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TARAS SHEVCHENKO

— Selections —



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Translated by JOHN WEIR



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— SELECTIONS —

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Author of "Bard of Ukraine," "Ivan Franko," etc.

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On the occasion of the centenary of the death of Taras Shevchenko.

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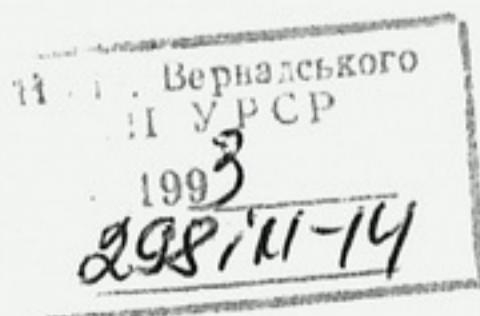
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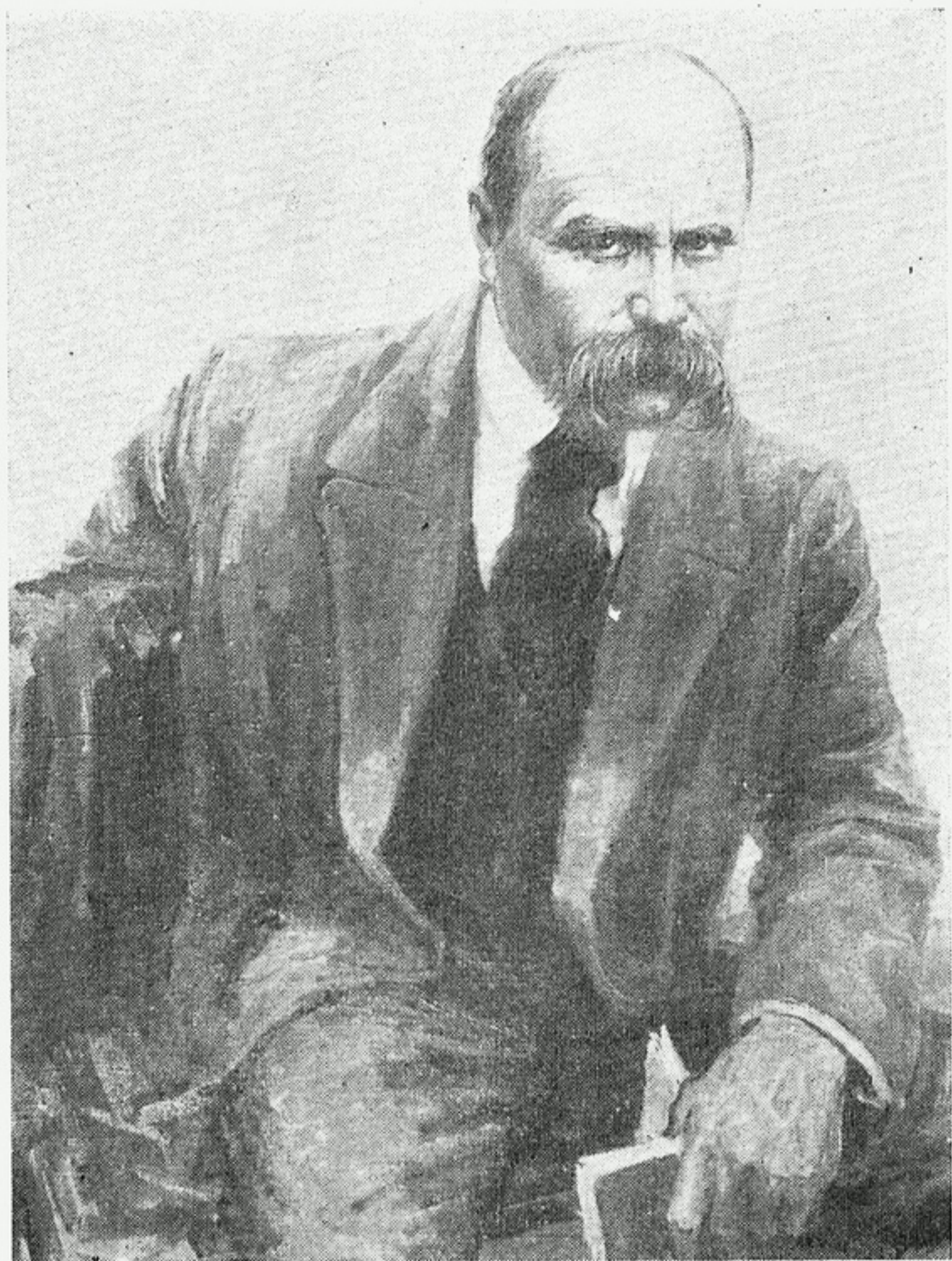
This book of translations of some of Taras Shevchenko's works is dedicated with gratitude and reverence to the Ukrainian pioneers in Canada, who are one by one passing from the scene, but whose contribution grows in stature and meaning with every passing year.

Those humble folk were touched with the wand of true nobility. They enriched their new homeland across the ocean with their creative labour and at the same time they contributed to its cultural and spiritual wealth by presenting to it precious gifts from the treasure trove of the culture created by their people over many centuries. Gleaming as the brightest jewel among those spiritual values is the legacy of Taras Shevchenko. By cherishing his memory and keeping his word alive in the minds and hearts of the Ukrainian Canadians, they have honoured one of the Bard's bequests: "Learn from others, but don't reject your own." And by sharing him with their fellow-Canadians of other origins, they have added a bright red rose to our country's garland of many flowers.

I hope this book of translations will serve as yet another step forward on the road which our pioneers laid out and on which they builded since they first came to Canada's shores in 1891.

JOHN WEIR.





Portrait by N. P. Hlushchenko.

TARAS SHEVCHENKO

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Foreword

One of the Immortals

Today, a century after his death, Taras Shevchenko is being recognized as one of the world's great poets. Although the first translations of his works into other languages were published when he was still alive, it is only in our days that his works are appearing in most of the languages of the earth. And yet, despite the fact that his name was known to British Slavists long before the end of the 19th Century and some of his poems were translated into English fifty years ago, Shevchenko is still relatively little known to the English-reading public.

That is not strange when we remember that Taras Shevchenko was the poet of the Ukrainians, until recently one of the submerged nations of the world, and that he lived and created in a police state — tsarist Russia. His first small collection of verse titled "Kobzar", was published in 1840, a few of his other works were printed in magazines and periodicals, and he received permission to republish "Kobzar" not long before his death — but all

that was published was heavily censored while most of his works, the most challenging of them, were circulated only in copies made by hand or passed orally from person to person. This persecution and mutilation of his works continued after his death, and it is only in our times, since the tsarist Russian empire has been overthrown and Ukraine has emerged from her centuries-long subjugation, that the complete works of Taras Shevchenko, unexpurgated by the censor's blue pencil, have been published and made available to his own people and to the world.

Thus, it can be said of Taras Shevchenko, that he gave his talents and his life to the task of lifting up the Ukrainian people, and was himself lifted up to world recognition by them when they rose to their feet.

The world significance of a writer, thinker or statesman derives from the fact that the things he advocated for his own people in his own time are in harmony with and form part of the common striving of all men throughout the ages. That which makes Shevchenko immortal and universal is expressed in his works, of course, concretely — in the setting of the Ukraine and Russia of the 1800's. It is right and necessary, therefore, to preface the present modest presentation of a number of Shevchenko's works to the English-speaking public with a brief excursion into Ukrainian history, a sketch of the poet's life and an indication of the influences that moulded his views and guided his actions.

The Ukrainian Nation

Numbering more than forty million and occupying a territory reaching to the Don River in the East and spilling over the Carpathian Mountains in the West, the Ukrainians are one of the large nations of Europe.

A thousand years ago Kiev was the centre of the powerful and highly developed early feudal state of the East-

ern Slavs (Rus), who at that time had not yet separated into the separate Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian nations. In the 13th Century, Kiev Rus went down under the terrible Mongol-Tatar invasions and for two centuries the people languished under the cruel yoke of the Golden Horde. Then, when the northern Rus principalities were freeing themselves from Mongol rule and establishing the Russian feudal state with Moscow as its centre, the territories of the Ukrainians came under Lithuanian-Polish sway (later annexed outright by Poland). The remnants of the Golden Horde, meanwhile, formed the Tatar khanate of the Crimea, which they joined to the slave-trading Turkish empire. Having conquered Byzantium, the Turks had overwhelmed the Balkans and seized the Black Sea coastlands, from which they made frequent incursions into the heart of Europe.

The Poland of the Middle Ages was ruled by a number of powerful feudal magnates, loosely held together through a monarchy elected at conclaves of the nobility. Oppression and the feudal exactions were especially onerous in the territories where the Ukrainians were the serfs. In addition to this, under the prodding of the Jesuit Order and the Vatican, the rulers of Poland sought to denationalize and forcibly convert the Orthodox population to Roman Catholicism as a stepping stone to the conversion and conquest of all Russia. Thus, the Ukrainians suffered national and religious oppression as well as feudal slavery. Numerous serf uprisings, some of which assumed a widespread character, finally erupted in the 17th Century in a great war of national liberation, waged by the Cossacks together with the masses of the people.

The Cossacks were a unique military organization. The wide stretches of lush grassland of Southern Ukraine (called the Wild Steppe) had remained uninhabited, a buffer area between the Polish feudal estates to the north and north-west and the Tatar and Turk holdings along the

Black Sea. Groups of runaway Ukrainian serfs penetrated that area, established homesteads and farmed the free land — with saddled horses always standing by and rifles slung over their shoulders in case of a Tatar raid. That's how detachments of "free Cossacks" came into being. The Polish lords and monarchy tolerated these military formations, which at times united into veritable armies under a chief (hetman) and themselves raided Crimea and even Constantinople, because they protected the kingdom from Turco-Tatar incursions. But they also feared them as a possible foe and sought to limit their numbers and subject them to control from Warsaw. In time, the Ukrainian Cossacks established their fortress (the Sich) on the island of Khortitsya in the Dnieper River and trained and equipped an army that was to inflict defeat time and again on the chivalry of Poland. Under Hetman Bogdan Khmelnit-sky in the 1650's the Cossack command also became the nucleus of an independent Ukrainian state.

By unanimous decision of the representatives of Ukraine at the Council of Pereyaslav in 1654, the liberated eastern half of Ukraine was joined to Russia. The agreement with the Russian rulers guaranteed autonomous status to Ukraine within the tsarist empire, but eventually this pledge was violated, the Cossacks were disbanded, the Ukrainian language was proclaimed to be only a dialect of the Russian, and ever greater feudal burdens were piled on the backs of the people. Thus, the Ukrainian people had rid themselves of religious oppression and forced denationalization by the Polish gentry, and won relief from cruel harassment by the Turkish and Tatar slavers, and they had acquired powerful new allies — the democratic revolutionary forces in Russia itself — but they were subjected to new forms of national and social oppression by the Russian feudal-militarist regime.

Frightened by the revolutionary democratic tides that were sweeping over the continent, tsarist Russia had be-

come "the gendarme of Europe," bolstering up every reactionary regime against rising democracy, and at the same time it had sharpened repression at home. While the growth of commerce and the beginnings of industry were undermining the feudal order in Russia as well, they were also causing an increase of the feudal burdens. More and more, the landowner leased his estate for a lump sum to an entrepreneur. While the lord spent the money in Paris or at the gaming tables of Monaco, the lessee squeezed the serfs for all he could — after all, he reasoned, he just had it for a certain while, and all he could get out of it would be his. When the lessee happened to be a Jew, all the better — the woes of the serfs could be blamed on the "unbelievers."

The 19th Century opened with the heroic defense of Russia (and Ukraine) by the people against the Napoleonic invasion. It was followed soon after by the "Decembrist" uprising (an unsuccessful military coup organized by democratic-minded lesser nobility who were in commanding positions in the Russian army — **"the first bearers of the good tidings of freedom,"** Taras Shevchenko was to call them later) and by peasant uprisings in various parts of Russia, including Ukraine, where the serfs burned down the manor houses and sought to divide up the land.

This was the situation into which Shevchenko was born.

The Life of Shevchenko

Taras Shevchenko was born on March 9th, 1814, in the village of Morintsi, not far from Kiev. His parents were serfs on the estate of Baron Engelhardt, a scion of the German Baltic nobles, who had large holdings in the Ukraine.

Orphaned in early childhood, Taras for some time wandered about, trying to find someone who would teach

him to draw — he had artistic talent from his earliest years — and earning his keep by doing chores for church deacons. . . He learned to read and write while serving them. His grandfather, whom he calls an “old oak,” told him many stories of peasant uprisings (it is probable that he had been a participant in the events his grandson later immortalized in the poem “Haidamaki”) and all around the growing lad spoke of the people’s history. Thus, from his earliest years, Taras Shevchenko imbibed the lore of his native land and also was witness to the barbarity of the feudal-autocratic regime then ruling Russia.

When he was fourteen years of age, Taras applied to his master’s manager for permission to be apprenticed to a painter and was instead taken on as a servant boy in Engelhardt’s manor. And in the autumn of 1829 his master took him with his suite first to Vilno (Vilnius), then to the capital, St. Petersburg, where he established permanent residence. It was at Vilno that Shevchenko learned Polish and became aware of the political ferment then brewing, which burst into flame in the rebellion of 1830.

Arriving in St. Petersburg at the beginning of 1831, Taras kept begging his master to let him study art until Engelhardt finally relented (he thought it would be fine to own a private artist) and apprenticed him to a painter, Shirayev, who took contracts to decorate the interior of various public buildings. Not learning very much art at this occupation, young Taras used to steal out at night to copy the statues in the tsar’s Summer Gardens during the “white nights”. It was there that he was discovered one night by a Ukrainian artist, Ivan Soshenko, who befriended him, helped to teach him the rules of painting, and introduced the bashful, sensitive lad to the most progressive and highest circles in the capital, including the poet V. Zhukovsky, who had been a tutor to the tsar’s family, and Karl Bryullov, the world-famous Russian painter.

Captivated by the young serf's gifts and presence, the Russian intellectuals long sought to gain his freedom (this period is faithfully described by Taras Shevchenko in his autobiographical novel "The Artist"). Finally, Bryullov painted a portrait of Zhukovsky, which was auctioned off to get the money (2,500 roubles) needed to buy Shevchenko out of bondage. On April 22nd, 1838, when he was nearing his twenty-fourth birthday, Taras Shevchenko received his certificate of freedom.

Studying on a scholarship at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, he delved deeply into the natural sciences and history (both ancient and modern), took up French, read voraciously of the best authors, both Russian and foreign, attended all the operas that came to the capital. The erudition that he gained in these few years was tremendous. And at the same time he mixed with the most advanced circles of the Russian intelligentsia, among whom were some of the foremost thinkers of the day, and was particularly drawn to the followers of Petrashevich, a group that promoted doctrines of Utopian socialism.

Graduating from the Academy of Arts in 1845, he was sent to Ukraine to paint a series for an album to be called "Pictorial Ukraine". He had already paid a brief visit to his native land in 1843 and again witnessed its torment. Now he came not only as a "free artist", but also as a renowned poet.

Shevchenko began writing early in life. Like practically all of the foremost Ukrainian writers, he wrote both in Ukrainian and Russian (the great Russian writer Turgenev noted that he spoke perfect Russian, "without a trace of an accent"). His collection of Ukrainian poems, "Kobzar" (the title name means an itinerant minstrel or bard, intoning lays while accompanying himself on a lute-like instrument, the kobza), was published in St. Petersburg in 1840 and received popular acclaim in both Ukraine and Russia. In 1842, excerpts from his drama "Nikita Gai-

dai" (in Russian) were published in the journal "Mayak" and at the same time he was working on his Russian poems "Slepaya" and "Trizna". So, the recently despised serf found himself lionized by the Ukrainian gentry when he came there in 1845, but like Robbie Burns before him on a memorable trip to Edinburgh, and many another great man both before and after, Taras Shevchenko turned his back on temptation and remained true to his principles and his people.

In his earlier works Shevchenko had delved into the rich folklore of Ukraine, painted both the beauty of the country and the hard lot of its people (for example, in "Katerina", a deeply moving story of a village girl betrayed by a Russian officer), and dramatized chapters from Ukrainian history, both exploits of the Cossacks and serf uprisings against the feudal lords (the full-length poem "Haidamaki" is an outstanding example of this). Now he wrote some of the most fiery revolutionary poetry in world literature. In "A Dream" he drew a devastating picture of tsarist Russia and presented a deadly satire on the tsar himself and his court. In "The Heretic" (Jan Hus) he proclaimed the doctrine of the unity of the Slavic peoples. In "The Caucasus" he indicted war and colonial conquest. In "To the Dead, the Living and the Yet Unborn" he lashed the "liberal" Ukrainian gentry whose liberalism in fact cloaked subservience to the autocracy and support of the maintenance of the feudal order. As though to sum up his message, Shevchenko then wrote his "testament" ("Bequest") in which he called on the people to rise and to water their liberty with the blood of their oppressors.

In 1846 Taras Shevchenko was associated with the secret Kirilo-Mefody Fraternity in Kiev, where he headed the revolutionary wing against the "moderate" group, led by Panteleimon Kulish, who conciliated with the ruling circles. One of the students who attended gatherings of

this society turned informer and the police were ordered to arrest all the participants. Shevchenko was seized by gendarmes on April 5th, 1847, and taken to St. Petersburg for interrogation. At his hearing he conducted himself manfully, defending his views. Aware of his popularity, the authorities decided to punish him without trial and ordered him exiled as a rank-and-file soldier to the special Orenburg corps in the Far East, to be kept under stern discipline. Tsar Nicholas I personally added the following postscript to the sentence: **"Under strictest surveillance, with prohibition to write and to paint."**

There followed ten bitter years of exile and persecution. His health broke down, but not his spirit: **"I'm punished and I suffer, but I don't repent!"** he wrote. For write he did, and paint as well, secretly from the officers, on any bit of paper he could find in the wilderness. He had a small notebook, which he kept hidden in his boot-leg and in which he inscribed deathless verse. Risking his very life, he wrote a number of novels in Russian ("The Artist", "The Musician", "A Ramble With Pleasure And Not Without A Moral" and others) and on June 12th, 1857 he began to keep his diary, in which he not only inscribed daily events, but made comments on various subjects. His ordeal was softened somewhat for a time when a new commandant, a man with democratic sentiments, braved the wrath of the tsar and attached Shevchenko to a scientific expedition to the Aral Sea as the official painter.

His friends, meanwhile, had never ceased trying to win his release. One of the most assiduous of the supplicants was Countess Tolstoy, wife of the vice-president of the Academy of Arts. Nicholas I died and was succeeded by Alexander II, but the new emperor could not forgive the poet for his merciless lampoon on the royal house and some time elapsed before he reluctantly consented to revoke the sentence exiling Shevchenko. The poet was freed on August 2nd, 1857, but many months passed before he

could get permission to return to live in St. Petersburg, and then he was kept under constant police surveillance. The long and tedious journey was made lighter by the welcome given to Shevchenko at every stop by Russian and Ukrainian democrats. The famous Russian actor, Shchepkin, who had also been born a serf, travelled all the way to Nizhny Novogorod to meet his friend (but the Ukrainian "nationalist" writer Kulish refused to see him). As he travelled, Shevchenko continued to write and his poem "The Neophytes", which denounced the tsarist tyranny and feudal slavery of Russia in the pretence of describing the Roman empire under Nero, was finished in Nizhny Novgorod on December 8th, 1857.

Shevchenko received permission to return to St. Petersburg on February 10th, 1858, and he arrived there on March 27th. He was welcomed by his friends and people who shared his democratic revolutionary sentiments and views, which included the foremost thinkers and writers of Russia at that time: Chernishevsky, Dobrolyubov, Nekrasov, Saltikov and others. He was provided quarters in the Academy of Arts building and resumed his painting. And he took part in public affairs, for example, he was one of the signers of an angry protest of the intellectuals of Russia against anti-Semitic incitements in the journal "Illustration". And he continued to write poetry.

Towards the end of 1859, Taras Shevchenko after much trouble received permission to visit Ukraine. He again saw his relatives, they were still serfs. . . But orders had gone ahead from St. Petersburg to keep close watch on him. A policeman informed his superiors that **"in his conversations with the peasants Shevchenko not only preaches blasphemy, but also says that there's no need for tsars, priests and gentry."** In July, the poet was arrested and sent back to St. Petersburg under convoy.

Shevchenko continued to work despite failing health (he suffered from dropsy). Just as he had deliberately con-

centrated on poetry because in this way he could carry his message to the widest circles of the people, he now took up engraving in art so as to make his work available to the common folk. He dreamed of retiring to a quiet place in Ukraine beside the Dnieper — he had even arranged to buy a piece of land in a favoured location, himself drew architect's plans of the house that he would have built on it, and asked his foster brother to suggest a suitable wife for him, stressing that she would have to be a serf. . . But his illness brought him to bed altogether.

On March 9th, 1861, friends called on him to congratulate him on his forty-seventh birthday. Greetings had come in from many parts of Ukraine. Taras Shevchenko was deeply moved. In the middle of the night, unable to sleep, he decided to go down the stairs to the chamber where his easel and paints waited. Perhaps if he painted awhile, his weakness would leave him. . . He stumbled on the stairs. . .

His body was discovered in the morning. That was March 10th, 1861.

The news of his death spread quickly. Despite police intimidation and the weather (it was one of the coldest days on record) a large crowd gathered at the Smolensk cemetery to pay their last respects to Taras Shevchenko (the tsar would not grant permission to have the poet's body taken to Ukraine, so he was first buried in St. Petersburg). But the people had liberated him from serfdom and later from exile, and now they exerted pressure to have his remains interred in his native land, as he had wished. Finally, they won. On April 6th, Shevchenko's coffin was disinterred, decked with red bunting, placed on a horse-drawn cart and taken to Ukraine. Along the way, people came out from towns and villages to pick up the coffin and carry it in a demonstration to the next town, and so on. The students of Kiev poured out in a multitude to carry the ashes of their bat'ko (father) across the

Dnieper and into the city . . . but the authorities would not permit the body within the city limits. So Shevchenko's coffin was placed in a church on the outskirts of the city — and all Kiev came down to pay its respects. His family came from the village. . .

Then the body was carried by boat to the beautiful town of Kanev and there Shevchenko was laid to final rest on Chernecha Hill, overlooking the Dnieper, on May 22nd, 1861.

And his spirit went marching on, his words became part of the thinking of his people, and today, a century after, are heard across the world.

The Legacy of Shevchenko

Taras Shevchenko is often compared to Robbie Burns. There is much that is similar between the Scottish and the Ukrainian poets. Their origins in the common people, their burning hatred of tyranny, injustice and hypocrisy, their honesty and love of their people. They both were flaming patriots and militant democrats. Both wrote in the language their people spoke, both gathered up and worked into their poetry the songs, the sayings, the wisdom and the history of their people. The works of both have in turn become part of the language and thinking of their people, many of the poems of both have become songs of the people. But comparisons have their limits. It is better to study Shevchenko's legacy on its own merits.

He was greatly gifted, very versatile and amazingly prolific. When we remember that he died when he had just turned forty-seven, that for the first twenty-four years of his life he was a serf and that he spent ten years in prison and exile, and that during the thirteen years when he was free he was hounded by the authorities and in his latter years suffered from serious illness, the word "amazing" seems hardly adequate to describe the volume of his output.

There are preserved more than 900 of Shevchenko's artistic works. He was as versatile in this field as he was in the field of literature. He worked in oils, water colours, etchings, crayon drawings. He did landscapes, portraits, paintings of people at their work and amid their surroundings, illustrations of historic events, and even what could be called political cartooning. And while he does not rank with the very greatest, he was a fine artist. The delicacy of line and colour in some of his paintings touches the heart in the same way as does the tenderness and compassion of some of his lyrics.

While Shevchenko is noted above all as a poet, it must not be forgotten that he wrote many novels (of which only nine have survived) and several plays, kept a diary and conducted wide correspondence. Much of this voluminous production was in Russian, though most of his poetry was in Ukrainian. While he did not write special treatises on those themes, his references to and comments upon history, philosophy, the arts, literature (both classic and contemporary), social theories, etc., show an amazing (to use that inadequate term again) range and depth of learning. Yet here was a man who was not a "bookworm", who cherished above all communication with living people, and on many occasions escaped the salons of the gentry to join the village young people in their merry-making on the sward.

Taras Shevchenko is the **national** poet of Ukraine. There were some literary works in Ukrainian before Shevchenko (notable among them being Ivan Kotlyarevsky's burlesque "Aeneida"), but it was Shevchenko who proved beyond all further argument that Ukrainian was a suitable instrument for literature no less than were the recognized European languages. And it was Shevchenko's Ukrainian, the development and enrichment of the Kiev - Poltava dialect, that became the foundation of the literary Ukrainian language. Thus Shevchenko directly played an important role in the maturing of the cultural and spiritual

attributes of the Ukrainian nation as well as awakening the national consciousness of the Ukrainian people.

Some of his greatest lines are devoted to the declaration of his love for his native land (which he called his "widowed mother") and to the awakening of patriotic sentiment among his people. He could write such lines as:

**My poor Ukraine, I love her so,
That for her sake I'd e'en curse God,
For her I'd doom my soul!**

He romanticized chapters from Ukrainian history, especially the exploits of the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the peasant risings, but he had no patience with those Ukrainian nationalists who idolized everything Ukrainian — to them he pointed out that the "idyllic" Ukrainian village was a hell on earth for the peasants that lived in it, that the famed hetmans were "**Warsaw dirt and Moscow muck**" — even as he heaped ridicule on Ukrainians who wormed themselves into the tsar's service ("**go, ink-pot, go!**"). With fierce realism he mirrored the people's hatred of oppressing nations, but at the same time he warned against national exclusiveness or chauvinism. In "Haidamaki" he depicted the bloody vengeance wreaked by the Ukrainian serfs on the Poles (including a scene reminiscent of Gogol's "Taras Bulba", where one of the leaders of the uprising, Gonta, kills his two young sons because their Polish mother had reared them in the Roman Catholic religion) and then in a postscript he wrote:

"Yet you'll say: 'Thank God that it's past' — especially when you recall that we are the children of one mother, that we are all Slavs. The heart is sore, but the story must be told: let the sons and grandchildren know that their fathers were wrong, let them fraternize again with their enemies. May the Slavic land, covered with wheat and rye as with gold, forever be one, from sea to sea . . ."

Shevchenko fervently believed in and fought for Ukrainian freedom, but he foresaw it achievable with the

overthrow of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German and Turkish empires and the establishment of a free union of all the Slavic nations. That was the idea behind the Kirilo-Mefody Fraternity in Kiev, to which he belonged. It was in this sense that he wrote in "The Heretic" that **"all the Slavic rivers flow into a common sea"** and in his political testament ("My Bequest") spoke of **"the great new family, the kinship of the free."** But he was not narrow in his Slavophilism, either. In banishment he championed the nomadic Kazakh people against their oppressors. In "The Caucasus" he took up the cause of the Caucasian mountaineers who were defending their liberty from the Russian armies. In the final account, the "family" he belonged to embraced the whole human race.

The key to an understanding of Taras Shevchenko's works is to be sought in his uncompromising hatred of and struggle against serfdom and the tsarist regime. Early in life he came to the conclusion that he must dedicate his efforts to the fight for the overthrow of tsarism and the abolition of serfdom, and everything he wrote and did was singlemindedly directed to that purpose. In this he was one with the peasants who rebelled against the landed gentry, and with the foremost Russian intellectuals, who were dedicated to the cause of democracy. And Taras Shevchenko had no illusions about the tsar and the aristocracy voluntarily ceding liberty to the people — he believed that the problem could be solved only by revolution, a popular peasant revolution. **"When will our Washington come at last?"** he asked. In his "My Bequest" he repeated the dictum of revolutionary democrats in other lands that **"freedom must be watered well with the blood of its enemies"**. And in one of his last poems, he echoed the call printed in the revolutionary Russian paper "Kolo-kol" (which was published in England) for the masses to **"take axes in hand and set about winning freedom."**

Shevchenko was the national poet of Ukraine, he was

the poet of the serf peasantry, and he was the poet of revolutionary democracy.

The influence of Utopian socialist ideas is evident in his works, in such statements as his hope that when the people were liberated,

**The brothers will consume together,
Not share the common wealth.**

And contrary to the erroneous theory which swung a generation of Russian revolutionaries into the blind alley of the Narodniki, the theory that Russia would by-pass industrialization and build the future society on the foundation of the remnants of the village communes, Shevchenko recognized the revolutionary effects of the development of industry. Seeing a steamer for the first time on his way back from banishment, he wrote in his diary:

“Oh, great Fulton! And great Watt! Your infant child, which grows not by the day but by the hour, will soon gobble up the knouts, thrones and crowns, and will but gulp down the diplomats and gentry for dessert. What the Encyclopedists began in France, your colossal child of genius will finish over our whole planet. My prediction brooks of no doubt.”

The events in the century since he died, rushing to their world-wide conclusion in our own times, bear witness to the truth of that prediction. And as mankind carries into life the great tasks of social transformation and liberation from despotism and oppression for which he gave his life, it takes him to its heart and places his works along with those of the other immortals into the hands of the people in all the countries on earth. Thus Taras Shevchenko today continues to do battle against the evil forces of greed, war and tyranny on a world-wide scale and is remembered by the people on all the continents as their own.

Toronto, Ontario, March 9th, 1961.



Monument to Shevchenko at Palermo, Ontario, Canada.

Poetry

The Mighty Dnieper

The mighty Dnieper roars and bellows,
The wind in anger howls and raves,
Down to the ground it bends the willows,
And mountain-high lifts up the waves.

The pale-faced moon picked out this moment
To peek out from behind a cloud,
Like a canoe upon the ocean
It first tips up, and then dips down.

The cocks have not proclaimed the morning,
There's not a sound as yet of man,
The owls in glades call out their warnings,
And ash trees creak and creak again.

St. Petersburg, 1838.

A Reflection

The river empties to the sea,
But out it never flows;
The Cossack lad his fortune seeks,
But never fortune knows.
The Cossack lad has left his home,
He's left his kith and kind;
The blue sea's waters splash and foam,
Sad thoughts disturb his mind:

“Why, heedless, did you go away?
For what did you forsake
Your father old, your mother grey,
Your sweetheart, to their fate?
In foreign lands live foreign folks,
Their ways are not your way:
There will be none to share your woes
Or pass the time of day.”

Across the sea, the Cossack rests —
The choppy sea's distraught.
He thought with fortune to be blessed —
Misfortune is his lot.
In vee-formation, 'cross the waves
The cranes are off for home.
The Cossack weeps — his beaten paths
With weeds are overgrown. . .

St. Petersburg, 1838.

My Thoughts

My thorny thoughts, my thorny thoughts,
You bring me only woe!
Why do you on the paper stand
So sadly row on row? . . .
Why did the winds not scatter you
Like dust across the steppes?
Why did ill-luck not cradle you
To sleep upon its breast? . . .

My thoughts, my melancholy thoughts,
My children, tender shoots!
I nursed you, brought you up — and now
What shall I do with you? . . .
Go to Ukraine, my homeless waifs!
Your way make to Ukraine
Along back roads like vagabonds,
But I'm doomed here to stay.

There you will find a heart that's true
And words of welcome kind,
There honesty, unvarnished truth
And, maybe, fame you'll find . . .
So welcome them, my Motherland,
Ukraine, into your home!
Accept my guileless, simple brood
And take them for your own!

Silver Poplar

(Maiden's song from "Topolya" — *Silver Poplar*.)

Swim, o swan, my snowy cygnet,
O'er the sea's blue water!
Keep on growing taller, taller,
Slender silver poplar!
Rise up slim and straight and stately
To the clouds above
And ask God if I am fated
Ne'er to find my love?
Rise until your topmost branches
See across the sea!
On that side's my happy future,
Here — just misery.
There, perhaps, my handsome lover
Spends his days at play,
While I wait and weep and wither,
Years slip fast away.
Tell my sweetheart how I suffer,
How the people jeer;
I will die unless my dear one
Comes back home to me!
E'en my mother, deaf to pity,
Drives me to my grave . . .
Who'll then care for her and tend her



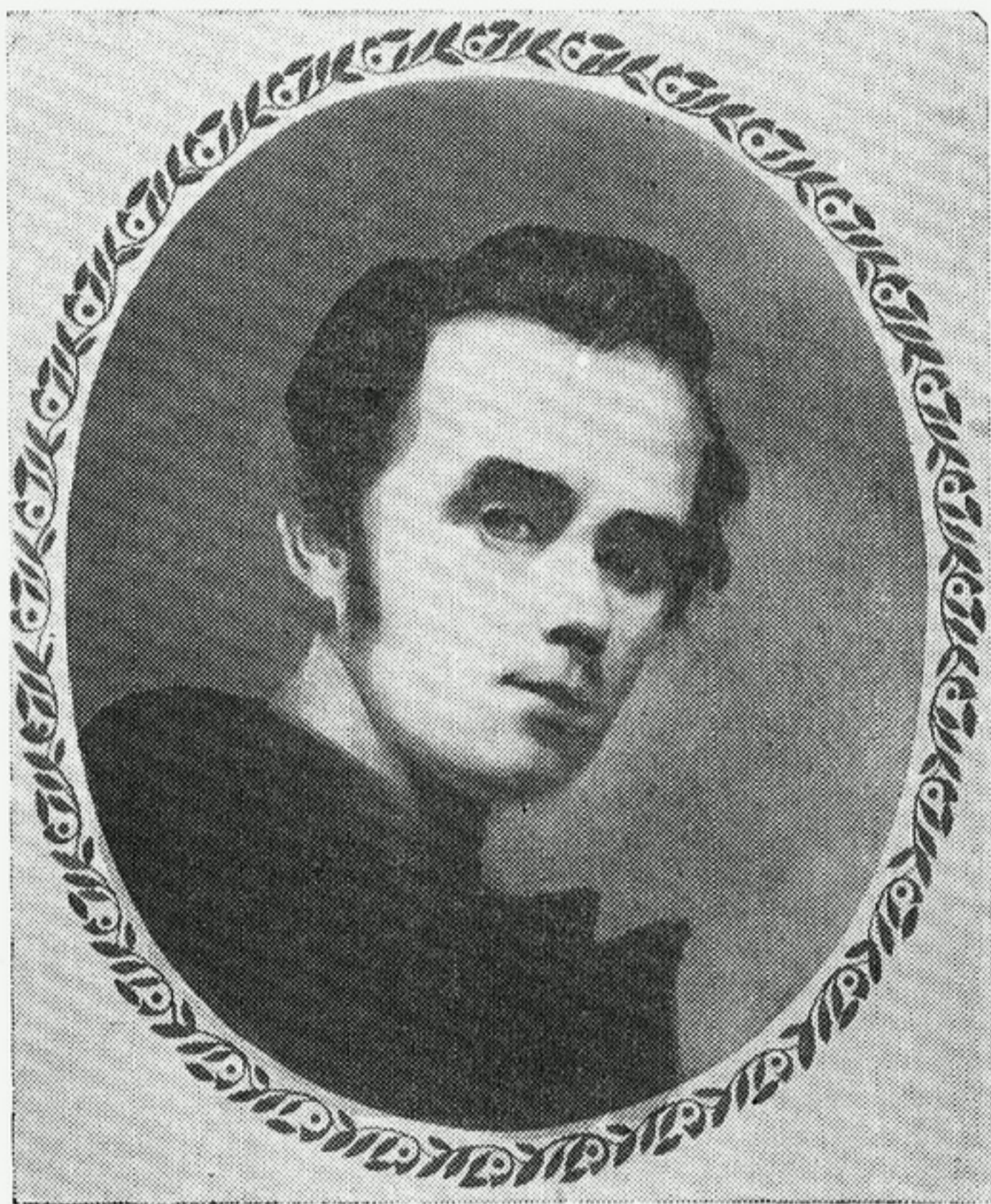
Katerina. Oil painting by Taras Shevchenko, 1842.

When she's old and grey?
Who will nurse her, soothe her forehead
When the fever burns?
Oh, my mother! . . . My misfortune! . . .
I've nowhere to turn!

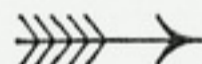
Look across the sea, o poplar!
And, if he's not there, —
Face the east when day is dawning,
Drop a silent tear . . .
Grow up straight and tall and stately,
Slender silver poplar!
Swim, o swim, my snowy cygnet,
Sail upon the water!

St. Petersburg, 1839.





Autoportrait of Shevchenko in oils, 1840.



"Haidamaki" is the longest of Shevchenko's poems. It describes the peasant risings in Ukraine against the Polish szlachta (nobility) in the 18th Century. The haidamaki was the name given to the rebels. We here give three small excerpts from the poem.

The first excerpt is the beginning of Shevchenko's introduction to the poem, and it reveals his outlook on human history.

In the second excerpt, the poet bares the background of the events described in the poem: the unstability of the Polish feudal state and rapacity of the nobility. The great magnates, who were the real rulers of Poland, elected their kings and they made sure that a centralized monarchy couldn't develop by the use of the veto (decisions of policy could only be made at conclaves of nobles and it sufficed for one noble to apply the veto — "nie pozwalam" — for the conclave to adjourn without any decision being taken).

In the third excerpt, describing the vengeance of the haidamaki, Shevchenko — who passionately supports the haidamaki all through the poem — as though stands aside for a moment and, surveying the period objectively, sorrows for what happened.

Shevchenko blames the Jesuits, who were the chief protagonists of the aim of the Polish rulers to convert the Ukrainian population under their rule to Catholicism and to strive to conquer Russia, for the calamities that ensued.

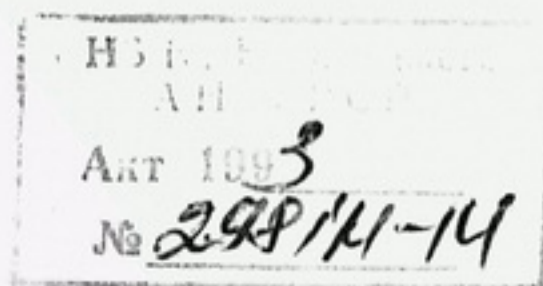
Haidamaki

(Excerpts)

All moves and all passes — no end is there ever . . .
Yet where has it vanished? And whence did it come?
The fool and the wise man know nothing whatever.
There's life . . . then there's death . . . While here
 blossoms a one,
Another there withers beyond a returning . . .
Its yellow leaves scatter to green nevermore,
But still the bright sun will arise in the morning,
At nightfall the stars will come out as before
To swim in the sky, and then, silver sister,
You too, gentle 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 centuries hence you will still be regarding
What haps to our children. Eternal thou art! . . .



The nobles once ruled Poland's roost,
A quick-to-quarrel lot;
With Muscovites they measured swords,
The Turk and Tatar fought,
And Teuton too . . . Yes, once 'twas so . . .



But all things pass away.
The highborn 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
The spectacle — how Polish kings
The Polish kingdom fled —
And listened how the noble mob
The sejms brought to an end.
“Nie pozwalam! Nie pozwalam!”
The frenzied szlachta roared,
While magnates houses set on fire
And sharpened up their swords.
This lasted for a lengthy time
Until to Warsaw-town
The lively Poniatowski 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.
Just “nie pozwalam” — that one phrase
To take from them he sought.
And then . . . All Poland burst in flames,
The gentry ran amok . . .
“The king's a villain, scoundrel vile,
A Moscow tool!” they cry.
At Pac's appeal, Pulawski's call
The Polish nobles rise.
A hundred local leagues in all —

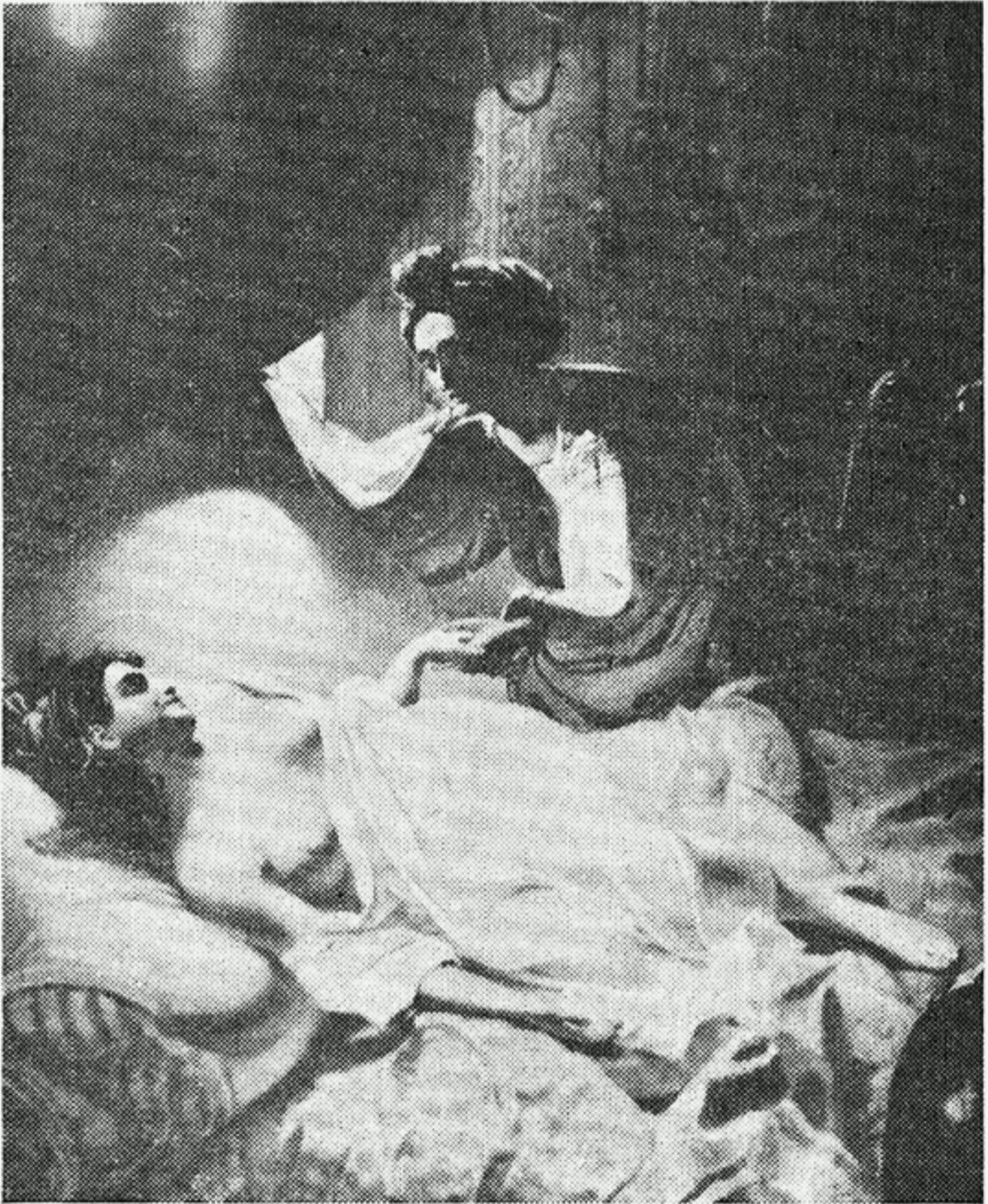
All Poland they inflamed
O'er Lithuania they spread,
Moldavia, Ukraine;
They scattered wide and they forgot
For liberty to fight —
With usurers they joined to bleed
The hapless country white.
They looted, churches set on fire
And snuffed out many lives . . .
The Haidamaki meanwhile 'gan
To sanctify their knives.



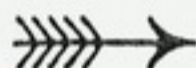
The sun comes up: Ukraine is all
In ashes or in flames,
Just here and there behind locked doors
The gentry trembling waits.
Each village has its gallows-trees
With corpses thickly hung —
Just of the bigwigs — smaller fry
Are piled in heaps like dung.
At crossroads and along the streets
The dogs and ravens feed
On human flesh and pecked out eyes;
Nobody pays them heed.
There's no-one left, except for dogs
And groups of stripling lads —
The women, too, took oven-prongs
And joined the rebel bands.

Such evil 'twas that then engulfed
The whole of fair 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 can't, or else they won't,
They have to disagree.
Blood has to flow, fraternal blood,
For one's with envy filled
Because his brother's bin is full,
His fields give handsome yield!
"Our brother murder! 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 think back:
The sons of Slavs like beasts
Got drunk with blood. And who's to blame?
The Jesuits, the priests!



Maria. Illustration to Pushkin's "Poltava" by Shevchenko.



"Hamaliya" is a romantic description of a Cossack raid on the Scutari fortress, near Constantinople (in the poem called *Byzantium*, present name Istanbul), to liberate Ukrainian prisoners from Turkish dungeons. There is no record of an otaman (war chief) named Hamaliya, but such raids were made many times.

Luh (Veliky Luh) was the grassland at the mouth of the Dnieper River where the Zaporozhian Cossacks pastured their herds of horses. Khortitsya was the island on the Dnieper where they had their fastness. Janissaries were the most fanatic of Turkish troops.

The Monk is hetman Petro Konashevich-Sahaidachny who became famous for his raids on Turkey around 1600, during one of which he put Galata, a section of Istanbul, to the torch. Ivan Pidkova led similar raids on Turkey in the second half of the 16th Century.

Hamaliya

"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, from the fields of Ukraine,
Dry our bitter tears, subdue 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 Scutari 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 crying; 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 post-haste 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 mighty 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.

But the foe to assail,
Not for pelf do we sail,

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
On the waves unruly.

In the lead boat Hamaliya

Steered the vessel truly.
Hamaliya, the heart falters:
Savage waves are pounding.
They did not scare! — Then were hidden
By the leaping mountains.

In luxury pillowed, Byzantium's drowsing
At ease in his harem, Scutar' at his side.
The Bosphorus clamoured, 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 ceased its commotion. And so Turkey slumbered.
At ease in his harem the sultan relaxed.
Only in Scutari the captives weren't sleeping
In their dreadful dungeon. For what did they wait?
God's help in their trouble they were beseeching,
While waves on the outside kept pounding away.

"Ukraine's dear God, we pray, don't let us,
The Cossacks, famed for freedom, perish
In prison in a foreign land!
It's shameful now, and will be then —
When we, who liberty so cherish,
On that, the final Judgment Day
Will stand up from a foreign grave
And face the multitudes in shackles. . ."

Just then behind the walls a cry
Rang through the night, "On, on to battle!
The unbelievers smite and slay!"
Oh, the very blood is blazing.
Scutari goes crazy.

“Kill them! Slay them!” Hamaliya
The fortress is razing.

The cannon of Scutari thundered.
They fought but they could not survive
The daring of the Cossack drive —
The janissary guards went under.

Hamaliya through Scutari —
Through hades — went racing;
First into the prison breaking,
He knocked off their bracelets.
“Fly free, birds of falcon feather,
Join the merry-making!”
The grey falcons then roused themselves
For long had they waited
To hear good Christian speech again.
The night, too, awakened;
Dear old mother, she had never
Seen debts being settled
By the Cossacks. Have no terror,
Watch the Cossack revel.
Why should Cossacks feast in darkness?
It's a celebration! —
They're not robbers that in the dark
They should eat their bacon
Unbarbecued. “Let's have some light!”
Soon the clouds were scorching —
Scutari blazed 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,
Grabs hold, rears up — then, laved with gore,

Sinks down beneath the Cossack sabres.
Like hell-fire all Scutari blazes;
The Bosphorus is filled with blood
Which runs down from the marketplaces.
Like blackbirds flitting through a wood
The Cossacks combed the raging hades
To see that none escaped the sword!
Fire held no terror for this brood.
They razed the fortress; then they carried
The gold and silver in their caps
Back to their boats. And now the task
Was done. They had no need to tarry.
The lads assembled at the shore.
Their pipes with burning brands they started,
Boarded their boats and took the oars —
The crimson waves before them parted.

More like going on an outing
Than from war returning,
They set singing, Cossack fashion,
As homeward they journeyed:

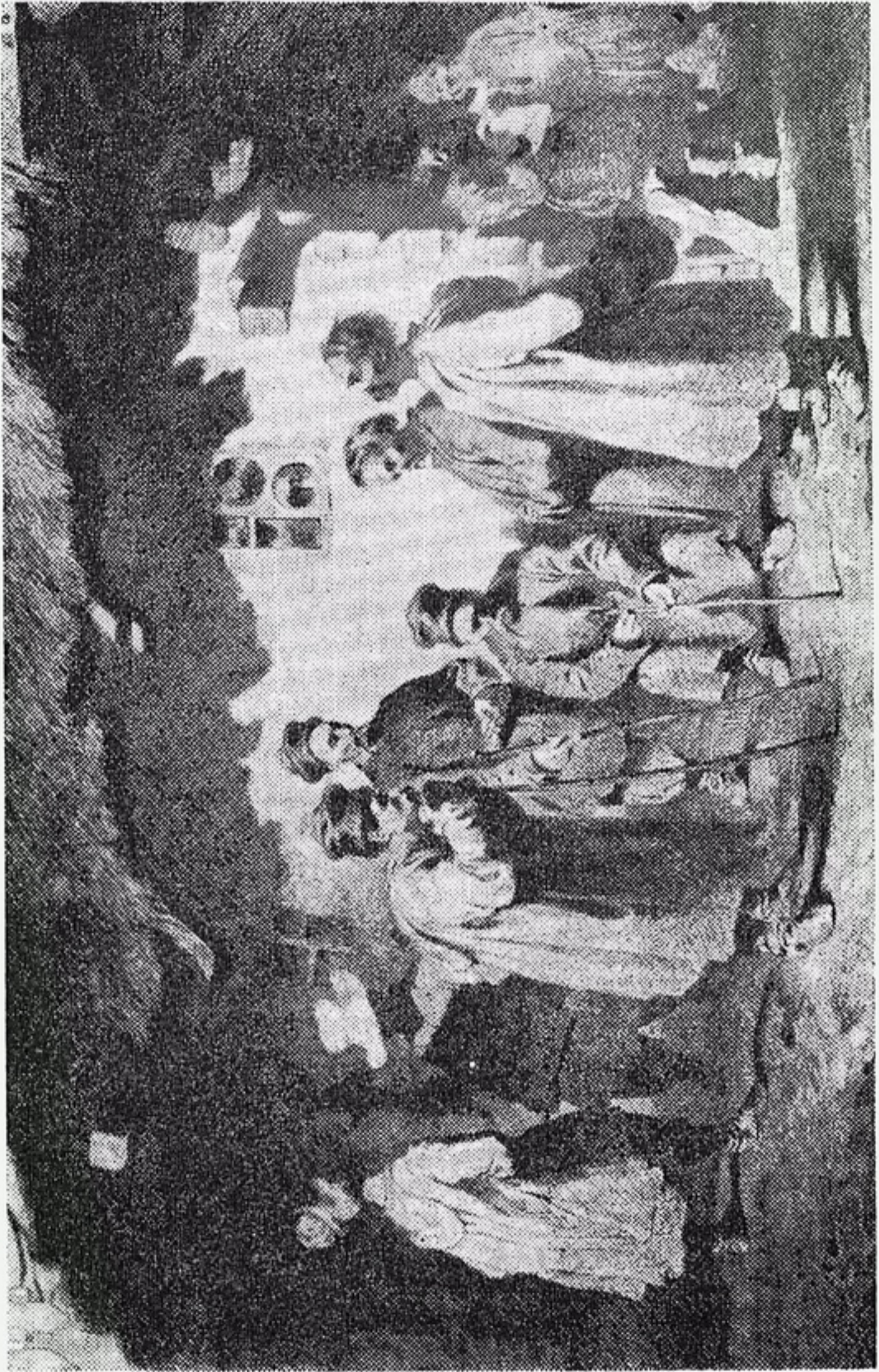
“Our otaman Hamaliya
Is a chieftain daring,
His good crew he took a-cruising
Asea for an airing;
Asea for an airing,
Fame and fortune sharing,
Freeing brothers from the prison
Where they were despairing.
To Scutari Hamaliya
Boldly went a-faring.
There our Cossack lads in irons
Sat for death preparing.
‘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;
Grimly 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 prison to perish!''

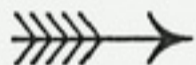
So sailed the Cossacks home with song;
Behind, the doughty Hamaliya
Kept watch — the eagle guards his young;
From Dardanelles the wind blew freely,
Yet not a sign of Turkish galley;
The Turks were scared the Monk again
Would build a bonfire at Galata,
Or that a new Pidkova wrathful
Would beard their vessels on the main.
Soon the morning sun on rising
Tinted red the dancing wave;
Stretching out to the horizon
Friendly seas embraced the brave.

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

St. Petersburg, 1842.



Council of Village Elders. Engraving by Shevchenko, 1844.



Shevchenko called this poem (which, by the way, was the one which sent the tsar into the greatest rage) a Comedy, that is, a farce. It is one of the most devastating political satires ever penned.

In the first part, the poet describes conditions in the Ukraine. In the second, he is transported to the northern reaches of Siberia where prisoners toiled in the mines, among them the revolutionary democrats — the Decembrists ("the king of freedom"). Then the scene shifts to St. Petersburg.

"The Second to the First" is engraved on the monument Empress Catherine II erected beside the Neva River to Tsar Peter I. Shevchenko recalls the destruction of the Sich (fortress) of the Ukrainian Cossacks by the tsars and how the Cossacks and serfs were driven to build St. Petersburg on the marshes, where many perished. He depicts their souls as a flock of white birds hovering over the tsar. The acting hetman (whose song is heard by the poet) was Pavlo Polubotok, imprisoned by Peter the Great in the Petro-pavlovsky fortress, where he died in 1724.

A Dream

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 person's destiny's his own,
His road before him lies:
This one builds up, that one tears down,
And that casts greedy eyes
O'er all the earth, 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 solid citizen,
The worthy, pious kind,
Who'll creep up like a cat and then

Bide patiently his time
Until hard luck hits your affairs,
Then pounce! — Don't plead your cause:
Your wife's appeals and children's tears
Won't save you from his claws.
And that one, generous and grand,
The 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
Thus ordained from on high."
That's how it's 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 every one —
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,
Not other people's blood!

Such thoughts went flitting through my head
As tipsy from a merry feast

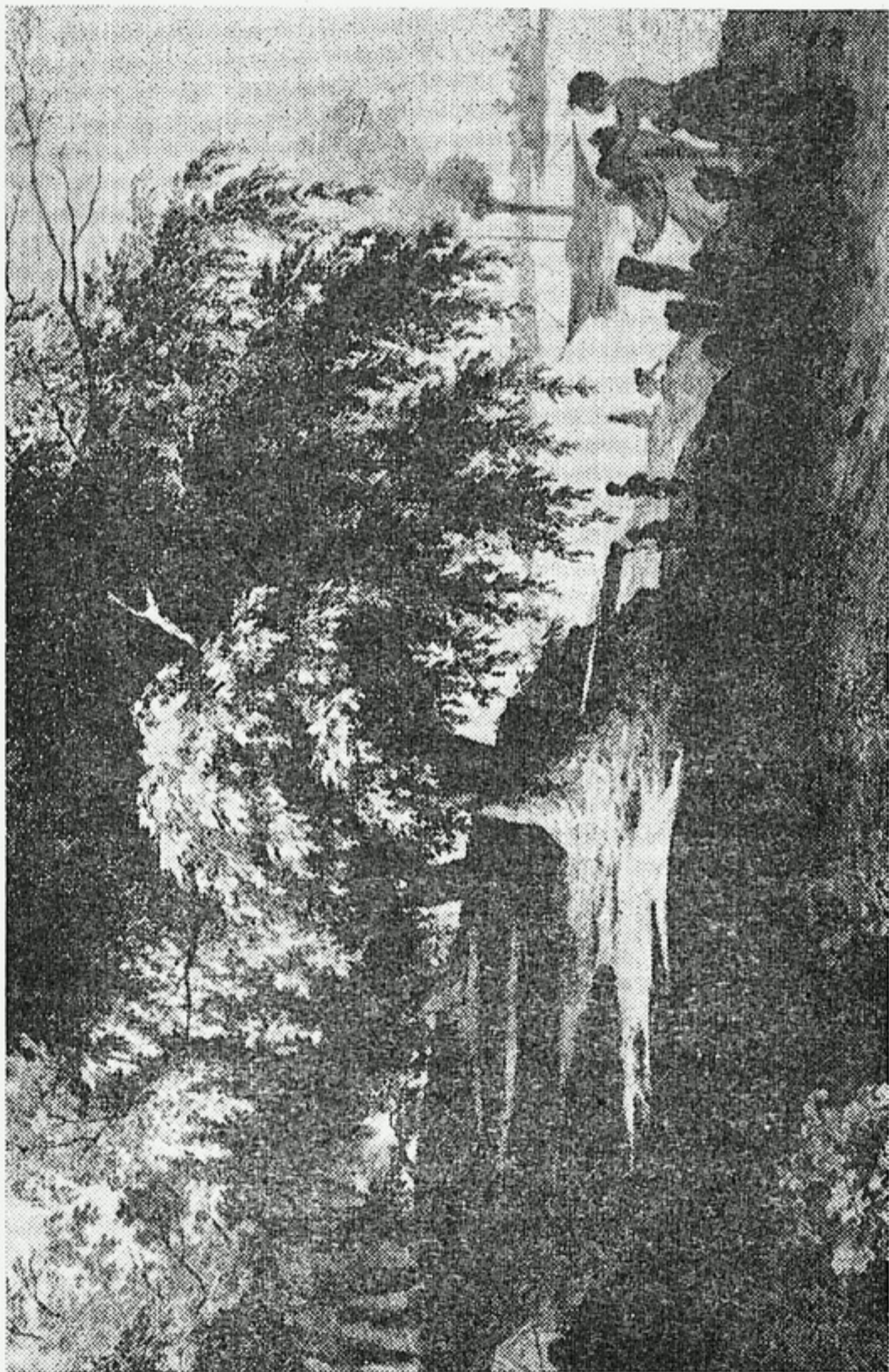
In dead of night, on reeling feet,
I made my way to home and bed.
No bawling child or nagging spouse
Have I to spoil my rest —
With perfect peace I'm blest
Both in my mind and in my house.
I climbed into my bed
And soon slept like the dead.
And when a man has had a few,
Though cannon roar he still will snore,
He'll sleep whate'er you 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.
But not a chance!
I dreamed: high in the air's expanse
It was as though an owl was flying
Over meadows, over valleys,
Over river banks and gulleys,
Over steppes and over forests.
And in the owl's wake I flew, too,
And flying, bid the earth adieu:

“Goodbye, O world, O earth, farewell,
Unfriendly land, goodbye!
My searing pain, my tortures cruel
Above the clouds I'll hide.
And as for you, my dear Ukraine,
I'll leave the clouds behind
And fall with dew to 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.
Goodbye, my lovely, poor Ukraine,
O widow-land of mine!
Your children teach the living truth —
That justice is divine!"

We fly . . . I look — the dawn has come,
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;
About the coulees, by the lakes
The willows shimmer green.
The orchards, heavy laden, bow;
The poplars stand at ease
Like watchmen who, their duty done,
Hold 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 on the earth can raze
And ruin this beauty-land. . .
And all of this . . . My aching heart,
My soul, why are you sad?
My poor, my desolated soul,
Why do your useless weep?



In Kiev. Engraving by Taras Shevchenko, 1841.

For whom is your 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;
Up 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 off a 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 lasses 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.
Let us drink down a poison draught
And sink into the snow,
And send a thought right up to God
And ask of Him to tell
How long with hangmen 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
To seek and find somewhere a place
Where Eden still holds sway.

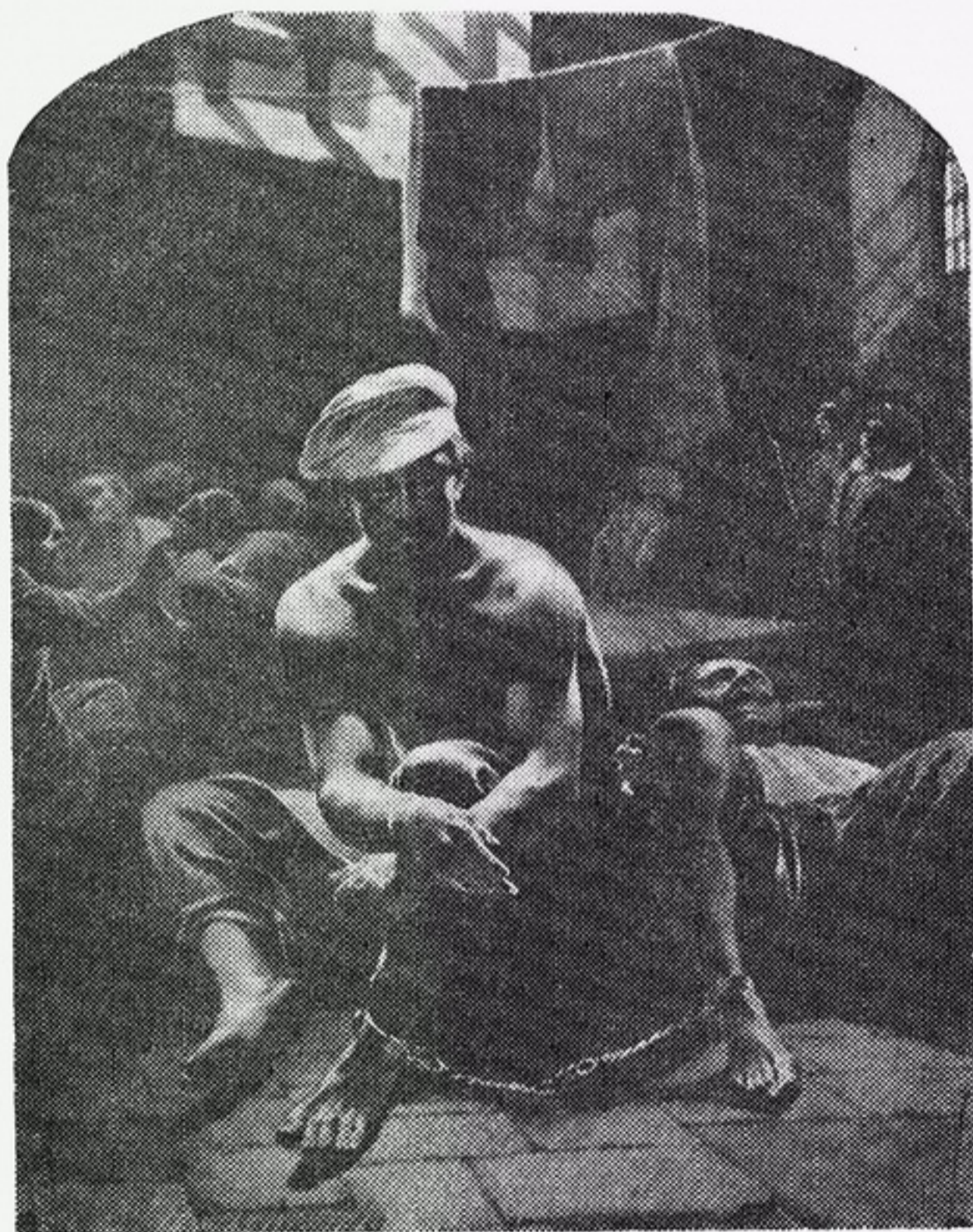
Again I tell the earth good-bye.
Again above the earth I fly.
It's hard to leave your mother dear,
No roof above her head,
But harder yet to watch her tears,
Her rags, her lack of bread.

I fly, I fly, the north winds blow;
Before lie endless miles of snow,
Muskeg and woods, a fog-bound land,
A wilderness untouched by man.
No human 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?
What way 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 carrion crows —
These rebel thoughts of mine?
I don't know why I suffer so,
Why I'm tormented so!
Oh, when will I my sins atone
And pay the debt I owe? —
I am afraid, I must confess,
I neither see nor know!

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

No, these are not the dead at all,
And not to judgement claim!
They're people — living, breathing 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?



In Prison. Sepia by Taras Shevchenko, 1856.

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! 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 worth was warmed
Will warm forever keep!

And where are the thoughts you so lovingly nurtured,
Your lofty ideals, bold plans for 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 widely!
They'll sprout and they'll grow — in time they will ripen!

Enough? Or must I undergo
Still more of this? Enough, it's cold
And I must flee these snows.

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,
With men their squares and streets are filled —
They're 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 stands;
A heavy cloud above it hangs,
A cloud of fog . . . Up close I fly —
The city's of enormous size.
Perhaps in Turkey,
Or in Germany,
Or, maybe, even Muscovy:
With churches, palaces galore,
Big-bellied masters score on score,
And not a solitary home!

"Twas growing dark . . . Then fires were lit —
With torchlights all about
The people press upon all sides . . .
"Hurrah! Hurrah!" they shout.
"Come to your senses, you poor fools!
What do you celebrate?
Why all the fuss?" "What a khokhol,
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 push my way; a countryman
With buttons made of brass
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 inkpot, go
Away from me . . . I made myself
Invisible again
And to the chambers made my way.
Oh God, what I saw then!
Now there is 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 beauty rare 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,
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 jabbers; 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 poked right in the pot
The next in line! . . . Then that one 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 little father deigns to play!
“Hooray, hooray, hooray, 'ray, 'ray!”

I laughed out loud, and that was all;
I own, in the melee
I too got banged. 'Twas nearing dawn,
The city was asleep;
Just here and there some orthodox
Lay groaning on the street,
And moaning, begged the Lord their tsar
In best of health to keep.
Laughter and tears! I sauntered forth
The city's sights to see.
There night is bright as day. I look:
Beside the silent stream
Rich mansions, palaces abound,
The river banks are seamed —
Shored up with stone. I look around
As though I were entranced!
What magic wrought such marvels rare
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 ticks off the time.
I turn — I see a steed
A-gallop and his flying hooves
The granite seem to cleave!
The rider, bareback on the horse,
In something like a cloak,
Is hatless. His bare head's adorned
With leaves, perhaps of oak.
The steed rears up as though it means

To leap across the sea.
And he extends his arm as though
He coveted to seize
The whole, whole world. Who is that man?
I read the message terse
Inscribed upon the mound of stone:
"The Second to the First."
I understand 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 stand . . . And then I faintly hear
A melancholy strain,
From ghostly lips a mournful song:

"From Hlukhov-town at break of dawn
The regiments withdrew
To build abutments on the line.
I, with a Cossack crew,
As acting hetman of Ukraine
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 built
Your capital-to-be,
On tortured Cossack corpses built!
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 is drawn
And from it comes a cry,
A dismal howl. That's not a cloud —
A flock of snowy birds
Soar like a cloud above the tsar
And wail a mournful dirge:
"We're chained together with you too,
Inhuman monster vile!
When Judgment 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 bleeding skins you used as cloth
To make your purple robe,
Our sinews served you as the thread
With which the robe to sew.
Your new throne-city thus you built:
Palaces and churches!
Rejoice then, wicked, vicious tsar!
Curses on you, curses!"

They flew away, they all dispersed.
The morning sun appeared.
I still stood fascinated there,
With awe akin to 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 send them out all night
To earn a crust of bread.
I stand there with a heavy heart
And bow my aching head
And think how hard must people toil
To earn their daily bread.
The civil servants hasten next
Their office desks to man,
To scribble — and to rob the folks
Of everything they can.
Among them here and there I see

My fellow-countrymen.
They chatter in the Russian tongue
And bitterly condemn
Their parents that when they were small
They didn't teach them how
To jabber German — that's the cause
They've no 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 reared salons,
On Moscow's silly-potions fed
Until they are inane! . . .
Oh weep, my childless widow-land!
Unfortunate Ukraine!

And now to visit once again
The royal palace hall
And see what's doing there. I come —
The upper crust stands, all
Panting, snorting, short of breath,
Big-bellied, puffed with pride
Like turkey gobblers, and each one
Askance the doorway eyed.
And now the waited moment's here —
The portal swings ajar
And like a grizzly from his den
He shambles out — the tsar;
All bloated and his face tinged green:
His hangover was bad.
At those who stood out front he roared,
The fattest of the fat —

And instantly they disappeared,
Just vanished into air!
With bulging eyes he looked around
And struck fear everywhere.
And then as though he'd gone berserk
At smaller fish he roared —
They disappeared. Then at the fry —
They too are there no more!
To servants next he turned — and they,
They too were 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 look to see what else will be,
What next my teddy-bear
Intends to do! He just stands there
With hanging head. And lo,
What's 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 strange 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 saw,
But only what I dreamt.

July 8th, 1844, St. Petersburg.

Don't Wed

Don't wed a wealthy woman, friend,
She'll drive you from the house.
Don't wed a poor one either, friend,
Dull care will be your spouse.
Get hitched to carefree Cossack life
And share a Cossack fate:
If it be rags, let it be rags —
What comes, that's what you take.
Then you'll have nobody to nag
Or try to cheer you up,
To fuss and fret and question you
What ails you and what's up.
When two misfortune share, they say,
It's easier to weep.
Not so: it's easier to cry
When no-one's there to see.

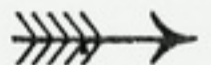
Mirhorod, October 4th, 1845.

Don't Envy

Don't envy, friend, a wealthy man:
A rich man's life is spent
Without a friend or faithful love —
Those things he has to rent.
Don't envy, friend, a man of rank,
His power's based on force.
Don't envy, too, a famous man:
The man of note well knows
The crowd's acclaim is not for him,
But for that thorny fame
He wrought with labour and with tears
So they'd be entertained.
But then, when young folk gather 'round,
So fine they are and fair
You'd think it's heaven, — ah, but look:
See evil stirring there . . .

Don't envy anyone, my friend,
For if you look you'll find
That there's no heaven on the earth,
No more than in the sky.

Mirhorod, October 4th, 1845.



Shevchenko dedicated this stirring anti-imperialist, anti-war poem to his friend, Y. de Balmen, who was killed while serving as an officer in the tsarist army engaged in the conquest of the Caucasian mountain areas. "We, the gracious" refers to Tsar Nicholas 1.

The Caucasus

TO MY TRUE FRIEND, YAKIV DE BALMEN

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

Jeremiah, Ch. 9, Verse 1.

Mighty mountains, row on row, blanketed in 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 word.
He cannot dim the great god's fame,
Bring darkness to the world.

'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 have faith in Thy great pow'r
And in the living soul.
Justice will rise! Freedom will flow'r!
And then to Thee alone
All tongues will pray, all heads will bow
For ever and ever.
But in the meantime, rivers flow,
People's blood in rivers!

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

'Twas there that We, the Gracious, 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!
The rulers all could drink their fill.
In widows' tears alone they could
Be drowned with all their kin and kind!
The tears of sweethearts, shed at night!
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 bound to win!
God helps you in your fight!
For fame and freedom march with you,
And right is on your side!

A hut, a piece of bread — 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,
And schools, and wealth, and even 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 —
Siberia alone sans end!
And prisons — myriads! Peoples — throngs!
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 sell or trade
Or lose in card games as the stake
People . . . 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
Down in 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:
Furs for your daughter's pride.



Kazakh Girl Katya. Sepia by Shevchenko, 1854.

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 genuflections 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! . . .

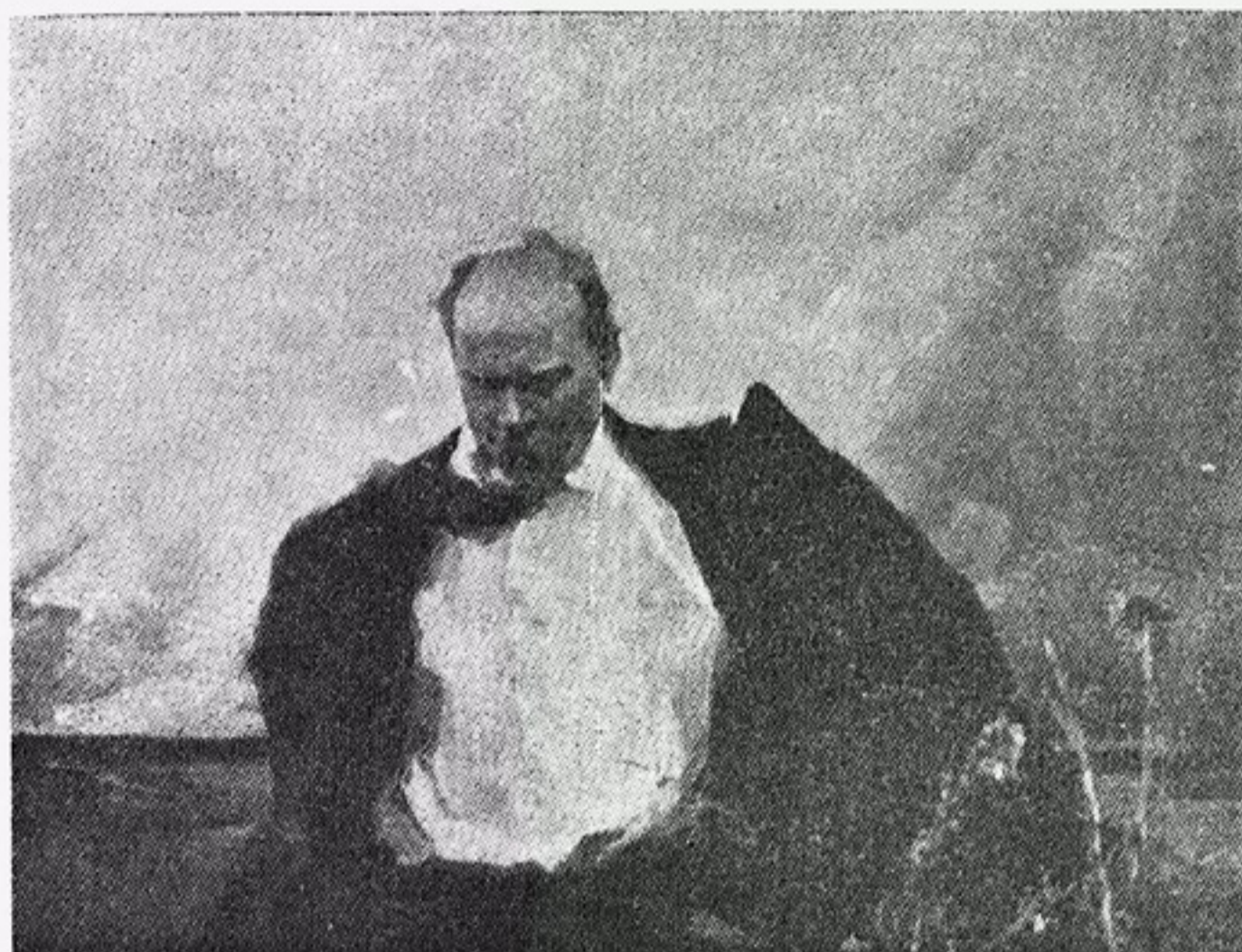
We're civilized! And we set forth
To civilize others,
To make them see the sun of truth . . .
Our blind, simple brothers!!
We'll show you everything! If but
Yourselves to us you'll yield.
The grimmest prisons how to build,
And shackles forge of steel,
And how to wear them! . . . How to pleat
The cruelest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

And you, my good Jacob, 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
From the Muscovite goblet the Muscovite draught
Of hemlock. Oh, ever-remembered friend of my youth!
Now let your soul freely fly over Ukraine;
And soar with the Cossacks all over her shores,
Stand guard 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 18th, 1845.



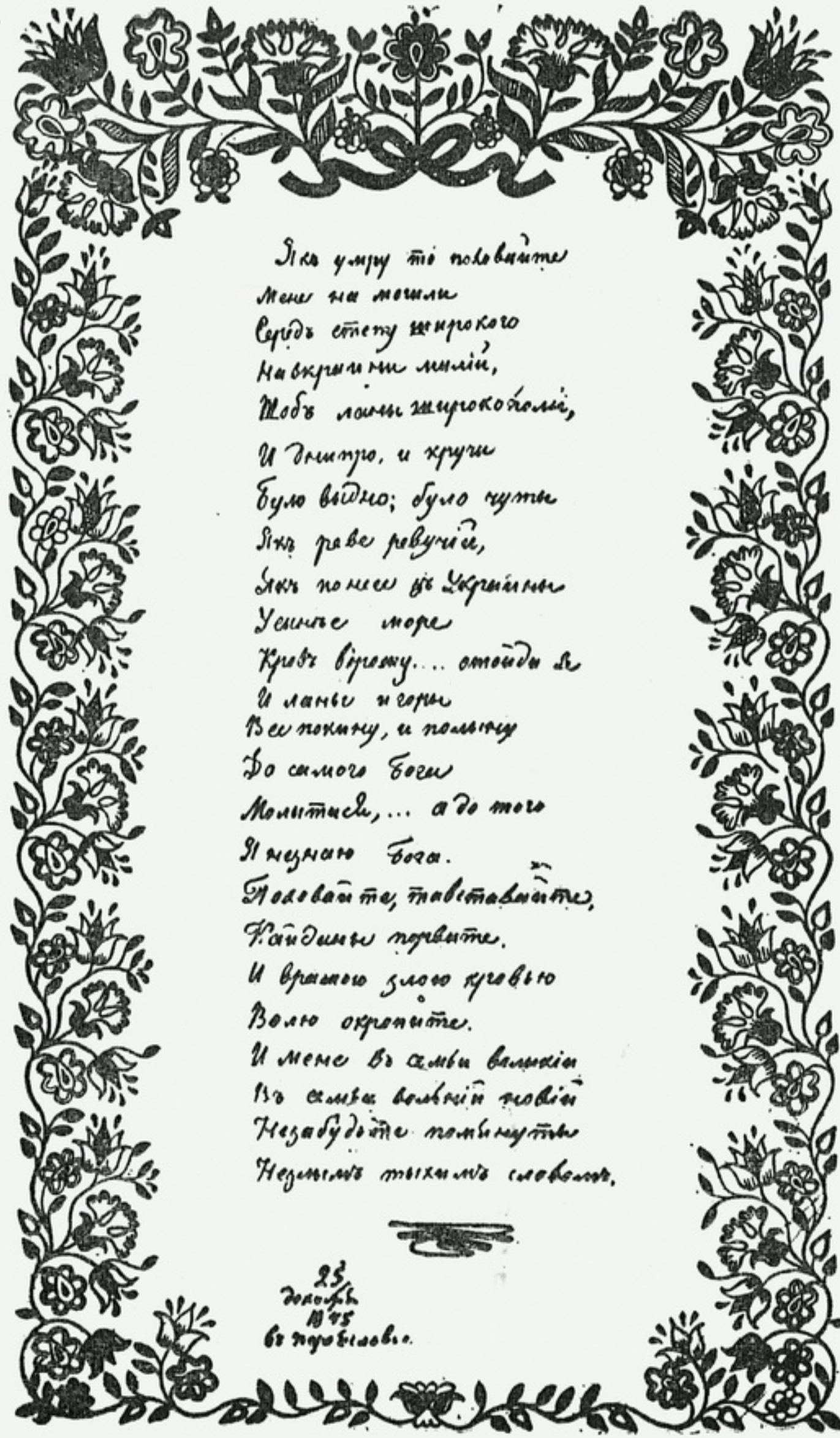
The Days Go By

The days go by, the nights go by,
The summer's passing; yellow leaves
Are rustling; light deserts the eye,
Thoughts fade away and feelings sleep —
All falls asleep. And I don't know
If I'm alive or but so-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 begrudge good fortune, Lord,
Let evil fate befall!
Don't let me walk around asleep,
A dead heart in my breast,
And roll about, a rotten log,
A hindrance to the rest.
Oh, let me live, live with my heart
And love the human race,
But if not that . . . then let me curse
And set the world ablaze!
It's terrible to lie in chains,
To 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 that the fact you lived or died
No whit of difference makes!
Where art thou, Fate? Where art thou, Fate?
No fate have I at all!
If You begrudge good fortune, Lord,
Let evil fate befall!

Vyunishcha, December 21st, 1845.



Як утру ті половіте
Мен на могили
Серед стіпу широкого
Навкривити лилій,
Щоб лопи широкоюлі,
И Дмитро, и круги
Було видно; було чутти
Як раве ревучій,
Як по мси це Українці
Усміє море
Крові вірому... отойди в
И ланци и гори
Всє покину, и полити
До самого Бога
Молитиш, ... а до того
И мучити Бога.
Половіте, павітавіте,
Райдішты порвіте,
И врастою злою кровію
Волго окропите.
И мене вь сьмби виліаіи
Вь сьмби вольній повііи
Незабудіте памінути
Недітати тихи мь словоті.

25
Дароуль
1895
вь публікаціі.

My Bequest

When I die, let me be buried
In beautiful Ukraine,
My tomb atop a hillock 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 angry 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 —
All, all I'll leave and fly away,
I'll fly right up to God
To sing His praise . . . But till that day
I recognize no God.
Oh bury me and rise ye up
And smash your heavy chains
And water well with evil blood
The freedom of Ukraine.
And in the great new family,
The kinship of the free,
With kindly and a gentle word
Remember also me.

Pereyaslav, December 25th, 1845.

When I Was Thirteen

My thirteenth birthday soon would come.
I herded lambkins on the lea.
Was it the magic of the sun,
Or what was it affected me?
I felt with joy all overcome
As though in heaven . . .
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 . . .

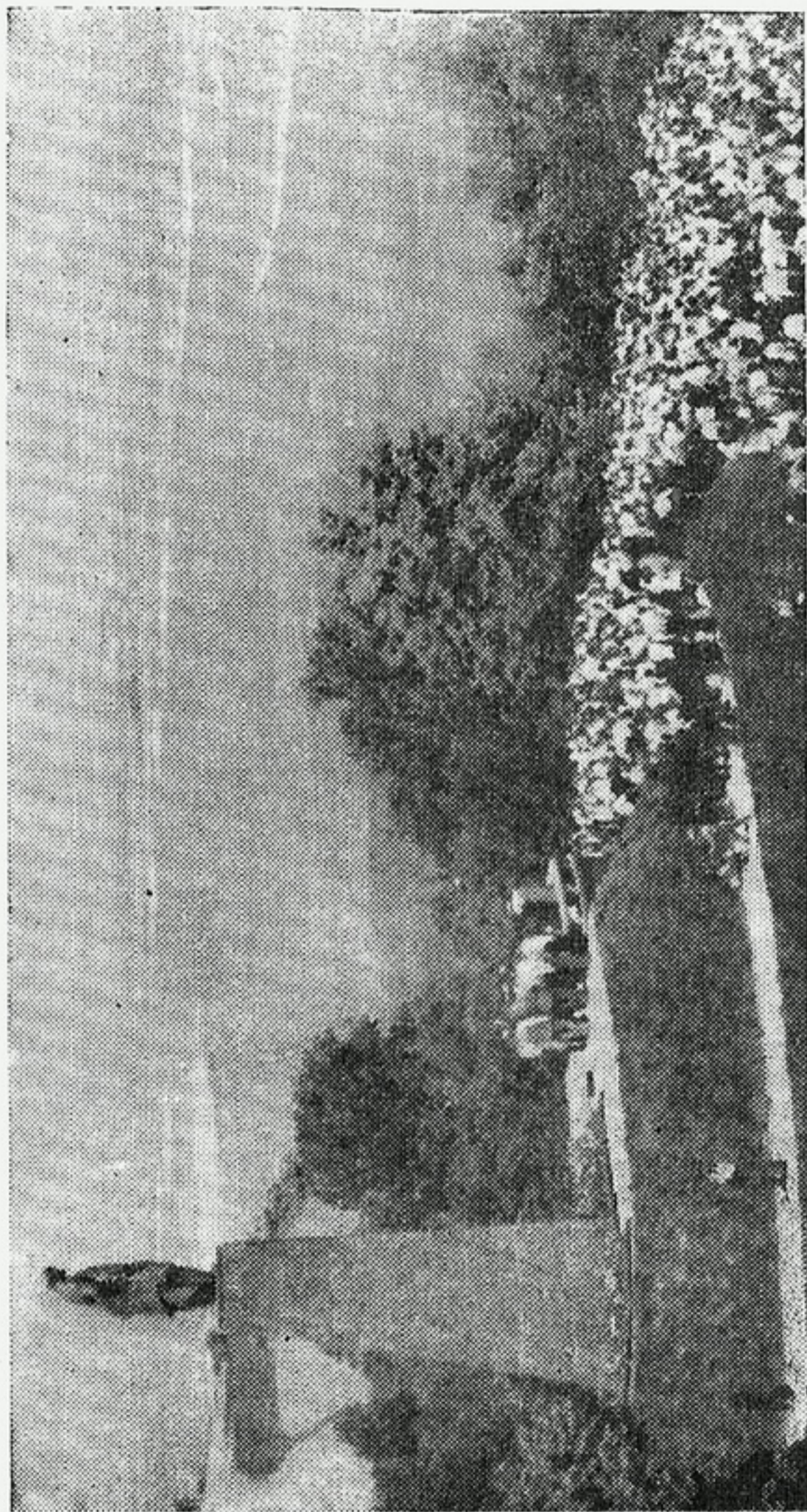
It was as though the sun had smiled,
As though all things on earth were mine,
My own . . . The orchards, fields and groves! . . .
And, laughing merrily the while,
The master's lambs to drink we drove.
How nauseating! . . . Yet, when I
Recall those days, my heart is sore
That there my brief life's span 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.

Lights Are Blazing

The lights are blazing, music's playing,
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 uselessly slipped by.

Orenburg, 1850.



Monument to Shevchenko at his graveside in Kanev. Photo.

Calamity Again

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

Novopetrovsk Fortress, 1854 (?).

If You But Knew

The tranquil cottage in the grove
Young gentlemen, if you but knew
Where people weep their whole life through
You'd not compose your rhapsodies
And God for nothing you'd not praise —
And mock our tears and twit the truth.
You call a paradise, I know.
In such a cottage once I dwelt
And there my first hot tears were spilt,
My early tears! I know no vice,
No wrong or evil anywhere
That's not within that cottage fair . . .
And yet they call it paradise!

I do not speak of that wee house
Beside the village, by the copse,
As though 'twere 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 given 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
(And we were 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 plow 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,

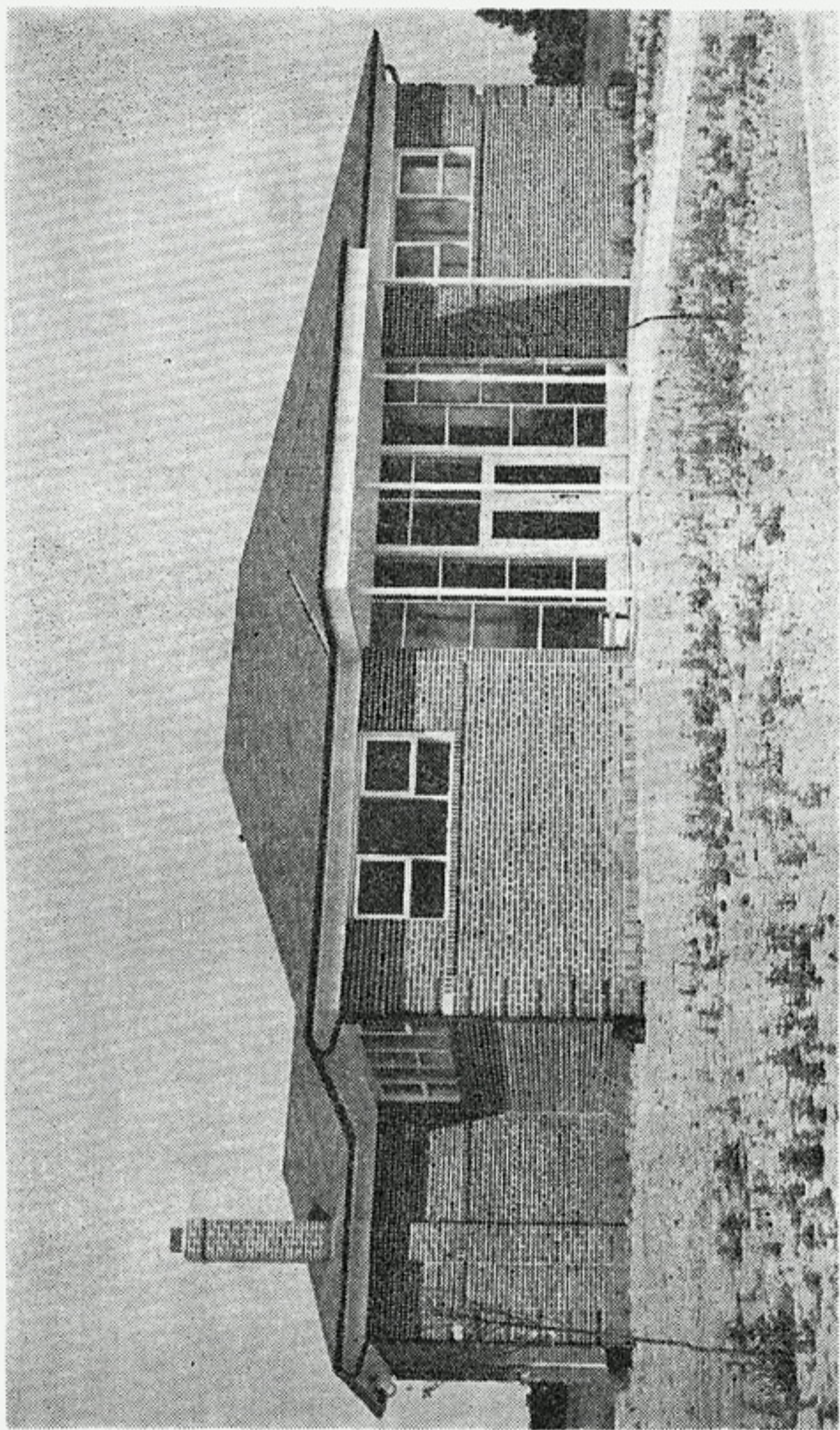
And from behind the grove a pool
Peeps shyly out, behind it stands
A row of willows washing hands,
Their branches, in the waters cool . . .
Is this not truly paradise?
Look once again until your eyes
See what has made this heaven cruel!
You'll see rejoicing, songs of praise
To Him, our God above, alone
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.

Fate

You did not play me false, O Fate,
You were a brother, closest friend
To this poor wretch. You took my hand
When I was still a little tot
And walked me to the deacon's school
To gather knowledge from the sot.
"My boy, just study hard," you said,
And you'll be somebody in time!"
I listened, studied, forged ahead,
Got educated. But you lied.
What am I now? But never mind!
We've walked the straight path, you and I,
We have not cheated, compromised
Or lived the very slightest lie.
So let's march on, dear fate of mine!
My humble, truthful, faithful friend!
Keep marching on: there glory lies;
March forward — that's my testament.

Nizhny Novgorod, February 9th, 1958.



Taras Shevchenko Museum at Palermo in Canada.

I Am Unwell

I am not feeling well, I fear,
And yet the eye sees something near,
The heart for something seems to wait.
It weeps and whimpers, yearns and aches,
Just like a tot that's not been fed.
Perhaps the things that lie ahead
Will evil prove? Await no good,
Long longed-for freedom don't await —
It is asleep: our gracious tsar
Lulled it to sleep. But if you'd wake
This sickly freedom, all the folk
Into their hands must sledges take
And axes sharpen well — then go
That sleeping freedom to awake.
If not, the wretched thing will stay
Asleep right up to Judgment Day!
The master class will keep it lulled,
More palaces and shrines they'll build,
Their drunken tsar they will adore,
Sing praises to Byzanthian ways,
And, all the signs say, nothing more.

St. Petersburg, November 22nd, 1858.

Rejoice, O Wilderness

(In imitation of Isaiah, Chapter 35)

Rejoice, o desert, arid wilderness!
Rejoice, o barren land whose nakedness
No raiment knows of golden corn!
With blossoms bright and grasses verdant
You'll bloom like unto holy Jordan's
Fair banks with gardens, meadows green!
And then the honour and the glory
Of sainted Karmil, Livan hoary,
Not crafty cant, will mantle thee
In priestly vestment, sewn so finely —
Goodwill and freedom for the lining —
With golden thread on silken sheen.
And then the blind, no longer sightless,
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 knees will be released!
Rejoice, ye poor, fear not, ye meek —
'Tis Judgment Day on Earth
And God has come to set you free,
Who chains have worn since birth.

And to the evil ones to mete
According to desserts!

O Lord, when sacred justice comes
If only for a fleeting hour
To rest upon this Earth of ours . . .
The blind shall ope' their eyes, the lame
Like startled stags will swiftly go.
The dumb shall find their voice once more;
And like a flood the words will pour
Until the desert wasteland arid
With waters curative is watered
And comes alive; gay streams will flow
Amid the fields, and leafy forests
About the silver lakes will grow,
While songbirds make all Nature glow.

Land and lake to life will waken;
Ancient roads despising,
New highways will on every side
Stretch to the horizon,
Roads wide and free: the masters won't
These new roads discover,
But erstwhile slaves will tread those ways
Without fuss or bother
To come together, brothers all,
In gay celebration.
And where the desert was, will be
Happy habitations.

St. Petersburg, March 25th, 1859.

The Artist

(The narrator of the story is unnamed, but is readily identified as Ivan Soshenko, the young artist is Taras Shevchenko himself, the other personages are as named. The action takes place in the 1830's in St. Petersburg, the events described are a faithful reproduction of a momentous period in the poet's life: his liberation from serfdom and introduction to an artist's career.)

In St. Petersburg I nearly always pass the summer nights out on the street or somewhere on the islands, or more often yet, on the riverside walk. Especially do I like the place where the Neva 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 dwelling is lit up inside and the scarlet curtains flame like a fire against the dark background, and I am always annoyed that the Neva is then covered with ice and snow and therefore the decoration loses its true effect.

In the summertime I also like 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 a thrilling moment of rapture.

I often admire Shchedrin's landscapes and especially was I captivated by his small painting, "Portichi Before Sunset." A fascinating work! But it has never fascinated me so much as does the view from Troitsky bridge in the Viborg direction just before sunrise.

One time, having enjoyed to the brim this picture, which was not painted by the hand of man, I walked over to the Summer Gardens for a rest. Whenever I happen to be in the Summer Gardens, I never stop on any of the alleys which are ornamented with marble statues: those statues make the worst kind of impression on me, especially the ugly Saturn gobbling up his equally hideous offspring. I always pass by those clumsy gods and goddesses and sit down to rest beside a pool from where I can 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 teaking 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 bashfully, "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 quarto of grey stationery from his shirt-front and shyly handed it to me. On the sheet the outline of Saturn had been copied quite 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 maiden'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 weekdays too."

"You are training for a house painter?"

"Also fine painting," he added.

"To whom are you apprenticed?"

"To mural painter Shirayev¹⁾."

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

"Where are you hurrying so?"

"To work. I'm late already and when the master comes, I'll get it."

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

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

I wrote my address down right on his drawing 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 teaking but in something resembling a frock-coat of a brown colour, and with a roll of paper

1) **Shirayev**, guild-master of painting and frescoe decoration (series of decorations forming ornamental band around a room), to whom Taras Shevchenko was apprenticed in 1832.

in his hand. I greeted him and extended my hand to him. He sprang to my hand and attempted to kiss it. I snatched away my hand: I was 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 corridor and looked about, but my friend had disappeared; I went downstairs and asked the caretaker 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. A 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 figure 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 parody of the Belvedere god that stands by itself right beside Moika street. 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 pavilion and in passing ordered the tavern waiter to bring us tea.

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.

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

"To be angry with you was the 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 facility to quickly become friendly with a person. I say "unhappy" because it is a rare quick friendship that doesn't cost me dear, especially with the crooked and squint-eyed ones. Those crooked and squint-eyed ones gave me what-for! How many of them I've come in contact with, yet I haven't met a single decent one, all rotters! — or is it just my luck to have met that sort?

I have seen my new acquaintance only three times and already I am drawn to him, I have become attached to him, I have developed a liking for him. And truly, there is something in his features that you can't help liking. His physiognomy, which seemed homely at first, as time went on appeared more and more attractive. After all, 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, "for you stopped over 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 returned from Mass."

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

"Strict and . . ."

"And cruel, is that what you meant to say?"

"No, I was going to say that he is a skinflint. He would beat me but actually he would be glad that I was too late to have dinner."

We entered the room. On my easel was a copy I had done of a painting by old Velasquez²⁾ 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, saccharinely 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 Cupid that decorate the house of the architect Monferrant, which is on the corner of the riverside Moika street and Fonarny lane.

What struck me about these not-at-all-poor 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 without being moved.

I was glad at heart over my discovery. At that time the idea didn't even come to 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 set 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 daytime, but you can't draw then, with the people walking about."

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

2) Velasquez, Diego (1599-1660) — Head of Spanish school of painting, one of the world's greatest artists.

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

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

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

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

"Then let's go to dinner."

When we arrived there were as yet no customers at Madame Yurgens' place, of which I was very glad because it would have been annoying to have some smooth-faced bureaucrat smirking stupidly as he eyed 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 Day of Pompeii," but — not 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 test him in that subject. I fell asleep on the first page of Dickens' 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 appeared pleasant to the eye: 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 one who was responsible for all this harmony sat by the window, drawing the mask of Thorvaldson's³⁾ 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

3) Thorvaldson, Bertel (1770-1844) — Danish sculptor.

for the tavern "Berlin" 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 naively simply, without a shadow of complaint or reproach. Until that confession I had been thinking of means to improve his upbringing, but having heard 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 a half an hour. He shook me out of my stupor with his sobs. I glanced at him and asked why he was bawling.

"It is disagreeable to you that I . . ."

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

Along the way we met old Venetsianov⁴). 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 was thoughtful 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 protege begged me to give him a print which he could copy. As it happened, I had a copy of the just then published "Hercules of Farnese", engraved by Slyudzhinsky from the drawing by Zavyalov, and also Losenko's "Apollo." I wrapped the

4) Venetsianov, Aleksei Gavrilovich (1780-1847) — Prominent Russian painter.

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 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 humanist-artist. Let one of his numerous pupils do it, who knows in more detail than I do all his magnanimous deeds in the field of the arts.

I told the old man everything I knew about my god-send 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 did I 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 at the Bolshoi Theatre (at that time Kavoss was engaged in renovating the interior of the Bolshoi Theatre) and for that reason he now couldn't 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 into the Bolshoi Theatre and got acquainted with his master. I praised inordinantly the sketches for the murals which he himself designed, and by this I laid a firm foundation for our acquaintance.

He was a guildmaster of the painters' department, he continually kept three and sometimes four greenhorns in smocks of teaking, whom he called pupils, and whenever

necessary hired from one to ten Kostroma mouzhiks — painters and glass-cutters — by the day or the month; consequently he wasn't the poorest master in his guild either artistically or as regards capital. Apart from the above-mentioned qualities, I saw several engravings on his walls by Audran and Volpato and on his chest of drawers several volumes 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 teaking, 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 painter's guild, it seems, was not a stranger to such an antihumanist feeling. In time, however, I managed to talk him into not hindering my protege from visiting me on holidays and on those weekends 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 else than 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 seventh heaven, while the old-

sters were, to put it bluntly, possessed. Only the strict matrons and desperate lionesses stubbornly pouted 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 Trubetskoy, they were the first to mourn the great loss and condemned the woman for that which they themselves couldn't do despite all the help cosmetics could give them.

Karl the Great (that's how the late Vassily Andreyevich Zhukovsky⁵⁾ called the also late Karl Pavlovich Bryullov⁶⁾) had a boundless love for all the beautiful 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 saccharine 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 palaces of the aristocrat and in the modest nook of the Kolomna official. Everywhere the cachucha — in the home, in 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 already about the soirees and socials, where the cachucha became indispensable. That's nothing yet, — everything suits youth and beauty, — but esteemed mothers and sedate fathers of families joined in. It was, to put it bluntly, a St. Vitus dance epidemic in the shape of the cachucha. . .

At the very apex of this cachuchomania, Karl the Great paid me a visit (he loved to visit his pupils). He sat

5) **Zhukovsky**, Vassily Andreyevich (1783-1852) — Prominent Russian poet.

6) **Bryullov**, Karl Pavlovich (1792-1852) — Famous Russian painter.

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 that young fellow go?" he said, pointing to my protege.

"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 our 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 was lost in thought. After a minute's contemplation he threw his cigar to the floor, took his hat and went out, but immediately turned back 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 Michelangelo⁷⁾ which had barely been sketched. He looked long at the drawings,

7) **Michelangelo** (Michelagnuolo Buonarroti) (1474-1564) — Most famous of Florentine artists of the Renaissance.

that is, he held the drawings in his hands and looked — God knows where he was looking at that moment.

“Who is his landowner master?” he asked, raising his head.

I gave him the landowner’s name⁸).

“We’ll have to give a lot of thought to your pupil. Lukian promised to treat me with roast beef, come for 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 seen him in the flesh.”

“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 recognize him when he was here. Well, don’t feel bad, if he doesn’t drop in to see me

8) **Baron Engelhardt**, whose serf Shevchenko was and who took the young boy with him as his “kozachok” (house servant) when he left his Ukrainian estates and went to St. Petersburg.

by Sunday, you and I will pay him a visit. In the meantime, here's a talon for Madame Yurgens' for you. I will have dinner at home today."

Having given these instructions, I left.

In Bryullov's studio I found V. A. Zhukovsky and M. Y. Count Vyelgorsky. They were admiring the unfinished painting "The Crucifixion of Christ," painted for the Lutheran church of Peter and Paul. The head of the weeping Mary Magdalene was finished, and V. A. Zhukovsky, gazing at that marvellous weeping beauty, himself wept and, his arms around Karl Pavlovich, embraced him as though he were embracing the beauty he had created.

I often had occasion to be in the Hermitage together with Bryullov. Those occasions provided brilliant lectures on the theory of painting and they ended every time with Tenier 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 and followed Zhukovsky. A 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 traveling suit but in a black dandified 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 created was enormous, and the poet was rewarded by the sincere embrace of the second 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 on her little finger! By the way, I almost forgot to tell you: today we're eating macaroni and stofatto with lacrima-cristi at Alexander's. Nestor will be there, Misha, etcetera, and to top it off, Pyanenko. Let us be off!"

Bryullov took his hat.

"Oh yes! I had forgotten . . ." Guber continued, taking some 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 come with us?" said 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 lacrima-cristi, 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 protege'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 guild master, but by the engineer, Kartashov, who was continually present at the job and

early every morning treated my protege to tea.) I had intended to tell Bryullov about my pupil's arabesques, but the overture came on and everybody, including myself, riveted their eyes on the curtain. The overture finished, the curtain quivered and then rose, and the ballet began. Until the cachucha everything went well: the audience conducted itself like any audience 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 "De 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, working his hands and feet and hollering at the top of his voice: "Da capo!" Guber also. I filled my lungs with air 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 onto 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 curtain a crowd of her worshippers, consisting mainly of venerable bald heads, spectacles and binoculars, was already swarming. 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 in a pitiable position! — had just managed to utter a compliment equal to the occasion and, pronouncing Bryullov’s name, to glance behind him, when he found 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 dessert 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,” in my imagination hope began to take more definite form. 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 have 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 classroom 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 classroom and treated my tireless toiler with 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 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 artistically truthfully evaluates the pedantic work of Michelangelo, "Judgment 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 transport of delight was 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 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 have more effect than those happy, heavenly, divine tears? "Everything red!" he kept repeating through his tears.

Accustomed to that sort of decoration, I was moved only for a minute by the red room, hung in the main 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 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 the price of 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 riverbank 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 have seen many characters of that sort, but I have never seen a Russian who would be rude to K. 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 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 already 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 not-so 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’ before 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 ‘Aedipus 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 manage to outline it with a pen.”

This was his first creative work 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: Aedipus, Antigonus and in the background, Polinicus, 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 it 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 Pussen’s or Audrant’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 Gillis’s “History of Ancient Greece”.

Accepting the books, he said: "In addition to those that hang on the walls, my master has a full folio 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 Venetianov 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 antechamber, 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, that study of his I didn't like. 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 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 tried 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 that 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.

" 'Here's my bottom price: 2,500 roubles! Is it a deal?'

" 'Agreed,' I replied.



The Young Taras. Sculpture by I. M. Gonchar.

“ ‘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 beautiful art 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 compelling me to blush for this morning,” I mumbled.

“Not at all. You act like a genuine Christian. We have defined the time 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 Belvedersky, bring him along,” he added on leaving. Belvedersky 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 — that was what we called the building back of the present Academic Garden

where the workshops of Bryullov, Baron Klodt, Sauerweid and Bassin were located.) I came to the street through the foundry 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, what?" he asked.

"Where are you dining today?" I enquired.

"I don't know, why do you ask?"

"Here's what," I said. "Let's go to Venetsianov's for dinner. He will relate such wonders to you about the amphibian as you have probably never heard before and never will again."

"Allright, 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 pensioners — scholarship students. Apart from the rooms taken by the students, there were also two classrooms decorated with ancient statues — of Venus di 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 knowledge 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 the secretary of the Society, and asked his permission for my pupil to make use of the classrooms.

Obliging Vassily Ivanovich gave me an entrance card in the shape of a note to the artist Golovnya who was living together with the pensioners as their overseer.

It is hardly worthwhile 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 pales before this anti-artist Golovnya. Plyushkin at any rate had youth and consequently joyousness too, even if not complete, exultant joyousness, but joyousness of sorts all the same, while this poor fellow didn't possess anything even resembling youth and joy.

He had been a pensioner 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 over 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 thing 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 at my discovery was to blame. 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.

Things went on as usual and 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 bawling?"

"I'm not bawling, only. . ."

And the tears streamed from his expressive, fine eyes. I couldn't figure 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 the best I could, but I didn't even hint to him about the intentions of Karl Pavlovich, especially in view of the fact that I myself didn't know anything for certain that would be enough of a base on which to build up his hopes.

On Sunday I visited his guild-master to suggest whether it wouldn't be possible to have a common 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, sorry! — he's a graphic artist, and you yourself know what that means in our profession. But do you suppose," he continued, "that he'll have 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, governor, charge whomever you will a hundred iron men, but you would be lucky to get a 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."

"Let it be even for one month, then it's a deal," said I and we shook hands as traders do in the marketplace.

"When do we begin?" he asked me.

"Even tomorrow," 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 when the term expires. Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!"

What does one fleeting month of freedom mean among

many long and difficult years of slavery? A tiny grain in a poppy pod! 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 Yurgens' 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 Yurgens' place when we met Karl Pavlovich on the Bolshoi Avenue.

"Where are you going?" he asked us.

"To Madame Yurgens," I replied.

"I'll go with you. Suddenly, I have an appetite," he said and turned with us to the Third Line.

Once in a while, when he had the leisure, Karl the Great liked to visit Madame Yurgens: it wasn't that he liked the complaisant Madame Yurgens herself or her maid Olympiada who had been the late Petrovsky's model for Agara, but that as a genuine artist he liked our diversified company. There he could see a poor clerk of a Senate department in his threadworn uniform, or a pale and lanky university student blowing on lunch at Madame Yurgens' the coin he received from a wealthy merry-maker for copying Fisher's lectures for him. He saw very many things here which he couldn't have seen at either the Dumas or the St. George restaurants. Whenever he appeared, however, the attentive Madame Yurgens 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 Olympiada to Fox for a bottle of Jackson's.

Madame Yurgens was in transports — she began run-

ning and bustling about, and almost tore off her wig together with her cap when she remembered that she ought to change her cap for such a valuable guest.

And he was truly a valuable guest for her. 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 beefsteak. And that's quite proper. If they can pay a quarter to see a dame from Amsterdam, why not pay thirty kopeks to get a close look at Bryullov? Madame Yurgens fully understood this and exploited it as much as she could.

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 the door. 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 guild-master, 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 shabby 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 caretaker for Zhadovtsev, a private doctor, and myself proceeded to undress him and put him to bed.

He abandoned himself to my ministrations like a meek child.

Zhadovstev 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 Ste. 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 guild-master 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, governor."

"Does he rave?"

"He only keeps repeating the word 'red'."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing, governor."

And I would go out into the street again, and again cross Tuchkov bridge and visit Mr. Sokolovsky's summer cottage, 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 taken the upper hand.

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 to 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 home. I walked over to the riverbank road and found him standing beside an enormous sphinx and watching how a small skiff, loaded with laughing passengers, slipped along the Neva, whose ice had already broken up, leaving behind it a silvery runnel.

"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, seating himself in the easy-chair, was admiring the still damp background-painting of the portrait of Vassily Andreyevich Zhukovsky. When we entered poor Lypyn sprang up and got embarrassed like a schoolboy caught in a misdemeanor.

"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 a half an hour, then turned to me and said:

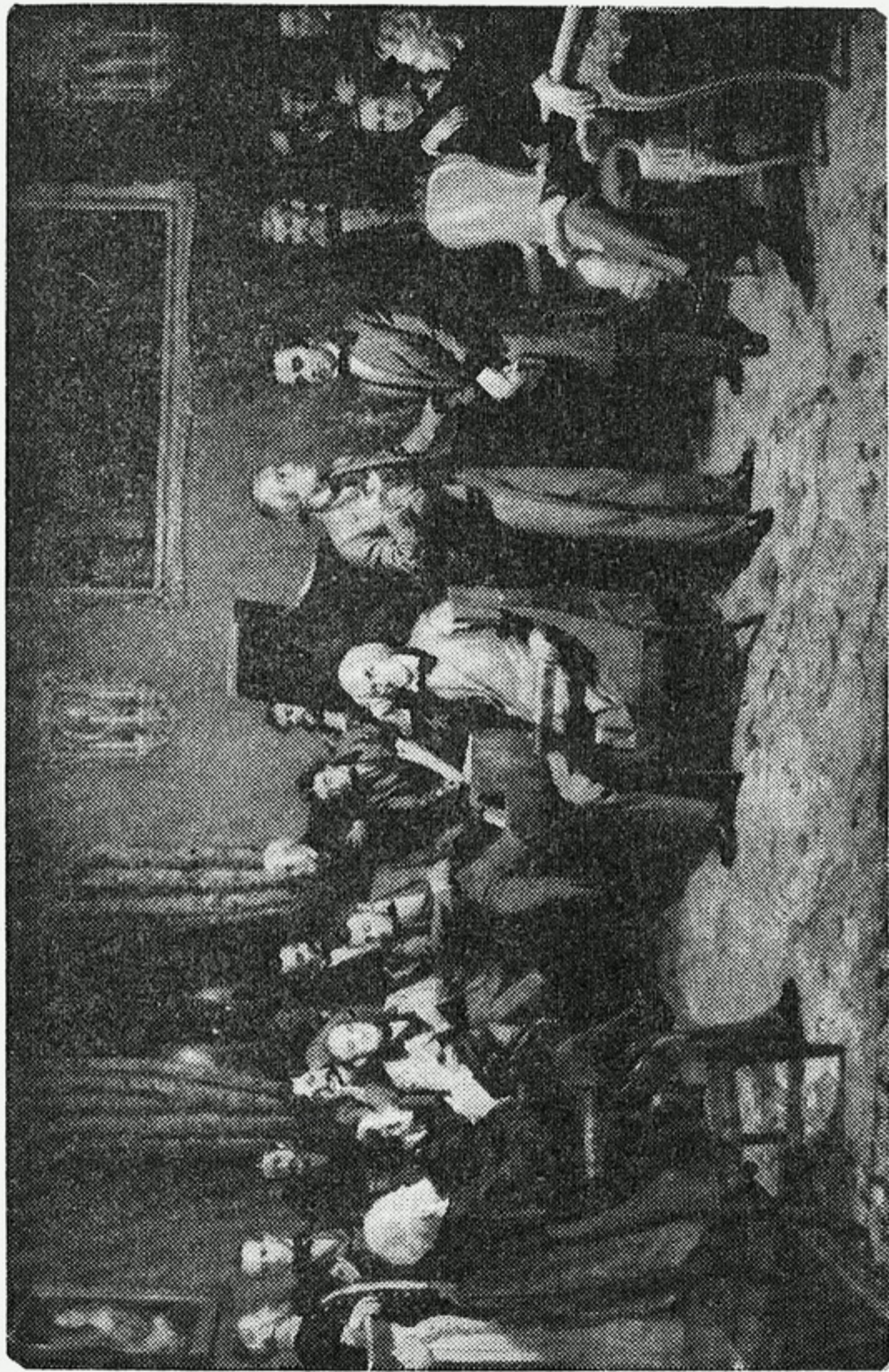
"His look should be more gentle: his verses are gentle and sweet. Isn't that so?"

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:



T. G. Shevchenko and V. G. Bielinisky at a gathering at the home of the writer O. M. Strugovshchikov.
Painting by Y. V. Balanovsky, 1949.

"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 protege, 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."

"Goodbye," he said, giving me his hand. "I'll look in on Hilberg. The poor fellow will hardly be able to 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 Hesse, but in reality to ferret out some information about the mysterious portrait. However, I proved in error.

Klentze, Valhalla, Pinacoteca and Munich generally took up the entire morning, so that not even a word was mentioned about Dusseldorf, while the portrait simply didn't exist on the earth.

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 fuss 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 en-

tered and pronounced the name of an aristocrat unknown to me. I realized my question was out of place, bowed my goodbyes and left, so to say, with nothing gained.

Meanwhile, the vital forces of youth were winning. Like the fabled hero in the fairy tale, he revived and grew stronger not by the day but by the hour. About a week after his fortnight's bout of fever had left him, he got on his feet and walked, holding on to his cot, but he was so downcast and sad that, despite the doctor's orders not to speak to him of serious matters, I one time 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 bedside all the time, and there's no other way I can help him."

Immersed in thought, there came to my mind Albert Duhrer'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 Duhrer'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. I did not have to explain the second and third lessons in perspective at all later: 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 in hygienic terms that for a complete cure he must remain under medical supervision for at least another month. Reluctantly, I agreed.

During that period of time 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 some sort of secret, but for some reason which I myself can't explain, I sidestepped any confidences on his part. It was as though I was afraid, for some reason, although I practically guessed the secret.

The mystery was soon unveiled. On the 22nd of April, 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 door-keeper had instructions to let me through at any time of the day, that time he wouldn't let me in, saying: "It's early, governor, the patients are all asleep as 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, in my heart thanking the door-keeper for stopping me.

Long, long ago, when I was yet in the parish school,

furtively, so that the teacher shouldn't see me, I read Kotlyarevsky's⁹⁾ celebrated parody on "Aeneid" 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 presentiment, but presentiments were often deceptive. What if my intuition was playing me false now? What a terrible wrong I would have done, and to my most favoured person yet! 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 myself don't know what I was afraid of. The twenty-first time I ventured to ring and Lukian, looking out the window, said: "He'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.

9) **Kotlyarevsky**, Ivan (1769-1838), outstanding Ukrainian writer, one of the first to write literary works in the Ukrainian language. His "Aeneid" is a most original burlesque of Homer's "Illiad" in which the 18th Century Ukraine is vividly portrayed. Shevchenko quotes the two lines from "Aeneid" in the original Ukrainian, though the novel is written in Russian.

Goodbye! 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, but yet:

**If you haven't got it in your hands,
Don't say that it's already yours.**

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. Will the doctor give his 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 protege 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 goodbyes and went out. I polished the pavement for quite a while with my shoes without going anywhere in particular. I had an urge to visit old man Venetsianov 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 the Troitsky bridge and wait to watch the sunrise. But Troitsky 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, but not the same. So, 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, as though lecturing me: "It is fortunate that people aren't about yet, or they would say, what a loafer."

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 Campieri 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.

Despite the way I was beleaguered with doubts, 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 Campieri, while my heart grew faint with expectation. At last Zhukovsky took a correctly 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 K. 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 into the corridor and ran to Venetianov.

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 undertake to 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 settled ourselves around the table. Lunch, contrary to custom, 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 story. 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 roubles 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 the utmost care must be observed. But how can I hold myself back? Perhaps I should stop visiting him for a time? 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 already 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 guild-master came to my apartment and without beating about the bush began to reproach me 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 to his place and told him all that 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 preliminary 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: he was now prepared already and could receive the news more calmly than before.

"Is it true? Can I believe what I have heard?" — that was the question he met me with 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 phrase, 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. It fell to my lot but once in my life to fully sate myself on such fascinating beauty.

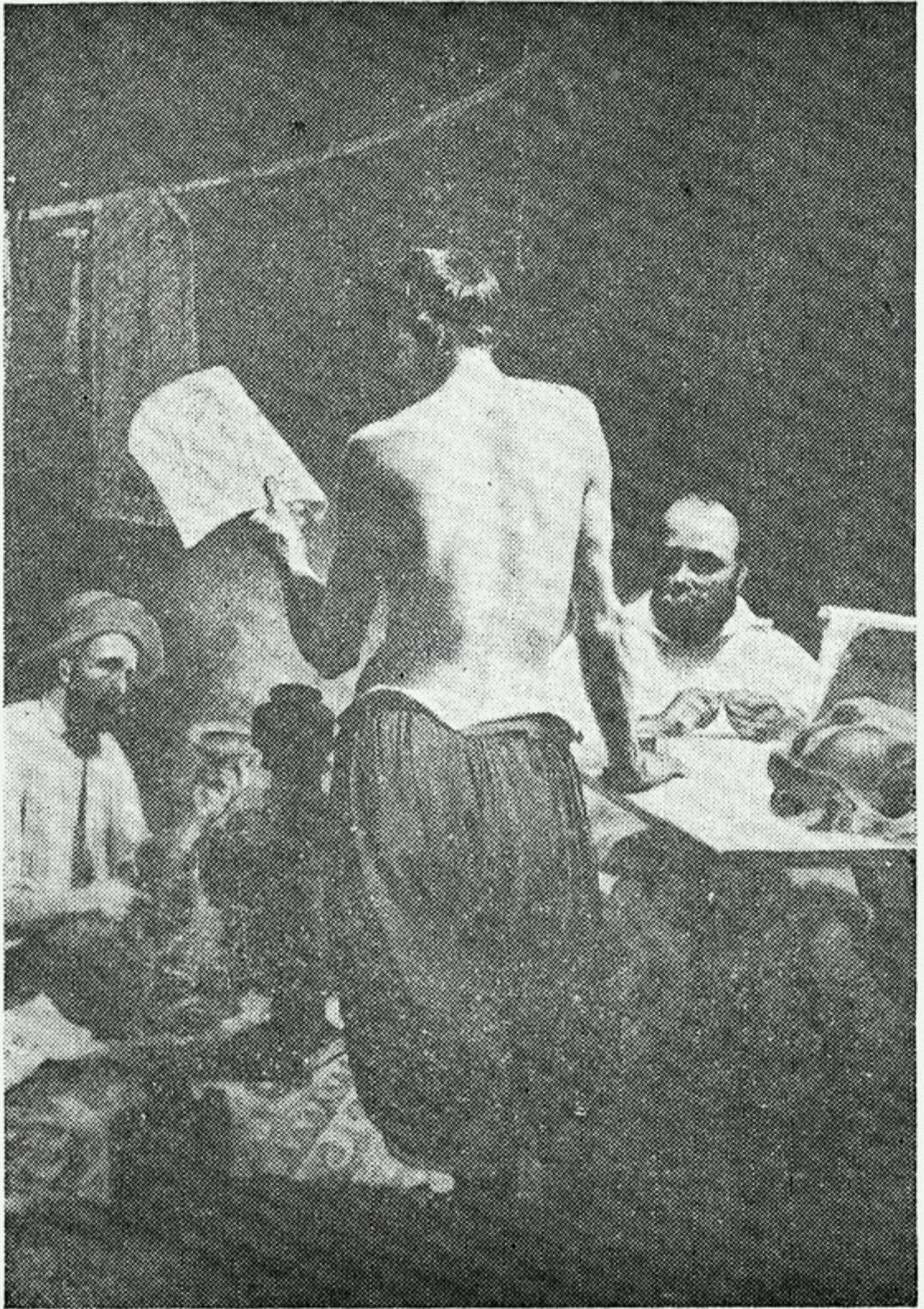
During several days he was so happy, so fine, that I couldn't gaze upon him without being moved. He poured some of his boundless happiness over into my heart. His ecstasy was sandwiched in with periods of calm, smiling happiness. Although he tried to work during all those days, the work couldn't get going and he would put away his drawing in the briefcase, take out the certificate of freedom from his pocket, read it over almost syllable by syllable, 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 a 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 again and took him to Karl Pavlovich and handed him over to our immortal Karl Pavlovich 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.

(This finishes the approximately autobiographical section of Taras Shevchenko's novel "The Artist". The second half of the novel, although it also contains much that is autobiographical, describes the travails of the artist as a "free" man, leading to his tragic death.)



Among Comrades in Exile. Sepia by Shevchenko, 1852.

The Autobiography of Taras Shevchenko

This autobiography — or rather, a rough draft of an autobiography — was written by Taras Shevchenko in 1860 for the St. Petersburg periodical "Narodnoye Chteniye". The version that finally appeared in that journal was somewhat different. It is translated from the Russian, but the names of Ukrainian people and places are given in the Ukrainian pronunciation.

Taras Shevchenko, the son of a serf-peasant, Hrihory Shevchenko, was born on February 25th, 1814¹⁾ in the village of Kirilivka, Zvenihorod district, Kiev province, on the estate of the landowner Vassily Vassilievich Engelhardt. When he was eight years of age²⁾, having lost his father and mother, he found refuge with a church deacon in a school as his pupil-drudge. After a most difficult two-

1) This date is according to the Julian calendar that prevailed in Russia prior to 1917. The date according to the calendar we use (and which is now used in the Soviet Union) was March 9th, 1814. Other dates in this Autobiography should also be changed by adding 13 days.

2) Although his parents came from the village of Kirilivka, Taras was actually born in the neighbouring village of Morintsi, but the family soon after returned to Kirilivka and he always considered it to be his native village. His mother died in 1823 and his father in 1825.

year ordeal he learned grammar, the breviary, and finally, the psalm book. The deacon, realizing his pupil-drudge's gift of the gab, 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 as an incentive. But despite such flattering attention which he received from his strict Spartan-like teacher, on one of the many days and nights when the Spartan teacher and his friend Iona Limar were dead drunk, the pupil-chore boy, baring the buttocks of his mentor and benefactor, without a twinge of conscience gave him a good dose of birch-pudding³⁾. Having avenged himself to the full and purloining some sort of booklet with engravings in it, that very night he ran away to the little town of Lisyanka where he found for himself a teacher of painting, a reverend deacon, also a Spartan. For three days the tramp-pupil 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 Tarasivka to a deacon-painter who was famous in the neighborhood for his portrayal 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 Apelles⁴⁾ 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 gazed carefully at the left palm of the tramp and turned him down cold, having found no talent in him not only for painting but for cooeping too.

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

3) A hiding with a birch switch.

4) Apelles was a painter of Ancient Greece.

That too was not to be. The landowner Pavel Vasilievich 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 teaking and sharovari⁵⁾ of the same material, and finally, into the position of indoor kozachok⁶⁾. While serving as a kozachok, on the sly with a pencil stolen from a clerk, he copied paintings of the Suzdal school which adorned the master's chambers. Travelling with the entourage that followed his lord of the manor to Kiev, Vilno and St. Petersburg, at the inns he stole pictures of various historical heroes such as Solovey-Razboynik⁷⁾, Kulnev, Kutuzov, Cossack Platov and others, with the intention of copying them exactly at his leisure.

The opportunity and the leisure came in Vilno. This was on December 6th, 1829. The lord⁸⁾ and lady drove off to a ball and in the building 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 lord and lady had returned from the ball. The master tore 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.

5) Sharovari — broad Ukrainian pantaloons-like trousers.

6) Kozachok is a servant boy.

7) Solovey-Razboynik (Nightingale-Brigand) was a legendary Russian highwayman who was also reputed to sing "like a nightingale."

8) In giving Engelhardt his title, Shevchenko uses the word "pan" which in Poland and also in Ukraine is equivalent to "lord" or "master", while among Poles today it has become plain "Mister."

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-deacon. But despite all restraints, on bright summer nights he would run to the Summer Gardens to copy the ugly and clumsy statues (worthy decoration for Peter's garden!). In that garden and at that same time he began to make excursions into the art of poetry. Out of numerous attempts he eventually published only one — the ballad "Prichinna⁹⁾." During one of those seances he got acquainted with the artist Ivan Maksimovich Soshenko, with whom he remains on the most sincere and brotherly of relations to the present day. On Soshenko's advice he began to try his hand at watercolour 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 I. M. Soshenko introduced him to the conference-secretary of the Academy of Arts, V. I. Grigorovich, with the purpose of securing his liberation from his sorry state. V. I. Grigorovich made representations on his behalf to V. A. Zhukovsky and V. A. Zhukovsky, first learning his price from the landowner, asked K. P. Bryullov to paint his, V. A. Zhukovsky's, portrait for the Imperial family, intending to raffle it off in the tsar's family circle. The great Bryullov gladly agreed. The portrait was painted. V. A. Zhukovsky, with the assistance of Count M. Y. Vielgorsky, organized the lottery for 2,500 rubles

⁹⁾ The opening verses of "Prichinna" have become one of the most loved folk songs of Ukraine: "The Mighty Dnieper".



Pencil drawing of his childhood home by Shevchenko, 1842.

in cash, and at that price the freedom of Taras Shevchenko was bought on April 22nd, 1838.

That very day he began to attend 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 Kostomarov¹⁰⁾, Kulish¹¹⁾ and many others on the basis of information by a certain Petrov, a student at Kiev University. They were sent to various fortresses without trial or examination, and

¹⁰⁾ Kostomarov, Mikola, I. (1817-85), historian and writer, professor of Kiev University, leader with Kulish and others of the liberal-nationalist wing of the Society of Cyril and Methodius (Kirilo-Mefodievske Bratstvo) in which Taras Shevchenko headed the democratic-revolutionary trend.

¹¹⁾ Kulish, Panteleimon A. (1819-97), Ukrainian writer, ideologist of Ukrainian nationalism.

on May 30th of that same year T. H. Shevchenko was transported from the casemate of the Third Department¹²⁾ to the Orsk fortress and later to the Novopetrovsk fortifications with the most strict prohibition to write and to paint.

On August 22nd, 1858, due to intercession by Countess Anastasia Ivanovna Tolstoy¹³⁾ he was freed from Novopetrovsk fortress. And thanks to her solicitations he was by the highest clemency permitted to exist 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 people at the head of the Academy, he devotes himself to aquatint and aquafort¹⁴⁾ 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!).

In the first half of January, 1860.

¹²⁾ Headquarters of the tsarist secret police.

¹³⁾ Wife of Count F. P. Tolstoy, vice-president of the Academy of Arts.

¹⁴⁾ Aquatint and aquafort are methods of engraving (line engraving).



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