

# MARYANA, THE COSSACK GIRL<sup>1</sup>

BY COUNT LEO TOLSTOI

[THIS hitherto unpublished story has just been discovered in the Tolstoi manuscript collection at Moscow.]

Two companies of Cossacks had just left the Cossack settlement of Staniza to drive the enemy out of the Terek province. Old men, women, children, and girls followed the troops to the edge of the town. The beautiful Cossack maiden Maryana bade farewell to her brother and young Tereshka Urvan, the darling of her heart. Then her companions, bearing empty wine flasks, put their arms around her and escorted her home. The girls sang Cossack songs, and Maryana sang too, though she wanted to cry.

Tereshka's hovel and the little house belonging to Maryana's parents stood next door to each other. Maryana and Tereshka had been in love for a long time, but Maryana's rich father had no use for Tereshka, who was as poor as a church mouse. One evening during the wine-pressing season Maryana was walking over to Tereshka's garden, when he flung his arms around her, pressed her to his breast, kissed her, and said that when he came back from the wars a rich man he would ask her father's permission to marry her.

'Why, then, did he take his leave without saying a word about it?' wondered Maryana. 'When I passed the farewell wine-cup to my brother I turned all red and was afraid that

Tereshka would say something. Then, when I handed the cup to Tereshka, he drank it off in a single draught, seized his Cossack's cap, leaped upon his steed, swung his whip, and rode away.'

Maryana looked around once more, but only a cloud of dust could be seen in the distance. She sang the song still louder, and when she and her friends arrived at her house she stopped by her neighbor's gateway. Tereshka's mother leaned over the fence and inquired, 'Did you see him off?'

'Yes, grandmother,' replied Maryana sadly.

'Did his horse gallop away, full of life?'

'Yes; and Tereshka was full of life, too.'

Maryana's mother looked over her neighbor's fence and cried: 'What are you up to in the street? Take off that pretty dress of yours and go out and feed the cow. You're big enough to help your mother.'

Maryana entered the house in silence, went to her room, took off her blouse and her blue stockings, and put on her old shoes, before going out into the yard to drive the cow to its stall. When the cow had been attended to, she put on an old smock, wound a bright kerchief about her head, seated herself on the bank by her front door, and ate sunflower seeds. In silence she contemplated the dark heavens, the far-away snow-capped mountains, and the glistening waters of the river. As twilight fell the shadows deepened.

<sup>1</sup> From *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (Vienna Conservative daily), June 5

Clouds drifted across the sky, and from Terek the wind blew chill. Passers-by in the street greeted the silent maiden. At length a big gray-bearded old man with a fowling piece and a hunter's bag containing several partridges stopped in front of Maryana, pulled off his Cossack's hat, and said: 'Well, Maryana, how goes it? Has my godson Tereshka given you a keepsake?'

'Good evening, Uncle Girtshik,' she replied crossly. 'What's your Tereshka to me? I have n't seen him for a long time.'

She turned away, her eyes glistening.

'Aha, sweet maid, you have learned how to love quickly,' cried the old man, laughing. 'Give me a sunflower seed. All day and all night I have been tramping the forest, and here is what I have killed. Give the birds to your mother, and get me a glass of wine.'

'Here, take the sunflower seeds. I'll ask Mother for the wine.'

'Devil take the old witch. Is your father home?'

'Yes, uncle.'

'Then I'll knock.'

He rapped on the window.

'What do you want?' demanded the angry voice of the master of the house, as he opened the window. But when he saw the fat partridges he at once brightened up, and asked, 'How goes it, Uncle Girtshik?'

'Fine, thanks. We followed the Cossacks, and then I went into the woods and shot some game. Tell your old woman this, and she will give me some wine.'

'Wife,' cried the master of the house, as he tried to pull the fattest partridge out of the bag, 'give us a glass of wine.'

'Another already, you old devil?' grumbled the old woman behind the door, before she produced the bread and wine.

The old hunter entered the little house. Maryana arose, still eager to

talk to him, but blushed and sauntered out into the square, where boys and girls were standing around laughing. Girtshik was the godfather of her Cossack, Tereshka, and she wanted to talk to the old man and ask if he had given the boy her amulet to take with him as a protection against bullets, but she did not dare to put her question. The hunter strode into the house, crossed himself before the picture of the Virgin, and sat down with the master of the house at the table, on which the lady of the house had put a jug of wine. The old Cossack complained about the hard times, and about the young people, who would not go to church or respect their elders.

'For two years I shall not see my son, for he has gone to war. And my Maryana lords it over me. She will not marry a brave Cossack, the son of the Hetman, though he has been wooing her the last two years. She will have nothing to do with him, and I will not allow her to have your godson.'

Girtshik drank his wine, and said with a laugh:—

'You're a rich man. God has blessed you with fine children—a beautiful daughter and an upstanding son. What are you complaining about? I am an old man; my whole world is my gun and my dog; but I have never in all my life complained. I go into the forest, sing my songs, and say, "As long as man lives he must eat, drink, and take pleasure in love." Woman, bring another glass of wine; and don't grumble. Your son will be promoted to the post of color sergeant. Give Maryana to Tereshka for his wife. He is very poor, but when I die he will inherit my house, and then he will be rich. So pour out another.'

Maryana's father did not reply, but looked gloomily in front of him. Girtshik slung his flintlock over his shoulder

and went out. He whistled to his dog, and loudly sang a song.

The Cossack girls stood at street corners flirting with the boys, and among them was the Hetman's son, but Maryana did not see him in his silver-embroidered hat.

'Uncle Girtshik,' cried the girls as the old hunter went by, 'have you lost your caftan? Have you kissed your dog?'

The old hunter laughed, and said to the girls: 'Getting bored without your Cossacks, young ladies?'

The Hetman's son felt insulted because Girtshik did not consider him a real Cossack. He pulled up a bunch of nettles, planted it on Girtshik's cap, and said: 'Look, girls — Uncle Girtshik has a forest on his head, like the antlers of a stag.'

The girls laughed. Maryana went up to the Hetman's son and said: 'Cut out these jokes, you lunkhead. Don't make fun of the old man.'

But since the Hetman's son would give Girtshik no peace, Maryana hit him on the chest, and then pushed him so hard from the side that he fell on the ground.

'That was splendid, Maryana,' said Girtshik. 'If I were Tereshka I would love you more than ever. I would come back from camp to see you. Yes, girls, there are no longer any Cossacks such as we had in the old days.'

He shook his head and surveyed the Hetman's son. 'Marry me,' said one of the girls, laughing.

'Tell us how you came back from camp to see your girl,' begged another.

'Tell us why your wife disappeared,' cried a third.

'How did I love my girl?' said the old man reflectively. 'Young ladies, as no Cossack will love you to-day. When I felt lonely for her in camp I would saddle my horse and ride home

while the other Cossacks were sleeping. I would creep past the sentries as if I were leading my animal to drink. A gulp of water, and away we flew. Then when I came to my native village I would go to my dear little girl, knock on her window, and say: "Sweetheart! Darling! Get up. I am here." She would leap out of bed, run barefoot to the window, and in the dark house would find something to eat and drink. Then we ate, drank, kissed each other, and forgot all about death. How my Mashenka could kiss!'

He threw his arms around Maryana and showed how he once kissed his girl. Maryana gently pushed him away, thinking: 'Perhaps my sweetheart will visit me, too. Perhaps he will ride back from camp and knock at my window, saying, "Dearest, I am here."'

Maryana's mother appeared on the threshold and called to her. She took leave of her friends and went back home. After the evening meal Maryana went to bed, but she could not sleep. The moon shone into her room through the window. Worry made her restless. She got up, looked out the door, and listened to hear whether anyone was knocking. Then she went back to bed, said her prayers, and gradually fell asleep.

Life in the Cossack town flowed on without Cossacks. Maryana helped her mother with the housework; but at night she could not sleep, and her friend, the cheerful Stepa, had to stay by her side. Often Maryana went to see her sweetheart's mother, and she talked with her about Tereshka. On Sunday she would go to church, and spend all the rest of the day sitting on the bank in front of her house. But her eyes were on the steppe beyond Terek, with her darling, the Cossack of her heart.

# DREAMS AND IMMORTALITY<sup>1</sup>

## A CONVERSATION WITH GERHART HAUPTMANN

BY JOSEF CHAPIRO

ONE night at dinner, a recent suicide having called up the subject of death, I asked Hauptmann: 'Do you believe in an existence in the Beyond — to use the popular expression?'

'Possible, very possible; although I can't easily explain it. I conclude, however, that there is a life beyond because I am firmly convinced that we have had previous existences before we are called to our present life. Is n't that a general feeling? Has n't it often occurred to you that you have already experienced, felt, desired, seen, thought, in some previous existence what you are experiencing, feeling, desiring, thinking, or seeing in your present life? You can't tell exactly when that was, though your mind gropes for a clue. Convinced as I am, moreover, that nothing can come from nothing, I believe that every fancy, every dream, every unreality, was once a reality, and that even our most fanciful imaginings must have behind them some solid antecedent of actuality. There is no such thing as an artist *in abstracto*. A person who tries to create anything out of pure abstractions can never be a true poet, painter, or musician. But I do not include among abstractions a vision that suddenly flashes into the mind. Such a vision surely expresses something real, some fact of experience, something that once was clothed in

flesh and blood, and that the artist suddenly glimpses and calls back to life. I feel so certain of this that I do not believe that any true artist is free in his creative work. He does not originate his characters and forms; they already exist within him before he sets about his task. I am convinced that what I may call a preëstablished harmony exists, and that no true artist would ever venture to introduce a discord into this original harmony, which is interwoven with his whole sensitive being.'

I was called away by a telephone message, and when I came back conversation at the table had drifted to another theme. Wishing to resume the subject, I said: 'I know poets, however, of high reputation who undoubtedly possess the gift of vision, and are compelled to write by the dreams that people their brains. They are artists, keenly sensitive of the pre-established harmony, as you call it, which they bear within them. Yet I personally know a case where such a poet radically revised a completed work — a drama — because the producer urged him to do so.'

'Then I don't know,' answered Hauptmann, 'what you mean by a real poet and by preëstablished harmony. Personally, I believe absolutely that if we change even the slightest shading of what our inner vision reveals to us we can no longer paint the same picture that we originally conceived. Please

<sup>1</sup> From *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna Nationalist-Liberal daily), June 5, 19