

scene. With slow steps and folded arms Ira Macbeth entered and commenced the soliloquy 'If it were done,' etc, to our astonishment, in English." This Ira Macbeth was a mulatto tragedian, Ira Aldridge, who, a generation ago, won tragic renown abroad, which he could not win at home on account of his having the misfortune to be born with some African blood in his veins. Taylor says that the performance received enthusiastic applause, and at the end of the play there were vociferous cries of "Aira! Aira! Aldretch! Aldretch!" He farther says that "the dialogue—one voice English and all the others Russian—proceeds smoothly enough, but the effect is like nothing which our stage can produce." Had he lived a few years longer, he would not have written that sentence; for our stage has produced the same effect, and we can say of a Boston and a New York audience what he said of the benighted Navgorodians, "Nevertheless, the audience was delighted."

GOGOL.

More and more interest is coming to be felt by American readers in the works of the three great Russian novelists, Gogol, Turgenief and Tolstoi, and it is perhaps needless to say that they are well worthy of this interest. Up to a comparatively recent date no great regard, I believe, has been felt for Russian literature, at least by English speaking nations. I am inclined to believe that this has been more the fault of ignorance, owing to the lack of adequate translations, than from any deliberate judgement based upon personal observation. Now that we have in our possession excellent translations of the greatest masters of modern Russian literature, it would be well, I think, to avail ourselves of the opportunity offered, and become, if not thoroughly familiar, at least in some degree acquainted with their writings.

Of the novelists whose names I have mentioned the first has probably succeeded in awakening the greatest interest for his works among all classes of readers, and whose fame as an author will undoubtedly last the longest, at least outside of his native country. Believing this to be true I shall take the liberty of giving, first, a short account of his life, and afterwards of giving a few of my impressions of one of his most interesting works.

Nicolai Gogol was born in the early part of the present century, at a time when Russia seemed to be just emerging from a state of half barbarous life and entering upon a period of greater intellectual and moral refinement. At school, Gogol did not particularly distinguish himself,—a fact which is quite refreshing to some of us, considering that in the biographies of nearly all famous men we are told that in his studies his wonderful progress was so remarkable as to call forth from his instructors frequent encomiums and predictions of his future greatness, or something to that effect. Indeed, Gogol pursued pretty much the same course in his student's career as is followed by a great many of his brethren all over the world; he paid no particular attention to his books during the term, but before examinations studied hard, and by the help of a very retentive memory was fortunately able to pass them with some degree of success. I should not encourage a student, however, who does not feel inclined to devote himself to hard intellectual work, in the belief that his disinclination or study is an omen of genius,—not at all. Somehow this rule does not seem to apply in all cases, and he who follows it implicitly will perhaps find that after all, something in his case must have been wanting. But to return to Gogol. The education which he really acquired, and which had the most lasting influence upon his life and writings, was obtained in

his father's house. It is somewhat remarkable that a man who was so averse to all kinds of technical learning, who hated the classics, had a deep rooted objection to the German and English languages, who seemed to have a sort of predilection for the bottom of his class, and who, finally, was so careless in his orthography as to require the assistance of his teachers in writing letters, should have become one of the foremost writers of his age. Yet it is none the less true. It calls to mind the early career of Patrick Henry, who in many respects must have resembled Gogol, but in none so much as in disinclination to learn. Gogol graduated at the age of nineteen somewhere near the foot of his class, and the next year went to St Petersburg to win success in the field of letters. He met with many failures here, however,—something which seems to have been wholly unexpected by him. Soon after he was made professor of the Russian language in the Patrotic Institute, but not long after gave up this position as being totally unsuited to his tastes. After this he devoted himself entirely to literature until his death, which occurred in 1852.

Gogol is perhaps one of the best examples of how a man's nature may undergo a total change at some period of his life. In him there were two separate and distinct natures which, however, were never manifested at the same time. When he first began to write, it was with his mind filled with the stories and legends which he had collected from every available source, and with his whole nature imbued with a love for whatever was strange, fanciful or wierd. His early stories show this trait very clearly indeed. After his literary success had become assured, however, he seems to have undergone a change in style of thought, and he then began to write in an intensely satirical vein. This transition, as it seems to me, is a most remarkable one, inasmuch as the feelings which prompted it are so widely dissimilar in their nature. As a natural consequence Gogol's novels may be divided into two different classes, representing stages in the transition of the author's mind from a state of simplicity to one growing out of his love for satire. The works of the latter class I shall not now discuss; but as an example of the first class, the author's "Taras Bulba" will probably serve as a good illustration.

It is somewhat difficult to determine whether a novel of the style of "Taras Bulba" will be suitable to the general taste, because it is in almost every instance so utterly different from the class of fiction to which we have been accustomed. It is safe to say, however, that if it be read in the spirit in which it was written, and is not judged by comparison with such novels as those of Howells and James, its real beauty will be seen, and will grow upon the reader the longer he peruses it. A somewhat remarkable fact is that in this book dialogue forms scarcely any part. Indeed there is, properly speaking, but two connected dialogues in the whole story, and these constitute the opening and closing scenes. The reader is at once introduced to the three characters whose actions form the plot by which Gogol has displayed his wonderful descriptive powers. These are Taras Bulba, an old Cossack warrior whose thoughts are only upon the stirring scenes of war, and his two sons, Ostaf and Andru, who have just come from college, clad in their priestly robes. Their strange appearance appeals irresistibly to the ludicrous side of the old man's nature, and he indulges in unseemly mirth at their expense. Now occurs a scene which is, to say the least, not strictly modern. The older son instead of hanging his head and looking sheepish, is filled with righteous indignation, and at once proceeds to give his father a thrashing in the most approved style, after which they "kiss-and-make-up." Taras is too much of a