scarecrow, do you hail?"

"From Kerelivka way."

"Do you know Budishch and the lake?"

"Of course I know the place—

Go down that gully, it will lead

You straight to Budishch lake."

"Are any gentry to be seen?"

"There's not a one today,

Though yesterday were quite a few.

We couldn't bless our wreaths—

The Poles would not allow us to.

That's why we killed the beasts!

My dad and I used blessed blades,

While mother's sick in bed,

Or else she too. . . ."

"Fine, that's the way!

Here's something for you, friend,

A ducat, which you must not lose."

He took the golden coin,

Inspected it, then said, "Thank you!"

"Well, let's get going, boys!

But don't make any noise, d'ye hear?

Halaida, follow me!

Beside this lake in the ravine

There is a clump of trees

In which a Polish treasure's found.

When we come to the wood

We will surround it without sound

In case some Poles still should

Be left on guard."

When they arrived,

They stood about the wood

And looked—but saw no sign of life. . . .

"Oho, the devil's brood

Is here all right! What fears I see

Up there among the leaves!

They must be ripe! Just shake the trees!"  
Like rotten pears, indeed,  
The Poles came tumbling to the ground  
To meet the penal blade.  
The Cossacks scoured till all were found  
And not one live remained,  
Then found where treasure chests were hid  
And took away the gold,  
Ransacked the pockets of the dead,  
And on their mission rode

On to Lisyanka.

### GONTA IN UMAN

**As to Uman they made their way,  
The Heldamaki bragged:  
Their silks and satins we will take  
To make ourselves foot-rags!**

The days go by, the summer wanes,  
And the Ukraine is still ablaze;  
In hamlets hungry children wail—  
Their parents gone. The yellow leaves  
Of autumn rustle in the trees;  
The clouds roll by; the sun is glazed;  
No sound is heard of human speech;  
In villages the beasts that feed  
On human corpses howl. The Poles  
Were left unburied, food for wolves,  
Until the heavy winter snows  
Concealed their bones. . . .

The raging snow-storms did not stop  
The vengeance worse than hell:  
The Poles froze, while beside the fires  
The Cossacks warmed themselves.  
Spring came and woke the sleepy earth  
From its deep winter sleep:



With primroses it was adorned  
And periwinkles sweet;  
The larks in fields and nightingales  
In groves each morning sing  
Their sweetest songs in joyful praise  
Of earth adorned by spring. . . .  
A heaven truly! And for whom?  
For people. Yes, but they?  
They do not even want to look,  
Or that it's poor, they say.  
They want it tinted up with blood  
And brightened with a blaze;  
The sun and blooms aren't bright enough,  
And clouds cast too much shade.  
What they mean is: too little hell!  
Oh people! Will you e'er  
Be satisfied with what you have?  
Oh, people, you are queer!

To blood and human savagery  
Spring did not bring a halt.  
It's terrible. . . . Yet 'twas the same  
In ancient Troy, recall,  
And will be in the future, too.  
The Haidamaki rode—  
And where they went the earth was  
  scorched  
And washed with human blood.  
Maxim acquired a worthy son,  
Renowned throughout Ukraine;  
Yarema, though adopted, is  
His true son just the same.  
While Zaliznyak is well content  
To smite the Poles and slay,  
Yarema rages—he would spend  
In carnage night and day.

He shows no mercy, does not spare  
Or miss a single Pole—  
For the churchwarden's death he makes  
Them pay a hundredfold,  
And for Oksana. . . . At the thought  
Of her his heart grows faint.  
"Go to it, son!" cries Zaliznyak,  
"We'll dance until our fate  
Wills otherwise!"

And so they did:  
Along the entire way  
From Kiev to Uman the dead  
In heaping piles were laid.

The Haidamaki on Uman  
Like heavy clouds converge  
At midnight. Ere the night is done  
The whole town is submerged.  
The Haidamaki take the town  
With shouts: "The Poles shall pay!"  
Dragoons are downed, their bodies roll  
Around the market-place;  
The ill, the cripples, children too,  
All die, no one is spared.  
Wild cries and screams. 'Mid streams of blood  
Stands Gonta on the square  
With Zaliznyak together, they  
Urge on the rebel band:  
"Good work, stout lads! There, that's the way  
To punish them, the damned!"  
And then the rebels brought to him  
A Jesuit, a monk,  
With two young boys. "Look, Gonta, look!  
These youngsters are your sons!  
They're Catholics: since you kill all,  
Can you leave them alone?"

Why are you waiting? Kill them now,  
 Before your sons are grown,  
 For if you don't, when they grow up  
 They'll find you and they'll kill. . . ."  
 "Cut the cur's throat! As for the pups,  
 I'll finish them myself.  
 Let the assembly be convened.  
 Confess—you're Catholics!"  
 "We're Catholics. . . . Our mother made. . . ."  
 "Be silent! Close your lips!  
 Oh God! I know!" The Cossacks stood  
 Assembled in the square.  
 "My sons are Catholics. . . . I vowed  
 No Catholic to spare.  
 Esteemed assembly! . . . That there should  
 Be no doubt anywhere,  
 No talk that I don't keep my word,  
 Or that I spare my own. . . .  
 My sons, my sons! Why are you small?  
 My sons, why aren't you grown?  
 Why aren't you with us killing Poles?"  
 "We will, we'll kill them, dad!"  
 "You never will! You never will!  
 Your mother's soul be damned,  
 That thrice-accursed Catholic,  
 The bitch that gave you birth!  
 She should have drowned you ere you saw  
 The light of day on earth!  
 As Catholics you'd not have died—  
 The sin would smaller be;  
 Such woe, my sons, today is mine  
 As cannot be conceived!  
 My children, kiss me, for not I  
 Am killing you today—  
 It is my oath!"

He flashed his knife

And the two lads were slain.<sup>29</sup>  
They fell to earth, still bubbling words:  
"O dad! We are not Poles!  
We . . . we . . ." And then they spoke no more,  
Their bodies growing cold.  
"Perhaps they should be buried, what?"  
"No need! They're Catholic.  
My sons! Why did you not grow up?  
My sons, why weren't you big?  
Why did you not war 'gainst the foes  
With me as Cossacks brave?  
Your mother, Catholic accursed,  
Oh why did you not slay? . . .  
Let's go, my brother!"

With Maxim

Across the square he treads;  
They cry together: "Punish them  
Till every Pole is dead!"  
And awesome was their punishment. . . .  
Uman went up in flames.  
No house, no church, but had been searched,  
And not a Pole remained—  
They all were dead. Such carnage cruel  
As at Uman that day  
Had ne'er been seen. St. Basil's school,  
Where Gonta's sons had stayed,  
Was razed down to the very ground  
By Gonta, raging wild.  
"Twas you that ruined my little sons!"  
With every blow he cried,  
"You swallowed them when they were small,  
You taught them evil lore  
And not the good! . . . Tear down the walls!"  
The Haidamaki tore  
The walls to pieces. 'Gainst the stones  
They bashed the heads of priests,

And the young pupils still alive  
They threw in cisterns deep.  
Until late at night they slaughtered the Poles;  
Not one was let live. Yet Gonta still raved:  
"Oh monsters, come out! Crawl out from your holes!  
My sons you've destroyed—oh, cruel's my fate!  
I've nobody now! For nothing to wait!  
My sons, whom I loved, so handsome and good,  
You're gone from me now. I'm thirsty for blood!  
I want in the blood of the gentry to wade,  
To drink it, and watch how it flows and turns  
black. . . .

Oh winds, as ye blow, why waft ye not back  
Some Poles for our blades? . . . Oh cruel's my fate!  
And yet I can't weep! Ye stars in the sky,  
Please leave me alone and hide behind clouds.  
I murdered my sons! . . . My heart is wrung dry!  
Where will I find peace? . . ." So Gonta cried loud;  
And then in the square big tables were laid  
Amid the debris, 'mid corpses and blood,  
And loaded with looted liqueurs and fine food—  
The rebels sat down. It was their last raid,  
Their last supper too!

"Make merry, my brood!  
We'll drink while we may, and fight while we may!"  
Old Zaliznyak cried. "We'll frolic, my lads!  
Fast music, minstrel! Let earth really shake  
Tonight in Uman when my Cossacks dance!"  
And the minstrel played:

"My father's an innkeeper,  
Shoemaker too;  
My mother is a spinner,  
Matchmaker too;  
My brothers are brave fellows  
They roam the woods,

A cow found in the forest,  
    Rich necklace too.  
And I'm Khristya, a maiden  
    With beads so fine,  
My needlework is made in  
    A leaf design.  
With red boots my feet adorning,  
    I go milking in the morning—  
I water the cow, I do,  
    And milk her too,  
With the lads I stop to spoon,  
    I stop to spoon."

“Heigh-ho! Supper's o'er,  
Hey, children, lock the door,  
Old woman, don't you fret,  
Sidle up to me, my pet!”

The Cossacks dance. But one is gone. . . .  
Why does not Gonta dance?  
Why joins he not in merry song,  
Nor drinks he with the lads?  
He is not there; his heart won't let  
Him sing and dance and joke.  
But who is he who silent flits  
In black loose-hanging cloak  
About the square? See, there he stops  
And 'mong the dead he digs  
As though he's searching. Then he stoops,  
Two little bodies picks  
And lifts them gently on his back  
And carries them away  
Behind the blazing church, where black  
He fades into the shades  
Of summer night. Who can that be?

It's Gonta, and his load—  
His sons—he bears some place where he  
Can cover them with sod,  
So that the youthful Cossack flesh  
Should not be food for dogs.  
Down darker lanes, where fires are less,  
And smoke serves as a fog  
To screen him from all prying eyes,  
The Cossack bends his steps,  
So none should see how Gonta cries  
Or where his children rest.  
Out in a field, far from the road,  
He lays them; takes his knife  
And with the bless'd blade digs a hole.  
Uman supplies the light  
So he can see the work he does  
And the two lads who lie  
As though asleep still in their clothes. . . .  
Why do they fear inspire?  
Why is it Gonta seems to hide  
As though he were a thief?  
Why does he shake? From time to time  
The wind bears to the chief  
The sounds of Cossack revelry;  
He does not heed the noise—  
A fine deep house amid the fields  
He's building for his boys.  
It's done at last. He lays his sons  
Into their home, the hole,  
His ears still ringing with the sound:  
"Oh dad, we are not Poles!"  
Then Gonta from his pocket takes  
A crimson silken cloth,  
The dead eyes kisses, then he makes  
The sign of sacred cross,  
And covers the young Cossack heads.

Then lifts the cloth again,  
To gaze once more upon his dead. . . .  
The tears then gush like rain:  
“My children! Open up your eyes,  
Look at Ukraine, my boys:  
For her, my sons, you gave your lives  
And I, too, am destroyed.  
Who will there be to bury me?  
In some far foreign field  
Who will there be to weep o’er me?  
My fate is black indeed!  
The most unfortunate of men,  
I’m left alone, in pain!  
Why was I granted children, then?  
Or why was I not slain?  
They would have laid me in the earth—  
I bury them instead.”  
Again he kissed them, made the cross,  
The cloth drew o’er their heads,  
And earth he then began to pile:  
“Rest in your hole, my sons,  
Your mother, bitch, did not provide  
Fine beds to lie upon.  
Without corn-flower wreaths and rue,  
My sons, you’ll have to sleep.  
Please pray to God, I beg of you,  
That he should punish me  
Yet on this earth for what I did,  
For this most awful crime.  
Forgive me, sons! You I forgive  
That Catholics you died.”  
He levelled off the earth and laid  
Green sod upon the grave,  
So none could tell where Gonta made  
His sons’ last resting place.  
“Sleep well, my lads, and wait for me,



I will not tarry long,  
My knife cut short your span of life,  
The same will be my lot  
They'll kill me, too. . . . May it be soon!  
But who will bury me?  
The Haidamaki! Just once more  
I'll join them on a spree! . . .”

So Gonta went; his shoulders sagged,  
He tripped as though were blind.  
The burning city lit his path;  
He raised his eyes and smiled—  
A smile most awful to behold.  
He looked back on the field,  
And wiped his eyes. . . . And then by smoke  
The Cossack was concealed.

#### EPILOGUE

Much time has gone by, since a child, a poor orphan,  
In sacking and coatless, without any bread,  
I roamed that Ukraine where Zaliznyak and Gonta  
With sanctified sabres had wreaked vengeance dread.  
Much time has gone by since, along those same highways  
Where rode Haidamaki, exhausted and sore  
I tramped through the country, its high roads and by-  
ways,  
And weeping, sought people to teach me good lore.  
As now I recall them, my youthful misfortunes,  
I grieve that they're past! I would trade present  
fortune  
If only those days could be brought back again.  
Those evils, the steppes that seem stretching forever,  
My father and grandfather old I remember. . . .  
My father is gone, but my grand-dad remains.

On Sundays, on closing the book about martyrs  
And drinking a glass with the neighbours, my father  
Would beg of my grand-dad to tell us the story  
Of the Haidamaki revolt long ago,  
How Gonta, Zaliznyak once punishment gory  
Inflicted on Poles. And the ancient eyes glowed  
Like stars in the night as the old man related  
How gentry folk perished and how Smila burned. . . .  
The neighbours from horror and pity near fainted.  
And I, a wee fellow, the churchwarden mourned,  
Yet, nobody noticed, all gripped by the horror,  
The child that was weeping alone in the corner.  
I thank you, my grand-dad, 'twas you that preserved  
The story I've told of the old Cossack glory:  
And by the grandchildren it now will be heard.

I beg your pardon, readers dear,  
That artlessly I spin  
This yarn of bygone Cossack feats,  
Without the bookish skill.  
I'm just repeating grand-dad's tale—  
Good health to him!—and he  
Ne'er dreaméd that there would come a day  
When learned folk would read  
His narrative. Now don't be hurt,  
Old grand-dad—let them rant.  
And in the meantime I'll return  
To my small rebel band,  
And when I've led them to the end,  
I'll rest—and then again,  
At least in dreams, my eyes shall look  
Upon that fair Ukraine  
Where once the Haidamaki roved  
And awful vengeance wreaked,  
Whose roads I measured years ago  
With blistered naked feet.

The Haidamaki had a spree,  
Made merry unrestrained:  
With gentry's blood almost a year  
They watered the Ukraine,  
Then were no more—their dented blades  
Were put away to rust  
And Gonta's gone: no cross or grave  
To mark his place of rest.  
O'er all the steppe the wild winds swept  
The Cossack dust away,  
No one was left to mourn his death  
Or for his soul to pray.  
A foster-brother yet remained  
Alive upon the earth;  
But when he learned the fiendish fate  
The devils had reserved  
For Gonta, how his brother died—  
For the first time in life  
Old Zaliznyak began to cry.  
He did not wipe his eyes,  
But pined away, and soon was dead;  
He died in foreign parts,  
In foreign earth his bones were laid:  
So hapless was his lot!  
Their iron chief with deepest grief  
The Haidamaki bore  
To bury in a foreign field;  
They built a mound, and mourned  
Awhile, then brushed their tears away  
And went back whence they came.

Yarema, leaning on his staff,  
Long stood beside the grave.  
"Rest, father, in this foreign place,  
For in our native land  
No longer is there any space,

Nor freedom to be had. . . .  
Sleep soundly, honest Cossack soul!  
You won't forgotten be."

Across the steppe Yarema went,  
His tears still flowing free,  
And he kept always looking back,  
Till he was lost to sight.  
Then just the grave mound in the steppe  
Was dark against the sky.

By Haidamaki with good seed  
Ukraine had then been sown,  
The harvest, though, they did not reap.  
So what is to be done?  
The seeds of justice did not sprout;  
Instead, injustice grew. . . .  
The Haidamaki all dispersed,  
Each chose what he would do:  
Some just went home, but others took  
To forests with their blades  
To prey on merchants. This repute  
To our own days remains.<sup>30</sup>  
The ancient Cossack fortress, Sich,  
Then later was laid waste:  
Some Cossacks 'cross the Danube fled,  
Some to Kuban escaped;  
That's all that's left—except the plaint  
The Dnieper rapids howl:  
"They finished off our sons, and aim  
To pulverise us now!"  
But people, passing by, don't heed  
The rapids' angry roar;  
And the Ukraine is fast asleep,  
Asleep for evermore.

Since those grim years the grain grows green  
And lush across Ukraine;  
No screams are heard, no carnage seen;  
The winds blow 'cross the plains,  
They bend the willows in the wood  
And grasses on the lea.  
Now silence reigns. That is what God  
Has willed. So let it be.

But sometime, when the day is done,  
And all is warm with spring,  
Old Haidamaki walk along  
The Dnieper's banks and sing:

"Our good Halaida's house has floors.  
Let the sea surge! Let the sea swell!  
Halaida, all will yet be well!"

*Translated  
by John Weir*



**A Widow's Cottage. 1843.**  
*Pencil drawing*



**Council of Village Elders. 1843-1844.**

## FOREWORD

After the word comes the foreword; although it could have been done without. But, we see, here's what: everything that I have seen in print—only seen, since I've not read very much—has a foreword, and I haven't got one; if I weren't printing my *Haidamaki*, there would be no need of a foreword either. But once I'm sending them out into the world, they should have something to go with, so people shouldn't jeer at the ragamuffins and say: "See what he's like! Can it be that our grandfathers and fathers were more foolish than he, since they didn't put out even a grammar textbook without a foreword?" Yes, indeed, it's so, I beg your pardon, a foreword is needed. But how should it be composed?—you know, that it shouldn't contain falsehoods, nor should it contain the truth, but be the way all forewords are composed. Even though you kill me, I don't know how to do it; I'm ashamed to give praise, and I don't want to disparage. *But let us at last begin the beginning of this book*: it is a pleasure to look on a blind kobzar as he sits there, sightless, with a boy, beside a hedge, and it is a pleasure to listen to him, as he sings a ballad about what took place long ago, how the Poles and Cossacks fought—it is a pleasure. . . and yet you'll say: "Thank God that it's past", the more so when you recall that we are one mother's sons, that we are all Slavs. The heart is sore, but it must be told: let the sons and grandsons see that their parents erred, let them fraternise again with their enemies. May the Slavic land, covered with rye and with wheat as though with gold, remain forever without borders from sea unto sea. I am relating what happened in the Ukraine in 1768 the way I heard it from old people; I haven't read anything about it that has been printed and criticised because, it seems, there is nothing of the kind to read. Halaida is semi-invented, but the death of the Vilshana churchwarden



is true, because there are still people alive who knew him. Perhaps Gonta and Zaliznyak, the atamans of that bloody affair, are depicted by me not as they were—I do not guarantee that. My grandfather, may he stay hale, whenever he begins to relate something which he hadn't seen himself, but heard from others, starts by saying: "If the old folks are lying, I'll lie along with them."

*T. Shevchenko*

### HAMALIYA<sup>31</sup>

“Oh, the winds are mute, the tides do not carry  
    Good tidings to us from Ukraine!  
Do the Cossacks meet, the Turk plan to harry?  
    For news we are waiting in vain.  
Blow, ye north wind, blow across the blue water  
    From Luh,<sup>32</sup> from the fields of Ukraine,  
Dry our bitter tears and drown our chains’ clatter,  
    And ease the poor prisoners’ pain.  
Roll, oh roll, ye sea, as hither you’re bearing  
    The bold Cossacks’ boats from Ukraine,  
When they sail to save their unhappy brethren  
    Who languish in Turkey in chains.  
Even, O God, if they come not to free us,  
    Still send them across from Ukraine;  
Word of their exploits will reach us in prison  
    And light our last days with their fame.”

---

’Twas thus in Skutari that Cossacks were singing,  
Unfortunate captives, their tears running free,  
The tears of the Cossacks, their woe overbrimming.  
The Bosphorus shook, for it never before  
Had heard Cossacks weeping; the grey bull in anguish  
The hide on his back ’gan to shake with a roar  
And sent the blue waves down his ribs with the message  
Of Cossack misfortune full-speed to the sea.  
The sea heard the tidings which Bosphorus bellowed  
And passed the sore plaint on to Liman, which trembled  
And told it in ripples to Dnieper’s deep stream.  
    With foam upon his hoary whiskers,  
    Our might grand-dad thunder-roared:  
    “Hey, brother Luh, Khortitsya sister!  
    D’ye hear? What are you waiting for!”  
    “We hear, we hear!” they promptly answered.

The Dnieper soon with boats was thronged,  
And Cossack voices rose in song:

---

“Ho, the Turk’s across the water  
Where the surf is pounding.  
Hey, hey! Pound, ye waves,  
Wear the rocks all away!  
Visitors are coming.

\*

“Ho, the Turk has roomy pockets  
Full of gold and silver.  
Not for pelf do we sail,  
But the foe to assail,  
Brethren to deliver.

\*

“Ho, the Turkish janissaries,  
Pasha, too, are snoring.  
Ha, ho! Tremble, foe!  
We’ll not temper the blow!  
Liberty and glory!”

---

So, singing free, they set asea;  
Oh the sea’s unruly.  
In the lead boat Hamaliya  
Steers his vessel truly.  
Hamaliya, the heart falters:  
The sea’s gone a-rocker!  
They don’t take fright!—Soon they’re hidden  
By the surging water.

---

In luxury pillowed, Byzantium<sup>33</sup> drowns  
At ease in his harem, Skutar’ at his side.

The Bosphorus clamours, intent on arousing  
 The Turk from his slumber, to thwart the surprise.  
 The sea roared in fury: "I swear that I'll bury  
 You, Bosphorus Strait, beneath mountains of sand  
 Unless you are silent! . . . D'ye see whom I'm bearing  
 To visit the sultan? . . . Be still, I command!"  
 The Bosphorus quaked at the sea's angry thunder  
 (The sea loved those resolute, long-whiskered Slavs)  
 And stopped its commotion. And so the Turks  
slumbered.

At ease in his harem the sultan relaxed.  
 Only in Skutari the captives weren't sleeping  
 In their dreadful dungeon. For what do they wait?  
 God's help in their trouble they are beseeching,  
 While waves on the outside keep pounding away.

---

"Do not permit, God of Ukraine,  
 That freedom-loving Cossacks perish  
 In foreign prisons, clad in chains!  
 A blot today, 'twill be black shame  
 If we, who liberty so cherish,  
 Will rise up from a foreign grave  
 On that, the final Judgement Day,  
 And face the hosts in shameful shackles. . . ."  
 Then from behind the walls a cry  
 Rang through the night, "On, on to battle!  
 The Moslem pagans smite and slay!"  
 Oh, the very blood is blazing.  
 Skutari goes crazy.  
 "Kill them! Slay them!" Hamaliya  
 The fortress is razing.  
 The cannon of Skutari thundered,  
 And yet the Turks could not survive  
 The daring of the Cossack drive—  
 The janissary guards went under.

Hamaliya through Skutari—  
Through Hades—is racing;  
First into the prison breaking,  
He knocks off the bracelets.  
“Fly free, birds of falcon feather,  
Join the merry-making!”  
The grey falcons aroused themselves,  
For long had they waited  
To hear good Christian speech again.  
The night, too, awakened;  
Dear old mother, she had never  
Seen how Cossacks settle  
Accounts with foes. Have no terror,  
Watch the Cossack revel.  
Why should Cossacks feast in darkness  
At a celebration!—  
They’re not robbers that in the night  
They should eat raw bacon  
Without a fire. “Let us have light!”  
Soon the clouds were scorching—  
Skutari burned and the galleys  
Were turned into torches.  
Byzantium at last awoke  
And beheld the slaughter,  
Gnashing his teeth, to the rescue  
He swam ’cross the water.

Byzantium in frenzy rages  
And clutches madly at the shore,  
Takes hold, rears up—then laved with gore,  
Sinks down beneath the Cossack sabres.  
Like hell-fire all Skutari blazes;  
The Bosphorus is filled with blood  
Which gushes from the market-places.  
Like blackbirds flitting through a wood  
The Cossacks comb the raging Hades

To see that none escape the sword!  
Fire holds no terror for this brood.  
They raze the fortress; then they carry  
The gold and silver in their caps  
Back to their boats. And now the task  
Is done. There is no need to tarry.

The lads assembled at the shore.  
Their pipes with burning brands they started,  
Boarded their boats, took to the oars—  
The crimson waves before them parted.  
More like coming from an outing  
Than from war returning,  
With rousing songs, Cossack fashion  
'Cross the sea they journey:

---

“Our ataman Hamaliya  
Is a chieftain daring,  
His good crew he took acruising  
Asea for an airing;  
Asea for an airing,  
Fame and fortune sharing,  
Freeing brothers from the prison  
Where they were despairing.  
To Skutari Hamaliya  
Boldly went afaring.  
There our Cossack lads in irons  
Sat for death preparing.  
'Brothers!' called out Hamaliya,  
The lads liberating,  
'Life awaits you, celebrating,  
Turks exterminating,  
Our Cossack camps with tapestries  
And silks decorating!'  
Swiftly came the Cossacks flying

The harvest to gather;  
Stoutly reaping, corpses heaping,  
They sang all together:  
'Glory to you, Hamaliya,  
O'er Ukraine's wide spaces,  
O'er Ukraine's wide spaces  
Your name will be cherished  
That you didn't let the Cossacks  
In slavery perish!' "

---

So sail the Cossacks home with song;  
Behind, the doughty Hamaliya  
Keeps watch—the eagle guards his young;  
From Dardanelles the wind blows freely,  
Yet not a sign of Turk flotilla;  
The Turk's afraid the Monk<sup>34</sup> again  
May build a bonfire at Galata,  
Or that a new Pidkova<sup>35</sup> wrathful  
Will call to battle on the main.  
Soon the morning sun, arising,  
Crimson tints the dancing waves;  
Stretching out to the horizon  
Friendly seas embrace the brave.

Hamaliya, feel the breezes. . . .  
Our home seas are pounding! . . .  
Then the Cossack boats are hidden  
By billows like mountains.

St. Petersburg,  
1842

*Translated*  
*by John Weir*

## A MAIDEN'S NIGHTS

**"The maiden's nights  
Drained her brown eyes dry."**

*Maryana the Nun*

Her thick braids unplaited became,  
Reaching to her waist;  
Her breast hills uncovered became,  
Midst the sea white waves;  
Her brown eyes sparkled bright,  
Starlight in the night;  
Her white hands stretched out—  
Ready to embrace  
That slender shape—but clawed the pillow cold  
Instead. And buried her face,  
Her hands grew stiff, and then grew still,  
And then with tears let go.

"What's to me plaited beauty,  
Eyes of a dove,  
My lissom waist. . . when there's no one,  
No one to love,  
No husband true and faithful  
To share one's heart. . . .  
Heart of mine! Heart apart!  
It's hard to keep on beating  
All on your own. With whom to live,  
With whom, oh cunning world?  
Tell me . . . what's honour to me. . . .  
My honour and good name!  
I want to love, I want to live  
With my heart, not beauty's fame!  
Yet people envy and abuse me,  
Proud and evil they accuse me—  
People so malicious.  
But they know not what I feel,



What in my heart I conceal. . . .  
Let them be malicious,  
Theirs is the sin. . . . Oh God of Light,  
Why dost Thou not wish  
To shorten these, Thy dark,  
My heavy-laden nights! . . .  
For in the day I'm not alone—  
With the fields I converse,  
I converse and misfortune's worst  
In the field's forgotten.  
But at night. . . ." Then she grew silent,  
While the tears billowed. . . .  
White hands stretched out futilely,  
Clutching her pillow.

St. Petersburg,  
May 18, 1844

*Translated  
by Herbert Marshall*

## A DREAM<sup>36</sup>

A COMEDY

**“Even the spirit of truth, whom  
the world cannot receive because  
it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”**

*John, Chapter 14, Verse 17*

Each man on earth has his own fate,  
Each one his highway wide:  
This one builds up, that one lays waste,  
And that casts greedy eyes  
O'er all the globe, to find somewhere  
A land not yet enslaved,  
Which he could conquer and then bear  
With him into the grave.  
This fellow in his neighbour's home  
His host cleans out at cards,  
While that one in a corner hones  
A blade for brother's heart.  
Then there's the sober citizen,  
The worthy, pious kind,  
Who'll creep up like a cat and then  
Bide patiently his time  
Until with hardship you're beset,  
And then he'll pounce!—Don't plead:  
The tears your wife and children shed  
Won't save you from his teeth.  
And that one, generous and grand,  
A fervent patriot,  
So deeply loves his native land,  
So worries o'er its lot,  
As from his country's heart he sucks  
The blood as though 'twas water! . . .  
The brethren meanwhile sit and look,  
Their eyes agape like saucers!

And bleat like lambs: "Perhaps it was  
Ordained thus from on high."  
That's how 'twas meant to be! Because  
There's no God in the sky!  
You pull your yoke until your breath  
Gives out and you are done,  
Yet pray for heaven after death?  
In vain! There's none! There's none!  
Your labour's lost. Come to! Come to!  
In this world everyone—  
The princes, and the beggars, too,—  
They all are Adam's sons.  
Both he . . . and he . . . What's this I prate?  
What is it all about?  
I banquet every single day,  
Carouse day in, day out,  
While you with envy burn and hate!  
Don't scold: 'Twill do no good—  
I'm deaf to you! I drink my own,  
And not the people's blood!

---

Such thoughts went flitting through my  
head

As tipsy from a merry feast  
In dead of night, on reeling feet,  
I made my way to home and bed.  
No bawling child or nagging spouse  
Have I to spoil my rest—  
With perfect peace I'm blest  
Both in my mind and in my house.  
I climbed into my bed  
And soon slept like the dead.  
And when a man has had a few,  
Though cannon roar he still will snore,  
Whatever you may do.

Oh, what a vision rare I saw  
    In sleep that night:  
    A staunch abstainer would get tight,  
A tightwad would a coin bestow,  
If they could only get a glance  
    At what I saw.  
    But not a chance!  
I dreamed: high in the air's expanse  
It seemed an owl was flying fast  
    Over meadows, over valleys,  
    Over river banks and gulleys,  
    Over woods and over steppes.

And in its wake I flew as well  
And bid the earth below farewell:

“Farewell, O world, farewell, O earth,  
Unfriendly land, good-bye!  
My tortures cruel, my searing pain  
Above the clouds I'll hide.  
And as for you, my dear Ukraine,  
I'll leave the clouds and sky  
To fall with dew and talk with you,  
Poor widow-country mine.  
I'll come at midnight when the dew  
Falls heavy on the fields;  
And softly, sadly we will talk  
Of what the future yields.  
Until the rising of the sun  
We'll talk about your woes,  
Until your infant sons are grown  
And rise against the foes.  
Good-bye, my lovely, poor Ukraine,  
O widow-land of mine!  
Your children rear unto the day  
For justice is divine!”

We fly . . . . I look—the dawn arrives,  
 The sky's edge bursts ablaze;  
 In shady glades the nightingales  
 Sing out the new sun's praise.  
 The breezes softly, lightly wake  
 The steppelands from their dreams;  
 In the lush valleys, by the lakes  
 The willows shimmer green.  
 The orchards, heavy laden, bow;  
 The poplars stand at ease  
 Like sentinels when all is well,  
 And gossip with the fields.  
 And all about, the whole land gleams  
 With nature's warmest hues,  
 Bedecked with blossoms, dressed in greens,  
 And bathed in drops of dew.  
 Since time began it bathes in dew  
 And greets the morning sun. . . .  
 There's no beginning to all this,  
 Of ending, too, there's none!  
 There's no one who could either gild  
 Or blotch this beauty-land. . . .  
 And all of this. . . . My aching heart,  
 My soul, why are you sad?  
 My poor, my desolated soul,  
 Why do you vainly weep?  
 Whom is it you pity? Alas, can't you see?  
 And cannot you hear how the multitudes cry?  
 So go, take a good look! And meantime I'll fly  
 Into the blue sky, above the grey clouds;  
 Where there are no rulers, no prisons or knouts,  
 No jeers of contempt and no people's lament.  
 Go, closer look: in that same Eden which you flee,  
 His tattered shirt from a poor cripple's back they  
 tear  
 With skin and all—because his hide they need

To shoe their princelings with. And over there  
A widow's crucified for taxes, while they drive  
Her only son—her only hope!—in chains  
Into the army. And there—more dead than live,  
A starving babe beside a hedge awaits  
Its mother from the feudal lord's estate.

And there, d'you see? My eyes! My eyes!  
While I was yet a child  
Why did you not along with tears  
Flow out and leave me blind?  
An unwed mother with her babe  
Is shuffling down the lane—  
Her parents drove her from the house,  
And none will take her in!  
E'en beggars chase her from their midst!  
Young master pays no mind:  
He's had some twenty maidens since,  
To while away the time!

Does God look from behind a cloud  
And see our woes and ills?  
Perhaps He does, but helps as much  
As do these ancient hills  
Which mute and motionless endure  
While washed with human gore!  
My soul! My miserable soul!  
I cannot suffer more.  
We shall drink down a poison draught  
And sink into the snow,  
And send a thought right up to God  
And ask if He will tell:  
Will hangmen still much longer rule,  
And turn earth into hell?

Then leave me, my thoughts, my torment, my pain,  
And take away with you all evils, all woes—  
Your constant companions! Together you've grown

And clung to each other; by woe were you trained  
From earliest childhood. So take them and fly,  
Unleash angry riot all over the sky.

Let it turn black, let it turn red,  
Let conflagration spread,  
Let once again the dragon's breath  
Pile mound on mound of dead.  
And meanwhile, I will hide my heart  
And go far, far away  
And find somewhere a blessed place,  
Where Eden still holds sway.

Again above the earth I fly.

Again I tell the earth good-bye.

It's hard to leave your mother dear,  
No roof above her head,  
But harder yet to watch her tears,  
Her rags, her lack of bread.

I fly, I fly, the north winds blow;  
Before lie endless leagues of snow,  
Of swamps and woods, a fog-bound land,  
A wilderness untouched by man.  
Here not a sound, not e'en a track  
Is seen of fearful human feet.

To foe and friend alike I speak:

Farewell! I'm never coming back!

Carouse, make merry all you like!

I'll never hear you now—

All by myself I'll sink to sleep

Forever in the snow.

And till the day comes when you find

There is a corner yet

That's not been drenched in blood and tears

I'll take a little rest. . . .

I'll rest a bit. . . . What's this I hear?—

The clanging sound of chains  
Beneath the earth. . . I'll take a look. . .  
Oh, evil human race!  
Where have you come from? And what for?  
What is it that you seek  
Beneath the earth? No! I'm afraid  
There'll be no rest for me  
In heaven too! . . . What have I done?  
In what am I to blame?  
To whom and how have I done wrong?  
Whose heavy hands have chained  
My soul within this searing breast  
And set my heart on fire?  
And who let loose these clam'ring crows—  
These carping thoughts of mine?  
Why do I suffer? I don't know  
Why I'm tormented so!  
Oh, when will I my sins atone  
And pay the debt I owe?  
When will this dreadful nightmare end?—  
I neither see nor know!

Then suddenly the wasteland shook.  
As though their coffins they forsook  
On that, the final Judgement Day,  
The dead arise to justice claim.

No, these are not the dead at all,  
And not to judgement claim!  
They're people, living mortal men  
In heavy irons chained.  
Deep from the bowels of the earth  
The gold they daily bring  
To fill his hollow coffers with! . . .  
They're convicts! . . . Why in chains?  
Go ask the tsar. . . And even he,  
Perhaps, cannot explain.



See, there a branded bandit drags  
His ball and chain behind;  
And there, fresh from the torture rack,  
His teeth an outlaw grinds—  
To kill his barely-breathing pal  
Is topmost in his mind!  
And there, amid those wretched dregs,  
In iron chains he stands;  
The king of freedom!<sup>37</sup> World-wide king,  
Crowned with a convict's brand!  
In prison dread he does not groan,  
He does not quail or weep!  
A heart that once with good was warmed  
Will warm forever keep!

Oh, where are the thoughts you so lovingly nurtured,  
Your beautiful blossoms, those dreams of the future—  
To whom did you pass them, my friend, oh to whom?  
Or will they lie buried with you in the tomb?  
Don't bury them, brother! Scatter them surely!  
They'll sprout and they'll grow, and will soon be  
maturing!

Enough? Or must I undergo  
Still more? Enough, the brain  
Is wakened by the cold.

Again I fly. The land turns dark.  
My mind is drowsing, faint my heart.  
Big towns I see as I look down,  
A hundred churches in each town,  
I see their squares and streets are filled  
With soldiers busy at their drills;  
Supplied with boots and clothes and food,  
And given heavy chains to boot,  
They're training. . . . But what's that ahead?

A swampy, boggy lowland spreads,  
And in that slough a city<sup>38</sup> stands;  
A heavy cloud above it hangs,  
A cloud of fog. . . . Up close I fly—  
    It's of enormous size.  
        Perhaps in Turkey,  
        Or in Germany,  
Or, maybe, even in Muscovy:  
        Churches, palaces galore,  
        With plenty of pot-bellied lords,  
        And not a solitary home!

The night was falling. . . .

Bonfires flared. . . .

With torchlights, on all sides

The throngs pressed so that I was scared! . . .

“Hurrah! Hurrah!” they cried.

“Come to your senses, you poor fools!

What do you celebrate?

Why all the fuss?” “What a *Khokhol!*<sup>39</sup>

Can't see it's a parade!

His Majesty himself has deigned

This day to promenade!”

“So where's that marvel to be seen?”

“There—through the palace gate.”

I pushed my way; a countryman

With buttons made of brass<sup>40</sup>

Elected to acknowledge me:

“Where are you from?” he asked.

“I'm from Ukraine.” “How comes it that

You do not even know

To talk the way they do up here?”

I answered, “That's not so—

I know, but do not choose to.” “Queer!

Well, I'm in service here,

I know the ins and outs, and so

I'll lead you, if you care,

Into the palace. But, you know,  
We're educated folk  
So don't be stingy with the tip. . . ."  
Oh loathsome scribbler, go  
Away from me. . . . I made myself  
Invisible again  
And to the chambers made my way.  
Oh God, what I saw then!  
Now there was heaven! In those halls  
The very cuspidors  
Are gold-encrusted! Scowling, tall,  
Here comes himself, the tsar,  
To stretch his legs; and at his side  
His empress struts and preens,  
All wrinkled like a dried-up prune  
And like a beanpole lean,  
While every time she steps, her head  
Goes jiggling on her neck.  
Is this the goddess whom they praise?!  
Poor thing, you are a wreck!  
And silly I, not having seen  
You once with my own eyes,  
Accepted what your scribblers wrote,  
Believed your poets' lies.  
Oh, what a fool! I took for cash  
A Moscow pledge to pay.  
How can I after this believe  
The things they write again!  
Behind the gods come gentlefolk  
In gold and silver dressed,  
With heavy jowl and portly paunch—  
Of well-fed hogs the best! . . .  
They sweat, but closer, closer press  
Around the august thing:  
Perhaps he'll deign to slap a face  
Or show a royal fig,



**Self-Portrait. 1843-1845.**  
*Pencil drawing*



**A Peasant Yard. 1845.**  
*Water-colour*

Or even half a fig to show,  
Or maybe tweak a nose—  
If but with his own hand.  
Then all line up in one long row  
And “at attention” stand.  
The tsar-god jabbbers; and his spouse,  
That royal marvel rare,  
Just like a heron among birds  
Hops briskly here and there.  
They walked about a goodly while,  
A pair of puffed-up owls,  
And talked in whispers all the time—  
We couldn’t hear at all—  
About the fatherland, I think,  
The officers’ new pips,  
And still more drills for army men! . . .  
And then the empress sits  
In silence on a tabouret.  
I watch: the tsar comes close  
To him who is of highest rank  
And whops him on the nose! . . .  
Poor fellow, he just licked his lips,  
And then poked in the pot  
The next in line! . . . That one then gave  
A smaller ace a clout;  
That one punched still a smaller fish,  
And he—still smaller fry,  
Until the smallest at the end  
Got theirs and opened wide  
The palace gates, and poured outside  
Into the city streets  
To put the boots to common folks;  
Then those began to screech  
And holler fit to wake the dead:  
“Our royal father deigns to play!  
“Hoorah, hoorah, hoorah, ’ray, ’ray!”

I laughed most heartily and left;  
I own, in the mêlée  
I too got banged. 'Twas nearing dawn,  
The city was asleep;  
Just here and there some pious folk  
Stood groaning on the street,  
And moaning, prayed the Lord their tsar  
In best of health to keep.  
I laughed through tears! Then sauntered forth  
The city's sights to see.  
The night was bright as day. I look:  
Beside the sluggish stream  
Rich mansions, palaces abound,  
The river banks are seamed—  
Shored up with stone. I look about  
As though I were entranced!  
What magic wrought such marvels here  
Where once was a morass? . . .  
What quantities of human blood  
Upon this spot were shed—  
Without a knife! Across the way  
There looms a fortress dread,  
Its steeple rising like an awl—  
A comic sight to see.  
The tower clock ticked off the time.  
I turned—and saw a steed  
Agalloping, his flying hooves  
The granite seemed to cleave!  
The rider, bare-back on the horse,  
In something like a cloak,  
Was hatless, his bare head adorned  
With leaves, perhaps of oak.  
The steed reared up as though it meant  
To leap across the sea.  
And he held out his arm as though  
He coveted to seize

The world entire. Who is that man?  
I read the message terse  
Inscribed upon the mound of stone:  
"The Second to the First."<sup>41</sup>  
I understood right well what's meant  
By those laconic words:  
The First was he who crucified  
Unfortunate Ukraine,  
The Second—she who finished off  
Whatever yet remained.  
Oh, butchers! butchers! cannibals!  
And did you gorge and loot  
Enough when 'live? And when you died  
What did you take with you?  
A heavy weight pressed on my heart.  
It was as though engraved  
Upon that granite I could read  
The story of Ukraine.  
I stood. . . . And then I faintly heard  
A melancholy strain,  
From ghostly lips a mournful song:

---

"From Glukhov-town at break of dawn  
The regiments withdrew  
To build abutments on the line.  
I, with a Cossack crew,  
As acting Hetman of Ukraine<sup>42</sup>  
Due northward took my course—  
Up to the capital. Oh God!  
Oh wicked tsar, accurst!  
Oh crafty, evil, grasping tsar,  
Oh viper poison-fanged!  
What did you with the Cossacks do?  
Their noble bones you sank  
In the morass and on them raised



Your capital-to-be,<sup>43</sup>  
Their tortured bodies at its base!  
And me, a hetman free,  
You threw into a dungeon dark  
And left in chains to die  
Of hunger. . . . Tsar! We'll never part.  
We are forever tied  
Together by those heavy chains.  
E'en God cannot untie  
Those bonds between us. Oh, it's hard  
Eternally to bide  
Beside the Neva! Far Ukraine  
Exists, perhaps, no more.  
I'd fly to see if she's still there,  
But God won't let me go.  
It may be Moscow's razed the land,  
And emptied to the sea  
Our Dnieper, and our lofty mounds  
Dug up—so none may see  
The relics of our former fame.  
Oh God, please pity me.”  
Then silence fell again. I look:  
Across the leaden sky  
A white cloud like a sheet was drawn  
And from it rose a cry,  
A dismal howl. No, not a cloud—  
A flock of snowy birds  
Soared like a cloud above the tsar  
And wailed a mournful dirge:  
“We're chained together with you too,  
Inhuman monster vile!  
When Judgement Day comes we'll screen God  
From your rapacious eye.  
'Twas you that drove us from Ukraine—  
A hungry, tattered lot—  
Into these far-off snows to toil,

And here our throats you cut;  
Our bloodied skins you used as cloth  
To make your purple robe,  
You used our sinews as the thread  
With which the robe to sew.  
Your new throne-city thus you built  
Of temples, mansions grand!  
Make merry, wicked, vicious tsar!  
Be damned! Be damned! Be damned!”

---

They flew away, they all dispersed.  
The morning sun appeared.  
I still stood fascinated there,  
With mounting sense of fear.  
The poor were hurrying to work  
Though it was early still,  
And soldiers, lined up in the squares,  
Were busy at their drills.  
Young drowsy girls came scurrying  
Along the sidewalk's edge,  
But homeward, not away from home  
They bent their weary tread! . . .  
Their mothers sent them out all night  
To earn a crust of bread.  
I stood there with a heavy heart  
And bowed my aching head  
And thought how hard must people toil  
To earn their daily bread.  
The horde of clerks then hastened next,  
Each to his office nook,  
To scribble—and the folks to rob  
Of everything they could.  
Among them here and there I saw  
My fellow-countrymen.

They chattered in the Russian tongue  
And bitterly condemned  
Their parents that when they were small  
They didn't teach them how  
To jabber German—so they can't  
Get big promotions now!  
Oh leeches, leeches! It may be  
Your father sadly sold  
His last remaining cow that you  
The Moscow tongue should know.  
My poor Ukraine! My poor Ukraine!  
These are your hapless sons,  
Your youthful blossoms, splashed with ink,  
In German hot-house grown,  
On Moscow's silly-potions fed  
Until they are inane! . . .  
Oh weep, my childless widow-land!  
Unfortunate Ukraine!

And then I turned my steps again  
Towards the palace hall  
To see what's doing there. I came—  
The lords were standing, all  
Panting, snorting, short of breath,  
Big-bellied, puffed with pride  
Like turkey gobblers, and each one  
Askance the doorway eyed.  
And then the waited second struck—  
The portals swung ajar  
And like a bear from his dark den  
He shambled out—the tsar;  
All bloated and his face tinged green:  
His hang-over was bad.  
He roared at those who stood out front—  
The fattest of the fat—  
And instantly they disappeared,

Just vanished into air!  
With bulging eyes he looked around  
And all were struck with fear.  
As though he'd gone clean off his head,  
At smaller fish he roared--  
They disappeared. Then at the fry--  
They too were there no more!  
To servants next he turned--and they  
Were also whisked away.  
Then to the soldiers--they dissolved  
And didn't leave a trace  
Upon the earth. Oh what a sight--  
A miracle for fair!  
I looked to see what else would be,  
What next my little bear  
Would do! But he kept standing still  
With hanging head. And lo,  
What happened to the raging beast  
He was a while ago?  
Meek as a kitten now--how droll!  
I laughed to see the sight.  
He heard and cast a glance at me--  
I froze from sudden fright  
And woke from sleep. . . .

Such was my rare  
And truly wondrous dream!  
How odd it was! . . . 'Tis but by loons  
And drunks such dreams are seen.  
Don't be astonished at this tale,  
My well-beloved friends,  
I did not tell you what I'd seen,  
But only what I dreamt.

St. Petersburg,  
July 8, 1844

*Translated*  
by John Weir

## DON'T TAKE YOURSELF A WEALTHY BRIDE

Don't take yourself a wealthy bride,  
She'll drive you from the nest.  
Don't take a poor girl for your wife,  
For you will have no rest.  
Get wedded to a life that's free,  
And share the Cossack fate:  
If it be rags, let it be rags—  
Whatever comes, you take.  
Then there'll be nobody to fret,  
To sympathise, or moan—  
And why you're sore, and where you're sore  
No one will want to know.  
They say it's easier to grieve  
When two misfortune share.  
Not so! It's easier to weep  
When no one else is there.

Mirgorod,  
October 4, 1845

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## ENVY NOT THE MAN OF WEALTH

Envy not the man of wealth,  
Wealth cannot aspire  
To love or friendship or respect—  
These he simply hires.  
Envy not the man of power,  
He can but oppress.  
Envy not the man of fame,  
He can well assess  
That the people love not him,  
But his weight of fame—  
That which he poured out in tears  
To them is a game.  
And when two youngsters meet  
Love in beauty blooms  
Like in paradise—but see:  
Behind them sorrow looms. . . .

Envy then no man that is,  
See how the world goes round:  
On earth no paradise exists,  
Nor in the sky is found.

Mirgorod,  
October 4, 1845

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

## THE HERETIC

*To Šafařík*<sup>44</sup>

Bad neighbours came and set afire  
Their neighbour's good new house:  
They warmed themselves and then retired  
To sleep, and failed to douse  
The smoking ashes from the fire,  
And sow them to the winds.  
The ashes at the cross-roads lay,  
Grown cold, and yet within  
A tiny spark alive remained,  
And waited for the day  
It would be blown into a blaze,  
Like an avenger waits.  
The hour to strike! A long, long time  
Still glowed that living spark  
And waited where the highways meet,  
And then it, too, was dark.

'Twas thus the Germans to the torch  
The Slavic mansion put, and rent  
The family of Slavs apart,  
And slyly planted in their hearts  
The savage serpent of dissent.

The blood, in rivers streaming, quenched  
The embers that yet glowed.  
The fire site and the orphans then  
The German neighbours stole.  
And so the children of the Slavs  
Grew up in slavery;  
In shackles fettered, they forgot  
Their very history!  
But there, where once the fire had burned,

Of brotherhood a brand  
Still glowed—still waited to be picked  
By strong and steady hand.  
’Twas not in vain. . . . For you looked deep  
Where cold the ashes lie,  
And found the ember with your heart  
And with your eagle eye!  
You shone the torch of truth, O Sage,  
The light of liberty. . . .  
And in the darkness and in chains  
The large Slav family  
You counted, naming every one,  
Although no longer Slavs  
But corpses of the Slavs you named.  
And high upon a crag—  
Upon the cross-roads of the world—  
You stood like seer of old.  
A miracle!—The corpses rose  
And opened up their eyes;  
The brothers at each other gazed  
And fondly recognised,  
Clasped hands in love, and warmly vowed  
Forever friends to be!  
And all the Slavic rivers flowed  
Into a common sea!

Glory to you, sage and prophet,  
O Czech, Slavic brother,  
That you didn’t let our justice  
And our truth be smothered,  
In the German flood to perish!  
The sea you discovered,  
The new Slavic sea of freedom,  
I see filled with water,  
On this sea will sail a vessel  
Full speed, sheets distended,



At the wheel a trusted helmsman,  
Will steer steady-handed.  
May your fame endure, Šafařik,  
Forever and ever,  
For, into one sea you gathered  
All the Slavic rivers!

So, among your many laurels  
This mite, too, accept—  
My elegy, poor and artless,  
To the saintly Czech,  
To Jan Hus,<sup>45</sup> exalted martyr  
And great patriot!  
Please accept this tribute, father.  
While I pray to God  
That all Slavs as faithful brothers,  
As one man should stand,  
True sons of the sun of justice  
And heretics grand,  
Such as was the deathless martyr  
That at Constanz<sup>46</sup> flamed!  
They'll bring peace to all the nations,  
And eternal fame!

Pereyaslav,  
November 22, 1845

**The stone which the builders rejected  
Is become the head of the corner.  
This is the Lord's doing;  
It is marvellous in our eyes.**

*Psalm 117, Verse 22*

“With stark injustice all around  
The shackled people silent wait,  
While on the apostolic throne  
There sits a fatted monk in state.

He wholesale trades in human blood  
And rents out heaven for a price!  
Thy reign's a mockery, O God,  
Thy words of truth transformed to lies.  
Despoilers, cannibals, O Lord,  
Are trampling justice 'neath their heels,  
They mock Thy glory and Thy word,  
They mock Thy power and Thy will!  
The very earth in bondage cries,  
As cries a mother for her young:  
Are there none, then, prepared to rise  
To challenge slavery and wrong,  
The gospel of the truth defend,  
Direct the unenlightened throng?  
Are there not now such righteous men,  
O Lord, and never will be none?  
Oh no! The day of wrath will come,  
The day of Heaven's vengeance just!  
And then the Papal Triple-crown  
Will come down tumbling to the dust!  
It will come tumbling down! To brave  
Dire punishment and death  
Bless these frail hands of mine, I pray,  
O Lord, please give me strength!"

'Twas thus that in his simple cell  
Jan Hus, the righteous, took the vow  
To break the chains of hell! . . . To eyes  
That were bereft of sight to show  
A miracle!

    "To battle, then!  
God's will be done! . . . Let come what may!"  
And to the Chapel Bethlehem<sup>47</sup>  
The good man went to preach and pray.

“In Jesus’ holy name, who died  
Upon the cross to save us all,  
And in the twelve apostles’ name,  
Of Peter specially, and Paul,  
By virtue of this sacred Bull<sup>48</sup>  
This woman, servant of the Lord,  
Is hereby cleansed of all her sins,  
And is absolved. . . .”

“Who is? This whore?”

The same who just two days ago  
Solicited on Praha’s streets.  
The same who drunken reeled and rolled  
In taverns, in the market-place,  
And also on monastic cot!  
She paid some money from her gains,  
An absolution Bull she bought,  
Now she’s as pure as any saint! . . .  
Almighty God!

Have mercy on people! In Thy serene heaven  
From wreaking relentless revenge take a rest!  
Why dost Thou condemn Thy good, loyal children  
To punishment ruthless? Take pity! Desist!

Why didst Thou blind their eyes to light,  
Their common sense, their reason free  
Imprison in the darkest night! . . .

Oh people, look—the dawn is here!  
Awake, O Czechs, from your deep sleep.  
Cast off all cant, rise to your feet,  
Be men, not butt for priestly jeers!  
The robber princes of the church  
Have trampled, plundered us, and raped  
Our land, as Tatars put the torch  
To Muscovy, and then they gave  
Their dogmas to us! . . . Fire and sword,  
All that is evil, squabbles, war,  
And endless misery and woes. . . .

And Rome with bastards overflows!  
Such are their dogmas, such the fame  
Which they have earned! . . . Now all who die,  
The holy conclave has proclaimed,  
And did not absolution buy,  
Go straight to hell! But he who pays  
A double price is free to slay  
All but the Pope or priest, and then  
Goes straight to heaven! It's the end!  
Now thieves from one another steal  
Right in the church. Oh, serpent's seed!  
Have you not drunk your fill of blood? . . .  
O Lord Almighty, it is not  
For me, a common man, to judge  
The wondrous deeds that by Thy will  
Are done on earth. Without a cause  
Thou wouldst not work the people ill.

Have mercy on us, Lord, I pray,  
Deliver us from evil days!  
For blasphemy corrupt my tongue,  
But cure the earth of what is wrong.  
Do not permit a priesthood vile  
Thy glory and Thy name defile  
And mock the common human throng!"

And Hus, as thus he prayed to God,  
Wept bitterly. "What does he plan?"  
The people in amazement thought,  
" 'Gainst whom dares he to raise his hand!"

---

"Look, people, look! It's the decree  
I read to you. . . ." He lifted it  
So all could see. The people reeled:  
Hus tore the Papal Bull to bits!!

The echo of his action rolled  
Like thunder, till the news was told  
In the world capital, in Rome.  
The monks sought hide-outs. . . . Terror gripped  
The hierarchy—fear of doom:  
The proud tiara 'gan to slip!!

A serpent-pit, the Vatican  
With hissing monks is filled,  
The monks of Rome and Avignon  
Conspire in whispers shrill,  
The anti-Popes<sup>49</sup> together buzz—  
This all-pervading hiss  
E'en shakes the walls. The cardinals  
'Bout the tiara twist  
Like serpents. And like alley cats  
Over a mouse they spit  
And at each other snarl. . . . Of course,  
They have good reason to:  
There's fur, and hides . . . and meat gālore!!!  
The very walls shook, too,  
With grim foreboding when the geese<sup>50</sup>  
In Praha 'gan to honk  
And flew the eagles to engage  
In battle. . . . Then the monks  
Bestirred themselves, in council met  
And 'gainst Jan Hus resolved  
To take stern steps. In Constanz they  
A raven's rally<sup>51</sup> called!  
They undertook to closely watch  
And all precautions take  
Lest to the spacious Slavic plains  
The grey-winged fowl escape.

As ravens cover black a field,  
So monks converged in mighty throngs

On Constanz city from all sides;  
Like hungry locusts, all around  
The dukes and barons are encamped  
With heralds, minstrel-troubadours  
And squires and servants by the score,  
While on the highways soldiers tramp  
In snake-like columns. Noble dames  
Are followed by the German herd,  
Some riding asses, some afoot,  
And some with falcons—all inflamed  
With fever of the hunt, to kill!  
O Czech! D'y'e hold your courage still??  
Look at the might that's here arrayed  
As though to bar Atilla's horde  
Or else to start a new Crusade!

In Praha angry rumblings grow  
The thousand-headed synod's damned,  
Both king and emperor<sup>52</sup> condemned  
On every side! Hus must not go  
To Constanz! But Jan Hus replied,  
"God's with me still! I do not quake!  
My brothers, I don't fear to die!  
I'll teach a lesson to those snakes!  
I'll tear their poison fangs away!"  
The Czechs then saw him on his way  
Like loving sons their father kind. . . .

---

All bells that morn together tolled  
In Constanz for the meet.  
The cardinals in crimson robes  
Foregathered, fat and sleek  
Like prize bulls in a cattle pen.  
The prelates took their seats,  
Three Popes, some kings, and noblemen

Of various degrees;  
Like Judases, in court unjust  
They had assembled there  
To judgement pass on Jesus Christ.  
A clamour filled the air  
Like in a Tatar camp, or when  
A Jewish school is on. . . . And then—  
The din stopped dead and all were hushed! . . .

Straight, like a cypress on a plain  
In Lebanon—encased in chains,  
He calmly stood before them: Hus!  
He swept the whole assembly base  
With eagle eye from face to face.  
With limbs atremble, pallid cheeks,  
His judges at the martyr gazed  
In heavy silence. “Did you seek  
My presence here for a debate?  
Or did you wish my chains to see?”  
“Be silent, brazen Czech. . . .” They hissed  
Like vipers stirred up in their nest,  
Then roared like frenzied beasts:  
“A heretic! A heretic!  
You sow dissension’s evil seed!  
You seek to foster schisms and splits!  
God’s holy will you do not heed! . . .”  
“Pray, let me speak one word!” cried Hus.  
“A heretic! You’re damned by God!  
A heretic! A heretic! . . .”  
The prelates in a frenzy roared,  
“A trouble-maker! . . .” “Just one word!”  
“You are condemned! You’re damned by all! . . .”  
Jan Hus looked hard at the three Popes  
And walked out of the palace hall! . . .  
“We’ve brought him down! We’ve brought him  
down! . . .”

Restraint had long gone overboard.  
“Auto-da-fé! Auto-da-fé!”  
The synod all together roared.

The whole night long the monks and dukes  
Their triumph fêted. . . feasted, drank,  
And drunkenly they railed at Hus,  
Until the matin church bells rang.  
The dawn. . . . The monks retired to pray  
For Hus. The sun, a ball of fire,  
Rose o'er the mountain. Did it, too,  
That morning want to watch what they  
To this most righteous man would do? . . .

In Constanz all the bells were tolled  
As Hus in chains was led  
Along his own Golgotha road. . . .  
He showed no sign of dread  
But, climbing on the faggot pile,  
He turned and prayed aloud:  
“O God of mercy, what's my crime?  
What have I done, O Lord,  
To these, Thy people? Men of God!  
Why do they want my blood?  
Why am I nailed upon the cross?  
Oh listen, people! Pray!  
Oh pray, ye guiltless ones, because  
You, too, will end this way!  
For savage beasts into the fold  
Have crept as sheep disguised,  
And now their wolfish claws they show. . . .  
You'll find no place to hide,  
No shelter from their greedy fangs.  
A sea of blood will flow!  
The blood from your own children's veins. . . .  
Oh woe, my people, woe!



There, there in crimson robes attired  
They stand! Their eyes are mad  
With lust. . . . It's blood. . . ."

"Set fire! Set fire!"

"It's blood that they demand!  
They want your blood! . . ." Then clouds of smoke  
Concealed Jan Hus from view.  
"Pray, people!" still the good man spoke,  
"They know not what they do!  
Forgive them, Lord. . . ." No further sound  
Came from the martyr's pyre!  
With eyes intent, the monks like hounds  
Were clustered 'round the fire.  
They feared he'd snake out from the coals  
And slip along the ground  
To the tiara of the Pope  
Or to a royal crown.

The fire died down. The wind blew free  
The ashes o'er the ground.  
And yet the common folk could see  
A red snake wrapped around  
The triple-crown. The monks retired  
*Te Deum* for to sing,  
Then to the festive boards they hied  
To gorge themselves and drink  
Till they were bloated fit to burst.  
With heavy hearts and sore,  
A group of Czechs came, scraped some earth  
From where he died, and bore  
That dust to Praha. It was thus  
The monks condemned to die  
And at the stake burned good Jan Hus. . . .  
And yet God's truth defies  
Their bonfire. From behind the clouds  
An eagle, not a goose,

Shall swoop, the triple-crown to claw—  
And they don't even guess!  
Without a care, the monks and lords  
Dispersed each to his nest  
From that red feast, like carrion crows.  
In idleness they rest  
And roister in their castle dens.  
And as they feast and drink  
And chant *Te Deum* now and then,  
Their skins are safe, they think.  
The danger is no more. . . . But wait!  
Old Žižka<sup>53</sup> in Tabor  
Above his hoary head has raised  
And flashed the mace for war.

Village Maryinské,  
October 10, 1845

*Translated*  
*by John Weir*

## THE SERVANT WOMAN

### PROLOGUE

Early on a Sabbath day  
Wrapped in mist the country lay.  
On a mound, in mist enfolded,  
To her breast a bundle holding,  
Stood a woman, young and wistful  
Like a poplar, in a whisper  
Talking sadly to the mist:

“Mist, oh mist, please hear my plea,  
Pity me in my ordeal!  
Oh, why don't you bury me,  
Hide me in this lonely field?  
Oh, why don't you smóther me,  
Crush me so I wouldn't breathe?  
Why my days of suffering  
Not make mercifully brief?  
No, mist, no, don't smother me,  
With your cloak just cover me,  
Hide me so my misery  
None should know and none should see! . . .  
I'm not alone, I've left behind  
My father and my mother. . . .  
I also have . . . I have, besides,  
Oh mist! There is one other. . . .  
I have a son, a tiny child  
As yet unnamed and unbaptised!  
It's not I who will baptise you,  
To my bitter, bitter woe.  
It's strangers who will baptise you,  
I will never even know  
What they've called you, where to find you. . . .  
Oh, my child, my very own!  
Do not curse me! I'll be praying—

God will heed a mother's prayer,  
Happiness He'll send from heaven,  
Fortune kind will be your share."

Bowed in grief, she walked away  
Through the mist with footsteps slow,  
Singing tearfully a lay  
Of a widow's bitter woe  
As she buried her two babes  
In the Danube long ago:

"There's a grave mound on the plain,  
There a widow came one day,  
Poison grass she came to find,  
Poison grass she did not find,  
And her time was coming nigh.  
In the field she had to lie,  
Her two boys in cloth to bind,  
Take them to the Danube wide.  
'River, river, take my babes,  
Rock them gently on your waves.  
Yellow sand, with soft caress  
Feed my babies at your breast,  
Sing to them a lullaby,  
Cover them in peace to lie!"

## I

Beside a grove lived all their life  
A kind old man and his good wife,  
In their fine cottage near a pond,  
    Like children ever,  
    Always together.  
They tended lambs when they were young,  
Grew up and married later on,  
They bought a cow, and built a home,

A water mill then came to own,  
An orchard planted by the grove,  
And beehives not a few they got—  
Of everything they had a lot.  
But in their home there was no child,  
And Death was nearing with his scythe.

Who'll cherish them when they are old,  
Who'll be a loving son to them?  
Who'll say a prayer for their souls,  
Who'll mourn their passing, weep for them?  
Who other than their flesh and blood  
In time their legacy will share  
And think of them with gratitude,  
Recall how good and kind they were? . . .  
It's hard to rear a brood of young  
When you've no home to call your own,  
It's harder yet to age alone  
In mansion splendid, but forlorn,  
To grow infirm, then leave this world,  
Your property bequeath to none,  
So utter strangers squander all  
Ungratefully, in careless fun.

## II

The couple, on the day of rest,  
Were sitting in their Sunday best  
Upon a bench beneath the trees.  
The sun was shining, not a breeze,  
No wisp of cloud the blue disturbed,  
'Twas like a paradise on earth.  
But, like a beast in forest murk,  
Deep in their hearts a sadness lurked.

Why sorrow in this heaven fair,  
What more could these good people want?

Perhaps some grief of yester-year  
Had'wakened now their peace to haunt?  
Was it some hurt of long ago  
That stirred again their hearts to pain?  
Or some new trouble just arose  
This paradise to set aflame?

What is the cause of their despair?  
Perhaps they grieve because they know  
That soon to God they must repair,  
Yet they have nobody to care,  
To hitch their horses for the road. . . .

"Oh, who will lay us in our graves?"  
And Nastya answered: "I can't say.  
It's had me worried all my days,  
It hurts to think we've reached old age  
And we've no one our hearts to cheer. . . .  
For whom then did we scrape and save  
All this? . . . But listen, do you hear?  
There's someone crying, seems to me. . . .  
Sounds like a baby. . . . It's quite near!  
Let's go and see what it can be,  
Come on, let's hurry. Hear it? Hear?"

And off they hurried to the gate  
Whence came the wailing, plaintive sound. . . .  
And there they stopped and silent gazed.  
A baby lay upon the ground  
Beside the fence. The bundle wee  
Was loosely wrapped, but o'er it lay  
A new warm coat. 'Twas clear to see  
That its own mother must have laid  
The child here and with loving hands  
Had o'er it spread her only coat! . . .  
The two old folks stood there entranced,

And whispered prayers. While the babe,  
As though 'twas pleading for their care,  
Had freed its tiny arms and stretched  
Them up towards the aging pair. . . .  
And now the mite no longer cried,  
Just a whimper, soft and weak.  
“Nastya, wake up, can't you speak?  
Here's our answer, don't you see?  
Here's our fortune and delight,  
You and I now have a son!  
Take the baby, mother him. . . .  
Hope the day's a lucky one!  
Take him in, and I will ride  
To invite the sponsors. . . .”

Verily, how strange the things  
That occur among us!  
There one curses his own son,  
Driving him from house and home,  
Others, parenthood denied,  
Work their fingers to the bone  
Candles for the church to buy,  
And sobbing pray to all the saints—  
Yet have no child! . . . Indeed the things  
That come to pass on earth are strange!

### III

Not just two, but six godparents  
Gladly to the christening came.  
That same night the child was christened,  
Marko was his given name.  
Marko grew. Trokhim and Nastya  
Simply doted on the boy,  
Fussing over him and bustling  
In anxiety and joy.

In a year the child grew lusty.  
And the milch cow for his sake  
Lived in clover, so to say.  
Then a woman came one day,  
Very young and full of grace,  
Dark of brow and fair of face,  
Seeking work as servant-maid  
In this happy, blessed place.  
“Nastya, should we take her, eh?”  
“Yes, Trokhim, I think we should.  
We are old and often ail,  
Then there’s little Marko, too.  
True, the baby’s big and strong,  
Still he needs an able nurse,  
He wants care the whole day long.”  
“Yes, indeed, our Marko does.  
Also I have trod the earth  
Long enough, I think. And now,  
Daughter, let us come to terms.  
You’ll want yearly pay, or how?”  
“I’ll take whatever wage you say.”  
“Oh no, my girl, that’s not the way!  
You’ve got to care about your pay,  
Your honestly and hard-earned pay,  
For those who don’t, will always stay  
With nothing but an empty purse.  
We’ll do it this way. Try it out,  
Let’s see, my daughter, how it works,  
For you don’t know us or our ways,  
We don’t know you, so we can’t tell  
If we are suited. Of your wage  
We’ll talk again another time.  
All right, my daughter?” “Very well.”  
“So we’re agreed then. Come inside.”



That's how 'twas settled. The new maid  
Appeared in such a happy state  
That one would think she'd wed a prince,  
Or come into a rich estate.  
While working hard from dawn till dark  
Both in the house and in the yard,  
She sang as happy as a lark.  
To mind the child she never tired  
With motherly and loving care.  
Each week-day as on holiday  
She washed and combed his silky hair,  
And dressed him up each blessed day.  
She played with him and made him toys,  
And sang him songs; it was her joy  
On holidays, the whole day long,  
To fuss around the darling boy.  
Trokhim and Nastya watched her ways,  
And blessed the day she came to them,  
Nor knew their broken-hearted maid,  
To endless sleepless nights condemned,  
Was cursing her misfortune cruel  
As she lay sobbing in her bed.  
But no one heard it, no one knew,  
Nobody saw the tears she shed.  
No, no one but the little babe,  
The little one he couldn't know  
Why 'twas his nurse, their servant-maid,  
So wept in anguish over him.  
Nor could he know, of course, what made  
Her kiss him so and fondle him,  
And why the sweetest bits she laid  
With loving care aside for him,  
Nor why, if in the dead of night  
He stirred in sleep or even turned,  
At once she'd be there at his side  
With truly motherly concern

To bless him, put his covers right  
And lull him with a gentle croon.  
Why 'twas she heard his breathing light  
While sleeping in another room.  
And Marko, waking in the morn,  
His baby arms stretched out to her,  
'Twas Hannah whom he mother called,  
His Hannah who was always there. . . .  
He did not know. Thus Marko grew  
To man's estate without a care.

#### IV

The years rolled ever on and on,  
Much water 'neath the bridge had run.  
Death also visited this home,  
And sorrow brought to everyone.  
Old granny Nastya's end had come,  
And poor Trokhim all but succumbed.  
Accursed misfortune took its own—  
And then it left them well alone.  
And blessedness once more returned  
From 'yond the woods, where it had flown,  
To settle down in Trokhim's home.

Marko drives a cart to town,  
Autumn nights he never now  
Spends at home, asleep in bed. . . .  
It was time the boy was wed.

"Whom should he take?" thought old Trokhim,  
And he asked Hannah, faithful maid,  
For her advice. She'd have been glad  
To pick for Marko as a mate  
A princess true. "But let's ask him,  
Let Marko tell us whom he'd wed."  
"Good, daughter, let us speak to him,  
And after that we'll go ahead."

And so they did. A fitting match  
For Marko had to be arranged.  
Matchmakers went and soon came back  
And brought the bread they had exchanged  
With parents of the bride-to-be.  
She was both young and dignified,  
And beautiful, and dressed so fine  
A hetman even wouldn't mind  
To be her groom. She was indeed  
A very wonder of a bride!

"I thank you kindly," said Trokhim.  
"And now the date we must release,  
Tell all the folks so they will know  
Just when the wedding feast will be.  
There's only one thing worries me,  
Who will our Marko's mother be?  
My Nastya hasn't lived to see. . . ."  
Trokhim could not go on for tears.  
And in the doorway Hannah stood,  
Their servant woman all those years,  
The door-post gripping lest she swoon,  
She could not make a move or speak,  
And only whispered brokenly:  
"Ah, who, who'll Marko's mother be?"

## V

One week later matrons came  
To Trokhim's to bake the cake  
For the wedding. Old Trokhim,  
Bravely mastering the shakes,  
Danced with all the fair young wives,  
Laughed and joked, then went outside,  
Swept the yard and gladly hailed  
All those walking past his gate

To come in and taste his ale,  
At the wedding be his guests.  
Though unsteady on his legs,  
On he bustled, none the less.  
All were laughing, noisy, gay,  
Both inside the house and out,  
From the cellars where they lay  
Kegs of wine came rolling out,  
All were busy cooking, baking,  
Scrubbing, cleaning all around. . . .  
Strangers all. But where's their maid?  
Hannah's gone to Kiev town.  
Old Trokhim had begged her stay.  
In the mother's place to sit  
Tearfully had Marko prayed.  
"Marko, no, it isn't fit  
That your mother I replace.  
All your friends are well-to-do,  
And I'm just a servant-maid,  
They would only laugh at you.  
May the Lord guard over you!  
To the shrines in Kiev town  
I must go and pray the saints,  
Then I will return to you,  
If you'll have me back again.  
While I've strength left in my limbs  
I shall work. . ." with feeling deep  
She told Marko, blessing him  
From her heart. . . . Her tears ran free  
As she left him at the gate.

The wedding feast was in full swing,  
Musicians played, heels tapped away,  
All hard at work. The tables groaned  
With food and wine and home-brewed ale.  
While Hannah, footsore, hurried on

To Kiev at the shrines to pray.  
She got to town and straight away,  
Before she stopped to rest or sleep,  
She sought a place where she could stay  
And fetching water earn her keep,  
Saving from her meagre pay  
For St. Barbara's holy day.  
Pail she carried after pail  
And some kopecks eight she saved.  
At the shrine of John the Martyr  
In the ancient Kiev caves  
Hannah bought a cap for Marko  
That his head should never ache,  
At St. Barbara's shrine she bought  
Marko's wife a ring to wear,  
Then she prayed the saints once more,  
Crossed herself, and home repaired.

Marko and his lovely bride  
Hurried out to meet her  
At the gate, took her inside,  
At the table seated,  
Pressing food on her, the while  
Listening to Hannah's tale.  
And when night came, Katerina  
Bade her in the front room stay.  
"How have I deserved such love?  
Why do they respect me so?  
Oh my God in Heav'n above,  
Surely it can't be they know? . . .  
Have they guessed, perhaps, and they . . .  
No, they haven't, they're just kind.  
They're just good. . . ."

The servant-maid  
Wept and tossed all through the night.

## VI

Thrice the pond was frozen tight,  
Thrice again it melted down.  
Thrice Kat'rina saw old Hannah  
Off to holy Kiev town  
Like a daughter. And again  
She saw Hannah on the way,  
For the fourth time; to the mound  
Walked with her, and begged and prayed  
That she shouldn't tarry long  
For their happy, blessed home  
Would seem cheerless and forlorn  
With their loving mother gone.

One Sunday, following Assumption,  
Trokhim, dressed in his best white shirt,  
Was basking in the pleasant sunshine  
In great content. Before him romped  
His little grandson with his pup,  
There, too, his baby sister now,  
All dressed up in her mother's skirt,  
Came calling on Grandpa. She bowed  
As matrons do. Trokhim played up  
And welcomed her in all good faith:  
"What happened to the loaf you baked?  
P'raps in the forest you were robbed?  
Or you've forgotten it at home?  
Or never had one baked to bring?  
Oh shame, oh shame! But look who's come!"  
Why, it was Hannah walking in!  
His two grandchildren and Trokhim  
All ran to meet her at the gate.  
"Where's Marko? Is he not yet home?"  
She asked in great anxiety.  
Trokhim replied: "He still is gone."

“I feel so bad, I thought my feet  
Would never, never get me home.  
I didn’t want to die out there,  
In strange surroundings, all alone.  
If I could last till he comes back. . . .  
My heart’s so heavy and so grieved.”  
And then she took out of her bag  
The gifts she brought from Kiev.  
Little crosses, holy medals,  
A string of beads for young Irene,  
And in a frame of silver foil  
The nicest icon ever seen.  
She had a whistle for the boy,  
Toy horses too, a jolly pair;  
For Marko’s wife a ring once more,  
Kat’rina’s fourth that she’d bought there,  
At the shrines; and last of all,  
Three slim candles for Trokhim  
From the church. And for Marko—  
There was nothing there for him,  
Or for herself: her money spent,  
To earn more she’d had no strength,  
She was ill, and home she went.  
“Here’s half a roll that I have left,  
Come, share it, children,” Hannah said,  
And gave a little piece to each.

## VII

In they went, and Katerina  
Bathed old Hannah’s weary feet,  
And invited her to dinner,  
But she couldn’t drink or eat.  
She said: “Tell me, Katerina,  
When is Sunday, I forget?”  
“This is Friday.” “Then, my dear,

Sunday have a service sung  
To St. Nicholas the healer,  
Just in case there's something wrong;  
Why does Marko take so long. . . .  
God forbid that he should sicken  
On a distant road somewhere!"  
And the servant, old and stricken,  
Burst out crying in despair.  
Slowly, on the table leaning,  
Hannah got up to her feet.  
"I am ailing, Katerina,  
I'm not well, I feel so weak,  
I can hardly stand alone.  
It's hard to die, dear, in a home  
That's blest and warm, though not your own."

She was very, very bad.  
Though the Eucharist she took,  
Extreme unction, too, she had,  
Nothing seemed to do her good.  
Old Trokhim about the place  
Like a lost soul wandered,  
And a daughter couldn't be  
Than Kat'rina fonder.  
Day and night she hovered near,  
Always there at Hannah's side.  
But the hooting of the barn owls  
In the silence of the night  
Boded grief to come. And Hannah  
Fretted every waking minute,  
Every hour of the day.  
"Oh, my daughter Katerina,  
Why is Marko still away?  
If I knew 'twas not in vain,  
That I'll see him if I wait,  
I would wait until he came."



## VIII

With the ox-cart drivers train  
Homeward bound is Marko now.  
Leisurely they make their way,  
Resting while the oxen browse.  
Marko's gift for Katerina  
Is a length of splendid cloth,  
And a red silk sash he's bringing  
For his Dad to cut a swath.  
For their faithful servant-maid  
There's a white-fringed shawl to wear,  
And a piece of gold brocade  
For a cap to hide her hair.  
Fancy boots he's bought the children,  
Lots of figs and raisins sweet,  
And some good old wine in Tsargrad  
All of them to give a treat.  
There's a barrel of it there,  
And some caviar from the Don.  
Gifts he's bringing, unaware  
Things are what they are at home.

On he drives without a care.  
Thank the Lord he has arrived!  
At the gate he says a prayer,  
Opens it and throws it wide.  
"Katerina, I could swear  
I heard somebody arrive!  
Marko's come! Go quickly, daughter,  
Hurry, bring him right inside!  
Thank Thee, Jesus Christ, Our Saviour,  
That my tryst I've lived to keep!"  
And she whispered the Lord's Prayer,  
Softly, softly, as in sleep.

Old Trokhim unhitched the oxen,  
Put away the shaft and pin,  
While Kat'rina welcomed Marko,  
Feasted loving eyes on him.

"Where is Hannah, Katerina?

She's not dead now, surely?"

"She's not dead, but she is near it,  
Hannah's very poorly.

While your father's busy here

With the oxen, Marko,

Let us go to her, my dear,

Ease her awful heartache."

Marko walked into the room,  
On the threshold stopped, aghast.

Hannah whispered in the gloom:

"Thank the Lord, he's here at last!

Come here, Marko, don't be frightened.

Leave us two, my daughter dear,

There is something I must ask him,

Something Marko's got to hear."

Softly walked out Katerina.

Marko, grieved and smitten,

Bent down close to Hannah's pillow.

"Marko," she said, "listen,

Look at me, look very closely,

See how near the end I've come?

I am not your servant, Marko,

I'm. . ."

But she could not go on.

Marko gazed at her and wondered.

Hannah raised her eyes again,

At his face she looked intently

Then to sobs and tears gave way.

"Please, forgive me! How I suffered

All my life. . . no home my own. . . .  
Please forgive, forgive me, Marko!  
I'm your mother. . . . Marko . . . son."  
She fell silent.

                    He stood swaying  
As the whole world heaved.  
He came to. . . . "Oh mother, mother!"—  
She no longer breathed.

Pereyaslav,  
November 13, 1845

*Translated  
by Olga Shartse*

## THE CAUCASUS

*To My True Friend, Yakov De Balmen*<sup>54</sup>

**"O that my head were waters,  
And mine eyes a fountain of tears,  
That I might weep day and night  
For the slain. . . ."**

*Jeremiah, Chapter 9, Verse 1*

Mighty mountains, row on row, blanketed with cloud,  
Planted thick with human woe, laved with human blood.

Chained to a rock, age after age  
Prometheus there bears  
Eternal punishment—each day  
His breast the eagle tears.  
It rends the heart but cannot drain  
The life-blood from his veins—  
Each day the heart revives again  
And once again is gay.  
Our spirit never can be downed,  
Our striving to be free.  
The sateless one will never plow  
The bottom of the sea.  
The vital spirit he can't chain,  
Or jail the living truth.  
He cannot dim the sacred flame,  
The great god's fame on earth.

'Tis not for us to duel with Thee!  
Not ours the right to judge Thy deeds!  
Ours but to weep and weep, and weeping,  
To knead the daily bread we eat  
With tears and sweat and blood unending.  
We groan beneath the yoke of hangmen,  
While drunken justice sodden sleeps.  
Oh, when will justice rise at last?  
And God, when wilt Thou give  
Thyself from all Thy toil a rest?—

And let the people live!  
Yet we believe in Thy great might  
And in the living soul.  
There shall be liberty and right!  
And then to Thee alone  
All tongues will pray, all heads will bow  
For ever and ever.  
But in the meantime, rivers flow,  
The blood of men in rivers!

Mighty mountains, row on row, blanketed with cloud,  
Planted thick with human woe, laved with human blood.

'Twas there that We, the Gracious,<sup>55</sup> found  
Poor freedom hiding 'mid the crags  
(A hungry thing, and all in rags),  
And sick'd our dogs to drag her down.  
A host of soldiers on those hills  
Gave up their lives. And as for blood!?  
All emperors could drink their fill,  
In widows' tears alone they could  
Be drowned together with their seed!  
The sweetheart's tears, in secret shed!  
Unsolaceable mothers' tears!  
The heavy tears of fathers hoary!  
Not streams, but veritable seas  
Of blazing tears! So—Glory! Glory!  
To hounds, and keepers of the hounds,  
And to our rulers golden-crowned  
Glory!

And glory, mountains blue, to you,  
In ageless ice encased!  
And glory, freedom's knights, to you,  
Whom God will not forsake.  
Keep fighting—you are sure to win!  
God helps you in your fight!

For fame and freedom march with you,  
And right is on your side!

A hut, a crust—but all your own,  
Not granted by a master's grace,  
No lord to claim them for his own,  
No lord to drive you off in chains.  
With us, it's different! We can read,  
The Gospel of the Lord we know! . . .  
And from the dankest dungeon deep  
Up to the most exalted throne—  
We're all in gold and nakedness.  
Come, learn from us! We'll teach you what  
The price of bread is, and of salt!  
We're Christian folk: with shrines we're blest,  
We've schools, and wealth, and we have God!  
Just one thing does not give us rest:  
How is it that your hut you've got  
Without our leave; how is it we  
To you, as to a dog a bone,  
Your crust don't toss! How can it be  
That you don't pay us for the sun!  
And that is all! We're Christian folk,  
We are not heathens—here below  
We want but little! . . . You would gain!  
If only you'd make friends with us,  
There's much that you would learn from us!  
Just look at all our vast domains—  
Boundless Siberia alone!  
And prisons—myriads! Peoples—throng!  
From the Moldavian to the Finn  
All silent are in all their tongues  
Because such great contentment reigns!  
With us, a priest the Bible reads  
And then to teach the flock proceeds  
About a king of ancient times,

Who took to bed his best friend's bride,  
And slew the friend he wronged besides. . . .  
Now he's in heaven! See the kind  
We send to heaven! You're denied,  
As yet, our holy Christian light!  
Come, learn from us! With us, it's loot,  
    But pay the shot,  
    And straight to God,  
And take your family to boot!  
Just look at us! What don't we know?  
We count the stars, and flax we grow,  
And curse the French. We trade or sell,  
And sometimes lose in cards as well,  
Live souls . . . not Negroes . . . our own stock,  
And Christians, too . . . but common folk.  
We don't steal slaves! No, God forbid!  
We do not trade in stolen goods.  
We act according to the rules! . . .

You love your brother as is writ  
Within the Golden Rule?!  
O damned by God, O hypocrites,  
O sacrilegious ghouls!  
Not for your brother's soul you care,  
But for your brother's hide!  
And off your brother's back you tear:  
Rich furs for daughter's pride.  
A dowry for your bastard child,  
And slippers for your spouse.  
And for yourself, things that your wife  
Won't even know about!

For whom, O Jesus, Son of God,  
Then wert Thou crucified?  
For us good folks, or for the word  
Of truth. . . . Or to provide

A spectacle at which to laugh?  
That's what has come to pass.  
Temples and chapels, icons and shrines,  
And candlesticks, and myrrh incense,  
And genuflexion, countless times  
Before Thy image, giving thanks  
For war and loot and rape and blood,—  
To bless the fratricide they beg Thee,  
Then gifts of stolen goods they bring Thee,  
From gutted homes part of the loot! . . .

We're civilised! And we set forth  
To enlighten others,  
To make them see the sun of truth . . . .  
Our blind, simple brothers!!  
We'll show you everything! If but  
Yourselves to us you'll yield.  
The grimmest prisons how to build,  
How shackles forge of steel,  
And how to wear them! . . . How to pleat  
The cruelest knouts!—Oh yes, we'll teach  
You everything! If but to us  
Your mountains blue you'll cede,  
The last . . . because your seas and fields  
We have already seized.

---

And you, my good Yakov, you also were driven  
To die in those mountains! Your life you have given  
For your country's hangmen, and not for Ukraine,  
Your life clean and blameless. 'Twas your fate to drain  
The Muscovite goblet, the full, fatal draught!  
Oh friend good and noble, who'll be never forgot!  
Now wander, free spirit, all over Ukraine  
And with the brave Cossacks soar over her coast,  
Keep watch o'er the grave mounds on her spreading  
plains,



And weep with the Cossacks o'er all of her woes,  
And wait till from prison I come home again,  
And in the meantime—I shall sow  
My thoughts, my bitter tears,  
My words of wrath. Oh, let them grow  
And whisper with the breeze.  
The gentle breezes from Ukraine  
Will lift them up with dew  
And carry them to you, my friend! . . .  
And when they come to you,  
You'll welcome them with tender tears  
And read each heartfelt line. . . .  
The mounds, the steppes, the sea and me  
They'll bring back to your mind.

Pereyaslav,  
November 18, 1845

*Translated  
by John Weir*

**TO THE DEAD,  
THE LIVING AND THE UNBORN**

*Fellow-Countrymen of Mine in the Ukraine  
and not in the Ukraine My Friendly*

EPISTLE<sup>56</sup>

**"If a man say, I love God, and  
hateth his brother, he is a liar."**

*The First Epistle General of  
John, Chapter IV, Verse 20*

The dusk descends, the dawn ascends,  
God's day is passing,  
And once again weary men  
And all things are resting.  
Only I, like one accursed,  
Weep both day and night  
At the many-peopled cross-roads,  
But no one sees my plight.  
No one sees and no one heeds me—  
Deaf, they do not hear;  
Here chains they exchange and barter,  
Truth they trade with here.  
And God they scorn and disavow—  
And human kind they yoke  
In heavy harness. Evil they plough,  
Evil too they sow,  
    And what will grow? Just see  
    What harvest will be reaped!  
    Come to your senses, don't be beasts,  
    Don't childish half-wits be!  
    Look upon this quiet Eden,  
    On your native land!  
    Bestow a love whole-hearted  
    On this ruin grand.  
    Break your fetters, live as brothers!  
    And in foreign climes  
    Do not seek, do not ask for

That which no man finds  
In heaven above, let alone  
In a foreign kingdom.  
One's own truth in one's own home,  
One's own power and freedom.

No other River Dnieper exists,  
Nor another Ukraine,  
Yet in foreign fields you persist  
Blessed goodness to attain,  
A better goodness. Liberty! Liberty!  
Fraternal brotherhood! You sought it  
And finding, from foreign fields carried it  
And to the Ukraine brought it,  
A mighty mass of mighty words  
And nothing more. You shout out  
That you were not created by God  
That untruth you should adore! . . .  
But you bow down, as you bowed before!  
And once again you skin and gouge  
Your poor rye-reaping brothers blind,  
And once more truth's sun to behold  
In German land, no alien kind,  
You push forth! . . . If you'd but take  
With you all your wretched chattels,  
All your grandsires' stolen goods,  
The Dnieper then would be an orphan  
With its sacred hills and woods!

Ah, if it could be that you had returned not,  
That where you were reared, there you had died!  
No mother would have sobbed, no children cried,  
And your blasphemies would not've been heard by God.  
And the sun'd not have warmed your dung-heap sod,  
On that clean and free, that earth so wide.

And what eagles you were people wouldn't have  
realised,

And wouldn't have shaken their heads and cried:

Come to your senses! Human be,  
Or you'll meet calamity!  
And very soon the people's chains  
Will by the people broken be.  
Judgement will come, and when begun  
Will Dnieper and mountains give tongue!  
And a hundred streams will flood  
The blue sea with the blood  
Of your own children . . . and there'll be none  
To help--no, not a single one.  
Brother'll be renounced by brother  
And her child by mother.  
And smoke like a cloud will cover  
The sun before your eyes,  
And you will be damned for ever  
By your own children's cries.  
Wash yourselves clean! The image of God  
Do not with filth besmirch.  
And your own children teach not  
That they are upon this earth  
Merely in order to rule. . . .  
For an eye unlearned  
Will search their very soul  
Deeply, deeply discerning!  
And then the poor will realise  
Whose skin you're wearing now,  
And they will judge, and the super wise  
Will by the unlearned be brought down!

If you had learned as you should have done,  
Your own your wisdom would have been.  
But instead to the skies you climb:

“I am not I, and we’re not we!  
For I’ve seen everything, and everything know,  
There is no hell, nor heaven—no—  
There is no God, there’s only me!  
And the German, stocky and shrewd,  
And no one else at all! . . .”—“Very good,  
Brother, what are you then?”

“Let’s hear

The German tell us. We don’t know.”  
So that’s the kind of learning  
The foreign land bestowed!  
The German will say: “You’re Mongols.”  
“Mongols! Mongols, it’s plain!”  
The grandsons naked, wretched  
Of Golden Tamerlane.<sup>57</sup>  
The German will say: “You’re Slavs.”  
“Slavs! Slavs, it’s clear!”  
From glorious mighty forbears  
Worthless descendants appear!  
Jan Kollar’s works you’ve read,  
And have had your fill  
Of Šafařík and Hanka,<sup>58</sup>  
And into the Slavophils  
You push. . . . All the tongues you know  
Of the Slavonic peoples . . . every one  
Of them. But of your own—  
Nothing!. . . Oh, the time will come  
When we shall speak our native tongue,  
If the German teaches,  
And in addition to all that  
Our own history preaches,—  
Oh, then we’ll set about it!  
And you did, as one can tell,  
According to the German precept  
And learned to speak so well  
That even the German couldn’t grasp it—

That mighty pedagogue—  
 Let alone the common people.  
 What an uproar! What shouts agog!  
 “There’s power, and harmony,  
 In a word—music.  
 What history! . . . The poetry  
 Of a free people’s epic!  
 As to those Romans miserable!  
 The devil knows—they’re no Brutuses!  
 We’ve our own glorious, unforgettable  
 Brutuses and Cocleses!  
 Freedom it was grew up with us,  
 Bathed by the Dnieper’s billows,  
 The plains she used as her blanket,  
 The mountain peaks as pillows!”  
 In blood it was she washed herself  
 And went to sleep on a pile  
 Of Cossack freemen’s heaped-up corpses,  
 Corpses marauded and defiled!  
 Just have another good look,  
 Read once more that glory,  
 Read it once more word by word,  
 Our very own story,  
 Not one single comma skipping,  
 Not one apostrophe,  
 Analyse everything . . . then start asking  
 Yourselves: who are we? . . .  
 Whose sons? Of what fathers begot?  
 By whom? And what enchained for? . . .  
 Then you’ll see for yourselves what  
 Your Brutuses are famed for:  
 Slaves, Moscow’s dirty underfootmen,  
 Warsaw’s muck—your ruling host,  
 Those high and mighty Hetmans.<sup>59</sup>  
 How comes it then that *you* now boast,  
 Sons of wretched poor Ukraine!

That you well fit the yoke, and feel  
Better than your fathers felt.  
Don't boast, from you they're stripping weals,  
And from them tallow melt.

Maybe you boast the Brotherhood  
Fought to defend the faith?  
That over the fires of Turkish towns  
Dumplings they boiled and ate?  
True! . . . True, they ate their fill then,  
Now belly-ache's your plaint.  
And in the Sich the clever Germans  
Their precious potatoes plant.<sup>60</sup>  
And these, of course, you buy  
And for your health you eat them  
And Cossackdom glorify.  
But whose red blood seeped then  
And watered the very ground  
That potatoes could flourish?—  
For you it's the same. So long's it's good  
The market garden to nourish.  
And you boast that Poland too  
Once we brought to ruin! . . .  
Poland fell—that's very true,  
But crushed you in so doing!

That's how blood was spilt for Moscow  
And Warsaw by your fathers hoary  
And to you, their sons, bequeathed they  
Both their fetters and their glory!

---

Ukraine battled on and on  
To her very last breath.  
Worse than by Poles by her own sons  
She's crucified to death.  
As if 'twere merely beer, righteous  
Blood they draw from her side.

They say they merely wish to enlighten  
Their old mother's eyes  
With contemporary fires.  
To make her follow the times  
And the Germans, she, the tongue-tied  
Crippled, poor and blind.  
Well, lead on, show her, do!  
Let the old mother learn  
How such kind of children new  
Must be cared for by her.  
Show her! . . . For such tuition  
No need to worry at all,  
Motherhood will be well rewarded:  
And then the scales will fall  
From your insatiated eyes;  
That glory you'll descry,  
The living glory of your grandsires  
And your deceitful sires.  
Do not fool yourself in vain!  
Read, study and discern,  
And from the foreigner learn,  
But do not your own disdain.  
For whoever his mother forgets  
Him God will castigate,  
He'll be barred at the cottage gate,  
By his children he'll be shunned.  
By strangers he'll be driven away  
And such an evil one  
Will never find a joyful home  
On earth beneath the sun.  
I lament when I recall  
Deeds unforgettable  
Of our grandsires. Heavy deeds!  
If they could forgotten be  
I'd have given half-a-century  
Of life and gaiety.



But thus our glory will remain,  
The glory of Ukraine.  
Read thus, too, that you should see,  
Not in a dream of sleep,  
All her wrongs, that open wide  
Should be her grave mounds high  
Before your very eyes.  
That you should then inquire  
Of the martyrs: who are they, why,  
For what they were crucified?  
So embrace now, brothers mine,  
The least of these your brothers,—  
Let once more our mother smile,  
Our tear-ridden mother.  
And with firm hard-working hands  
She'll her children bless.  
And with lips of liberty  
Her little children kiss.  
And forgot will be the shame  
Of these long lost years,  
And the glory of Ukraine,  
True glory, reappear,  
And a clear light, not a twilight,  
Gently will embrace you. . . .  
Embrace each other, brothers mine,  
I entreat and pray you!

Vyunishcha,  
December 14, 1845

*Translated  
by Herbert Marshall*

## THE DAYS GO BY

The days go by, the nights go by,  
The summer's passing; yellow leaves  
Are rustling; light deserts the eye,  
Thoughts fade away, emotions sleep—  
All falls asleep. And I don't know  
If I'm alive or barely so,  
Just floundering about the earth,  
For I know neither rue nor mirth. . . .

Where art thou, Fate? Where art thou,  
Fate?

No fate have I at all!  
If You grudge me good fortune, Lord,  
Let evil fortune fall!  
Don't let me walk about asleep,  
A dead heart in my breast,  
A rotten log upon the road—  
A hindrance to the rest.  
Oh, let me live, live with my heart,  
And love the human race,  
Or if not that . . . then let me curse—  
And set the world ablaze!  
It's terrible to lie in chains  
And rot in dungeon deep,  
But it's still worse, when you are free  
To sleep and sleep and sleep—  
And then forever close your eyes  
And leave not e'en a trace,  
So whether you have lived or died  
No whit of difference makes!  
Where art thou, Fate? Where art thou,  
Fate?

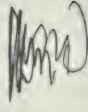
No fate have I at all!  
If You grudge me good fortune, I  
Let evil fate befall!

Vyunishcha,  
December 21, 1845

*Tran*  
*by John*

Или уму ли повелевал  
Мои на мольба  
Виде стени широкую  
Навариси ли мольба,  
Мольба лачи закрокован,  
И думно, и нури  
Буде видно, буде нури  
Или рабе рубрици,  
Или новии се думане  
Умаре море  
Крове думану... омице д  
И стени в море  
Кеи полану, а полану  
До амова Богу

Молитвучи, ... а до того  
И крестам Бога.  
Шкобаи то, шкеладаните,  
Крестами шкеладаните  
И шкеладаните шкеладаните  
Боже шкеладаните  
И шкеладаните шкеладаните  
Крестами шкеладаните шкеладаните  
Крестами шкеладаните шкеладаните  
Крестами шкеладаните шкеладаните



25  
Dimitrie  
1845  
65 Nicolae

Manuscript of "My Testament". 1845.



**Vydubetsky Cloister. 1843-1844.**  
*Pencil drawing*

## MY TESTAMENT<sup>61</sup>

When I am dead, then bury me  
In my beloved Ukraine,  
My tomb upon a grave mound high  
Amid the spreading plain,  
So that the fields, the boundless steppes,  
The Dnieper's plunging shore  
My eyes could see, my ears could hear  
The mighty river roar.

When from Ukraine the Dnieper bears  
Into the deep blue sea  
The blood of foes. . . then will I leave  
These hills and fertile fields—  
I'll leave them all and fly away  
To the abode of God,  
And then I'll pray. . . . But till that day  
I nothing know of God.

Oh bury me, then rise ye up  
And break your heavy chains  
And water with the tyrants' blood  
The freedom you have gained.  
And in the great new family,  
The family of the free,  
With softly spoken, kindly word  
Remember also me.

Pereyaslav,  
December 25, 1845

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## THE LILY<sup>62</sup>

“Why did to me from childhood days  
The people bear ill-will?  
And why was I when but a maid  
By those same people killed?  
And yet today why do they prize  
My presence in their rooms,  
Call me a queen, can't feast their eyes  
Enough upon my blooms?  
Why do they now my praises sing  
And hold me in esteem?  
Pray tell me, flower-of-the-king,<sup>63</sup>  
What can the reason be?”  
“Alas, my sister, I don't know,”  
Said flower-of-the-king,  
As tenderly to her he bowed  
His head of rose-and-pink  
To touch the Lily's pallid cheek,  
A crumb of comfort bring.  
And then the Lily 'gan to weep,  
Her tears the purest dew. . . .  
She softly wept, and then she said:  
“My brother, I and you  
Have loved each other long, yet I  
Have never told you, friend,  
The story of my human life,  
The woes I suffered then. . . .”

Why did my mother always grieve  
And sorrow over me?  
When looking at me, why did she  
So sadly sigh and weep?  
The reason then I did not know,  
My brother, why she cried,  
Or who it was had wrong'd her so.

I was a little child  
And child-like busily I played,  
Quite happy at my games,  
While she grew weaker day by day  
And cursed our master's name.  
She died. The master took me then  
Into his manor hall.  
And so I spent my youth within  
Those stately mansion walls.  
There I grew up, yet did not guess  
I was his bastard child.  
And then abroad the master went,  
While I was left behind.  
The people cursed him, and they came,  
The manor set afire. . . .  
And me . . . they did not kill or maim,  
But—I can't fathom why—  
Cut off my braids, my tresses fair  
That were my joy and pride,  
And on my head, now shorn of hair,  
A dirty rag they tied.  
All jeered. E'en Jews spat in my face,  
Although themselves despised.  
Such were the ills I underwent  
In life, my brother dear.  
The people did not let me spend  
In peace my youthful years,  
They hounded me to death. I died  
In winter by the road,  
But in the spring time came alive  
With petals white as snow,  
A flower growing in the downs!  
I brightened up the grove.  
The previous winter. . . oh my God!  
The people, jeering, drove  
Me from their midst. But in the spring



With wonder and with love  
They looked at me. My snow-white blooms  
The girls in garlands twined  
And called me lily-of-the-snows;  
And I began to thrive  
In hot-houses and palace rooms  
As well as I grew wild.  
Oh flower-of-the-king, explain,  
My brother dear, pray tell:  
For what was I by God ordained  
A flower here to dwell?  
To please the very people who  
Detested me and killed,  
And killed my gentle mother too?  
Dear God! Is that Your will?"  
Again the Lily `gan to weep.  
The flower-of-the-king  
With tenderness and pity deep  
His head of rose-and-pink  
Bent to the Lily's pallid face  
And brushed her tearful cheek.

Kiev, July 25, 1846;

Nizhny Novgorod,

March 6, 1858

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW TO ME

It does not matter now to me  
Whether I live in Ukraine or not.  
Whether in snows of foreign fields  
I am remembered or forgot—  
It matters now no more to me.  
I grew up midst strangers in slavery,  
No one to weep or mourn for me,  
So weeping I'll die in slavery  
And all I have I'll take with me,  
And leave not the slightest trace behind  
In our glorious Ukraine,  
This land of ours, that is not ours.  
Of me no father will his son remind  
Nor bid him: "Pray, now, son of mine,  
For one, my son, who for Ukraine,  
Suffered martyrdom and pain."  
To me it matters not a jot  
Whether that son makes a prayer or not. . . .  
But it matters a lot to me  
That my Ukraine will be lulled to sleep  
By evil men, and will awake to find  
Herself plundered and on fire. . . .  
And that matters a lot to me.

In prison,  
1847

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

## “FORSAKE NOT YOUR MOTHER!”

“Forsake not your mother!” they said.

You forgot—

You, daughter, ran away and forsook her,  
Your mother sought you, found you not. . . .  
Long having ceased to seek you,  
She died in grief. And since that day  
No sound is heard where you once played,  
The old dog too has wandered away,  
And the cottage with broken windows decays.  
In the dark of the orchard the sheep  
Graze in the day-time. At night  
The barn owls and brown owls prophesy  
And let not the neighbours sleep.  
And your periwinkle’s cross-crests  
Have overgrown with hemlock, awaiting  
You, hair unadorned. In the copse shade  
The once-clear little pond is drying  
Where you once bathed and played. . . .  
In the copse no sweet birds sing—  
With you too they have taken wing.  
In the valley the well has rotted away,  
Bending in grief the willow has dried,  
And where you so often trotted your way  
Prickly thorns have covered the pathway.  
Where have you gone, where have you flown to?  
Whom do you belong to? Whom?  
What strange land, what strange family  
Did you bring joy to? Whom?  
Whom do your hands hold on to?  
Prophecies my heart that wealth you’re making,  
In a palace living, and you don’t regret  
That your cottage you’ve forsaken. . . .  
‘To God I pray, even yet,

That sorrow will not waken you,  
In the palace will not find you. . . .  
That God be not condemned by you  
And your mother be not cursed by you.

In prison,  
1847

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

TO N. KOSTOMAROV<sup>64</sup>

A bright and merry sun was hiding  
Midst smiling springtime clouds agliding.  
Their guests, in manacles that clink,  
Were given wretched tea to drink,  
And meanwhile sentries changed the guard,  
Uniforms of blue they wore.  
Both to the locked and bolted door,  
And to the window multi-barred  
I'd got a little used, and did not pine  
At those long since done with,  
Long since buried, long forgotten,  
Bloody painful tears of mine.  
And there were poured out not a few  
On futile ground. . . . If but rue grew,  
But not a single thing appears!  
And I recalled my native village.  
How many there did I desert?  
Both father and mother in their coffins. . . .  
And my heart with sorrow hurts,  
'That there's no one to remember me!  
Oh my brother, your mother I see  
Blacker than the blackest earth she walks,  
As if taken down from the cross. . . .  
I pray, oh God, to Thee my prayer!  
Thee I'll never cease to praise!  
For that with no one shall I share  
My prison and my heavy chains!

In prison,  
1847

*Translated  
by Herbert Marshall*

## BESIDE THE COTTAGE

Beside the cottage cherry-trees are swinging,  
Above the cherries May-bugs winging,  
Ploughmen with their ploughs are homeward heading,  
And lassies as they pass are singing,  
While mothers wait with suppers ready.

Beside the cottage all the family's eating,  
Above, the evening star the sunset's greeting.  
The evening meal the daughter serves around,  
When mother chides, from where she's seated,  
Her voice by singing nightingales is drowned.

Beside the cottage mother's lullabying  
Till little ones in golden slumbers're lying;  
She herself beside them falls asleep.  
All is quiet, only the girls are vying  
With nightingales and can't their quiet keep.

In prison,  
1847

*Translated  
by Herbert Marshall*

## THE PRINCESS

My Evening Star, rise in the sky,  
Above the mountain lofty,  
And talk to me in my exile,  
Quietly and softly.  
Tell me how beyond that mountain  
Crimson sunsets glow and fade,  
How the rainbow dips for water  
In the Dnieper far away,  
How the poplars, tall and slender,  
Throw their leafy branches wide,  
How the willow droops in sadness,  
Weeping by the river's side,  
Arms spread out upon the water—  
In those green and tender arms  
Little babies nightly rocking,  
Babes that had not been baptised.  
How the werewolf lurks till morning  
By a lone, forgotten grave,  
And the screech-owls wail their warnings,  
Grief and trouble to presage.  
How the dream-flower in the valley  
Opens in the summer night. . .  
As for people. . . Never mind them.  
Them I know, I know all right.  
Know them well. My Evening Star!  
You're my one and only friend!  
Ah, who knows how matters are  
Now at home in our Ukraine?  
But I know. And I will tell you,  
Sleep tonight shall be forgot,  
And tomorrow you will whisper  
Everything I've said to God.

Our village! It's a joy indeed  
A village in Ukraine to see!  
A painted Easter egg, no less,  
Amid the greenery it rests.  
White houses peep through trees in bloom,  
And on the hill a mansion looms,  
A perfect marvel. On all sides  
Grow tall and stately poplar-trees,  
Then forests green, and rolling fields,  
Beyond the Dnieper mountains rise,  
And God seems smiling from the skies!

Ah, village mine! Those homes are gay!  
'The mansion, too, from far away—  
May nettles choke the curséd place!  
May from the earth it be erased,  
So people never find its trace!  
Once to this village blest and fair  
In our Ukraine, for beauty famed,  
'There came—I do not know from where—  
A prince. With him his princess came.  
They were not old, a youngish pair.  
They lived in wealth, the owners sole  
Of that big mansion on the knoll,  
The shaded pool in the ravine,  
The sloping gardens in between,  
The poplars, too, and willow-trees,  
And windmills flapping in the breeze,  
And, following the river's bend,  
Our village—stretching without end.

Once 'twas a place of merriment.  
In summer and in winter both  
'There would be music, wine would flow  
In streams to slake the bibbers' drought. . . .  
The prince among his guests would ply,



Fill up the glasses of the shy,  
And cheer them with a loud "Vivat!"  
They'd shout and sing and drink some more,  
And fall dead drunk upon the floor. . . .  
Next morning they'd revive to start  
Their round of revelry again.  
And so it went on every day.  
The prince's peasants moaned and groaned. . .  
The clerks meanwhile prayed hard to God. . .  
The drunks, uncaring, shouted on:  
"Our glorious prince! The patriot!  
"Good brother to the poor! Vivat!"  
This brother to the poor, whereat,  
The poor man's daughter and his cow  
'Takes for his own. God doesn't know,  
Or does, perhaps, but holds His peace.

The princess in her room he keeps,  
The door is locked, he has the key,  
This glorious prince. Where help to seek?  
She ran away and married him,  
Her parents' words she would not heed.  
They said to her: "Don't reach so far."  
A prince she'd have. And there you are!  
Enjoy your title now, princess!

You'll die, dear heart, in loneliness,  
A primrose in the night in spring.  
You'll wither ere you know a thing,  
The Maker's praises how to sing,  
How love can be a lovely thing.  
O God, she wanted so to live!  
She wanted to be loved and love,  
If only for a year, an hour,  
Move in the bright and splendid world.  
'Twas not to be. . . . Yet she'd had all—

All things a mother could provide  
Her mother old had given her  
In beauty rare she'd clothed her child,  
And like a painted saint you were,  
    To gaze upon and to adore. . . .  
    Ah, my princess, young and fair!  
    Heavy is my heart and sore!  
    You should live the Lord to bless,  
    Kindly deeds performing,  
    With your angel's loveliness  
    Hearts around you warming.  
    But alas! It seems your shining,  
    Starry eyes were fated  
    To grow dim in lonely pining.  
    Did the Lord, perchance, dictate it?  
    Lord, o Lord! Both will and wisdom  
    To people on this earth you give,  
    Virtue, too, and also beauty. . . .  
    But You will not let us live.  
    You won't let us long admire  
    Your lovely, earthly paradise,  
    Our fill to gaze, say all our prayers,  
    Before in sleep we close our eyes.

It's dreary living in this world  
If you have nobody to love.  
And that is how my young princess  
Seemed doomed to pine in loneliness,  
Her beauty wilted, heart grown cold,  
To perish slowly, comfortless.  
An awful thought! . . . She prayed the Lord,  
To longer let her live implored,  
For now she had someone to love.  
She was to be a mother soon,  
And loved the baby in her womb.  
The Maker granted her to know

A woman's greatest happiness,  
To see her child and kiss its face,  
Her first-born tenderly caress,  
To nurse her baby at her breast. . . .  
Oh children! By you we are blest!  
How truly infinite God's grace!

Tears dried up, they were no more,  
Radiantly shone the sun,  
And my princess was transformed,  
Now she had her little one.  
Born anew she seemed to be,  
Gay and laughing happily. . . .  
For the lovely princess wee  
Stitching tiny cambric vests,  
And embroidering the sleeves  
With the finest silken threads.  
Herself she bathed her little girl,  
Rocked and fed her at her breast,  
Most princesses in the world  
Only bear their babies,  
Nursing, bathing and the rest  
Being not for ladies.

Then they moan: "I've been forsaken  
By darling Paul or, say, Filat."  
All you did for him was bear him,  
Should he love you just for that?

My princess was not like that,  
Herself her little girl she reared,  
And her drunkard husband prince  
Did not even let come near.  
Like a tender little stalk  
Grew the baby in her care,  
She had now begun to talk,  
Mother taught her words to say,  
"Mummy" was the word she taught,  
As for "Daddy"—she did not. . . .

Coloured picture books she bought  
In the Romny village shop,  
Told the baby fairy-tales,  
Taught her how to say her prayers,  
Taught her ABC's in play  
From those coloured pictures gay.  
Every blessed night she bathed,  
And to sleep she rocked her babe,  
Not a speck of dust she'd let  
Fall upon the little saint.  
Hovering o'er the baby's bed,  
Wakefully the mother stayed,  
With her loving, tender gaze  
On the sweetly sleeping face. . . .  
Dreamed a match for her to make,  
She'd be glad for daughter's sake,  
Sorry too, because her braid  
Much too soon she must unplait.  
Then the memory of her prince  
Drunk, in uniform arrayed  
Came to her. She closed her eyes,  
Filled with scalding, bitter tears.  
Baby murmured in her sleep,  
And the princess seemed to hear:  
"Don't cry, Mummy dear, don't cry,  
Don't unplait my long, long hair,  
It is better in the braid. . . ."  
And this loving daughter fair  
Made her mother's every day  
Each a joyful holiday.  
Sweet and winsome like a poplar,  
Miracle of beauty rare,  
Grew the child. . . . But not much longer  
Was she destined to delight  
Her good mother. For God punished  
Our good saint, the princess. Why?

For what sin? It puzzles people,  
It puzzles them for they don't know  
Why does virtue die, while evil  
Ever comes alive once more?  
The princess, ailing, took to bed.  
This sobered up her husband.  
To nearby villages he sped  
And all the leeches summoned.  
The leeches came. Her blood they drew,  
And many remedies they tried,  
They treated her with every cure,  
Until the luckless princess died.  
She was no more. And once again  
The music rang in wild abandon.  
An orphan, in the village stranded,  
Her one and only child remained!  
A winnowed leaf upon the ground,  
A barefoot waif, uncared, unfed,  
Her clothes in dirt and tattered shreds.  
Out in the sun she stayed all day,  
Dug in the sand and nibbled grass,  
In puddles with the urchins played.  
Dear heart, go bathe your face! Alas,  
Your mother'd never know you now,  
Her only child, among the crowd.  
She'd think that you had died as well,  
Go bathe your face so she could tell  
The lovely child she left behind. . . .  
So she would bless and thank the Lord  
For sending you this fortune kind.  
She bathed her face. Some kindly friends  
Took her to boarding-school in town,  
In Kiev. And what happened then  
We'll live and see. The music rang,  
The prince made merry, food galore,

The mansion shook with drunken roars,  
While famine mowed the people down.  
The famine was raging all over Ukraine.  
God's punishment. Thousands to hunger succumbed,  
While still in the ricks rotted noblemen's grain.  
They even sold chaff to the mérchants for gain.  
They welcomed the famine, and heavens they prayed  
For only a couple more years of this dearth,  
And then they'd show Paris and lands far away  
What their sort of noblemen-farmers were worth!  
And God was asleep. For, indeed, 'twould be strange  
If He saw it all yet from anger refrained.  
Or else He's too patient, too patient by far. . . .  
"Believe ye and perish!" the prophets declaim.  
But how to believe? By closing my eyes?  
I'd like to believe, but the heart won't comply.

The years went by, and many died  
As famine raged throughout Ukraine.  
Of prince's serfs it took its toll,  
The hoarded grain had rotted all.  
He drank and revelled as before,  
Awaiting Jews to buy his stores  
In vain. . . . Again the corn grew tall.  
The grateful people thanked the Lord. . . .  
And then the princess young was brought  
From Kiev home. It was as though  
The sun above the village rose.

Her mother's image she'd become,  
With hazel eyes and fine dark brows,  
But she was always pensive, sad. . . .  
Why did she brood? Why did she frown?  
Had she been born that way, perhaps?  
Was it her nature to be glum?  
Or could it be that her young heart  
Already yearned for one she loved,  
Who's far away? No, 'twas not that.

She had been like a swallow gay,  
Untroubled in her Kiev school,  
The whole wide world when she'd surveyed  
By peeking from a nest secure,  
Until the country destitute  
On coming home she saw. 'Twas then  
That she began to sigh and brood.

Like a gentle little dove  
She flew about from home to home,  
Everywhere she brought her love,  
Called on all, saw everyone.  
Some she cheered with kindly words,  
And to others carried food.  
She devoted all her days  
To the needy, doing good,  
Helping all. Her loving care  
She gave orphans more than others,  
Brought them home with her, and they  
Called her mother, sainted mother,  
All the village folk adored her,  
And the Lord to keep her prayed. . . .  
In the meantime, to the prince  
Jewish dealers came to trade,  
And he gladly sold for cash  
All he had of grain and chaff.  
Peasants he drove out to thrash,  
Those whom famine had not claimed.  
Strength, praise be, they'd still retained,  
And it took them two-three hours  
Then they winnowed all the grain.  
That same night a great carouse,  
Celebrating his good yield,  
Held the prince. They had their spree  
In the grove. . . . Not in the house,  
There his daughter lay asleep.

The noise, the yells, the songs obscene,  
The drunken bawling! Topsy jades  
With bawdy laughter shrieked and screamed.  
The host called out: "Let's merry be,  
The while my daughter lies asleep!"

The daughter had not gone to sleep,  
But locked fast in her darkened room,  
She gazed up at the crimson moon  
As it appeared from shadows deep  
To glow above the hills so high,  
And stir them, fancied she, to life.  
The oaks like silent ghosts came out  
Into the open from the woods.  
And then an owl without a sound  
Flew to the field from 'neath the roof.  
The frogs croaked loudly on the lawn.  
Look on and marvel, feast your eyes  
Upon God's starry world till dawn,  
Upon the crescent in the skies. . . .  
Look on, while moonlight gives you warmth,  
And stars deny you sleep—look on!  
Gazing at the splendid moonglow,  
Long until the midnight hour,  
Drooping low before the window,  
Leaning sadly on her arm,  
Sat my princess, watched the glowing. . . .  
Softly then began to cry.  
Did her heart, perhaps, give warning  
That her evil hour was nigh?  
Let that be. She stemmed her tears,  
Smiled a little smile—why weep?  
Left the window, said her prayers,  
And was very soon asleep.

The drunkards sprawled out on the ground  
Amid their bottles. All were down,



Dead to the world. All but the host.  
He drained his glass and went indoors.  
He kept his feet, he did not fall.  
His walk was steady. . . . Dirty swine!  
Where to? What's on your filthy mind?  
And treading softly on the floor,  
He turned the key, unlocked the door,  
And stole up to his child. Wake up!  
Wake up, pure dove, wake up! Wake up!  
And kill the snake before he bites!  
Just kill him, God is on your side!  
As Beatrice Cenci plunged her knife  
And killed the cardinal, her sire—  
Almighty's punishment defied  
But no, she did not wake, she slept.  
God saw it all but silent kept,  
Condoning such atrocious acts. . . .  
No sound was heard. The minutes passed.  
Then suddenly a shriek, a cry,  
Then sobs that in the dark of night  
But owls could hear. Then not a stir,  
No sound again. And all at once  
The hay ricks went up in a blaze.  
The stars were dimmed. But not a word  
Was heard, no voice was raised.  
The nobles snored on unaware,  
While crowds of people came and stared  
As smoke to heaven made its way. . . .

The guests awoke next day at dawn,  
That things were really bad they saw—  
And promptly left their prince alone,  
Without regret or second thought. . . .  
Thus let us leave the reprobate,  
And God will, too, forsake him.  
Only you won't be forsaken,

You'll be dogged by evil fate—  
Princess dear, you'll have to pay,  
Oh, you crushed and broken bloom!  
Your father's sins to expiate  
Forevermore you will be doomed.  
Her father's sins! Oh wicked fate!  
Oh cruel, oh relentless fate!  
At least forsake her in old age,  
Or even in a country strange,  
Or in a wilderness. But nay,  
You'll grimly follow everywhere,  
You'll stalk her to her very grave,  
You'll kill her and you'll bury her.

No one knew, none could explain  
Where the princess could have gone.  
Must have perished in the flames  
On that night, thought everyone.

---

The village was in mourning plunged.  
The lofty mansion on the hill—  
The prince now deadly ill—looked glum.  
He could not move, he was so ill.  
And no one cared the prince to nurse,  
And no one ever came to call  
As he lay alone and curst,  
In his dark and evil hall.  
The village folks, recovering,  
Together prayed and begged the Lord  
To bring their princess back to them.  
But nought of her was ever heard,  
And she would never come again. . . .  
Where had she gone, where was she now?  
She was a nun, she took the veil,  
In holy Kiev made her vows.

To live and love she had been born,  
A saint with loveliness divine  
Above the sinful folks to shine  
And solace bring to everyone.  
But fate ruled otherwise. A nun,  
She'd waste away the years to come. . . .

One day, my ramblings in Ukraine  
Brought me to ancient Chihirin,  
Where on the moor beyond the sands  
A lonely monastery stands  
With willow bushes overgrown.  
And it was there that one old nun  
Told me that once, some time ago,  
A princess knocked upon their gate,  
She'd come from somewhere far away  
Beyond the Dnieper. Here she stayed  
Awhile, and here she passed away.  
"A woman still quite young she died,  
And very beautiful besides.  
The sun was hot, she'd walked for days,  
It made her ill. And she grew worse.  
She lingered for about three weeks,  
And everything she told to us,  
To Sister Xenia and me. . . .  
And died. She had been everywhere,  
What pilgrimages she had made!  
And here the poor soul passed away.  
Her sacred grave is over there. . . .  
The cross has not as yet been placed. . . ."

Orsk Fortress, 1847;

Nizhny Novgorod,  
February 24, 1858

*Translated  
by Olga Shartse*

## THE SUN SETS

The sun sets, darken the mountain crests,  
The birds quieten, the fields grow still,  
And people rejoice that now they'll rest.  
But I sit and ponder. . . my heart flies again  
To a shadowed orchard in Ukraine.  
With thoughts I fly, I fly,  
My heart, it seems, so tranquil grows,  
The earth grows black, the hills, the groves,  
And in that blue sky a star appears.  
Oh star! Oh star!—down stream my tears.  
Have you arisen over Ukraine yet?  
Are brown eyes there seeking for you  
In that blue sky? Or do they forget?  
If they have forgotten, wake them not,  
So they be not aware of my poor lot.

Orsk Fortress,  
1847

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

## I WAS THIRTEEN

I was thirteen. I herded lambs  
Beyond the village on the lea.  
The magic of the sun, perhaps,  
Or what was it affected me?  
I felt with joy all overcome,  
As though with God. . . .  
The time for lunch had long passed by,  
And still among the weeds I lay  
And prayed to God. . . . I know not why  
It was so pleasant then to pray  
For me, an orphan peasant boy,  
Or why such bliss so filled me there?  
The sky seemed bright, the village fair,  
The very lambs seemed to rejoice!  
The sun's rays warmed but did not sear!  
But not for long the sun stayed kind,  
Not long in bliss I prayed. . . .  
It turned into a ball of fire  
And set the world ablaze.  
As though just wakened up, I gaze:  
The hamlet's drab and poor,  
And God's blue heavens—even they  
Are glorious no more.  
I look upon the lambs I tend—  
Those lambs are not my own!  
I eye the hut wherein I dwell—  
I do not have a home!  
God gave me nothing, naught at all. . . .  
I bowed my head and wept  
Such bitter tears. . . . And then a lass  
Who had been sorting hemp  
Not far from there, down by the path,  
Heard my lament and came  
Across the field to comfort me;

She spoke a soothing phrase  
And gently dried my weeping eyes  
And kissed my tear-wet face. . . .  
It was as though the sun had smiled,  
As though all things on earth were mine,  
My own . . . the orchards, fields and groves! . . .  
And, laughing merrily the while,  
The master's lambs to drink we drove.

Oh, how disgusting! . . . Yet, when I  
Recall those days, my heart is sore  
That there my brief life's span the Lord  
Did not grant me to live and die.  
There, plowing, I'd have passed away,  
With ignorance my life-long lot,  
I'd not an outcast be today,  
I'd not be cursing Man and God! . . .

Orsk Fortress,  
1847

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## THE MONK<sup>65</sup>

In holy Kiev by the Podol  
Once upon a time . . . no more—  
What happened then will ne'er return,  
Return no more the hoped-for,  
Return no more. . . . Yet still I yearn  
And let the hope still burn  
That I shall see it once again,  
Though it racks my heart with pain.

In holy Kiev by the Podol  
The freedom of our Brotherhood,  
Without master, without slave,  
Itself in jerkin red, so brave,  
Out for merriment did ride,  
There in velvet streets it spread,  
With its silk 'twas carpeted  
And for no man turned aside.

In holy Kiev by the Podol  
The Cossacks make merry and dine.  
In tubs and pails, in buckets and barrels  
Like water they pour out the wine.  
Wine cellars, inns, bars and taverns  
With barmaids, wines and mead,  
The Zaporozhian Cossacks bought—  
With their ladles how they beat!  
And how the music roars and plays,  
And all the folk make gay.  
The Seminarists at the College  
Peer and nought can say.  
For scholars poor it's out of bounds,  
Or they would join the play. . . .  
Who is it there, whence music sounds,  
The folk are clustering around?

In wide red velvet breeches clad,  
Whose fullness sweeps across the street,  
A Cossack comes: "Oh, venerable lad!  
What's old age up to?" With his feet  
The old man beat, Ah how he banged  
His heels and raised the dust. Heigh-ho!  
That old Cossack, how he sang!

"On the road a crab, crab,  
Let us make a grab, grab,  
Let young wives go sow, sow,  
Poppies in a row, row!  
Let's kick trouble with our heels,  
Kick trouble with our heels,  
Dance on trouble with our heels.  
Dance on trouble, heel and toe!  
But old trouble won't let go!  
Pain and trouble dog our heels.  
Let trouble, too, see how it feels!"

To the monastery cloister there  
Dancing went old grey-hair.  
And all of his companions followed  
And all of Kiev holy.  
Danced up to the gateway wide,  
Crying: "Hey, inside!  
Come and welcome, holy monks,  
A comrade from the Cossackside!"  
The holy gates opened wide  
And let the Cossack through,  
And once again the gates closed tight,  
For evermore shut to  
Upon the Cossack. Who is this grey-hair  
Who bid the world farewell?  
Semen Paliy, a Cossack free,  
Whom trouble could not quell.



High above the sun arises,  
Then again goes down.  
In his cell an old monk paces,  
In a long black gown.  
The monk climbs up the highest hilltop,  
On Kiev feasts his eyes,  
Then sits him down upon a hillock  
And then grows sad and sighs.  
Then goes the monk to a nearby spring,  
Drinks water from the well,  
And meditates how hard it was  
In the outside world to dwell.  
Then goes the monk back to the cell,  
Stands 'twixt silent walls,  
His youthful years remembers still—  
Years beyond recall.  
Takes in his hand the sacred book,  
Aloud begins to pray. . . .  
But the thoughts of the aged monk  
Fly far, far away.

And the Word of God quietens down,  
And the Sich seems in the cell  
And the Brotherhood famed came to life.  
And the Hetman<sup>66</sup> grey, like an owl,  
Peers into the friar's cowl.  
Berdichev<sup>67</sup> and music and dances gay.  
Manacles clatter. . . . Moscow,  
Woods, snow and the Yenisei<sup>68</sup>. . . .  
And from his eyes tears flow  
Dropping on his cassock. . . . Bow low!  
And senile flesh suppress.  
Read the scriptures' sacred texts,  
Read, read and heed the bell,  
No more your heart must rule you.  
It led you to Siberia's hell,

All your life it fooled you.  
Lull it to sleep and your Borzna  
And Fastov District<sup>69</sup> leave alone.  
All things decay, and you'll decay  
And no one will know you passed this way. . . .  
Then heavily the old man sobbed,  
The Scriptures left alone.  
He paced his cell, to and fro,  
Then sat down and grieved, forlorn:  
"On this earth why was I born,  
Loving my Ukraine so?"

Then to Matins from the belfry  
Boomed the bell. Up rose the monk,  
His cowl he donned, his staff took he,  
Crossed himself, took his rosary. . . .  
And for Ukraine to pray  
The old monk hobbled away.

Orsk Fortress, 1847;  
Moscow, 1858

*by Herbert Marshall  
Translated*

## THE OUTLAW

As I was roaming far from home,  
Down Yelek way, I came across  
A countryman. An old, old man,  
A tortured convict with a brand  
Upon his brow. One Sunday 'twas  
I met him walking all alone  
Across a field. We 'gan to talk.  
His blessed Volyn he recalled,  
His youth when he was free and bold,  
His life entire. We sat and talked  
Behind a rise out in the field,  
Each told his past, our sins revealed  
To one another. "Ah, that's life,"  
He said to me. "'Tis all God's will.  
God's will! What man can do is nil,  
For all his vain and foolish strife!  
Just look at me, myself I wrecked,  
Myself I ruined my own life.  
But I blame no one, neither help  
Nor sympathy do I expect.  
I ask for nothing. Thus I'll die,  
My son, my one and only friend,  
Away from home in this strange land,  
An outlaw." And the convict sighed  
And dropped a tear. Oh, brother mine!  
While there is hope, don't let it die,  
Let it remain, don't drive it out,  
Let it warm your home betimes,  
Chilly walls will slowly thaw,  
And from old and weary eyes  
Freely then the tears will pour,  
Youthful tears, they'll purify,  
Ease your aching, tortured heart,

Like a bird from foreign climes  
It will fly to native parts.

“So much is gone,” he said to me,  
“No little water to the sea  
The Ikva’s carried all these years. . . .  
There was a village by that stream,  
’Twas in that village to my sad  
And sorry lot that I grew up.  
Oh, what a bitter, bitter cup! . . .  
Our lady of the manor had  
Two little sons, both of my age,  
She took me in to be their page,  
It really meant that for those lads  
I was a sort of whipping boy.  
The years went by and those two grew  
Like savage pups, and many knew  
Their painful bite, not only I.  
When tutors came, I studied too  
All they were taught, and paid the cost  
With tears! With blood itself! Because  
How dare we learn, slaves that we are,  
Much cheaper than the master’s dog?  
We’d dare to read?! Just pray to God,  
And meekly trudge behind the plough.  
And that is all. The peasant’s lot.  
That’s all a serf’s supposed to know,  
Such is his sorry destiny.  
My studies finished, boyhood done,  
I begged the mistress set me free.  
But no, she would not let me go,  
Nor to the army would agree  
To send me. What was I to do?  
All that remained for me—the plough. . . .  
While her own sons, the lordlings two,  
Enrolled in the Imperial Guards. . . .

The years ahead were grim and hard!  
Years full of grief and woe!  
I plodded on behind the plough.  
I had no folks at all, you know.  
A servant girl the neighbour had,  
He'd brought her up. And I . . .  
Oh fate, that awful fate of mine!  
She was a child, a child, no more,  
She was. . . . But no, Thy ways divine  
Are not for us to judge, O Lord!  
Well, to my ruin she grew up,  
For evil was my fate's design.  
Our love, alas, was not to be,  
I thought that she would marry me,  
We'd live in joy and happiness,  
The people and the Lord to bless. . . .  
What came to pass. . . .

A lot of food

Was cooked, and ale was brewed,  
But never served our wedding guests.  
Our lady's spouse, that old roué,  
Ransacked our stores and spilled the ale.  
Seduced the girl, made sport of her. . . .  
'Twas long ago . . . so why describe  
Or recollect. I'll say no more.  
It's over, finished, done with, gone. . . .  
I left the fields, I left my home,  
I left the village and my plough,  
My all. The devil prompted me  
To go to town and be a scribe.  
And so a year went by somehow.  
I scribed in town, good friends I made,  
And picked a gang of trusty blades.  
Another year went by. At last,  
The two young masters came to stay.  
Both were betrothed. The days they passed

In feasting, cards and other play,  
Carousing ere their wedding-day.  
They pounced on every village lass  
Like two young bulls. You know the way  
Of gentlemen. We waited too.  
We waited for their wedding-day.  
Came Trinity at last, and they  
Those fine and noble brides and grooms  
Were wedded in their private church,  
For they were Poles. You'd have to search  
The world to find their match in looks.  
The Lord Himself had never yet  
Seen bridal couples fair as they. . . .  
And then the band began to play,  
The couples from the church were led  
To their apartments where we lay  
In wait for them. We stabbed them dead,  
Those masters, princelings, newlyweds.  
We killed them all. Their wedding gay  
Became a bloodbath. None escaped,  
No Catholic remained unscathed.  
All swam in gore, in stinking slime.  
Like slaughtered pigs. Our business done,  
We started out for us to find  
A new abode, a home our own.  
And find we did, in green confines  
Of forest dark in gullies deep,  
In rolling fields, on hillsides steep,  
In spreading meadows. All was home,  
With room to give ourselves some fun,  
But never to relax or sleep.  
The gang elected me their head,  
My fam'ly grew by days and hours,  
Close on a hundred men I led.  
Blood flowed as freely as a sow's,  
I murdered all of master's bred,

By neither wrath nor pity roused.  
I simply slaughtered. Can't explain  
Myself what drove me on and on.  
A full three years I used my knives,  
A drunken butcher, that was me.  
I got quite used to weeping wives,  
To blood, to fires, to everything.  
I'd spike a baby like a toad  
And roast it o'er a blazing fire.  
Or catch a lady, strip her clothes,  
Then to a horse's back I'd tie her  
And send her flying through the steppe. . . .  
All that we did and even more,  
Till I grew sick of it and tired. . . .  
Hiding out became a torment,  
I was spent, I was distraught.  
And to cut my throat I wanted,  
Not to drag the mis'ry out.  
But a miracle so wondrous  
Was to happen to me then,  
Me, too vile to be called human. . . .  
Dawn was breaking as I came  
Out of darksome Brovar' forest,  
In my boot my trusty knife  
For the deed. And then I halted,  
There, up in the roseate sky  
Holy Kiev seemed suspended.  
Golden domes appeared alight,  
Bathed in awesome glory splendid,  
Talking with the Lord on high.  
Moved to tears, I gazed astound.  
Tolling Kiev bells I heard,  
Heaven borne the gentle sound.  
O my Lord, my Lord, my Lord!  
Thou art marvellous! I wept.  
Overwhelmed, I stood and wept.

And there rose up in my breast  
Such relief, away was swept  
All despair, all my distress.  
Like a man reborn I breathed.  
Once again I gazed at Kiev,  
Crossed myself, and then  
Slowly there my way I wended—  
Not to pray at ancient shrines,  
But to face the people's verdict,  
Beg them judge me for my crimes.

Orsk Fortress, 1848;  
St. Petersburg (?), 1858

*Translated  
by Olga Shartse*



## KINGS

If you, Apollo's agéd sister,<sup>70</sup>  
As was your wont in ancient days,  
Should chance to visit us and stay  
To lift your godly voice and utter  
A grand and lofty ode, I may  
My modest self be sorely tempted,  
Though from such tedious rite exempted,  
To sing the praises of the tsars.  
For I admit to you that, far  
From being pleased with, I am weary  
Of all my poor, dishonoured maids,  
My lords and peasants, and would fain,  
No more of word or sentence chary,  
Pour out my boredom and disgust  
And write of tsars and reigning princes,  
By God anointed. . . . So intense is  
My nausea that write I must. . . .  
Teach me to pluck them, and the chances  
Are that I'll flay these most august  
And honoured folk of skin and feathers. . . .  
So leave Parnassus and descend  
To earth, I beg you, ancient mother,  
And let your feeble voice ascend  
To saintly heights. . . . Let us together  
To caesars and such like attend,  
And for a worthy moment bend  
Our efforts to the task of peeling  
Their mantles off, and so revealing  
The sorry contents. . . . Come, dear friend,  
Begin, no part of truth concealing.

## I

Jerusalem lies hushed and nigh deserted,  
 Its gates are bolted. . . . Is't the plague  
   that holds  
 The city in its grip? . . . Nay, worse. . . .  
   'Tis parted  
 From God's own mercy, ne'er before withheld.  
 War has King David in his wisdom started,  
 And Israel is orphaned, and it bleeds!

The whole of Israel's weakly host,  
 Young, beardless lads included, all  
 Its manhood rally to the call,  
 The princes too. . . . No time is lost,  
 They lock away the scrolls and haste  
 To fight King David's foe and leave  
 Their children fatherless. . . . The town  
 Is still and empty, save alone  
 For fair young widows who do grieve  
 To see their helpless orphaned babes,  
 And curse the prophet king. . . . Meanwhile,  
 He walks, does David, with a smile  
 Upon the palace roof, in robes  
 Of crimson clad, and lets his eye,  
 As oily as a cat's when lard  
 Lies within reach, with soft regard  
 Stray o'er the house of neighbourly  
 Uriah. . . . In the garden there  
 He sees the lovely figure bare  
     Of Uriah's beauteous partner,  
     Bathsheba by name,  
     Who is bathing by a fountain,  
     Lost, like Eve, to shame.  
     She caresses now her bosom,  
     Now her milk-white arms,

And the sovereign falls a victim  
To her earthly charms.

Dusk has descended, fitful sleep embraces  
Jerusalem. . . . Within his palace hid,  
King David (how his eye, lascivious, blazes!)  
The royal chambers in a frenzy paces  
And whispers hoarsely: "I. . . . Nay, *we* so bid!

I am the ruler of this land,  
The chosen people's God and king,  
Their all in all!" At his command  
The slaves a bounteous supper bring  
And wine to cheer him in the night.  
He next instructs them to invite  
Uriah's spouse. . . . Aside she flings,  
Does Bathsheba, convention's stays,  
And comes, as she was bid, to grace  
The monarch's board. . . . With him she

whiles  
Full many an hour away, is dined  
And wined, slave though she is, in style,  
And later shares the prophet's bed  
With sweet compliance. . . . And the poor,  
Betrayed Uriah calmly sleeps  
And never knows that in the deep  
Of night the wily king has lured  
His wife from him, has robbed him of  
The one possession that above  
All else he holds. . . . And to ensure  
That it may never reach his ear  
What does the king but engineer  
Uriah's speedy death. . . . His tears  
And words of penitence deceive  
Old Nathan, and as drunk and gay  
As ever, David spends his days  
In revels with his lovely slave.

So do the saintly rulers live!  
As for the plain ones, I don't know. . . .  
And counsel you not to inquire,  
To stay in ignorance entire,  
Lest it should bring you needless woe! . . .

## II

King David's piousness was not  
Extreme. . . . Like many saints, a son  
And daughter too he had begot.  
In this, as most of you will own,  
There's nothing very strange. . . . But  
  stay!  
I'll tell you all, and then you may  
Judge for yourselves. . . . A handsome one  
Was Amnon, David's son. . . . To see  
So blithe and sweet a youth as he  
Take of a sudden to his bed  
Rends David's heart. . . . He strews  
  his head  
With ashes, tears his crimson gown,  
And weeps to hear poor Amnon moan.  
"My son!" he cries, "limb of my limb!  
My heart is sore, my sight bedimmed. . . .  
Do not thy father's plea deny,  
Leave thou not me, or I must die!"  
And with a cry he runs to him  
Or hobbles, rather. And Amnon lies,  
Strong as a bull and just as sound,  
Stretched on his couch, and groans aloud  
And heaves the most despondent sighs,  
And laughing up his sleeve, implores  
The king to let his most adored,  
His lovely sister Tamar come  
And visit him. . . . With streaming eyes

So does he speak: "O thou most wise  
And gracious king, I am become  
Weak, and am plunged in awful gloom. . . .  
Let Tamar bake a cake for me  
And bring it here, for then, 't may be,  
I shall be healed. . . ." And Tamar from  
Her chamber to her brother's hastes,  
Come morning, and with her she takes  
A cake that she herself has baked.  
He forthwith grabs her by the waist,  
And forces her on to the bed.  
Poor Tamar cries: "My brother, led  
Art thou by evil. . . . Mercy! . . . Spare  
Thy sister own! . . ." She wrings her hands  
And cries again: "By God and man  
Wilt thou be curs't, and I shall ne'er  
Live down my shame. . . . Stay thou thy lust. . . .  
Come, let me free! . . ." But, sad to tell,  
This he will not. So do the princes,  
The just, the wondrous wise, the puissant,  
    In truth, like to amuse themselves. . . .  
    Good people, mark it well!

### III

King David reached a vast old age,  
    Like many a sage,  
But ran to seed and so declined  
That though they heaped his robes on him  
The lecher shivered still and pined  
For warmth in every bone and limb.  
His slaves and lackeys then opined  
(His wolfish nature well they knew)  
That nothing else was there to do  
But find some young and lovely maids  
To keep him warm. . . . A bevy soon

Is 'fore his senile gaze displayed. . . .  
The slaves withdraw, the old buffoon  
Having been served and thus obeyed.

Licks his lips, does old King David,  
And by lust possessed,  
Slobbering, his hands he stretches  
Toward the loveliest  
Of them all—a lily tender,  
As the morning bright,  
Abishag, a sweet-faced virgin,  
Born a Shummanite.  
With her body does she warm him  
While the others play  
Noisy games, and bare of raiment,  
Wax uncommon gay.  
How she warmed her senile ruler  
I, forsooth, know not,  
I but know that though she warmed him,  
He . . . he knew her not.

#### IV

Prince Rogvolod,<sup>71</sup> a jolly old soul,  
Strolls o'er his courtyard with measured  
gait,  
While round about his henchmen wait,  
And too his warriors in gold  
And shining silver clad. . . . They all  
Expect the prince, Rogneda's groom,  
And in his honour hold a fête. . . .

'Fore Lel and Lado, godheads two,  
Rogneda lights a fire; the flames  
Lick at the oil, a strong perfume  
Of incense fills the air. . . . Like true

Valkyrias, around the fire  
Rogneda's lovely playmates dance  
And chant this song:

*Ho, flames, leap higher,  
We do so desire  
To add full measure  
To our guests' pleasure.*

Beyond the town of Polotsk rise  
Thick clouds of dust. Both young and old  
Go forth in haste to meet the prince,  
Rogneda's wooer. . . . And there, behold,  
Is Rogvolod, and with him fair  
Rogneda, mid the welcomers.

Toward them comes, alas, not Lithuania's prince,  
He Rogneda chose for to be her mate.  
With his men-at-arms, like a wild boar,  
Like a maddened boar or an aurochs fierce,  
Prince Volodimir<sup>72</sup> comes of Kiev-town,  
Not to woo he comes, but to hunt and slay.

The town, by walls and ramparts bounded,  
Is by the enemy surrounded,  
And set afire. . . . Old Rogvolod  
Is put to death. . . . Rogneda's led,  
In chains, to Kiev with the rest,  
And there deflowered. . . . At the behest  
Of Kiev's ruler she's sent to roam  
The world, forsaken and alone,  
Poor maid. . . . Sad is her plight. . . . For who  
Is there to help her? . . . None! . . . So do  
Disport themselves our revered tsars,  
They that by God appointed are  
To rule on earth.

V

May they be hanged, the bloody butchers,  
 And cursed! . . . A most unholy fuss  
 Over these sceptre-wielding wretches  
 Is made, methinks. . . . One's at a loss  
 How best to deal with them, or even  
 How to approach them. . . . I am driven  
 To seek your counsel. . . . Tell me, now,  
 Apollo's sister, O most civil  
 And courteous of ladies, how,  
 Think you, am I to learn to grovel  
 Before the throne? . . . For Easter day,  
 If but some coppers come my way,  
 I'll buy you, lass, a necklace. . . . Truly,  
 Let's put our minds to it, and coolly  
 Turn into lackeys, you and I,  
 And serve the tsars until we die. . . .  
 But stay! . . . 'Tis waste of ink and paper  
 So to go on. . . . Good cannot prosper  
 Where freedom is in fetters. . . . We  
 Shall to the village, O my goddess,  
 Repair, where men reside in goodness.  
 Amongst them we in peace shall live,  
 And to the Lord our praises give.

Kos-Aral, 1848;  
 St. Petersburg (?), 1858

*Translated*  
*by Irina Zheleznova*



## MARINA

A stabbing nail within the heart—  
So is Marina unto me.  
I durst not earlier impart  
Her story lest they say I lie  
And take the poor lost sinner's part  
To vent my hate and enmity  
For all that snarling pack of curs,  
The gentlefolk; they'd dub me churl,  
Boor, canting fool and knave,  
A serf from birth and to his grave,  
But nay, I lie not, as God seeth,  
That I'm no lord 'thout shame declare.  
'Tis you I blush to look upon,  
You that enlightened Christians are.

. . . . .

A wild beast could not have done  
That which, while piously  
Mumbling your prayers on bended knee,  
You visit on your brothers own. . . . Your laws  
Were writ by butchers. . . . But this did cause  
No pangs amongst you. . . . Just in case,  
To be absolved of sin you haste  
To Kiev, to an anchorite. . . .  
But why do I complain?  
Truly, neither good nor evil  
Can I feel again. . . .  
And to him of hardened spirit  
This will give no pain.  
So, my muse, my friend in sorrow,  
Fly from the Ukraine,  
From the sweet Ukraine, my mother,  
Come ye flying nigh,  
And to me of poor Marina  
Speak with muffled sigh.

Tell me how the well-born villain  
 Dealt with her, but, pray,  
 In a whisper speak lest strangers  
 Overhear and say  
 That we rob and burn and pillage,  
 That we're shriftless scum—  
 Then e'en farther we'll then be banished,  
 Nigh to kingdom come.

. . . . .  
 . . . . .

. . . . . Not long ago, as I did hear,  
 A village wedding was held; the cheer  
 Was general, and mirth ran high.  
 Just then the lord came driving by,  
 Home on his way from church; he may  
 Have been the steward, I cannot say.  
 Such was the gayety that none  
 Did see the Pole as quickly on  
 He drove. . . . But keen, alas,  
 Was he of sight, and on the lass,  
 The bride, so rosy-cheeked and fair,  
 His roving, lustful eye did light.  
 Oh, why does Heaven spare  
 Such demons in human form! . . . Not quite  
 Two years had passed since he arrived,  
 Bringing his German ploughs, the fiend. . . .  
 And he, he shames young maids and sires  
 Unhappy bastards that know not friend  
 Or home. . . . This man of low design  
 Was wed, and father to  
 Two children—angels two.  
 Out walking with their mother, as fine  
 A youthful matron as one may meet,  
 They were when up he drove and sent  
 For the bridegroom. . . . Then, his partner sweet

Coming close, he kiss'd her thrice; content,  
The children crowded round to greet  
Their parent, and together they  
Made for the house. . . . Quick to obey,  
The servants ushered in the groom.

(To army servitude for life

No sooner wed is he than doomed!)

Poor wretch, he's parted from his wife,  
And off to town they carry him,  
Where, in obedience to a whim,  
He's made a recruit. . . . So do we

With human lives make free!

As for the bride, is she to spend  
Her life a spinster, though so young  
And lovely? . . . Is it Heaven's intent,  
Now that her wedded bliss has gone  
Like so much smoke, and all's undone  
That was to be, to make her toil

In the master's field? . . . Oh, no, the  
spoils

She now becomes of the lord, is call'd  
Marysia, in the Polish style,  
No more Marina, and is install'd  
In the lord's own manor house; to smile  
They order her, but she—she weeps,  
And faithful to her yokel keeps,  
The silly wench. . . . If she were wise  
She'd know she was in paradise! . . .  
She need but ask for this or that,  
And 'twill be hers, and richly served,  
Though ill by such as she deserved.  
But no, all that she does is prate  
Of going back to her lowly hut.  
And this, when like a puffed-up cock  
The lord himself around her struts! . . .  
Marina, nay; by hook or crook,

But he will make you his. . . . Comply,  
Or else go hang yourself and die! . . .

To the lord, her mother  
Came to beg for mercy,  
But his henchmen sent her  
Off with threats and cursing.  
With her heart nigh bursting,  
She staggered off. . . . Her only child  
Was lost. . . . Aye, she was shamed, defiled,  
Proud, sweet-faced Marina! . . . . .  
. . . . .

Much like a raven that soars on high  
Predicting rain with raucous cry,  
So of the grief I speak and woe  
Of those poor souls on whom a sigh,  
In truth, none but myself bestow.

The wretches are denied  
The solace of pity e'en. . . . Accord  
My words a sacred strength, o Lord,  
That they may pierce men's hearts and wring  
Tears from their eyes, aye, tears, whose sting  
Melts callous spirits; that they may  
Teach them compassion's voice to hear  
And with my own deep sorrow sear  
Their souls. . . . Along Thy righteous way  
That they their faltering steps may guide,  
And fill their hearts with love and pride  
For such as are their fellows. . . .

Home

Marina's mother, weary, came;  
The hut was empty. . . . On the sill  
Stood flowers in pots, the white-washed wall  
Was gay with crosses daubed thereon  
Most prettily. . . . But she was gone  
Whose busy hands had so transformed

The room's dull drabness. . . . And a storm  
Of weeping shook the mother's frame;  
She stumbled out, Marina's name  
Repeating loudly; climbed a hill  
That overlooked the house where poor  
Marina languished, and whose door  
Was barred to her; then, knowing ill  
Why so she did, went down the road  
That led her to the cursed abode,  
And to the ground, her strength now failing,  
Sank, there to weep beside the paling  
All night. . . . The shepherds with their herds  
Passed by, the sun arose, and evening  
Descended fast. . . . She never stirred. . . .  
They beat her, set the dogs on her—  
To no avail! . . . . .

Like a nun, in white appalled,  
Locked away from sight,  
In her lonely room, Marina  
Sits from morn till night.  
There she sits, and to her Maker  
Prays with streaming eyes,  
While the lordling, he waits upon her  
And to tempt her tries  
With, perhaps, a toothsome dainty,  
Wine, a sweet, but no—  
She declines, she does not even  
Glance his way. . . . He grows  
Livid in his rage, the villain,  
    To be thus defied.  
    Summer passes into winter,  
    But encased in pride  
    Is Marina still. . . . The steward  
    Fumes, but she is proof  
'Gainst his courting, and is wasting

'Neath the friendless roof.  
Silent is she now, no longer  
Weeps, her tears have dried.  
But the lordling, he is helpless,  
For she'd rather die  
Than give in. . . . One winter's evening  
All alone she sat,  
Gazing darkly out the window  
At the forest, lit  
By a tub-shaped moon that, crimson,  
Moved across the sky.  
Said Marina in a whisper:  
"Young and bright was I  
As the moon, but now—" And sighing,  
She began to sing:

*'Tis a rich house, it is,  
Guests come when they please.  
Her plaits they unbind,  
And the ribbons undo,  
And the lord asks for lard  
And the devil for stew,  
And the screeching geese  
Fly beyond the blue seas  
Where the earth meets the sky, the sky!*

. . . . .  
Out in the yard, a hue and cry  
The whips start up; a frenzied barking  
Comes from the dogs. . . Red-faced and shaking  
With fury, like a drunken brigand,  
The lord hastes to Marina. . . .

Feeling

The cold wind not, beside the paling  
Her mother sits as by a hearth,  
The crazy hag, and this despite  
The crackling frost that numbs the earth. . . .

The moon has turned from red to white;  
 The watchman hoarsely calls the hour  
 For fear he wake the lord; the bower  
 Which is Marina's suddenly  
 Bursts into flame. . . . Fire! Fire! . . . And see—  
 A crowd collects, as if they'd sprung  
 From out the earth. . . . Both old and young  
 Come running nigh from every side,  
 Like waves, a surging, mounting tide,  
 To watch the eerie sight. . . . For there,  
 Seen clearly in the fire's glare,  
 Beside the house Marina dances,  
 Stark naked, with her mother, and  
 A bloody knife clasped in one hand,  
 Her ballad chants:

*Is it not you, my beauty,  
 All dressed up to look pretty? . . .  
 I'm a lady, and wear  
 A lady-like air.  
 The lords court and woo me,  
 Great honour they do me.*

*(To her mother)*

“Come you, my mother, from the grave  
 To see me wedded? . . . Fie! . . .  
 My plaits they did unbind when he,  
 The lord arrived. . . . Honk! Honk! . . . What have  
 We here? . . . Geese, think you? . . . Nay,  
 The gentry, for I know they crave  
 A warmer clime. . . . Honk! . . . See?—Away  
 To Satan's own domain they fly.  
 The bells are tolling. Hear them? . . . Fire! . . .  
 The bells of Kiev. . . . But the lord  
 Lies reading. . . . Wait. . . . He pulls the cord,  
 He wants a drink. . . . You know that I  
 Have slit his throat? . . . Look yonder. . . . He

Is perched atop the chimney. . . . Aye. . . .  
Charred as a log. . . . Scat! Leave me be,  
Me and my mother. . . . Don't you drool,  
Here, stuff yourself and choke, you ghoul!"

*(Makes a "fig" at him and sings)*

*To the Lord I swear above,  
A Muscovy lad I love!  
The Muscovy lad is smart,  
He'll bring a gown and steal a heart.  
A lordling's no worse,  
He comes with a purse,  
And the son of a priest  
With a necklace, at least!  
Ring, bells, ring loud,  
Disperse the clouds!  
Let the Tatars have rain  
Again and again,  
And all Christians true,  
Bright skies and blue.  
Ring, bells, ring loud!*

*Mother*

Marina, sweet, 'tis time for bed.

*Marina*

Aye, so it is. . . . Tomorrow we  
Must early be in church. . . . But see—  
He's after me, his arms outspread.  
Take that, you fiend!

*Mother*

Let's off to bed!

*(To the crowd)*

Help! She's undone, good folk. Alack! . . .



*Marina*

Come, tie my hands behind my back,  
Come, seize me, lead me to the lord! . . .  
And you, my mother, your adored,  
Your own Marina—care you not  
To see her? . . . In yon chamber, she,  
A captive, sits. . . . Sad is her lot. . . .  
She wilts, she dies, by all forgot,  
Poor, poor Marina. . . .”

*(Sings)*

*Grey geese, honk-honk!  
To the Danube fly.  
My hair's bound up,  
And I sit and sigh.*

The birds are gay and free of care,  
The birds, they wheel and sport on high,  
And I. . . . I'm held a prisoner.

*(Weeps)*

O, for a necklace. . . . With it I  
Could hang myself. . . . What else is there  
To do? . . . I have it—drown! . . . Now, now,  
Weep not, dear heart, I beg you. . . . Spare  
Your poor Marina. . . . Dark of brow,  
She stands beside you. . . . Do not make  
Her cry. . . . Oh! Oh! Look there—a snake  
Is coiling towards us o'er the snow. . . .  
It's black as pitch. . . . Away I'll go  
To southern lands. . . . For am I not  
A cuckoo-bird! . . . Why won't he spend  
His furlough here? . . . Dear God! . . . The war. . . .  
They killed him. . . . Aye. . . . But listen, for  
I had the strangest dream. . . . The moon  
Shone bright above us. . . . On the dunes,

Beside the sea, together we  
Were strolling. . . . Suddenly the stars  
Began to drop, one after one,  
Into the water. . . . There remained  
But one up in the sky. . . . Alone  
I found myself, and clad in bare  
And ugly rags. . . . I was trying to wade  
Across the Danube with a babe,  
A bastard, in my arms. . . . They jeered  
And mocked at me, said I was queer  
And called me trollop and witless jade. . . .  
You too were grinning. . . . As for me,  
I wept. . . . Nay, laughed. . . . For I was free  
To fly. . . . An owl am I. . . . Look! Look! . . .”  
And waving her arms as if they were  
A pair of wings, away she ran  
With howl the like of which no man  
But only beast of prey can utter.  
And after her her aged mother  
Went hobbling. Baked to death like pigs  
Were all the lords, the house burnt down.  
In silence did the lookers-on  
Disperse. Of poor Marina naught  
Was heard or seen. . . . In early spring  
Two corpses in the field were found,  
And buried there, high on a mound.

Kos-Aral,  
1848

*Translated*  
*by Irina Zheleznova*

## UNWASHED IS THE SKY

Unwashed is the sky, waves drowsily throng;  
Along the shore there, far away,  
As if drunk, the rushes sway  
And bend without a wind. "How long,  
How long, O Lord, shall I remain  
In this barless prison-plain,  
'Longside this oh so useless sea,  
In this weary world?" It does not speak,  
As if alive its silent swell—  
Steppeland's faded yellow grass;  
It does not wish the truth to tell  
And there's no one else to ask.

Kos-Aral,  
1848

*Translated  
by Herbert Marshall*

## YOUNG MASTERS, IF YOU ONLY KNEW

Young masters, if you only knew  
How people weep there all life through,  
You'd not compose your rhapsodies,  
And God for nothing you'd not praise,  
Nor mock our tears by twisting truth.  
That tranquil cottage in the grove  
You call a paradise—I know.  
In such a cottage once I dwelt,  
'Twas there my first hot tears were spilt,  
My early tears! I know no vice,  
No wrong or ill, however rare,  
That's not found in that cottage fair. . . .  
And yet they call it paradise!

I do not call that little house  
In a small village, by a copse,  
A very paradise on earth.  
'Twas there my mother gave me birth  
And, singing as her child she nursed,  
She passed her pain to me. . . . 'Twas there,  
In that wee house, that Eden fair,  
That I saw hell. . . . There people slave  
Without a let-up night and day,  
Not even having time to pray.  
In that same village to her grave  
My gentle mother, young in years,  
Was laid by toil and want and cares.  
There father, weeping with his brood  
(We were but tiny, tattered tots),  
Could not withstand his bitter lot  
And died at work in servitude! . . .  
And we—we scattered where we could  
Like little field mice. I to school—  
To carry water for the class.

My brothers slaved on the estate  
And then, conscripted, marched away!  
And you, my sisters! Fortune has  
Reserved for you the cruellest fate!  
What is the purpose of your life?  
Your youth in service slipped away,  
Your locks in servitude turn grey,  
In service, sisters, you will die!

My blood runs cold when I recall  
That cottage in the village fair!  
Such deeds, O God, do we do there  
Where piety rules over all  
And all in paradise should dwell!  
Of heaven we have made a hell,  
Yet for another heaven call.  
We with our brothers live in peace,  
We with our brothers plough the fields,  
And water them with brothers' tears.  
And also, maybe. . . . Nay, I fear,  
But so it seems. . . . perhaps, O God  
(Because without Thy will divine  
We'd not in nakedness repine  
In paradise), perhaps You mock  
Us also, Father, from the sky  
And with the masters You conspire  
On how to rule us here below.  
For look: there smiles a verdant grove,  
And from behind the grove a pool  
Peeps shyly out, behind it stands  
A row of willows washing hands,  
Their branches, in the waters cool. . . .  
Is this not truly paradise?  
Look once again until your eyes  
See what has made this heaven cruel!  
Will you see gladness, hear but praise

Of God for all that He has done,  
For all the marvels He has made?  
No, not a bit! There's praise for none!  
Just blasphemy and blood and wails—  
All things are curst, all is blasphemed!  
There's nothing sacred left on earth. . . .  
And even Thee, it seems to me,  
The people have already cursed!

Orenburg,  
1850

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## THE LIGHTS ARE BLAZING

The lights are blazing, music's playing,  
The music's weeping, sobbing, wailing;  
Like jewels gleaming in the night  
The eyes of youth are shining gaily,  
Alight with hope, with pleasure flaming;  
Their eyes are bright, for to the sight  
Of innocence all things seem right.  
So all are laughing, all are jolly,  
And all are dancing. Only I,  
As though accursed, in melancholy  
Look on and wipe a mournful eye.  
Why do I weep? Perhaps the reason's  
That dreary, like the rainy season,  
My youth has joylessly slipped by.

Orenburg,  
1850

*Translated  
by John Weir*

**DEAR GOD, CALAMITY AGAIN<sup>73</sup>**

Dear God, calamity again! . . .  
It was so peaceful, so serene;  
We but were set to shed the chains  
That bind our folk in slavery. . . .  
When halt! . . . Again the people's blood  
Is streaming! Like rapacious dogs  
Over a bone, the royal thugs  
Are at each other's throat again.

Novopetrovsk Fortress,  
1854 (?)

*Translated  
by John Weir*



## THE HALF-WIT<sup>74</sup>

'Twas in Tsar Sergeant-Major's<sup>75</sup> reign  
That close-cropped Corporal One-Arm  
And drink-besotted Long-of-Arm,<sup>76</sup>  
Two N.C.O.s, ruled the Ukraine.  
They did things grandly, truth to tell.  
They robbed the people very well,  
Those non-commissioned satraps twain,  
One-Arm especially excelled  
With his lance-corp'ral's<sup>77</sup> help—that lad  
Was lively, vicious, wholly bad.  
They drilled the folks such wondrous ways  
The Sergeant-Major were amazed  
To see such drills, and very glad,  
And told the N.C.O.s “our praise  
And favour” at all times they had.  
While we in craven silence gazed  
Like dummies, only scratched our pates.  
Oh fawning, cringing, dastard slaves,<sup>78</sup>  
The footstools of the tsar and tools  
Of the drunk corporal! Ye aides  
And lackeys of the men who rule,  
Informers, philistines, not you  
For truth and freedom can arise.  
Not how to love, but crucify  
Your brothers is your venal creed!  
Oh treacherous, accursed breed,  
When will you pass? When will we greet  
Our own George Washington at last  
With the new law of righteousness?  
Oh, there's no doubt that day we'll see!  
Not hundreds, millions of you,  
Sons of the ancient Slavic tribes  
Of the Ukraine, the corp'ral ruled;  
And you, my blessed Kievites,

With your neat women-folk were nought  
But servants at the beck and call  
Of his drunk latrine-cleaning squads.  
You didn't seem to mind at all.  
And yet among you one queer duck,  
One freak was found in all the lot,  
Who smashed the satrap in the mug—  
Right in the church—a hefty slug,  
And there it ended.  
Then you, fools, should have risen too  
To fight against him—ah, but you. . . .  
You were afraid. . . .

That was the case!

Among a million swineherds base  
There proved to be one Cossack true  
Who set the empire all abuzz:  
He gave the satrap's snout a bust. . .  
And then what did you, half-wits, do:  
While yet the corp'ral lay abed,  
The saintly knight, who laid him there,  
To be a half-wit you declared!  
The tyrant Sergeant-Major sent  
The saint to penal servitude;  
And said with great solicitude  
That he his battered satrap old  
"Eternally" with favour viewed.  
And nothing else at all transpired:  
By back lanes to the garbage pile  
They took the drama. Well, and I. . .  
My shining star! My steps you guide  
From prison and from exile far  
Straight to the cesspool of the tsar,<sup>79</sup>  
And shine upon it, glowing bright  
With an unearthly, holy light—  
Life-giving light, and from the cess  
His godless acts of wickedness

Rise up before me row on row. . .  
Oh tsar of wickedness and woe,  
And persecutor of the right!  
Oh, what you've done upon the earth!  
    And as for You, All-Seeing Eye!<sup>80</sup>  
As You looked down, did You not spy  
How throngs of saints<sup>81</sup> in chains they drove  
Into Siberia's frozen wastes,  
How tortured them 'mid ice and snow,  
And crucified! You did not know?  
On all those doings You could gaze  
And not be blinded?! Eye, O Eye!  
You don't see deep, though look from high!  
You sleep in icons, while the tsars. . . .  
But fawn on them, the rulers base!  
May they be haunted by those chains,  
While I fly to Siberia, far  
Beyond the Lake Baikal; and there  
Into the mountain dungeon lairs  
And pits abysmal I will probe,  
And I'll lead out, encased in chains,  
The saints, who freedom's cause maintain,  
Into the light of day, to show  
To tsars and people—a parade  
Of endless columns, clanking chains. . . .

Nizhny Novgorod,  
1857

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## FATE

You never played me false, O Fate,  
You've been my closest friend always,  
My brother and my sister too.  
When I was yet a little tot  
You took me to the sexton's school  
To learn my letters from the sot.  
"Just study hard, my boy," you said,  
"And you'll be somebody in time!"  
I listened, studied, forged ahead,  
Got educated. But you lied.  
What am I now? Yet never mind!  
We've walked the straight path, you and I,  
We've never cheated, compromised,  
Or lived the very slightest lie.  
So let's march on, dear Fate of mine!  
My humble, truthful, faithful friend!  
Let us march on: there glory lies,  
And glory is my testament.

Nizhny Novgorod,  
February 9, 1858

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## A DREAM

For her master the harvest she sickled,  
Then, not to rest—though tired and worn—  
She hobbled through the stooks of corn  
Her son Ivan to see and suckle.  
In swaddling clothes the baby cried  
In the scanty shade beneath the stooks.  
She unwrapped him, she lullabied  
And fed him; then, babe in her lap,  
Into sleep she began to slide.  
And she dreamed that her son Ivan  
Both handsome and wealthy had become,  
No longer single, but a married man—  
A free woman his wife, and he—  
No longer a serf, but also free;  
They reap for themselves their very own wheat  
On their very own happy field,  
And their children bring them their dinner to eat.  
And then the poor thing smiled to herself.  
And woke—nothing was left but thin air.  
She looked at Ivan, then gently there  
Again in his swaddling bands she wound  
And before the steward returned from his round  
Off to finish the shock went she.

St. Petersburg,  
July 13, 1858

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

## I'M NOT UNWELL

I'm not unwell, it's just that I  
Some things that loom ahead espy,  
And that my heart for something waits.  
It weeps and whimpers, sobs and aches,  
Just like a child that's not been fed.  
Perhaps it senses nought ahead  
But still more ills? Await no good,  
Expected freedom don't await—  
It is asleep: Tsar Nicholas  
Lulled it to sleep. But if you'd wake  
This sickly freedom, all the folk  
Must in their hands sledge-hammers take  
And axes sharp—and then all go  
That sleeping freedom to awake.  
If not, the wretched thing will stay  
Asleep right up to Judgement Day!  
The masters will not let it rise,  
They'll build more palaces and shrines,  
Their drunken tsar they will adore,  
And worship the Byzantine<sup>82</sup> rites—  
And, as I see it, nothing more.

St. Petersburg,  
November 22, 1858

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## ISAIAH. CHAPTER 35

*(An imitation)*

Rejoice, o desert, arid wilderness!  
Rejoice, o barren land, whose nakedness  
No raiment knows of golden grain!  
Let blossoms bright bedeck your plain!  
Lo, like the banks of holy Jordan  
With gardens lush and meadows verdant  
You'll flourish in the days to be!  
And then the honour and the glory  
Of Lebanon and Carmel hoary,<sup>83</sup>  
Not crafty cant, will mantle thee  
In priestly vestment, sewn so finely,  
Goodwill and freedom for their living,  
With golden thread on silken sheen.  
And then the people blind and witless  
A miracle divine shall witness.

The toil-worn, weary bondsmen's hands  
That day will rest at ease,  
And from their iron fetter-bands  
Their legs will be released!  
Rejoice, ye poor, take heart, ye meek—  
'Tis Judgement Day on Earth,  
And God has come to set you free,  
Who chains have borne since birth.  
And to ill-doers He will mete  
According to their crimes!

When sacred justice, Lord, arrives  
If only for a fleeting hour  
To rest upon this Earth of ours. . . .  
The blind will open up their eyes,  
The halt like startled stags will run.  
The dumb will find their voice once more;

And like a flood the words will pour  
Until this parched and sterile plain  
Is watered with reviving rain  
And comes to life; gay streams will flow  
Through fertile fields, and shady trees  
About the silver lakes will grow,  
While song-birds make all Nature glow.

Then land and lake with life will teem,  
In place of narrow roads of old  
On every side there will unfold  
New highways, broad and sacred roads  
Of freedom: and the rulers won't  
Those new roads discover,  
But all the slaves will tread those ways  
Without fuss or bother  
To come together, brothers free,  
In gay celebration.  
And where the desert was, will be  
Happy habitations.

St. Petersburg,  
March 25, 1859

*Translated*  
*by John Weir*



## TO MY SISTER<sup>84</sup>

Passing the joyless hamlets poor,  
Down along sad Dnieper's shore,  
I mused: "Where shall I shelter find?  
And who on earth will comfort me?"  
And then I dreamed a dream: I see,  
In a garden, flower-entwined,  
Like a maiden young it seems,  
Stands a cottage on a hillock.  
The Dnieper far and wide outspreading.  
Flickering and flashing on it streams!  
In the garden cool I see,  
'Neath a shady cherry-tree,  
My one and only sister dear!  
My much-suffering sister saintly!  
As if in Eden's Garden waits  
To see me, poor thing, appear  
From beyond wide Dnieper's waves.  
To her it seems a boat's emerging,  
From the waves, shorewards surging. . . .  
Then into the waves submerging.  
"My joy!" "My brother!" rang the cry—  
And then we awakened. You're. . . .  
A serf, and still unfree am I! . . .  
Perforce from childhood we've gone through it,  
A field of thorns we've had to pass!  
So pray, my sister! If life lasts,  
Then God will help us pass right through it.

Cherkassy,  
July 20, 1859

*Translated  
by Herbert Marshall*



From early childhood, Mary lived  
In Joseph's house. The old man was  
A carpenter, I do believe,  
Or cooper; she, a sweet-faced lass,  
His servant. . . . Time is known to fly,  
And so it did. The maiden flowered  
Out into womanhood, her bower  
The lowly hut where lovely as  
A rose she blossomed. A haven true  
Was that poor hut to man and maid.  
The carpenter would lay aside  
His tools to gaze at her who grew  
Daily more lovely, and forget  
To ply his trade, so full of wonder  
Would he become. . . . Did Heaven send her  
To be his child, or wife? . . . Regret  
Seized him at times. . . . His youth had flown,  
While she, poor orphan, was alone  
In all the world. . . . Such were the thoughts  
That oft would come to him, unsought.  
And Mary, sitting by the fence,  
Spun clouds of snowy yarn to make  
A cape for him, or hurried thence  
With goat and kid down to the lake  
Where they would graze for hours on end.  
A good way off it was, but she  
Did love the holy waters of  
The broad Tiberias, and there  
Was always willing to repair,  
Laughing in glee, glad that no move  
Was made by Joseph to reprove  
Her who was but a servant for  
Roaming the countryside. . . . Bemused,  
He'd sit there idly, while she used  
The hours to stand upon the shore  
And stare, like one bewitched, upon

The quiet waters, an orison  
Filling her heart, her brilliant eye  
Clouded with thought. . . . Thus did she speak:  
"Tiberias, thou mighty sea,  
Thou king of lakes, of thee I seek  
An answer. . . . Tell me, what's to be  
My fate and Joseph's? . . ." And so saying,  
One fateful day, she stood there swaying,  
A lonely poplar in the wind.  
"The old man's burden I will shoulder,  
I'll be a child to him, a daughter. . . .  
Aye, in my youth a prop he'll find."  
She smiled at this, her eye glowed brighter,  
She stirred, her chiton softly slipped  
From off her pearl-white shoulder, kept  
Hidden beneath its ragged folds,  
And beauty dazzling to behold  
Was thus revealed, such as human eye  
Had never seen. . . . But destiny's cold  
And evil hand her steps did guide  
Over a thorny path, delighting  
In mocking her, poor maiden! . . .

Lightly

She ran along the shore, beside  
The tranquil lake, and soon espied  
A burdock growing there. . . . She stooped,  
And plucking it, atop her head  
Perched it, that head so young, that saintly,  
That lovely head. . . . Then, sighing faintly,  
She vanished in the grove ahead.  
O sun, o light that never wanes,  
O maid as pure as thou art fair,  
O tender lily of the plains,  
In what dark forest, in what rare  
And secret spot canst thou find shelter  
From that remorseless ray, that bitter

And scorching blaze which, without flame,  
Will soon reduce thine heart to cinders,  
Will flood thy soul, and helpless render  
Thy being? . . . Nowhere! . . . It will claim  
All of thyself. . . . 'Tis kindled, aye,  
That all-consuming fire, 'tis raging,  
Its fearful victory presaging  
Over thine youth and over thy  
Chaste loveliness. . . . It will permeate  
Thy blood, and eat into thy marrow,  
And lay the stamp of darkest sorrow  
Upon thy brow; 'twill lick thy feet  
As in thine own son's wake thou'lt go  
Across Gehenna. . . . See—the glow  
Of that devouring, deadly blaze—  
It is reflected in thy gaze,  
It is thy future, lass. . . . But no! . . .  
Avert thine eyes from sight so cruel,  
Into thy tresses twine yonder cool  
And fragrant blooms, and in the shade  
Sleep while there's time. . . .

At even, out the twilit grove  
She stole, did Mary. . . . Up above  
The moon shone bright. . . . Mount Tabor gleamed  
As though of gold and silver made,  
Blinding the sight. . . . With humble love,  
Her eyes, those radiant eyes and starry,  
The maiden shyly, meekly raised  
And at its magic beauty gazed,  
Smiling in sudden joy, then hurried  
To lead the goat and kid away,  
Pausing to sing:

*O forest, hear me,  
Not long, I fear me,  
Will I, so fair,*

*Without a care  
Stroll here among  
Beauty unsung,  
God's wondrous treasures,  
'Thout end or measure! -*

She silent fell.

Then, looking round her, took the kid  
Up in her arms, her pensive mood  
Broken, and leaving the shady wood  
And lake behind her, gayly tripped  
Along the winding path that led  
To Joseph's hut. As if it were  
A babe, the kid she hugged and petted  
And to her bosom pressed, and let it  
Lick at her hands, and kissed its nose,  
And like a kitten it nestled close  
And playful waxed, and did not bleat,  
But seemed to like it so. Her feet  
Dancing along the road, the maid  
Went on without a pause, a fleet  
And graceful figure. . . .

Beside the gate

Old Joseph, anxious-hearted, waited  
For her return. He hesitated,  
Then said: "My child, but thou art late,  
What hath been keeping thee so long? . . .  
'Tis dark outside. . . . But run along  
And rest a bit, thou fidget, that we  
May later supper take with our  
Young guest." "A guest?" "Aye, and the hour  
Is late, so rest, and then thou'lt see  
The man, my pet." "Where hails he from?"  
"From Nazareth. With us this night  
He'll pass. . . . If I did hear aright,  
He says that Zacharias' home  
The Lord has blessed: but yester-morn

Elisabeth was of a son  
Delivered, and the couple called him  
John. . . .” As he spake, behold him!  
Their guest appeared, clad in a white  
Chiton that flowed down to his bare,  
Sandalless feet, his presence a light  
Casting on all, tall, with an air  
Of majesty about him. . . . On  
The step he paused, and bowed at sight  
Of Mary looking pale and wan  
All of a sudden to see the bright  
Halo circling his head, and lighting  
The air about him. . . . Her breath she caught,  
And touched old Joseph’s arm, and sought  
To calm herself, a frightened child,  
No more, no less. . . . Into the arbour  
She bade them come, and fetched some water,  
A jug of milk, a head of cheese,  
The simple fare she knew would please  
Both host and guest; then, as they ate,  
Apart from them she silent sat  
And could not bring herself to try  
A morsel even. Muffling a sigh,  
And then, she knew not why, another,  
She huddled in the farthest corner  
And hearkened to the holy words  
Their strange young guest did speak. . . .

She heard

His voice alone, it touched a string  
Deep in her heart, and, shivering,  
As in a fever Mary burned!  
“Hear me,” he now was saying, “and learn  
That never such as we shall see  
Was in Judea heretofore  
Witnessed or known. . . . The Rabbi, he  
Whom do we worship and adore,

Spake, and the words he uttered fell  
Upon a freshly furrowed field,  
And rich shall be the crop thereof.  
I go to herald to the world  
Messiah's coming. . . .”

Filled with a love  
That rent her spirit, Mary kneeled  
'Fore the apostle, and she prayed.

The bonfire burned with steady flame.  
Old Joseph to his God appealed  
In silence, and his thoughts were grave.  
Time passed. The fire was burning still  
When dawn's first ray, remote and chill,  
Crept up the sky. . . . Then Mary rose,  
And took a jug and off she went  
For water to the spring; the task  
Was one she liked. And in her wake  
Went the apostle. 'Twas in the vale  
He overtook her. . . .

The sky was pale  
And still unlit, when for the lake  
The three of them together started,  
Mary and Joseph, happy-hearted,  
Guiding their guest. . . . They left him there  
And then returned. Numb with despair,  
Her glowing beauty marred by tears,  
Mary awaited him. She grew  
Daily more white and gaunt, a queer  
Faintness beset her. Joseph knew  
A gnawing fear. “What ails thee, child?”  
He asked. “We'd best, I trow, be wed.  
Else will they. . . .”—Nay, his Mary dead,  
Slain by the mob—the vision held  
Blank, haunting horror. . . . Sobbing loudly,  
His counsel Mary heeded.



Sadly

They left their home, and side by side  
Set out for town. The old man carried  
A basket with some wares of his  
Which he did mean to sell, for this  
Would give him coin wherewith to marry  
And buy his bride a gift. . . .

O pious,

O godly patriarch, 'tis from  
Thy poor and unassuming home  
And not from Zion that true bliss  
Doth shine on us. . . . For hadst thou not  
Stretched out a helping hand to her  
Who is so pure, then would our lot  
Have been the lot of sufferers,  
Of slaves that slaves must die.

O sorrow,

O deepest woe, what bring the morrow  
To such as—Nay, I do not speak  
Of ye, the blind of heart, and meek  
Of spirit, but of such as see  
The axe suspended mightily  
Over their heads, but forge new fetters. . . .  
They shall, I know it well, be slaughtered,  
And of their blood the hounds will drink!

But where is he whose fate is linked  
With thine and Mary's? Where is your sly  
And cunning visitor, and why  
Hath he not deigned to look upon  
Your pure and holy marriage?. . . None  
Have heard of him or the Messiah,  
Yet do they, hopeless, wait, relying  
On empty dreams.

Thy trust reposes  
In God, O Mary. Wherefore, lass,

Art thou so gullible? . . . Alas,  
Deaf to thy tearful pleas He chooseth  
To stay; await no boons of Him  
Or of his messenger, that dim  
And transient figure. Be thou grateful  
To fate that thou art Joseph's lawful,  
His wedded wife, that he hath not  
Cast thee from him, that on the road  
Thou liest not stoned and dead, forgot  
By all good folk, that his abode,  
However poor, is thine!

While in  
Jerusalem, they heard the rumour  
( 'Twas whispered in the streets and inns )  
That at Tiberias had died  
A someone who had prophesied  
Messiah's coming. On the cross  
He'd met his end.

" 'Tis he! . . . " the bride  
Of Joseph uttered. She was lost  
In joyous wonder, and it brought  
A smile to her lips. The thought  
That this young maid bore in her womb  
A righteous soul, dispelled the gloom  
Of Joseph somewhat. Aye, 'twas true,  
The prophet's parting word! . . .

The two  
To Nazareth now made their way,  
And settled there.

Their wedded life  
Was from the outset far from gay.  
With thread and needle, the virgin wife  
Sat stitching tiny garments, while  
Her husband fashioned for the child  
A wooden cradle. . . .

At the door  
There came a rap. . . . "The Caesar's will  
Is that you go this very hour  
To Bethlehem, the census there  
Is to be held! . . ." The voice boomed out,  
Seeming to jar upon their senses. . . .  
It died, and all was still without.

In haste did Mary set to baking  
Some flat-cakes, and when this was done,  
She put them in a basket, making  
No fuss and saying little. On  
Their way they started, with a prayer  
To God to keep them safe, and spare  
Them suffering.

The day was near  
Of her confinement, and to have  
Milk when they needed it, they drove  
The goat and kid before them, stopping  
To rest now and again, and hoping  
All might be well.

In bloom the land  
Around them lay as they did bend  
Their steps toward Bethlehem, in low  
Though earnest tones conversing, so  
That none might hear. "Old Simeon  
Hath said to me that the Essenes,  
And this have others too foreseen,"  
Said Joseph, "will, I take it, soon  
The law of Moses reinstate,  
And Abraham. . . . He doth await,  
Doth Simeon, Messiah's coming.  
The day, the happy day is nearing!"  
She shook her head. "He was among us,  
And we did see him." On the ground  
His basket Joseph carefully

Set down beside a moss-grown mound,  
And taking out a cake, to Mary  
He proffered it, for he was weary,  
And so was she, and hungry too.  
Upon the grass beside the road  
They sat. . . 'Twas midday, and the blue  
Of sky was bright, and seemed to bode  
A mellow day. But lo! The scene  
Changed suddenly. The sun still glowed,  
But seemed to shrink in size, its beam  
No longer brilliant; then, from sight  
It sank, behold! . . . The dark of night  
Obscured the field. No eye had e'er  
Observed its like. The carpenter  
Started in awe, and gave a cry,  
For in the black and ominous sky  
Just over Bethlehem appeared  
A fiery, bushy-headed spear,  
A streak of flame that bathed the vales  
And hills in light, and slowly blazed  
Its way across the heavens. . . .

Dazed,

Did Mary watch, and turning pale,  
Knew that her time had come. . . .

A son

Was born to her, the saintly being  
Who did for all our sins atone  
By dying on the cross and freeing  
Those held in chains. . . .

Some shepherds were

Grazing their flock not far from where  
Lay Mary and her child. To her  
At once they hastened, and to their tent  
The babe and mother took, content  
To have them there. . . . Emmanuel!  
They named the boy. . . .

No rousing knell  
Announced the gathering at dawn  
Of white-lipped, anxious men upon  
The square of Bethlehem. 'Twas whispered  
And passed from mouth to mouth in fright  
That very soon a fresh disaster  
Would on them all descend, and blight  
Their very lives. . . .

“Good folk, rejoice!”

Panting, the man ran up, his voice  
Broken and hoarse. “The prophecy  
Of Jeremiah and Isaiah  
Hath now come true at last, for he,  
For yesterday the true Messiah  
Was born, and we are saved for aye. . . .”  
The shout went up: “O blessed day! . . .  
Hosanna! . . . Jesus! . . . The Messiah! . . .”  
And now the crowd, the women crying  
In joy, dispersed.

Within the hour  
King Herod's legion was dispatched  
To Bethlehem. It was empowered  
To do what must remain unmatched  
In history.

Upon the town  
The legionnaires did fast descend,  
And in the blood of innocents  
Their knives they bathed.

The ray of dawn  
Did see the murdered babies lie  
Where'er the swords had reached them. . . .

On  
The deeds of tyrants gaze, and ne'er  
Forget, O mothers! . . .

Mary fared

Better than most: her baby son  
Was saved. . . .

For this, our thanks to you  
We owe, kind shepherds, that did true  
Compassion show, and so our saviour  
Delivered from an early death.  
You gave the virgin food and shelter,  
And braving Herod's awful wrath,  
Did over hidden pathways guide  
The holy family unto  
The Memphis road which ran beside  
A range of jutting hills. With rare  
And tender sympathy you shared  
Your all with them, out of your need  
Giving an ass as parting gift  
To Mary.

Night had full descended,  
And still the blazing spearhead wended  
Its way across the sky, and lit  
The winding road, and watched the flight  
Of Mary and the young Messiah  
To Egypt.

There is no denying  
That had a queen astride an ass,  
If such could ever come to pass,  
Been seen to ride, the ass's fame  
Would spread throughout. And this one  
carried

A living deity, and Mary!  
And yet none knew the beast by name  
Or thought to say a kindly word  
In praise of it. . . . 'Twas later heard  
That some poor Copt had offered to  
Buy it of Joseph, but withdrew

His offer, for the ass fell dead  
Upon the road. . . .

A mellow ray  
Of sunlight touched the baby's face  
As 'neath a willow-tree he lay,  
Asleep. Beside the Nile, a pace  
Or two away, the mother sat,  
And weeping o'er their hapless fate,  
A crib of rods and grasses plaited,  
While Joseph, fearing if he waited  
The darkness would engulf them, was  
Building a tent of rushes.

As  
For night's approach they thus prepared,  
With sightless eyes the Sphinxes stared  
Like owls at them. Beyond the Nile,  
The Pyramids upon the sands,  
As though the Pharaohs' commands  
Obeying, stood in single file,  
Like sentinels, and seemed to warn  
Their sovereigns to be on guard,  
For o'er the Earth the truth of God  
Was rising. . . .

From the early morn  
(Thus did their busy day begin)  
To tend some sheep would Joseph go  
While Mary helped a Copt to spin  
His yarn. In wearing toil their woe  
Was oft forgot. If but they could  
Save up a little coin, and buy  
Themselves a goat! . . .

A year passed by.  
The old man sat in solitude  
And out of blocks of seasoned wood

Made stools and tables, and hummed the while  
He worked. . . . And thou, whose heart no guile  
Hath e'er contained, thou holy one,  
Thou didst not weep, but o'er thy son  
Stayed lost in deep and troubled thought:  
For how is a child to be taught  
The ways of good, how kept away  
From evil in a time and day  
With evil fraught?! . . .

Another year  
Slips past. . . . A goat is grazing near  
The house, and in the entrance way  
A kid is frolicking, the boy  
Watching it gleefully. Her joy  
Mingling with sadness, Mary gazeth  
Adoringly at him, and praiseth  
God for his mercy. . . .

Up the hill  
Old Joseph cometh, panting. He  
Hath sold some wares of his, and see!—  
Brought gifts from town: this kerchief will  
Become the youthful wife, this cake  
Delight the boy, these straps of leather  
Hold up his own worn sandals.

“Mother,”  
Saith he to Mary, “we can make  
For home at last! . . . King Herod's dead.  
He feasted much too well, 'tis said,  
And died of it. . . . Let us not tarry,  
But leave at once. Our quiet haven  
Awaiteth us, dear heart. At even  
We'd best be off.” To this did Mary  
Agree at once, and off she went  
To wash the baby's things. The goats  
Were browsing near, and in the tent



The boy was playing. Joseph bent  
To pick him up, and on his knee  
He rocked the child. Hastily  
The mother in the yellow Nile  
Her washing scrubbed and rinsed, and while  
'Twas drying, she helped Joseph make  
His sandals. . . .

        Taking up the child,  
And lifting, each, a heavy sack,  
They started on their journey back.  
'Twas sorry going, but at last  
They reached their ancient home. . . . Alas!  
May none set eye upon a sight  
So desolate! . . . All had been laid  
To waste. . . . The wood around the glade  
Where once had stood the house, a bright  
Though modest dwelling, was no more.  
As for the house, the heart went sore  
To see the ugly mass of clay  
And scattered heaps of stone.

                                Dismay  
Filled Mary's soul, and to the spring  
With burning cheeks she made her way. . . .  
'Twas here their saintly visitor  
She had encountered. . . . Overgrown  
With weeds the spring now was, and wore  
A most neglected look. . . .

                                O lone,  
O stricken heart, thine agony  
Dissolve in tears. . . . O Mary, pray,  
Pray, and be patient, sweet one. . . . Stay!  
Drown not thyself, for 'tis through thee  
That we, poor slaves, can be redeemed,  
Through thee alone, for not a gleam  
Of simplest hope can we retain  
Should this young son of thine remain

A helpless orphan, nor ever know  
What justice is, or truth. . . . But no,  
A sob escapeth thee, another,  
A third. . . . Thou findest solace, Mother,  
In tears, the pain that gripped thine heart  
Hath lifted, we are saved! . . .

In parts

Not far removed, at Nazareth,  
Their widowed friend, Elisabeth,  
Lived with her son. She was related  
To them, and so, in truth, 'twas fated  
That in this hour of need they should  
Seek help of her who was a good  
And kindly soul. The family  
Now go to Nazareth to see  
The widow, and to ask for shelter,  
And work as well.

What could a better,  
More gainly sight present than two  
Young, sprightly lads absorbed in play! . . .  
On mat and floor, like bear-cubs true,  
They rolled, or ran about, or strayed  
Behind the house, and finding there  
Two sticks, rushed back in glee to share  
These riches with their mothers, eager  
To have them use the sticks for wood  
To heat the stove. Their health and vigour  
Was good to see. In kindly mood,  
The mothers watched. . . . The younger boy  
Took both the sticks (John had been skipping  
About the yard on his and whipping  
His hobby-horse with shouts of joy)  
And formed a cross of them, and carried  
The cross triumphantly to Mary  
To show her that at carpentry

He matched his father. And Mary, spying  
The gallows in his hands, came flying  
From out the house, more pale she  
Than death itself. "What rogue is he,  
What evil-hearted wretch that taught  
My child to make the like!" she cried,  
And running wildly to his side,  
She pulled it from his grasp, and caught  
The boy up in her arms, and sought  
To soothe him, for a fount of tears  
Rushed from his eyes. To quell his fears,  
She took him to a shady nook  
Behind the house, while still he shook  
With sobs, and held him tight, and gave  
A sweet to him. And in her love  
The boy found comfort, and was soon  
Engaged in play. . . . The afternoon  
Wore on, and in his mother's lap  
He slept at last, and looked a very  
Angel from paradise, and Mary  
Looked down at him, and o'er his sleep  
Kept loving watch. . . . She smiled, but deep  
Within her heart there lurked a pain  
That brought on tears. Hot, burning ones,  
They gushed. . . . For fear she wake her son  
She did not wipe them, but in vain  
To check their fall attempted. They  
Rolled down her cheeks, and though she stayed  
Quite still, on to the sleeper's face  
Fell fast. . . . Like drops of liquid flame  
They stung him. . . . With a start he came  
Awake. . . . The mother's warm embrace,  
Her smile were there for him, but he,  
Young as he was, her agony  
Sensed with his heart, and at her breast  
Wept bitterly. . . .

Out of her earnings  
(Herself, the mother had no learning,  
But wanted him to have the best  
Of everything) she bought a grammar,  
And sent him in his seventh summer  
To school. The boy, though young, was keen  
On study, and the strict Essenes  
Were pleased. And as for wisdom, that  
He learnt from her, and kindness too,  
And goodness.

John was e'er his true,  
His one close friend. At school, they sat  
Together always, and were never  
Seen far apart for long. A lover  
Of solitude, Emmanuel,  
In truth, liked nothing quite so well  
As sitting in some quiet corner,  
All by himself, and thoughtfully  
Hewing a stave. From other boys  
He kept aloof, and in their joys  
But seldom joined. Such industry,  
And in a lad but just turned seven,  
Delighted Joseph who was driven  
To prideful speculation on  
The youngster's future, for his son,  
He saw, was craftsman born. . . .

One morning,  
At break of day, they started for  
Jerusalem. All three with wares  
Were loaded to the full, the father  
Hoping that they could get a fair  
Price for them there, for to no other  
In size could this old city be  
Compared, or wealth. . . .

A lively trade  
Was soon in progress. . . . Suddenly,

The mother looked, and was dismayed  
To find Emmanuel was gone. . . .  
Where could he be? . . .

To find her son  
Was now her only thought. She held  
Her tears in check and rushed about  
In frightened search of him, impelled  
By some strange force. . . . A horrid doubt  
Had seized her. . . .

In a synagogue  
She found him, midst the rabbis. . . . He  
Was preaching God's own truth to them,  
The sages of Jerusalem,  
Telling these haughty Pharisees  
To love all men, and fight for truth,  
Aye, and for justice, unto death! . . .  
They listened, wondering. . . . And Mary  
Was full of gladness, she was carried  
Into a transport of delight,  
For was not God before her! . . .

Night  
Was coming on when they at last  
Made off for home.

Emmanuel  
And John, the widow's son, were fast  
Approaching manhood. They were well  
Versed in their trade, and scholarly. . . .  
And both did proudly choose to tread  
The thorny path through life. . . .

They spread  
The Word of God, and fearlessly  
Upon the cross for freedom died,  
For sacred freedom! . . .

John denied  
Himself, and as a hermit spent  
His days. As for thy son, he went,

O Mary, amongst men, and sought  
All o'er the earth to propagate  
His Teaching. . . . Thou didst leave thy mate,  
Old Joseph, and, thyself untaught,  
Didst follow him, thine own sweet son,  
And never faltered. . . . On and on  
Thy pathway stretched, remote and weary.  
And thou didst trudge along it, till  
Before thee, Golgotha, O Mary,  
Lay beckoning. . . . It put a chill  
Into thine heart, and yet thy will,  
O holy one, remained unbroken.  
Thou didst with soaring spirit hearken  
To every word thy son did speak.  
Thou wert beside him even while  
He sat and gazed with thoughtful smile  
Upon Jerusalem, awake  
To its proud beauty. He, thy child,  
Took in the temple where Israel's own  
High Priest was seen to walk alone,  
Rome's golden pleb, in robes of gold  
Attired! . . .

A most uncanny hold  
The city had on him. . . . He'd sit  
For hours upon Mount Olivet,  
And gaze on it, thyself forgot. . . .  
But, Mary, thou didst mind it not.  
The holy city's splendour brought  
Tears to thine eyes, and weeping, thou  
Didst to the spring for water go,  
And seeing thy son still rapt in thought,  
To all his needs didst minister,  
However small. Thou didst repair  
His chiton, and his thirst appease,  
And bathe his feet, and tenderly  
Watch o'er his sleep. . . .

'Twas good to see  
The children run to him, well pleased  
To climb the slope and be with one  
They loved, and follow him where'er  
He went. And he, thy grown-up son,  
In all their games did gladly share.  
Whene'er they came, his smile caressed  
These smudged-faced angels, and he blessed  
And kissed them, saying: "O pure of soul,  
O innocent of heart, my all  
Would I in gladness give to you! . . ."  
So always doth he speak, this true  
Child of God. . . .

As full of glee  
As are his youthful playmates, he  
Leaveth Mount Olivet behind him  
And entereth Jerusalem,  
And to the false of heart, and crafty  
Doth humbly strive to bring God's lofty  
And burning Word of Truth. . . .

Alas!  
They heed the prophet not. "The cross!  
The cross for him!" they, jeering, cry,  
And lead him off. . . .

And thou, surrounded  
By sobbing children, dost stand, dumfounded,  
Beside the cross and watch him die.

As for his disciples, in fright  
They flee from him.

"For ye the light  
Will shine if but ye follow him!"  
Thou dost cry out, but dark and dim  
The world now groweth, and to the ground  
Thou fallest 'thout another sound.

The days pass by. . . Thou goest, bowed  
With sorrow, back to Nazareth.  
Thy kindly friend, Elisabeth,  
Hath died, and been by strangers laid  
To rest, poor soul. John too is dead,  
Killed in a prison. And thy spouse,  
Old Joseph, is no more. . . .

Thou art  
Alone in all the world, dear heart! . . .  
They that the teaching did espouse  
Of Jesus while he lived have fled  
From punishment, the cowards, wed  
To basest fear. . . .

And thou, thou learnest  
Where they are hiding, and with earnest  
And loving words, by Heaven led,  
Summonest them to join thee, leaving  
Their fears behind them. . . .

Thus, believing  
In him who was thy son, the breath  
Didst thou of firm and selfless faith  
Instil into their souls, O Mary,  
Their weakling souls. . . .

May Heaven's glory  
Forevermore be thine, forever  
May thou be blessed. Through thine endeavour  
These pious men from sleep arose  
And, born anew, to lift they chose  
Thy martyred son's own standard, bearing  
His flaming Word of Love and Truth  
To all the corners of the earth,  
And to all hearts, themselves declaring  
To be his servants. As for thee,  
Thou didst in want and poverty  
Live out thy days, and die of hunger,



Hid from the avid sight of men,  
Beneath a crumbling wall. . . . Amen! . . .

And then the monks, when thou wert dead,  
Arrayed thee in a crimson gown,  
And on thine head a golden crown  
They placed, and to a cross  
In triumph they did nail thee.  
They spat upon thy purity  
And sullied it! But, clean as gold  
Upon the hearth, thou didst anew  
Rise in the souls of men, the true  
And faithful and unblemished souls  
Of humble serfs and sufferers.

St. Petersburg,  
November 11, 1859

*Translated*  
*by Irina Zheleznova*

## THE HYMN OF THE NUNS

Thunder and lightning strike God's house,<sup>85</sup>  
Strike this house, where death we wait,  
We scorn Thee, God, and set at naught  
And, in scorning Thee, we plaint:  
Hallelujah!

If not for you, we could have friends,  
Have fallen in love, and gotten wed,  
Children we'd have borne and bred  
And taught them, singing to the end:  
Hallelujah!

Thou has defrauded us, 'tis true  
But we, Thy plundered daughters, too,  
Have in our turn defrauded Thee,  
And in homage to Thee we screech:  
Hallelujah!

Though as nuns we cropped our hair,  
We're no longer virgins fair. . . .  
And so we dance, and so we sing,  
And merrily our voices ring:  
Hallelujah!

St. Petersburg,  
June 20, 1960

*Translated*  
by *Herbert Marshall*

## OH SHINING WORLD

Oh shining world! Oh quiet world!  
World untrammelled, world so free!  
Why is it, brother-world, I see  
That in your own, your warm good home  
    You are chained up, you are walled up,  
    (You, the wise one, made a fool of),  
By robes of purple choked your breath,  
By crucifixes done to death?

---

Not done to death! Why then, arise!  
Over us enlightenment shine,  
Enlightenment! . . . We'll, brother mine,  
Tear up purple robes for foot-rags,  
From incense-burners pipes we'll light,  
With wonder-icons stoves ignite,  
And, brother, with aspergills then  
Our new home we'll sweep and cleanse!

St. Petersburg,  
June 27, 1860

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

TO LIKERA<sup>86</sup>

*In memory of August 5, 1860*

Oh love of mine! Oh friend of mine!  
They won't believe us without a cross,  
They won't believe us without a priest. . . .  
Slaves, weaklings, captives! Like swine  
In their slavery, as in a puddled sty,  
They wallow and sleep! Friend of mine,  
Love of mine! Don't cross yourself now  
And do not pray, and do not vow  
To anyone on earth. People lie,  
And the Byzantine Sabaoth  
Fools us! God will not fool us,  
Will not punish or forgive us:  
We're not his slaves—we're human beings!  
Oh love of mine! Smile awhile  
And your saintly spirit free  
And your free hand give to me,  
My dear one. And he will help us  
Through the puddled sty to cross,  
Help us bear misfortune's loss  
And disaster dire to bury  
In a cottage quiet and merry.

Strelna,  
August 5, 1860

*Translated  
by Herbert Marshall*

## NEITHER ARCHIMEDES NOR GALILEO

Neither Archimedes nor Galileo saw  
Wine. The oil of unction  
Poured into priestly paunches!  
But you, saintly sires of yore,  
Over all the world have spread  
    Bringing but a crumb of bread  
    To wretched Kings. And beaten down  
    Will be the grain that Kings have sown!  
But human folk will flourish. Perish  
Will princes yet unconceived, unknown. . . .  
    And on this resurrected earth  
There'll be no foes, no hostile ones,  
    But there'll be mothers, there'll be sons,  
There'll be human folk on earth.

St. Petersburg,  
September 24, 1860

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

## THE DAYS GO BY

The days go by, the nights go by,  
And, with my hands my head clasped tight,  
I wonder why he comes not nigh,  
Apostle of learning, truth and right?

St. Petersburg,  
November 5, 1860

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*

## SURELY THE TIME HAS COME<sup>57</sup>

Surely the time has come, my friend,  
Poor neighbour of mine, now to end  
Our versifying of useless verse,  
And instead, our waggon-hearse  
For that last long ride prepare—  
To that world, friend, to God repair:  
To that rest be our own waggoners.  
With age we're worn, with labour tired,  
A little wisdom we've acquired,  
Let it suffice! Now sleep will do,  
Let's to our home return and rest. . . .  
A happy home, if you but knew! . . .  
Oh let's not go, no, let us stay,  
It's too early, friend, too early;  
Let us walk, let's sit and talk—  
And at this world's wonder gaze.  
Oh let us wonder still, my fate. . . .  
See how vast and wide it is,  
How high it soars, how glad it is,  
How clear and oh, how deep it is. . . .  
We'll walk together still, my star!  
We'll climb up that high mountain far—  
Take our rest, and by that time  
Your sister-stars will high have climbed,  
Those ageless ones, and through the skies  
Will glide with shining eyes. . . .  
Oh, wait a little, sister, wait,  
Holy wife of mine and mate!  
Then we, with lips unsullied,  
Our prayers to God will make,  
Then quietly, unhurried,  
That last long ride we'll take. . . .

Over Lethe's turbid waters  
Black and bottomless  
With your sacred glory  
Bless me, dear friend, bless! . . .

St. Petersburg,  
February 14, 1861

*Translated*  
*by Herbert Marshall*





PROSE



## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Taras Shevchenko, the son of a serf peasant, Grigory Shevchenko, was born on February 25, 1814, in the village of Kiri-lovka,<sup>88</sup> Zvenigorod district, Kiev Province, on the estate of the landowner Vassily Vassilyevich Engelhardt. When he was going on eight years of age, having lost his father and mother,<sup>89</sup> he found refuge with a church sexton in a school as his pupil-*drudge*. After a most difficult two-year ordeal he learned grammar, the breviary, and finally, the psalm book. The sexton, realising that his pupil-*drudge* had the ability, used to send him in his stead to read prayers for the souls of serfs who had passed away, for which he paid him every tenth kopeck in remuneration. But despite such flattering attention from his strict Spartan teacher, on one of the many days and nights when the Spartan teacher and his friend Iona Limar were dead drunk, the pupil-*drudge*, baring the buttocks of his mentor and benefactor, without a twinge of conscience gave him a good dose of the rod. Having avenged himself to the full and purloining a book with pictures, that very night he ran away to the little town of Lisyanka, where he found himself a teacher of painting, a reverend deacon, also a Spartan. For three days the pupil-tramp patiently fetched buckets of water from the Tikich and ground verdigris on an iron sheet, and on the fourth day he ran away. He fled to the village of Tarasovka to a deacon painter who was famous in the neighbourhood for his picture of the martyr Nikita and Ivan the Warrior; for greater effect he painted two army stripes on the left sleeve of the latter. It was to this Apelles that the pupil-tramp turned with the firm intention of suffering any ordeal if he could learn even a little of his great art. But alas! Apelles carefully inspected the tramp's left palm and curtly turned him down, having discovered no talent in him not only for painting but for cooeping either.

Losing all hope of ever becoming even a mediocre painter, the tramp returned to his native village broken-hearted, with the intention of hiring himself out as a teamster or to tend the community herd and, walking behind the sheep and pigs, to read the pilfered booklet with engravings.

That also was not to be. The landowner, Pavel Vassilyevich Engelhardt, who had just then inherited the property from his natural father, needed a smart boy, and the ragged tramp was catapulted straight into a jacket of ticking and trousers of the same material, and finally, into the position of house servant boy. While engaged as a servant boy, on the sly he copied paintings of the Suzdal school which adorned the master's chambers, with a pencil stolen from a clerk. Travelling with the entourage that followed his *lord of the manor* to Kiev, Vilno and Petersburg, at the inns he stole pictures of various historical heroes such as Solovey the Highwayman, Kulnev, Kutuzov, the Cossack Platov and others, with the intention of copying exact replicas of them at his leisure.

The opportunity and the leisure came in Vilno. This was on December 6, 1829. The master and mistress drove off to a ball, and in the house everything quieted down and went to sleep. Then he opened up his stolen treasures and, selecting the Cossack Platov from among them, set about copying it reverentially and accurately. He had already come to the wee squires prancing about the huge hooves of Cossack Platov's horse when the door opened—the master and mistress had returned from the ball. The master cuffed his ears in a frenzy and slapped his face because, he claimed, he could have burned down not only the house but the whole city. The next day the master ordered the coachman, Sidorko, to give him a good whipping, which order was scrupulously carried out.

In 1832 in St. Petersburg, as the result of his constant pleading, the landowner apprenticed him to a guildmaster, a certain Shirayev, to four years of various painting jobs. Shirayev was more exacting than any Spartan sexton. But despite all restraints, on bright summer nights he would run to the Sum-

mer Gardens to copy the ugly and clumsy statues (a worthy decoration for Peter's garden!). In that garden and at that same time he began to make excursions into the art of versification. Out of numerous attempts he eventually published only one—the ballad *The Bewitched*. During one of those séances he became acquainted with the artist Ivan Maximovich Soshenko, with whom he remains on the most sincere and brotherly of relations to the present (time). On Soshenko's advice he began to try his hand at a water-colour portraiture from nature. His fellow-countryman and friend, the Cossack Ivan Nechiporenko, a manor serf of that same Engelhardt, patiently served him as the model during his numerous try-outs. One time this Engelhardt saw a drawing by his serf artist in the possession of Nechiporenko, which evidently was much to his liking because he began to exploit him to draw portraits of his favourite mistresses, for which he sometimes rewarded him with a ruble in silver, never more.

In 1837 Soshenko introduced him to the conference-secretary of the A(cademy) of Arts, V. I. Grigorovich, with the purpose of securing his liberation from his woeful state. Grigorovich made representations on his behalf to V. A. Zhukovsky and Zhukovsky, first learning his price from the landowner, asked K. P. Bryullov to paint his, Zhukovsky's, portrait for the Imperial family, intending to raffle it off in the tsar's family circle. The great Bryullov readily agreed. The portrait was painted. Zhukovsky, with the assistance of Count M. Y. Vyelgorsky, organised the lottery for 2,500 rubles in cash, and at that price the freedom of T. S(hevchenko) was bought on April 22, 1838.

From that very day he attended classes in the Academy of Arts and soon became one of the favourite pupils and companions of the great Karl Bryullov.

In 1844 he was awarded the title of Master of Fine Arts, and in 1847 he was arrested along with Kostomarov, Kulish and many others on the basis of information laid by a certain Petrov, a student at Kiev University. They were sent to various fortresses without trial or examination, and on May 30 of that

same year T. G. Shevchenko was transported from the prison of the Third Department to the Orsk fortress and later to the Novopetrovsk fortifications with the most strict prohibition to write and to paint.

On August 22, 1858, due to intercession by Countess Nastasia Ivanovna Tolstoi he was freed from Novopetrovsk fortress. And thanks to her solicitations he was by the highest clemency permitted to stay in the capital under police surveillance and occupy himself with his art.

In the summer of 1859, after a lengthy and painful separation, he saw his lovely homeland, his serf brothers and sister, and in the autumn returned safely to the Academy of Arts where, thanks to the administration of the Academy, he devotes himself to aquatint and aquafort with the passion of a true artist.

After a lengthy delay, which lasted two years, the Chief Censorship Committee has permitted him to publish only such of his works as had been printed prior to 1847, striking out dozens of pages from them (that's progress!).

January 1860

*Translated  
by John Weir*

## THE ARTIST<sup>90</sup>

The great Thorvaldsen began his brilliant artistic career by carving ornaments and tritons with fishes' tails for snub-nosed Copenhagen ships. My hero began his not so brilliant but nevertheless artistic career by grinding ochre and mummy between millstones, and painting floors, ceilings and fences. A dismal, hopeless beginning. But are there then many of you, fortunate artistic geniuses, who began otherwise? Very, very few! In Holland, for example, in its most brilliant golden heyday, Ostade, Berghem, Teniers and a host of notable artists (with the exception of Rubens and Van Dyke) started and finished their great careers in rags. It would be unjust to point to mercantile Holland alone. Open up Vazari and there you'll find the same if not worse. I say worse, because at that time even the policy of Saint Peter's heirs<sup>91</sup> called for elegant decorations to dazzle the crowd and eclipse the heretical teachings of Wycliffe and Hus, which were already beginning to educate that fearless Dominican—Luther. Then too, I say, when Leo X and Julius XI suddenly bethought themselves and poured gold on every painter and stone-mason that happened to be around, even at that golden time great artists starved to death, as for example, Correggio and Zampieri. And that happened (not very rarely, unfortunately) at all times and everywhere, wherever the divine and vivifying art penetrated! It happens also in our enlightened nineteenth century, the century of philanthropy and of all things that tend to bring benefit to mankind, despite all the means at its disposal to remove and cover the sacrifice

*To the punishing goddess doomed.*

The question then arises, why does such a sad and bitter lot almost always fall to those angels personified, those representatives of vital virtue on the earth? Probably because they are angels in the flesh.



These reasonings serve only to take the reader away from the subject which I intend to present to him as clearly as on the palm of the hand.

In Petersburg I nearly always passed the summer nights on the street or somewhere on the islands, or more often yet, on the Academy embankment. Especially did I like the place where the Neva River is calm and like a gigantic mirror reflects to the tiniest detail the majestic portico of the Rumyantsev museum, a corner of the Senate and the scarlet curtains in the home of Countess Laval. In the long winter nights that mansion was lit up inside and the scarlet curtains flamed like a fire against the dark background, and I was always annoyed that the Neva was then covered with ice and snow, and therefore the decoration lost its true effect.

In the summer-time I also liked to meet the sunrise on Troitsky Bridge. A marvellous, majestic picture! In a genuinely artistic painting there is something that is more charming and beautiful than nature itself—that is the uplifted spirit of the artist, his divine creativeness. On the other hand, there are such wonderful phenomena in nature before which the poet-artist bows to the earth and can only give thanks to the Creator for such thrilling moments of rapture.

I often admired Shchedrin's landscapes and especially was I captivated by his small painting, *Portici Before Sunset*. A fascinating work! But it never fascinated me so much as did the view from Troitsky Bridge towards Vyborg just before sunrise.

One time, having enjoyed to the brim this marvellous work of nature, I walked over to the Summer Gardens for a rest. Whenever I happened to be in the Summer Gardens, I never stopped on any of the alleys which are ornamented with marble statues: those statues impressed me most unfavourably, especially the ugly Saturn gobbling up his equally hideous offspring. I always passed by those clumsy gods and goddesses and sat down to rest beside a pool from where I could admire the beautiful granite vase and the majestic architecture of the Mikhailovsky castle.

Nearing the place where the main alley is crossed by a smaller one, and where Saturn, surrounded by gods and goddesses, is depicted devouring his child, I almost stumbled over a living person in a soiled smock of ticking who was sitting on a bucket directly opposite Saturn.

I halted. The boy (for he was really but a lad of fourteen or fifteen) looked around and began to hide something inside his shirt-front. I came closer and asked what he was doing there.

"I'm not doing anything," he replied shyly, "I'm on my way to work and I stepped into the park on the way." Then, after a moment's silence, he added: "I was drawing."

"Show me what you drew."

He pulled out a sheet of grey stationery from his shirt-front and shyly handed it to me. On the sheet the outline of Saturn had been copied fairly faithfully.

I held the drawing in my hands for a long time and feasted my eyes on the smudged face of the author. There was something attractive in his thin, irregular features, especially in his eyes, which were intelligent and meek as a girl's.

"Do you often come here to draw?" I asked him.

"Every Sunday," he answered, "and if we happen to be working close by, I come on week-days too."

"Are you learning house painting?"

"Also the finer arts," he added.

"To whom are you apprenticed?"

"To mural painter Shirayev<sup>92</sup>."

I wanted to question him in greater detail, but he picked up the bucket with yellow paint and a large yellow brush that had been wiped dry and started to leave.

"Where are you hurrying so?"

"To work. I'm already late, and when the master comes, he'll make it hot for me."

"Come to see me Sunday morning, and if you have any drawings you did yourself, bring them to show me."

"I'll come, but where do you live?"

I wrote my address down on his sketch and we parted.

Early on Sunday morning I returned from an all-night promenade and in the hallway before the door of my apartment I was met by my new acquaintance, no longer in a soiled smock of ticking but in something resembling a frock-coat of a brown colour, and with a roll of paper in his hand. I greeted him and extended my hand to him. He sprang to my hand and attempted to kiss it. I snatched my hand away, embarrassed by his slavishness. Without a word I went into my apartment while he remained in the hallway. I took off my coat, put on a smock, lighted a cigar, and he still hadn't entered the room. I walked out into the hallway and looked about, but my friend had disappeared; I went downstairs and asked the care-taker whether he had seen such a person. "I saw him," said he, "a young fellow with papers in his hand, he ran out to the street." I went out to the street but found no trace of him. Sadness came upon me as though I had lost something dear to me. I was dispirited all week until the following Sunday and couldn't puzzle out what the sudden flight of my friend could have meant. When Sunday arrived at last, I went to Troitsky Bridge at two o'clock in the morning and after enjoying the sunrise I went to the Summer Gardens, traversed all the alleys—but my friend was nowhere about. I was on the point of going home when I remembered the Belvedere Apollo, that is, the travesty of the Belvedere god that stands by itself next to the Moika canal. I went there—and there was my friend. Seeing me, he stopped drawing and blushed to the ears like a child caught stealing cookies. I took him by his trembling hand and led him like an offender to the tavern, ordering the waiter to bring us tea as we passed him.

I showed my friend all the kindness I knew how, and when he calmed down I asked him why he had run away from the hallway.



**Taras Shevchenko and Kirghiz Children-Beggars. 1847-1853.**  
*Sepia*



**In a Yourta. 1848.**  
*Sepia*

"You were angry with me and I got frightened," he replied.

"To be angry with you was farthest from my mind," I told him, "but your grovelling was unpleasant to me. Only a dog licks hands, a human being should not do it." This strong expression so affected my friend that he seized my hand again. I laughed and he turned red as a lobster and stood silent with his head bowed.

After drinking our tea we parted. At parting I told him that he must call on me without fail either this very day or next Sunday.

I don't have the happy faculty to take a person's measure quickly but instead I have the unhappy faculty to quickly become friendly with a person. I say "unhappy" because it is a rare quick friendship that doesn't cost me dear, especially when it's with one-eyed or squint-eyed persons. Those one-eyed and squint-eyed ones have given me plenty of trouble! How many of them I've come in contact with, yet I haven't met a single decent one, they're all bad!—or is it just my luck to have met that sort?

I saw my new acquaintance only three times and already I had become attached to him, developed a liking for him. And truly, there was something in his features that you couldn't help liking. His face, which seemed homely at first, appeared more and more attractive as time went on. There are such fortunate faces on the earth!

I went directly home so that my friend shouldn't have to wait in the hallway. I walked up the stairs and there he was already, in that same brown frock-coat, washed, combed and smiling.

"You're quite the nimble-foot," I said, "because you stopped at your quarters on the way, didn't you? How did you manage to do it so quickly?"

"Well," he answered, "I hurried to be home when the master returns from Mass."

"Why, is your master strict?" I inquired.

"Strict and . . ."

“And cruel, is that what you meant to say?”

“No, I was going to say that he’s mean. He would beat me but actually he would be glad that I had missed my dinner.”

We entered the room. On my easel was a copy I had done of a painting by old Velasquez that was on exhibition at the Stroganov Gallery, and his eyes fastened on it. I took the roll from his hands, unfolded it and began to inspect it. Everything that disfigures the Summer Gardens was there, from the frivolous, sweetly smiling goddesses to the hideous Phraclitus and Heraclitus, and at the very end there were several drawings of bas-reliefs which adorn certain dwellings, including the bas-reliefs of the Cupids that decorate the house of the architect Monferrant, which is on the corner of the Moika embankment and Fonarny lane.

What struck me about these outlines was their remarkable similarity to the originals, especially the sketches of Phraclitus and Heraclitus. They were more expressive and, truth to tell, uglier than the originals, but nevertheless you couldn’t look at the drawings with indifference.

At heart I was glad over my find. At that time the idea didn’t even cross my mind to ask myself what I would do with my diamond in the rough in view of my more than limited resources. Actually, the thought did cross my mind even then, but was immediately pushed aside with the proverb: “God is not without mercy, and a Cossack is not without luck.”

“Why don’t you have a single drawing with shadings?” I asked, returning the roll to him.

“I drew all those sketches early in the morning, before sunrise.”

“So you have never seen them in the light?”

“I’ve gone to look at them in the day-time, but you can’t draw then, with people walking about.”

“What do you intend to do now: stay and have dinner with me, or go home?”

He was silent for a minute and then, without lifting his eyes, said almost indistinctly:

"I would rather stay, if you let me."

"And how will you square it with your master afterward?"

"I'll tell him that I was asleep in the garret."

"Then let's go to dinner."

When we arrived there were as yet no customers at Madame Jurgens's place, of which I was very glad because it would have been annoying to have some smooth-faced official smirking stupidly as he inspected my friend who was far from being a dandy.

After dinner I had intended to take him to the Academy and show him *The Last Days of Pompeii*, but then decided not to give him everything at once. After we had dined I proposed that we either take a promenade on the boulevard or read a book. He chose the latter and I made him read aloud in order to see how well he could read. I fell asleep on the first page of Dickens's famous novel *Nicholas Nickleby*, but neither the author nor the reader were to blame for this—I simply couldn't stay awake because I hadn't slept at night.

When I awoke and went into the next room, my usually chaotic study was pleasant to behold: there were no cigar butts or tobacco ashes anywhere to be seen, everything was tidied up and swept clean, even the palette, which hung on a nail, with dried paints on it, was cleaned and glistened like glass; meanwhile, the person who had created all this harmony sat by the window, drawing the mask of Thorvaldsen's famous model, Fortunata.

All this was exceedingly pleasant to me. Those services clearly spoke in his favour. However, I don't know why I didn't let him notice my satisfaction. I corrected the sketch he was doing, put in shadows, and then we left for the Kapernaum for tea. Kapernaum is another name for Berlin tavern on the corner of the Sixth Line and the Academy Lane—that's how it was named, I believe, by Pimenov during his boisterous student days.



While we were having tea, he told me the story of his life. It was a sad, mournful tale, but he told it naïvely and simply, without a shadow of complaint or reproach. Until that confession I had been thinking how to improve his education, but after hearing the confession I even stopped thinking about it: he was a serf.

That sad discovery so set me aback that I lost all hope of his education. The silence lasted for at least half an hour. He shook me out of my stupor with his sobs. I glanced at him and asked why he was crying.

“It is disagreeable to you that I . . .”

He didn’t finish the sentence and burst into tears. Again I reassured him as best I could and we returned to my apartment.

Along the way we met old Venetsianov.<sup>93</sup> After the first greetings he looked intently at my companion and asked, smiling good-naturedly:

“Wouldn’t that be a future artist?”

“Yes and no,” I told him. He asked the reason. I explained to him in a whisper. The old man stood lost in thought for a moment, then he pressed my hand and we parted.

It was as though with his glance and the pressure of his hand Venetsianov was reproaching me for my lack of faith. I took heart, and recalling some of the artists who were Venetsianov’s pupils and wards, I began to see—very vaguely, it is true—something like hope on the horizon.

Taking his leave in the evening, my protégé begged me to give him a print which he could copy. As it happened, I had a copy of the recently printed *Farnese Hercules*, engraved by Slyudzhinsky from the drawing by Zavyalov, and also Losenko’s *Apollo*. I wrapped the originals in a sheet of Peterhoff paper, supplied him with Italian pencils, instructed him how to keep them from hardening, and we went out on the street. He then went home and I went to old Venetsianov’s place.

This isn't the place and it's not to the point to expatiate here on that humanitarian artist. Let that be done by one of his numerous pupils, who know in more detail than I all his magnanimous deeds in the field of the arts.

I told the old man everything I knew about my godsend and asked him to advise me what to do in the future to bring the matter to the desired conclusion. As a man practised in matters of that sort, he didn't promise anything or give any definite advice. He only counselled me to get acquainted with his master and as far as possible to ease his present difficult circumstances.

That's what I did. Without waiting for Sunday, I went to the Summer Gardens before sunrise the next day. But, alas, I didn't find my friend there, nor the next, nor the day after that, so I resolved to wait and see what Sunday would bring.

On Sunday morning my friend appeared and, when I questioned him, told me that they had started work in the Bolshoi Theatre (at that time Kavoss was engaged in renovating the interior of the Bolshoi Theatre) and for that reason he could no longer visit the Summer Gardens.

We spent that Sunday much the same as we had the previous one. In the evening, when we were parting, I asked the name of his master and the hours when he was present at the job.

Next day I went to the Bolshoi Theatre and got acquainted with his master. I praised inordinately the sketches for the murals which he himself designed, and in this way laid a firm foundation for our acquaintance.

He was a guildmaster of the painters' guild, he continually kept three and sometimes four novices in smocks of ticking, whom he called pupils, and whenever necessary hired from one to ten Kostroma muzhiks—painters and glass-cutters—by the day or the month; consequently he wasn't the poorest master in his guild either in art or in capital. Apart from the above-mentioned qualities, I saw several engravings by Audran and Volpato on his walls and on his chest of drawers several vol-

umes of books, including *The Travels of Anacharsis the Younger*. This raised my spirits. But alas, when I gently hinted to him about improving the lot of his pupils in ticking, he was amazed at such a crazy idea and tried to convince me that that would only lead to their own ruination.

The first time I did not contradict him, and anyway, it would have been useless to attempt to convince him otherwise: people who are backward and interested only in material gains, who lived their youthful years in scarcity and dirt, underwent severe trials, yet somehow managed to crawl out into the divine sunlight, such people don't believe any theory; for them there can be no other path to well-being except the one they travelled themselves, and often in addition to those crude convictions there is added a feeling that is cruder still: nobody, so to say, made things easy for me, so why should I make things easy for somebody else?

This master of the painters' guild, it seems, was not a stranger to such anti-humanist feelings. In time, however, I managed to talk him into not hindering my protégé from visiting me on holidays and on those week-days when there was no work, in winter, for example. Although he agreed, he still looked on it as over-indulgence that could lead to absolutely nothing but ruination. He almost guessed right, at that.

Summer and autumn passed, and winter arrived. The work in the Bolshoi Theatre was finished, the theatre opened, and the enchantress Taglioni began to work her magic. The youth were in the seventh heaven, while the oldsters were, to put it bluntly, possessed. Only strict matrons and desperate lionesses stubbornly sulked even during the most unrestrained applause and contemptuously passed judgement: *Mauvais genre*,—while unapproachable female puritans chorused: "Depravity! Depravity! Open public depravity!" And yet the bigots and hypocrites didn't miss a single show of Taglioni's. And when the celebrated artiste consented to become the Princess Trubetskoi, they were the first to mourn the great loss and

condemned the woman for that which they themselves couldn't achieve despite all the help that cosmetics could give them.

Karl the Great (that's how the late Vassily Andreyevich Zhukovsky called the also late Karl Pavlovich Bryullov<sup>94</sup>) had a boundless love for all the fine arts, no matter what form they took, but he was practically indifferent to the modern ballet, and if he ever spoke of the ballet it was always as of sugary frippery. To crown her triumph Taglioni danced the cachucha from the ballet *Khitana*. That same evening the cachucha spread all over our Palmira, and next day it already held sway both in the palace of the aristocrat and in the modest abode of the Kolomna clerk. Everywhere the cachucha—in the home, on the street, at the workbench, in the tavern, at dinner and at supper—in a word, everywhere and all the time, the cachucha. I'm not talking about the soirees and socials, where the cachucha became indispensable. All that's nothing yet,—everything suits youth and beauty,—but esteemed mothers and sedate fathers of families also joined in. It was, to put it bluntly, a St. Vitus dance epidemic in the shape of the cachucha. The fathers and mothers soon came to their senses, but arrayed their wee ones, who were barely beginning to walk, in khitana tunics. Poor youngsters, how many tears you shed because of that accursed cachucha! However, the effect was complete—an effect leading to speculation. For example, if the amphitryon lacked a cherub of its own, the social evening was adorned with a rented khitana cherub. It was not long ago, but already it's hard to believe!

At the very apex of this cachuchomania, Karl the Great paid me a visit (he loved to visit his pupils). He sat down on the couch and fell into a reverie. I silently admired his intelligent curly head. After a minute he quickly raised his eyes, laughed and asked me:

“Do you know what?”

“No, I don't,” I replied.

"Today Guber (the translator of *Faust*) promised to get me tickets for *Khitana*. Let us go."

"In that case send your Lukian to Guber and tell him to get two tickets."

"Couldn't the lad go?" he said, pointing to my protégé.

"Certainly he'll go, write the note."

On a piece of grey paper he wrote with an Italian pencil: "Get two tickets. K. Bryullov." To this laconic message I added my address and my Mercury flew off.

"What is he, a model or a servant?" he asked, pointing to the closed door.

"Neither the one, nor the other," I replied.

"I like his face—it's not the face of a serf."

"Far from a serf's face, and yet . . ." I broke off.

"And yet he is a serf?" he picked up my thought.

"Unfortunately, that is so," I added.

"Barbarism!" he whispered and went into a reverie. After a minute's contemplation he threw his cigar to the floor, took his hat and went out, but immediately returned and said:

"I'll wait for him: I would like to take another look at his face." And lighting a cigar he said: "Show me his work."

"Who told you that I have his work?"

"You must have it," he said emphatically.

I showed him the finished drawing of the mask of Laokoon and a copy of a work by Michelangelo which had barely been sketched. He looked long at the drawings, that is, he held the drawings in his hands and looked—but God knows where he was looking at that moment.

"Who is his master?" he asked, raising his head.

I gave him the landowner's name.

"We'll have to give a lot of thought to your pupil. Lukian promised to treat me to a roast beef, come to dinner."

Saying this, he went to the door and then stopped again:

"Bring him to my place some time. Good-bye!"

And he left.

A quarter of an hour later my Mercury returned and reported that Guber would go to Karl Pavlovich himself.

"Do you know who Karl Pavlovich is?" I asked him.

"I do," he replied, "only I've never actually seen him."

"And today?"

"Was that he?"

"It was."

"Why didn't you tell me?" he asked after a moment of silence. "At least I would have taken a good look at him, but I thought he was some ordinary gentleman. Won't he visit you another time?"

"I don't know," I told him, and began to dress.

"My God, my God! If I could only see him, even from a distance! Do you know," he continued, "when I walk along the street I always think of him and keep looking at the passers-by, trying to find him among them. You say that his portrait, the one in *The Last Days of Pompeii*, is a very good likeness?"

"It is, and yet you didn't recognise him when he was here. Well, don't feel bad, if he doesn't drop in to see me by Sunday, you and I will pay him a visit. In the meantime, here's a coupon for Madame Jurgens's for you. I'm not having dinner at home today."

Having given these instructions, I left.

At Bryullov's studio I found V. A. Zhukovsky and Count M. Y. Vyelgorsky. They were admiring the unfinished *Crucifixion of Christ*, painted for the Lutheran church of Peter and Paul. The head of the weeping Mary Magdalene was finished, and Zhukovsky, gazing at that marvellous weeping beauty, himself wept and put his arms around Karl Pavlovich, as though he were embracing the beauty he had created.

I often had occasion to visit the Hermitage when Bryullov was there. Those occasions provided brilliant lectures on the theory of painting and they ended every time with Teniers and especially his *Barracks*. He usually stopped long in front of that painting and, after a moving, heartfelt eulogy of that

remarkable Flemish artist, he would say: "One could travel all the way from America just to see that one painting." The same can now be said of his own *Crucifixion* and especially of the head of the sobbing Mary Magdalene.

After the hugging and kissing, Zhukovsky went into another room. Noticing me, Bryullov smiled, then followed Zhukovsky. Half an hour later they returned to the studio and Bryullov, approaching me, said with a smile: "The foundation has been laid." At that same moment the door flew open and Guber walked in, no longer in a travelling suit but in a dandified black frock-coat. He had barely managed to exchange greetings when Zhukovsky approached him and warmly pressing his hand asked him to read the final scene from *Faust*, which Guber proceeded to do. The impression he created was enormous, and the poet was rewarded by the sincere embrace of the other poet. Soon after Zhukovsky and Count Vyelgorsky left the studio, Guber, with more elbow-room now, read us his new-born *Terpsichore*, after which Bryullov said:

"I definitely won't go to see *Khitana*."

"Why?" asked Guber.

"In order to keep my faith in your *Terpsichore*."

"How's that?"

"It is better to believe in a beautiful invention than..."

"What you are trying to say," the poet interrupted, "is that my verse surpasses the divine Taglioni. I swear to God that it isn't worth the nail of her little finger! By the way, I almost forgot to tell you: today we're eating macaroni and stofatto with *Lachryma Christi* at Alexander's. Nestor will be there, Misha, et cetera, and to top it off, Pyanenko. Let us be off!"

Bryullov took his hat.

"Oh yes! I had forgotten..." Guber continued, taking tickets from his pocket, "here are your tickets, and after the show, off to Nestor at the Exchange." (That's how they jokingly referred to the literary evenings at N. Kukolnik's.)

"I haven't forgotten," Bryullov replied and, putting on his hat, he handed me a ticket.

"Will you be coming with us?" asked Guber, turning to me.

"I'm with you," I replied.

"Off we go!" said Guber, and we went out into the corridor. Closing the door behind us, Lukian muttered:

"So much for the roast beef!"

After the macaroni, *stofatto* and *Lachryma Christi*, the company departed for "the Exchange", while we, that is, Guber, Karl the Great and I, went to the theatre. While waiting for the overture I admired my protégé's art. (He had sketched all the decorations and arabesques that ornamented the Bolshoi Theatre under the direction of the Architect Kavoss. I was informed of this not by himself, nor by his grasping guildmaster, but by the engineer, Kartashov, who was continually present at the job and early every morning treated my protégé to tea.) I had intended to tell Bryullov about my pupil's arabesques, but the overture came on, and everybody, including me, riveted their eyes on the curtain. The overture ended, the curtain quivered and then rose, and the ballet began. Until the *cachucha* everything went well: the audience conducted itself like any gathering of well-bred people. But with the first click of the castanets it was as though they had been jolted out of their seats and began quivering with excitement. Applause rippled through the auditorium, at first muffled like the roll of far-away thunder, then louder and louder, until the *cachucha* ended to the full thunder of the storm. The well-bred audience, including me, sinner that I am, went mad and began to roar, each according to his preference: some "Bravo!" others "*Da capo!*", and some just bellowed wordlessly, working their hands and feet the while. After the first paroxysm had abated I glanced at Karl Bryullov and there the poor fellow was, clapping his hands and pounding his feet and hollering at the top of his voice: "*Da capo!*" Guber also. I took a deep breath and rejoined my teacher in his exertions. Finally the hurricane began to



calm down little by little and the sorceress, having been called out to take a bow for the tenth time, flitted on to the stage, curtsied most gracefully several times, and then disappeared. Karl the Great rose, wiped the perspiration from his forehead and, turning to Guber, said:

“Let us go backstage. You must introduce me to her.”

“Let’s go,” said Guber rapturously, and we went backstage. Behind the curtains swarmed a crowd of her worshippers, consisting mainly of venerable bald heads, spectacles and binoculars. We joined them and not without some difficulty made our way to the centre. And heavens, what we saw there! The enchantress, who had flitted about light as a zephyr, was lying back on a settee with her mouth open, her nostrils dilated like those of an Arabian steed, and powder and rouge, mixed with perspiration, running down her face like muddy streams in the springtime.

“Disgusting!” said Karl the Great and turned back. I followed him, while poor Guber—truly he was left in an unenviable position!—had barely uttered a compliment equal to the occasion and, pronouncing Bryullov’s name, glanced behind him, when he discovered that Bryullov had disappeared. I don’t know how he extricated himself from that predicament.

There was one act of the ballet remaining, but we left the theatre in order, as Bryullov expressed it, not to spoil the desert with cabbage. I don’t know whether he ever attended the ballet after *Khitana*, I only know that he never spoke of the ballet.

But to return to the hero of my tale. After Bryullov had told me that “the foundation has been laid”, hope began to take more definite form in my imagination. I began to think how best to direct the training of my pupil in view of my paltry personal finances. I thought of the Gallery of Ancient Arts. Andrei Grigorovich, the supervisor, would have readily agreed to let him work there, but the statues in that gallery are so poorly lighted that it is impossible to draw them. After lengthy

consideration I approached the male model, Taras, a living Antinous, with the request that he allow my pupil to work in the plaster class-room at times when there were no classes. That's what we did. During one week (he even had his lunch there) he drew the head of Lucius Verus, the dissolute confidant of Marcus Aurelius, and the head of Canova's *The Genius*. Then I transferred him to the figure class and told him for the beginning to draw a human anatomy from four sides. Whenever I was free I visited the class-room and treated my tireless toiler to a pound of white bread and a piece of sausage, while customarily he lunched on a piece of black bread with water—if Taras brought some water. Occasionally I would be so carried away with admiration of the Belvedere torso that I too would sit down to draw. What a marvellous masterpiece of ancient culture! No wonder that the blind Michelangelo, feeling it with his fingers, was enraptured by this bit of Hercules at rest. And it is odd that a certain gentleman named Gersevanov in the account of his travel impressions so correctly evaluates the pedantic work of Michelangelo, *Judgement Day*, the frescoes of the divine Raphael and many other notable works of sculpture and painting, but in the Belvedere torso he sees nothing but a hunk of marble. Strange!

After the anatomy course he drew a sketch of Germanicus and a dancing faun, and then one beautiful morning I introduced him to Karl the Great. When Bryullov kindly and indulgently praised his drawings, his transports of delight were indescribable.

I have never seen a happier or more joyful person in all my life than he was during the days that followed.

"Is he always so kind and good?" he asked me time and again.

"Always," I replied.

"And that red room, is that his favourite?"

"Yes, that's his favourite room," I replied.

"Everything red! The room is red, the divan is red, the curtains on the windows are red, his dressing-gown is red and

the painting is red—everything red! Will I ever see him so close again?"

After that question he would begin to sob. Naturally, I did not try to comfort him. After all, what words of sympathy or comfort could be more healing than those happy, heavenly, divine tears? "Everything red!" he kept repeating through his tears.

Accustomed to that sort of interior decoration, I was moved only for a minute by the red room, which was hung with costly Oriental weapons and lighted by the sun through transparent scarlet curtains, but he kept the memory of it to his grave. After long and frightful trials he forgot everything—his art, his spiritual life, his love that had poisoned him, and me, his true friend,—he forgot everything else, but his last words were of Karl Pavlovich and the red decorations.

I met Karl Pavlovich the day following our visit and he asked me the name and address of his master. I told him. Then he took a horse-cab and left, saying to me: "Come tonight!"

That evening I went to him.

"That's the biggest swine in satin slippers!" Those were the words with which Karl Pavlovich greeted me.

"What's the matter?" I asked, guessing to whom he was referring.

"The matter is that tomorrow you'll have to go to that amphibian and get him to name his price for your pupil."

Karl the Great was out of sorts. For a long time he paced the room in silence, then spat and muttered, "Vandalism!"

"Let us go upstairs," he added, turning to me, and we silently went to the upstairs apartment where he had his bedroom, library and dining-room.

He ordered a lamp to be brought and asked me to read something aloud while he himself sat down to finish a painting—the sepia *The Sleeping Odalisque*, which he was doing, I believe, for the Vladislavlev album.

Our peaceful occupations, however, did not last long. Apparently, he was still haunted by the swine in satin slippers.

"Let's go outside," he said, putting away his painting.

We went out and walked along the river bank for a long time, finally coming out on the Bolshoi avenue.

"Is he at your place now?" he inquired.

"No," I replied, "he doesn't stay overnight at my place."

"Well, then let's go to supper."

And we went to Deli's.

I have seen many varieties of Russian landowners in my life, the wealthy, the middling and the gentlemen farmers. I have even seen the kind that live continually in France or England and speak with admiration about how well off the farmers and peasants are in those countries, while in their own country they rob the peasant of his last sheep. I had seen many characters of that sort, but I had never before seen a Russian who would be rude to Karl Bryullov in his own home.

My curiosity was strongly aroused and for a long time I couldn't fall asleep for wondering what the swine in satin slippers had done. However, my curiosity cooled off when I began to put on my frock-coat the next morning. Good sense took over. My good sense told me that the given swine wasn't such an interesting rarity that on its account I should sacrifice my own self-respect, although the cause demanded considerable sacrifice. But the question was, what would happen if I couldn't stand up to the torture any more than my teacher had?

After brief consideration I took off my frock-coat, donned my everyday overcoat and went to old Venetsianov. He was experienced in such affairs and probably had had many encounters with such characters, from which encounters he had emerged with honour.

I found Venetsianov already at work. He was making an India-ink drawing of his own painting, *A Mother Teaching Her Child to Pray*. That drawing was intended for Vladislavlev's album *The Dawn*.

I explained the reason for my untimely visit, gave him the amphibian's address, and the old man left his work, dressed,

and we went out to the street. He drove off in a horse-drawn cab, while I returned to my apartment where I found my happy, cheerful pupil. But it was as though his happiness and cheerfulness were under some sort of shadow. He was like a person who wants to share some great secret but is afraid that it would cease to be a secret. Even before I took off my topcoat and put on my smock, I saw something was wrong with my friend.

"Well, what's new with you?" I asked. "What did you do last night? How is your master?"

"The master is so-so," answered he, stammering. "I read *Andrei Savoyar* until everybody fell asleep and then I lighted the candle you gave me and I drew."

"What did you draw?" I asked him. "Did you copy something or draw without a model?"

"Just so," he said, blushing. "I recently read Ozerov's works and I took a liking to *Oedipus in Athens*, so I tried to compose. . . ."

"That's fine. Did you bring your composition with you? Show it to me."

He took a small roll of paper from his pocket, unrolled it with trembling fingers and handed it to me, muttering:

"I didn't have time to outline it with a pen."

This was the first creative work of his own which he had nerved himself to show to me after such great difficulty. I liked his modesty, or rather, bashfulness: that's a sure sign of talent. I also liked the work itself on account of its simplicity: Oedipus, Antigone and in the background, Polinices, three figures in all. Such laconism is rarely met in early attempts, which always contain numerous figures. Youthful imagination does not limit itself and concentrate on one eloquent word, one note, or one line, but demands expanse, it soars, and in its flight it often gets entangled, falls and is smashed against adamant laconism.

I praised him for his choice of scene and advised him to read history in addition to poetry, and above all, to more diligently copy fine prints, such as Raphael's or Volpato's, for

example, or Poussin's, or Audran's. "Your master has those and others, so copy them whenever you have free time, while I will supply you with books." And then and there I gave him several volumes of Gillies' *History of Ancient Greece*.

Accepting the books, he said: "Besides those that hang on the walls, my master has a full portfolio of prints, but he won't permit me to copy them: he's afraid I will damage them." And smiling, he continued: "By the way, I told him that you took me to Karl Pavlovich and showed him my sketches and that..." here he began to stammer, "that he... but then, I don't believe it myself."

"What's that?" I caught him up. "He doesn't believe that Bryullov praised your drawings?"

"He doesn't even believe that I saw Karl Pavlovich, and when I assured him that I had, he called me a fool."

He was going to say more but at that moment Venetsianov entered the room and taking off his hat, said with a smile:

"Nothing exceptional! A landowner as landowners go! He made me wait about an hour in the ante-chamber, it is true, but that's a custom of theirs. What can you do, a custom is a law. He saw me in his study. Now, I didn't like that study of his. It is true that everything in it is luxurious, expensive and magnificent, but it is all magnificent in the Japanese manner. I began by speaking of enlightenment in general and of philanthropy in particular. He listened to me for a long time silently and attentively, but at last he interrupted me: 'Tell me straight and simply what it is that you and your Bryullov want from me. He upset me yesterday. He's a regular American savage!' And he laughed loudly. At first I was taken aback but quickly recovered and explained my business calmly and simply.

"'You should have said so a long time ago, instead of carrying on about philanthropy! There's no philanthropy involved in this! Money and nothing else!' he added smugly. 'So you want to know the rock-bottom price? Have I understood you correctly?'

“ ‘Exactly,’ I replied.

“ ‘My bottom price is 2,500 rubles! Is it a deal?’

“ ‘Agreed,’ I replied.

“ ‘He’s a craftsman,’ he continued, ‘and he’s needed around the house. . . .’ He wanted to say something more, but I bowed and left. And here I am,” added the old man smiling.

“I thank you heartily.”

“And I thank you heartily!” he said, firmly pressing my hand. “You provided me with the opportunity to do something for our fine arts and also to see at last an odd fish that calls our great Karl an American savage.” And the old man laughed good-naturedly.

“I have contributed my mite,” he said when he stopped laughing, “and now it’s up to you. In case of failure I’ll have to turn to the English gambling club again. *Au revoir!*”

“Let us go together to Karl Pavlovich,” I suggested.

“I won’t go and I don’t advise you to do it. Remember the saying, ‘a visitor at the wrong time is worse than a Tatar’, the more so when you’re dealing with an artist and especially in the morning—that’s worse than an entire horde of Tatars.”

“You are making me blush for this morning,” I mumbled.

“Not at all. You acted like a genuine Christian. We have definite times for work and for rest, but there is no special time set aside for good deeds. I thank you heartily once more for this morning’s visit. *Au revoir!* We are dining at home today, please join us. If you see the Belvedere, bring him along,” he added on leaving. The Belvedere was a nickname he had for Apollon Nikolayevich Mokritsky, a pupil of Bryullov’s and a passionate admirer of Schiller.

I parted with Venetsianov on the street and went to inform Karl Pavlovich of the outcome of our diplomacy, but alas, I didn’t even find Lukian at home. Fortunately Lypyn looked out from the kitchen and told me that they had gone to the portico. (Portico was what we called the building back of the present Academy Garden where the workshops of Bryullov, Baron Klodt, Sauerweid and Bassin were located.) I came to

the street through the Liteiny yard and, passing Dovicielli's shop, saw the curly-headed profile of Karl the Great in the window. Seeing me, he came out on the street.

"Well?" he asked.

"Where are you dining today?" I inquired.

"I don't know. Why do you ask?"

"Here's what," I said. "Let's go to Venetsianov's for dinner. He will tell you such wonders about the amphibian as you have probably never heard before and never will again."

"All right, let us go," he said, and we went to Venetsianov's.

At the dinner table the old man told the story of that day's visit and when he came to the part about the American savage, we all guffawed and the dinner ended in hysterical laughter.

The Society for the Encouragement of Artists rented large quarters in Kastyurin's house on the Seventh Line between the Bolshoi and Sredny avenues for its five scholarship students. Apart from the rooms taken by the students, there were also two class-rooms decorated with ancient statues—of Venus de Medici, Apollo, Germanicus and a group of gladiators. This was the haven I picked for my pupil in place of the plaster class under the patronage of Taras, the model. Apart from the above-mentioned statues, there was also a human skeleton, and study of the skeleton was all the more imperative for him since he had taken to drawing the figure statue of Fisher from memory without any idea of human bone structure.

With this good end in mind, the day following the dinner at Venetsianov's I paid a visit to V. I. Grigorovich, who was then secretary of the Society, and asked his permission for my pupil to make use of the class-rooms.

Vassily Ivanovich obligingly gave me an entrance card in the shape of a note to the artist Golovnya who was living together with the students as their overseer.

It is hardly worth while to spend any time on such a miserable being as the artist Golovnya, but since he is a rare phenomenon, especially, among artists, I'll devote a few words to him.



The strong, sharply delineated figure of Plyushkin<sup>95</sup> pales before this anti-artist Golovnya. Plyushkin at any rate had youth and consequently also joyousness, even if not complete, exultant joyousness, yet joyousness of sorts, while this poor fellow didn't possess anything even resembling youth and joy.

He had been a scholarship student of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists and when he set about fulfilling the programme for the second gold medal in the Academy of Arts contest (the subject was: Adam and Eve beside the dead body of their son, Abel), he found that he needed a female model in order to do the painting, but in St. Petersburg at that time it was not easy to get such a model, the main reason being that it cost a lot. The fellow scented a business deal and went to the then president of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists, Kikin, who was a generous patron of the artists, to ask for assistance, that is, for money with which to hire a model. Receiving a hundred-ruble bill, he sewed it up in the mattress, using a doll, such as painters have for draperies, as the model for the first-to-be-created beauty.

Whoever knows what a gold medal means to a young artist will understand the repulsiveness of the petty spirit of this stingy youth. Plyushkin does not even come near him.

It was to this moral monster that I presented, together with the note, my morally pure foundling.

That first day I myself took the skeleton from the cupboard, set it on a chair in a pose of extreme debauchery, and having charted the general position of the skeleton with light strokes, I bade my pupil to sketch in the particulars.

Two days later I compared his drawing with the lithographed anatomical drawings of Bassin with great satisfaction, finding his particulars to be the more precise and accurate.

Of course, perhaps the magnifying glass through which I looked on my foundling was responsible for that. Be that as it may, I liked his drawing.

He continued to draw the skeleton in various positions and

also, under the patronage of the male model, Taras, the statue of Midas, who was hanged by Apollo.

In the normal course of events winter was passing and spring was drawing near. My pupil became noticeably thinner, paler and more thoughtful.

"What's wrong with you?" I asked him. "Aren't you well?"

"I'm well," he answered mournfully.

"Why are you crying?"

"I'm not crying, only. . . ."

And the tears streamed from his expressive, fine eyes. I couldn't make out the meaning of all this and was beginning to think that perhaps his virginal young heart had been struck by one of Cupid's arrows, when one almost spring-like morning he told me that he wouldn't be able to visit me daily as work would commence the coming Monday and he would have to paint fences again.

I tried to cheer him up as best I could, but I didn't even hint to him about Karl Pavlovich's intentions, especially since I myself didn't know anything for certain that would be sufficient foundation on which to build up his hopes.

On Sunday I visited his guildmaster to suggest whether it wouldn't be possible to have a common house painter do the work in place of my pupil.

"Why not? It can be done," he said, "before the fine painting jobs begin, but after that, you'll have to excuse me!—he's a graphic artist, and you yourself know what that means in our profession. But do you suppose," he continued, "that he'll find the means to hire a workman in his place?"

"I'll hire the worker for you."

"You?" he asked me with astonishment. "But what pleasure or profit do you derive from that?"

"Oh, I do it just out of boredom," I replied, "just for my own amusement."

"Fine amusement—to throw money away for nothing! You must be loaded with money." Then, smiling smugly, he said: "How much do you charge, for instance, for a portrait?"

"It depends on the portrait and on the customer," I answered, guessing what he was leading up to. "From you, for example, I wouldn't take more than a hundred rubles."

"No, no, sir, charge whomever you will a hundred iron men, but you'll be lucky to get ten from me."

"Then let's do it this way," I told him, stretching out my hand, "let your graphic artist off for a couple of months and you'll have a portrait."

"A couple?" he muttered thoughtfully, "that's too long, I couldn't do it. But I could for one month."

"So let it be for one month then, it's a deal," said I and we shook hands as traders do in the market-place.

"When do we begin?" he asked me.

"Tomorrow, if you like," I replied, putting on my hat.

"Where are you off to? How about sealing the bargain with a drink?"

"No, thank you, we can have a drink at the end of the month. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

What does one fleeting month of freedom mean among many long and difficult years of slavery? A grain of sand in the desert! I enjoyed watching him during that happy month. His expressive youthful face shone with such joy, such complete happiness, that I, the Lord forgive me, envied him. His poor but neat and clean suit seemed stylish to me, while his frieze overcoat appeared to be made of wool and of the very finest Riga wool at that. During lunch at Madame Jurgens's nobody looked askance, first at him and then at me—evidently I was not the only one to note such a happy transformation in him.

On one of those happy days we were strolling together to Madame Jurgens's place when we met Karl Pavlovich on the Bolshoi Avenue.

"Where are you going?" he asked us.

"To Madame Jurgens," I replied.

"I'll go with you. Suddenly, I have an appetite," he said and turned with us into the Third Line.

Once in a while, when he had the leisure, Karl the Great liked to visit Madame Jurgens: it wasn't that he liked the complaisant Madame Jurgens herself or her maid Olimpiada who had been the late Petrovsky's model for Agar, but that as a genuine artist he liked our diversified company. There he could see a poor clerk of a Senate department in his only, threadworn uniform, or a pale and lanky university student treating himself to a lavish lunch at Madame Jurgens's with the coin he received from a wealthy merry-making fellow-student for copying Fisher's lectures for him. He saw very many things there which he couldn't have seen at either the Dumet or the St. George restaurants. Whenever he appeared, however, the attentive Madame Jurgens offered him a covered table in a private room and some quickly prepared special food, which he like a true socialist always turned down. But he did not refuse this time and ordered a table to be laid for three in a separate room and sent Olimpiada to Fox for a bottle of Jackson's.

Madame Jurgens was in transports—she began running and bustling about, and almost tore off her new wig along with her cap when she remembered that she ought to change her head-dress for such a valuable guest.

And for her he was a valuable guest indeed. From the very first day that he visited her, customers multiplied with every day. And what customers! Not small fry—artists, or students, or two-for-a-penny Senate clerks, but people who ordered a bottle of Madoc and some special sort of steak. And that's quite proper. If they can pay a quarter to see a lady from Amsterdam, why not pay thirty kopecks to get a close look at Bryullov? Madame Jurgens fully understood this and exploited it as much as she was able to.

My pupil sat silently at the table, silently and with growing pallor he drank a glass of Jackson's, silently he pressed the hand of Karl the Great, and he walked to my apartment in

silence, but on arriving home he dropped to the floor without undressing and cried the rest of the day and the whole night through.

He still had a week of independence left, but on the second day after the lunch I have described above he rolled up his drawings and without saying a word to me went out. I thought he was going to the Seventh Line as usual and therefore didn't ask him where he was off to. Came the time for lunch—he had not returned, nor had he come home by nightfall. Next day I went to his guildmaster, but he wasn't there either. I became frightened and didn't know what to think. On the third day he came to me in the late afternoon, more pallid and dishevelled than usual.

"Where were you?" I asked. "What's the matter with you, are you sick? Are you unwell?"

"I'm unwell," he replied in a barely audible voice.

I sent the care-taker for Zhadovtsev, a private doctor, and myself proceeded to undress him and put him to bed. He abandoned himself to my ministrations as meekly as a child.

Zhadovtsev felt his pulse and advised me to take him to the hospital. "Because," he explained, "it would be dangerous to treat a fever at home with the means at your disposal."

I took his advice and that very evening I drove my poor pupil to the St. Mary Magdalene hospital which is situated by the Tuchkov Bridge.

Thanks to the influence of Zhadovtsev as a private doctor, my pupil was accepted without the customary formalities. I informed his guildmaster of what had happened the next day and the form was filled out with all the accessories.

I visited him several times every day and every time I left the hospital I felt sadder and sadder. I had become so accustomed to him, so attached to him, that I didn't know what to do without him. I would cross to the Petersburg side, turn into Petrovsky Park (at that time it had just been started), come out where the Sobolevsky summer cottages are, and

again go back to the hospital where he was burning up with fever. I would ask the nurse:

"Well, has he regained consciousness?"

"No, sir."

"Does he rave?"

"He only keeps repeating the word 'red'."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing, sir."

And I would go out into the street again, and again cross Tuchkov Bridge and visit Mr. Sobolevsky's summer cottages, and again return to the hospital. Eight days passed in that manner. On the ninth day he regained consciousness and when I came close he looked at me so intently, so expressively, so tenderly, that I won't forget that glance as long as I live. He wanted to say something to me but couldn't, he tried to give me his hand and only began to weep. I left.

The doctor on duty, whom I met in the corridor, told me that the crisis was past and the strength of youth had pulled him through.

Reassured by the good doctor's words, I went home to my apartment. I lighted a cigar. For some reason the cigar wouldn't smoke well, so I threw it away and went out on the boulevard. Something seemed missing, something was lacking for my peace of mind. I went to the Academy, to Karl Pavlovich's quarters, but he wasn't at home. I walked over to the river bank road and found him standing beside an enormous sphinx and watching a small skiff, loaded with laughing passengers, slipping along the Neva, where the ice had already broken up, leaving a silvery runnel behind it.

"Were you at my studio?" he asked without a preliminary greeting.

"No, I wasn't," I told him.

"Let us go."

We walked in silence to his home studio. There we found Lypyn. He had brought a palette with fresh paints and, sitting in the easy chair, was admiring the still damp back-

groud-painting of the portrait of Vassily Andreyevich Zhukovsky. When we entered poor Lypyn sprang up and got embarrassed like a schoolboy caught in a misdemeanour.

"Put away the palette, I won't work today," Karl Pavlovich told Lypyn, and sat in the easy chair. He gazed at his creation for at least half an hour, then turned to me and said:

"His look should be more gentle: his verses are gentle and sweet. Isn't that so?"

Then, not giving me time to answer, he continued:

"Do you know the purpose of that portrait?"

"No, I don't," I replied.

There was another ten minutes of silence. Then he rose, took his hat and spoke:

"Let us go out on the street and I'll tell you the purpose of that portrait."

Coming out on the street, he said:

"I have changed my mind. Such matters aren't talked about beforehand. Moreover," he added, joking, "I am fully convinced that you aren't curious."

"If that's your wish," I said, "let it remain a mystery to me."

"Only until the second sitting. Well, and how is your protégé, is he feeling better?"

"He's beginning to regain his strength."

"Does that mean that the danger is past?"

"At least that's what the doctor says."

"Good-bye," he said, giving me his hand. "I'll look in on Hilberg. I doubt that the poor fellow will ever get up," he added sorrowfully and we parted.

I was intensely curious about that mysterious portrait. I vaguely guessed its purpose, but no matter how much I wanted to get proof for my surmise, I summoned up enough fortitude not even to hint about it to Karl the Great. It is true that one beautiful morning I paid a visit to V. A. Zhukovsky, ostensibly to admire the stiff contours of drawings by Cornelius and Peter Hess, but in reality to ferret out some information about the mysterious portrait. However, I failed.

Klenze, Valhalla, Pinacoteca and München generally took up the entire morning, so that not even a word was mentioned about Düsseldorf, while the portrait simply didn't exist.

Vassily Andreyevich's rapturous praises of German art were interrupted by the arrival of Count M. Y. Vyelgorsky.

"There's the cause and the reason for your present trouble and bother," Vassily Andreyevich told the Count, pointing to me.

The Count pressed my hand with feeling. I had already phrased a question in my mind when a servant entered and announced an aristocrat whose name was unknown to me. I realised my question was out of place, bowed my good-byes and left with nothing gained.

Meanwhile, the vital forces of youth were winning. Like the hero in the fairy-tale, he revived and grew stronger not by the day but by the hour. A week after his fortnight's bout of fever had left him, he got on his feet and walked, holding on to his bed, but he was so downcast and sad that, despite the doctor's orders not to speak to him of serious matters, I once asked him:

"You're recovering, you're comfortable, yet why are you sad?"

"I'm not sad, I'm happy, but I don't know what it is I want. I would like to read."

I asked the doctor whether he was permitted to read anything.

"Don't give him anything, especially no serious reading matter."

"What shall I do with him? I can't sit at his bed-side all the time, and there's no other way I can help him."

As I cast about in my mind, I remembered Albert Durer's *Perspective* with a Russian interpretation, which I had one time studied and finally given up without making any sense out of it. And strange to say, I remembered Albert Durer's mishmash, but completely forgot about the sensible, fine course in linear perspective by our own Professor Vorobyov. I had sketches of that course in perspective in my briefcase (not in



their proper order, it is true). I gathered them together and after talking it over with the doctor I gave them to my pupil along with compasses and a set square, giving him a first lesson in linear perspective there and then. Afterwards, I did not have to explain the second and third lessons in perspective at all: he was recuperating rapidly and he grasped this mathematical science quickly—even though he did not know the four rules of arithmetic, by the way.

The lessons in perspective came to an end. I begged the head doctor to release him from the hospital, but the doctor explained to me that for a complete cure he must remain under doctor's supervision for at least another month. Reluctantly, I agreed.

During that period I often met Karl Pavlovich, and I saw the portrait of Vassily Andreyevich Zhukovsky two or three times after the second sitting. In conversations with Karl Pavlovich I several times detected hints about a secret, but for some inexplicable reason I side-stepped any confidences on his part. It was as though I was afraid, somehow, although I practically guessed the secret.

The mystery was soon unveiled. On April 22, 1838, early in the morning I received a handwritten note from V. A. Zhukovsky with the following message:

“Dear sir!

Come tomorrow at eleven to Karl Pavlovich's place and wait for me there, wait for me without fail, no matter how late I should be.

“V. Zhukovsky.

“P. S. Bring him with you also.”

I watered that blessed note with my tears, and not trusting it to my pocket, I held it tight in my hand and ran to the hospital. Although the porter had instructions to let me through at any time of the day, that time he wouldn't let me in, saying: “It's early, sir, the patients are all asleep yet.” That cooled me off a little. I unclenched my fist, smoothed out the note, read

it practically syllable by syllable, carefully folded it up and placed it in my pocket, and then returned with measured steps to my apartment, thanking the porter in my heart for stopping me.

Long, long ago, when I was yet in the parish school, I would read Kotlyarevsky's<sup>96</sup> celebrated parody on *Aeneid* furtively, so that the teacher shouldn't see me, and

*If you haven't got it in your hands,  
Don't say that it's already yours.*

Those two lines got so deeply imbedded in my memory that even now I often repeat them to myself and apply them to my affairs. I recalled those very lines as I was returning to my apartment. As a matter of fact, did I know for certain that this blessed note referred to his case? I didn't know, I only had a feeling that it was so and feelings often proved deceptive. What if my intuition was playing me false now? What a terrible wrong I would have done, and to my favourite friend at that! I was frightened at the very thought of it.

During that longest of days I approached Karl Pavlovich's door twenty times and yet, overcome by an unaccountable fear, I turned back each time. I don't know what I was afraid of. The twenty-first time I ventured to ring and Lukian, looking out the window, said: "Master's not at home." It was as though a mountain had rolled off my shoulders, as though I had accomplished some mighty feat and could breathe freely at last.

I walked briskly from the Academy to the Third Line—and there saw Karl Pavlovich coming towards me. I became utterly confused and made as though to run away from him, but he stopped me with the question:

"Did you receive Zhukovsky's note?"

"I did," I replied barely audibly.

"Be at my place at eleven o'clock tomorrow, then. Good-bye! And oh yes . . . if he's fit, bring him along with you," he added, moving off.

Well, thought I, there's not the slightest doubt now, yet:

*If you haven't got it in your hands,  
Don't say that it's already yours.*

But several minutes later that wise saying had evaporated from my highly unpractical head. I was seized with an irresistible desire to bring him to Karl Pavlovich's the following day. Would the doctor grant him permission? There was the rub. In order to solve this problem I went to the doctor's quarters, found him at home and told him the cause of my sudden visit. The doctor cited several cases of mental derangement caused by sudden joy or sudden grief. "Especially," he concluded, "since your protégé has not yet fully recovered from the fever." I had no answer to such arguments, so I thanked the doctor for his good advice, said my good-byes and went out. I polished the pavement a long time with my shoes without going anywhere in particular. I had an urge to visit old Venetianov to see whether he could tell me something more definite, but it was past midnight already and he wasn't one of us single fellows—therefore a post-midnight visit was out of the question. Then the thought struck me to go to Troitsky Bridge and wait there to watch the sunrise. But Toitsky Bridge was quite a distance away and I was already feeling tired. Perhaps I should content myself with quietly sitting beside those giant sphinxes? After all, it's the same Neva. The same, yet not the same. However, after some thought, I turned my steps to the sphinxes. Sitting down on a granite bench and leaning against a noseless gryphon, I long admired the gentle-flowing beauty of the Neva.

At sunrise a porter of the Academy came to the Neva for water and woke me up, repeating in a tone of admonition: "It is fortunate that people aren't about yet, or they would say, what a good-for-nothing."

Compensating the porter with a coin for his service, I went home and there I fell asleep, as they say, like a log.

At eleven on the dot I was at Karl Pavlovich's apartment and Lukian, opening the door to me, said: "You are asked to wait." In the studio my eyes were attracted by the famous Zampieri painting, *John the Baptist*, which I had known only by reputation and from Miller's engraving. Again I was bewildered! Did Vassily Andreyevich invite me to see that painting? But why, then, did he write "bring him with you also"? I had the note on me, so I took it out and after reading the postscript over several times I grew somewhat calmer and walked closer to the painting, but the damned doubts prevented me from enjoying that very fine work to the full.

Nonetheless, I did not notice when Karl the Great entered the studio, accompanied by Count Vyelgorsky and V. A. Zhukovsky. With a bow I let them take my place and I went over to the portrait of Zhukovsky. They long admired the great work of the poor martyr Zampieri, while my heart grew faint with expectation. At last Zhukovsky took a neatly folded paper from his pocket and, extending it to me, said:

"Give that to your pupil."

I unfolded the paper. It was his certificate of release from serfdom, witnessed by Count Vyelgorsky, Zhukovsky and Bryullov. I crossed myself piously and three times kissed those celebrated signatures.

I expressed my gratitude to the great humanitarian trio to the best of my ability, and then, saying my good-byes hastily, I went out to the corridor and ran to Venetsianov's.

The old man met me with the joyous question: "What's new?" Without a word I took the treasured deed from my pocket and gave it to him.

"I know, I know everything," he said, returning the paper to me.

"But I don't know anything! For God's sake, tell me how it all came about."

"Thank God it did come about, but let us have lunch first and then I'll tell you about it—it's a long story, and above all, a beautiful story."

And raising his voice, he recited a line from Zhukovsky:

*Children, the oatmeal's on the table, say grace!*

"Yes, papa," came a feminine voice and Venetsianov's daughters, accompanied by A. N. Mokritsky, entered from the drawing-room, and we sat down at the table. Contrary to custom, lunch was eaten in a noisy and merry atmosphere. The old man became animated and related the story of V. A. Zhukovsky's portrait, without hardly a mention of his own part in that noble enterprise. He just added in conclusion:

"I was only a simple go-between in that magnanimous transaction."

Here is how the deal was actually carried out.

Karl Bryullov painted a portrait of Zhukovsky, and then Zhukovsky and Count Vyelgorsky offered that portrait to the royal family for 2,500 rubles in cash and for that money they bought my pupil's freedom, while old Venetsianov, as he himself described it, played the role of a diligent and noble-spirited go-between in that good deed.

What should I do now? When and how should I announce the joyous news to him? Venetsianov repeated the same advice that the doctor had given me and I was completely convinced that utmost care must be observed. But how could I hold myself back? Perhaps I should stop visiting him for a while? No, because then he would think that I too had fallen ill, or that I had forsaken him, and that would torment him. After thinking it over, I mustered my will and went to the Mary Magdalene hospital. At the first visit I passed the test with honours and at the second and third visits I began to prepare him a little for the news. I asked the doctor how soon he could be permitted to leave the hospital, but he advised me not to hurry. Impatience again began to torment me.

One morning his former guildmaster came to my apartment and without beating about the bush began to reproach me, saying that I had robbed him in a most barbarous fashion, stealing away his best workman, and that because of me he

was losing several thousand rubles at the very least. For quite a while I couldn't make out what the matter was and how I came to be a robber. Finally he told me that the previous day the landowner had called him over to his place and told him all that had happened, asking him to cancel the contract; that same day he had been at the hospital and found that the sick lad knew nothing at all about it.

"There goes my caution!" I thought.

"But what do you want from me now?" I asked him.

"Nothing. I only want to know if all that is the truth."

"The truth," I answered, and we parted.

I was glad of such a turn of events: now he was already prepared, and could receive the news more calmly than before.

"Is it true? Can I believe what I have heard?" he asked as he met me at the door of his ward.

"I don't know what you heard."

"The master told me yesterday that I . . ." and he stopped, as though afraid to finish the sentence, then after a period of silence, mumbled almost inaudibly: ". . . that I have been set free! . . . that you. . ." And tears coursed down his cheeks.

"Calm yourself," I told him, "so far it just appears to resemble the truth." But he didn't hear a thing and continued to weep. A few days later he was released from the hospital and moved in with me, completely happy with the arrangement.

There is much, very much, that is beautiful in divine, everlasting nature, but the triumph and crown of deathless beauty is the face of a human being animated by happiness. I know nothing loftier or more beautiful. It fell to my lot but once in my life to fully satiate myself on such fascinating beauty.

During several days he was so happy, so fine, that I couldn't gaze upon him without being moved. He poured some of his boundless happiness over into my heart. His ecstasy was sandwiched in with periods of calm, smiling happiness. Although he tried to work during all those days, the work couldn't get going and he would put away his drawing in the briefcase,

take out the certificate of freedom from his pocket, read it over carefully, cross himself, kiss it and give way to tears.

In order to draw his attention away from the object of his happiness, I took the certificate from him on the pretext that it had to be registered in the Chamber of Civil Affairs, and every day I took him to the galleries at the Academy. When his suit was ready I dressed him as though I were his nurse and we went to the provincial government house. After registering the precious deed, I led him to the Stroganov gallery where I showed him the original Velasquez painting, and our day's adventures ended in this way.

The following day at ten in the morning I dressed him up again and took him to Karl Pavlovich and handed him over to our immortal Bryullov much as a doting father entrusts his son to a teacher.

From that day on he began to attend classes at the Academy and was made a pensioner of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists.

I had long intended to forsake our Northern Palmira<sup>97</sup> for some humble nook in the hospitable provinces. During the current year that desirable nook became available at one of the provincial universities and I didn't fail to seize the opportunity. In times gone by, when I attended sculpture classes and dreamed of the land of wonders and of the world capital crowned by the Buonarotti cupola,<sup>98</sup> if anyone had proposed that I take a position as a teacher of drawing at a university, I would have thrown my pencil down and exclaimed, "After this, is it worth while to study the divine arts!" But now, when imagination has been balanced with common sense, when you look into the future with open eyes and not through rose-coloured glasses, despite yourself the saying keeps coming into your head: "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

I should have departed for the position in the winter, but was held up in the capital by certain personal matters, and especially the matter of no-longer-mine but K. Bryullov's

pupil, later by his illness and lengthy convalescence, and finally, by financial difficulties. When all these matters came to a satisfactory conclusion, I placed my favourite under the wing of Karl the Great, as I have already related, and early in May I finally left the capital for a lengthy period.

Parting with my favourite, I left him my flat with the easel and other scanty furnishings, together with all the plaster-of-Paris casts which I couldn't take with me. I advised him to invite a friend to share the quarters with him until the winter, and in the winter Sternberg<sup>99</sup> would move in with him—Sternberg at that time was in Little Russia and I had arranged that we meet at the home of a common acquaintance in Prilutsk district, when I intended to ask the good-hearted Vilya to move in with my protégé into my apartment on his return to the capital, which, I am happy to say, was what took place. I further advised him to visit Karl Pavlovich, but to take care not to pester him with too frequent visits, not to shirk classes, and to read as much as he could. Finally, I asked him to write to me frequently and to write as he would to his own father.

And committing him to the protection of our eternal Mother, I parted from him—alas, forever.

His first letters were all of one kind and resembled a schoolboy's detailed and monotonous diary—they are of interest only to me and no one else. In his later letters he began to display individuality and literacy, sometimes also a special content, as for example, in his ninth letter.

“Today, before ten o'clock in the morning, we rolled up the painting *The Crucifixion of Christ* and had the models carry it to the Lutheran church of Peter and Paul. Karl Pavlovich directed me to accompany it to the very church. A quarter of an hour later he arrived himself, and he ordered that it be again put in the frame and hung in its place in his own presence. Since it had not yet been varnished, from a



distance it showed nothing but a dark, dull stain. After lunch Mikhailov and I went and lacquered it. Soon Karl Pavlovich came too. At first he sat in the front pew; after a brief period he seated himself in the very last one. Then we came up to him and also sat down. He sat in silence for a long time, only muttering occasionally, 'The vandal! Not a ray of light on the altar. What do they want the painting for?'

"'Now,' said he, turning to us and pointing to the arch that divided the church in two, 'if there were a painting done, depicting the crucifixion of Christ, that would be to the size of that arch, now that would be a painting worthy of the God-Man.'

"Oh, if I could pass on to you even one-hundredth, even one-thousandth of what I heard from him then. But you know yourself how he talks. It is impossible to put his words on paper, they would become petrified. Here, on the spot, he created that colossal painting in imagination with all the smallest details, painted it and hung it. And what a painting! Nicolas Poussin's *Crucifixion* is simply a Suzdal handicraft job in comparison, while Marten isn't even in it.

"He let his fancy flow in this manner for quite awhile yet, and I listened to him with reverence. Then he put his hat on and went out, Mikhailov and I following. Passing by the statues of the apostles Peter and Paul, he uttered, 'Dolls in wet rags! Copied from Thorvaldsen too!' Passing Dacciaro's shop, he joined the crowd of idlers to gape at the window hung with coloured French lithographs. My God, I thought as I looked at him, and that is the same genius who a moment ago was soaring so high in the realm of the fine arts, and is now admiring Grévedon's too-sweet beauties. Incomprehensible! And yet, it's true.

"Today I missed class for the first time, because Karl Pavlovich wouldn't let me go—he set Mikhailov and me to play checkers with him, two against one, and lost a three-hour carriage drive to us. We rode to the islands and he remained at home, waiting for us to come back for supper.

“P.S. I don’t recall whether I wrote you in my last letter that in the September test I graduated to the nature class at the top of the class for my *Warrior*.

“If it weren’t for you, my unforgettable friend, I would not have passed into the nature class for at least another year. I have started attending Professor Buyalsky’s lectures on anatomy. He is now dealing with the skeleton. And here it is, again thanks to you, that I know the skeleton by heart. Everywhere, everywhere it’s you, my only, my unforgettable benefactor! Farewell!

“Devoted to you with all my heart, N. N.”

I intend to tell the rest of his story through the medium of his own letters, and that will be the more interesting since in his letters he often describes the pursuits and daily home life of Karl Pavlovich, whose favourite pupil and companion he was. In time I will publish all of his letters for the benefit of the future biographer of Karl Bryullov, but now I shall include only those which have a direct bearing on his pursuits and development in the artistic field, and the unfolding of his inner highly moral life.

“Here it is the end of October already, and Sternberg still hasn’t arrived. I don’t know what to do with the apartment. I don’t find it a burden. I pay for it fifty-fifty with Mikhailov. I am at Karl Pavlovich’s practically all the time, coming home only to sleep, though sometimes I sleep over at his place, while Mikhailov doesn’t even come home to sleep. God knows how and where he lives. I see him only at Karl Pavlovich’s and sometimes in class. He’s a very original person and has a good heart. Karl Pavlovich proposes that I come to live with him altogether, but I’m ashamed, and I’m afraid to tell you, yet it seems to me that I’m more free in an apartment of my own, and secondly, I very much want to live at least a few months together with Sternberg, mainly because you advised me to, and you never give me bad advice.

“Karl Pavlovich is working very hard on a copy of Domenicino’s painting *John the Apostle*. The Academy of Arts ordered that copy. During the work I read. He has a sizable personal library, but it is completely without order. We have tried several times to put it in some sort of reasonable order, but always without success. Nevertheless, there’s plenty to read. Karl Pavlovich promised Smirdin to draw a picture for his *One Hundred Literateurs*, and so he has his entire library at his disposal. I have read nearly all of Walter Scott’s novels and am now reading Michaud’s *History of the Crusades*. I like it better than the novels, and Karl Pavlovich says the same. I drew a sketch of Peter the Hermit leading a crowd of the first Crusaders through a German town, adhering to Retzsch’s manners and costumes. I showed it to Karl Pavlovich and he strictly forbade me to take any subject whatever outside of the Bible and ancient Greek and Roman history. ‘There,’ he said, ‘all is simplicity and grace, while in mediæval history all is ugliness and dissoluteness.’ So now I have no book in my flat, except the Bible. I am reading *The Travels of Anacharsis* and Gillies’s *The History of Greece* aloud to Karl Pavlovich, and he always listens to both with equal pleasure.

“Oh, if you could only see with what care and how lovingly he is finishing his copy! I simply revere him, and it couldn’t be otherwise. Yet what an enchanting, magical influence is exercised by the original! Either it is simply bias, or time has so charmingly softened those colours, or Domenicino. . . . No, that’s a sinful thought, Domenicino could never be greater than our divine Karl Pavlovich. Sometimes I wish they would take away the original without delay.

“At the supper table once the conversation turned to copies and he said that neither in painting nor in sculpture does he admit true copies, i.e., recreations, and in oral poetry he knows but one alone, Zhukovsky’s *The Prisoner of Chillon*—and then and there he recited it by heart. How marvellously he recites poetry! Honestly, better than Bryansky or Karatygin.

By the way, about Karatygin. A few days ago we happened to walk into the Mikhailovsky theatre. They were putting on *Thirty Years, or A Gambler's Life*—a too salty drama, as Karl Pavlovich expressed himself. Between the second and the third acts he went backstage and dressed Karatygin up for the role of the beggar. The audience went crazy, themselves not knowing why. That's what costuming means to a good actor!

"Taglioni has already arrived in Petersburg and will soon begin her enchanting flights. Somehow, he doesn't like her, however. How I wish Sternberg will come soon! I like him without having met him. Karl Pavlovich is too colossal for me, and in spite of his goodness and his kindnesses, I sometimes feel that I'm all alone. Mikhailov is an excellent and noble friend, but he doesn't get carried away by anything, it would seem that he isn't fascinated by the most charming things. But perhaps I don't understand him. Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor!

"I am in raptures! Sternberg, for whom I waited impatiently for so long, has finally arrived. And so suddenly, such a surprise! I became frightened and couldn't believe my eyes for a while; I thought, I was seeing things. At that time I was composing a sketch of *Jezeziel on a Field, Strewn with Bones*. It was night, going on two o'clock. Suddenly the door opened—I had become so engrossed in 'Jezeziel' that I had forgotten to lock it—the door opened and a human figure in a fur coat and a warm cap appeared. At first I became frightened and I don't know how I uttered: 'Sternberg?' 'Sternberg,' he answered me, and without letting him take his coat off I fell to kissing him and he replied in kind. We long stood looking at one another in silence with pleasure, then he remembered that the coachman was waiting at the gate, so he went out to the coachman and I went to ask the janitor to carry his baggage to the apartment. When all this was done, we breathed freely. And how strange! It seemed to me that I was meeting an old acquaintance, or rather, as though I was seeing you your-

self there in front of me. By the time I had asked and he had told me where and when he saw you, and what you had talked about and how you parted, the night had sped by. We noticed the dawn only when we saw that a bright blue shadow was being cast by the candlestick.

“‘Now, I think, some tea would not be amiss,’ said he.

“‘I think that would be fine,’ I replied and we went to the Golden Anchor.

“After tea I put him to bed and myself rushed to tell Karl Pavlovich my glad tidings, but he was also asleep. With nothing to do, I walked out on the river bank and hadn’t gone more than a few steps when I met Mikhailov, who evidently also hadn’t slept that night. He was walking with a gentleman in an overcoat and glasses.

“‘Lev Alexandrovich Elkan,’ Mikhailov introduced the gentleman with the glasses.

“I told him my name and we shook hands. Then I told Mikhailov about Sternberg’s arrival, and the gentleman with glasses became overjoyed as though at the coming of a long-awaited friend.

“‘Where is he?’ Mikhailov asked.

“‘At our apartment,’ I replied.

“‘Is he sleeping?’

“‘He’s sleeping.’

“‘Well, so let us go to Kapernaum, they probably aren’t asleep there,’ said Mikhailov.

“The gentleman with glasses nodded in agreement and they went arm-in-arm, with me behind them. Passing Karl Pavlovich’s apartment, I noticed Lukian’s head in the window and gathered that the maestro had already risen. I said good-bye to Mikhailov and Elkan and went in to him. I met him in the hallway with a fresh palette and clean brushes, exchanged greetings with him and turned back. I was in no condition to read, not only aloud but even to myself. After promenading awhile along the embankment, I went to the apartment. Sternberg was still asleep. I quietly took a chair, sat down facing

his bed and admired his childishly innocent face. Then I took a pencil and paper and began to draw your (and consequently, my) sleeping friend. The likeness and expression came out fairly well for a sketch, and I had just outlined his whole figure and set down the folds in the blanket when Sternberg woke up and caught me red-handed. I became confused, and he noticed this and laughed in his hearty manner.

“‘Show me what you’ve done,’ he said, sitting up.

“I showed him. He laughed again and praised my sketch to the skies.

“‘Some day I will repay you in kind,’ he said laughing. Leaping out of bed he washed himself, opened his suitcase and began to dress.

“He pulled out a thick briefcase from underneath the clothes and giving it to me, said:

“‘Here is everything I did last summer in Little Russia, apart from a few small paintings in oil and water-colour. Look them over if you have the time, because I have to go out.’

“‘So long!’ he went on, giving me his hand, ‘I don’t know what’s on at the theatre today, but I’ve missed the theatre terribly. Let’s go together tonight!’

“‘With great pleasure!’ said I, ‘But you’ll have to call for me at the nature class.’

“‘Fine, I’ll call for you,’ he said.

“If Lukian hadn’t come for me on behalf of Karl Pavlovich, I would not even have thought of lunch. I was even annoyed that I had to leave Sternberg’s briefcase for Lukian’s roast beef. I told Karl Pavlovich my happiness at lunch, and he said he would like to see him. I told him that we had an appointment to go to the theatre together. He voiced the desire to join us if there was something worth while on. Fortunately, that day *The Enchanted House* was being put on at the Alexandrinsky theatre. At the end of the class Karl Pavlovich came into the class-room, took Sternberg and me away with him, seated us in his carriage, and we went off to see Louis XI on stage. That’s how the first day ended.

“On the second day in the morning Sternberg took his fat briefcase and we went to visit Karl Pavlovich. The latter was delighted with the monotonous diversity, as he expressed it, of your homeland and with your pensive fellow-countrymen, so beautifully and truthfully depicted by Sternberg. Such a large number of drawings and all so beautifully done. On a tiny scrap of grey wrapping paper a horizontal line is drawn, in the foreground a windmill, a pair of oxen beside a waggon piled high with sacks—all this not drawn but only hinted at, and yet how delightful!—you can’t tear your eyes away. Or a white little straw-thatched cottage in the shade of a spreading willow-tree, standing on the very bank and fully reflected in the water as in a mirror. Beside the house an old woman, and ducks swimming on the water—that’s the whole picture, but what a complete, vital picture!

“Sternberg’s briefcase is packed with such pictures, or rather, such thrilling sketches. Wonderful, incomparable Sternberg! No wonder Karl Pavlovich kissed him.

“Involuntarily I recalled the Chernetsov brothers. They recently returned from a journey on the Volga River and had brought their drawings to show Karl Pavlovich: an enormous pile of Whatman paper, with drawings done with German pedantism in ink. Karl Pavlovich looked at several of the drawings and closed the briefcase, saying (not to the Chernetsov brothers, naturally): ‘In this I don’t expect to see not only Mother Volga, but even a fair-sized puddle.’ But in a single sketch of Sternberg’s he could see the whole of Little Russia. He took such a liking to your homeland and to the doleful visages of your fellow-countrymen, that at lunch today he had already built himself a house on the Dnieper near Kiev with all the wood-work most charmingly adorned. He is afraid of one thing, which fear he isn’t able to avoid—that’s the landowners, or as he calls them, the feudal houndkeepers.

“He is an absolute child with all the charm of a child!

“This day we also rounded off with a show. Schiller’s *Robbers* was showing. Operas are almost non-existent, only

rarely *Robert* or *Fenella* are put on. The ballet, or rather, Taglioni, has destroyed everything. Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor!"

"For more than a month now I have been living together with the incomparable Sternberg and God grant real brothers to live as well as we do. What a kind, gentle creature he is! A true artist! Everything smiles on him, even as he smiles on everything. A happy, enviable nature! Karl Pavlovich likes him very much. But how could anyone who knows him not like him?"

"Here is how we spend our days and nights: At nine in the morning I go to the painting class. (I am already sketching in oils and at the last test I was third.) Sternberg remains at home and from his sketches makes either water-colour drawings or small oil paintings. At eleven o'clock I either go to Karl Pavlovich's or come home and Sternberg and I breakfast on whatever God has sent us. Then I go to class again and stay there until three o'clock. At three we go to Madame Jurgens to dine, sometimes Karl Pavlovich comes with us too, because at that time nearly every day I find him visiting Sternberg, and he often renounces a luxurious aristocratic dinner in favour of a bowl of plain democratic soup. A truly unusual person! After lunch I go to class. At seven Sternberg comes to fetch me and we either go to the theatre or after a promenade along the river bank we return home and I read something aloud while he works, or I work and he reads. We recently read Walter Scott's *Woodstock*. I was extremely struck by the scene where Charles II of the Stuarts, hiding under a false name in the castle of old Baron Lee, discloses to his daughter, Julia Lee, that he is the king of England, and offers her the high position of concubine at his court. There is real royal gratitude for hospitality! I drew a sketch and showed it to Karl Pavlovich. He praised my choice and the sketch itself, and advised me to study Paul Delaroche.

"Recently Sternberg introduced me to the Schmidt family. He is some sort of distant relative of his, a fine person, and



as for his family—they are truly heavenly. We often spend our evenings at their place, and on Sundays have dinner with them. What a wonderful, pleasant family! I always leave them with a feeling of having become purer and better. I don't know how to thank Sternberg for introducing me to them.

“He also introduced me to the household of a Little Russian aristocrat, the one at whose place you and he met last summer in Little Russia. I go there rarely, and that actually for Sternberg's sake: I don't like that patronising tone, or the fawning flattery of his crude guests, whom he stuffs with his luxurious dinners and fills with his Little Russian plum brandy. For a long time I couldn't understand why Sternberg suffers such scenes. Finally the mystery solved itself. One time he returned from Tarnovsky's completely unlike himself, i.e., angry. He long paced the room in silence, then he lay down on his bed, got up and then lay down again, repeating this about three times, and finally he calmed down and fell asleep. In sleep I heard him uttering the name of one of Tarnovsky's nieces. That's when I realised what the trouble was. The next day my Vilya again departed for Tarnovsky's and returned late in the night in tears. I pretended that I didn't notice it. He fell on the divan and covering his face with his hands, he sobbed like a child. At least an hour passed in this way. Then he rose from the divan, came up to me, put his arms about me and kissed me, smiled bitterly, sat beside me and told me the story of his love. It was a common enough story: he had fallen in love with the elder of Tarnovsky's nieces, and although she reciprocated his feeling, when it came to marriage she preferred a bald doctor, Burtsov. A most ordinary story. After the confession he calmed down somewhat and I put him to bed.

“On the second and third day I practically didn't see him at all: he would leave early and return late, God knows where he spent the days. I tried to talk to him, but he barely answered me. I suggested that we go to visit the Schmidts, but he shook his head negatively. On Sunday morning I

proposed that we go to the Botanical Gardens conservatory and he agreed, though reluctantly. The conservatory had a benign influence on him. He grew gay and began to dream about visiting those bewitching lands where all those strange plants grow in profusion the way thistles do here.

“When we left the conservatory, I suggested we have dinner at the German tavern on Krestovsky island. He readily agreed. After dinner we listened to the Tyrolese, watched people tobogganing and then drove straight to the Schmidts. That day the Schmidts were dining at Fitztum’s (the University inspector) and remained there for the evening. We went there and were met with questions and exclamations: Where had we been all this time? Having enjoyed ourselves at Fitztum’s, listening to a Beethoven quintet and a Mozart sonata in which the famous Behm was the soloist, we returned to the apartment at one o’clock in the night. Poor Vilya again became pensive. I did not try to cheer him up—how could I cheer him up?

“The next day at Karl Pavlovich’s request I went to Smiridin’s bookshop, where along with other books I took two issues of *The Reading Library* where Dickens’s novel *Nicholas Nickleby* was printed. I thought to organise literary evenings at the Schmidts’ and to invite Sternberg. Everything went according to plan. After evening classes that very day we repaired to the Schmidts with the books under our arms. My idea was enthusiastically acclaimed, and after tea the reading began. I read the first evening, Sternberg the second, then I again, then he—we continued in this way until the novel was finished. That had a beneficent influence on Sternberg. After *Nicholas Nickleby* we read *Kenilworth* in the same manner, then *The Beauty of Perth* and several other novels by Walter Scott. We often stayed until past midnight, and before we knew it the Christmas holidays were upon us. Sternberg had practically returned to normal, at least he was working and brooded less. God willing, that too will pass.

“Good-bye, my true father! I do not promise to write you soon because the holidays are upon us and through Sternberg’s

kindness I have made the acquaintance of a number of people, apart from the Schmidts, the sort of acquaintanceships that should be maintained. I had a new suit of clothes made for myself for the holidays, and an overcoat of English wool, just like Sternberg's, so that the Schmidts shouldn't call us Castor and Pollux for nothing. For the spring we are thinking of ordering camlet greatcoats for ourselves. I have money now. I have begun to paint water-colour portraits, at first for friendship and later for money, only I haven't yet shown them to Karl Pavlovich—I'm afraid to. I follow Sokolov's style more—I don't like Gau, he's too sickly sweetish. I'm also thinking of studying French, that's a necessity. One elderly lady offered me her services as tutor if I would teach her son to paint—mutual favours. But I don't like the proposition, first, because it's far to go (Ertelyev Alley), and, secondly, a two-hour session with a spoiled brat is also no mean assignment. I would rather spend those two hours doing a water-colour portrait, and pay a teacher with money. I'm certain you'll agree with me. Karl Pavlovich has Gibbon in French and I can't look at it with equanimity. I don't know whether you've seen his sketch, or rather, small painting, *Genseric's Visit to Rome*. Now it is in his studio. Wonderful!—as everything that comes from his brush is wonderful. If you haven't seen it, I'll make a little drawing of it and send it to you. I'll also send *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. That was started while you were still here, I believe.

“Oh yes! I almost forgot—an unusual event is coming up: Karl Pavlovich is getting married, the wedding will take place after the holidays. His fiancée is the daughter of Timm, an esteemed Riga citizen. I haven't seen her, but they say she's a rare beauty. I meet her brother in class occasionally, he's Sauerweid's pupil, an unusually handsome youth. When all is over, I'll describe it all to you in greatest detail, how it took place, and in the meantime—good-bye again, my unforgettable benefactor!”

"Two months have passed since I wrote you last. Such a long silence is unforgivable, but it was as though I were purposely waiting until an interesting episode in the life of Karl Pavlovich came to an end. In my last letter I wrote about the intended marriage and now I will describe to you in detail how it took place and how it broke up.

"On the wedding-day itself Karl Pavlovich dressed as he usually dresses, took his hat, and passing through the studio, stopped before the copy of Domenicino which was already finished. There was nobody in the studio apart from the two of us. Silence reigned for several minutes. Then he turned to me and said: 'It's as though Zampieri were saying to me, 'Don't get married or it will be the end of you.'

"I couldn't find anything to say to him, and he took his hat and went to his fiancée. All that day he didn't return to his apartment. There were absolutely no preparations for the wedding, Lukian didn't even prepare roast beef that day—in a word, there was nothing at all resembling a celebration. In class I learned that he was to be married at eight o'clock in the evening in the St. Anne Lutheran Church on Kirochnaya. After class Sternberg and I took a cab and went to Kirochnaya. The church was already lit up, and Karl Pavlovich was already there with Sauerweid and the bride's brother. When he saw us, he came up, shook hands and said: 'Married I shall be.' At that very moment the bride entered the church and he went to meet her. I had never seen such a beauty in my life and never will again. During the ceremony Karl Pavlovich stood lost deep in thought. He never once looked at his lovely bride. The ceremony over, we congratulated the happy couple, accompanied them to the carriage, and on our way home we stopped at Kley's, had supper and drank a bottle of Cliquot in honour of the newlyweds. All this took place on January 8, 1839. Karl Pavlovich also finished the wedding with a bottle of Cliquot. There was no feast either that day or the next days.

"A week after this event I met him in the hallway, across from Count Tolstoi's apartment, and he invited me to his

quarters and made me stay for dinner. As we were waiting for dinner he was drawing something in his album and asked me to read *Quentin Durward* to him. I had just started to read when he stopped me and called quite loudly: 'Emilia!' In a minute the dazzling beauty, his wife, entered. I bowed to her awkwardly, and he said:

"'Emilia! Where did we stop? Or no, sit down and read it yourself. And you listen how masterfully she reads in Russian.'

"At first she didn't want to read, but later opened the book, read a few phrases with a strong German accent, burst out laughing, threw the book down and ran off. He called her back and with the tenderness of a lover asked her to sit down at the piano and sing the celebrated cavatina from *Norma*. She sat at the instrument without mincing and after a few preludes she sang. Her voice was not very strong, but so sweet and charming that I listened and couldn't believe that I was listening to the singing of a mortal creature of the earth and not some fairy of the air. I can't tell you now for certain whether it was due to the magic of her beauty, or whether she really did sing well, but even yet it seems as though I can hear her entrancing voice. Karl Pavlovich was captivated by her singing too, because he sat unmoving, with his folded hands on top of his album, and didn't hear Lukian enter and repeat twice: 'Dinner is served.'

"After dinner Lukian placed fruit and a bottle of Lachryma Christi on that same table. When the clock struck five I left them at the table and went to class. Karl Pavlovich shook my hand at parting and invited me to come for dinner every day. I was overjoyed at such an invitation.

"After class I met them on the river bank and joined them. They soon went home and asked me to come with them. Over tea, Karl Pavlovich read Pushkin's *Angelo* and related how the late Alexander Sergeyevich had asked him to paint a portrait of his wife and he had refused outright because his wife was squint-eyed. He proposed to paint a portrait of

Pushkin himself instead, but Pushkin answered him in kind. Soon after this the poet was killed and left us without a portrait. Kiprensky depicted him as some sort of dandy, not a poet.

"After tea our charming young hostess taught us to play *halb-zwölf* and lost two ten-kopeck pieces to me and a cavatina from *Norma* to her husband, and immediately seated herself at the piano and paid him off. After such a splendid finale I thanked my enchanting hostess and my host and left for home. It was already far after midnight. Sternberg wasn't yet asleep, he was waiting up for me. Without removing my hat I told him my adventures and he called me a lucky devil.

"'Envy me too,' said he. 'I have been invited by the governor-general of Orenburg Territory to spend the summer at his place in Orenburg, and today I went to Vladimir Ivanovich Dal<sup>100</sup> and we've already arranged for the journey. Next week—good-bye!'

"I was stunned by the news. I couldn't speak for a long time and when I came to myself, I asked him: 'When did you manage to get everything arranged so quickly?'

"'Today, at ten o'clock Grigorovich sent for me,' he told me. 'I went. He suggested the trip to me, I agreed, went to Dal—and the deal was done.'

"'What will I do without you? How will I live without you?' I asked him through tears.

"'In the same way that I will without you—we'll study and work, and we won't notice our loneliness. And oh yes,' he added, 'tomorrow we are dining at Joachim's. He knows you and asked me to bring you. Agreed?'

"I replied that I agreed and we went to sleep.

"Next day we had dinner at Joachim's. He's the son of the noted coachmaker Joachim, a gay, simple and well-educated German. After dinner he showed us his collection of prints and among other things several magnificent lithographs just received from the Dresden Gallery. Since this was Saturday, we spent the evening at his place. During tea the talk somehow

turned to love and lovers. Poor Sternberg was sitting on pins and needles. I tried to change the conversation, but Joachim kept harping on it as though on purpose, and then told the following story about himself:

“When I was in love with my Adelheida and she wasn't in love with me, I made up my mind to commit suicide. I prepared everything, wrote notes to several friends and one to her too (here he pointed to his wife), took a bottle of rum and ordered a brazier to be brought with cold coals, a splinter and a candle. When all was ready I locked the door, poured out a glass of rum, drank it, and I began to see Martin's *Belshezzar's Feast* as though in a dream. I repeated the dose and didn't dream about anything any more. Learning of my untimely and tragic demise, my friends gathered, broke down the door and found me dead drunk. The trouble was that I had forgotten to light the coals, or else I would have died for certain. After this event she became more favourably disposed towards me and finally decided to accept me as her husband.’

“He topped his story off with a good-sized glass of punch.

“I have taken an exceptional liking to Joachim's ways, and am going to make it my duty to visit him as often as possible.

“We spent Sunday at Schmidt's, returned home at eleven and were beginning to undress already when Sternberg shoved his hand in his pocket to get his handkerchief and instead brought out a poster.

“‘I forgot! There's a masquerade at the Bolshoi Theatre tonight,’ said Sternberg, unfolding the poster. ‘Let's go!’

“‘Yes, let's go, it's too early to sleep,’ said I and donning evening dress instead of frock-coats we first went to the fancy dress shop near Politseisky Bridge, hired costumes and demi-masks, and then went to the Bolshoi Theatre. The brilliant hall rapidly filled with masked people, the music thundered and wee Capuchins squealed amid the noise of general conversation. It soon became stifling hot and my mask became a terrible nuisance, so I took it off, and Sternberg did like-

wise. That might have seemed odd to others, but we didn't care!

"We started to go to the upper side halls to get a breath of air away from the crush and the heat. Not one mask followed us, not even for a joke. Only on the stairs we met Elkan, the same gentleman in glasses whom I once met with Mikhailov. He recognised me, and Sternberg too, and guffawing loudly he embraced us. Just then a young midshipman came up, and he introduced him to us, calling him his dear friend, Sasha Obolonsky. It was past two o'clock already when we gained the floor where in one of the side halls there was a laden table. The chewing public woke my appetite. I informed Sternberg of this in a whisper and he announced his agreement out loud. But Elkan and Obolonsky protested and proposed instead that we go to the never-failing Kley and have a proper supper. 'While here,' Elkan added, 'they won't give you a square meal and yet will charge you ten times what it's worth.'

"We expressed our unanimous agreement and left for Kley's.

"I liked the young midshipman for his easy manners. Until now I had met only my humble friends and was seeing a young man-about-town from close up for the first time. He simply rained puns and witticisms, and he knew vaudeville verses without number—a most amiable young man! We sat at Kley's until dawn, and since the bold midshipman had had a drop too much, we brought him with us to our apartment, parting with Elkan at the tavern.

"That's how I'm living these days! Going around to masquerades, eating in taverns, spending money right and left, and yet how long is it since that unforgettable morning beside the Neva when you first saw me in the Summer Gardens in front of the statue of Saturn? Oh, unforgettable morning! Oh, my unforgettable benefactor! When and how will I be able to recompense you properly? I can repay you only with but a pure tear, and a prayer for you in my heart.

"At nine o'clock I left for class as usual, while Sternberg and our guest remained at home: the guest was still sleeping.



At eleven o'clock I went to Karl Pavlovich's and received a gentle reprimand from Emilia Karlovna. We played *halb-zwölf* until two. She wanted me to stay and have dinner with them. I was about to agree already, when Karl Pavlovich remarked that people shouldn't shirk their duties, and blushing to the roots of my hair I went to class. I came again at three, then left them still at the table at five o'clock, and went to class.

"I spent all my days there in the same way as described above, except for Saturday and Sunday. Saturday was devoted to Joachim, and Sunday to the Schmidts and Fitztum. You will note that all my acquaintances are Germans, but what fine Germans! I'm simply in love with those Germans!

"All week Sternberg has been bustling about with arrangements for his journey, but he will surely forget something, that's his nature. On Saturday we went to Joachim, where we met old man Kolman, a noted water-colour artist and Joachim's teacher.

"After dinner Kolman made his pupil show us his sketches of trees, the latter agreeing reluctantly. The sketches were made with black and white pencil on grey paper, and they were done so magnificently, so distinctly, that I couldn't look at them enough. He received a second prize, a silver medal, for one of those sketches, and good old Kolman praised that drawing to the skies as the triumph of his pupil, and vowed by all that was holy that he himself couldn't draw that beautifully.

"Since Sternberg had no more than two days left to spend with us, Joachim asked him how he intended to dispose of those days. It transpired that Sternberg hadn't even thought about it. So Joachim proposed that tomorrow, i.e., Sunday, we should visit the Stroganov and Yussupov galleries, and on Monday the Hermitage. This plan was adopted and the following day we picked up Joachim and went to the Yussupov Gallery. The prince was informed that some artists were asking permission to inspect his gallery, at which the polite host sent word that today was Sunday and the weather was

fine, and therefore he advised us to enjoy the beautiful outdoors rather than fine works of art. Naturally, we could only thank the prince for his obliging advice, and nothing more. In order not to hear similar advice from Stroganov as well, we went to the Hermitage, and for three hours revelled there as only true worshippers of the fine arts can do. We dined at Joachim's and spent the evening at the theatre.

"On Monday morning Sternberg received a note from Dal. Vladimir Ivanovich wrote him to be ready to leave at three o'clock. He left to bid good-bye to all his friends, and I began packing his suitcase. By three o'clock we were already at Dal's, and at four Sternberg and I kissed good-bye at the Central Turnpike and I returned to Petersburg alone and almost in tears. I had intended to stop at Joachim's, but I wanted to be alone; nor did I want to return to the apartment: I was afraid of the emptiness that would weigh down on me at home. Dismissing the coachman at the city gates, I walked. The distance I tramped did not tire me out as I had expected, so I long walked up and down the embankment beside the Academy. There was a light in Karl Pavlovich's apartment. Then the light was extinguished and after a minute he came to the embankment with his wife. In order not to meet with them, I went home, undressed and lay down in bed without lighting a fire.

"I am practically never home nowadays, it is so dull and empty without Sternberg. Mikhailov has moved in with me again, but is never at home, just as previously. He has also become acquainted with the midshipman Obolonsky, probably at Elkan's. The latter often calls at night and if Mikhailov isn't home, he goes to sleep in his bed. I am beginning to like that young man less than I did before: either he really is dull, or else he gets on my nerves because I'm not myself these days. As a matter of fact, although I attend classes punctually, I work sluggishly. Karl Pavlovich has noticed it, I am dismayed by it, but I don't know how to correct myself. Emilia Karlovna is pleasant to me as before, and as before she plays *halb-*

*zwölf* with me. Soon after Sternberg's departure, Karl Pavlovich asked me to prepare pencils and paper. He wants to draw twelve heads of his wife in different poses for a painting he intends to do to the ballad by Zhukovsky, *Twelve Sleeping Maids*. The paper and pencils are lying idle, however.

"It was towards the end of February; as was my custom, I was dining at their place. She appeared especially charming to me on that fateful day. At dinner she treated me to wine and was so amiable that when the clock struck five I would readily have forgotten about class, but she herself reminded me. There was nothing else to do, so I rose from the table and left without saying good-bye, promising to return after class and beat her at *halb-zwölf* for sure.

"When class was over I went to their place as I had promised. Lukian met me at the door and told me that his master had ordered nobody to be let in. I was greatly astonished at this turn-about and went home. I found Mikhailov and the midshipman there, which was unusual. The evening flew by in gay chatter. At eleven o'clock they went out to supper and I went to sleep.

"Next morning I went to Karl Pavlovich after class, entered the studio, and he met me gaily with the words: 'Gongratulate me, I'm a single man!'

"At first I didn't understand him, and he repeated the words. I still didn't believe, so he added, not at all gaily: 'After dinner yesterday my wife went to Madame Sauerweid's and did not return.'

"Then he ordered Lukian to tell Lypyn to bring him his palette and brushes. In a minute all was brought to him and he sat down to work. On the stand there was an unfinished portrait of Count Musin-Pushkin. He went to work on it. But no matter how he strove to appear indifferent, his work gave him away. Finally he threw down the palette and brushes and said, as though to himself: 'Can it be that it bothers me so much? I can't work.'

"And he went to his apartment upstairs.

“At two o’clock I went to my class, still not fully convinced that it had really happened. At three o’clock I left the class and didn’t know what to do: go to him, or leave him alone. Lukian met me in the corridor and ended my perplexity by saying: ‘The master asks you to dinner.’ I ate alone, however, since Karl Pavlovich wouldn’t touch a thing. He didn’t even sit down at the table, complaining of a headache, just smoked his cigar. The next day he took to bed and lay ill for two weeks. I never left him during that time. Sometimes he was in delirium, but he never uttered his wife’s name. Finally he began to recuperate and one evening he invited his brother Alexander over to ask him to recommend a lawyer for the purpose of undertaking divorce proceedings. He goes about now and has ordered a big canvas at Dovicieli’s—he intends to start painting *The Taking of the Mother of God to Heaven* for the Kazan Cathedral, and while waiting for the canvas and for summer, he has begun a full-size portrait of Prince Alexander Nikolayevich Golitsyn and another one of Fyodor Ivanovich Pryanishnikov. The old man will be shown sitting with an Andreyev ribbon and in a grey evening suit.

“I won’t repeat to you the rumours about Karl Pavlovich that are going around in the city and in the Academy itself. Those rumours are most absurd and outrageous, it would be a sin to repeat them. The concensus in the Academy is that Sauerweid is the author of that muck, and I have reason to believe that. Let all of it settle down a bit and I will tell you what I suspect, and until the material is gathered and elaborated, farewell, my unforgettable benefactor!

“P.S. I have received a letter from Sternberg from Moscow. Good old Vilya! He remembers you too and sends his regards and asks you if you should happen to meet Tarnovsky’s niece, Madame Burtseva, in Little Russia, to deliver his deepest respects to her. Poor Vilya, he still remembers her.”

I omit the letter that followed because it contains nothing except an account of the absurd gossip and the most rotten

slander against our Karl Pavlovich, and such things have no place in a story about that noblest of men. His unfortunate marriage ended in an amicable settlement, i.e., a divorce, for which he paid 13,000 rubles in cash. That's all of interest in that letter.

“The drab Petersburg summer passed as though it never had been. Now it's grey, damp autumn outside, and in our Academy there is a brilliant exhibition. Why don't you come to see it? And I would see you with pleasure too. There is nothing particularly notable in pupils' work in the field of painting, apart from Petrovsky's *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*. But in sculpture, on the other hand, Ramazanov and Stavasser, especially the latter, have excelled themselves. He made a statue of a young fisherman, and how he did it! It's simply marvellous, especially the facial expression—an animated face that is following the movements of the float with bated breath. I recall that when the statue was yet in clay, Karl Pavlovich unexpectedly walked into Stavasser's studio, and admiring his statue, he advised him to press in the lower lip of the angler. He did this and changed the expression. Stavasser is prepared to swear by the great Bryullov.

“About paintings in general, I will tell you that it would be worth while to come from China, let alone Little Russia, for a look at one of Karl Pavlovich's paintings alone. This miracle-worker, in one sitting, painted it, polished it up, and is now treating the greedy public to that marvellous work. Great is his fame and vast his genius!

“What can I tell you about myself? I have received a first-class silver medal for a sketch from nature. I've also done a small painting in oils: *An Orphan Boy Shares Alms With a Dog Beside a Fence*. And that's all. During the summer I was continually busy at my classes, and early in the mornings I went with Joachim to the Smolensk cemetery to draw burdocks and trees. I am getting more and more fond of Joachim. We see each other practically every day, he regularly attends

evening classes; he has made friends with Karl Pavlovich and they often visit one another. Sometimes we indulge in excursions to the Petrovsky and Krestovsky islands with the aim of drawing a black fir or a white birch. Twice we tramped to Pargolovo, and there I introduced him to the Schmidts. They spend the summer at Pargolovo. Joachim is highly pleased with that acquaintanceship. But who wouldn't be pleased with the Schmidt family?

"I will tell you about an amusing adventure I had recently. Not long ago some sort of civil service clerk moved in with his family into an apartment on my floor. His family consists of a wife, two children, and a niece, a beautiful girl fifteen years of age. I will tell you right away how I learned all those details. You remember your former apartment well: the door from the tiny ante-room opens into the general hallway. Once I opened that door and imagine my amazement—before me stood a lovely girl, confused and blushing to her ears. I did not know what to say to her and after a minute's silence I bowed, while she covered her face with her hands and ran away, darting into a nearby door. I couldn't puzzle out what that could mean and after racking my brain for a long while, I went to class. I worked poorly, my mind being taken up with that mysterious girl all the time. She met me again on the stairs next day, and again she blushed as before, and I was dumbfounded again. After a minute she laughed so like a child, so open-heartedly, that I couldn't help joining her. Somebody's steps were heard on the stairs and that stopped our laughter. She put her finger to her lips and ran off. I quietly went up the stairs and entered my flat even more puzzled than before. She didn't give me any peace for several days: every so often I would walk out into the corridor hoping to meet my mysterious acquaintance, but if she ever ran out into the corridor she darted back so fast that I had no time to nod, let alone bow to her. A week passed in this way. I was already beginning to forget her. But listen what happened. On Sunday at ten o'clock in the morning Joachim entered my

room and guess whom he was leading behind him? My mysterious blushing beauty. 'I caught a thief in your place,' he said, laughing.

"At the sight of the blushing mischievous imp I myself became confused no less than the apprehended thief. Joachim noticed this and letting go of the beauty's hand, smiled slyly. The freed beauty did not disappear, as might have been expected, but remained, and fixing her braid, looked about and said: 'I thought that you sit next to the door and draw, but you're over there, in the other room.'

"'And if he were drawing next to the door, what then?' asked Joachim.

"'Then I would have watched through the keyhole.'

"'Why through the keyhole? I'm sure that my friend is polite enough to permit you to stay in the room while he's working.'

"I nodded my head in corroboration of Joachim's words, and offered her a chair. Without paying any attention to my politeness, she turned to the recently started portrait of Madame Salova that was on the stand. She was just beginning to marvel at the painted beauty when a harsh voice was heard from the corridor: 'Where has she disappeared? Pasha!'

"My guest started and turned pale.

"'My aunt,' she whispered and darted to the door. At the door she halted, put her finger to her lips, stood a minute and then was gone.

"Laughing over this quaint adventure, Joachim and I went to Karl Pavlovich.

"The adventure by itself is nothing, but somehow it bothers me and is constantly on my mind; Joachim chaffs me once in a while about my pensiveness, and I don't like that. I am even annoyed that he happened to be present at that adventure.

"Today I received a letter from Sternberg. He is preparing to leave on some sort of an expedition to Khiva and writes that I shouldn't expect him for the holidays in Petersburg. I miss

him. No one can take his place for me. Mikhailov has gone away to his midshipman at Kronstadt, and I haven't seen him for more than a fortnight now. A fine artist, a noble person, but alas, he leads a most dissipated life! On Fitztum's recommendation I have taken in the student Demski to stay with me during his absence. He is a modest, well-educated young Pole, quite poor too. He spends the entire day in the auditorium, and in the evenings teaches me the French language and reads Gibbon. Twice a week, in the evening, I attend lectures on physics in the hall of the Free Economic Society. Together with Demski I also attend Professor Kutorga's lectures on zoology once a week. As you can see, I'm not wasting my time. There is absolutely no time to get bored, and yet I do mope. There's something lacking, I myself don't know what. Karl Pavlovich doesn't do anything these days and practically does not live at home. I see him very rarely, and that on the street. Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor! I don't promise to write you soon: time passes tediously, monotonously for me, there's nothing to write about, and I wouldn't want you to doze over my monotonous letters just as I am at this moment falling asleep as I write this missive. Once again, good-bye!"

"I have deceived you: I said I would not write soon, and here I'm again writing you a letter barely a month since my last epistle. An event has caused this hurry. Not I, but it has deceived you. Sternberg fell ill during the Khiva expedition, and wise, good Dal advised him to leave the military camp and to go back home, so he suddenly appeared before me on the night of December 16. If I had been alone in the room I would have taken him for an apparition and got frightened, naturally, but Demski was with me, we were translating the most amusing chapter of Paul de Coq's *Frère Jacques*, and therefore the appearance of Sternberg was accepted by me as an almost natural phenomenon, although my astonishment and joy were not the less for that. After the preliminary hugs



and kisses, I introduced Demski to him, and since it was only ten o'clock, we went to the Berlin tavern for tea. The night, of course, was spent in questions and answers. At dawn Sternberg was overcome and fell asleep, while I, glad of the morning light, went for his briefcase, which was packed just as full as when he had come from Little Russia last year. But now the scenery and the people were different. Although it was all beautiful and expressive, nevertheless it was absolutely different, except for the melancholy mood, perhaps, though that might have been the reflection of the artist's own pensive spirit. In all of Van Dyke's portraits the dominating traits are intellect and nobility, and that is explained by the fact that Van Dyke himself was a most noble and wise man. That's how I interpret for myself the general expression of Sternberg's beautiful drawings.

"Oh, if you only knew how inexpressibly quickly and happily the days and nights now flash by for me. So happily and so quickly, that I don't manage to learn the miniature homework given me by Mr. Demski, for which he is threatening to give me up altogether. But God forbid, I won't let it come to that. The circle of our acquaintances is neither greater nor smaller, but all of them have blossomed out and become so pleasant that I simply can't sit at home. Although, to tell you the truth, home also has its delights and charm for me. I'm speaking of my neighbour, that same thief whom Joachim caught at the door. What a pretty, innocent creature! Truly a child, and a lovely, unspoiled child at that. She runs in several times a day, skips about and prattles for a bit, and then flits out like a bird. Sometimes she begs me to paint her portrait, but she can't pose for more than five minutes—pure quicksilver. A few days ago I had need of a woman's hand for a lady's portrait, so I asked her to hold her hand up, and she agreed like a good girl; but what do you think—she couldn't hold it steady for a second. A real child. I tried and tried, and finally had to call in a model for the hand. And what do you think? I had just seated the model and picked up the

palette when my neighbour ran in, frisky and laughing as always, but as soon as she saw the model she stood stock still of a sudden, then began to cry and sprang at the model like a tiger-cub. I didn't know what to do. Fortunately, close to hand there was a crimson mantilla, belonging to the lady whose portrait I was painting. I grabbed the mantilla and threw it over her shoulders. She came to her senses then, went up to the mirror and admired herself for a minute, then threw the mantilla to the floor, spat on it and ran out of the room. I let the model go, and the hand remained unfinished.

“For three days after that event my neighbour didn't show her face in my apartment. If she met me in the corridor, she would cover her face with her hands and run in the opposite direction. On the fourth day I had just come home from class and was getting the palette ready when my neighbour entered, so modest and quiet that I simply couldn't recognise her. Without a word she bared her arm to the elbow, sat down on the chair and adopted the pose of the lady whom I was painting. I took up the palette and brushes with a matter-of-fact air and began to work. In an hour the hand was finished. I showered her with thanks for doing me such a kind favour, but she didn't even smile, only stood up, rolled down her sleeve and wordlessly left the room. I will confess to you that this touched me on the raw and set me wondering how to restore the previous harmony. A few more days passed like that, and then harmony appeared to have been re-established. She no longer ran away from me in the corridor, and sometimes even smiled. I was beginning to expect the door to open at any time and my bright-feathered bird to fly in. The door, however, did not open and the bird stayed away. I began to get impatient and think up traps for the crafty little bird. And it was when my absent-mindedness was becoming unbearable to myself and to the good Demski also, Sternberg came to me from the Kirghiz steppe like an angel from heaven.

“I am so wrapped up in Sternberg now that if I didn't meet her occasionally in the corridor I would probably forget my

neighbour altogether. She is just itching to visit me, but here's where the trouble comes in: Sternberg is always at home, and if he leaves, I go with him. During the holidays, however, she couldn't endure it any longer, and since we are never home in the evening, she donned a mask and ran into our rooms in the day-time. I pretended that I didn't recognise her. She hopped about for a long time and in various ways tried to get me to recognise her, but I stubbornly stood my ground. Finally, she couldn't hold back any more, came up to me and said almost out loud: 'You're intolerable, why—it's I!'

"'When you remove the mask,' I replied in a whisper, 'then I will recognise you.'

"She fidgeted a bit and then took off her mask, and I introduced her to Sternberg.

"From that day on everything has gone on as before. She doesn't stand on ceremony with Sternberg any more than with me. We give her candies and in general treat her as good brothers treat their sister.

"'Who is she?' Sternberg once asked me.

"I didn't know how to answer that unexpected question. It had never entered my head to ask her about it.

"'Either she's an orphan, or she's the daughter of a particularly careless mother,' he continued. 'In any case, she's pitiful. Can she read and write, at least?'

"'I don't even know that,' I replied hesitatingly.

"'She should be given something to read, then at least her head wouldn't remain idle. So find out if she can read, and if she can I will present her with a very moral and well-published book. That's Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*. A fine translation and a fine edition.'

"A minute later he turned to me with a smile and continued: 'You can see that today I am suffering from an attack of morals. For example, here is a question: how may those visits by that innocent scamp end up?'

"A light shiver ran down my back, but I immediately took myself in hand and replied: 'By nothing, I think.'

“‘God grant it,’ he said and fell into a reverie.

“I have always admired his noble youthfully tranquil countenance, yet now that pleasant face did not appear youthful to me, but fully mature and the face of one who had suffered more than his share. I don’t know why, but involuntarily Tarnovskaya came to my mind. He looked at me as though he had foreseen my thoughts, and sighed deeply.

“‘Take care of her, my friend,’ he said, ‘or else yourself be on guard. Do as your feelings dictate, only remember, and never forget, that a woman is a sacred and inviolable thing and at the same time she is so seductive that no power of will can withstand that seduction except the feeling of the loftiest, evangelical love. It alone can protect her from shame and us from life-long reproach. Arm yourself with that beautiful sentiment as a knight with an iron shield, and advance boldly on the foe.’

“He was silent for a moment. Then he said, smiling: ‘I’ve grown terribly old since last year. Let us rather go outside. It seems stuffy in the room.’

“We walked in silence for a long time, then wordlessly returned to our flat and went to bed.

“In the morning I went to class and Sternberg remained home. At eleven o’clock I returned and what did I see? Yesterday’s professor of morals had dressed my neighbour in a Tatar beaver cap with a velvety top and a gold tassel, and in some sort of red silk jacket, also Tatar, and donning a Bashkir pointed cap himself, was strumming the cachucha on the guitar while the neighbour was pounding out a solo *à la* Taglioni.

“Naturally, I just spread my arms in amazement, but they didn’t turn a hair, only continued with the cachucha. Having danced until she was ready to drop, she threw off the cap and jacket and ran into the hallway, while the moralist laid down the guitar and began to laugh like mad. I held back a long time, but at last gave way and seconded him so heartily that I drowned out the primo. Having laughed ourselves helpless,

we sat in chairs opposite one another, and after a moment's silence, he spoke first:

“ ‘She’s a most fetching creature. I wanted to draw a sketch of her as a Tatar girl, but she had no sooner dressed up than she began to dance the cachucha, and as you saw, I couldn’t hold out and grabbed the guitar instead of the pencil and paper, and you know the rest. But here’s what you don’t know: before the cachucha she told me her story, briefly, of course, as she herself probably doesn’t know the details, but still if it hadn’t been for that damned cap she wouldn’t have stopped in the middle of the story, but then she saw the cap, snatched it, put it on—and everything was forgotten. Maybe she will be more talkative with you. Question her well, it should be a most dramatic story. She says her father died last year in the Obukhov hospital.’

“At that moment the door opened and in came Mikhailov, whom we hadn’t seen for so long, with the bold midshipman in his wake. Without beating about the bush, Mikhailov invited us to breakfast at Alexander’s. Sternberg and I exchanged glances and, of course, we agreed. I mentioned something about class, but Mikhailov guffawed so unrestrainedly that I took my hat without a word and went to the door.

“ ‘And you want to be an artist! Are the really great artists produced in classes?’ the irrepressible Mikhailov pronounced solemnly. We agreed that the tavern was the best school for an artist, and left for Alexander’s in complete unanimity.

“Beside Politseisky Bridge we met Elkan promenading with a Moldavian boyar and conversing in the Moldavian tongue. We took him along with us. That Elkan is a strange phenomenon: there isn’t a language that he can’t speak, there isn’t a social group where you can’t meet him, beginning with our kind and ending with counts and princes. Like the magician in a fairy-tale, he is everywhere and nowhere: at the steamship offices, on the English quay—seeing off a friend who is leaving the country, or at the stage-coach offices, or even at the Central Turnpike—also seeing off some bosom friend, a Mus-

covite, or at a wedding, a christening or a funeral, and all this during one single day, which he tops off by being present at all three theatres at night. A real magician. Some shy away from him, thinking him a spy, but I don't see anything in him resembling such a creature. In essence, he's a never-stopping chatterer and a fine fellow, and in addition, the author of mediocre satire. In fun they also call him the Wandering Jew, and he finds that title quite proper. He speaks with me only in French, for which I am very grateful to him as it gives me good practice.

"At Alexander's, instead of breakfasting, we had a full dinner and then went each his own way. Mikhailov and the midshipman spent the night with us and in the morning departed for Kronstadt. The Yuletide passed quickly for us, and that means—gaily. Karl Pavlovich tells me to prepare for the contest for the second gold medal. I suppose something will have to be done. I have studied so little as yet, but with God's help we'll give it a try. Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor. I have nothing more to tell you."

"Shrovetide, Lent and finally the Easter holidays have passed and here I haven't written you a single word. Don't think, my treasured, unforgettable benefactor, that I'm forgetting you. God save me from such a sin. You're present in my grateful heart as the brightest and dearest being in all my day-dreams and undertakings. The reason for my silence is very simple: there's nothing to write about, only the same old things. It can't be said that I find things dull and monotonous—to the contrary, the days, weeks and months fly past imperceptibly for me. What a beneficent thing labour is, especially if it finds encouragement. And I have plenty of encouragement, thank God: in class I'm never lower than third in standing. Karl Pavlovich is perpetually satisfied with me—what encouragement could be more real and stimulating to an artist? I'm boundlessly happy. They accepted my sketch for the contest without the slightest alteration, and I have already started

on the programme. I like the subject, it's along my lines, and I have wholly devoted myself to it. It's a scene from the *Iliad*—Andromacha over the body of Patrocles.<sup>101</sup> Only now do I fully understand how imperative it is to study the ancients, and the life and arts of the ancient Greeks in particular, and the French language has come in useful in this respect. I don't know how to thank the good Demski enough for this favour.

"Karl Pavlovich and I celebrated Easter in a unique manner. During the day he had told me that he intended to go to morning Mass at the Kazan Cathedral in order to see his painting by torchlight, and the Easter procession. He had ordered tea to be served at ten o'clock. To make the time pass imperceptibly, I poured tea for both of us. He lighted a cigar, lay down on a couch and began to read *The Fair Maid of Perth* aloud, while I paced up and down the room: that's all I remember. Then I indistinctly heard something akin to thunder and opened my eyes—it was daylight and the lamp on the table was burning down. Karl Pavlovich was asleep on the couch, the book lay on the floor, while I was sprawled in the easy chair, listening to the cannon salute. Blowing out the lamp, I quietly left the room and went to my quarters. Sternberg was still asleep. I washed, dressed and went outside. The people were already coming out of the Andreyev Church, their Easter cakes having been blessed. The morning truly had a holiday atmosphere. And do you know what I was most preoccupied with at that moment? I'm ashamed to say it, but I must, since it would be wrong for me to keep any thought or feelings from you. At that moment I was just a child. I was preoccupied most with my new raincoat. Isn't that odd? I'm happy about my new acquisition. And yet when you think it over, it isn't so odd at all. Looking at the skirts of my shiny raincoat, I recalled how not long ago, in a shabby, soiled smock, I didn't even dare to dream of such brilliant attire, and now! I throw away a hundred rubles for a coat—simply an Ovidian metamorphosis! Or else, when I used to somehow get hold of a poor half-ruble, I would use it to go

to the theatre gallery, no matter what was playing; for half a ruble I used to laugh more heartily and weep more feelingly than many another person does during his whole lifetime. Was that so long ago? Only yesterday, hardly more—and yet what a marvellous change. Now, for instance, I don't go to the theatre except to sit in the stalls, very rarely in the back seats, and I don't go to see whatever comes, but strive to land at a première performance, or if it's something that has played before, always something special. It is true that I've already lost that unaffected laugh and those sincere tears, but I'm practically not at all sorry for that. Recalling all that, I recall you, my unforgettable benefactor, and that sacred morning when God Himself guided your steps to the Summer Gardens in order to lift me out of the mire and insignificance.

“I spent the feast day with the Uvarov family. Not the counts—God forbid, we don't fly that high as yet! They are a plain, modest merchant family. But they're so good, pleasant and harmonious that God grant all families on earth to be like them. I have been accepted by them as one of their own. Karl Pavlovich also visits them often.

“We spent the holiday merrily. During the week we didn't eat at Madame Jurgens's once, always being invited to dinner, either to Joachim's, or to the Schmidts, or to Fitztum's, and in the evenings we went either to the theatre or to the Schmidts. Our neighbour still visits us as before and is the same mischievous imp—it's too bad that she can't be my model for Andromacha, she's too young and slender. I am amazed at the type of woman her aunt is. It seems that she never even thinks of her mischievous niece. Sometimes she larks around in our place for two hours at a stretch, but auntie doesn't care. Strange! Sternberg told me the rest of her story. She doesn't remember her mother, and her father was a poor clerk of some kind and, it would seem, a drunkard, because when they lived in Kolomna he would come home from his office every day tipsy (that's her own expression) and irritable, and if he had the money he would send her to the pot-house for vodka,



and if he had no money, he would send her out on the street to beg, and his service uniform was always frayed at the elbows. Her aunt, the present patroness, who was his sister, sometimes visited them and begged him to give Pasha to her to bring up, but he wouldn't hear of it. She doesn't remember how long they lived like that in Kolomna. But once in the winter he didn't come home to sleep from the office, and she spent the night alone, but wasn't afraid of anything. He didn't come home the following night either, and then on the third night a porter of the Obukhov hospital called for her on his behalf. She went to see him, and on the way the porter told her that policemen had picked him up on the street in the night and taken him to the police station, and then on the following day they brought him from the station to the hospital in a fever, and that the previous night he had come to briefly and told them his name and where he lived, and asked that she be brought to him. Her sick father didn't recognise her and told her to go away. Then she went to her aunt's and has remained there since. And that's the whole sad story.

"A couple of days ago Sternberg gave her *The Vicar of Wakefield*. She snatched the book as a child snatches a pretty toy, and she played with it like a child, looked at the pictures and then put it on the table, and on leaving didn't even mention the book. Sternberg is certain that she's illiterate, and I think the same, considering her sorry childhood. The thought even came to me (if she really is illiterate) to teach her to read at least. Sternberg approved of my idea and undertook to help me. He was so sure that she's illiterate that he went right out to a bookstall and bought an ABC book with illustrations. But our good intentions came to nothing, because the very next day, as we were thinking of starting the first lesson, Aivazovsky<sup>102</sup> came to us from the Crimea and put up at our apartment. Sternberg greeted his friend with enthusiasm, but as for me, for some reason I didn't take to him from the first. In spite of his elegant manners, there is something not attractive, not artistic, but rather politely cold and repellent

about him. He didn't show us his briefcase, saying that he left it with his mother at Feodosia and that he hadn't sketched anything along the way because he was in a hurry to catch the first boat for abroad. He lived with us for over a month, however, I don't know because of what circumstances, and during that period our neighbour didn't visit us once—she was scared of Aivazovsky, and for that alone I would have been prepared to send him abroad every day, but the trouble was that my priceless Sternberg was leaving together with him.

“Several days later we went to Kronstadt to see my Sternberg off. There were ten of us clustered around him, and not a single person with Aivazovsky. That's a strange thing to happen among artists! Mikhailov was also among those who came to see Sternberg off. Didn't he cut a caper! After a gay, friendly dinner at Stewart's, he fell fast asleep. We tried to wake him but couldn't, so taking a couple of bottles of Cliquot with us, we accompanied Sternberg to the steamship. On the deck of the *Hercules* we drank the wine, handed our friend over to Mr. Tyrinov (the ship's captain), said good-bye and in the evening returned to the tavern. Mikhailov was already half awake. We started telling him how we had accompanied Sternberg—he kept quiet—and how we boarded the boat—he kept quiet—and how we drank the two bottles of Cliquot. . . . ‘Scoundrels!’ he spoke as soon as the word ‘Cliquot’ was uttered. ‘They wouldn't wake up a man to see a friend off.’

“I'm lonesome without my amiable Sternberg, so lonesome that I'm ready to run away not only from the apartment where everything reminds me of him, but even from my sprightly neighbour. I won't write anything more just now—I'm lonesome and I don't want to pass my loneliness on to you via my dull missive. I had better get going on the programme. Farewell.”

“The summer flew by fast, more swiftly than a minute does for an idle dandy. Only after the exhibition, I suddenly noticed that it was gone. And yet during the summer Joachim and I

visited old Kolman several times on Krestovsky island, and under his guidance I drew three sketches: two of fir-trees and one of a birch. What a fine person Kolman is! The Schmidts have already returned to the city, and it was they who reminded me with their reproaches that summer was over. I had not visited them once—it was far away and my days and nights were taken up with the programme. But how sincerely they congratulated me on my success. Yes, with success, my unforgettable benefactor! What a great thing the programme is for a pupil! It is his touchstone, and how happy he is if on that stone he is shown to be a true artist, not a counterfeit. I have experienced that happiness to the full. I can't describe that wonderful, immeasurably sweet feeling to you. It is the enduring concentration in a person of everything that is sacred and beautiful in the world. On the other hand, what a bitter and tormenting spiritual condition preceded that sacred happiness—during the waiting period. Despite Karl Pavlovich's assurances of my success, I suffered as a criminal must before his death sentence is carried out, no—worse! I didn't know whether I was to die or remain alive, and in my opinion, that's harder still. The sentence had not yet been announced, and while awaiting the terrible verdict, Mikhailov and I dropped in to Deli's to play a game of billiards, but my hands shook and I couldn't pocket a single ball, while he was packing them in as though there was nothing to be excited about. And yet his fate too was in the hands of the judges—his programme stood alongside of mine. Such indifference made me angry, I threw down my cue and went home. In the corridor I met my laughing, happy neighbour.

“‘Well?’ she asked me.

“‘Nothing,’ I replied.

“‘How's that, nothing? Here I've gone and decorated your room for a merry celebration, and you come here down in the mouth.’

“And she also tried to make a down-in-the-mouth face, but she couldn't. I thanked her for her kindness, and invited her

into the room. She began to cheer me up so childishly and sincerely, that I couldn't help laughing.

"'Nothing is known as yet, the examinations aren't over,' I said.

"'Then why did you deceive me, you shameless man! If I had known, I wouldn't have tidied up your room.'

"And she pouted with her rose-bud lips.

"'You may be sure that I didn't tidy up Mikhailov's,' she continued. 'Let him and his midshipman wallow around like bears in their den, what's it to me.'

"I thanked her for her preference and asked her if she would be glad if Mikhailov got a medal and I didn't.

"'I'll break his arms, I'll scratch his eyes out, I'll kill him dead!'

"'And if I do?'

"'Then I myself will die of joy.'

"'Why such preference for me?' I asked her.

"'Why... Because... because... you promised to teach me to read in the winter...'

"'I'll keep my word,' I said.

"'Go to the Academy and find out what's doing there,' she said, 'and I'll wait for you in the corridor.'

"'Why not in here?' I asked.

"'What would I do if the midshipman came?'

"She's right, I thought to myself, and without a word went out into the corridor. She locked the door and put the key in her pocket.

"'I don't want them to come into your room in your absence and spoil anything.'

"'What makes her think they might spoil something in my room, I mused—it's simply childish caprice.

"'So long,' said I, going downstairs. 'Wish me luck.'

"'With all my heart,' she said solemnly and disappeared. I walked out on the street. I was afraid to go to the Academy. The gates of the Academy seemed to me like the open maw of some horrible monster. I

walked the streets until I was perspiring, then I crossed myself and ran through those terrible gates. My impatient friends were pacing the corridor of the second floor like shades at Charon's ferry. I joined the crowd. The professors had already emerged from the circular conference room. The fateful moment was at hand. As Andrei Ivanovich (the inspector) came out, I was the first one he met, and walking past me he whispered, 'Congratulations.' I have never heard anything sweeter or more melodious in my life, and I never will. I rushed home pell-mell and in my ecstasy showered kisses on my neighbour. It is well that no one saw us, because it happened on the stairs. Although I don't see anything reprehensible in it, still—thank God that nobody saw us.

"That is approximately the way in which that examination, which shook me to the roots, concluded. And all that I have written you is now only a dark silhouette of living nature, a pale shadow of the actual event. It cannot be expressed, neither by the pen, nor by the brush, nor even by words.

"Mikhailov failed the test. If, God forbid, such a misfortune had befallen me, I would have gone mad, but he came to the apartment as though nothing had occurred, put on his warm overcoat and departed to visit his midshipman in Kronstadt. I can't understand why he's attached to this midshipman. I can't see anything attractive about him, but he dotes on him. At first, it is true, I liked him too, but not for long. My poor tutor Demski!—now there's a really attractive person. He is ill, poor fellow, incurably ill: consumption in the last stage. He still walks about, but just barely moves. A couple of days ago he came to congratulate me on winning the medal, and we spent the evening in warm, friendly conversation. He kept foretelling my future with such conviction, and in such a natural and lively manner, that I involuntarily believed him. Poor Demski, he doesn't even suspect his illness; he is so sincerely carried away with dreams of his future as only a

healthy young man can be. He is happy, if dreams can be termed happiness. He says that the main and most difficult obstacle has already been overcome, i.e., poverty, that he is no longer obliged to sit up nights copying lectures for a ruble or so, that he is now completely independent financially and can devote himself fully to his favourite studies, and that if he doesn't surpass his idol, Lelewel, in the field of his country's history, he will at least equal him, and that his coming thesis opens up all the avenues for him to make his radiant hopes come true. And here the poor fellow is coughing up blood all the while, and striving to hide it from me. My God, what I wouldn't give to have him realise his ardent wishes! But alas, there is absolutely no hope—he will probably not last to the break-up of the ice on the Neva.

“At the moment of the most heart-to-heart outpourings on Demski's part, the door opened noisily and the dashing midshipman walked in.

“‘Is Mishka in his room?’ he inquired without taking off his cap.

“‘He left for Kronstadt yesterday to visit you,’ I replied.

“‘That means that we passed each other. Let him have an outing. By the way, I'll spend the night here.’

“And he went into Mikhailov's room. I gave him a candle. What was I to do? I had offered Mikhailov's bed to Demski, being completely assured that nobody would grab it from us. Demski noticed my discomfiture, smiled, took his cap and gave me his hand. I also silently put on my cap and went outside with him, leaving the midshipman to himself. Having accompanied Demski to his flat, I returned home, and what did I find there? Unaware that I wasn't at home, my neighbour had run into my room, and the half-undressed midshipman had grabbed her and was trying to lock the door when I came up and interrupted him. She tore herself from his arms, spat in his face and ran away.

“‘Quicksilver and no mistake,’ said the midshipman, wiping his face.

"I was outraged by that scene, but I didn't let him notice it, and since it wasn't late as yet, I unceremoniously left him in the flat and went to seek company for the autumn evening somewhere else.

"My visits to friends weren't successful, I was met everywhere by locked doors. It was too late to go to the Schmidts, Karl Pavlovich also wasn't at home, and I didn't know what to do with myself. The damned midshipman riled me, I hated him. I don't know whether it was jealousy or simply disgust with a man who profaned the sacred modesty of a woman. A woman, no matter who she may be, is entitled to respect from us, or at the very least, to polite behaviour, and the midshipman had violated both. Either he was simply drunk, or at bottom he is a cad. Somehow I believe the latter.

"Then a light appeared in Karl Pavlovich's apartment, so I went there and stayed the night. Karl Pavlovich noticed that I wasn't myself, but was kind enough not to question me, only told me to make a bed up for myself in his room and read aloud to me. The book was Washington Irving's *Christopher Columbus*. While reading, he conjured up on the spot a picture of Spaniards leading the great admiral from the launch to the shore, heavily laden with chains. What a sad, instructive picture. I offered him a sheet of paper and a pencil, but he refused them and continued to read.

"While talking of his travels through ancient Greece at supper one time, he verbally outlined a wonderful picture entitled *Evening in Athens*. The picture showed an Athenian street in the light of the setting sun. On the horizon stood the Parthenon, roughly finished but with the scaffolding not yet removed. In the foreground, in the middle of the street, a team of buffaloes was drawing a marble statue, *The Ylis River* by Phidias. At the side, Phidias himself was being greeted by Pericles, Aspasia and all that was glorious in the Athens of Pericles, from the famous haetera to Xanthippa. And all this in the rays of the setting sun. A magnificent picture! What was the *Attic School* alongside that thrilling picture? And yet

he didn't paint it only because there already is the *Attic School*. And how many similar pictures end up only as inspired words or as inch-size sketches in his not very magnificent album. Thus, for example, last winter he drew several of the tiniest sketches on one and the same theme. I did not know what was up and could only guess that my great teacher was planning something special. And I wasn't wrong in my surmises.

"This summer I began to notice that before sunrise every day he repaired to his studio in his grey workshirt, and remained there until evening. Lukian alone knew what was going on there, because he carried him water and lunch. I was working on my programme at the time and I couldn't offer to read aloud to him, although I was convinced that he would have gladly accepted such services, being a book-lover. Three weeks passed in this manner. I was all aquiver with expectation. He had never before stayed in his studio so constantly. It had to be something exceptional. Such a colossal genius never created anything ordinary anyway!

"Once toward evening, having dismissed the model, I started to go outside. In the corridor I was met by an unshaven Karl Pavlovich. He asked to see my programme work. With trepidation I led him to my study, where he made several unimportant observations, and then said: 'Now let's go to see my programme.' So we went to his studio.

"I don't know whether or not to describe for you what I saw there? I am obliged to describe it to you, but how can I describe the indescribable?

"As I opened the studio door, I first saw the back of a huge dark canvas stretched on a frame. On the canvas in black paint was inscribed: 'Begun June 17'. On the other side of the canvas a music box was playing the chorus from *The Huguenots*. With my heart in my throat, I walked to the other side of the canvas, looked around, and... it took my breath away: what I saw before me was not a painting but the real siege of Pskov in all its horror and majesty. Here was



the explanation for those tiny sketches. This is why he made that trip to Pskov last summer. I had known that he contemplated doing the picture, but never imagined that he would get it done so quickly. So quickly and so beautifully! Before I draw a little copy of this new marvel for you, I will describe it, very scantily, naturally.

“On the right side of the viewer, in the background you see the tower being blown up; a bit closer you see the breach in the wall and the hand-to-hand fighting in that breach, and such fighting that it’s frightening to look at. You imagine you can hear the cries and the ring of swords against the Livonian, Polish, Lithuanian and God knows what other iron helmets. On the left side of the painting, on the second ground, you see a religious procession with banners and an icon of the Mother of God, with the bishop walking in front solemnly and serenely, holding the sword of Saint Mikhail, the Prince of Pskov. What striking contrast! In the foreground, in the centre of the painting, you see a pale monk with a cross in his hand, seated on a bay horse. To the right of the monk is Shuisky’s horse, dying, while Shuisky himself is running to the breach with his arms raised. To the left of the monk a pious old woman is blessing a youth, or rather a boy, against the foe. Still farther left, a girl is giving weary warriors to drink from a bucket, while in the very corner of the painting a semi-naked dying warrior is being held up by a woman, perhaps his future widow. What marvellous, diverse episodes! I haven’t told you half of them yet. My letter would be endless and yet not complete if I began to describe all the details of that perfect work of art for you.

“You must be satisfied for the time being with at least this prosaic description of a work that is of the highest poetic order. Later on I will send you an outline of it, and you will then see more clearly what a divine work it is.

“What else shall I write you about, my unforgettable benefactor? I write you so rarely and so little that I’m ashamed of myself. Your reproof that I don’t write because I’m lazy,

isn't fully justified. I'm not lazy, but I'm not an expert at writing in an interesting manner about my everyday life, the way some people are. Recently I read Jules Janin's translation of *Clarissa* (especially to perfect my letter-writing), and I liked only the translator's foreword, while the letters themselves were so sweetish and so lengthy, that I couldn't stand them. Where did the man find the patience to write such endless letters? I liked the letters from abroad even less: great pretensions but little sense, only pedantry. I'll confess to you that I have a strong urge to learn to write, but I don't know how to go about it. Teach me. Your letters are so fine that I learn them by heart. But until I master your secret, I will write you as the heart dictates, and let my sincere frankness take the place of art for the time being.

"After spending the night at Karl Pavlovich's, at about nine o'clock I made my very unwilling way home to the apartment. Mikhailov was home already, pouring some wine in a glass for the barely wakened midshipman, while my giddy neighbour was peering out of my room and laughing boisterously as though nothing had happened. No self-respect and not a trace of modesty. Is it simply natural naïveté, or the result of street upbringing?—The question is insoluble for me, insoluble because I am unaccountably attached to her as I would be to a most pleasant child. And I have put her to work on the ABC book as though she were really a child. In the evenings she repeats syllables and I sketch something or draw pictures of her. She has a lovely head! And the peculiar thing is that ever since she started studying, she has stopped giggling, but it makes me laugh to watch her serious, childish face. During the winter I'm planning to draw a sketch of her by the fire-light in exactly the pose she assumes when she's sitting absorbed in her ABC book with a pointer in her hand. It will be a very pleasant picture—*à la* Greuze. I don't know whether I'll master the colours. In pencil it comes out fine.

"Recently I made the acquaintance of her aunt, and that in a very original manner. I was returning from class as usual

at eleven o'clock in the morning, when Pasha met me in the corridor and on her aunt's behalf invited me to their place for coffee. I was dumbfounded and refused. Really, how can you enter a strange home and go straight for the food? She didn't let me say a word, however, but dragged me to their door as though I was a stubborn calf. I was resisting like a calf too, and had almost freed my arm, when the door swung open and auntie herself came to her assistance. Without a word she grabbed me by the other arm and they dragged me into the room, locked the door and then bade me feel at home.

"I beg you humbly, don't stand on ceremony," said the lady of the house, panting. "Please excuse the simplicity. Pasha, why are you gaping? Bring the coffee in quickly!"

"Right away, auntie," Pasha answered from the other room and in a minute she came in with the coffee pot and the cups and saucers on a tray, a real Hebe. Aunt also resembled Zeus somewhat.

"I've been wanting to make your acquaintance for a long time," the hospitable hostess began, "but never had the opportunity. Today, thank God, I have had my way. Now, please forgive us our simplicity. Would you care for a cup of coffee? My milkwoman hasn't been around for a long time for some reason, while the cream from the shop is worthless. But what can we do? Pasha has been pestering me for a long time now to meet you, but you're so unsociable, a real recluse, you don't even go out in the corridor much. Have another cup. You've accomplished a miracle with our Pasha. She's simply unrecognisable: she's at books from morning till night, doesn't get into any mischief at all, it's really wonderful. Imagine our astonishment yesterday when she took out that book with the pictures, the one your friend gave her, opened it and began to read, not as yet very fluently, it is true, but everything could be understood. What is the title of that book?"

"*The Vicar of Wakefield*," said Pasha, emerging from behind the partition.

“Yes, yes, the vicar. How he, poor man, sat in gaol, and how he searched for his depraved daughter—she read the whole book right through. We didn’t even want to go to sleep. I asked who taught her to read. She told me that you did. Honestly, you have done us a great favour. Whenever my Kirill Afanasyich isn’t at the office, he sits working at his papers at home. When evening comes we sit here in silence, and the evening seems a year long. And now, I didn’t even notice how it flew by! Would you care for another cup?”

“I declined and got up to leave. But it was no use. The hostess grabbed me by the arm most unceremoniously and seated me in her chair, chattering the while: ‘No, I don’t know about you, but we don’t do things that way—hello and good-bye. No, we beg you to sit and talk with us and have a bite of whatever God has sent.’

“I declined the bite and the talk, however, on the excuse that I had a stomach-ache and pains in my side, ailments from which I never suffer, thank God. The point was that I had to go to class, since it was almost one o’clock. I was permitted to leave when I gave my word that I would come back in the evening. True to my promise, I was at my hospitable neighbour’s at seven. The samovar was already on the table and she met me with a glass of tea in her hand. After the first glass of tea, she introduced me to her master of the house, as she called him, an elderly bald man in glasses, who sat at a desk in the next room, poring over a pile of papers. He rose from his chair, adjusted his glasses and gave me his hand, saying: ‘Please be seated.’ I sat down and he removed the spectacles from his nose, wiped them with his handkerchief, replaced them on his nose, sat down wordlessly on his chair and again became absorbed in his papers. Several minutes passed. I didn’t know what to do, my situation was becoming farcical. But mercifully the hostess came to my rescue.

“‘Don’t disturb him,’ she said, peeking in from the other room. ‘Come to us, it’s more merry with us.’

"I left my industrious host without a word and crossed over to my bustling hostess. Pasha was quietly leafing *The Vicar of Wakefield* and looking at the illustrations.

"'Did you see our master of the house?' said the hostess. 'He is always like that, he has become so used to those papers that he can't live a minute without them.'

"I said something in praise of industry, and asked Pasha to read aloud to us. She read one page from *The Vicar of Wakefield* quite slowly, but correctly and clearly, and was rewarded by her auntie with a glass of tea with sugar and an eulogy which could not be recorded even on three pages, and I, as her mentor, in addition to unending gratitude was offered rum in my tea. Since the rum was still at Vogt's and Pasha would have had to run to fetch it, I declined the rum with tea, to my hospitable hostess's considerable distress.

"By eleven we had had supper and I left, promising to visit them daily.

"I cannot clearly define the impression which acquaintance with this family has made on me, while first impressions, they say, are very important in the matter of acquaintanceships. I am happy with having made that acquaintance only because my friendship with Pasha hitherto had seemed reprehensible to me, and now it was as though everything had been made right, and our friendship became stronger in consequence.

"I began to drop in on them daily, and after a week was already like an old friend, or rather, like one of the family. They offered to board me for the same price as at Madame Jurgens's, so I turned traitor to good Madame Jurgens and I don't regret it: I had become fed up with the carefree single men's company, and I readily accepted my neighbour's offer. In their place I feel so comfortable, calm and peaceful, everything is so homey there, the way I like it, so much in harmony with my peaceable disposition. I call Pasha sister, her aunt I call auntie, but I don't call her uncle anything, since I only see him at the dinner table. I believe he goes to the office on holidays too. I feel so good at their place that

I almost never go out, except to visit Karl Pavlovich. I don't remember when I was at Joachim's last, and the same goes for the Schmidts and Fitztum. I can myself see that I'm not acting right, but what can I do: I don't know how to lie to good people. That shows a lack of a worldly upbringing, nothing else. Next Sunday I will visit them all and will spend the evening at the Schmidts, because otherwise we may really cease knowing each other. All that is nothing, it can all be remedied, but here is my trouble: I can't get on with Mikhailov, i.e., not actually with Mikhailov, but with his bosom friend, the midshipman, who spends practically every night at our place. By itself, that would not yet be so bad, but he brings with him God knows what sort of people, and all night long they're at cards and drinking. I wouldn't like to change living quarters, but it looks as though I'll be compelled to, if those orgies don't cease. I wish spring would come soon and that unbearable midshipman would leave for the sea.

"I have begun to paint a study of Pasha by fire-light. A very pretty head, it's only too bad that the damned midshipman keeps disturbing us. I would like to finish it by the holidays and start something else, but I'll hardly be able to. I've already tried to work in my neighbours' place, but it's inconvenient somehow. I like the fire lighting so much that when I've finished this head, I'm thinking of painting another—also of Pasha—as a vestal virgin. It's just too bad that you can't get white roses for the garland at this time of year, and they're imperative. But all that's in the future.

"Pasha is beginning to read fluently, and has come to love reading. I find this very pleasing, but I have difficulty in selecting things for her to read. They say that it's not good for young girls to read novels, although honestly, I don't see why it's not good. A good novel cultivates the imagination and ennobles the heart, while a dry educational book, sometimes, apart from not teaching anything, may even inspire an aversion to books. To begin with, I have given her *Robinson Crusoe*, and then will offer her the travels of Arago or Dumont

d'Urville, and then again a novel of some kind, and then Plutarch. It's too bad that we don't have Vazari in translation, or I would introduce her to the notable figures of our fine arts. Do you think my plan is good? If you have anything to say against it, please tell me in your next letter, and I will be sincerely grateful to you. I am now taken up with her as with someone near and dear to me. Now that she's literate I look on her as an artist does at his unfinished painting and would consider it a great sin to leave her now to select her own reading matter, or rather, to read haphazardly, because she has nothing to select from. It would have been better not to teach her to read at all. I'm boring you with my neighbours, but what can I do? As the saying goes, 'You talk about what's bothering you.' And now, to tell the truth, I've nothing else to talk about. I don't go anywhere and don't do anything. I don't know what the fates have in store for me next summer, but I'm waiting not without trepidation. How can it be otherwise—next summer I must be sure to lay down the real foundation for the career which I—or rather, you—have chosen for me. Karl Pavlovich says that the programme for the first gold medal will be announced right after the holidays. I grow faint at the very thought of that fateful programme. What if I'm successful? I'll go mad. And how about you? Can it be that you won't come to see the triennial exhibition and to take a look at my endorsed programmatic work and at its humble author, your own creation? I am convinced that you will come. Write me about your coming in your next letter and I will have a plausible excuse to ask Mikhailov to vacate the apartment. It appears that he too has had his belly full of the midshipman already. It's good, at least, that I have a haven at my neighbours' place, or I would have to flee my own quarters. Do me a favour and write that you are coming, and then I'll put an end to those things here right away.

"Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor. In my next letter I will inform you about my pupil's further successes and give you the particulars regarding the forthcoming contest. Farewell.

“P.S. Poor Demski can’t leave his room any more. He won’t live through the spring.”

When I received that letter I wrote him that I would come to visit him probably during the Easter week, without waiting for the exhibition, and that I would come straight to the apartment the way Sternberg did. Actually I wrote that to help him get rid of the importunate midshipman. To tell the truth I was anxious about him, because his youthful character had not yet become fully formed. Who knows, he might even become an exact duplicate of the impudent midshipman. Then good-bye to everything—his brilliant gifts, his art, his good name, everything that’s fine in life. All that would be buried in the all-consuming liquor glass, as in the grave. Unfortunately, such instances are anything but rare, especially here in Russia. And what’s the cause of it? Can the company of drunkards by itself really kill the germ of all that’s good in a young man? Or is there something here that is incomprehensible to us? Folk wisdom, by the way, has provided us with one conclusion: tell me who your companions are, and I will tell you who you are. And Gogol noted not without reasons, probably, that if a Russian is a good craftsman he invariably is a drunkard. Why is that so? It’s nothing more, in my opinion, that the lack of civilisation generally. With us, for example, a village clerk or some other scribbler is the same to the honest, illiterate peasants as Socrates was in Athens, and yet when you look close, he’s a grossly immoral, eternally drunk animal, and that precisely for the reason that he’s a craftsman in his field, the one and only person who can write among hundreds of simple-minded muzhiks, at whose expense he gets drunk and leads a dissolute life; while they are continually astonished at his accomplishment and can’t understand how it is that such a learned man can be such a terrible drunkard. It never even enters the simple people’s heads that the reason is that he is the only master of writing or some other speciality among them, that he has no competitors, that his



contributors will always remain loyal to him because they have no one else to turn to, and therefore he does his business any old way and spends the easily earned proceeds on drink.

In my opinion that is the sole reason why here a craftsman in any field is at the same time an incorrigible drunkard. Moreover, it has been noted that also among civilised nations persons who stand out of the common throng, those who are gifted with higher spiritual qualities, everywhere and at all times to a greater or lesser degree paid tribute to and often were zealous worshippers of the merry god Bacchus. That must therefore be an indispensable quality in uncommon people.

I knew our brilliant mathematician Ostrogradsky very well (and mathematicians in general are people who don't get carried away), and had occasion to dine with him on several occasions. He never drank anything at the table except water. I once asked him:

"Can it be that you never drink wine?"

"A long time ago in Kharkov I drank two wine-cellars dry, and then I had had enough," he answered me artlessly.

Not many, however, stop at two wine-cellars, but inevitably go on to a third, and often a fourth, and in that fourth wine-cellar they end their sad careers and often their lives as well.

He, i.e., my artist, belonged to the category of passionate people, the sort that get carried away, who have a hot imagination, which is the worst enemy of an independent, staid life. Although I am far from being an admirer of monotonous, sober propriety and daily unvaried ox-like existence, I cannot at the same time claim that I'm an open enemy of a positive, proper way of living. On the whole, the middle road is the best road in life, although in the arts, the sciences and in the mental pursuits generally, the middle road leads to nothing but a nameless grave.

I would like to see my artist become a great and rare artist while being a common person in his domestic life, but those two great qualities rarely blend under one roof.

I would sincerely wish to foresee and forestall all harmful influences on my favourite's youthful imagination, but I don't know how. I am definitely afraid of the midshipman, but neither will anything good come from his neighbour—that's as clear as day. As yet it could still end up in parting and tears, as the first, flaming love usually ends, but with the assistance of the aunt, to whom he has taken from the beginning, it will end in Hymen's torch, and, God grant that I'm mistaken, in dissolution and poverty.

He does not tell me openly that he's head over heels in love with his pupil, but what young lad openly discloses such a sacred secret? He will leap into fire and water at one word from his adored one, before he expresses his tender feelings to her in words. That's how a youth who is sincerely in love acts. And are there youths who love differently?

In order to turn his attention at least a little bit away from his neighbours, I purposely didn't mention them at all. I advised him to visit Schmidt, Fitztum and Joachim as often as possible, since they are indispensable to his inner education, to visit old Kolman whose good advice he needs in the field of landscape painting, and every day to visit Karl Pavlovich's studio as a shrine and a lamp of the finest art, and during those visits to do a water-colour copy of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* for me. In conclusion I described the whole importance of the forthcoming programme, to which he should devote himself and give all his days and nights to the very last day of the examinations, i.e., until October (I considered such a length of time and such an occupation sufficient to cool down the ardour of first love at least to some extent), and also wrote that if I don't find it possible to remain in the capital for the entire summer, I would return without fail in the autumn especially for his programme work.

As I expected, that letter had a salutary effect, but only half-way: his programme was successful, but his neighbour—alas!

But why lift the curtain of secretive fate ahead of time? Let us read one more letter from him—the last one.

“I don’t know whether you did it on purpose or not, I only know that you deceived me cruelly, my unforgettable benefactor. I waited for you as for the guest dearest to my heart, but you—let God be your judge. . . . Why did you have to promise? How much trouble I had with my lodgers! I managed to get rid of them only with the greatest difficulty. It’s true that Mikhailov agreed at once, but the redoubtable midshipman held out right until the spring, i.e., until Easter week, and at parting we almost quarrelled: he insisted on staying on during Easter week and I told him it was impossible because I was expecting you.

“‘Oh, what is so important about your relative? He can take rooms at the inn!’ he said, twirling his silly moustaches. That made me mad and I was ready to let fly with God knows what insults, but luckily, Mikhailov stopped me. I don’t know what it is exactly that the midshipman likes so much about our apartment, maybe it’s just that it’s free and he does not pay the rent. During the winter Mikhailov would stay away for several nights at a time, coming in for a minute in the day and going off again. But the midshipman would never go out except to eat and get drunk, and would return to lie on the sofa to sleep or smoke his pipe. Not long ago he even brought over his suitcase with his underwear, and after I already told him to vacate the apartment completely, he still came around several times to sleep—he’s absolutely shameless. Another strange thing: up to the very day he left for Nikolayev (he has been transferred to the Black Sea fleet) I would meet him every evening either in the corridor, or on the stairs, or in the gateway. I don’t know whom he was visiting of evenings. But never mind, thank God that I’m rid of him.

“It’s simply marvellous the strides my pupil has made in her studies during the winter! If they had started to teach her

early enough, she could have become a really educated person. And how modest and gentle she has become, simply charming! Not a trace remains of her childish playfulness and naïveté.

“Truth to tell, I’m even sorry that literacy—if literacy alone is responsible—has destroyed that endearing childish impishness that was hers. I am glad that I captured at least a shade of that charming naïveté in my painting. The portrait came out very well. Though it presented some difficulty, the fire lighting nevertheless came out successfully. Prevo offered me a hundred rubles in silver for it, and I readily agreed, only I won’t deliver it until after the exhibition. I want to present my attractive pupil to the judgement of the public without fail. I would be supremely happy if you didn’t deceive me a second time and came for the exhibition, which will be exceptionally interesting this year: many artists—both ours and from abroad—have promised to send their works, including Horace Vernet, Gadin and Steuben. Come, for the sake of Apollo himself and his nine beautiful sisters.

“My programme is going poorly so far. I don’t know what will be later on. Karl Pavlovich is satisfied with the composition, and that’s about all I can tell you about it. I will really get working at it next week, so far it has been as though I were avoiding it. I don’t know why. Even my pupil is beginning to urge me on. Oh, I wish I could tell you how fond I am of that plain good-hearted family. They treat me like a son. The aunt is always good-natured and gay. Even the morose and taciturn uncle sometimes leaves his papers, sits down with us around the hissing samovar and slyly tells little jokes, which are most ingenuous, naturally. Sometimes, when there is an extra kopeck jingling in my pocket, of course, I permit myself the luxury of treating them to a box in the third circle of the Alexandrinsky Theatre, and then the general gratification is boundless, especially if it’s a vaudeville show. My pupil and model for several days afterwards sings the vaudeville couplets even in her sleep, I think. I love, or rather,

I adore everything beautiful in man himself, beginning with his beautiful appearance, and I adore as much if not more the elevated, refined works of man's mind and hand. I am delighted by a society woman, and also by a society man. Everything about them, beginning with their expressions and ending with their movements is in such even, proportionate harmony, that it seems as though the pulse beats in the same way in all of them. Only rarely, if at all, will you find among them fools or sages, phlegmatics or excitable individuals and that appeals to me boundlessly—but not for long. Maybe that's because I was born and reared among other kinds of people, and am far removed from them in my upbringing, and therefore, irrespective of all the alluring fascination of their manner of life, I prefer the family life of plain people, such as my neighbours, for instance. With them I am completely at ease, while with those others it's as though I was always afraid of something. Of late I haven't been feeling comfortable even at the Schmidts, and I don't know why. I visit them practically every Sunday, but don't sit there long the way I used to. Maybe that's because my dear, unforgettable Sternberg isn't here with us. By the way, speaking of Sternberg, I received a letter from him recently from Rome. Now there's a proper eccentric for you! Instead of telling me his personal impressions of the Eternal City, he recommends me—whom do you think?—Dupaty and Piranesi. What an odd fish! He writes that at Lepri's he witnessed a big collection of artists, among them Ivanov, who is painting *John the Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness*. The Russian artists make sport of him on the sly, saying that he has become completely bogged down in the Pontine marshes and still hasn't found the sort of dead stump with exposed roots which he needs for the background of his painting. But the Germans are in transports over Ivanov. In the Greco Café he also met Gogol, dressed up to kill and telling obscene Little Russian jokes at the dinner table. But the main thing he saw on entering the Eternal City, within the view of the Dome of St. Peter and the im-

mortal giant Colosseum, was the cachucha—graceful and passionate, such as it exists among the people, and not prim and rouged up, the way we see it on stage. ‘Imagine for yourself,’ he writes, ‘that the celebrated Taglioni is a second-hand copy of the original which I saw without charge on a street in Rome.’ But why should I copy out excerpts for you. I will send you the original letter. You will read something about yourself in it that won’t be without interest to you. Poor fellow, he still mentions Tarnovsky’s niece. You see her often. Tell me, is she happy with her Aesculapius? If she is happy, don’t say anything to her about our friend, don’t disturb her connubial peace with useless recollections. If she isn’t, then tell her that our friend Sternberg, the noblest of men on the earth, still loves her just as sincerely and tenderly as he did before. That will sweeten the ache in her heart. No matter how a person suffers or what trials he undergoes, if he hears a single friendly, sincere word, a word of true sympathy from a far, unfailing friend, he forgets the woes that bear him down, even if it’s not for long, just for an hour, a minute. He is perfectly happy, and they say that a minute of perfect happiness makes up for endless years of the heaviest ordeals.

“You will smile when you read the above lines, my revered friend, and perhaps you’ll begin to wonder whether I’m not undergoing some sort of ordeal myself since I write so colourfully about it. I assure you that I have no griefs, but I do grow sad at times for some reason. I am completely happy, and how could it be otherwise when I have such friends as you and my dear unforgettable Vilya? Few men enjoy such a sweet share of the good things as the fates have doled out to me—and yet if it had not been for you, the blind goddess would have flown past me. But you halted her in front of this poor, neglected clod. Oh, my God, my God! how fortunate, how boundlessly fortunate I am—it seems to me that I will choke with the fullness of my happiness, choke and die. I simply must have some sort of grief, even though slight, because judge for yourself, whatever I project or wish

for is always realised. Everybody loves me, everybody is kind to me, beginning with our great maestro, and it seems to me that his affection alone would be enough to ensure perfect happiness.

“He visits me often in my apartment, sometimes even having dinner with me. Could I have dreamed when I first saw him, in this same apartment, that such happiness was in store for me? Many, very many nobles of the tsar’s court are not vouchsafed the great fortune which is extended to me, an unknown pauper. Is there a person on earth who wouldn’t envy me at the present moment?”

“He came to me in class last week, glanced at my sketch, made some off-the-cuff observations, and called me out into the hallway for a talk. I thought he was going to tell me some big secret, but what do you think it was? He invited me to go with him for dinner to the Uvarovs’ summer cottage. I didn’t want to skip class, and I begged to be excused, but he called my excuses schoolboyish and irrelevant studiousness, saying that it doesn’t mean a thing to skip one class.

“‘And above all,’ he added, ‘along the way I’ll read you such a lecture as you will never hear from a professor of aesthetics.’

“What could I say to that? I put away my palette and brushes, dressed up and went. As we were driving, however, there wasn’t a word said about aesthetics. At dinner there was general gay conversation, as usual, and after dinner the lecture began. Here’s how it took place.

“While we were drinking coffee in the drawing-room, old Uvarov began to talk about how fast time flies and how we don’t value those precious hours—especially the young people, the old man added, looking at his sons.

“‘Here’s a living example for you,’ Karl Pavlovich joined in, pointing to me, ‘he skipped class today just to fritter away the time at a summer cottage.’

“I felt as though someone had dashed boiling water at me, while he didn’t notice a thing and read me such a lec-

ture on all-consuming and swiftly flying time that only at that moment did I perceive the symbolism of the statue of Saturn devouring his own children. The whole of that lecture was delivered with such affection, such paternal solicitude, that I wept in front of all the guests like a child chided for some mischief.

"After all that, tell me, what do I lack? You! Your presence alone is lacking. Oh! will I live to see that joyous moment when I will embrace you, my dear and sincere friend! Do you know what? If you hadn't written me that you would come to me for the holidays, I would certainly have gone to visit you last winter. But the saints in heaven evidently grew envious of my earthly joys and wouldn't let the happy meeting take place.

"In spite of the completeness of my happiness, however, I feel so sad sometimes that I don't know where to hide from that oppressive melancholy. In those terribly long moments my charming pupil alone has a beneficent influence on me. How I would love at such a time to open up my suffering soul to her, to pour out everything that's in me, to melt in tears in front of her. . . . But that would offend her maiden modesty, and I would sooner smash my forehead against a stone wall than permit any woman to be offended, and especially her—a lovely innocent child.

"I believe I wrote you last autumn about my intention to paint her as a vestal virgin to match the one of her as a diligent student. But it was hard to procure a lily or a white rose in the winter, and mostly, the insufferable midshipman hindered us. Now all those obstacles have been removed, and I'm thinking in between times, i.e., during the work on my programme, to carry out my heartfelt design, the more so since my programmatic work is not very complex, only three figures in all—Joseph interpreting the dreams of his fellow-prisoners, the wine-bearer and the bread-provider. The subject is old and trite, and therefore it is necessary to do it well, i.e., to create. There is little mechanical work involved, and



more than three months to do it in. You write me about the importance of this programme, which may be my last, and advise me to study it as diligently as possible, or as you put it, to become permeated with it. That's all very fine, and I'm fully convinced about the necessity of it. But, my only friend, and I hesitate to say this to you, the *Vestal Virgin* occupies my attention more and does so constantly, while the programme work is in second place, and no matter how I strive to put it first, I simply can't do it, I don't know why. I intend to finish the *Vestal Virgin* first (it was started long ago). I'll finish it and get it off my hands, and then I will get going at the programme with greater facility.

"The programme! I have a premonition that all will not go well with my programmatic work. Where do such fatal premonitions come from? Perhaps I should leave it over until next year? Yet to waste one year of time! How will that loss be compensated? By certain success. But who can guarantee that success? I'm sick, don't you think? I really do feel as though I'm slightly daffy, getting to be like Khemnitzer's *Metaphysician*. For God's sake, come and restore my drooping spirits.

"What a shameless egoist I am! On what grounds do I practically demand such a visit? For what sensible reason should you abandon your pursuits and responsibilities and travel a thousand versts simply to take a look at a semi-idiot?

"Avaunt, unworthy faint-heartedness! It's just childishness, nothing else, and I have already been admitted to the contest for the first prize, the gold medal, thank God. I am already finishing. . . no, as an artist I am only beginning what may be a great career. I'm ashamed before you, I'm ashamed of myself. If you don't have an extreme necessity to do so, for God's sake don't come to the capital. Don't come at least until I have finished my programme and my beloved *Vestal Virgin*. And when you do come then, i.e., at the time of the exhibition, my joy and happiness will be without bounds.

"I have another odd and constant desire: I terribly want you to see, even if only in passing, the model for my *Vestal*

*Virgin*, i.e., my pupil. It's a strange, funny desire, isn't it? I want to show her to you as divine nature's best and loveliest creation. And—oh, vanity!—I feel as though I had promoted the moral adornment of this marvellous creature, i.e., by teaching her to read and write in Russian. Am I not boundlessly vain? Joking aside, literacy has cloaked her with a kind of special charm. There's one small fault in her, which I noted recently: it seems to me that she reads with reluctance. Her auntie has long ceased to be delighted with her literate Pasha. After the holidays I gave her *Robinson Crusoe* to read. And what do you think? During the whole month she barely got to the middle of it. Such indifference pained me to such an extent, I may tell you, that I was already beginning to regret that I had taught her to read at all. I didn't tell her that, naturally, I only thought it to myself. But it was as though she had listened in on my thoughts: the very next day she read the book to the very end, and at tea that evening related Defoe's immortal work to her auntie with such unaffected enthusiasm and in such detail that I was ready to rain kisses on my smart pupil for it. In this regard I find that she and I have much in common. Sometimes such wooden indifference comes over me that I am unable to do a thing. But with me such fits don't last long, thank God, while with her. . . . Another thing I can't understand is that since that irrepressible midshipman left us, she has somehow become more modest, pensive and indifferent to books. Could she really? . . . But I can't admit that: the midshipman is a brutal, antipathetic creature, even the coarsest woman could hardly be drawn to him. No, that's an absurd thought. She becomes pensive and apathetic simply because she's at that age, as all psychologists assure us.

"I am boring you with my lovely model and pupil. You may begin to think that I'm too interested in her. Actually, it looks like it. I like her exceptionally, but I like her as someone especially near and dear to me, like the most tender of sisters.

“But enough of her. Yet apart from her I don’t have anything to write about these days. There’s nothing to write about the programme as yet, it is barely started, and I won’t write you about it even when it is finished. I want you to read about it in the newspaper, and most of all, I long to have you see it for yourself. I speak with such assurance as though it were already finished and all that remained was for me to take the medal from the president’s hand and hear out the flourish of trumpets.

“Come, my unforgettable, true friend! My triumph will not be complete without you, it will be incomplete because I owe my present and future happiness to you and you alone.

“Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor! I don’t promise to write soon. Farewell!

“P.S. Poor Demski didn’t last even to the break-up on the Neva: he died, and he died like a truly righteous man, quietly, calmly, as though he fell asleep. I often had the opportunity to watch human life flickering out when I was in the Mary Magdalene hospital, but I never saw such a peaceful and listless parting with life as his. A few hours before the end I sat beside his bed and read out loud some sort of booklet with light contents. He listened with closed eyes and only occasionally the corners of his lips lifted in something akin to a smile. I didn’t read long—he opened his eyes and turning them towards me, said almost inaudibly:

“‘Don’t you think it’s silly to waste valuable time on such nonsense?’ And pausing to catch his breath, he continued: ‘You would do better to draw something, even me.’

“I had an album and a pencil with me, as is my custom. I began to draw an outline of his dry, sharp profile. He glanced at me again and said with a sad smile: ‘A quiet model, am I not?’

“I continued to draw. The door opened quietly and the dirty face of the landlady, wrapped in something soiled, ap-

peared, but seeing me, she retreated and closed the door. Without opening his eyes, Demski smiled and made a sign for me to bend closer to him. I bent down. He was silent a long while, and at last spoke indistinctly and in a quivering voice:

“‘For God’s sake, pay her the rent. God willing, I’ll settle my debt.’

“I had no money with me, so I immediately hurried to the apartment. I was held up at home by something, I don’t recall what—auntie’s coffee, or something of that sort, I don’t remember now. I came to Demski when the sun was already setting. His cubby-hole of a room was lighted a bright orange by the setting sun so dazzlingly that I was forced to close my eyes for a few moments. When I opened my eyes, I went up to the bed, but under the blanket there now lay only Demski’s remains in exactly the same position as I had left him. The folds of his blanket had not been disarranged, his faded smile had not changed and his eyes were shut as though he were asleep. Only upright people die so peacefully, and Demski belonged to the assembly of the righteous. I folded his already half-cold hands on his breast, kissed his cool forehead, and covered him with the blanket. I searched out the landlady, paid her the debt which the departed owed her, asked her to arrange the funeral at my expense, and myself went to the coffin-maker. On the third day I invited a pastor from the St. Stanislaw church, hired a carter and with the assistance of the janitor we carried and placed the modest coffin on the waggon and started with Demski on the long journey. Only Father Posiada, a little psalm-reader and I followed the coffin. We weren’t joined by a single mendicant, although we met quite a few along the way. Those poor idlers smell alms like a starving dog smells food. They didn’t foresee us parting with any contributions, and they were not mistaken: I hate those detestable enterprisers who speculate with Christ’s name. I invited the priest to come to the departed’s room from the cemetery, not in order to hold a wake, but to

show him Demski's modest library. The entire library was contained in a hastily constructed box and consisted of over fifty volumes, mostly on history and jurisprudence, in the Greek, Latin, German and French languages. The learned pastor leafed the simple editions of the works of the Greek and Roman classics with great excitement, while I put aside only the books in the French language. It's odd, but in the Polish language, in addition to Lelewel, there was only one small volume of Mickiewicz in the cheapest Poznan edition, and nothing else. Can it be that he didn't love his native country's literature? That cannot be! When we had sorted out the library, I took the French books and offered the rest to the pastor. The conscientious pastor would not agree to accept such a treasure completely without charge, and proposed to put up a granite tombstone over Demski's grave at his own expense. For my part, I offered to cover half the costs, and we there and then decided on the size of the gravestone and composed the inscription. The inscription was of the simplest: 'Leonard Demski, mort anno 18. . . .' Having finished all this, we parted like old friends, each carrying away his share of the estate.

"It is strange, however. Could it be that the late Demski did not attract anybody and himself didn't get close to anyone except me? I never met anyone at any time in his flat, but whenever we went out in the street we often met acquaintances of his who said hello in a friendly manner and some even stopped to shake his hand. All of them were respectable people, too. But it's also true that so-called respectable people do not visit a poor toiler in his gloomy hovel, isn't it? It is sad! Poor respectable people!

"Farewell again. Do not forget me, my unforgettable benefactor."

From that long and diffuse letter I learned, first of all, that my artist, as befits a true artist, is a man of great nobility and sensitivity. People of common character don't get

attached so sincerely and selflessly to such a poor person, who has been abandoned by everyone, as was the late Demski. I don't see anything special in that beautiful, selfless attachment; it is the usual consequence of mutual sympathy to everything that is great and fine in learning and in man. According to our nature and the will of our divine teacher, we should all be like that. But, alas, very few of us have heeded that sacred behest and retained our divine quality of love and chastity. Very few! That is why a person who loves selflessly—a truly noble person—somehow seems extraordinary to us. We gaze at such a person as at a comet, and then, having looked our fill, in order that our own dirty, selfish being shouldn't stick out, we begin to throw mud at him, the clean one, at first by behind-the-back slander, then openly, and if the muck still doesn't stick, we sentence him to poverty and suffering. If we lock him up in a lunatic asylum, that's not so bad yet, but sometimes we also hang him as the vilest of criminals. It is bitter, but alas, it is the truth!

However, I'm letting my tongue run away with me.

Secondly, I learned from that clumsy letter of my artist protégé that without being aware of it himself, the poor fellow was head over heels in love with his pretty, frivolous pupil. That's in the order of things, it's good, it's even necessary, especially for an artist, otherwise his heart would shrivel up over his academic studies. Love is a vitalising fire in a person's soul, and everything created by man under the influence of that divine sentiment bears the stamp of life and poetry. All that is very well, but here's the rub: those flaming souls, as Libelt calls them, are astonishingly indiscriminating in matters of love. It often happens that to the lot of a pure and rapturous worshipper of beauty there falls a morally ugly idol who deserves only the smoke from the kitchen stove, while he in his simplicity burns the choicest incense before it. Very, very few of those flaming souls found harmony in their home life. Beginning with Socrates and Berghem, right down to our own times, we find always the same

revolting incongruity in their daily lives. Sorrowful to record, those flaming souls don't fall in love cavalier-fashion, but worse than any poor foot-soldier—for life. This is what I can't understand and what makes me afraid for my artist.

It may happen that he too, following the example of world giants, will shackle his gentle, susceptible heart to some devil in skirts. And it will still be not so bad if he shakes off the domestic devil with a quip, as Socrates or Poussin did, and goes his own way, for otherwise—good-bye art and learning, good-bye poetry and everything fine in life, good-bye forever. The vessel is broken and the precious myrrh is spilt and mixed with dirt, and the radiant lamp of peaceful artistic life is extinguished by the poisonous fumes of the domestic serpent. Oh, if those luminaries of the world could only do without family happiness, how fine that would be! How many great works would not be drowned in the domestic slough, but would remain on the earth for the edification and enjoyment of mankind. But alas! a domestic hearth and a family circle are probably just as necessary to a genius as to one of us. Probably that's because to a heart that feels and loves everything highly beautiful in nature and in art, after concentrated delight in that fascinating harmony a spiritual rest is imperative, and sweet solace to the weary heart can be found only in the circle of children and a good, loving wife. Blessed, a thousand times blessed is the man and the artist whose unjustly termed prosaic life is irradiated by the beautiful goddess of harmony. His bliss is limitless as God's world.

Here is what I have noticed in my observation of family bliss. My comment refers to people in general, but especially to the inspired worshippers of all that is good and beautiful in nature. They, poor fellows, sometimes are severely punished by the idol they adore—beauty. And you can't blame them, for they react overwhelmingly to beauty in general, and feminine beauty in particular. It cannot be otherwise, yet that is the muddy well-spring which poisons all that is beautiful and good in life.

“How’s that?” furious youths will cry. “A beautiful woman is created by God solely to bring joy into our lives which are filled with tears and troubles!” True, that’s the divine purpose, but she, or rather we, have managed to change that lofty divine purpose and have transformed her into a soulless, lifeless idol. One feeling has swallowed up all other beautiful sentiments within her, and that’s egoism, born of the consciousness of her own shattering beauty. We let her understand when she was yet a child that she’s a future heart-breaker and passion-inspirer. We only hinted it, it’s true, but she grasped the point so quickly and understood it so deeply that from that fateful day on she became an innocent flirt and a worshipper at the shrine of her own beauty to the day of her death. The mirror became her inseparable partner in her pitiful, solitary life. She cannot be changed by any re-education. That’s how deeply the seed we accidentally threw of selfishness and incurable coquetry penetrated into her soul.

Such is the result of my observation of beauties in general and privileged beauties in particular. A privileged beauty can be nothing but a beauty—neither a meek and loving wife, nor a good, gentle mother, not even a passionate mistress. She’s a wooden beauty and that’s all. And it would be foolish on our part to demand anything else of wood.

That’s why my advice is to admire those beautiful statues from afar, but never to get close to them, let alone marry them, and this goes especially for artists and people who have dedicated themselves to science or the arts. If an artist needs a beauty for his favourite art, that’s what models are for, dancing girls and other women in those professions, but in the home, like common mortals, he needs a good, loving woman, not a privileged beauty. The privileged beauty will brighten the peaceful abode of the favourite of the gods with her bright, dazzling rays of joy only for one moment, and then there won’t be a trace left of that momentary joy, no more than from the flash of a meteor. A beauty, like a true



actress, needs crowds of worshippers, sincere or false, it makes no more difference to her than it did to the idols of antiquity—so long as there are worshippers, and without them, like an idol of old, she is a beautiful marble statue and nothing more.

“Not every word fits the sentence,” our saying goes, and so there are also exceptions among beauties: nature is endlessly diverse. I have great faith in exceptions, but only as very rare phenomena; I am guarded in my faith because I have lived more than half a century among respectable people and haven’t yet had occasion to see one such marvellous exception. And it can’t be said that I am a misanthrope or one of those who impudently defame everything that’s beautiful. On the contrary, I am the most sincere admirer of beauty, both in nature itself and in the divine arts.

Here is what happened to me recently. By chance I was compelled to vegetate quite a long time far, very far from polished or civilised society, in a practically uninhabited out-of-the-way place, and it transpired, not at all, by chance, that a society beauty—at least that’s what she later called herself—lit for a while on this out-of-the-way spot. Well, I made her acquaintance, and I should mention that I make acquaintances quite easily. I got acquainted with her and began to observe my new acquaintance, who was a beauty, and—oh, wonder of wonders!—I could not notice in her a trace of likeness to the beauties I had seen hitherto. I began to wonder whether I hadn’t lost touch with society in the wilderness. No, she was a beautiful woman in all respects, also clever, modest, even well-read, and, what was outstanding, without a shred of coquetry. I became ashamed of myself for keeping her under observation, and I put aside all doubts and became—not a worshipper, that is out of my line—but a good and sincere friend to her. I don’t know why, but she liked me too, so we became almost fast friends. I couldn’t be more delighted with my discovery, so much so, that something more than common attachment began to stir in this old heart, and

I was near to playing the role of the old fool in vaudeville. I was saved by an accident, a simple accident. Early one morning—they accepted me into their home as one of the family and they often invited me to take morning tea with them—I noticed that the hair in the back of her head was braided to make small curls. That discovery set me aback. I had previously assumed that the hair in the back of her head was naturally curly, but here is how it was done. That very same discovery prevented me from confessing love to her. I once again became simply a good friend. We discussed literature, music and the other arts almost daily—it isn't seemly to gossip with an educated woman. It was only in the second year, however, that I noticed that she was very superficial and spoke of the beautiful in the arts or in nature without feeling. That shook my faith somewhat. Further, there wasn't a book in the German or Russian languages which she wasn't supposed to have read, but she didn't remember a single one of them. I asked her why that was. She alluded to some sort of woman's ailment which had left her memory impaired when she was yet a girl. Simple-mindedly I believed her. But then I noticed that she was able to recite by heart banal verses which she had heard in her youth. After that I was ashamed to discuss literature with her, and soon after noticed that they didn't have a single book in their home, except the calendar book for the current year. In the winter she played cards in the evenings if there was company, and she said that was demanded by politeness, but she got terribly out of sorts if she could not get a card party together, immediately pleading a bad headache. If her husband got a game going, however, she sat at the table as though nothing was amiss and looked into the players' hands as though she were looking at her own cards, and this pleasant diversion lasted until long after midnight for her. As soon as this soulless scene began, I immediately went outside. It is disgusting to see a young and beautiful woman at such a senseless occupation. I became completely disillusioned then and from

then on I saw her as a polyp, or rather, a real privileged beauty.

If her retirement had continued for another year or two in that obscure corner without sanguinary worshippers, i.e., without lions and wild asses, I am convinced that she would have gone dotty, become a real idiot. She had already reached the condition of semi-idiocy, and here I, simpleton that I was, had imagined that at last I had discovered El Dorado—and all the time this El Dorado was just a wooden doll, at whom I couldn't look later without a feeling of disgust.

Delivering this stern maxim on beauties, I may cause some people to think that in this regard I'm acting like another Buonarrotti—nothing of the sort. I'm just as big a worshipper as any leopard, perhaps even more untamed than others. The point is that I like to speak my mind frankly, irrespective of rank and title. The more so since I am doing it at the present moment for the sake of my young artist friend, and not to publish my views on beautiful women. God save me from such stupidity. If I did that, my own sister would be ready to hang me on the first aspen-tree as a Judas. But then she's not a beauty, so I have nothing to fear from her.

Where is the root of this evil? It is in the upbringing. If doting parents are blessed with a beautiful daughter, they begin to spoil her, setting her above the other children, and as for the education of their favourite, here is what they think and even say: "Why tire the child in vain with silly books. She will make a brilliant career for herself without books and even without a dowry." Since she's a beauty, she really does make a brilliant career for herself. Her parents' prognosis comes true, what more do you want? But that's the beginning of the evil. And its continuation (mind, I'm not asserting this, only suggesting it) lies in this direction.

Our amiable Slavic race, although it belongs to the Caucasian family, in appearance is not far removed from the Finnish and Mongolian races. Consequently, a beautiful woman is a rare phenomenon with us. So we begin to fill this rare

phenomenon, from the time it's hardly out of diapers, with preposterous praises, selfishness and other nonsense, and at last we transform it into a wooden doll on hinges, similar to those that artists use for drapery.

In countries that are blest with an abundance of beautiful women, they are compelled to be commonplace women at home, and the common women, in my opinion, are the best.

Why have I delivered this lengthy discourse about breakers of hearts, including my own? Evidently for my friend's benefit. But I think this lecture will prove completely superfluous so far as he's concerned. And his vestal virgin too, from what I have been able to gather from his description, will hardly be capable of penetrating very deeply into the heart of an artist who profoundly feels and understands everything that is lofty and beautiful in nature the way my friend does. She's probably a cheat with roving eyes and a snub nose, something along the lines of a seamstress or a pert housemaid, and those kind are not a rarity. Moreover, they're absolutely harmless.

Such types as her smooth auntie, however, though they too are not rare, are very dangerous. Her aunt, although he describes her so sweetly, reminds me of Gogol's matchmaker, who answers, when asked by a bride-seeker whether she'll fix up a marriage for him: "Oh, I'll get you married, dear fellow! And that so slickly that you won't even feel it." My friend has nothing in common with Gogol's hero, naturally, and in this regard I have practically no fears on his account. Although the passion of first love burns with greater intensity, on the other hand it cools off more rapidly. But when I think it over again, I can't be without apprehension either, for such strange and heedless matches are often made not only by smart people but even by careful people, and I don't suspect my friend of being very careful, artists don't have that virtue. In any case, I've written him a letter, without exhortation, of course. (The Lord preserve me from those lecturing letters.)

I wrote him in a sincere and friendly manner what I was afraid of and what he should beware of, indicated the amiable aunt to him without beating about the bush as the main and most dangerous pitfall. He hasn't replied to my letter, however, so it probably wasn't to his liking. That's a bad sign. But then, he was busy all summer with his programme, so it could be that he forgot about my letter.

Summer passed, September passed, so did October, and yet no word from my friend. I read a review of the exhibition in *Pchela*, written in a dashing style, probably by Kukolnik. My friend's *Vestal Virgin* is praised to the skies, but there's not a word about his programme. What can that mean? Can it be that he failed? I wrote him again, begging him to explain his stubborn silence, without mentioning his programme or work at all, knowing from experience how unpleasant it is to answer the friendly query, "How goes the work?", when the work is going badly. After two months I received a reply to my letter, a laconic and extremely confused one. It seemed that he was ashamed or afraid to tell me frankly what was tormenting him, yet something was tormenting him savagely. Among other things he alluded in his letter to some sort of failure (probably of his programme work) which almost sent him to the grave, and wrote that if he's alive today it is solely due to his good neighbours, whose sympathy and assistance saved his life, and that he's doing practically nothing now, suffering mentally and physically, and doesn't know how it will all end.

I considered all this to be an exaggeration, of course. That's usual in young impressionable natures: they always make mountains out of molehills. I wanted to learn something definite about his circumstances; I felt uneasy for some reason. But how and from whom? I knew I couldn't get any sense out of him. So I wrote to Mikhailov, asking him to write me everything he knows about my friend. Obliging Mikhailov did not make me wait long for his eccentric and frank missive. Here is what Mikhailov wrote me:

“Your friend, brother, is a fool, and what a fool yet. There was never such a rare fool since the world began. You see, his programme didn’t come out, so what does he do in his despair, you’ll never guess: he gets married, honest to God, he gets married. And do you know whom he married? His vestal virgin, and she pregnant to boot! Now there’s a laugh: a pregnant virgin. And it was her pregnancy, as he himself declares, that compelled him to marry her. But don’t think that he himself was the cause of that sin. Not at all, it was the midshipman, the rogue, who played that dirty trick on her—she confessed it herself. Great lad, that midshipman! He made a mess and off he went to Nikolayev as though nothing was amiss. And your magnanimous fool—plop, like a chicken into the soup. Whom can she turn to now, he says, who will take her in, poor girl, when her own aunt is driving her out of the house? So he took her in. Now tell me yourself, did you ever see such a fool in all the world? Never even heard of such a one, probably. Truth to tell, it is immeasurable magnanimity, or rather, immeasurable stupidity. That would be nothing yet, but here’s what is boundlessly funny: he painted her as his *Vestal Virgin*—when she was pregnant, he painted her as a virgin! Isn’t that a scream! I haven’t seen anything so naïvely and innocently delightful either in a picture or in nature. People crowded about it at the exhibition. It made as great a splash among the public as Tiranov’s *Girl With a Tambourine* did, you will remember it. A delightful work! Karl Pavlovich himself stopped before it many times, and that means something. Some wealthy nobleman bought it and paid well for it. In all the shops and at all corners you see copies and lithographs of it—in a word, it has been a complete triumph. And he, the fool, gets married. I went to visit him several days ago and found an unpleasant change in him. It seems that the aunt has taken him in hand. He never visits Karl Pavlovich any more—ashamed to, probably. He has begun to paint a Madonna and Child of his wife and not his babe, and if he finishes it as well as he began it, it will surpass the *Vestal*

*Virgin.* The babe and mother are expressed marvellously in it. I am surprised that he could fail in his programme. I don't know whether they'll permit him to enter the contest next year because he is now a married man; I don't think they will. Well, this is all I can tell you about your muddle-headed friend. Farewell! Our Karl Pavlovich is not quite well; he's thinking of starting work in the Isaakievsky Cathedral in the spring.

“Yours, Mikhailov.”

I was overcome with inexpressible sadness when I read this simple, friendly letter. I saw the brilliant future of my favourite and friend coming to an end, and that at the very dawn of radiant fame, but it was too late to do anything that would help. As a man he had acted injudiciously but nobly to the highest degree. If he were a plain artisan-painter, the event wouldn't have any influence on his work, but on him as a truly ardent artist it could have a most disastrous effect. To lose all hope that you'll be sent abroad at government expense—that alone is enough to destroy the strongest vital energy there is. He can't even think now of going abroad at his own expense. Even if by strenuous exertions he did acquire the means, his wife and children would take those poor earnings from him before he could even think of Rome and its immortal marvels.

*Oh, Italy's the happy scene,  
To which the youthful inspiration  
Flies in ecstatic expectation  
To see the Eden of your dreams!...*

But that fortunate, charming country is now closed to my friend forever. Only a miracle could now open the gates to him to that paradise on earth. But such miracles are extremely rare. We no longer have those true patrons of the arts, who used to give an artist money with which to go abroad and study. Nowadays, if some wealthy man does risk some-

thing on such a luxury, he does it out of childish vanity alone, so he takes the artist together with him abroad, pays him an allowance as to a hired lackey and treats him like a lackey, making him paint the hotel where he stays or the sea-shore where his wife takes sea baths, and other similarly inartistic subjects, while the ninnies beat the drums: "Now there is a true lover and connoisseur of the fine arts, he took an artist abroad with him!" Poor artist! What must take place in your gentle heart when you hear those senseless, stupid outcries? I don't envy you, poor worshipper at the shrine of the beautiful in both nature and the arts. As the saying goes, you were in Rome and never saw the Pope, and the reputation that you have been abroad must seem the cruellest of hoaxes to you. No, it's better to tramp abroad with a knapsack on your back than to ride with a grand gentleman in his carriage, or else to give up altogether the hope

*To see the Eden of your dreams,*

and find a corner for yourself somewhere in your own prosaic homeland and there worship the divine idol Apollo on the sly.

My friend has disposed of his future foolishly, with amazing stupidity. For two weeks now I have been reading and re-reading Mikhailov's frank letter daily, and I still can't convince myself of the truth of that unforgivable stupidity. I doubt it to such a degree that at times I'm seized with the idea to go to Petersburg myself and see that repulsive truth with my own eyes. If this was vacation time, I wouldn't hesitate a moment, but unfortunately the school term is on, and consequently, even if I could get away it could only be for twenty-eight days, and what could I do for him in half those days? Nothing at all—all that would be accomplished would be that I would see that which I don't wish to see even in a nightmare. After pondering on it, and getting over the first shock, I decided to wait and see what old Saturn says, in the meantime carrying on a constant correspondence with



Mikhailov. I had lost all hope of letters from my pupil, but my hopes for letters from Mikhailov were absolutely unfounded too. Counting on Mikhailov, I didn't take into consideration that by nature that man was not capable of constancy in correspondence, and that if I did receive a reply from him to my letter, and that so much sooner than I expected, I should have considered it the eighth wonder and shouldn't bank on constant correspondence because of this one letter. The truth is, I made a mistake, but who doesn't make errors? I wrote him several hasty letters one after another, but didn't receive a single reply. Finally, I lost my temper and wrote him a rude and very brief letter. This evoked a reaction from Mikhailov and he wrote me the following in reply:

"I'm surprised that you find the patience, time and even paper to write me your tiresome, not to say silly, letters. And whom do you write about? About a fool. Is he worth thinking about and writing such tiresome letters about as you are doing? Forget him—he's a finished man, that's all. But in order to make you happy, here's what I'll add: together with his wife and mama, as he now calls her, he has begun to lush, i.e., he has taken to drink. At first he endlessly copied his *Vestal Virgin* until they finally refused to accept his copies even in the second-hand shops; then he took to colouring lithographs for shops, and now I don't know what he is doing. Painting portraits at a ruble per snout probably. Nobody ever sees him, he has buried himself somewhere on the Twentieth Line. To do you a favour I went to ferret him out last week. With great difficulty I finally found his living quarters right next to the Smolensk cemetery. I didn't find him at home, his wife said he had gone to some clerk's place for a sitting. I admired his unfinished *Madonna* for a while, and do you know, somehow I grew sad: he is a lost man, and what for, when you come to think of it? He didn't return, so I left without saying good-bye to the woman of the house—I was disgusted with her.

"Despite his illness, Karl Pavlovich has begun to work in

the Isaakievsky Cathedral. Doctors advise him to lay over the work until next year and go abroad for the summer, but he doesn't want to leave the work once he has started it. Why don't you come even for a short visit, at least to take a look at the marvels created by our miracle-worker Karl Pavlovich? You could admire your fool at the same time. You're married too, I expect, only you don't confess it, eh? Don't write me, as I won't answer. Farewell!

“Yours, Mikhailov.”

My God! Can it be that his unfortunate marriage was the sole cause of the sudden and rapid ruination of a brilliant youth? There was no other cause. What a dismal marriage!

I could hardly wait for the vacation to come. Finally, the examinations were finished, I took my leave and hastened to Petersburg. Karl Pavlovich had already left Petersburg when I arrived. He abandoned his work on doctor's orders and went to Madeira island. I ran down Mikhailov with great difficulty. That eccentric never has a constant dwelling-place, but lives like the birds. I met him walking in the street arm-in-arm with the daredevil midshipman, now a lieutenant. I don't know how he got back to Petersburg. I couldn't look at that man. Saying hello to Mikhailov, I took him aside and asked him to give me my friend's address. At first Mikhailov guffawed, and then, barely holding back his laughter, he turned to the midshipman and said:

“Do you know whose address he wants? That of his favourite, N. N.”

And Mikhailov haw-hawed again. The midshipman joined him, but his laughter was strained. Mikhailov made me angry with his silly laughter. Finally, he sobered up and told me:

“Your friend now lives in the warmest quarters on the Seventh Verst. They didn't allow him to enter the contest, d'ye see, so he went off his rocker there and then, and they whisked him away to the warm place. I don't know whether he's still alive.”

Without saying good-bye to Mikhailov, I took a cab and went to the Hospital of All Who Sorrow. They wouldn't let me see the patient because he was having a violent fit. I saw him the following day and if the keeper hadn't pointed him out to me as the artist N. N., I would never have recognised him—insanity altered him so dreadfully. Naturally, he didn't recognise me either; taking me for a Roman from Pinelli's painting, he laughed and walked away from the door with bars on it.

My God, what a depressing sight is a man who is deformed by insanity! I couldn't look at that dismal scene for more than a few minutes, so I said good-bye to the keeper and returned to the city. But my unfortunate friend did not give me peace, neither in the Academy, nor at the Hermitage, nor at the theatre—in a word, nowhere. Everywhere I was haunted by his terrible image, and only daily visits to the Hospital of All Who Sorrow little by little erased that first terrible impression.

His violence abated with every day, but his physical strength also ebbed rapidly. Finally, he couldn't rise from his bed any more and I could freely come into his room. It seemed at times as though he were coming to his senses, but he still did not recognise me. One time I came early in the morning: the hours of morning were easier for him. I found him completely serene, but so weak that he couldn't move a hand. He looked at me intently as though trying to recall something. After a long, thoughtful, intelligent look, he spoke my name in a barely audible voice and tears ran in rills from his now lucid eyes. Quiet weeping gave way to stormy sobbing, such heart-rending sobs as I had never seen before, and God grant that I will never again see a man weeping so terribly.

I wanted to leave him, but he let me know by a sign that he wanted me to remain. He extended his hand and I took it, and sat down beside him. Little by little his sobs subsided and only great tears rolled down from under his lowered eyelids. A few more minutes passed and he calmed down completely

and dozed off. I gently freed my hand and left the room, fully convinced that now he would recover. The next day I again came to the hospital early in the morning and asked his keeper, whom I met as I entered: "How is my patient?" The keeper replied: "Your patient, your honour, is already in the mortuary; after he fell asleep yesterday morning, he never woke up again."

After the funeral I stayed a few days longer in Petersburg, I don't know why. On one of those days I met Mikhailov. After he told me how he had seen the midshipman off to Nikolayev the previous day and how they had got pickled at the Middle Turnpike, the talk turned to the subject of the late departed, his widow, and finally, his unfinished *Madonna*. I asked Mikhailov to guide me to the widow's flat, to which he readily agreed, because he himself wanted to take another look at the unfinished *Madonna*. In the dead man's rooms we didn't find anything to show that an artist had once lived here, except a palette with dried paints on it, which had replaced a broken window. I asked about the *Madonna*. The woman of the house did not understand what I wanted. Mikhailov explained to her that we wanted to see the painting at which he had looked when he had been here before. She led us into the next room, and we saw the *Madonna*, which was doing service as a patch on an old screen. I offered her ten rubles for the painting, and she readily agreed. I rolled up my precious purchase, and we left the widow rejoicing over her ten rubles.

The next day I said good-bye to all my acquaintances and left our Northern Palmira—I believe, forever. Our unforgettable Karl the Great was dying in Rome.

January 25, 1856-October 4, 1856

*Translated*  
by John Weir

## DIARY

(Excerpts)

*June 12, 1857*

The first remarkable event to be entered in my notes is that while trimming this first notebook for those notes, I broke my penknife. The event would seem too trivial to be mentioned as something extraordinary in this motley book. If that incident had taken place in the capital or even in a sizable provincial city, it would not, naturally, have found its way into my memorandum book. But it occurred in the Kirghiz steppe, i.e., in the Novopetrovsk fortress, where for a literate person, such as I, that item comes dear; and what's most important, it cannot always be acquired even for a considerable sum of money. . . . Now it is clear why in the Novopetrovsk fortress the loss of a penknife is an event that deserves to be recorded. But let them be—both the fortress and the knife; soon, God willing, I will break out of this boundless prison. And then such happenings won't find a place in my journal.

*June 13*

. . . I ought to have started my journal when I was first pressed into the armed forces, namely, in 1847. By now it would have been an exceedingly thick and an exceedingly boring notebook. Recalling those past ten sad years, I am heartily glad that the happy thought to provide myself with a notebook did not strike me at that time. What would I have jotted down in it? It is true that during those ten years I saw things gratis which not everyone manages to see even for money. But how did I see all this? As a prisoner sees a gay marriage procession through the bars of his prison window. The very recollection of what took place and what I saw during that time sets me shuddering. And how would it be

if I had recorded the gloomy scenery and the soulless, coarse *dramatis personae* with whom I had to act out that sombre, monotonous, ten-year drama? Oh my insidious memory, let my past be buried! We shall not trouble the hearts of loving friends with unworthy reminiscences, we shall forget and forgive our ignorant tormentors as the merciful Lover of Mankind forgave His cruel crucifiers. We shall turn our face to that which is bright and serene like our Ukrainian autumn evenings, and we shall write down all that we see and hear and all that the heart dictates.

I have received a letter from Petersburg, from Mikhail Lazarevsky,<sup>103</sup> dated May 2, with 75 rubles enclosed. He informs me of, or rather, congratulates me on my liberation. As yet, however, there is nothing from the corps headquarters, and I am waiting for orders from the above-mentioned headquarters. . . .

This evening was made memorable by the arrival of a steamship from Astrakhan. But since that event took place quite late, at nine o'clock, I will not receive the news which the boat has brought until the morning. . . . Perhaps Cossack Father Kukharenko<sup>104</sup> took a notion to write me? That would really make me indebted to the old Black Sea veteran. That truly noble person is an extraordinary phenomenon among people. All my friends were obliged to sever all relations with me as from 1847 by order of the highest authorities. Kukharenko was not aware of such an order. Neither did he know where I was located. But when he was in Moscow at the coronation as a deputy from his Cossack regiment, he got acquainted with old man Shchepkin<sup>105</sup> and learned from him where I was imprisoned. And, noblest of friends! He wrote me a most sincere, heartfelt letter. After nine years and not to forget a friend, and a friend in misfortune at that. That's a rare phenomenon among selfish humankind. Along with that letter, to celebrate, as he writes, his having received the Stanislav order first class, he sent me twenty-five rubles in silver. For a family man of modest means that is a big contri-

bution. I don't know how and when I will reimburse him for that sincere, open-hearted offering?

On receipt of this friendly, unexpected greeting, I planned my journey in the following manner. I would ride through Kizlyar and Stavropol to Yekaterinodar directly to Kukhareenko. After looking my fill at his noble, expressive features, I proposed to journey through the Crimea, to Kharkov, Poltava, Kiev and then to Minsk, Nyesvizh and, at last, to the village of Chirkovichi, and then, having embraced my friend and prison comrade Bronislaw Zaleski,<sup>106</sup> to drive through Vilno to Petersburg. That plan was altered by M. Lazarevsky's letter of May 2. From that letter I perceived that without stopping anywhere I must hasten to the Academy of Arts and kiss the hands and feet of Countess Nastasia Ivanovna Tolstoi and her magnanimous husband, Count Fyodor Petrovich.<sup>107</sup> They are the people solely responsible for my deliverance, and to them I owe my first obeisance. Apart from gratitude, plain politeness demands it. That is the main reason why I chose the thirty-day monotonous boat trip up Mother Volga, instead of the dashing troika. But I still do not know for certain whether that will take place. It may well happen that wrapped in a chlamys of shame and with a knapsack over my shoulder I will yet march to Battalion No. 1 headquarters at Uralsk. Anything can yet happen. Therefore I shouldn't give too much rein to my indefatigable imagination. But I'd better sleep on it. We will see what tomorrow brings. Or rather, what the Guryev mail will have brought.

*June 14*

... What curious event shall I describe today? Here is one. Yesterday's steamboat delivered itself of a sizable sack of rubles in silver and bills. That was the garrison's tertiary pay. The officers got theirs today and this very day they carried it to Popov (canteen-keeper) and the tavern-keeper, and they sent what was left also to the tavern-keeper and began to

carouse, or rather, to have a drunken orgy. Tomorrow the soldiers will be given their pay, and the soldiers too will begin to carouse, i.e., go on a drunken spree. This will continue for several days. And both the soldiers' and the officers' drinking bouts will end up in fights and, in the end, in the chicken-house, i.e., the guard-house.

Soldiers are the poorest, the most pitiable estate in our Orthodox fatherland. Everything that goes to make life beautiful has been taken away from him: family, homeland, freedom, in a word—everything. It is forgivable for him sometimes to drown his sore, lonely soul in a bottle of raw vodka. But the officers, to whom everything has been given, all human rights and privileges, in what way do they differ from the poor soldier? (I am speaking about the Novopetrovsk garrison.) In no way do they differ, poor fellows, except in their uniform. . . .

### *June 16*

Today is Sunday. I spent the night in the kitchen garden. In the morning I went to the fortress. I was prevented from returning to the garden by rain (a very rare phenomenon) and I remained to dinner at Mostowski's. Mostowski is the only person in all the garrison whom I like and respect. He is not a gossip-monger, he's not a shallow person, but an orderly and sedate man with a noble heart. He speaks Russian poorly, but he knows the Russian language better than do the graduates of the Nyepluyevsky Cadet School. He served in the artillery of the former Polish army during the uprising of the Poles in 1830, was taken prisoner and made a private in the Russian army. I heard many exceptionally interesting details about the 1830 revolution from him. Worth noting is that here we have a Pole telling of his own feats and failures without the slightest embellishment, which is a rare trait in a military person, and what is more, in a Pole. In a word, Mostowski is a good enough man, although his character is dry and prosaic. . . .



*June 17*

Today, at four o'clock in the morning, I went to the garden. The morning was peaceful and beautiful. Only the orioles and swallows disturbed the drowsy and sweet silence of the morning. For some time now, ever since I was permitted to seclude myself, I have become extraordinarily fond of solitude. Precious solitude! There can be nothing in life sweeter or more charming than solitude, especially when you are face-to-face with that smiling, blooming beauty, Mother Nature. Under the influence of her sweet, magic charm, a man involuntarily becomes deeply immersed in himself and sees God on the earth, as the poets say. I never liked noisy activity or rather, noisy inactivity, not even previously. But after ten years of barracks life, solitude seems to me to be truly heaven. And I still don't undertake to do anything. I haven't the slightest desire to work. I sit or lie in silence for hours at a time under my favourite willow, and nothing ripples the imagination, not even for a joke. Absolutely nothing. Real stagnation. This wearying condition has set in since April 7, i.e., from the day I received the letter from M. Lazarevsky. I have become completely absorbed in my forthcoming freedom and the journey. It is a good thing that Kulish<sup>108</sup> thought of sending me some books, or else I would not have known what to do with myself. I am particularly grateful to him for the *Notes on South Russia*. I will soon be able to recite that book by heart. It reminded me so vividly, so marvellously of my beautiful, poor Ukraine, that I seemed to be talking with her lyrists and minstrels as though they were alive. A most excellent and noble work. A gem amid contemporary historical literature. . . .

*June 18*

Today, as yesterday, at exactly the same early hour of the morning, I went to the garden, lay for a long time under the willow, listened to the oriole, and at last, fell asleep. In



**Self-Portrait. 1848-1850**



**Garden by Novopetrovsk Fortress. 1853-1857.**  
*Pencil drawing*

a dream I saw the Mezhgorsky Spass, the Dzvonkovaya Kri-nitsya and then the Vidubetsky Monastery. And later—Pe-tersburg and my beloved Academy. Of recent I have begun to dream of familiar objects which I haven't seen for a long time. Will I soon see all this in reality? The dream left its benign influence on me during the whole day, the more so since today the Guryev, i.e., the Orenburg mail was to arrive. Toward evening the mail actually did arrive, but it brought nothing for me or about me. Again my face fell. Again dis-appointment and endless waiting. They had plenty of time to come to a decision about me at the corps headquarters between April 16 and now. In the evening I returned to the fortress and was ordered by the sergeant-major to prepare for inspection. That's the result of the long awaited mail and the freedom for which I waited so tremulously. It's hard, inexpress-ibly hard! In the end I'll go mad from this endless waiting.

With what speed and enthusiasm the order for arrest is carried out, and to the contrary, how sluggishly and coldly is carried out the order for release. And yet both are the will of one and the same person. The executors are the same in both cases. Why the difference? This same month in 1847 I was delivered from Petersburg to Orenburg on the seventh day. And now God grant that some battalion commander orders the state-owned articles to be taken from me and my mainte-nance stopped on the seventh month. That's the pattern, but I can't make sense out of such an inhuman pattern.

### *June 19*

Yesterday the steamboat left for Guryev and will bring back from there the Second Company and the battalion com-mander himself. It is due to the arrival of such an important personage that the company which remained here, to which I also belong, is preparing for inspection. For this important impending event, today I was fitted out with military ac-

coutrements. What a vile impending event! How endless and repugnant this army outfitting is! Can it be that this isn't the last time I'll be led out on the compound to be exhibited like a dumb animal? Shame and humiliation! It is hard, difficult, impossible to subdue all human dignity in oneself, to stand at attention, to listen to commands and move like a soulless machine. And this is the only method, tested by experience, to kill people like yourself by the thousands at one time. A brilliant invention! It brings honour to Christianity and enlightenment.

It is strange that even such sensible people as, for example, our doctor, Nikolsky, like to watch how a man, blue from exertion, stretches out the toe of his boot. I don't understand such inhuman pleasure. But our esteemed Hippocrates sits for hours at the wicket gate, braving heat and cold, and delights in the abasement of his fellow-men. It seems that you're a butcher by calling, and a doctor only by title. . . . And my perfidious fate had to torment me so poisonously and maliciously, pitching me into the very dregs of this Christ-worshipping set. Even if I were a monster, a vampire, even then it would be impossible to invent a worse torture for me than to be transported as a private to the Detached Orenburg Corps. And in addition to all that, I have also been forbidden to paint. To take away from me the noblest part of my poor existence! A tribunal under the chairmanship of Satan himself could not have brought down such a cold, inhuman sentence. But the soulless executors of the sentence carried it out with revolting precision.

The pagan Augustus, banishing Nazo to the savage Getae, did not forbid him to write and to paint. But the Christian N(icholas) forbade me the one and the other. Both were torturers. But one of them was a Christian torturer, and a Christian of the nineteenth century, before whose eyes the most immense state in the world grew up on the foundation of Christian precepts. The Florentine Republic was a semi-savage, frenzied, medieval Christian state, but still it dealt with its

refractory citizen, Dante Alighieri, as a material Christian state. God forbid that I should compare myself to those martyrs and beacons of humanity. I am only comparing the material, coarse pagan and the semi-illuminated medieval Christian with the Christian of the nineteenth century.

I am not certain to what I am obliged that during the ten years I was not promoted to the rank of non-commissioned officer. Was it the stubborn antipathy which I nurse to that privileged caste? Or my insurmountable Ukrainian obstinacy? Both, it seems to me. On that unforgettable day when my sentence was passed, I told myself that they would never make a soldier of me. And they haven't. I didn't learn a single item of the rifle manual, not even superficially. And that flatters my vanity. . . .

There's a second and no less important reason why I was not promoted. The soulless satrap and confidant of the tsar imagined that I had been freed from the serfdom and educated at the tsar's expense, and by way of gratitude I had painted a caricature of my benefactor. So—let the ingrate suffer, then. I don't know where that absurd fairy-tale originated. I only know that it has cost me dear. It must be presumed that this fairy-tale was concocted when my sentence was passed, at the end of which it was written: "Most strictly to be forbidden to write and to paint." I was forbidden to write because of my subversive verses in the Little Russian<sup>100</sup> language. But the supreme judge himself doesn't know why I was forbidden to paint. The enlightened executor of the tsar's commands himself explained the inexplicable in that sentence and pressed me down with his soulless omnipotence. A cold, degenerate heart. And that rotten old roue enjoys the reputation here of a generous and magnanimous benefactor of the territory. How short-sighted, or rather, how base are those foul praise-mongers. A satrap loots the territory which has been entrusted to him and donates necklaces worth tens of thousands to his dissolute charmers, and they glorify his generosity and benefactions. Scoundrels!

*June 20*

Today the company will arrive in Guryev, and on account of the high water in the Ural it will go directly to the Streletskaia Kossa and this very day will board the steamboat. Tomorrow morning the boat will lift anchor and day after tomorrow the company will disembark at Novopetrovsk harbour. Steady, our officers! A storm, a terrible storm is approaching. Like Kronos, the driver of storm-clouds, the battalion commander is coming in gloomy cloud upon you, and at the same time on us, the mute ones. In expectation of this dreaded judge and executioner, those who drank themselves nery are acting up and beg our Aesculapius to invent and regularly certify that they are suffering from fantastic illnesses of the body and the spirit, more the spirit, and in that manner to save them from righteous judgement at the hands of the thunder-bearing Kronos<sup>410</sup>. But the gloomy Aesculapius is inexorable. Nikolsky reserves hospital cots and prescribes laxatives only for our kind—the privates, who also have drunk themselves naked and have nothing in which to face our commander. . . .

There's another odd thing. All this inscrutable grief, all sorts of humiliation and insult, have bypassed me, as it were. They have not left the slightest imprint on me. It is said that experience is the best teacher. But bitter experience has passed me by invisibly. Not a single trait of my inner make-up has changed. Is that good? It's good. At least, that's how it appears to me. And I thank my Almighty Creator from the bottom of my heart that He did not allow those terrible experiences to affect my convictions and my childish radiant beliefs, with their iron claws. Some things have become clearer, more rounded out and have assumed a more natural size and appearance. But that is the consequence of imperturbably flying ancient Saturn, and in no way the consequence of bitter experiences.

Having received a letter from Kukharenko with twenty-

five rubles enclosed, which is a very substantive enclosure, I repaid him with a letter, enclosing my personal countenance, and another letter with an even less substantive enclosure. The enclosure of an imaginary tale by a supposed fugitive, entitled *The Muscovite's Well*. I wrote it soon after receiving the letter from Kukharenko. The verses proved to be almost as good as my previous verses. Somewhat harder and rather curt. But that's nothing, God grant me to break out to freedom and they will flow from me more fluently, more freely, and be more simple and gay. Will I ever live to see that limping sorceress—freedom?

June 26

Two days have already gone by since our commanding officer left us, but I still can't rid myself of the depressing influence inspired by his brief presence. That abominable inspection so squashed my bright, rose-coloured hopes, and discouraged me so much, that if I didn't have Lazarevsky's letter in my hands, I would have weakened completely under the weight of that depressing influence. But, God be praised, I do have that priceless document; that means that I have a canvas on which I can embroider the most fanciful and intricate of arabesques.

The late Goethe said that insignificant minds live on hope. The late sage spoke but half the truth. Hope is characteristic of both little and big minds, and even of the most practical and positive ones. It is our most tender nurse and lover, constant and unfailing until death. It is beautiful and it constantly nurtures the credulous imagination of the almighty tsar, the world-renowned sage, the poor ploughman, and miserable me, and lulls the doubting mind with its fairy-tales, which every one of us so readily believes. I don't mean that we do it unrestrainedly. The mind that believes that pears grow on a willow-tree is truly insignificant. But why shouldn't I believe that I will be in Petersburg by winter for certain? I will see people dear to my heart, the beautiful Academy and



the Hermitage, which I haven't seen yet, and I will listen to the sorcery of the opera. Oh how sweet, how unutterably sweet it is to believe in that wonderful future. I would be an indifferent, cold atheist if I didn't believe in that beautiful god, that fascinating hope.

Here is how I intend to arrange my material existence, with the assistance of my friends, of course. I can't even think of painting now. That would be like believing that pears can grow on willows. Even previously I was less than a mediocre painter. All the more so now. Ten years without practice can transform even a great virtuoso into a common pot-house balalaika-strummer. Consequently, I mustn't even think about painting. I'm thinking of devoting myself whole-heartedly to aquatint engraving. For this I plan to limit my material subsistence as much as possible and to strenuously apply myself to that art. At intervals I will copy famous paintings in sepia, making drawings for future plates. I think that two years of diligent work will be sufficient for that. Then I will go to my dear Little Russia for cheap living and will take up the making of the prints, my first plate to be *The Barracks* from Teniers's painting. That's the painting of which my unforgettable teacher, the great Karl Bryullov, said that it would be worth while to travel all the way from America to take a look at that marvellous creation. The great Bryullov's opinion in these matters can be believed.

I now like engraving best of all the fine arts. And not without reason. To be a good engraver means to be a disseminator of the beautiful and instructive in society. It means to be a disseminator of the light of truth. It means to be useful to people and pleasing to God. The engraver's work is most beautiful and noble. Without your miracle-working chisel, how many of the finest works, available only to the wealthy, would keep gathering dust in gloomy galleries? The engraver's calling is divine!

In addition to copies of the works of masters, I am thinking in time to publish in aquatint engraving my own child,

*The Parable of the Prodigal Son*, adapted to the contemporary taste of the merchants. I divided that instructive parable into a series of twelve drawings, all of which are practically finished on paper. But there still remains the long and assiduous labour of bringing them to the stage where they can be transferred to copper. The general idea is quite well suited to our coarse merchantry. But its fulfilment has proved beyond my powers. What is wanted is dexterity, keenness, accuracy, and above all, not a caricature, but dramatic sarcasm more than mockery. It needs diligent labour to achieve that. And advice from people who know. It is too bad that the late Fedotov didn't stumble on that rich idea, for he would have made the finest of satires of it for the benefit of our ignorant semi-Tatar merchants.

It seems to me that satire is imperative in our time and for our semi-literate middle class, but it must be wise and noble satire. Such as Fedotov's *The Bridegroom*, for example, or Ostrovsky's *We're Not Strangers—We'll Come to Terms*, or Gogol's *The Inspector-General*. Our young middle class is like a lazy schoolboy who has got stuck on the syllables and won't and can't get past that stage without prodding from the teacher. There is no need to pay attention to the vices and shortcomings of our upper class. First, because that class is so small numerically, and secondly, because its moral ailments are of such long standing—and if chronic ailments can be cured, it is only by truly heroic measures. The gentle means of satire is useless in this case. Moreover, has our tiny upper class any significance in the national sense? None, it seems to me. But the middle class is a huge and, unfortunately, semi-literate mass, it is half the people, it is the core of our nationality, and what it needs at this time is not a cheap Suzdal print of the parable of the prodigal son, but noble, fine and apt satire. I would consider myself the luckiest man in the world if my unintentional scoundrel, my prodigal son, whom I conceived so sincerely and open-heartedly, came out that way.

Here's an interesting story. I was told here two years ago by N. Danilevsky, a man who inspires confidence, that Ostrovsky's

comedy, *We're Not Strangers—We'll Come to Terms*, was banned from the stage on the insistence of the Moscow merchants. If that is true, the satire hit its mark with utmost effect. But I can't understand why the government should undertake to foster ignorance and cheating. A strange measure!

### *June 27*

I will pass from the merchants to the officers. The transition isn't sharp, it's even harmonious. That privileged caste also belongs to the middle class. The only difference is that the merchant is more polite than the officer. He addresses the officer as "sir". And the officer addresses him as "hey you!" That superficial distinction does not differentiate them at all, however, because they are blood-brothers by their upbringing. The only difference is that the officer is a follower of Voltaire, and the merchant is an Old Believer. But in essence they're one and the same. . . .

### *June 29*

"The highway from heaven is wide, while the path to heaven is narrow and strewn with thorns," one old, dying woman used to tell me when I was yet a child. And she spoke the truth. A truth whose meaning I have only now fully realised.

The steamboat came from Guryev today and brought me nothing at all, not even a letter. I'm not expecting any letters, as a matter of fact, because my dear friends imagine that I've long since left this foul kennel. Oh, my true, faithful friends! If you knew what my ten-year-long torturers are doing to me at parting, you wouldn't believe it, because I myself find it difficult to believe such infamy. To me it seems like the continuation of a ten-year nightmare. And what does that delay portend? I can't explain it at all. Madame Eigert, writing from Orenburg on May 15, congratulates me on my liberation. But my liberty is making merry in a tavern somewhere

with a smart-dealing clerk. And that's so, because my immediate torturers are enjoying themselves with inspections, drills, cards and drink, while their clerical duties are being taken care of by some clerk, Petrov, reduced to the ranks for swindling. That's how it has been done from time immemorial, and it would be contrary both to the behests of the fathers and the regulations of the armed services if the sacred legacy of the past generations was to be violated because of a Private Shevchenko.

A terrible depression is gnawing at my heart, and here I am amusing myself with jokes. And all that is the work of flighty hope. Surely, a person shouldn't hang himself because of some drunkard father-commander and his secretary, who is worthy of him. . . .

### *July 1*

Today I sent a letter to Lazarevsky by boat. Perhaps it will be the last from this suffocating prison—God grant it. I am at fault with my sincere friend. I should have replied to his letter of May 2 as soon as I received it, i.e., on June 3. But in expectation of happy news from Orenburg, which I wanted him to be the first to know, I waited a whole month in vain and then was compelled to write him after all that I was not free and would remain exactly the same kind of soldier that I had been, until July 20 and perhaps until August, with the one difference that I am allowed to hire a substitute to stand guard duty for me and to sleep in the garden, which I do with gratitude. I have put all resentful thoughts off until July 20. In the mornings now I revel in the luxury of complete solitude and even in a glass of tea, even though it isn't specially good. If I could also stick a fine cigar in my mouth, like one of that bunch of twenty-five which my good friend Lazarevsky sent me, for example, I could easily imagine myself at a Peterhof festival. But that's too much already. And today there really is a festival in Peterhof. A magnificent royal festival! Once long ago, in 1836 if I'm not

mistaken, I was so charmed by stories of that enchanting festival that without asking my master's permission (at that time I was apprenticed to a painter or so-called muralist, a certain Shirayev, a coarse and cruel individual), and braving the consequences of absence without leave (I knew for certain that he wouldn't give me leave) I ran off to Peterhof straight from work, in my ticking smock, which apprentices usually wear, and with a piece of black bread and fifty kopecks in coppers in my pocket. I must have been a sight. It's strange, and yet at that time I didn't find the magnificent Samson and the other fountains, and the festival generally, one-half as enjoyable as I had been led to believe I would. Perhaps my imagination had been fired too much by the descriptions, or else I was simply tired and hungry. The latter, probably. In addition, I saw my dreaded master with his dolled-up lady in the crowd. This last circumstance completely dimmed the brilliance and magnificence of the festival for me. So I returned without waiting for the fireworks, quite impassive to what had been. I got out of that scrape scot-free. They found me asleep in the attic next day and no one suspected that I had been away without leave. To tell the truth, I myself considered it something in the nature of a dream.

I attended the Peterhof festival a second time in 1839 under different circumstances. The second time I accompanied my great teacher, Karl Pavlovich Bryullov, on the Berdov steamboat together with his other favourite pupils, Petrovsky and Mikhailov. A quick transition from the attic of a coarse muzhik painter to the splendid studio of the greatest painter of our century. I, myself, find it hard to believe, yet it was so. I, an insignificant smudge, was carried on wings from a filthy attic to the magnificent halls of the Academy of Arts. But what am I bragging about? In what way have I shown that I profited by the precepts and friendly confidence of the greatest artist in the world? In no way whatever. Up until his inappropriate marriage, and after his appropriate divorce, I lived in his quarters, or rather in his studio. And what did I

do? What did I busy myself with in that sanctuary? It is strange, when you think of it. At that time I was busy composing the Little Russian verses which later descended with such terrible weight on my poor soul. I would fall into a reverie in front of his marvellous works, and in my heart I conjured up my blind kobzar and by blood-thirsty Haidamaki. In the shade of his elegant and luxurious studio the martyred shades of our poor hetmans flashed before my eyes as though it were the scorching wild steppe along the Dnieper. Before me spread the steppe, dotted with burial mounds. Before me appeared my lovely, poor Ukraine in all its virginal, melancholy beauty. And I would get lost in thought and could not tear my spiritual eyes away from that dear, enchanting fascination. A calling, that's what it was.

It is a strange thing, that all-powerful calling. I well knew that my future profession, my daily bread, would be painting. But instead of studying its deep secrets, and that under the guidance of such a teacher as was the immortal Bryullov, I composed verses for which nobody paid me a penny, which finally cost me my freedom, and which, despite the almighty inhuman prohibition, I still keep scribbling on the sly. And at times I even think of printing those whimpering scraggy children of mine (under another name, of course). That irrepressible calling is a strange thing indeed. . . .

### *July 5*

. . . What would I do without a book during such a long and unexciting journey as sailing up the Volga from Astrakhan to Nizhny (Novgorod)? That's what was bothering me. And really, what would I do a whole month without any kind of book at all? But fortune, that proud sovereign of the sovereigns of the world, the eyeless empress of the emperors, today is at my service. . . .

After enjoying the beautiful, fresh morning in the garden, at nine o'clock I went to the fortress. I had to get some bread

from the artel man and have it dried so I would have rusks during the journey. I came to the company office and saw three rather thick volumes in grey shabby paper-covers lying on the table next to a pair of model boots. I read the title. And what was it? *Estetyka czyli Umnictwo Piękne przez Karola Libelta*.<sup>111</sup> In the barracks! Aesthetics!

"Whose are those books?" I asked the clerk.

"Quartermaster Sergeant Kulikh's."

I sought out the above-mentioned Kulikh. When I asked him whether he would sell me *Umnictwo Piękne*, he replied that it belonged to me. He told me that Przewlocki, when he was leaving Uralsk for his homeland, gave him, Kulikh, the books to be delivered to me. And that he, Kulikh, had brought them here with him, put them in the store-room and forgotten all about their existence, and that he happened to notice them only yesterday and is very glad that he can now deliver them to their owner. To celebrate I sent for vodka and put the books in my traveller's bag.

This is visible and tangible work on the part of my obliging factress, fortune. Thus, thanks to that blind empress of the emperors, I have things to read during my journey which I hadn't counted on at all. The reading matter, to tell the truth, is not wholly to my taste, but what can I do—where there are no fish, a crayfish will do.

### July 8

This morning I invited Sergeant Kulikh, the same that brought me Libelt's *Umnictwo Piękne* from Uralsk, to visit me in the garden. Our conversation, naturally, centred around the battalion and especially the Second Company, which had gone away from here two years ago and had now returned. Both then and now it has been my misfortune to belong to that company. We went over that company man by man, starting with the then company commander Lieutenant Obryadin, until we finally came to Private Skobelev. That Private

Skobelev, despite his (Russian) surname, was a fellow-countryman of mine, a native of Kherson province. I remember him particularly for his Little Russian songs, which he sang amazingly simply and beautifully in his young, mellow tenor. He sang the following song with special expressiveness:

*A tiny stream is flowing  
Through the cherry orchard.*

Listening to that charming song I would forget that I was in a barracks. It carried me away to the banks of the Dnieper, to freedom, to my dear motherland. And I will never forget that dark-complexioned semi-naked fellow, sewing patches on his shirt and carrying me far away from the stifling barracks with his artless singing.

By his build and manners he was not a bit like a dashing soldier, for which I especially respected him. But in the company he enjoyed the reputation of an honest and smart soldier. And despite his dark, coarse and pock-market features, his face shone with courage and nobility. I loved him as a fellow-countryman and as a decent man, apart from the songs. He was a runaway serf, as he confided to me in secret. He had gone tramping, and when apprehended, declared he could not remember his home and family, and was enrolled in the army, where they had given him the surname Skobelev in honour of the Skobelev who was the famous jester of the *Russky Invalid*. Kulikh told me the following outrageous story about that poor fellow Skobelev.

Soon after the Second Company arrived in the city of Uralsk, the company commander, Lieutenant Obryadin, took Private Skobelev as his constant attendant, because he was a sober and trustworthy soldier, though somewhat uncouth in appearance. Private Skobelev unintentionally became his commander's chargé d'affaires in matters of the heart and the constant servant of his mistress. Before six months had passed the clumsy Skobelev just as unintentionally became the



lover of his ruler's mistress. One time, during a heart-to-heart effusion, the perfidious traitoress disclosed to Skobelev that two months previously Obryadin had received in his name ten rubles in silver from Moscow from a previous comrade (a fellow-tramp, probably), who was now a shopkeeper. As proof that she spoke the truth, she showed him the envelope with five stamps. Previously, when Lieutenant Obryadin had been the battalion adjutant and paymaster, he was not only suspected but there had even been proof that he was stealing similar parcels. But he knew how to cover up his tracks somehow and to be generally considered a man of good repute. Learning of his commander's swindle, Skobelev confronted him with the empty packet, demanding the money that had been taken from it. The commander treated him to a cuff on the ear, and he returned in kind. If they had been alone, the matter would have ended there, but as the scene was played out before a high-born audience, the officers, the abashed Lieutenant Obryadin, having arrested Private Skobelev, turned in a report to the battalion commander on the event. In consequence of the report there was an investigation, and in consequence of the investigation Lieutenant Obryadin was ordered to retire from the service, while Private Skobelev was court-martialled. In fulfilment of the sentence passed on him by the court-martial, Private Skobelev ran the gauntlet, receiving 2,000 rods, and was banished to Omsk for seven years to the convicts' companies. It is a painful event, and unfortunately, not the only one of its kind.

Poor Skobelev! You were born and grew up in slavery. You thought to try the wide and sweet freedom road, and landed in Edikul (that's how soldiers usually call Novopetrovsk fortress), you flew into my seven-year prison like a song-bird from the Ukraine, as though only to remind me of my dear, poor homeland with your sweet, plaintive songs. Poor, luckless Skobelev! You honestly and nobly returned the blow of the high-born thief and robber, and for that decent act you

ran the gauntlet and bore heavy chains to the wilderness on the banks of the Irtysh and the Om. In your new slavery will you meet such an attentive and grateful listener, a comrade of your plaintive, sweet songs, as I was? Yes, you will meet more than one such wretched prisoner as yourself, a fellow-countryman and branded outlaw, who will shed a tear of gratitude on your heavy irons for those consoling sounds from home, so dear to the heart. Poor, unfortunate Skobelev.

July 10

The wind doesn't let up. The melancholy doesn't go away. The rain continues to wash the new moon. It grants such lengthy favours here but rarely. I lay motionless in the summer-house all day and listened to the monotonous quiet melody made by the small, frequent raindrops falling on the wooden roof of the summer-house. However hard I tried, I couldn't fall asleep. The damned flies flew into the summer-house from all over the garden and gave me no peace. Several times I tried to build castles in the air with my future aquatint prints, also without success. Bryullov's *The Siege of Pskov* and *Genseric* especially were unsuccessful. Nudity must be avoided to begin with. What's needed is practice and more practice, or else that charming Bryullov nudity will come out ugly in the print. I wouldn't like my future prints to be like the Parisian aquatint print of the painting *The Last Days of Pompeii*. It's an uncouth, ugly print. A brilliant work has been profaned and made ugly.

While I was in such a bad mood of depressed spirits, I remembered Libelt's *Umnictwo Piękne* and began to chew on it: it is tough, sour and insipid. Real German soup-water. How, for instance, can a man who is so weightily dealing with inspiration, simple-mindedly give credence to the tale that Josef Wernet asked that he be tied to the mast during a storm in order to receive inspiration. What a peasant conception of that unutterably divine feeling! And this is

believed by a man who writes on aesthetics, treats of the ideal, the lofty and beautiful in the spiritual nature of man. No, I didn't succeed in aesthetics today, either. Libelt only writes in Polish, but feels (if he feels at all) and thinks in German. Or at any rate, he is permeated with German idealism (which used to be, I don't know whether it is now). He resembles our V. A. Zhukovsky in prose. He believes in the lifeless fascination of the scraggy and lanky German ideal just as the late Zhukovsky did.

When Zhukovsky returned from Germany in 1839 with a huge portfolio filled with works by Cornelius, Hess and other luminaries of the Munich school of painting, he found that Bryullov's works were too material, that they brought divine, high-flown art down to the sinful earth. Turning to the late Sternberg and me, who happened to be in Bryullov's studio, he asked us over to his place to enjoy and learn from the great German teachers. We did not fail to avail ourselves of this happy opportunity. The very next day we appeared in the Germanophile's study. But God! The things we saw in that huge portfolio that was opened before us! Tall, lifeless Madonnas, surrounded by skinny Gothic cherubs, and other biblical martyrs and martyrs of true, smiling art. We saw Holbein and Dürer, but no painters of the nineteenth century. How those German idealist painters have become fuddled. They didn't notice that in the architecture of Klenze, for which they created their ugly Gothic works, there isn't so much as a shade of anything Gothic.

I put Libelt's *Umnictwo Piękne* in my travelling bag and brought my frame down again to a horizontal position. I don't know what will be next.

Unforgettable, golden days, you flashed before me like a bright, joyous dream, leaving behind you indelible traces of fascinating remembrances. At that time Sternberg and I were mere youngsters, and looking through that unique collection of sheer ugliness, we spoke our opinions aloud and brought gentle, delicate Vassily Andreyevich to such a state that he



**Running the Gauntlet. 1856-1857. From the Series  
"Prodigal Son".  
*Sepia***



**In Stocks. 1856-1857. From the Series "Prodigal Son".**  
*Sepia*

called us spoiled pupils of Karl Pavlovich and already was on the point of closing the portfolio on us, when Prince Vyazemsky entered the study and prevented Vassily Andreyevich from carrying out his good intention. We continued to leaf through the portfolio with unruffled indifference and were rewarded for our patience with the original sketches for *The Last Days of Pompeii*, skilfully outlined with a pen and lightly tainted with sepia. This brilliant sketch, which remained practically unchanged in the painting, was followed by several clumsy sketches by Bruni, which shocked us by their studied, monotonous ugliness. Where, and from what putrid source did Mr. Bruni take and assimilate that unnatural manner? Can the desire to be original alone have made the tireless Bruni's works so repulsive? A pitiful desire. A sad result. And that man even dared to pose as the equal of Karl the Great! (That's how V. A. Zhukovsky usually called Bryullov.)

An acquaintance of mine who is not an artist, but just a lover of fine arts, not even a connoisseur, looking at Bruni's painting *The Raiment of the Mother of God* in the Kazan Cathedral, said that if he was the mother of that repellent child which was lolling in the foreground of the painting, he would be afraid not only to take the little cretin in his arms, but even to come near it. An exceptionally true and apt comment! And what about his *Copper Serpent*? It's a mob of the most ugly actresses and actors, devoid of all talent. I saw that painting in its initial stage and was shocked by it. It created an unpleasant impression, but still an impression. But that huge finished painting did not leave me with even that unpleasant feeling. And yet its purpose was to annihilate *The Last Days of Pompeii*. A colossal, but alas, an unsuccessful undertaking.

#### August 5

At five o'clock in the evening I sailed into the city of Astrakhan on the most fragile fishing boat imaginable. It all took place so suddenly and so quickly that I can barely believe

it happened. Now I recall my walk in the gully with Andrei Oberemenko as though it were a dream, and the very next day, i.e., on July 31, Irakly Alexandrovich<sup>12</sup> suddenly agreed to give me a pass direct to Petersburg. The very next day he did as he promised, and on the third, i.e., on August 2 at nine o'clock in the evening, I left Novopetrovsk fortress. After a fine three-day journey on the sea and up one of the many branches of the Volga, I arrived in Astrakhan.

*August 6*

On account of the Makaryev fair, not one of the many private steamboats is now in Astrakhan. The S.S. *Mercury* will not return to Astrakhan before August 15. It will then take on its cargo and will sail for Rybinsk on the 20, taking me to Nizhny. In the meantime I have willy-nilly become a sightseer in this deliberately filthy city.

*August 7*

Oh Astrakhan! Oh seaport city! Not a single eating-house where a person can dine half-way decently, to say nothing of getting a room in a hotel. . . .

*August 8*

Even a God-forsaken town like Belebei (the most worthless little town in Orenburg Province) ought to have made a pleasant impression on a man who had vegetated seven years in the wilderness the way I have. But it didn't. That must mean that I havent yet completely gone savage. That's good. . . .

*August 27*

Quiet, moonlit nights, charming, poetic nights! The Volga, covered with a transparent mist, like an immense looking-glass softly reflects the pale beauty of the night and the drowsy,

precipitous bank, set with groups of dark trees. What delightful, sweetly soothing decoration! And all this charm, all this visible, mute harmony is filled with the soft and gentle sounds of a violin. For three nights running that miracle-worker, a freed serf, without remuneration lifts my soul to the Creator of eternal harmony (?) with the captivating sounds of his cheap fiddle. He says that it isn't possible to keep a good instrument aboard ship, but he evokes magic sounds even from that not-so-good violin, especially in Chopin's mazurkas. I can never hear enough of those all-Slavic, heartfelt, deeply doleful songs. I thank you, serf Paganini. I thank you, my accidental and noble friend. From your poor violin issue the groans of a desecrated serf soul, and they merge into a single, drawn-out, deep groan of millions of serf souls. How soon will those penetrating wails reach Thy leaden ears, our just, pitiless and implacable God?

Under the influence of the mournful, wailing sounds of that poor freed serf, in the funereal silence of the night, the steamboat seems to be some sort of huge, hollowly roaring monster with an enormous open maw, ready to swallow the landlord-inquisitors. Great Fulton! And great Watt! Your young child, which grows not by the day but by the hour, will soon eat up the knouts, thrones and crowns, and will treat itself to the diplomats and landlords for dessert, like a schoolboy with a lollipop. That which the Encyclopaedists started in France, your brilliant, colossal child will bring to a successful end on the whole planet. My prophecy brooks of no doubt. I only pray the long-patient Lord to diminish His soulless patience a little bit. I pray Him to bend His leaden ear to the fullness of that heart-searing wail, the wail of His sincere, simple-hearted supplicants.

*August 29*

The banks of the Volga become steeper and more attractive day by day. I made an attempt to draw a sketch of one spot from the deck of the boat, but alas, that's impossible. The



deck shakes and the contours of the bank change rapidly. So I must say good-bye to the plan I made in Novopetrovsk to draw the banks of Mother Volga. Today, from midnight to sunrise, the boat was taking on a cargo of wood near Kamyshin, and I barely managed to make a light sketch of the Kamyshin pier and a stretch of the right bank of the Volga. The wood is being taken to Saratov, and that means that I won't be able to do anything before Saratov. Sixty versts above Kamyshin the ship's pilot pointed out Stenka Razin's<sup>413</sup> mound to me. . . .

The Volga fishermen and the common people generally believe that Stenka Razin lives to this day in one of the gullies beside the Volga not far from his mound, and that (according to the pilot) last summer some seamen sailing from Kazan stopped at his mound, entered the gully and talked with Razin himself. . . .

According to that same narrator, Razin was not a brigand, he only kept a guard-ship on the Volga and collected customs from ships and distributed the money to the needy. A Communist, it appears.

*September 2*

*Fifteen years have wrought no change in us,  
I'm still the old Sashka, and you're still Taras.*

This morning at seven o'clock we happened to foregather in the captain's cabin and, one word leading to another, our talk on commonplace matters turned into a discussion of contemporary literature and poetry. After gossiping a bit, I suggested that A. A. Sapozhnikov read to us *The Dog's Feast* from Benediktov's translation of Barbier, which he did in a masterly fashion. After reading the translation, the original was read, and we unanimously agreed that the translation is superior to the original. Benediktov, the songster of curls and such-like things, does not translate Barbier, he recreates him. Incomprehensible! Can it be that with the death of that tre-

mendous Obstacle<sup>144</sup> of ours, as Iskander<sup>145</sup> called him, the poets have returned to life, have been resuscitated? I don't know any other cause. Apropos *The Dog's Feast*, our good, dear captain Vladimir Vassilyevich Kishkin brought out from his cherished briefcase Benediktov's *Entrance Forbidden* and read it to us, attentive listeners, with the ardour of a worshipper of our renovated poesy. Then he read the same author's *To the New Year, 1857*. I was amazed and couldn't believe my ears. Our dear captain read much more yet that was resilient, fresh and lively. But I concentrated all my attention and amazement on Benediktov. I barely listened to the others.

And so today, starting with commonplace chatter, we had a very satisfactory literary morning. It would be pleasant to have more such improvisations. At the end of that poetic gathering A. A. Sapozhnikov got inspired and wrote the above graceful and fraternally sincere two-line verse. . . .

### *September 5*

Volga's banks are changing more and more, taking on a monotonous and severe appearance. The plateaus on the right bank are covered with forests, mostly oak. At rare intervals, here and there glisten the white trunks of birches and the grey, lustreless trunks of the aspens. The leaves of the trees are noticeably turning yellow. The temperature of the air is growing cooler. . . . I will have to read a lot now. I've fallen behind the new literature terribly. How fine the "Provincial Sketches" are. . . . I revere Saltykov.<sup>146</sup> Oh Gogol,<sup>147</sup> our immortal Gogol! How overjoyed your noble soul would be to see such brilliant pupils around you. My true friends! Write, raise your voices on behalf of that poor, dirty, reviled rabble! For that profaned, mute muzhik!

September 6

At ten o'clock in the morning S.S. *Prince Pozharsky* cast anchor at the quay of the city of Samara. That rich traders' town is anything but picturesque from a distance. I went ashore to look at that prim young merchant woman from close up and to buy some warm footwear. I met I. Yavlensky on the street and we set out to inspect the town together. It is a level, smooth, powdered and painted city, monotonous to the point of nausea. A living specimen of the reign of hard-to-forget Nicholas the Obstacle. . . .

. . . On the floor in the captain's cabin I saw a crumpled page of my old acquaintance, the *Russky Invalid*, and I picked it up and out of boredom began to read a satirical column. It dealt with the Chinese insurgents and told of a speech made by Hong, the leader of the insurgents, before the storming of Nanking. His address began thus: "God is with us. What can the demons do against us? Those mandarins are cattle fatted for slaughter, fit only for sacrifice to our heavenly father, the supreme ruler, the only true god." I wish we could soon say the same for all to hear about the Russian boyars!

September 13

*Kazan is a corner of Moscow*

I first heard that saying in 1847 at a postal station in Simbirsk Province, when I was being transported by government stage-coach to Orenburg. A well-nourished Simbirsk steppe dweller capped his description of the magnificence of Kazan to my escort with that catchy saying. This morning I sighted Kazan from afar and involuntarily recalled and spoke that saying which I had heard long ago. The boat had barely cast anchor when I jumped ashore, ensconced myself in a Tatar cart for twenty-five kopecks and went sight-seeing. Kazan does resemble a corner of Moscow both from a distance, from close up and from inside: beginning with

the churches and belfries and ending with the rolls and fancy breads—everywhere, at every step you see the influence of white-stone Moscow. . . . Stepping out of the cart on to the street I heard the hollow noise of the drums and saw a thick mob of people accompanying a criminal to execution. I turned into a lane in order to avoid that ghastly procession, and among those who were running to see the sight I saw a young girl with a street-organ over her shoulders and a ragged boy with a tambourine in his hands. I felt sad, more than that, sick at heart, so I hired a Tatar cart again for twenty-five copecks and returned to the steamboat. . . .

### *September 17*

Nothing went well for me yesterday. In the morning I began to paint a portrait of Y. A. Panchenko, the house doctor of A. Sapozhnikov. The call for breakfast came before I had had time to sketch the outline. After breakfast I went to the captain's upper room, firmly resolved to continue the portrait, when the town of Cheboksari began to come into sight from behind a hill. It is an insignificant, but a picturesque little town. At least half, if not more, of the buildings in it are churches. All are of ancient Moscow architecture. For whom and to what purpose were they built? For the Chuvash people? No, for the cause of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox creed formed the central knot of the old domestic policy of Moscow. The hard-to-forget Obstacle in his folly tried to tighten that knot, which had become loosened, and overdid it. It now hangs by a thread. . . .

### *September 20*

. . . At eleven in the morning the S.S. *Prince Pozharsky* cast anchor opposite Nizhny Novgorod. The clouds dispersed and the sun pleasantly lit up the city and the beautiful countryside around it. I went ashore and climbed the hill without a cabby's help, past the seventeenth-century beauty—the St.

George Church. I went to visit Bobrzycki, formerly a student at Kiev University, at the college; not finding him at home, I went to the Kremlin.<sup>118</sup> The new cathedral is a revolting building. It's an enormous square mortar with five short pestles. Could this be the work of Konstantin Ton? That's incredible. More probably it is a creation of the hard-to-forget Obstacle himself. Further. The offering of grateful posterity to Citizen Minin and Prince Pozharsky.<sup>119</sup> A petty offering which is a disgrace to an ungrateful posterity! It's a comfort that this cheap obelisk is already broken.

From the Kremlin I again went to Bobrzycki's and again didn't find him at home. I went from the college to find Sverchkov's house on Pokrovskaya street, where A. A. Sapozhnikov's quarters were. I found it. I had barely congratulated the master and lady of the house and my fellow-travellers generally on their temporary home, when Nikolai Alexandrovich Brylkin (head director of the *Mercury* steamship company) appeared and in secret informed first the master of the house and then me that he had a special order from the chief of police to let him know when I arrived in the city. Although I'm toughened to such things, the surprise set me aback. After a hasty breakfast I went to the steamboat, thanked my good friend, the captain, for his favours, took my passport and gave it together with my things to N. A. Brylkin. Calming down somewhat, I went to visit Bobrzycki a third time and found him at home, welcoming me with wide open arms. At eight o'clock in the evening I went to visit Brylkin, spent two hours in friendly conversation with him, took *Golos iz Rossiyi*, London edition, from him to read, and left for my temporary quarters at Pavel Abramovich Ovsyannikov's place.

### *September 21*

My good new friends, Brylkin and Ovsyannikov, advised me to pretend I was ill so as to avoid a trip to Orenburg, very likely via convict transport, to secure the order of dis-

missal. I judged that it is not a sin to ward off baseness with hypocrisy, and pretended I was sick. I stayed abed until one o'clock, reading *Golos iz Rossiyi* and waiting for the doctor and the chief of police. But at one o'clock I gave it up and went to the Sapozhnikovs. After dinner I accompanied my good fellow-travellers to the post station and parted with them. They left for Moscow by post chaise. When will I see you again, charming people? I asked Komarovsky and Yavlensky to kiss my old friend M. S. Shchepkin for me in Moscow, and I begged Sapozhnikov in Petersburg to kiss my saintly patroness, the Countess Nastasia Ivanovna Tolstoi. There goes Moscow! There goes Petersburg! The theatre, the Academy, the Hermitage, the delightful, friendly embraces of my fellow-countrymen, my friends Lazarevsky and Gulak-Artemovsky!<sup>120</sup> Curses on you, my commanders, my unpunished torturers! It is vile! It is inhuman! It is disgustingly vile!

At seven in the evening I visited Brylkin. I found Ovsyanikov and Kishkin at his place and in frank, friendly talk drowned out the wails of the heart which had been wounded so unexpectedly, so vilely and so basely. If it weren't for those good people I would either have had to sit behind bars and wait for the order for my release, or simply to hurl myself into the embraces of the beautiful Volga. It seems to me that the latter would be easier.

### September 22

Today, as yesterday, the weather is rotten: sleet and freezing cold. It's impossible to go outside. From behind the Kremlin wall the cathedral displays its ugly pestles with turnip-like tops, and that's all I can view from my window. It's boring. I waited for the doctor and police chief in vain again as I had yesterday, and then went to Brylkin's for dinner. After dinner, as before, I lay and read Kostomarov's *Bogdan Khmel'nitsky*.<sup>121</sup> A beautiful book, which fully presents that brilliant rebel to us. An educational, uplifting book!

Historical literature has advanced powerfully during the past decade. It has cast light on details which had been covered with soot from the smoke of the incense that was so zealously burned before idols born to the purple.

*September 30*

While waiting for my uninvited guest, Mr. Police Chief, I proposed to my good landlord, Pavel Abramovich Ovsyannikov, that he sit for me. I finished the portrait quite successfully within two hours, while Mr. Lapa (that's his name) did not visit us. . . .

*October 1*

Mud, fog, sleet and other atmospheric abominations, in consequence of which I asked Brylkin's brother-in-law, Mr. Gras, to sit for me. The sitting was interrupted before it was half-way through by the arrival of Mr. Lapa and Mr. Hartwig. The former is a dashing, amiable colonel of the Guards and Police Chief. The latter is not dashing, but still an amiable police doctor. Both are Poles or Lithuanians, and neither speaks Polish. Hartwig, thanks be, without any formality whatever found me ill with some long-lasting illness, while the obliging Mr. Lapa certified to the actuality of that supposed illness, and after mutual informalities we parted. . . .

*October 11*

This morning I ventured out early to paint the Archangel Cathedral, got chilled to the bone and wouldn't have got anything done if I hadn't seen General Weimarn, the commander of the rifle regiment in training and, of course, the big chief of the barracks by the wall of which I had settled down to do my painting. I told him my trouble and he obligingly permitted me to set myself up at any one of the barracks windows, which I did with gratitude. After working

awhile, I went to dine with N. K. Yakobi. For dessert he treated me to Iskander's pamphlet *Sacred Property*, the second London edition. What a heartfelt, sincere, humane message! May the light of truth and the strength of the true God be with you, our apostle, our lonely exile!

*October 12*

I have finished the drawing of the Archangel Cathedral which I began yesterday. It is original, beautiful and the oldest and best preserved building in Nizhny Novgorod. This cathedral was built at the time of the Grand Prince of Nizhny Novgorod Yuri Vsevolodovich in 1227.

*October 16*

Out of boredom I visited Varentsov today. Naturally, we talked about Kostomarov and he informed me (according to news he received from Moscow) that in Moscow a letter from Kostomarov to the tsar is being passed around among the youth. The letter is full of various truths and is generally more extensive and reasonable than Herzen's letter addressed to the same individual. Kostomarov's letter is supposed to have been written from London. If that is true, then it can truly be said that Nikolai Ivanovich is included in the list of our apostles abroad. Bless him, Lord, in that great endeavour!

After leaving Varentsov, I visited a new acquaintance, Pyotr Petrovich Golikhovsky, a pleasant, amiable person. He is here in transit from Petersburg to Yekaterinburg. . . . Golikhovsky informed me, among other things, that a new Russian journal has been founded in Paris, under the name of *The Intermediary*, with Sazonov as editor. The main purpose of the journal is to serve as an intermediary between the London periodical publications of Iskander and the Russian government, and further, to expose the foulnesses of *The Bee*, *Le Nord* and governmental vileness in general. An excellent purpose. It's



too bad that it's not housed in Brussels or Geneva. In Paris the recently crowned Cartouche will close down that new-born child of sacred truth in a friendly way. . . .

After dinner at the Popovs, I visited Yakobi, where I got acquainted with a Simbirsk landowner Kindyakov, a relative of Timashov, the present chief of staff of the gendarme corps. Since Kindyakov is going to Petersburg, I asked him to find out from his relative whether my banishment would long yet continue, and whether I can ever hope to attain full freedom.

At Yakobi's I also met and reverentially got acquainted with Ivan Alexandrovich Anenkov, a Decembrist returning from Siberia. This grey, majestic, gentle exile does not exhibit even a shade of bitterness against his cruel judges, but even good-naturedly ridicules the crowned sergeant-major's favourites, Chernyshov and Levashov, the presidents of the Supreme Court of that day. I venerate you, one of our first-called apostles!

We talked about Nikolai Turgenev, who has returned from exile, and of his book, we talked of many people and many things, and we said *au revoir* at one o'clock.

### *October 17*

Today I received a letter from Lazarevsky and two letters from my dear, unfailing Zaleski. Lazarevsky writes that he saw Countess Nastasia Ivanovna and that they came to the conclusion that if I were forbidden entry to the capital, they would write Count Fyodor Petrovich to solicit such permission for me through Maria Nikolayevna,<sup>122</sup> president of the Academy of Arts, where I would attend classes with enthusiasm as I did in times past. My good and noble patrons and advisers!

Apart from his usual heartfelt and sincere prelude, Zaleski writes that he received my drawings in full and had already placed some of them in good hands and sent 150 rubles to me in care of Lazarevsky. My tireless friend! He also intro-

duces me to a Lithuanian countrywoman of his who recently returned from Italy with an enormous number of works of fine arts. I find such phenomena charming even when I haven't seen them, and am sincerely grateful to my friend for this introduction via correspondence.

Why doesn't Kukharensko write me? Can it be that he didn't receive my likeness and my *Muscovite's Well*? That would be terribly annoying.

Having read those pleasant missives to the point of intoxication, in the evening Ovsyannikov and I repaired to the fiery Moldavian. An awesome, extraordinary woman! Well magnetised, we wished her a happy journey to her distasteful Yekaterinburg and parted, perhaps, forever. A wonderful woman! Can it be that the blood of the ancient Sabines remains so omnipotently and infinitely alive? It would seem so.

October 23

I met A. S. Schreiders at nine o'clock in the evening. He informed me that an official document about me has been received from the commander of the Orenburg Special Corps, addressed to the local military governor. In order to read that document we went to the governor's office, to Andrei Kirillovich Kadinsky, who is an excellent person. The document announces that I am prohibited from entering both capitals and that I'm under secret police surveillance. Some freedom! A dog on a chain. That means that it's not worth being grateful to you, Y(our) M(ajesty).

What am I to do now without my Academy? Without my beloved aquatint, of which I have dreamed so longingly and so long. What am I to do? Supplicate my sainted patroness, Countess Nastasia Ivanovna Tolstoi, again? I'm ashamed to bother her. I'll wait until tomorrow. I will ask the advice of my true friends, Ovsyannikov and Brylkin. They are good, sincere and intelligent. They will teach me what to undertake in this desperate situation.

October 24

Today we came to the following conclusion. I shall remain here for an indefinite period on account of my supposed illness, and in the meantime I'll write Count F. P. Tolstoi and beg his intercession on my account, that I be allowed to live in Petersburg at least for two years. During two years with God's help I'll manage to make the preliminary experiments in my beloved aquatint.

November 3

Today is Sunday, so like a respectable person I preened myself and went out with the intention of visiting my acquaintances. I first visited Mister Grand, an Englishman from head to toe. And it was at this Englishman's that I first saw Gogol's works, published by my friend P. Kulish. My friend botched it somewhat. The edition turned out rather uncouth, and the author's portrait is so bad that I wonder how the illustrious Jordan allowed it to be signed with his famous name.

Also at Grand's I first saw Iskander's *Polar Star* for 1856, Volume 11. The cover, i.e., the portraits of our first martyred apostles, had such a heavy, melancholy effect on me that even yet I can't shake off that gloomy impression. How fine it would be if there was a medal struck in memory of that infamous event. On one side the portraits of those martyrs with the inscription, "The first Russian heralds of liberty", and on the other side of the medal a portrait of the hard-to-forget Obstacle with the inscription, "Not the first Russian crowned hangman".

November 7

A few days ago, as I was passing through the Kremlin, I saw a large crowd of peasants with bared heads in front of the governor's palace. It struck me as an extraordinary oc-

currence, but until today I had not been able to find out what it was about, and now Ovsyannikov has told me.

The peasants belonged to the landowner Demidov, that same scoundrel Demidov whom I knew as a cuirassier cadet in Gatchina in 1837 and who at that time refused to pay me for his fiancée's portrait, and who, having squandered everything, now lives in his village and loots the peasants. The meek peasants, instead of simply hanging their despoiler, came to the governor to seek justice, and the governor, being no fool, ordered them whipped because they had not sought justice in the proper order, i.e., beginning with the district police officer.

It would be interesting to know what will happen next.

#### *November 8*

Until noon today I painted portraits of the Yakobis, and in the evening went to visit Weimarn; he had a regimental celebration today, consequently, there was a carousal. Walking into the first room I became completely confused at the sight of (a mob of) military men. I haven't been meeting those honorable gentlemen for a long time already, thank God. One of them in particular so reminded me of Captain Kosaryov with his fat calf's mug that I almost drew myself up to attention, shouting, "I wish you health, sir!" I was brought out of that detestable state by the hospitable host himself, who invited me into the drawing-room; among other guests in the drawing-room I met Annenkov and did not part from him all evening long.

#### *November 11*

This is a great, solemn, joyful day for me. Today I received a letter from my patroness, Countess Tolstoj, a friendly letter, as though to a kinsman. For what does she favour me with such inexpressible happiness? And how will I repay her

for that unexpected, blissful celebration? Your only recompense are tears of joy and sincere prayers, my saintly patroness.

She advises me to write to Count Fyodor Petrovich and ask him to intercede in obtaining permission for me to come to the capital. That was my original idea, but I was ashamed to bother the old man. Now I have firmly made up my mind to do it. She also asks me to pass on greetings to V. I. Dal from herself and a Mr. Zhadkovsky. I haven't seen Dal here, though I knew him previously, so now it will be embarrassing for me. Serves me right, too.

### *November 12*

Having replied to my saintly patroness's letter, I dressed up and went to visit Dal. But I passed his apartment, for some unknown reason, and went to visit the aide-de-camp of the local military governor, Prince Vladimir Fyodorovich Golitsyn, a very amiable young man who was wounded at Sevastopol. . . .

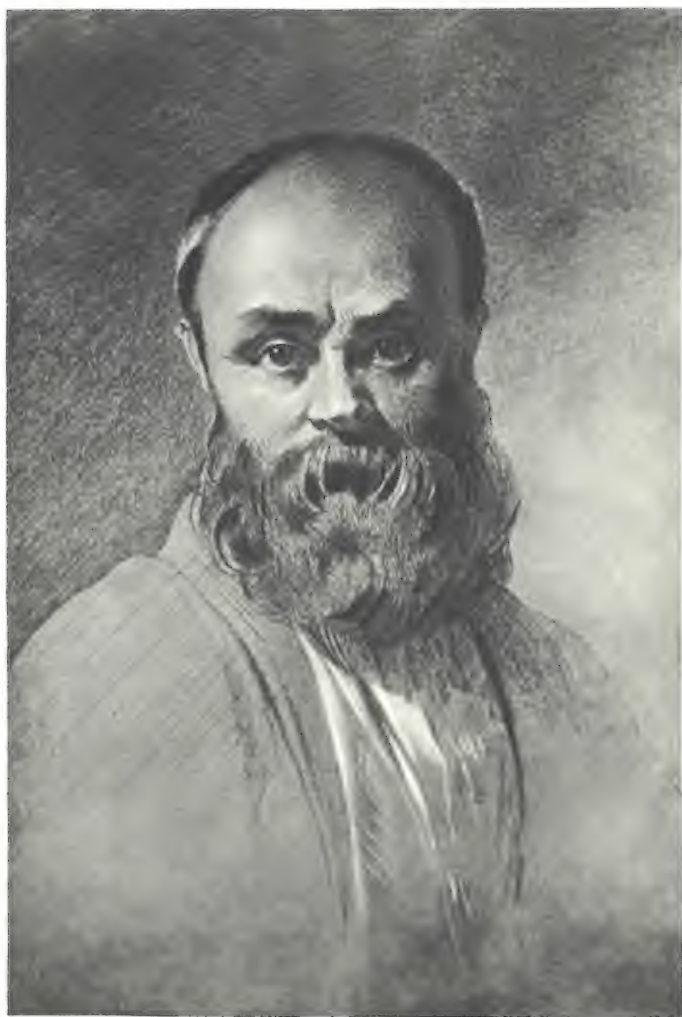
### *November 13*

I wrote the soliciting letter to Count F. P. Tolstoi today and will mail it tomorrow. I beg him to ask the proper authorities for permission for me to live in Petersburg and attend the Academy classes. It seems to me that the letter came out well. Ovsyannikov says that I have the qualifications to assume a prominent place among scribblers of petitions. We'll see whether we will reap the harvest we want from that clever composition.

I also wrote Mikhailo Semyonovich Shchepkin today. I beg him to arrange an appointment with me somewhere on a farm in Moscow's suburbs. How happy I would be to see that famous veteran actor.



**Portrait of Actor M. S. Shchepkin. 1858.**  
*Pencil and White Lead*



**Self-Portrait. 1858.**  
*Pencil drawing*

*November 15*

I received a letter from my amiable Bronislaw, he complains that his father has fallen ill, and he recommends me a friend of his, Yelena Skirmond, an art lover, a dreamer and generally an eccentric woman. That's not good either. But still she's better than my new acquaintance, M. Varentsova, who also is an eccentric woman. Only she's gone not on poetry and the fine arts, but on the stable and the kennel. Perhaps that's a sort of poetry too.

*November 16*

I've finished the portrait of my desperate Amazon and have started on her dear offspring. He's a boy of five, terribly spoiled, a future follower of the hounds, gentleman of the emperor's bedchamber, and a rotten person generally.

*November 17*

I paid my visit to Dal, and it's good that I have finally made that visit. He received me very cordially, enquired about his Orenburg acquaintances, whom I hadn't seen since 1850, and in conclusion asked me to drop in on him as an old friend. I won't fail to avail myself of that amiable offer, especially since my Nizhny Novgorod acquaintances have gradually begun to pall.

*December 1*

I have a letter from Shchepkin, in which he proposes that we meet in the village of Nikolskoye (his son's estate), or else, if I don't have the money to spare for the journey (for me 125 rubles were completely superfluous), he promises that he himself will come to me to Nizhny. How happy he would make me and all his Nizhny Novgorod admirers. I will write him to come here and to give us a taste of the old days on the poor local stage. . . .



## December 2

Today I visited my inspired virtuoso Tatarinov and at his place saw something I had not dreamed of seeing in Nizhny. I saw there an actual, magnificent Gudin. Such two beautiful surprises at one time are a rare and high treat. What barbarians the Nizhny Novgorod people are: they know Tatarinov only as an official of a railway-building company. Nobody even heard of Gudin's painting or of Gudin himself, except old Ulibashev, with whom I got acquainted today at the theatre. He's a well-known biographer and critic of Beethoven, and the most constant attendant of the local theatre.

## December 13

I have received letters from Shchepkin and from Lazarevsky. My old friend writes that he'll come to me to sing carols during the holidays. Good, sincere friend! He plans to donate several performances to the Nizhny Novgorod theatre lovers. What a grand holiday gift!

Lazarevsky writes among other things that he received 175 rubles for me from Lev Zhemchuzhnikov with the stipulation that his name not be divulged to me. How generous is this anonymous contribution! How will I repay you, my good, generous fellow-countrymen, for that sincere contribution? With a free, heartfelt song, a song of gratitude and prayer!

Right off today I'm starting to work on *The Satrap and the Dervish*, and if God helps me to finish it successfully, I will dedicate it to my upright, generous and noble countrymen. I want to write the *Satrap* in the form of an epic poem. That form is wholly new to me. I don't know how I'll manage it.

## December 15

I received a letter from Fyodor Lazarevsky via Dal. He writes that he will be passing through Nizhny again on his way somewhere, and he asks me not to go to Balakhna. I won't go. Let it go hang!

### *December 16*

In the evening I visited Dal to deliver him respects from Lazarevsky. . . .

### *December 21*

Today I received a letter from Shchepkin. He leaves Moscow today, and day after tomorrow I will embrace my old, sincere friend. How I rejoice in that candid friendship! God doesn't send many of us such complete happiness, and there are very few people indeed who have reached seventy years of age and preserved such poetic purity of heart as the patriarch actor Shchepkin!

Today I also received a letter from my saintly patroness, the Countess Nastasia Ivanovna Tolstoi. She writes that the letter which I addressed to Count Fyodor Petrovich will be delivered to Maria Nikolayevna during the holidays. And she writes me N. O. Osipov's address. My God! Will I soon see my Academy? Will I soon embrace my saintly patroness? . . .

### *December 24*

A holiday above all holidays and a celebration beyond all celebrations! Mikhailo Semyonovich Shchepkin arrived at three o'clock in the night.

### *December 29*

Mikhailo Semyonovich Shchepkin departed at twelve o'clock midnight. Ovsyannikov, Brylkin, Oleinikov and I saw my great friend off to the first station and returned home at three o'clock sharp. Six days, six full days of joyful celebration! How will I repay you, my old, my inseparable friend? How will I recompense you for that happiness? For those tears of joy? With my love! But I have loved you long, and you are loved by all that know you. So with what? I have nothing to offer except prayers for you, the most sincere prayers.

*January 1, 1858*

We celebrated the New Year in a friendly and gay manner with Brylkin's family.

However gaily we celebrated the New Year, when I came home I became bored. After a little while, I went to visit Madame Gilde's charming family, but boredom overcame me there as well. From the shrine of Priapus I went to early service; that which worse yet—the sextons had hang-overs and sang so atrociously that I closed my ears with my fingers and got out of the church. . . .

*January 7*

Returning to his homeland from exile (on the shores of the Syr-Darya), Kulikevich accidentally learned that I was in Nizhny and today paid me a visit. Among various uninteresting news from the steppes, he related a piece of news that was disgustingly interesting. The illegitimate son of the rotten satrap Perovsky killed his batman with his own hand, for which he was only reduced to the ranks; but the weakling couldn't stand even that most merciful punishment and he soon died or else poisoned himself. That's the proper end for him too. Like mother, like son. That cowardly tiger cub's mother, the wife of a certain mangy Baron Saltz and the bought w(. . . .) of the corrupt satrap Perovsky, one day while getting ready to go to Mass for some reason became angry with her maid and whacked her on the head with a flat-iron. They buried the maid and the almighty satrap ended the matter there. Oh Nicholas, Nicholas! What evil handy men you had. In your own style.

*January 22*

Yakov Lazarevsky visited me on his way from Petersburg to service in Vyatka. He was in Little Russia recently. He told me about many fresh abominations in my native land, in-

cluding the distressing Yekaterinoslav uprising in 1856, and about his neighbour and kinsman Byelozersky. That philanthropic landowner has so stripped his peasants that they composed a song about him, ending like this:

*Don't you know, our Bilozer  
Has a grey old mare,  
Many a house in the village  
Now is standing bare.  
Don't you know, our Bilozer  
Has a kerchief red,  
May he suffer from ill-fortune,  
Curses on his head.*

What naïve, innocent revenge!

*February 25*

At seven o'clock in the morning I received a letter from Lazarevsky. He writes that I have been granted permission to come and live in Petersburg. I couldn't wish for a better congratulation on my birthday.

At three o'clock I gave a dinner to N. Brylkin, P. Brylkin, Gras, Lapa, Kudlai, Kadinsky, Freilich, Klimovsky, Vladimirov, Popov and Tovbich. There was noise, gaiety and refinement at the dinner table because the company was of one kidney, simple and with a high degree of nobility. When the champagne was poured I made a speech: first of all, I thanked my guests for the honour they showed me, and in conclusion I said that I wouldn't bear God a grudge if I could meet such fine people everywhere as those present here, and that I would always keep their memory fresh in my heart. . . .

*March 1*

The local governor has received a document from the minister of home affairs to the effect that I am permitted to live in Petersburg, but still under police supervision. That's the work of that old reprobate Japanese Adlerberg.

### March 2

I received a letter from Countess Tolstoi. She writes that at last her heartfelt wish has been realised and that she is impatient to greet me at her place. A good, noble creature! How will I recompense you for the good which you have done (for me)? . . .

### March 4

While waiting for Ovsyannikov and a police permit for Peter(sburg), I began to rewrite *The Witch* for publication. I found much that was wordy and unpolished. The work, thank God, will shorten the long days of waiting.

### March 5

I sent a letter to Countess Tolstoi. I wrote her that I will leave Nizhny Novgorod on the 7 at nine o'clock in the evening. Will it be so? That will depend on Ovsyannikov, not on me. That's silly.

I am continuing to work on *The Witch*.

### March 6

I went to work on my *Witch* too zealously, so much so, that I finished it today, although there was a lot of work, and it seems that I finished well. I have copied and slightly amended *The Lily* and *The Water-Nymph*. How will my fellow-countrymen greet my prison muse? . . .

### March 7

From one o'clock in the afternoon until one o'clock at night I was bidding my Nizhny Novgorod friends farewell. I finished the parting at M. A. Dorokhovaya's with supper and a toast to the health of my saintly patroness Countess Tolstoi.

### *March 10*

I left Nizhny at three o'clock in the afternoon on March 8 on a sleigh and arrived in Vladimir at night on the 9th in a cart. . . .

At the postal station in Vladimir I met A. I. Butakov, under whose command I sailed the Aral Sea during two summers—in 1848 and 1849. We had not seen each other since then. Now he's going to Orenburg with his wife, and later to the shores of Syr-Darya. . . .

I arrived in Moscow at eleven o'clock in the morning. I rented a room at a silver ruble a day in a magnificent hotel and had great trouble in getting tea because it was so late. . . .

### *March 11*

At seven in the morning I went to search for my friend Shchepkin. I found him at old Pimen's at Shchepotyeva's house and have taken up quarters there, evidently for quite a while, because my eye has become swollen and red, and several groups of pimples have appeared on my forehead. . . .

### *March 15*

Two doctors visited me yesterday, but today there have been none. I'm better, thank God, and perhaps soon I won't have any need of them at all. . . .

Mikhailo Semyonovich is nursing me as though I was a capricious sick child. He's the best of people! He asked a semi-countrywoman of mine, a Mrs. Grekov, to visit me with a notebook of Little Russian songs. She has a lovely, fresh, strong voice, but she does not do our songs at all well, especially the women's songs. She sang jerkily, harshly, without catching the national expressiveness. Will I soon hear you, my native, heartfelt song?

Pyotr Mikhailovich, my friend's eldest son, gave me two photographic portraits of our apostle Alexander Ivanovich Herzen.

*March 18*

I have finished rewriting or straining my poetry for 1847. It's too bad I've nobody with whom to read it over intelligently. Mikhailo Semyonovich is no judge in this case. He gets carried away too much. Maximovich simply reverences my verse. Bodyansky too. I'll have to wait for Kulish. Although he is harsh, he sometimes tells the truth; but you mustn't tell him the truth if you want to keep on good terms with him. . . .

*March 19*

At ten o'clock in the morning Mikhailo Semyonovich and I left the house and in spite of the water and mud under our feet, we walked through at least a quarter of Moscow. I hadn't seen the Kremlin since 1845. The new barracks-like palace has made it much uglier, but it is still uniquely beautiful. The Cathedral of Our Saviour in general and the main cupola in particular are ugly. An extremely ungainly enormous building. It looks like a fat merchant wife in a golden head-dress who has stopped to show off amid the white-stone buildings. . . .

*March 22*

Today is the most joyful day of all. Today I saw a person whom I never expected to see during my present stay in Moscow. That person is Sergei Timofeyevich Aksakov.<sup>123</sup> What beautiful, noble aged features! He is not well and does not see anybody. Mikhailo Semyonovich and I today went to pay our respects to his family. He learned of our presence in his home and asked us to his room despite doctor's orders. Our

meeting was only for the duration of several minutes. But those several minutes made me happy all day long and will remain forever among my brightest memories. . . .

### *March 25*

Our esteemed M. A. Maximovich gave a dinner for me, to which he invited, among others, his comrades of yore, Pogodin and Sheviriov. Pogodin isn't as old as I had imagined him to be. Sheviriov is older, but despite his decorous grey physiognomy, he doesn't command respect. The oldster is cloyingly sweet. At the end of the dinner the amphitryon recited some verses he himself had written in my honour. And after the dinner our most amiable hostess sang several Little Russian songs, and then the delighted guests went their ways, while I visited Sergei Timofeyevich Aksakov, intending to bid him farewell. He was asleep, so I didn't have the happiness of kissing his beautiful grey head. I stayed at the Aksakovs until nine o'clock and listened with delight to my native songs, sung by Nadezhda Sergejevna. The whole Aksakov family are sincerely and heartily sympathetic to Little Russia, her songs and her poetry generally. At nine o'clock I went to Koshelyov's, accompanied by Ivan and Konstantin Aksakov, and there I met and became acquainted with Khomyakov and the aged Decembrist Prince Volkonsky. He described some episodes from his 30-year exile briefly and without any gall, and added in conclusion that those of his comrades who were kept in solitary confinement, all died, whereas those who languished several men together, including himself, survived their ordeal.

### *March 26*

At nine in the morning I parted with Mikhailo Semyonovich Shchepkin and his family. He left for Yaroslavl, while I gathered up my meagre belongings and went to the railway station, and at two o'clock I left hospitable Moscow, bottled



up in a coach. What had pleased me most about Moscow was that among enlightened Muscovites I had met with the warmest cordiality towards myself personally and sincere fondness of my poetry. Especially in the family of Aksakov.

### *March 27*

At eight in the evening the thundering locomotive whistled and halted at Petersburg. At nine o'clock I was already in the apartment of my most sincere friend, M. M. Lazarevsky.

### *March 28*

I ran about half the city on foot in the snow and sleet with practically no purpose. I dropped into Kley's hotel and there found Grigory Galagan, who had just come from Moscow. He delivered a letter from Maximovich to me with his verses, which he had recited at the dinner on March 25, a note for the receipt of the *Russkaya Beseda*, and my *Heretic*, i.e., *Jan Hus*, which I had deemed irretrievably lost, but which turned up in Moscow. At three I returned home and embraced my bosom friend, Semyon Artemovsky. Half an hour later I was already at home in his house. We recalled a good many things and talked a lot, but there was still more that we did not have time to recall or talk about. Two hours flashed by faster than one minute. I parted from my dear Semyon, and at six o'clock in the evening together with Lazarevsky went to visit Countess Tolstoi.

I never received a more hearty and joyful welcome from anyone than from my saintly patroness and Count Fyodor Petrovich. It was more heartfelt than any family welcome. I wanted to tell her much, but didn't tell her anything. Another time. We sanctified our sacred joyous meeting with a bottle of champagne and parted at eight o'clock.

We spent the evening at the home of V. M. Byelozersky, my fellow-prisoner and cell neighbour in 1847. At his place

I met my fellow-exiles in Orenburg—Sierakowski, Staniewicz and Zelakowski (Sowa). A happy, joyful meeting. We parted after cordial talk and dear native songs.

*March 29*

At ten o'clock in the morning I went like a petitioner to the office head of the city chief of police, my fellow-countryman I. N. Mokritsky. He received me semi-officially, semi-familiarly. Old acquaintance was relegated to second place. In conclusion he advised me to shave off my beard so as not to make an unpleasant impression on his patron Count Shuvalov, to whom I was to show myself as to my main warder. . . .

*April 4*

Kamenetsky informed me that all my writings, except *The Heretic*, have been copied by Kulish. It will be necessary to make a selection and set about getting them published. But how should I approach the censorship? . . .

*April 8*

. . . In the evening I visited my fellow-prisoner Kroniewicz, and at his place, along with many Poles, I also met Russians, including two notables: Count Tolstoi<sup>124</sup>, the author of the soldiers' Sevastopol song, and General Khrulyov, the defender of Sevastopol.

The latter notable seemed subdued.

*April 11*

I commissioned Kamenetsky to make representations to the censorship committee about permission to publish the *Kobzar* and *Haidamaki* under the general title of *Poetry by T. Sh.* What will come out of it? . . .

*April 15*

In accordance with Countess Nastasia Ivanovna's wish, I presented myself to the chief of the gendarmes, Prince Dolgorukov. I listened to an appropriate but polite admonition, and that ended the audience.

I spent the evening at the place of my fellow-countryman Trofim Tupitsya, where I met Gromeko, the author of the article titled "About the Police and Bribery", and got acquainted with old Persidsky, a Decembrist.

*April 17*

N. D. Starov sent M. Lazarevsky a written copy of the address he delivered in my honour at a dinner given by Countess Tolstoi. As an item that I hold precious, I am entering it in my journal:

"A benedictory address to Taras Shevchenko.

"Shevchenko's misfortune has come to an end, and with that one of the most outrageous injustices has been wiped out. We will not infringe on the modesty of those, whose participation helped achieve that good end and has won the gratitude of all who sympathise with the blessings of virtue. . . . We say that we are delighted to see Shevchenko, who, amid the most terrible and killing circumstances, enclosed in the gloomy walls of the filthy barracks, did not weaken in spirit, did not give way to despair, but retained his love for his difficult fate because it is a noble one. Here we have a great model for all our artists and poets, and that alone deserves making him immortal! . . .

"Allow me to raise a toast of gratitude to Shevchenko who by his own sufferings has upheld the sacred belief that no circumstances have the power to crush the truly moral nature of man! . . ."

April 12, 1858

*N. Starov*

V. M. Byelozersky introduced me to Professor Kavelin. An attractive and likeable character.

The same Byelozersky introduced me to the three Zhemchuzhnikov brothers. Charming brothers!

In the evening I heard the opera *Life for the Tsar* at the Circus Theatre. A brilliant work! Immortal Glinka!<sup>125</sup> Petrov is as fine as ever in the role of Susanin, and Leonova is fine in the role of Vanya, but a long shot from Petrova, whom I heard in 1845.

*Translated  
by John Weir*



NOTES



## GENERAL EDITORIAL REMARKS

This volume has been prepared especially for the 150th anniversary of the birth of Taras Shevchenko. Sponsored by the Ukrainian Shevchenko Jubilee Committee, the book aims to comprehensively acquaint the English-language reader with the life, works and ideas of the great Ukrainian poet. To this end, in addition to his most important poetic works, the volume includes Taras Shevchenko's autobiography, one of his novels, excerpts from his diary and specimens of his painting. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to include one of his plays.

It is the poetry of Shevchenko that takes first place in this volume, as it did in his work as a whole. In selecting the poems an effort has been made to give faithful representation to the various themes and genres that were typical of his work at different periods in his life. Most of the translations have been done specially for this volume, while those that have appeared in print previously have been revised for this publication.

The translators faced the formidable task of rendering the meaning, imagery, form and music of Shevchenko's poetry into a language that is substantially different from the Ukrainian. In approaching that task they strove, first of all, to truthfully reproduce the poet's thoughts and feelings, and secondly, to clothe them in forms as close as possible to those of the original and charged with the rhythm and tonality approximating those of the original. It will not detract from the successes achieved in this undertaking to state quite candidly that the translations still fall short of the rare richness of Shevchenko's poetry.

All of Shevchenko's poems included in this volume were written in the Ukrainian language and are either translated directly from the Ukrainian or have been checked with the original. Shevchenko wrote his autobiography, his novels and his diary in Russian and the translations were made from that language.

Names of people and places are transmitted the way they are spelled in the original where that original is written in the Latin alphabet (German, Polish, Czech, etc.), while Russian and Ukrainian names are transliterated phonetically. Ukrainian names have been retained as they are pronounced, except in cases where a different spelling is already established in English, e.g., the Ukraine or simply Ukraine instead of Ukraina. The absence of a separate letter for the "g" sound in the Ukrainian alphabet has presented some difficulties. Ukrainians usually sound "h" where Russians, English and others use "g", but the Ukrainian "h" is not always sounded soft.



In this volume, in most cases, the "h" has been used (*Hamaliya*, *Haidamaki*, etc.), but in others, where the use of "h" would make it hard to pronounce in English, or where the Ukrainian "h" itself is "hard", the "g" has been substituted (Grigory, Gonta, etc.). Wherever necessary for the rhythm of the poem, the accentuation of the particular name has been indicated. However, where in English a different accent has already been established (Ivan), the latter has been permitted to remain.

Dates in Shevchenko's works are left according to the Julian calendar in use in Russia at that time. In the nineteenth century the Julian calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar.

The poems are printed in chronological order, according to the date when each was written.

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A number of Shevchenko's poems here included are on Ukrainian historical themes and others contain references to the past of the Ukraine. It has been deemed advisable, therefore, to present a brief sketch of that history in this place rather than scattered among the editorial notes.

The second largest of the Slavic nations of Europe, the Ukrainians are historically, linguistically and culturally close to the Russians and Byelorussians. All three Eastern Slavic nations developed from common ancestors, the ancient Rus, who a thousand years ago established a great and flourishing early feudal state with Kiev as its capital.

During the thirteenth century the Rus were overwhelmed by the Mongol-Tatar invasions. Two centuries later, when the Northern Rus provinces were being freed from the Mongol yoke and united in the Russian state under the aegis of the Moscow princes, the Ukrainian, Byelorussian and some Western Russian territories had been incorporated in the Polish feudal state. The development of the Ukrainians as a separate nation began in this period.

The *Golden Horde* of the Mongols fell apart and one section of it in the middle of the fifteenth century established the Tatar khanate in the Crimea. Later in that same century the Crimean Tatars became vassals of the Sultan of Turkey.

Between the Polish domains to the north and west, and the Tatar khanate in the Crimea, stretched wild, unsettled plains. Runaway serfs began to establish Cossack settlements in that area already in the fifteenth century. The Cossacks were armed horsemen who not only defended themselves from Tatar and Polish raiders but often banded in armies to themselves attack their enemies, and even made

raids on Istanbul, the capital of Turkey. Eventually the free Cossacks established a unique military-social organisation with headquarters in the Zaporozhian Sich (a fortress on an island below the rapids in the Dnieper River). The Zaporozhian Cossacks joined with rebellious serfs in wars of liberation of the Ukraine from Polish rule. The greatest of these wars, led by Hetman Bogdan Khmelnytsky, culminated in the decision at the Pereyaslav Rada (Council) in 1654 for the voluntary reunification of the Ukraine with Russia.

At that time, however, only the territory on the left bank of the Dnieper River and the city of Kiev were ceded by Poland. Left-bank Ukraine (also called the Hetman-state) was joined to Russia as an autonomous part, the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Great serf risings against the Polish gentry continued in the Western areas of the Ukraine and the Zaporozhian Cossacks assisted the rebels (e.g., the Haidamaki movement). In the left-bank Ukraine the peasants were also converted into serfs and Ukrainians took part in the great struggles of the Russian peasantry against the feudal autocracy. In the latter half of the eighteenth century the Zaporozhian Sich was seized by tsarist troops and destroyed, the Zaporozhian Cossacks disbanded and the autonomous rights of the Ukrainians were abrogated.

The nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries were marked in the Ukraine by a development of revolutionary-democratic and working-class struggle which formed an integral part of the all-Russian revolutionary movement.

Immediately after the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution the Ukraine was proclaimed a Republic of Soviets. In 1922, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed, the Ukraine became its equal member.

The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic today is a constituent republic of the U.S.S.R. and a constituent member of the United Nations Organisation.

## NOTES

### THE BEWITCHED

- <sup>1</sup> In Ukrainian folklore *rusalki*—mermaids, water nymphs, water-sprites—were deemed to be spirits of female babies that were abandoned by their (unwed) mothers and died before they were baptised. Superstitious people believed *rusalki* came out of the water at night and killed wayfarers by tickling them to death.
- <sup>2</sup> The word “Cossack” was often applied in Ukrainian songs and poetry to young men in general.
- <sup>3</sup> Tatar hordes from the Crimea frequently raided Ukrainian, Polish and Russian territories for loot and slaves.

### OH THOUGHTS OF MINE

- <sup>4</sup> In the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries the Zaporozhian Cossacks in the Ukraine decided their affairs at general meetings (Cossack councils).
- <sup>5</sup> The Hetman, the Commander-in-Chief of the Zaporozhian Cossacks was elected at the Cossack Council.

### PEREBENDYA

- <sup>6</sup> Perebendya—a capricious, talkative person.

### KATERINA

- <sup>7</sup> V. A. Zhukovsky (1783-1852) was a noted Russian poet and translator who helped to buy Shevchenko's freedom from serfdom, which event took place on April 22, 1838.
- <sup>8</sup> Muscovites—tsarist soldiers. While originally this term referred to inhabitants of Moscow principality, later it was applied to all Russians and also to soldiers of all nationalities that served in the Russian army.

### THE NIGHT OF TARAS

- <sup>9</sup> This poem describes the uprising of the Ukrainian people against the Polish gentry in 1630 under the leadership of Cossack Hetman Taras Fyodorovich, also called Tryasylo, and the rout of the Polish troops and German mercenaries led by Polish Crown Hetman S. Konicypolski near the city of Pereyaslav (now Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky) on May 22 of that year.

- <sup>10</sup> In the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries Orthodox churches and monasteries in the Ukraine were often the property of the landowners on whose land they were situated. There were cases of the landowners leasing such churches or presenting them as collateral for loans to financiers, including those of the Jewish nationality.
- <sup>11</sup> In order to strengthen their rule the Polish feudal lords sought to forcibly convert the Ukrainian and Byelorussian people in the territories they occupied from the Orthodox faith to Roman Catholicism. To this end, with the help of a section of the Orthodox hierarchy, the so-called Brest Unia was engineered in 1596, establishing the Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church, which retained the Slavonic ritual, but acknowledged the Pope of Rome as the head of the Church.
- <sup>12</sup> Severin Nalivaiko led a popular rising against the Polish gentry in 1591-96. He was seized by the Poles and executed in Warsaw in 1597.
- <sup>13</sup> Pavlo But, called Pavlyuk, one of the leaders of the Ukrainian peasant rising in 1637, was executed by the Poles in 1638.
- <sup>14</sup> The Estuary refers to the estuary of the Dnieper River. Trubailo is the Trubezh River that flows into the estuary, while Alta is a tributary of the Trubezh. The city of Pereyaslav is situated on the Trubezh.
- <sup>15</sup> Ataman—Cossack chieftain.

#### Haidamaki

- <sup>16</sup> The poem is given incomplete (nine sections out of fourteen) in this volume. The name Haidamaki was given by the Polish gentry to the peasant rebels that operated together with the Cossacks on the part of the Ukraine that still remained under Polish rule during the eighteenth century. The word is of Turkic origin and means "unruly ones". The height of the Haidamaki movement, known as Koliyivshchina, was reached in 1768, and this is the theme of Shevchenko's poem.
- <sup>17</sup> V. I. Grigorovich, conference-secretary of the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, helped to gain Shevchenko's freedom from serfdom.
- <sup>18</sup> Sotnik—a centurion in the Cossack army.
- <sup>19</sup> Skutari, a suburb of Istanbul, was several times raided and razed by the Ukrainian Cossacks.
- <sup>20</sup> In feudal Poland the sejm (diet, parliament) was the form by which the actual government by the great magnates was realised. The nobles (*szlachta*) sent representatives to the sejm to decide major issues, such as election of the king, making war, etc. The magnates, each ruling undividedly in his domains, forestalled cen-

- tralisation by the veto. If but one voice shouted "*Nie pozwalam!*" (I do not permit it), the measure under consideration was dropped and the sejm adjourned.
- 21 Stanislaw II August Poniatowski, the last king of Poland (1764-95), while nominally elected by the sejm was in fact the tool of the Russian tsars.
  - 22 The Confederates were armed unions of Polish nobles that sprang up in opposition to Poniatowski's rule, especially to the edict giving the Orthodox gentry equal rights with the Roman Catholic.
  - 23 In the eighteenth century money relations had already deeply permeated the feudal system, commerce and usury were highly developed, the big landowners often leased their estates for money to entrepreneurs, including those of Jewish nationality. In rising against the Polish nobles the peasant rebels often also attacked the Jewish merchants, usurers and lessees of estates. These movements, motivated by deep social causes, often assumed a national and religious character and therefore, as Shevchenko realistically portrays in his poem, became anti-Polish, anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish.
  - 24 Followers of the Orthodox Church were denounced as schismatics by the Roman Catholic hierarchy.
  - 25 Ivan Gonta, a sotnik of the Uman court Cossacks in the service of the Polish magnate Potocki, joined the Haidamaki. When the rising was suppressed by the Poles with the help of Russian troops, Gonta was killed after being inhumanly tortured.
  - 26 Maxim Zaliznyak, a Zaporozhian Cossack, one of the Haidamaki leaders, was seized by the Russian military after the suppression of the revolt and sentenced to be flogged, branded and exiled for life to hard labour in Siberia.
  - 27 In referring to the Alta and the Ros the poet has in mind sanguinary battles of the Ukrainian people with the Polish gentry that took place beside those rivers. In referring to the Seine he has in mind the slaughter of the Huguenots in France, known as the St. Bartholemew's Night Massacre (August 23-24, 1572).
  - 28 Halaida means a homeless person, a tramp.
  - 29 There is no historical record of Gonta killing his sons.
  - 30 The term "Haidamaki" was later applied to denote highwaymen.

#### HAMALIYA

- 31 Hamaliya is fictional, although the events described in the poem are based on historical fact. Zaporozhian Cossacks crossed the Black Sea in boats and attacked Istanbul and razed its suburbs a number of times.

- <sup>32</sup> Veliky Luh (The Great Meadow) was the land near the mouth of the Dnieper River where the Zaporozhian Cossacks fished, hunted and pastured their herds of horses. Khortitsya is the island in the Dnieper where the Zaporozhian Sich was located.
- <sup>33</sup> Byzantium was the general name of the Greek empire that was conquered by the Turks in the fifteenth century, but Shevchenko here means the capital of that empire, Constantinople, which was renamed Istanbul by the Turks. Among ancient Slavs the city was also called Tsargrad or Tsarhorod (the emperor's city).
- <sup>34</sup> Hetman Petro Konashevich-Sahaidachny became famous for his campaigns against the Turks, during one of which he razed Galata, a section of Istanbul. Sahaidachny was not a monk. He died in 1622 of wounds received in battle.
- <sup>35</sup> Ivan Pidkova led Cossack campaigns against the Turks in the second half of the sixteenth century.

#### A DREAM

- <sup>36</sup> This poem, a merciless satire on the tsarist regime and on Tsar Nicholas I and the empress personally, was the main cause for the severe sentence forbidding writing and painting meted to Shevchenko by the tsar.
- <sup>37</sup> Exiled revolutionaries, the Decembrists. (In December 1825, a group of officers organised an uprising of sections of the armed forces in an attempt to overthrow the absolute feudal monarchy; the rising was defeated, and some of its leaders were executed, while others were sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia.)
- <sup>38</sup> St. Petersburg, built early in the eighteenth century by Peter I (the Great) in the marshes on the Gulf of Finland as "the window into Europe".
- <sup>39</sup> Khokhol was a derogatory name for Ukrainians.
- <sup>40</sup> Shevchenko has in mind those Ukrainians who served the tsarist government as clerks and petty officials.
- <sup>41</sup> On the monument erected to Peter I the empress Catherine II had inscribed the dedication: "To Peter the First—Catherine the Second".
- <sup>42</sup> Acting Hetman of the Ukrainian Cossacks Pavlo Polubotok was imprisoned in the Petropavlovsk fortress in Petersburg for actions hostile to Tsar Peter I, and died in prison in 1724.
- <sup>43</sup> Not only many thousands of serfs from various parts of Russia, but also Ukrainian Cossacks were impressed to build St. Petersburg. Thousands perished of cold, hunger and inhuman labour.

## THE HERETIC

- 44 P. Šafařík (1795-1861), Czech scholar and Slavist, proponent of the unity of the Slavic nations and liberation of the Slavic peoples from Austro-German domination.
- 45 Jan Hus (1369-1415), a Czech patriot and one of the leaders of the Reformation, was condemned by the synod of the Roman Catholic Church and burned at the stake as a heretic.
- 46 Constanz, the city in present-day Switzerland where Hus was tried and executed.
- 47 A chapel in Praha (Prague), where Hus preached against the Papal indulgencies beginning with 1412.
- 48 Pope's decree. Here is meant the Bull on the sale of indulgencies by which absolution from sins could be purchased.
- 49 Anti-Popes were pretenders to the Papal throne. Towards the end of the 14th century there was one Pope in Rome and another in Avignon. At the beginning of the 15th century the Conclave at Pisa dethroned both and elected a third. Later, at the Constanz Conclave, he was deposed and a fourth Pope was elected.
- 50 A play on words. Hus means goose in Ukrainian.
- 51 The conclave of the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 52 German emperor Sigismund and his brother, Vaclav, the king of Czechia (Bohemia).
- 53 Jan Žižka led the war of the Hussites against the forces of the Pope and the German emperor following the execution of Hus.

## THE CAUCASUS

- 54 Yakov de Balmen, an artist friend of Shevchenko, was killed while serving as an officer in the tsarist army that was waging a war of conquest against the Circassian people in the Caucasian Mts.
- 55 The Russian tsar.

## TO THE DEAD, THE LIVING AND THE UNBORN

- 56 This poem is directed to the Ukrainian gentry and bourgeois intellectuals, urging them to stop orientating on outside influences and turn to the Ukraine and the struggle to liberate the serfs ("the least of these your brothers").
- 57 German reactionary teachings perverted the history and ethnography of the Slavic peoples.
- 58 Slavists in Czechoslovakia.

- <sup>59</sup> Shevchenko criticises the idealisation of the history of the Ukraine, pointing out that the Hetmans often served foreign masters.
- <sup>60</sup> After the destruction of the Sich, Empress Catherine II donated large tracts of land in the Ukraine to German colonists.

#### MY TESTAMENT

- <sup>61</sup> This poem became a revolutionary hymn of the Ukrainian people.

#### THE LILY

- <sup>62</sup> This poem, together with several other Shevchenko's poems on folklore themes, served as the basis for the Ukrainian ballet, *The Lily*.
- <sup>63</sup> *Phaseolus multiflorus*.

#### TO N. KOSTOMAROV

- <sup>64</sup> N. Kostomarov (1817-1885), Ukrainian writer, historian and professor at Kiev University, was one of the organisers of the Society of Cyril and Methodius, and exponent of nationalist liberal views within it. Arrested at the same time as Shevchenko, N. Kostomarov was exiled to Saratov, where he was employed as a government official. He was later permitted to go to St. Petersburg and lecture at the University there.

#### THE MONK

- <sup>65</sup> The poem is devoted to Semen Paliy, a Cossack colonel, hero of the peasant war against the Polish gentry, who was falsely accused of treason and arrested by Hetman Ivan Mazepa in 1704 and was then exiled by Tsar Peter I to Siberia. After Mazepa went over to King Charles XII of Sweden and his treachery became manifest, Peter the Great recalled Paliy from exile, and he took part in the battle of Poltava in 1709 where the Swedes were defeated. Paliy was never a monk.
- <sup>66</sup> Hetman Ivan Mazepa.
- <sup>67</sup> Paliy was arrested by Mazepa at Berdichev.
- <sup>68</sup> Siberian river where penal settlements were located.
- <sup>69</sup> District where Paliy was commanding officer of the Cossacks.

#### KINGS

- <sup>70</sup> In Greek mythology Apollo was the god of the arts, his sister was one of the nine muses.



- <sup>71</sup> Rogvolod, prince of Polotsk in the second half of the tenth century.
- <sup>72</sup> Grand Prince Vladimir (in Ukrainian, Volodimir) of Kiev Rus (circa 980-1015), adopted Christianity and proclaimed it the state religion. He was canonised by the church.

#### DEAR GOD, CALAMITY AGAIN!

- <sup>73</sup> Shevchenko refers to the Crimean War of 1853-56.

#### THE HALF-WIT

- <sup>74</sup> This poem is based on an actual incident, when the tsarist governor-general was assaulted in a Kiev church, the assailant being later declared "insane" by the authorities.
- <sup>75</sup> Tsar Nicholas I.
- <sup>76</sup> In the 1840s the Kiev, Podolya and Volyn provinces of the Ukraine were ruled by Governor-General D. G. Bibikov, and the Kharkov, Poltava and Chernihiv provinces by Governor-General Prince M. A. Dolgorukov. Bibikov was one-armed, while the name Dolgorukov means long-armed.
- <sup>77</sup> Bibikov's bailiff for Kiev Province, M. Y. Pisarev.
- <sup>78</sup> Ukrainians who collaborated with the tsarist regime.
- <sup>79</sup> St. Petersburg. Shevchenko wrote this poem during his return journey from exile, while waiting in Nizhny Novgorod for permission to enter the capital.
- <sup>80</sup> God was often painted as an eye in icons.
- <sup>81</sup> Revolutionaries sentenced to penal servitude and exile.

#### I'M NOT UNWELL

- <sup>82</sup> The Orthodox Church.

#### ISAIAH. CHAPTER 35

- <sup>83</sup> Mountains in Palestine.

#### TO MY SISTER

- <sup>84</sup> Shevchenko's sister Yarina, two years his junior and the companion of his childhood, remained a serf during the poet's life. Serfdom was abolished in Russia in 1861.

#### THE HYMN OF THE NUNS

- <sup>85</sup> The convent.

## TO LIKERA

- <sup>86</sup> Likera Polusmakova, a serf-girl, whom Taras Shevchenko wanted to marry in the last years of his life.

## SURELY THE TIME HAS COME

- <sup>87</sup> This last poem written by Shevchenko is here given in an abridged form (the original has thirty-seven more lines).

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

- <sup>88</sup> Actually, Shevchenko was born in the village of Morinty. His parents came from Kirilovka, however, and soon after his birth returned to that village where he spent his childhood.
- <sup>89</sup> Shevchenko's mother died in 1823 and his father in 1825.

## THE ARTIST

- <sup>90</sup> The first half of the novel is largely autobiographical, as though Ivan Soshenko were the narrator, describing the discovery of the young Shevchenko and his liberation from serfdom.
- <sup>91</sup> The Popes of the Roman Catholic Church.
- <sup>92</sup> Shirayev was the guildmaster of painting and fresco decoration to whom Shevchenko was apprenticed in 1832.
- <sup>93</sup> A. I. Venetsianov (1780-1847), a prominent Russian artist, assisted in gaining Shevchenko's freedom.
- <sup>94</sup> K. P. Bryullov (1799-1852), famous Russian painter, painted Zhukovsky's portrait, which was raffled off to get the money needed to buy Shevchenko's freedom from his master.
- <sup>95</sup> A character in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, noted for his extraordinary stinginess.
- <sup>96</sup> Ivan Kotlyarevsky (1769-1838), one of the first Ukrainian writers to write in the Ukrainian language. His *Aeneid*, a highly original burlesque of Virgil's *Aeneid*, portrays the customs and mores in eighteenth-century Ukraine.
- <sup>97</sup> Palmira was an ancient Syrian town renowned for its architecture. In the first half of the nineteenth century poets often referred to St. Petersburg as the Northern Palmira.
- <sup>98</sup> Rome.
- <sup>99</sup> V. I. Sternberg (1818-1845), an artist and close friend of Shevchenko. They roomed together for some time in Petersburg.
- <sup>100</sup> V. I. Dal (1801-1872), outstanding Russian dialectologist and lexicographer, author of the Russian dictionary which is still in use.

- <sup>101</sup> Shevchenko wrote the name of Patrocles in error for Hector. The theme is from Homer's *Illiad*.
- <sup>102</sup> I. K. Aivazovsky (1817-1900), noted Russian artist, famed for his seascapes.

#### DIARY

- <sup>103</sup> M. M. Lazarevsky (1818-1867) befriended Shevchenko in Orenburg Province during the latter's exile. Shevchenko donated his diary to Lazarevsky in 1858.
- <sup>104</sup> Y. G. Kukhareno (1798-1862), a Ukrainian writer, served in the Black Sea Cossack force.
- <sup>105</sup> M. S. Shchepkin (1788-1863), brilliant Russian actor, also a former serf, was one of Shevchenko's closest friends.
- <sup>106</sup> B. Zaleski (1820-1880), Polish artist and historian, was also exiled to Orenburg Province by the tsarist regime, and there he and Shevchenko became close friends.
- <sup>107</sup> Count F. P. Tolstoi (1783-1873), Russian painter, sculptor and architect, vice-president of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, and his wife, Countess Nastasia Tolstoi, exerted great efforts to secure Shevchenko's return from exile.
- <sup>108</sup> Panteleimon Kulish (1819-1897), Ukrainian writer, exponent of liberal and nationalistic views, as opposed to Shevchenko's democratic revolutionary stand.
- <sup>109</sup> Ukrainian. Like the Russians and Byelorussians, the Ukrainians are descended from the ancient Rus. The tsarist authorities denied the existence of a separate Ukrainian nationality and language, claiming the latter was simply a dialect of the Russian, and attempted to suppress it. Ukrainian resistance to forced Russianisation included objection to the name Little Russian, which formerly had no objectionable connotation (as witnessed by Shevchenko's use of it), and the term was discarded.
- <sup>110</sup> In Greek mythology Kronos was a titan, son of Uranus, and was also considered the ancient god of the harvest. Later, because of the similarity of the name to the Greek word "chronos" (time), he came to be imagined as the god of time.
- <sup>111</sup> *Aesthetics, or Wisdom of Beauty* by Karol Libelt. K. Libelt (1807-1875), Polish idealist philosopher and art critic.
- <sup>112</sup> I. A. Uskov, commandant of the Novopetrovsk fortress.
- <sup>113</sup> Stepan (Stenka) Razin, leader of an uprising of the Don Cossacks and peasant serfs of Russia against the feudal autocracy (1667-1671). Razin was captured by the tsarist forces and executed.
- <sup>114</sup> Tsar Nicholas I.

- <sup>115</sup> Pseudonym of the Russian revolutionary democrat A. I. Herzen (1812-1870), who was compelled to emigrate from Russia, established a printshop in London and published papers and pamphlets that were smuggled into Russia.
- <sup>116</sup> M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826-1889), outstanding Russian satirist.
- <sup>117</sup> Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), great Russian writer, Ukrainian by nationality, author of *Dead Souls*, *The Inspector-General*, *Taras Bulba*, etc.
- <sup>118</sup> The Kremlin was the centre of medieval Russian cities, surrounded by a fortified wall.
- <sup>119</sup> Citizen Kuzma Minin and Prince Dmitry Pozharsky led the Russian people to rout the Polish invaders in the seventeenth century.
- <sup>120</sup> S. S. Gulak-Artemovsky (1813-1873), Ukrainian singer and composer, wrote both the libretto and music of the opera *Cossack Beyond the Danube*.
- <sup>121</sup> Hetman Bogdan Khmel'nitsky (1600-1657) led the Ukrainian war of national liberation from the Polish monarchy, culminating in the reunification of the Ukraine with Russia in 1654.
- <sup>122</sup> Sister of Tsar Alexander II.
- <sup>123</sup> S. T. Aksakov (1791-1859), a prominent Russian writer.
- <sup>124</sup> Lev Tolstói (1828-1910), world-famous Russian writer, author of *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, etc.
- <sup>125</sup> M. I. Glinka (1804-1857), great Russian composer, founder of Russian classical music. Under official pressure he was compelled to change the title of his opera *Ivan Susanin* for the title *Life for the Tsar*.



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***Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics***