It is particularly gratifying and surprising to observe the care bestowed on country houses, now arranged as museums. Two, within easy access of Moscow, are Ostankino, situated near the great Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition, and Arkhangelskoye, formerly the country house of the Yusupov family. Ostankino belonged to the Sheremetyevs, who in the eighteenth century were great builders, collectors and, above all, enthusiasts for the theatre.[18] The charming late eighteenth-century house, built of wood in the Palladian style (Fig.9), contains a private theatre and a picture gallery, including works by Salvator Rosa, Cignani, Schedone, Bassano, Palamedes, and George Dawe. At Arkhangelskoye the standard of painting is higher. The ground floor galleries contain portraits by Van Dyck, Vigée Lebrun, Roslin, Rotari, Batoni, and Gros's portrait of Prince Boris Yusupov on horseback.[19] A corner room has four upright landscapes by Hubert Robert[20] and Venetian scenes by Bellotto hang below them.

Two large paintings of *The Story of Cleopatra* by Tiepolo (Figs.7 and 8), which are believed to have been purchased by Prince Yusupov when he was ambassador in Turin in 1783–9, hang in the Saloon. After the Revolution they were removed to Leningrad and are now back again in the country house, somewhat the worse for wear, but interesting in that *The Meeting of Anthony and Cleopatra* bears the date 1747. These paintings can be related to the frescoes in the Palazzo Labia and to *The Banquet of Cleopatra*, which was sold by the Hermitage in 1932 and is now in Melbourne.[21]

Upstairs the history of the building is shown in a series of plans and old engravings. Both houses are kept in immaculate condition; visitors have to wear felt slippers to protect the polished, inlaid, parquet floors. Labels describe the architectural features of the house and the principal works of art, and stress the historical importance of these relics of aristocratic taste, as illustrations of a bygone way of life.

[18] Described by MARIE NOELE KELLY: *Mirror to Russia* [1952], pp.160–6.
[19] Repr. C. STERLING, *loc. cit.*, pl.52.
[20] Reproduced in *Société Impériale d'Encouragement de l'Art: Les Trésors d'Art en Russie*, St Petersburg [1907], pp.179 ff.
[21] Exhibited Royal Academy, 'European Masters of the Eighteenth Century', [1954–5] (No.51). See also *Catalogo, Mostra del Tiepolo*, Venice [1951], p.86; J. GRABAR in *Iskusstvo* [March–April 1947], p.63; MICHAEL LEVEY, 'Tiepolo's "Banquet of Cleopatra" at Melbourne', *Arte Veneta*, IX [1955], p.199.

TAMARA TALBOT RICE

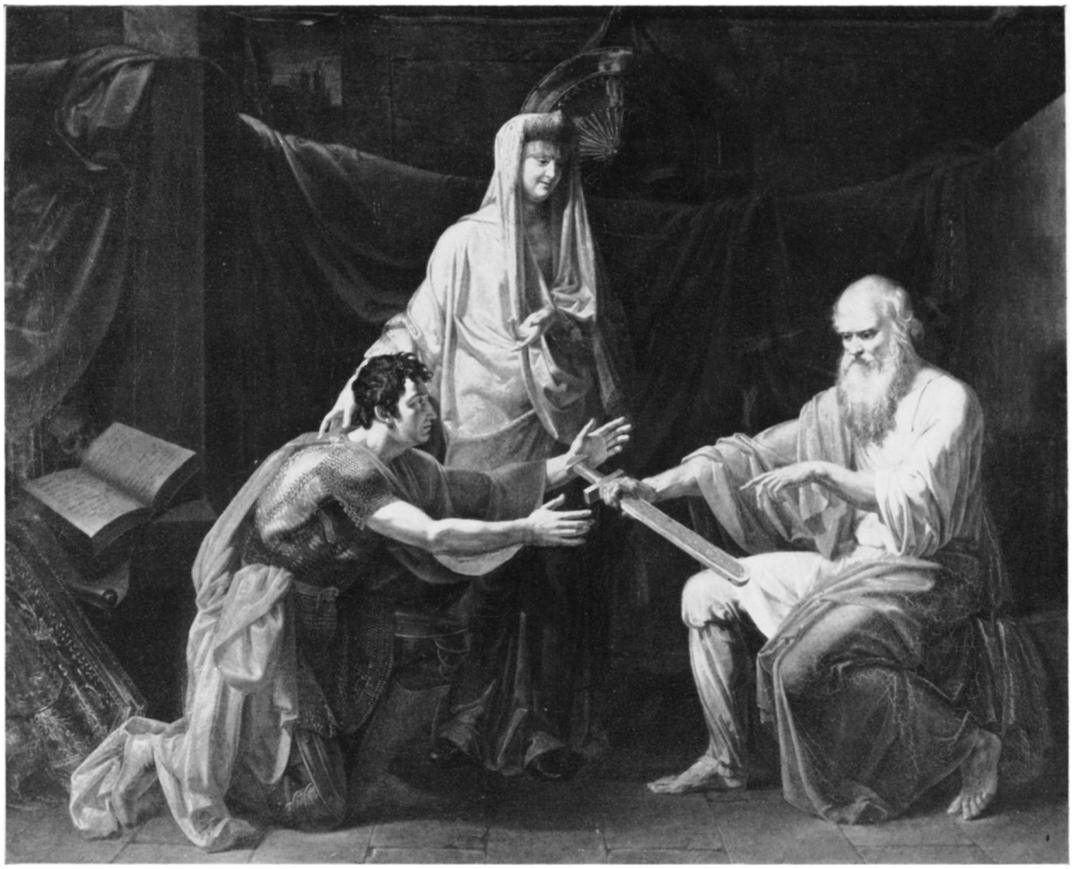
Some Reflections on Nineteenth-century Russian Painting

THE organizers of the Royal Academy exhibition of Russian painting have devoted considerable space to the realistic and 'purpose' painters of the nineteenth century. Though the style of many of these artists is not that most likely to appeal to contemporary western taste, the part they played in the history of Russian art is so important that it fully justifies this choice. It is, however, regrettable that the pictures displayed at the Royal Academy do not in most cases constitute the best selection of works that could have been made, and it is sad that the more important paintings by the leading artists of the period have not been included nor their minor works shown in sufficient numbers to give a fair idea of their stature.

The significance of these artists is twofold; on the one hand must stand, as with all artists, the aesthetic quality of their production; on the other, their historical importance. It is the latter which, in the present instance, must rank paramount, for it was these artists who were the first to rebel against the custom that had obliged Russian painters to conform throughout the thousand years of their history, first to the dictates of their church, then to those of their sovereigns. The painters of the early nineteenth century were the first to insist upon their right of self-expression, and their attitude led to a change in outlook which enabled painters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to develop freely, and thus to produce a succession of splendid and exciting masterpieces. To appreciate the extent of the transformation it is necessary to link the development of the leading artists of the nineteenth century to the social and political changes which resulted from Peter the Great's westernizing reforms.

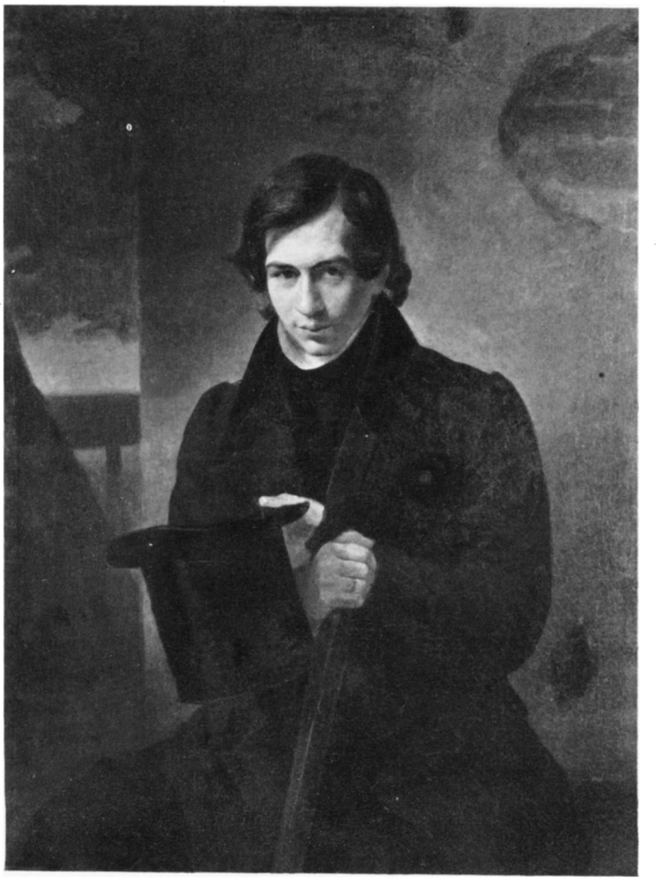
In painting, these reforms obliged artists to develop and master a new style far more rapidly than they would have done had they been allowed to set their own pace for the change. In consequence, the initial phase was largely one of recording – of recording the changed appearance of their native land. Thus the bulk of their work consisted of portraits both of people and places. The former – as, for example, Tropinin's (1776–1857) of *Ravich* (Fig.12) shown in the present exhibition – depicted those who, by adopting western fashions in dress and hairdressing, had ceased to resemble their forebears or the ordinary men and women of the land; the latter recorded the growth of Peter's new capital; these pictures are not landscapes in the real sense of the word, but topographical portraits.

The western formula and outlook were assimilated, at any rate both in St Petersburg and Moscow by the end of the eighteenth century, so that the intellectual elements in these cities were ready to understand and delight in the romantic spirit which prevailed there in the early decades of the nineteenth. Shchedrin (1791–1830) was one of the first artists to express it in landscape painting, and the two pictures by his hand that are included in the present exhibition are among the best of their kind. In portraiture, Borovikovsky (1757–1825), who deserves to have been better represented in the exhibition, and Kiprensky (1782–1836) produced some truly excellent pictures. However strong the romantic element in their works it is rare for it to obscure the sitter's personality (Fig.14). Striving after the inner truth is indeed a basic element in Russian painting of all periods, so that even the elegant portraits of the eighteenth century have little of the veneer of court or drawing-room art. When landscape painting came into its own in the later nineteenth century, as it did with artists such as Shishkin (1832–1898), Arkhipov (1862–1930), Savrasov (1830–1897), and above all, with the splendid seascapes of Aivazovsky (1817–1900) and



11. *The Hermit Feodosy Boretsky handing the Sword of Ratmir to Miroslav*, by Dmitry Ivanovich Inanov. 1808. Canvas, 160·3 by 196 cm. (Russian Museum, Leningrad.)

12. *Portrait of Konstantin Georgiyevich Ravich*, by Vasily Andreyevich Tropinin. 1825. Canvas, 66 by 52 cm. (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.)



13. *Portrait of Nestor Vasilyevich Kukolnik*, by Karl Pavlovich Bryullov. 1836. Canvas, 117 by 81·7 cm. (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.)

with Levitan's (1860–1900) gentle, lyrical renderings of Russia's unspectacular but immensely lovable countryside, this sensitive and faithful response to the visual scene endowed their pictures with a poetic element of enduring value.

The romantic movement produced two artists who became renowned in the Europe of their day. They were Karl Bryullov (1799–1852) and Alexander Ivanov (1806–1858). Both were accomplished technicians as well as sensitive artists. This is especially true of Ivanov, though, at the time, it was Bryullov who met with the greater international success. It came to Bryullov early in life, within seven years of his settling in Florence on a travelling scholarship. Soon after his arrival he attended a performance of Pacini's opera, *The Last Day of Pompeii*. The work enthralled him and, on reading Pliny's account of the disaster, the young painter set to work on an immense canvas devoted to the same subject. He spent several years on it, exhibiting it in 1830. The picture made him famous overnight. Sir Walter Scott gave it the seal of his approbation when, having contemplated it in silence for over an hour, he proclaimed it an epic. Nowadays it would probably strike us as dull and uninspiring, but it is nevertheless a pity that we have not been given the opportunity of seeing it in the exhibition and passing fresh judgement upon it. Instead Bryullov is represented by only one portrait (Fig.13); this is unfortunate, for he was surely Russia's most distinguished portraitist in the romantic style, whose better works can well sustain comparison with those of Lawrence.

Alexander Ivanov receives more generous treatment in the exhibition, though of the five pictures shown, two are studies for two of his most important works. Like Bryullov, Ivanov also won a scholarship to Italy, but he chose to live in Rome rather than in Florence, and it was mainly in Rome that he spent the next twenty-five years of his life. Whilst still a student in Russia, Ivanov had devoted himself to the painting of religious subjects. Bryullov's sensational success with his picture of *The Last Day of Pompeii* led Ivanov to seek a similar triumph by producing a religious picture of equal importance. He chose as his subject *Christ appearing to the People* and he spared no efforts to ensure the picture's success; indeed, he devoted the best part of twenty years to this project, spending much time both in consulting biblical texts and in studying relevent paintings by the old masters. He even intended visiting Palestine to obtain local colour. When this proved impossible, he travelled to Sicily to study the mosaics of Palermo and Monreale. One of the many studies for this work is included in the exhibition; it is of considerable interest, but it is this finished picture which shows the full extent of Ivanov's powers in paintings of this type. To the modern eye, however, Ivanov appears at his most lyrical both in his sensitive landscapes, and more especially in his nudes. Italy had taught him to respond to the beauty of the visual scene and his paintings of nudes are not only the earliest, but they are also among the loveliest in Russian art; the example chosen for inclusion in the exhibition, as well as the two landscapes there, are among his best works. The earlier Dmitry Ivanov (1782–after 1810) is also interesting because his style to some extent recalls that of David (Fig.11).

The importance of the romantic movement proved relatively short lived in Russian painting, for the suffering and political unrest which resulted from Napoleon's invasion of 1812 produced a new temper in Russian society. Henceforth a liberalism not always divested of admiration for the heroic, though combined with a sincere regard for the opinions of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, as well as with a genuine admiration and concern for the Russian peasant, induced many intellectuals to take an interest in their native land and its people. Many of them became united in a determination to improve living conditions in the country, though they were not agreed as to the best way of doing so; one group, that of the Slavophils, believed that hope for the future lay in a return to the customs prevalent before Peter's accession, while the other, that of the Westerners, held altogether different views, for its members were convinced that the solution lay in the complete acceptance of the western way of life and the introduction of wide sweeping social reforms.

No thinking person living either in St Petersburg or in Moscow, and least of all no artist, could find it easy to remain aloof from the fierce arguments of these two parties – or to disregard the growing political unrest. Just as Dickens in England was unable to ignore the social evils of his day or to refrain from portraying them in his books, to the possible detriment of their artistic unity, so, in Russia, did the majority of the painters of the post-Napoleonic period find it difficult to disregard political issues. At first their sympathy was instinctive and unconscious, and as such, confined to the choice of genre scenes as the subjects depicted. This is true of Venetsianov (1780–1847), whose development in this direction was encouraged by the Dutch paintings in the Hermitage Collection. Whilst still a pupil of Borovikovsky, Venetsianov spent much time studying these pictures; somewhat later he became equally attracted by the works of the Le Nain brothers and of Chardin, and all these combined in developing his preference for simple, homely subjects such as the charming picture of *A Peasant Girl with a Scythe and Rake* (Fig.15), which graces the present exhibition. However, his admiration for the works of Granet persisted throughout his life, influencing his own style to no small degree. Venetsianov's pictures of the type here illustrated attracted the attention of the rising generation of artists, and they in their turn were quickly drawn to the native scene.

With these younger men absorption in the local scene was intentional rather than instinctive, but they gazed upon it with less serenity and more cynicism than Venetsianov had done. In consequence their works became infused with a new, strongly satirical, spirit which has much in common with that appearing in the writings of such authors as Griboedov, Goncharov, Gogol, and the considerably later Chekhov. Fedotov (1815–1852) was the first to express this new outlook in painting. It is to be seen in his picture of *A Poor Aristocrat's Breakfast* (Fig.17) which is included in the current exhibition. Where Venetsianov had been affected by the serene domesticity of the Dutch masters, Fedotov was influenced by the touches of satire which appear in these same pictures, and it was this aspect of the Dutch works that influenced his own choice of subject, leading him to portray the social evils of his day and to present them in the exact settings in which they so often occurred. The interest which he took in interiors is evident in his pictures; it was shared by many of his contemporaries and followers, and as a result, it

led to the development of a type of picture entirely devoted to the interior. Compositions of this sort are indeed as characteristic of Russia as the conversation-piece is of England, and contemporary artists such as Alexander Benois and the late Dobuzhinksy excelled at them.

The liberal rule of the opening years of Alexander II's reign (1855–81) enabled the satirical artist to express himself with greater freedom than had been possible under Nicholas I, and painters such as Perov (1833–1882), who is represented in the exhibition by three works, were quick to take advantage of this opportunity. Perov directed his brush at deriding the pettiness of the minor officials and poorer gentry. This did not hinder him from winning a six-year scholarship to Paris which he readily took up, but, as is often the case with artists who find themselves uprooted from their native soil, he failed to benefit by the grant, and spent only two years abroad. He reached Paris late in 1861, and was still there two years later when the *Salon des Refusés* was focusing attention on the young artists who were later to become Impressionists, yet he remained unaffected by their innovations. He may well have been unaware of them, for he was overcome by homesickness. Abandoning his scholarship he returned to St Petersburg late in 1863 and although he continued to paint the same type of picture as formerly, his hand had now lost some of its earlier pungency.

Whilst Perov had been living in a Paris agitated by the protests hurled at the revolutionary painters, the art world of St Petersburg had likewise been rocked by a bitter controversy. It had arisen in the Academy, where the authority's choice of *The Banquet of the Gods in Valhalla* as the subject for the gold medal competition had aroused the anger of the students. The latter were anxious to paint national themes and to choose the subjects of their paintings themselves. Classical subjects did not appeal to them for their hearts lay in realism and 'purpose' painting. Their ringleader was called Kramskoi (1837–1887), and sooner than renounce their principles, he and twelve others resigned from the Academy. Unemployment faced them, but with the encouragement of M. Tretyakov, a notable Moscow art collector, who was later to bequeath his picture gallery to the nation, they formed themselves, first into a co-operative society and, soon after, into a more definite group for which they chose the name of Peredvishniki, or Wanderers, because they had decided to show their works to the country as a whole by means of travelling exhibitions. These exhibitions were held with great success until late into the 1880's, the pictures hung in them being essentially realistic in treatment and often political or social in purpose. Yaroshenko's works (1846–1898) were among the best exhibited and they have stood up well to the test of time. The single example included in the exhibition (Fig.16) is a painting of a progressive girl student. It is a work of considerable charm and is almost as evocative of its period as is many a painting by Berthe Morisot. Throughout his life Kramskoi remained the leader of this movement. Though he had begun as a religious painter, he widened his field to include portraits and genre scenes. He is represented in the current exhibition by only one portrait. The omission from it of his genre paintings, and especially of the deeply moving picture entitled *Inspecting the old House*, which is imbued with much of the same magic as is Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*, is to be regretted.

Of the many able painters who either sympathized or became associated with the Peredvishniki, Ilya Repin ranks as the most important. Dying at the age of 86 in 1930, his work is varied and impressive. Basically a realistic painter, he became the foremost portraitist of his age, but his genre scenes, such as that showing *Volga Boatmen Wading*, which is included in the present exhibition, his great historic paintings, as well as his political ones, helped to influence the outlook of his contemporaries. In his mature period he acquired considerable flexibility of brushwork and a wide and varied range of colours. At the close of his life he remained young enough in spirit to respond to the work of Munch, and the latter's influence is clearly apparent in the important sequence of *Scenes from the Passion*, which best represents his final phase.

Vereshchagin (1842–1904) was another notable painter of the period. A pupil of J. L. Gérôme, he remained something of a lone wolf, and although he visited Paris on several occasions, he did not react to the experiments in which the Impressionists were at that time engrossed. He was fond of travelling in the Caucasus, Turkestan, and India, and the colours he saw there influenced his palette. Though a confirmed pacifist, he attached himself in the capacity of a war artist to the troops fighting in Turkestan in 1867–8 and against the Turks in 1877–8, so that he might record the tragedies of war in all their stark horror. He exhibited these pictures in western Europe as well as in Russia, and his one-man shows in St Petersburg, Paris, Munich, and America met with tremendous success. His work is represented in the present exhibition by a colourful painting of a Kirghiz, and not by any of his war pictures.

Surikov (1848–1916) was the foremost historical painter of his age, and indeed the finest Russian artist of this type, but he too is represented in the exhibition only by studies for the major pictures, not by any of the large canvases, which would have shown his skill in grouping and his interest in period costume. However, the study of an idiot gives some idea of his ability and talent.

All these artists, but especially Ivanov and Repin, were now no less interested in aesthetic matters than in the political issues of the day and many of the younger painters were ready to follow in their wake. Progress was made easier for them by two artists of genius, whose originality blazed the trail. The greatest of the two was Vrubel (1856–1910), but he comes off badly in the present exhibition, for the two pictures by his hand that are on view at Burlington House give no idea of his style and power. Vrubel was an artist of outstanding genius, with a soul and temperament curiously akin to Blake's. A symbolist by temperament, he was both a scholar and a philosopher, a being as quick to delight in early Russian icons and Greek vases as he was ready to respond to the horrific visions conjured up by his fevered imagination. His strange colours, delicate yet vigorous brushwork, and powerful hallucinations did more than any other single factor to detach Russian painting from the shackles of realism and proselytism.

Serov (1865–1911), though primarily a portrait painter, was as great and as dedicated an artist as Vrubel, and his pictures stressed anew the lessons that Vrubel had taught. His portraits are indeed of the highest quality, and it is good to see three of them, including one of children, on view at

Burlington House, for Serov excelled at painting children. Makovsky (1846–1920), who is represented in the exhibition by a colourful painting of a lively Moscow boulevard, was young enough to benefit by the wordless precepts of Vrubel and Serov, and to help further in freeing painting from literary and moral preoccupations. It remained, however, for the coming generation to achieve the complete independence of art at which the older men had aimed.

These younger painters formed themselves into the Society of Artists of the World of Art. With art for art's sake as their slogan, with men such as Benois, Korovin, Kustodiev, Bakst, Dobuzhinsky and a score of others as their leaders, and with Diaghilev as their spokesman, they not only introduced a glorious period in Russian painting, but they also profoundly influenced the work of contemporary artists in western Europe. Indeed, many of the deep and daringly juxtaposed colours that characterize present day painting in the west owe their evolution to the influence of these Russians. Though five pictures by three prominent artists of this group are included in the exhibition, none is of sufficient calibre to give a clear idea of the significance of the group. This is sad, more especially since this is the first exhibition of Russian art to have been held in England. As such it is to be heartily welcomed.

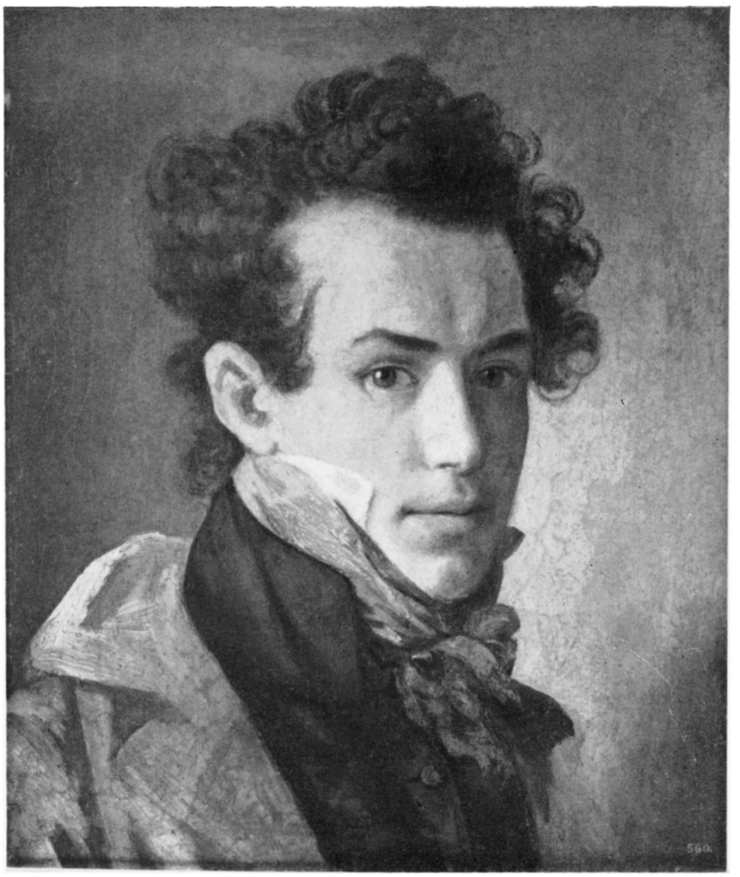
HANS WERNER GROHN

Report on the Return of Works of Art from the Soviet Union to Germany

EARLY in July 1958, it was made known by the Government of the Soviet Union that they had decided to return the works of art formerly in museums and collections of the German Democratic Republic, which were taken into their safe keeping during and immediately after the military operations of the last phase of the war. In the course of that same month, German museum officials went to Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev to assist at the handing over and packing of these works of art. On 28th September the first cases arrived at the Berlin East Railway Station and ever since, week after week, large consignments continue to arrive at the Museumsinsel. Here they are being unpacked and listed, and those objects which belong to other museums are passed on to them. This activity is still in full swing and it seems likely that it will continue into the summer of 1959. The actual work of packing in the Soviet Union, however, more or less came to an end by the beginning of December. It is, therefore, already possible to gain a clear impression of what has been, or will be, returned.

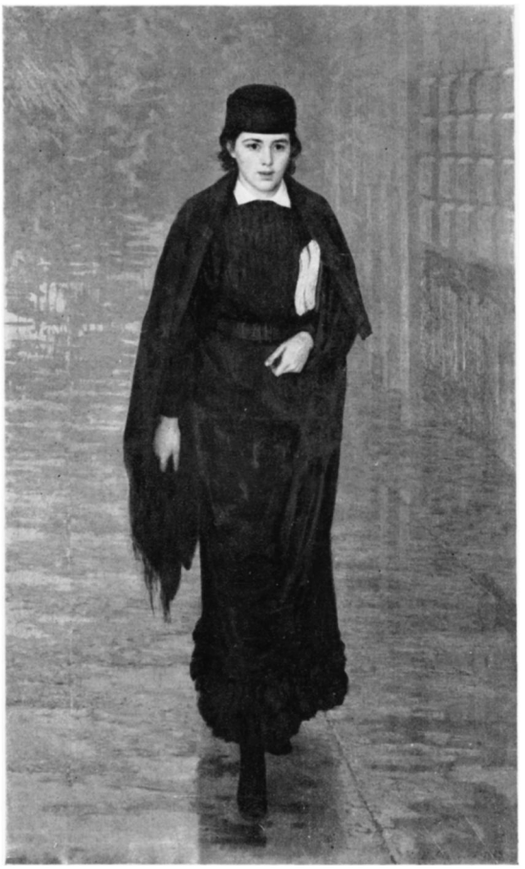
The works of art handed back are the property of various Berlin museums or they form part of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden, the Kulturhistorisches Museum in Gotha, the Museum der Bildenden Künste and the University Collections in Leipzig and the Anhaltische Gemäldegalerie in Dessau. They consist partly of pieces of furniture, furnishings, and decorations from Central German castles, especially from Potsdam, but also from Wörlitz, Oranienbaum, Mosigkau, and Hummelshain.

It is intended to give here a short survey of the extent of this restitution. The lists of objects in the safe keeping of the Hermitage alone run to about 500,000 items. Among them there are practically the complete Berlin Collection of antiques, detachable architectural ornaments, large works of sculpture, bronzes, terra-cottas, and vases, and the complete collection of the Berlin Münzkabinett. The Department of Byzantine and Early Christian Art have received back some icons and stone sculptures, the Egyptian Department various objects and its collection of papyri, the Near-Eastern Museum bronzes and the complete collection of seals, the Islamic Department miniatures, ceramics, textiles, carpets, architectural ornaments, and various objects of metal and glass. Furthermore in the safe keeping of the Hermitage there were sculptures from the Berlin Skulpturensammlung and from the National-Galerie, as well as furniture, textiles, small objects in bronze and silver, glass and majolica, from the former Schlossmuseum. 3000 porcelain objects, also from Leningrad, are the property of the Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten and of the former Hohenzollern Museum, the valuable historical collections of which have also been returned. Several cases containing national costumes and furniture, which had been stored in a safe place east of Berlin, were also taken care of in Leningrad and have now been returned to the Museum für Volkskunde. The 1114 paintings returned from the same depot came from the Berlin National-Galerie and Gemälde-Galerie as well as from the Märkisches Museum, from the Anhaltische Galerie in Dessau and from Central German castles and mansions, especially from Potsdam. The Berlin Print Room and the collection of drawings in the National-Galerie welcome back some 80,000 prints and more than 20,000 drawings (some from the Beuth-Schinkel Museum) as well as 1200 original blocks from the Derschau Collection. The Dresden Historisches Museum have received from the Hermitage an extensive collection of armour and costumes. The Leningrad Maritime Museum has returned to its counterparts in Berlin, Stralsund, and Danzig their complete collections, and the same has been done by the Artillery Museum in Leningrad from where the Berlin Zeughaus and the Dresden Historisches Museum have received howitzers, armour, flags, etc. In the same way, the collections of the Geological Museum in Berlin have been returned by the Mineralogical Museum in Leningrad. Some 7000 moulds, the property of the Meissen Factory, together with their archives, were stored in country seats near Leningrad; among these documents are medieval *Stadturkunden* from Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, and Saxony.

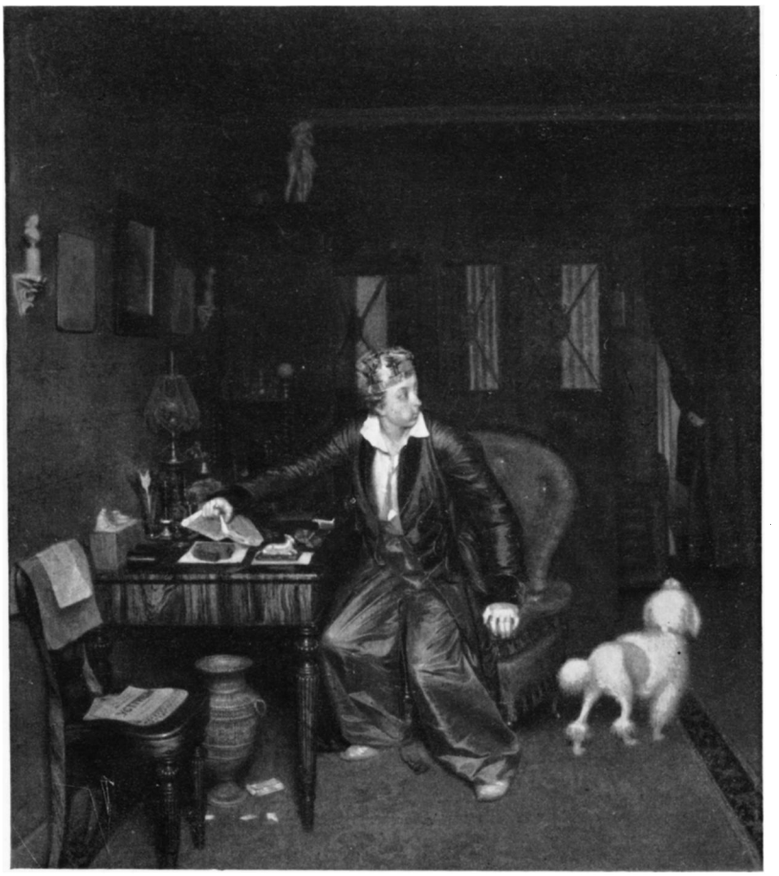


14. *Self-portrait* (?), by Orest Adamovich Kiprensky. 1822–3. Canvas, 76 by 62 cm. (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.)

15. *Peasant Girl with a Scythe and a Rake* ('*Pelageya*'), by Alexei Gavrilovich Venetsianov. Panel, 22·5 by 17·5 cm. (Russian Museum, Leningrad.)



16. *A Girl Student*, by Nikolai Alexandrovich Yaroshenko. Signed and dated 1883. Canvas, 134 by 83 cm. (Museum of Russian Art, Kiev.)



17. *A poor Aristocrat's Breakfast*, by Pavel Andreyevich Fedotov. Canvas, 51 by 42 cm. (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.)