

borne in mind that the reader is being let into the secret of the author's personal experience, because the knowledge of this fact will throw about the characters a halo of interest by which otherwise they could not possibly be surrounded. One does not care to pass all of the time he devotes to the reading of a novel in becoming acquainted with a character which he knows has never existed, and which, moreover, can not be a type of real beings. But if the reader is aware that his author is telling him indirectly of his own experience, and if that experience is thrilling enough to enter the sphere of romance, the story becomes one of absorbing interest, and it makes no difference then whether or no he is separated from us by oceans; he becomes in our eyes a person who has been singularly favored by Fortune in being permitted to pass through scenes of such startling character and power.

While among the Cossacks, during the long days of enforced inactivity, the Count wrote his first great work, "The Cossacks," a book which in originality of design and strength of characters has but few equals. Its plot is simple, the chief interest centering in the character of a young man who the author meant should represent himself in the principal traits of his character. Olenin had been steeped in the dissipations of the Russian capital, until the reaction had set in, and he resolved to abandon everything pertaining to his old life, and seek contentment in the free life of the plains. Reaching a border village where he intended to take up his abode, he here falls in love with a village maiden who, however, does not return his attachment. The man whose accomplishments had fascinated the court belles utterly failed to impress the untutored child of the plains, who, in her lofty scorn for the sham elegance of society, saw in this young man only one of its slaves. Fortunately for the originality of the story, as it seems to me, this girl plays a somewhat unimportant part in the working out of the plot; the different phases of Olenin's character developing as he becomes habituated with his new surroundings, forming the chief interest to the reader.

Now that which seemed to me to distinguish this book from most works of fiction is its entire freedom from any of the plots and counterplots, the hackneyed phrases, love passages, ball room scenes, intrigues, and a host of other characteristics which have become so familiar to us as to be simply disgusting. In this book there is nothing of all this; every thing is pure, fresh and new. In reading, one feels a sense of purity, contentment and ease which, I am sorry to say, is not always found in the works of our own writers. Passing from one of the latter kind of books to the one referred to is like coming out of a laundry into the open air. "The Cossacks" opens up to one possibilities of life which he will find no where else and beguiles him into a feeling of tranquility which, alas! is only too fleeting.

Now I do not mean to find fault with the ordinary style of novels;—it would ill become me to do so. The authors of these works are not to blame. They are bound by circumstances and restrictions from which Tolstoi was free. They must write about life as they find it if they wish to secure interest in their works. They must, in other words, write of scenes, characters and events which to a certain extent are familiar to their readers, otherwise they will fail to reap any benefit from their efforts. But there is another and more potent reason for this fact, and that is the question of stern necessity. How, let me ask, can a writer be expected to produce the best of which he is capable—of which he *knows* he is capable—if he must keep constantly in view the consideration of the monetary success of his work? True, Shakespere did it; but there was but one Shakespere, and the exception only proves the rule.

With Tolstoi all was different. Possessed of unlimited resources, he had only to follow his own inclinations, he could write with no thought as to whether his works would bring him pecuniary profit. Hence it can easily be seen, that being obliged to cater to no public taste, and having no fear of failure, he could take down his impressions of life as it pleased him. For that very reason he achieved success.

I pass over "War and Peace," in which, although it is regarded as one of Tolstoi's masterpieces, I could not get interested. Why this was I am unable to say; perhaps the contrast between this book and the first-mentioned is too pronounced to be altogether pleasant, especially as the latter was capable of exciting so much interest as it did.

In "Anna Karenina" Tolstoi has depicted the drama of life as he saw it with wonderful—even startling—truthfulness. In this book, as perhaps nowhere else in his writings, he has exhibited his own character in two persons, each representing one period of his varied life. The character of Vronsky exhibits Tolstoi in his early manhood, surrounded by wealth, luxury and gaiety; his views of life formed and influenced by the usages of that brilliant society in which he moved, believing in the all-powerful principle of strength and personal glory as the road to happiness. In Konstantin Levin we see him with his whole character changed and his views modified. Like Levin, he has come to see how poor, forlorn and illusory are the successes upon which he formerly doted, and now he is rapidly approaching that conception of the real duties of his existence which he afterwards held and now maintains. Of what I suppose is considered the principle interest of the romance, namely, the relations between Vronsky and Anna Karenina, I do not wish to speak. The subject is too terrible, too awful in its final tragedy, to read, much less to discuss. The manner in which Tolstoi analyzes the various and conflicting emotions felt by the unfortunate pair, the relentless way in which he leads up to the inevitable outcome of their guilty union, is truly startling. M. Dupuy in his analysis of this work, thinks that the suicide of Anna Karenina, Tolstoi felt to be the necessary and inevitable result of her actions, because it coincided with his conception of the duties of marriage which he at that time held. This I am unable to see. Surely there existed some solution of the difficulty which would not have brought in its train all the horror, the sad disheartening circumstances which Tolstoi deemed necessary. Perhaps this illustrates an actual fact or set of facts. If so, rather let it be compassionately kept out of sight than be put forward to shame and sadden the hearts of those, who in reading of these events, cannot but wonder, and deplore the existence of such happiness arising from sin.

#### BERBEL THORWALDSEN.

Perhaps no artist has attained more renown in his own time than Thorwaldsen. Born of obscure parents in Copenhagen, his high position was gained only through his own exertions. He received a good elementary education, and as he showed a fondness for drawing, he was sent in his eleventh year to the Academy of Fine Arts at Copenhagen as an evening pupil, where he made such progress that at sixteen he won the highest prize given to beginners. Still his progress was hindered by the necessity of helping his father in wood carving. But with diligence he would accomplish his tasks and devote all his spare time to his art studies. He and a number of his fellow students would meet evenings and, having chosen a subject—usually a verse from the Bible—each would make his sketch and then they would compare and criticise each other's productions. He said that he learned as much by observation as by practice.