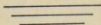


# UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

And Its Guiding Light  
SHEVCHENKO

*by*

C. H. ANDRUSYSHEN



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## And Its Guiding Light

### SHEVCHENKO

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SHEVCHENKO'S PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF



## ***Shevchenko — A National And Universal Genius***

To the Ukrainians Shevchenko is a name to conjure with. To them he is not merely a poet, but a seer, a prophet, whose message is indelibly impressed upon the hearts and minds of all those who belong to his race. In him, in the poetic heritage he left them, his people see the past, the present and the future of their land revealed in the darkest and brightest shades. He is a torch that lights their groping steps towards a better future; but he is also a lash that does not spare those who lag behind on the path of progress, that path which he himself had blazed for them.

There is but one other in the realm of literature with whom Shevchenko can be compared, and he is Dante Alighieri. Just as Dante's work is a compendium of all that had been achieved in the Middle Ages, so does Shevchenko's work embrace all that is evoked by the word 'Ukraine', all the joys and sorrows of its people. He lays bare the very heart of the nation, and proclaims to the world her glory that was and her glory that shall be. Ukraine is Shevchenko, and Shevchenko is Ukraine. He is the embodiment of her spirit, of that spirit which had enlivened that nation for a thousand years before his birth and which will continue to enliven it as long as the foundations of the earth stand firm and the structure of humanity remains solid.

A commonplace remark passed on Shevchenko by those who do not know him enough is that he is a nationalistic poet through and through, and that for that reason his message is limited to his own people.

That is true only to some extent; because in his writings one can almost at random detect features that appeal to humanity at large. Certainly, his main concern is with his own Ukraine; but those aspirations, hopes, and protests against injustice, which make his poems so vital, can, by extension, be brought to refer to any people subjected by a foreign power, or to any part of humanity that suffers want and oppression. In human and humane qualities Shevchenko excels even Pushkin and Mickiewicz, and, on that score at least, can be regarded as the foremost poet of the human heart in the Slavic world, if not in the entire world.

Shevchenko's life presents a constant conflict with fate and with vested authorities. It was not a happy one. He was born a serf and in that lowly state he remained till his twenty-fourth year. His freedom purchased for cold cash, he could then live the life of a free man; but fate had decreed otherwise. The tsarist government, which was on the alert for the least sign of opposition to its regime, would not tolerate any expression tinged with Ukrainian national spirit. The Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood was one of the organizations where ideas of liberty were extensively discussed, and for that reason it was ever under the vigilant eyes of the police. Shevchenko did not actively belong to that society, but his friends did; and his association with them implicated him when, in 1847, the tsarist police swooped down upon the members and incriminated them. Shevchenko's lot, however, would not have been so harsh if previously he had not been so rash to write the poem *Son* (The Dream) in which he ridiculed tsar Nicholas I and his entire family, especially his wife whom he, in the poem, described as a thin creature on long legs and as dry as a mush-

room. To say such a thing about any woman is bad enough, but to say it about the exalted person of a Russian empress was tantamount to treason. For that Shevchenko was sentenced to hard military labor far from his beloved Ukraine, in the barren regions of the Caspian Sea. He was forbidden to write and to paint, but he did both, either secretly or by sufferance of his guards. Some of the poems which he wrote in exile are among his best. Most of these, as the report goes, he wrote surreptitiously, hiding them in his boots in order to avoid detection by those overseers who were stricter than others.

Speaking of his painting, it must be borne in mind that he was an expert in that manner of art. Although his productions do not reach the level of the then prevailing European standards, still he was favourably considered as an artist in the entire Russia; so much so that shortly before his arrest he was offered the post of an instructor at the Kiev Academy of Arts. His fame as a poet, however, eclipsed that of a painter.

Ten years of his prime life passed in exile; and when he was finally freed, he returned a broken man, an old and spent man at the age of forty-three. Only four years remained for him to live, and during that time he wrote such masterpieces as the *Neophytes* and *Maria*, which are perhaps the greatest of his entire literary creation, for they are of genuine universal quality, worthy to be placed among the greatest creative achievements of the human mind.

As mentioned above, Shevchenko had only four more years to live. He died at the age of forty-seven completely undermined by misery and by the injustice of men. For only nine years he was a free man. For the rest of his life he was either a serf, an exile, or under the police surveillance.



The portraits and photographs we have of him reveal him mostly as an aged man, perhaps in his sixties. These are, no doubt, true replicas of his appearance, but it must be nevertheless remembered that he died a bachelor, comparatively young, decrepit in body, but youthful in spirit.

That spiritual youth shines through all his works, whether they are of an earlier or later date. It is a fountain of national life for his entire people. As long as they draw from it they will never grow old, mossy, or fossilized; and in their constant and eternal youth they will work out, as years, decades, and centuries pass by, that destiny which Shevchenko had envisaged and prophesied for them in his *Kobzar*, which is the Book of Revelation to the Ukrainians, who see in it the millenium that is to come to the land in which Shevchenko flourished.

Woman has a greater place in Shevchenko's work than has man. And for a good reason: for she serves as the prototype of Ukraine herself. It is a lowly woman that he at first presents, an innocent creature led astray by a deceitful lover who abandons her to fate, a poor widow, a destitute orphan surrounded by a cold, hostile world. In his poem *Katerina* we have that picture of a woman tempted, fallen into error and consequently on evil days. But what a far cry from *Katerina* to the mother of Alcides (Hercules) in his poem *The Neophytes*, or to the mother of Christ in his glorious poem *Maria*, in which he depicts her as never a poet in the whole wide world and time had ever depicted her. In both the latter poems the woman has, through error and tribulation, developed into a glorious motherhood and given rise to an issue that will eventually save humanity. It is these two poems that elevate Shevchenko into a world-wide sphere. In

them he is no longer a national poet, but a poet of the entire human race.

In the *Neophytes* one sees a glowing picture of Nero's Rome as it wallows in filthy orgies and in Christian blood. Over the reeking fumes of the bodies torn by famished beast and charred by fire there hovers the mystic Word, the Word risen from the tomb in all its resurrected glory, proclaiming to the wicked humanity the new truth, the truth whose armor is love and brotherhood. And in that vision one sees the Apostle Peter raise his hands over the prevailing moral chaos and bless the bacchanalian orgy, saying: "Peace be unto you!"

*"І оргію благословив.  
І тихим, добрим, кротким словом  
Благовістив їм слово нове:  
Любов і правду і добро,  
Добро найкращеє на світі —  
То братолюбіє . . . І слово  
Із уст апостола святого  
Драгим слесм потекло.  
І стихла оргія."*

("He blessed the orgy, and in his soft, mild, humble speech he proclaimed to them a new word—love and truth and goodness, the most precious goodness in the world—brotherly love . . . And that word flowed like precious oil from the lips of the holy Apostle. And the orgy ceased.")

The orgy ceased, filled with wonder at these new and strange words proclaiming the brotherhood of men. But the Roman revellers failed to understand them, and the blood bath of the Christians resumed; and martyr after martyr fell prey to man's hate, hate more ferocious than the claws and the teeth of the beasts that tore the bodies of the first saints, more consuming than the fire that destroyed their bodies.

While amid the chaos and ruin there rises the leader of the martyrs, Alcides, who rebels against the entire pagan world and, together with his followers, pits his strength against the universal idol of injustice. They rebel against it not with fire and sword, but with the mighty spirit of love. "Let them crucify us", exclaims Alcides, "it will avail them nothing; for new children have already been conceived. They will one day grow into manhood and become not avengers, no, but Christ's holy warriors. Without fire and sword they will rise, those warriors, and **numberless hosts** of the evil ones will fly before the saints." And so, inspired by the new truth for which they suffer, the first Christians go to their death. While above this scene of carnage there hovers the glorious figure of Alcides' mother in whom the spark of her son's zeal has increased into a glowing fervor. In that glow she becomes an apostle of peace and truth among humanity. Ending his poem, Shevchenko apostrophises her in the following manner:

*"І спас*

*Тебе розп'ятий син Мар'ї,  
І ти слова його живїї  
В живу душу прийняла,  
І на торжища і в зертоги  
Живого істинного Бога  
Ти слово правди понесла,"*

("And you were saved by the crucified son of Mary, and to his living words you have given refuge in your soul; and to the market squares and to the palaces you have taken the word of truth, the word of the true and veritable God.")

Needless to say that the poem is symbolic. Its background is religious, and it embraces the entire sphere of human morality, morality which consists of Christian

charity and of brotherhood of men. The mother of Alcides is the symbol of world motherhood which can, and finally will, save humanity by its missionary zeal in making love and truth prevail in the world of men.

In the poem *Maria* this theme is developed further and brought to a climax. Here, the mother gives birth to Truth itself; here she becomes the very resurrection of Christ's spirit. It is she who, after the death of her son, exhorts his disciples to continue his mission, rouses them from their stupor, fear and despair.

*"І ти великая в женах,  
І їх уникіс і страх  
Розвіяла, мов ту полову,  
Своїм святим огненним словом;  
Ти дух святий свій пронесла  
В їх душі вбогії . . . Хвала  
І похвала тобі, Маріє!  
Мужі воспрянули святії,  
По всьому світу розійшлись,  
І іменем твогого Сина.  
Твоєї скорбної дитини,  
Любов і правду рознесли  
По всьому світу . . ."*

("And you, O greatest amongst women, scattered their fear and despair like chaff with your sacred and fiery word; your holy spirit you have instilled in their humble souls . . . Glory and praise to you, O Mary! The holy men have risen and dispersed throughout the world, and in the name of your Son, of your unfortunate child, they have disseminated love and truth among mankind . . .")

In these two poems, the *Neophytes* and *Maria*, Shevchenko is revealed as a truly universal poet. In them he is no longer the nationalistic bard that he was in *Katerina*, *Haydamaki*, *The Great Grave*, and

others; he now appeals to the entire humanity. And to be able to speak to humanity with all the force of his genius, he prays to Divinity to grant him that longed-for power in words that glow with ardor and piety:

*"Ридаю,  
Молю, ридаюги; пошли,  
Подай душі убогій силу,  
Щоб огненно заговорила,  
Щоб слово пламенем взялось,  
Щоб людям серце розтопило  
Те слово — Божеє кадило,  
Кадило істини! Амінь!"*

("I cry out, and crying out to Thee, I beseech: grant, vouchsafe to my humble soul that power that I may flamingly speak out, that my word may be couched in fire with which to melt the hearts of men. O for that word which rises fragrantly like holy incense, the incense of truth! Amen!")

The foregoing may sound like a sermon. More or less it is. But one must remember that almost the entire work of Shevchenko is a sermon. Shevchenko plain that he, like the prophets of old, is directly speaking. In several places in his works he makes it quite plain that he, like the prophets of old, is directly speaking with God. Just like the philosopher Spinoza, he is a man intoxicated with God and a seeker of truth.

He is also a poet of liberty, liberty not only for his own people, but likewise for any other that suffers servitude and injustice. He is a firm believer in that liberty, truth, justice will finally triumph. Nowhere in his works is that hope more eloquently expressed than in his *Caucasus* where Truth is symbolized by the mighty figure of Prometheus, that god who, chained to the Caucasian rock, suffers a Christ-like passion.

Every day an eagle rips open his chest and with its sharp beak feasts on his heart. And yet, that heart has the charmed power to heal, to revive and again to beat with gladness and hope. There is no power on earth that can drain the blood that courses in the veins of that mighty divinity. And Shevchenko concludes:

*"Не вмірає душа наша, Не скує душі живої  
Не вмірає воля, І слова живого,  
І неситий не виоре Не понесе слави Бога,  
На дні моря поля, Великого Бога."*

("Our soul is deathless; deathless is our liberty; and even as the greedy oppressor will not furrow a field at the bottom of the sea, so cannot the living soul be bound, nor the living word be fettered. And the glory of God, of the mighty God, shall not be tarnished . . .")

At this point in the poem Shevchenko apostrophises God, saying:

*"Не нам на прою з Тобою стати,  
Не нам діла Твої судить,  
Нам тільки плакати, плакати, плакати,  
І хліб насущний зам'єсить  
Кр'івавим потом і сльозами.  
Гати знущаються над нами,  
А правда наша п'яна спить!  
Коли вона прокинеться?"*

*Коли опозити  
Лажеш, Боже утомлений,  
І нам даси жити?  
Ми віруєм Твоїй силі  
І слову живому:  
Встане правда, встане воля,  
І Тобі одному  
Поклоняться всі язики*

*Во віки і віки.  
А покищо тезуть ріки,  
Кр'иваві ріки!"*

(It is not for us to rise against Thee, it is not for us to judge Thy work: our lot is only to weep and weep and weep, and to knead our daily bread together with bitter tears and bloody sweat. Our executioners torment us while our truth sleeps a drunken sleep. When will it awaken, when wilt Thou lie down to rest, O weary God, and let us live? We believe in Thy power and in Thy living Word. Truth shall rise, and Liberty shall rise, and to Thee alone will all the people of the earth do reverence for ages without end. While in the meantime the streams flow on . . . bloody streams! . . .")

Here we have Shevchenko as a poet of universal liberty, liberty which comes in the wake of truth. So staunch a seeker of truth is Shevchenko that at times, when utter despair seizes him, he upbraids God himself for not lending man an assisting hand in making justice prevail upon the earth.

As we mentioned before, Shevchenko was a painter of some note. That power of depiction he brings to bear in many of his poems. In a few short lines, at times, he creates a picture so glowing with life and beauty that one can never forget it. The greatest of such poems in his production is the *Evening*, the like of which I have never read in the vast store of other literatures of the world. It seems that if Shevchenko had not written anything else, but this short poem, he would still have immortalized himself in Ukrainian literature. It evokes a rustic scene, a scene which for sheer power of concentration surpasses even Grey's *Elegy*. Listen to this miniature masterpiece, and if you have any imagination at all, you will see this

wonderful vision clearly pictured before your eyes no matter where you are, on the sands of the Sahara, on the wide expanses of the oceanic wilderness, or in the deepest jungles:—

*“Садок вишневий коло хати,  
Хрущі над вишнями гудуть,  
Плугатарі з плугами йдуть,  
Співають. ідузи, дівзата,  
А матері везерять ждуть.*

*“Сім'я везеря коло хати,  
Вез'рня зіронька встає,  
Дозка везерять подає,  
А мати хоже наузати,  
Так соловейко не дає,*

*“Поклала мати коло хати  
Маленьких дітожок своїх,  
Сама заснула коло їх.  
Затихло все... Тільки дівзата  
Та соловейко не затих.”*

(“A cherry orchard by a cottage; the beetles hum over the cherry trees; the plowmen with their plows wend their way homeward; and as they return from the fields, the young women sing; while the mothers are awaiting them all with their suppers. — The family is supping by the cottage; the evening star is rising; the daughter serves the meal; and the mother wishes to admonish and instruct her children, but the nightingale will not allow her.—The mother has put her little children to sleep by the cottage; they all slumber, and she herself has fallen asleep beside them. All is quiet . . . only the maidens and the nightingales are not silenced.”)

It is frankly to be admitted that the above translation does not by any means do even remote justice



to the poem. One must go to the original to get a vivid picture of that quiet pastoral scene, so full of peace, harmony and simplicity. It is to be noticed that here Shevchenko does not describe anything in detail; he simply paints with broad dashes. There is nothing ornate in it; it is a humble little piece, quite unpretentious; but in its very humility and unpretentiousness it is a rare masterpiece.

There are passages in Shevchenko in which his voice sounds like a clarion call to the future generations of his race. One of these calls is to be found in what is known as his "Testament" (Зановир). There, in a stern command, he cries out:

*"Поховайте та вставайте,  
Кайдани порвіте,  
І вражою злою кров'ю  
Волю окропіте,"*

("Bury me, and rise to shatter your chains asunder, and with the evil blood of your enemies sprinkle your liberty.")

Then, in the *Caucasus*, we hear him exclaim:

*"Борітеся — побороете!"*  
("Strive and you shall conquer!")

And again, in Ivan Huss:

*"Прозріте, люди — день настане!"*  
("Open your eyes—the day has dawned!")

But the greatest of these clarion calls is the one that is to be found in his *Epistle* to the Ukrainians wherever they may be found, to those who are now living as well as to those who will compose future generations. In that most famous edifying and didactic poem Shevchenko exhorts his countrymen in the following manner:

*"Узітеся, брати мої,  
Думайте, зитайте,  
І зужому наузайтесь,  
Свого не цурайтесь:  
Бо хто матір забуває,  
Того Бог карає,  
Чужі люде цураються  
В хату не пускають,  
Свої діти, як зужії,  
І немає злomu  
На всій землі безкoneзній  
Веселого дому."*

("Study, my brethren, think and read, acquire the knowledge of foreign lands, but do not scorn that which is your own: for God will punish him who forgets his own mother, and alien people will spurn such a one, and refuse him hospitality: to such a pervert his own people are like strangers, and for him there is no happy nook upon this boundless earth.")

Yes, this is a stern injunction left by Shevchenko to all Ukrainians, those living and those yet to be born. And this admonition is even greater than his command to break their chains asunder; it is far greater than the order—"Strive and you shall conquer!" Because the spirit of Enlightenment is a force against which no power of darkness or of brute might can prevail, Shevchenko therefore exhorts his people to immerse themselves in the knowledge of things Ukrainian, as well as to seek wisdom elsewhere; and at the same time he implores them not to spurn their own language, because he who forgets his mother will in the end be sorely punished for the misdeed. Such a one is a traitor to his own people, and will, in his turn, be spurned and disdained.

That is the very foundation of Shevchenko's national philosophy:—Once the people are enlightened, they will know how to struggle in order to conquer, they will know how to shatter their chains of servitude; after which they will be able to open their eyes wide to see the dawn of a new day. But the prerequisite of all that is the enlightenment of each and every individual of the entire nation.

Shevchenko's *Kobzar* is the greatest treasure the Ukrainians possess. What the Bible is to Christendom, that the *Kobzar* is to the Ukrainian nationhood. Without it Ukrainians would not be that which Shevchenko's genius had predestined them to be. Of Kotlyarevsky Shevchenko says:

*"Один він між нами як сонце високе."*

These words may well be applied to Shevchenko himself: "He among us is like the sun above." Yes indeed, because he is a seer, a prophet of first magnitude.

*"Неназе наш Дніпро широкий,  
Слова його лились, текли,  
І в серце падали глибоко,  
І н'би тим вогнем пекли  
Холодні душі,"*

("Like our broad and mighty Dnieper, his words poured forth and flowed, and deep into the heart they penetrated, and as if with fire they burned the cold souls of men.")

Then let those words flow like precious oil from the lips of the Apostle, let them flow in full flood. The Ukrainians need them. They cannot exist without Shevchenko because he is the very heart of their nation. He is their alpha and their omega.

## *Highlights of Ukrainian Literature*

Ukraine can boast of the greatest democratic and humanitarian literature in the world. That is a broad and categorical statement, but true nevertheless. From its very beginning Ukrainian literature has been a bulwark against oppression and injustice; from its very beginning it came to the defense of the common mass which toiled and suffered in serfdom, in economic, cultural and political poverty. It likewise proved a powerful instrument in effecting their emancipation and enlightenment. And it could not have been otherwise, because our literature took rise out of the very soil that produced and fed the hardy race of our fathers. True, one of its characteristics is its excessive sentimentality, but it is no less noted for its battle cries of freedom.

Its chief characteristic is that it took rise out of the living speech of the peasants. It was not formed in learned academies; it was not developed in literary salons, as was the French language, for example. It grew out of the needs and aspirations of those who lived under thatched roofs, of those who toiled on their sacred soil and irrigated it with tears of joy and sorrow. And that is why the Ukrainian language is so vital. It is the living language of the people. And I insist that only the language spoken by the general mass of common people is the genuine language of a given race. That which is developed and formed in salons and learned coteries is artificial.

There are four lines in Ukrainian literature that never cease to have a magical effect on me. Many, many years ago I came across those lines, which literally

cast a spell over me then, and even now continue to charm me. Here they are:

*"Горе ж мені, нещаслива доле!  
Ізорала бідна вдова мислоньками поле,  
Карими озима та й заволозила,  
Дрібненькими слізоньками все поле змозила."*

Which, if translated freely, means:

("Grief, my dire grief!

With her thoughts the poor widow has furrowed  
the field,

With her dark eyes she harrowed it,

And with her thickly streaming tears has made it  
moist.")

One would try in vain to render this passage into idiomatic English. Its spirit will simply not lend itself to translation. All one could do is admit that there is no finer expression of its kind in the songs of any nation. In a few salient words one gets the impression of a destitute widow whose sorrow is so immense and whose thoughts so intensely laden with grief as to furrow the hard field itself; so concentrated is that grief in her eyes that it becomes palpable, as sharp as steel with which one harrows the soil; and her tears flow so copiously as to flood the field she works on . . .

I was a small boy when I first came across those lines, and for years afterwards I tried to learn the name of the poet who composed them. But there was none to be found. Those words sprang from the people, just as a plant rises out of the soil. The people are their sole creator. And for that reason, as I grew older, I continually sought to understand who were the people whose poetic power made their very grief and misfor-

tune blossom into such a thing of beauty. And it was in their traditions, manners and customs, in their oral and written literature that I came to understand them.

What interests me most in any literature is not its fictional or realistic matter as such, but its very spirit, the types, the characters, the heroes which the genius of a race creates. And all because it is in the creation of types that the soul of a nation is most clearly revealed. These positive types I find mostly in Ukrainian historical songs and *dumy* which recreate for me the entire Ukrainian historical period from 1550 to the end of the eighteenth century.

This period begins with the Tatar invasions of Ukraine. These barbaric inroads caused a heroic reaction of the entire people who rose in mass against this threat to their liberty. Out of this reaction there emerged an organization, a military organization unique in the annals of history. And that organization was the Slavic knighthood of the Zaporoggian Kozaks, who unfurled their banner of freedom, and with the cry "Let us as one man rise in defence of our Christian faith," stemmed the rising and surging tide of Islam, thus saving the entire western Europe from the Turk. This heroic effort is glowingly reflected in the historical songs of the nation, and their ever recurring refrain is:

*"За віру християнськую одностайне стати!"*

"Let us as one man rise in defence of our Christian faith."

This crusading effort created a heroic episode in the history of Ukraine, and the exploits of are embodied in the songs which the popular muse composed almost extemporaneously. The representative of these heroic times is Bayda Vishnevetsky, the terror

of Islam. So great is his rash boldness that he becomes the very incarnation of that glorious period. In the song which idealizes his renown, we find him drinking brandy in the very capital of the Turks, boisterously refusing to exchange Christianity for Mohamedanism. For this he suffers. The Turks hook him up by his ribs and hang him on a gibbet. As he thus hangs, with cold steel piercing his body, he asks a final favor of his executioners: a bow and three arrows with which to kill three doves for the sultan's supper. Given these, he kills the sultan, his wife, and daughter, thus even in his last moments destroying the enemies of his people and of his faith. Such a hero is Bayda that the Turkish leaders eat his very heart in order to gain some of his qualities of courage.—And so Bayda is the representative of those thousands who would rather suffer the dungeon and the chains of a lifelong captivity and even death, rather than prove false to their Christian faith.

Reading these historical songs, one cannot help but think that the martyrdom of the Christians did not end with Nero and Diocletian.

Lofty morality is evoked in these historical songs. In them we find Bondarivna, Bondar's daughter, who chose death rather sacrifice her chastity to the lecherous Pole Kanyovsky. In them we find that the greatest of virtues is the keeping of the fourth commandment. That is particularly made clear in the *duma* which gives an account of the kozaks' amphibious expedition against the Turks. As they ply their oars across the Black Sea, a terrible storm overtakes them, and they find themselves at the peril of their lives. While they are in that distress, their commander steps in among them and tells them that one of them is guilty of a grievous, unpardonable sin, and that that sin has now brought

misfortune upon them. At which the young popovich, a priest's son, asks to be thrown into the sea in order to appease God's wrath, for he is the greatest sinner among them all, the greatest sinner in that he had not honored his father and his mother, and had insulted them before leaving on this expedition. As soon as he confesses this guilt and repents, the storm subsides, and the kozaks continue on their way to a merry old time with the Turks.—With such strict morality ruling the people's hearts, with such a rigid conception of one's duty with regard to one's parents, it is no wonder that the Ukrainian family has remained a solid mainstay of the entire nation.

It has often been said that Ukrainian people lack much in social manners, that they do not know how to behave in public, and in many instances conduct themselves improperly. Considering the people as a whole, nothing is farther from the truth. One has but to read Ukrainian literature to be convinced that the contrary is the case. I have recently come across a seventeenth century code of good manners, which I read with great interest. No doubt, it will make you smile, but it will also prove to you that even three centuries ago Ukrainians knew what was proper or improper in their social relations with one another. Out of a host of rules and regulations I submit to you the following:

"Do not cut, pare or chew your fingernails when you are among people."

"Do not make too much noise when you blow your nose in company; and do not look into your handkerchief once you have blown into it."

"Do not spit on the floor when others are present; if you do, do not spit too far away from you. Take care to wipe the spittle with your foot."



"Do not scratch your back against the doorpost when you are visiting."

"Do not crack your knuckles when you are at the table: people might get the impression you are gnawing bones."

"Eat slowly, do not put a second piece of meat into your mouth until you have swallowed the first morsel."

"Do not bend right over the table, especially when you are eating something liquid; just lean forward a bit, very gracefully, and when you are through, straighten yourself out slowly to an erect position. Take care not to drop anything on the table cloth.—Do not suck the marrow from the bone . . . and remember not to wipe your nose or perspiration with the napkin."

"If you are walking with a person who is more important than you, see that you remain half a step behind him, for it is not proper to walk abreast with a person of a higher rank."

"Do not yawn when your betters are speaking; but if you cannot help doing it, cover your mouth with your hand or handkerchief, or turn aside and do it very quietly. Above all, do not fall asleep when your betters are addressing you."

So much for table manners and general etiquette as prescribed by the Ukrainian *bon ton* of the seventeenth century.

Thus far we have been considering the general aspect of that part of Ukrainian literature which was created by the entity called "race". Let us now deal briefly with some individual authors who appear to be

the very embodiment of the nation's spiritual, humanitarian and artistic spheres of life.

As we enter upon our short survey of the temple of Ukrainian letters the first of these literary giants that we encounter is Ivan Vishensky, who lived in the sixteenth century, and who was one of the first to raise a powerful voice in protest against the injustice done to the common people by the mighty of this world. So greatly did Ivan Franko consider Vishensky that he immortalized both him and himself in a poem which is one of the monuments of Ukrainian literature. In it we find Vishensky, weary of public life, enter the Greek monastery on Mount Athos. He is not satisfied with merely ending his days among the monks; he wishes to bury himself in a cell at the foot of a precipice, apart from every living being, with only the crucifix and the sea as his only sights. There they lower him, and there he remains for years and years, until one day emissaries arrive from Ukraine to beg him return to continue his struggle for the spiritual and physical emancipation of his people. He refuses, and they depart in sorrow. While he reflects upon the sad lot of his people, another companion enters his cell—a spider, which distracts him from his prayers by weaving a web. And old Vishensky is struck with the thought that prayer is not enough, that one must both pray and work, that such is the law of divine nature. And he prays for a miracle to happen; and by a miracle he is transported to the departing ship which he sees in a distance. He returns to his beloved Ukraine to continue the good fight as a soldier of God and of his people.

One hundred years later Ukraine was blessed by another such defender of the rights of the people—

Hrihori Savich Skovoroda, whose steps measured the length and breadth of Ukraine as he walked on foot, like an apostle, from village to village, preaching spiritual perfection, and fulminating against the oppressors of his people. His is a great philosophy, which he concentrated in one pithy sentence: "God made all things necessary easy to attain, and all things difficult--unnecessary." It is only too apparent that this great rule applies more than ever to our day and age.

Then came Ivan Kotlyarevsky who in 1798 began a new era of Ukrainian literature with his travestied "Aeneid", in which the living language of the people was restored to its honored position in Ukrainian letters. He was followed by a whole array of writers whose chief theme was the social betterment of the people. Mostly all of some twenty better known writers who wrote in the age of Shevchenko, or preceded him, presented a glaring picture of the injustice endured by the peasants. Almost each one of them painted realistic pictures of those times when serfdom had reduced the common mass of humanity to an almost animal state of existence. One important fact to remember in this connection is that Ukrainian literature was the first in the world to introduce the peasants, their life, manners and customs, and their problems in the arena of world literature. Another important fact to remember with regard to these writers is that most of them wrote, or preferred to write, in Russian; but not a single one succeeded in establishing himself in Russian literature. And yet they all understood the significance and importance of the popular speech, and were driven, as if by fate, to write in the language of the masses. While their endeavour in the Russian sphere remains insig-

nificant, in their native sphere they shine like stars of first magnitude.

Need anything be said about Shevchenko? In him the entire genius of the Ukrainian people is incarnated. He is the compendium of all that made Ukraine what she has been and what she is now. So great, so powerful is his work and influence that one cannot but be proud to belong to the race to which he belonged.

Space does not allow us to dwell at great length on Markian Shashkevich who effected a literary rebirth in Western Ukraine (Galicia); or on Yuri Fedkovich who did the same in Bukovina; but one certainly cannot pass over Ivan Franko with a mere mention of his name, because the man looms large before us in all his Mosaic stature. For it was he who, like Moses, had led his people out of the "Egyptian" darkness, out of the land of spiritual bondage into the light of a new day, and for forty years had been their leader. Franko appeared on the scene to find his people a collective hireling, a *naymit* who plows the field which does not belong to him. Out of this hireling Franko made a pioneer, a *kamenyar*, instructing him how to pierce his way through the solid mountain of injustice beyond which lies the promised land. This pioneer Franko inspired with the eternal spirit of revolt against falsehood and injustice. And once the hireling becomes a pioneer, and once the pioneer is filled with the spirit of progress, he grows into a mass of seething humanity and moves like lava from an erupted volcano.

*"Розвалилася руїна,  
Покотилася лявіна,  
І де в світі тая сила,*

*Щоб в бігу її спинила,  
Щоб згасила мов огонь,  
Розвидняючийся день?"*

("The evil ruin has collapsed, and the lava rushes down. And where in this wide world is there a power to arrest it in its course, to extinguish the light of the dawning day.")

And could we even for a moment forget Lesya Ukrainka, that woman whose feeble body had been enlivened by a mighty spirit, whose very weakness generated the strength of a legion, and who boldly revealed to her people their sins, transgressions and limitations, and flayed them mercilessly, pounding into them the consciousness of their nationhood? It is no wonder that Ivan Franko called her: "одинокій мужчина на всю соборну Україну." ("the only masculine being in the entire Ukraine.")

It is always in an attitude of reverence that I approach the glorious work of Mikhaylo Kotsyubinski, because I consider him to be the greatest artist Ukraine has ever produced. Kotsyubinski is a superb and supreme master of Ukrainian prose. In him the ethnographic school that prevailed in Ukrainian literature for a hundred years before him finds its essence. In him also is the essence of all that is artistic, refined and ideal in the Ukrainian genius. One is somewhat at a loss even to begin to reveal this man who, like Shevchenko in poetry, is in poetic prose an incomparable master. All one could do here is give but a smattering of this great author who all his life had been battling against the commonplace. And I heartily admire a man who seeks to rise above the commonplace reality and to reach into the clouds, there to build his castles. I admire Kotsyubinski because he is like that

Egyptian god whose feet are firmly planted on solid earth, but whose head is among the stars. Kotsyubinski is the greatest enemy of the commonplace I know.

His *Dream* begins with a description of a petty clerk who lives in a dirty, muddy town. Day after day, month after month, and year after year he walks down the same bleak, grey streets to and from his dry and dusty work, on the way to which he invariably meets the same ordinary faces. He is yearning for an ideal to brighten his life at least occasionally, but even his home is as uninviting and cold as the town itself. This petty clerk, whose heart is filled with the imperative need of beauty, is at the point of despair. He does not get any understanding from anyone, not even from his wife who is an ordinary commonplace woman, careless about her appearance, and forever pestering him with her dreams, insignificant domestic matters and kitchen chores. She does not nag him, no, she simply bores him. No sooner does he arrive home than he is confronted by this voluble person who never seems to dry up. Time and time again she wearies him either with the rising cost of potatoes, cabbage and other vegetables, or by insisting on discussing the condition of the cask which she intends to use for her dills or pickles. All that commonplace talk the man bears with the patience of a martyr . . . One day however he wakes up unusually sprightly and cheerful. He has had a dream. His transformation frightens the woman, and she will not let him rest until he has told it to her. He does:—It seems he had suddenly found himself on an enchanted island. High up on a cliff he saw a beautiful woman, extending her arms to the sun. She was a vision of loveliness, as you can well imagine. And you can also imagine what happened. And you are right,

because the dreamer did get to her, and together they sported through the enchanted idyllic scenes, enjoying every manifestation of the natural phenomena, forgetful of all else. Their enjoyment goes on for many a page, while the wife listens with jealousy and apprehension. Finally, her anger rising to her throat, she cries out: "Did you kiss her?" — "Yes," he confesses, "I did".—Poor Martha (that is her name) bursts into tears, and although her husband seeks to console her and assure her that he did it quite innocently, merely in a dream, nothing helps. The fact remains that he admitted to kissing another woman, and that is enough for her. From that time on they quarrel frequently and bitterly, but Martha, however, does her best to brighten herself and her home for him. He has gained his end. His life has been made beautiful, but at a price . . .

Finally, we come to Vasil Stefanik who in his miniature stories paints a glaring and oppressive picture of the cruel lot of the peasants. These short stories are real, genuine jewels of artistry, and some of them are worth ever more than a full-length naturalistic novel. In them Stefanik depicts the sturdy characters of the soil who gain in strength even as they are pounded and crushed in the mortar of their fate. They are strong, hard-crust ed individuals who are not afraid of speaking their minds to God Himself. — Stefanik's outstanding creation is old Maksim who, although aged and abandoned by all, still ploughs his field which is often fed by the drops of his blood. His sons had been killed in the war, and he is left all alone to tend his beloved soil. It is heart-rending to hear him vent his grief to his Maker. And it is even more heart-rending to see him, in the evening, kneel down

before the image of the Virgin and Christ and say these words: "А Ти, Мати Божа, будь моею газдинею; Ти з своїм Сином посередині, а коло Тебе мої сини, Андрій та Іван, по боках . . . Ти дала Сина одного, а я двох."

("And you, Mother of God, be my housekeeper, you and your son in the middle, and my own sons, Andriy and Ivan, on both sides of you. You have given one son, but I have given two.") It is rarely that one finds anything so powerful in any literature.

The greatest scene in Stefanik's works, the scene one can never forget, is that in which the older, Andriy, comes to old Maksim and says: "Father, we are now setting out to fight for Ukraine."—The old man is surprised, and asks: "What kind of Ukraine are you talking about?"—In reply, the son picks up a lump of earth with the point of his sword and says: "This is Ukraine." And pointing the sword to his chest, he adds: "And here is her blood. We are off to regain our land from the enemy."—And the flash of the blade dazzles the aged man, who finally says: "Son, I still have a younger one than yourself. Take Ivan also with you for this sacred duty."—And so the sons go off to defend their land, while their mother, supporting herself against a post, looks speechless at their departing forms. At the station, as they are about to board the train, old Maksim says to them: "Don't go back now, and never, never forget me, because I am now all alone in this world. Your mother has died at the gates."—His sons die, leaving him to plow the fields alone, with only God above him to speak and complain to.

And as Maksim follows the plow which is pulled by a reluctant, decrepit horse, one seems to hear an over-tone of a similar grief, and to see that poor widow



who is the embodiment of the entire land of Ukraine. And this is the overtone heard above the entire music of Ukrainian literature:

*"Горе ж мені, нещаслива доле!  
Ізорала бідна вдова мислоньками поле,  
Карими озима та й заволозила,  
Дрібненькими слізоньками все поле змозила."*

("Grief, my dire grief!

With her brooding thoughts the poor widow has  
furrowed the field,

With her dark eyes she has harrowed it,

And with her thickly streaming tears she made it  
moist.")

What are those mysterious thoughts which so potently furrow the field? What is the poor widow really thinking, and what power is it that makes her thinking so substantial? Is that power the never-dying spirit of the race of hardy men and women? Is it the power of the Ukrainian genius? What do you think?

