

Tolstoy, Dostoevskiy, Turgenev

THE THREE GREAT MEN OF RUSSIA'S
WORLD OF LITERATURE

By
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Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev

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"DEVOTION TO BEAUTY and to creation of beautiful things is the test of all great civilized nations. Philosophy may teach us to bear with equanimity the misfortunes of our neighbors and science resolve the moral sense into a secretion of sugar, but art is what makes the

life of each citizen a sacrament immortal. For beauty is the only thing that time cannot harm. Philosophies fall away like sand, and creeds follow one another like the withered leaves of autumn, but what is beautiful is a joy for all seasons and a possession for all eternity." (Oscar Wilde, *Essays*, pp. 471-472)

The preeminence of the Russians in prose literature is generally recognized. The triad of names on which this reputation rests is well-known. It is that of Tolstoy, Dostoevskiy and Turgenev. I shall endeavor in this essay to give you something of the essence of the third member of this famous group.

Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev was born October 28, 1818, at Orel, a city in central Russia, and died August 22, 1883, at Bougival, France. Thus his childhood coincided with the end of the regime of Alexander I; his youth and mature years with that most oppressive era of Nicholas I. The flowering of his talent corresponded with the era of the reforms and the hopes inspired by the liberal trend of the first years of Alexander II, years that were to be followed by vacillations on the part of the government and unrelenting struggle of the revolutionaries. The author's old age, sickness and last days were also those of the greatest reaction which took place under Alexander III, following the assassination of his father, March 1, 1881.

Like most writers of that period Turgenev came from the class of the well-to-do landed gentry. His father, an impoverished officer of cuirassiers, was twenty-three when he married his wife who was then twenty-nine. He was tall, well-built

and exceptionally handsome. After marriage he soon retired from the army. He was not interested in the management of his wife's estates, nor in the education of his two sons. He led, henceforth, the empty existence of a provincial Don Juan, scoring easy victories over the hearts of the provincial ladies and not disdaining on occasion an affair with a comely serf girl. "First Love," one of the author's best stories written many years later, contains a true portrayal of his father in the role of the cold overbearing type of Don Juan. The mother was an eccentric, cruel and domineering woman. Her own childhood was unhappy. As an orphan she fled at the age of sixteen the home of her cruel stepfather, only to find refuge with an uncle, who was both cruel and indecent. She fled again. But here fate relented. The uncle died two months later, leaving her sole heiress of all his wealth, some 20,000 acres of land, 5,000 serfs and 2,000 pounds of family silver.

The Tourgenyevs lived in a spacious manor of Spasskoe. Here were ice houses and the smokehouse, the dairies and the wine cellar, the barns and stables, and the quarters of the house serfs. All this hummed and clanged with the work of milling and canning, churning and weaving. Spasskoe was virtually a self-sufficient economic unit, not unlike a medieval domain, producing all that the family ate and drank, most of its clothes and some of its furniture.

The Tourgenyevs lived in the traditional style and entertained lavishly. The day that began with the fox hunt might end with a masquerade, with private theatricals, or with a grand ball for which Madame Tourgenyev would gown herself in some imported creation of tulle in which she had danced in Paris.

The marriage was not a happy one. To the bitterness of a disappointed wife, the mistress of Spasskoe added an inherited predisposition to cruelty. The couple lived in an atmosphere of feudalism not tempered by the chivalric ideal of the West. Young Ivan was witness to many cruel scenes. One of them he

related many years later. Two young peasants who were working in the park neglected to bow to Madame as she passed them, for which she at once ordered them deported to Siberia. "Here is the window at which my mother sat," Tourgenev once related to a visitor at Spasskoe. "It was summer, and the window was open, and I looked on as the two men on the eve of their deportation approached the window with bared bowed heads to take leave of her." Little Ivan was flogged almost daily. The only bright spot in his childhood was the old park with its oaks and birches and the pond. The boy soon learned the ways and the calls of the various birds. It was here that he fled from the horrors of the manor, and it was here that he was initiated into poetry from the lips of a literate serf.

When Ivan was nine years old the family moved to Moscow and Ivan was placed in a boarding school. At the age of fifteen he entered the University of Moscow and one year later transferred to that of St Petersburg. At the age of sixteen he wrote verses and plays. "I was convinced," wrote Tourgenev in his "Reminiscences," "that in Russia it was possible to get only preparatory instruction and that the source of real knowledge was abroad." Accordingly, in May 1838, at the age of twenty, he went to Berlin and matriculated at the University. His chief interest at the time was philosophy, dominated as it was by the systems of Schelling and Hegel. He also had a passion for music and the stage. In Berlin he met a number of remarkable Russians. His first "crush" was Stankevich, a tuberculous youth, a mystic preoccupied with ethical self-culture. With Stankevich he visited Frolov's salon where he was privileged to meet such celebrities as Alexander Humboldt, Bettina Arnim (once an intimate of Goethe's) and many others. With Stankevich he traveled in Italy, visiting museums, art galleries and the charming Campagna. Those were, indeed, fruitful days. Stankevich soon died of consumption.

The next "crush" was one Michael Bakunin, an aristocrat like Tourgenev; a dreamer and a Hegelian at the time, he was

destined to become a great revolutionary, to wage a historical quarrel with Karl Marx, and to found the Anarchist Movement in Spain.

In 1840, at the age of 22, Tourgenév returned to Russia. He was now spending his summers hunting at Spasskoe - a passion which had never left him. He would tramp the fields and the woods, followed by his faithful dog for days and weeks on end. It was on these trips that he came in intimate contact with the Russian landscape, with the peasants, the landowners, and all sorts of people. As a result of these experiences, there began to appear short stories which later collected in one volume under the title of "Sportsman's Sketches" established its author as one of the great writers of Russia. Nor did the handsome young "barin" neglect Aphrodite. To be sure, it was only Aphrodite-Pandemos in the form of a meek blonde serf girl. She became the mother of a girl-child of whom more will be said later.

The winters were spent in Moscow and in St. Petersburg. Among the literati who frequented the fashionable drawing room of Madame Panaev, Tourgenév met a remarkable person to whom he soon became much attached. The person was Vissarion Belinskiy, a commoner, a great literary critic and a Westernist, but this latter term requires an explanation. The intelligentsia of that epoch were divided into two camps, the Slavophiles and the Westernists. The Slavophiles were opposed to Western Civilization. They adhered to orthodoxy, autocracy under a czar, and the village commune. These were at once the historic endowment and the Messianic virtue of the Russian people. They were reactionary and opposed to all innovations. The Westernists, on the other hand, regarded Russia as the stepchild of history, but however neglected and immature, a true member of the European family of nations. The country, in their opinion, could be saved only if it consented to be tutored by the West. Culturally, they were inspired by a humanist ideal, fostered in Europe by the Renaissance and the

Age of Reason, both of which Russia had been denied. Politically, they believed in liberalism, constitutional government and liberation of serfs. Alexander Herten, a fugitive from Russia and editor of the famous revolutionary paper, "The Bell," was the intellectual leader of the Westernists. Belinskiy was their most eloquent and impassionate representative. Here Tourgenyev naturally found himself. The following three winters Tourgenyev was a regular visitor to the shabby rooms of Russia's greatest literary critic. Belinskiy soon died of consumption and Tourgenyev pensioned his widow.

Tourgenyev returned to Europe six years later. His escape from Russia was a strategic retreat as he declared, executed so that he might the more freely attack serfdom and carry out his Hannibal's oath against that evil. He left the country because what he saw there confused, repelled and outraged him. He could not, he said, breathe the air of oppression; but perhaps an equally potent reason was his desire to be near Pauline Viardot. But who was she?

In his "Chapters of the Opera," Krehbiel, one of the Nestors of American music critics, gives an interesting account of the Garcia family, who in 1825 came to New York City and gave there at the Park Theatre the first Italian opera in the history of the city. Manoel del Popolo Vincente Garcia was a Spanish tenor, composer and impresario. His wife was a prima donna. The son sang for awhile, later becoming a famous vocal teacher. The older sister, Maria Felicita, known on the stage as La Malibran, has become the most celebrated operatic figure of the first half of the nineteenth century. Pauline, the younger of the two, made her debut, like her sister, at the age of sixteen. Pauline's voice was a dramatic soprano with a range so wide that she was able to sing dramatic, coloratura and contralto parts. Her histrionic ability was as remarkable as her voice. Combined with these gifts was a keen orderly mind and great diligence. At the age of eighteen she became the wife of her French impresario, Louis Viardot. He was twenty years her

senior, a good musician, a literateur, a passionate hunter, and made a most understanding and reasonable husband for a celebrity. Pauline was a great artist and a great intellect. George Sand, a life-long friend, said of her: "Pauline Viardot is the most remarkable female genius of our epoch." And Michelet, in his *History of the French Revolution*, after describing the Feast of Reason, of 1793, at which the actress, Mademoiselle Maillard, impersonated Reason, observes: "The day when the world grown wise will restore to women the priestly office which they held in antiquity, who will be surprised to see marching at the head of the national procession the good, the charitable, the saintly Garcia Viardot?"

But what has all this to do with our hero? Just this, that Pauline came to sing at the Imperial Opera at St. Petersburg. She was twenty-three and at the height of her career. Tourgnev was twenty-five. He was introduced and promptly fell in love. The impression he made on the young diva was not an unfavorable one. He was permitted to worship at her feet, together with a host of other admirers. This was the beginning of one of the most remarkable life-long friendships between two gifted persons. Tourgnev now follows Pauline to every European capital in order to watch her triumphs and to be near her. Two years later we find him spending the summer with the Viardots at their summer home at Chateau Courta-venel, forty miles east of Paris, in the midst of the meadows and forests of La Brie. It was here that Tourgnev wrote most of his "Sportsman's Sketches."

Several weeks before returning to Russia, where at the time the bureaucratic oppression stimulated by the events of 1848 had reached its height, Tourgnev wrote to Madame Viardot: "Russia will wait; that immense and somber figure, motionless and veiled like the Sphinx of Oedipus. It will swallow me later. It seems to me I see it fixing its heavy, inert look upon me with gloomy attention, as it behooves eyes of stone. Be calm, Sphinx; I shall come back to you, and you will be able to

devour me at ease, if I don't guess your riddle! Let me be in peace for some time yet! I shall come back to your steppes!"

The death of his mother in 1850 obliged Tourgenyev to return to Russia. He received as his share some 15,000 acres of land and 2,000 serfs. The new barin made generous provisions for his mother's personal servants and set at liberty many house serfs, all of whom the deceased had neglected in her will. He did not, however, attempt to free his peasants. But he was a conscience-stricken slave owner, ashamed of his privileges and awkward in his enjoyment of them. Tourgenyev in 1852 published an article on the occasion of the death of Gogol. It contained nothing seditious, but the pretext was seized upon in order to make the young author pay for the boldness of his *Sportsman's Sketches*. He was put under arrest for one month. It was during this arrest that he wrote the famous story "Mumu" of which Carlisle said that he had never read anything more touching. In this story a deaf and dumb house porter's sweetheart is forced to marry another man while he himself is ordered to drown his pet dog by the caprice of the Madame. This is a true domestic chronicle, the cruel mistress being no one else than the author's mother.

At the conclusion of the arrest, he was banished to live on his estate. The banishment lasted two years. It was a blessing in disguise. Leisure, a typical Russian winter - everything was in fact conducive to contemplation and undisturbed creative work. The pretty seamstress, Feoktista, whom he had purchased from his cousin, was just one of those accepted things. She was of no importance. It was in fact his last tribute to Aphrodite-Pandemos. It was during this winter that the novel "Rudin" was written in the space of seven weeks. Tourgenyev became a celebrity, the first writer of the Russian land. Upon his return to Moscow he came in contact with the small but influential group of writers who were associated with the publication of "The Contemporary," leading literary periodical. Among the literati who frequented the editorial rooms of

"The Contemporary" there appeared a new figure, the young Count Leo Tolstoy. Tourgenyev was probably the first to recognize his genius. He never ceased extolling him, both at home and abroad. But the two were temperamentally different and did not get on. Tolstoy was already harsh in his opinions and unsparing in his condemnations. These characteristics, forerunners of future passion for reform, were repugnant to the liberal, tolerant spirit of Tourgenyev. But here we must return for a moment to the little Pelageya, Tourgenyev's illegitimate child. She was eight years old when Tourgenyev had returned to Russia, and was being brought up in the kitchen with the servants. He wrote to Pauline telling her the entire story. Pauline at once offered to take the child and bring her up with her own. Tourgenyev was relating to his friends how the girl, now called Mademoiselle Pauline, a typical French miss, devoted a part of her time daily to sewing dresses for the poor. Tolstoy expressed the opinion that such charity was but a mockery and that it was a wrong way to bring up the child. A heated argument ensued and insulting remarks were exchanged. Tolstoy challenged Tourgenyev to a duel. It was only through the most energetic intervention of mutual friends that a calamity was averted. Years later Tolstoy, now a meek Christian, wrote to Tourgenyev asking forgiveness, which was, of course, given with all humility, characteristic of Tourgenyev. From his deathbed, in his turn, Tourgenyev wrote Tolstoy who had given up literature and devoted himself to religion and reform:

"For a long time I have not written you because I was and am on my deathbed. I write to tell you how happy I am to have been your contemporary, and to send you one last petition. My friend! Resume your literary work! It is your gift which comes whence comes everything else. Ah! how happy I should be if I could only think that my words would have some influence on you. My friend, great writer of our Russian land, heed my request."

It is an interesting contradiction that Tolstoy, so aggressive

an apostle of Christianity, was himself so lacking in the cardinal Christian virtues of meekness, humility and admiration for others; and that Tourgenev who was without religious belief of any kind should have been so beautiful an example of tolerance and unselfish modesty. This, his last letter, was widely circulated, and the title "Great Writer of the Russian Land" was always to shadow Tolstoy to his displeasure. He did not answer the letter.

Tourgenev's relations with Dostoevskiy were even less fortunate. Dostoevskiy was a mystic and a "Slavophile." Everything about Tourgenev irritated him, his aristocratic manners, his wealth, his exuberant health, and his Westernism. Tourgenev, in his turn, disliked thoroughly the neurotic, pathologic plebeian. Such were the mutual relations of the three great men of Russia's literary world.

Viardot began to lose her voice rather early - she was not quite forty. She promptly quit the stage while her star was still in ascendancy and decided to settle down in Baden, Germany. Here she established a school of vocal art and gave performances in which her pupils participated. These were attended by the aristocratic clientele of the fashionable spa, and even by the royalty. Tourgenev built for himself a spacious home next to that of Viardot. He participated heart and soul in all Pauline's undertakings, writing scenarios and acting parts. The war of 1870 forced them to go back to Paris, which in the future Tourgenev never left, except to go once every year or every two years to St. Petersburg or to Spasskoe. These trips were often made for the purpose of selling a bit of woods or a parcel of land, because the Viardot girls were now growing up and would need a dowry.

Through the Viardot family Tourgenev met George Sand and Merimee. Charles Edmond introduced him to all the men forming the elite of the literary world of the period: Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, Taine, Renan, Fromentin, and others, in a word, to all the guests of the

famous "dinners" at the Restaurant Magny. Tourgenév was also on intimate terms with Jules Simon, Edmond About, Gounod, Victor Hugo and Jules Claretie. Flaubert introduced him to the young naturalistic school represented by Zola, Daudet and de Maupassant. It is interesting to note that naturalism, or rather realism, which was becoming a school in France owing to Flaubert and Zola, had been the characteristic feature of Russian literature ever since Pushkin and Gogol.

The friendship between Tourgenév and Flaubert acquired a touching closeness, owing to the veneration in which both writers held George Sand. Regarding this friendship, Daudet wrote: "It was George Sand who married them. The boastful, rebellious, quixotic Flaubert, with a voice like a trumpeter of the Guards, with his penetrating ironical outlook and the gait of a conquering Norman, was undoubtedly the masculine half of this marriage of souls; but who in that other colossal being, with his flaxen brows, his great unmodeled face, would have discovered the woman, that woman of over-accentuated refinement whom Tourgenév has painted in his books, that nervous, languid, passionate Russian, torpid as an Oriental, tragic as a blind force in revolt?"

Tourgenév considered Flaubert the most remarkable French writer and "Madame Bovary" the most powerful work of the century. It was at this time (after the Franco-Prussian War) that the idea of a monthly gathering, where friends should meet over a good dinner, was first conceived. They were called the "Flaubert dinners," or the "dinners of the hissed authors."

"Often the first to arrive was Ivan Tourgenév, whom Flaubert would embrace like a brother," relates Guy de Maupassant. "Though a still greater man than Flaubert, the Russian novelist loved Flaubert with a deep and rare affection. Affinities of talent, philosophy and intelligence, similarities of taste, of ways of living and of ambition, an identity of literary tendency, of lofty idealism, of enthusiasm, and of

learning gave them so many points of contact that they both felt on seeing one another a pleasure that came perhaps even more from the heart than from the head. Tourgenev used to bury himself in an arm chair and talk slowly in a gentle voice, rather weak and hesitating, yet giving to the things he said an extraordinary charm and interest. Flaubert would listen to him with religious reverence, fixing his wide blue eyes upon his friend's fine face and answering in his sonorous voice, which came like a clarion blast from under that veteran Gaul's moustache of his. Their conversations rarely touched upon the current affairs of life, seldom wandered away from literary history. Tourgenev would often come laden with foreign books and would translate fluently poems by Goethe, Pushkin or Swinburne. In describing these dinners, Edmond de Goncourt said: "One felt in his presence that one dined with all Europe. His knowledge was so extensive, so universal." He was indeed more European than his European friends, being fluent in French, German, Spanish, English and Italian.

In his last decade living in Paris with the Viardot family, Tourgenev became a sort of ambassador for the refugee Russians and literary agent for the young writers. He gave his services free and often at his own cost. He did this partly because of his love for literature, partly out of pure generosity, partly out of his inability to refuse any one anything.

Already at forty-five Tourgenev began to suffer from attacks of gout. These became aggravated by anginal attacks, which the great Charcot characterized as gouty angina. Two years before his death Tourgenev began to suffer pains in the lower abdomen and the lower spine. The pain grew progressively worse and required morphine to control it. The physicians did not appreciate the nature of the disease. A metastatic growth removed proved the disease to be a neurinoma, a malignant growth of the spinal cord. His last days at Bougival, the new summer home of the Viardots, were a nightmare of suffering. He died August 22, 1883, at the age of 65, one month

after his friend, Louis Viardot. Pauline survived her husband and her friend by thirty years.

THE ART OF TOURGNEV

Analysis of the author's life, his books, and his correspondence reveals him as a man of widest culture, a liberal, a humanitarian and a gentleman. His mind was essentially contemplative, keen, analytic, observing, sensitive and elegant. He was the kindest of men, weak-willed, passive, lacking in decision, authority or initiative. Despite his intimate friendships with such revolutionary firebrands as Hertzen, Bakunin and Belinskiy, he remained a passive observer. De Maupassant, a keen judge of character, said of him: "He was one of the most remarkable writers of this century and at the same time the most honest, straightforward, universally sincere and affectionate man one could possibly meet. He was simplicity itself, kind and honest to excess, more good-natured than any man in the world, affectionate as men rarely are, and loyal to his friends. No more cultivated spirit, no more loyal, generous heart than his ever existed."

He had no religious beliefs of any kind. His philosophy of life was tinged with pessimism and sadness. "The aim of all high poetry," he once said, "is to portray the inescapable defeat of that which is just and innocent." One more trait must be added, that of constant striving and the capacity for inner freedom. In his style he was influenced by the two great realists who preceded him, Pushkin and Gogol; in his mode of thinking, by Goethe and Shakespeare; in his philosophy by Schopenhauer. He was a realistic writer in the highest sense of the term. In his mode of expression, he was objective. By objective is meant that the author does not project himself, his feelings or his emotions into his creations. The term does not necessarily denote quality, it denotes method. Thus Leo Tolstoy, a greater writer than Tourgenyev, was a splendid example of the opposite, the subjective method.

To a young man who wished to become a writer, Tourgenév gave the following advice: "If the study of a personality, of some one's life, excites more interest in you than the exposition of your own feelings and thoughts; if, for example, you find more pleasure in accurately describing the exterior aspect, not only of a person but of a simple object, rather than in telling eloquently that which you experience at the sight of the object or the person, then you are an objective writer and as such you may proceed to write a narrative or novel." And, again, "The writer must be a psychologist but a secret one; he must sense and know the roots of phenomena, but offer only the phenomena themselves, as they blossom or wither. The psychologist must disappear in the artist, as the skeleton is concealed within the warm and living body for which it serves as a firm but invisible support." And, again, "In art the question *how* is more important than the question *what*."

"Only stupid pedants and rhetoricians could maintain that art is nothing more than faithful imitation of nature." In support of his contention he cited Bacon's "*Ars est homo additus naturae*," and Goethe's "*die Wirklichkeit zum schoenen Schein erheben*" — Reality must be elevated to poetic heights. To put it in other words, reality must be subordinated to the subjective ideas of beauty. At the end of his literary career he still referred to himself as "the romanticist of realism."

Tourgenév is a realist in the higher sense because he deals with souls rather than with bodies. No one has ever analyzed the passion of love more successfully than he. But he is interested in the growth of love in the mind rather than in its carnal manifestations. Although an uncompromising realist, he was at heart always a poet. "In reading him," says his English critic Lloyd, "we feel that what he says is true; it is life indeed; but we also feel an inexpressible charm. To read him is not only to be mentally stimulated; it is to be purified and ennobled; for though he never wrote a sermon in disguise, the ethical ele-

ment in his novels is so pervasive that one cannot read him without hating sin and loving virtue."

As stylist he has no peer in Russian literature. Our own Henry James, who was admitted to the inner circle in Paris, said of Tourgenév that he was particularly a favorite with people of cultivated taste and that nothing cultivates taste better than reading him. To the beauty of language and perfection of style he added a gift for condensation unrivaled in world literature. In economy of material there has never been his equal. His novels, short as they are, tell more in less space than any other novels in the world.

In "Sportsman's Sketches" the author paints without irony and without bitterness a series of pictures, minute and objective, which reveal the life of the Russian people. A more objective piece of writing could hardly be imagined. The author writes down his impressions, giving us glimpses of a handful of lives. Very seldom does he express a sympathy with the peasant in terms of praise; for him the moujik is neither a newly discovered philosopher nor the source of all wisdom, as he was to the converted Tolstoy. Tourgenév writes as one who has no cause to plead but only reality to reveal. The scenes through which he wanders are simple and homely landscapes, great fields of rye, birchen woods, meadows fringed with lakes and rivulets. And everywhere the scents and sounds, the languor of summer days, the shade of birchen woods, the slow drowsy silences, the humming, buzzing under life, the inexplicable sounds of night.

The effect produced by the book on the reading public was extraordinary. "If," said the Russians, "Gogol revealed us to ourselves in his *Dead Souls*, the author of "Sportsman's Sketches" revealed to us all the ugliness of serfdom." For the first time the serf was portrayed as a human being. The emperor himself read the book and told the author that he was in no small degree influenced by it in his determination to liberate the serfs.

The six novels which followed at irregular intervals are all more or less social novels. In a paper presented before the Club one year ago Mr Gilruth told us that the Russians have contributed much to the social novel and that, in doing so, they have impaired its quality as a literary form. If by social novel Mr. Gilruth chooses to understand a disguised tract or a sermon, he is quite right. But a social novel need not be either, and a great writer surely need not dwell in an "ivory tower." It is indeed the Russians who have raised the novel to its highest pinnacle as a literary form. The novels of Tolstoy, Dostoevskiy and Tourgenyev have surpassed in significance, profundity and artistic quality everything that was written before them.

The mental and moral perplexities of the "thinking lords," the psychology of the "superfluous man," of the Russian Hamlets, are all depicted in his works in highly artistic and poetic fashion. These purely Russian characters, because of their human interest, are also in a sense universal characters. In a preface to a complete edition Tourgenyev wrote, "During all these years I strove with all my might and skill to honestly and dispassionately portray and reproduce in proper types that which Shakespeare calls 'the body and pressure of time,' as well as that rapidly changing physiognomy of the cultivated Russian which has predominantly constituted the chief object of my observations."

Rudin, in the novel bearing the same name, is a characteristic representative of the intelligentsia of the 1840's. Torn away from his native soil and brought up on German philosophy, he is a brilliant dialectician and orator, but is utterly lacking in capacity to act. He ends his useless life in an equally useless sacrifice. The heroine of the novel, "Natalya," is a striking contrast to this Russian "Hamlet." She is young, well-educated, honest to the core, idealistic, capable of decision and, if need be, of a heroic deed. The intelligentsia of the 1840's were principally talkers; the men of action have not yet

arrived. In the novel "On the Eve" the author appears to have found the strong man; but he is not a Russian — he is a Bulgarian patriot. The high point of the novel, however, is not the man but the girl. Helena is an exalted heroic person, a forerunner of a generation of heroines to come. Once more the men appear puny and weak-kneed alongside their women.

"A Nest of Gentlefolk" is a charming, even though sad, elegy to the dying generation of the landed gentry. The most arresting character in the novel is Liza, who upon her first disappointment in love retires to a convent of her own volition. In Liza the author created a finished type of an ideal feminine soul for whom religion constitutes the essential calling, like art for the artist, or science for the scientist. Religiosity with her is a natural, even though mystic quality of her soul. She is not of this world — she is a saint. Religious feeling here is an ethical principle combined with a perfectly sane and healthy mind. The very first contradictions of life were quite sufficient to decide her upon the fulfillment of her religious tendency. The charms of love, the promise of happiness, were inadequate to thwart her from her higher purpose. The type is unusual, and to many people, unreal. It is, in fact, an artistic creation of a higher sort. The naturally exalted spirit of the girl, encouraged by the circumstances of her childhood, blossoms into a pure, chaste, almost perfect expression of love of God and of good. Only a very great master could create a type so unusual and yet so convincing in its spiritual perfection.

"Virgin Soil" is a social novel in the strictest sense. In it is analyzed the so-called "populist movement." These young revolutionaries, to use Bakunin's phrase, "went to the people." Disguised as peasants or workers they preached to the peasants the gospel of revolt. But the peasants were too ignorant to grasp the significance of these sermons; they not infrequently bound the agitators with ropes and turned them over to the police. Nezhdanov, the principle character, makes a pitiful,

almost comical failure of his very first attempt at propaganda. The drunken peasants whom he attempts to address ply him with vodka, which he must drink to be one of them but which he cannot carry. Discouraged and disillusioned he ends his wasted life by sending a bullet through his heart. Not so the woman. Marianna, in fact, is the most complete of Tourgenév's heroines - calm, determined, heroic. These typical Tourgenév women combine with their essentially feminine charms a passionate will to serve an ideal, to enter upon wider fields of activity, to sacrifice themselves if need be. They are the forerunners of the true heroines of the Revolution to come. Beginning with the aristocratic wives of the Decembrist conspirators, who voluntarily followed their husbands to exile in Siberia, and continuing all through the terrible epoch of the 1870's and up to the Bolshevik Revolution, the women were the soul, the very backbone of the Revolution. No one was more conscious of it than Lenin. In one of his speeches he said, "In Petrograd, in Moscow, in cities and in the industrial centers, and out in the country, our women have stood the test magnificently in the Revolution. Without them, we should not have won." The publication of "Virgin Soil" brought upon the author a storm of protests and of accusations from the radical element who felt that they were misrepresented.

This storm, however, was a mild affair, indeed, compared with what took place upon the publication of "Fathers and Sons." Its author was now vilified. Both the Fathers and the Sons joined in a chorus of condemnation. In their partisan ardor the Russians have overlooked a literary masterpiece. To the intelligent Russian without a free press, without liberty of assembly, without the right to free expression of opinion, literature became the last refuge of his freedom of thought, the only means of propagating higher ideas. He expected and demanded of his country's literature not merely aesthetic recreation; he placed it at the service of everything noble and good, of his aspiration, of the enlightenment and emancipa-

tion of the spirit. Hence, the striking partiality, nay, unfairness, displayed by the Russians towards the most perfect works of their own literature when these did not answer to the claims or the expectations of their party or their day. A purely aesthetic handling of the subject would not gain it full acceptance.

In this novel, for the first time, the strong man makes his appearance on the Russian stage. This masterpiece is a novel of not more than 180 pages. It contains little, if any, plot. Arkadiy Kirsanov had just received his candidate's degree and is returning to his father's estate accompanied by one Eugene Bazarov, a fellow student, a biologist and a medic. Here the two young men meet Arkadiy's father, a sentimental landowner, and Arkadiy's uncle, a retired, aristocratic, military dandy. "Just what is Mr. Bazarov?" inquires the uncle. "He is a nihilist," replied Arkadiy. "What is a nihilist," interrupts the father; "nihilist from the Latin 'nihil est' - meaning 'nothing,' a man who believes in nothing?"—"Yes, a man who treats everything critically. A nihilist is a man who does not bow to accepted authorities, who does not accept on faith any principle, no matter how sacred." In another conversation Arkadiy tells his uncle, "We do not recognize accepted authorities." "We act," added Bazarov, "on that principle which we consider useful. The most useful thing to do at the moment is to reject; we reject." "Everything?" "Yes, everything." "Art, poetry?" "Everything," calmly replied Bazarov. "That is, you are destroying everything. But is it not just as important to create as to destroy?" - "That is none of our business," replied Bazarov, "Before one can build one must clear the space."

The antagonism between the aristocratic dandy and the plebeian medic ends in a duel in which the dandy is slightly wounded. Bazarov now leaves his friends and proceeds to his own home. And here the young generation is once more brought in contact with the old. Bazarov spends his days in dissecting frogs, looking for interesting specimens. While performing a

postmortem on a peasant dead of typhus, he inadvertently inflicts a scratch wound upon his finger. The county physician has no caustic with which to treat it. Several hours elapse before Bazarov reaches home and applies a caustic; but it is too late; he develops the infection and dies after a few days of illness. Exclusive of a brief love episode, such is the simple plot.

Everything in this work bears witness to the ripened power of Tourgenév's talent; the clarity of ideas, the skill in sketching types, the simplicity of plot and of movement of action, and moderation and evenness of the work as a whole. The dramatic element comes up naturally from the most ordinary situations; there is nothing superfluous, nothing retarding, nothing extraneous. The author portrays in this novel the essence of that struggle between the dying period of the nobility, which found its strength in the possession of peasants, and the new period of reforms. Tourgenév not only illumined the inner sense of the new movement, but he also has pointed out its principal characteristic sign — negation in the name of realism, as the opposition to the old ideally liberal conservatism. The artist created in the image of Bazarov a characteristic representative of the new movement, and christened it with a wonderfully fitting word "nihilist." The struggle of two social currents, the pre-reform and post-reform currents, the struggle of two generations; the old brought up on aesthetic idealism for which the leisure of the nobility afforded such a fertile soil; and the young generation which was carried away by realism and negation — this is what made up the essence of the epoch of the 1860's. Tourgenév portrayed this movement in bright living images with all its positive and negative, pathetic and humorous sides. The author sketched both the Fathers and the Sons impartially and analytically. He spared neither and pronounced a cold and server judgment on both. He sings a requiem to the Fathers, and especially to Paul Kirsanov, having shown up their aristocratic idealism, their sentimental aestheticism, almost in a comical light.

In the prominent representative of the Sons, in Bazarov, he recognized a certain moral force and energy of character which favorably contrasts this strong realist with the puny weak-willed type of the former generation. Bazarov's opinion of the landed aristocracy was shared by the author. "These people I am describing," said he, "are the cream. Now, if the cream is bad, what can the milk be like?" Bazarov representing the creed, which has produced the militant type of revolutionist in every capital of Europe, is the bare mind of science first applied to politics. His own immediate origin is German science interpreted by that spirit of logical intensity, Russian fanaticism, or devotion to the idea, which is perhaps the distinguishing genius of the Slav. Inasmuch as every work of the pure scientific spirit, knowing itself to be fettered by the superstitions, the confusions, the sentimentalities of the Past, was necessarily destructive, Bazarov's primary duty was to destroy. In his essence, however, he stands for the skeptical conscience of modern science. His appearance marks the dividing line between two religions: that of the Past - Faith - and that growing religion of today, Science.

The death of Bazarov is a master stroke. The description of his illness gave Chekhov, a physician as well as a writer, the sensation of having "caught the infection from him." But it was a master stroke for still another reason. "I dreamed," wrote Tourgenév in a letter addressed to Russian students, "of a somber, savage and great figure, only half emerged from barbarism, strong, menacing and honest, and, nevertheless, doomed to perish because it is always in advance of the future."

Bazarov, with all his ambition opening out before him, and his triumph awaited, is conquered by the pinprick of death. Bazarov in his keen pursuit of knowledge is laid low by his own weapon he has selected to wield. His own tool, the dissecting knife, brings death to him, and his body is stretched beside the peasant who had gone before.

The death of Bazarov is the apotheosis of the strong man.

But even a greater apotheosis is accomplished by the author in portraying the love of the parents for their only child. This simple-minded pair of peasants is old-fashioned, pious, dwelling in a mental world millions of miles removed from that of their educated son. They look on him with adoration and believe him to be the greatest man in all Russia. This humble pair is glorified by their infinite love for their son. The unutterable pathos of this love consists in the fact that it is made up so largely of fear; it is the fear that the boy will be bored at home, that the very solicitude of his parents for his health, for his physical comfort, will irritate and annoy rather than please him. There is no heart hunger so cruel as the hunger of father and mother for the complete sympathy and affection of their growing children.

The bewildered, helpless anguish of the parents who cannot understand why the God they worship takes their son away from them reaches the greatest climax of tragedy. Not even the figure of Lear holding the dead body of Cordelia surpasses in tragic intensity this old pair whose life has for so long revolved about their son; and the novel closes with the scene in the little village church yard, where the aged couple, supporting each other, visit the tomb and wipe away the dust from the stone. "Can it be," exclaims the author "that their prayers, their tears, are fruitless? Can it be that love, sacred, devoted love, is not all-powerful? Oh, no! However passionate, sinning and rebellious the heart hidden in the tomb, the flowers growing over it peep serenely at us with their innocent eyes: they tell us not of eternal peace alone, of that great peace of indifferent nature; they tell us, too, of eternal reconciliation and of life without end."

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