

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE ADULTERESS BEFORE CHRIST.

Russia is a peculiar country, comparatively unknown to the other Aryan races, and we may say that to a great extent Russia is herself the cause of this lack of appreciation. The severe boundary line, their high tariff, enforcement of much red tape in crossing the frontier, the differences in government, in customs and language, have isolated the inhabitants of the Moscovite empire as efficiently as if they were living within a Chinese wall cut off from the rest of the world. But to a great extent we must also bear the blame, and, I will add, we lose not a little by not knowing this eastern race as well as we ought to. No doubt the Russians are behind the rest of Europe and North America in many respects in civilization, institutions, and otherwise, but they have also their virtues, the acquisition of which would help to broaden our own views. We will here speak only of Russian art.

The music of Russia is known to be unusually deep and emotional. Her composers have made the classical music of Germany their own, and have developed it in a peculiar way which is typically Slavic. Russian architectural style has a charm of its own, and Russian poetry almost defies translation. What a variety of style there is! Within the domain of the novel Russia has produced a Gogol, a Dostoievski and a Tolstoy, and painting too can be favorably compared with the works of art in other countries. As an example we publish as a frontispiece to the current number, a painting by Vassili Dimitrievitch Polienov, entitled "The Adulteress before Christ," and accompanying these lines we insert below some other representations of the same subject. How sweet and sentimental are the paintings of Italian, German and French masters! How devoutly submissive and penitent are the women of western European art compared to this vigorous heroine of the Russian painter! What defiance is in her eyes, and how much more character is expressed in her hypocritical accusers. Polienov represents the climax of a dramatic scene, the import of which is indicated by the attitudes of Christ himself and of the villains who are compelled by his authoritative decision to give up their prey.

We notice that the scene is laid before the temple of Jerusalem, and the artist has made his study on the spot. In our opinion he has missed the right reconstruction of the temple, but possibly he has done so for artistic reasons, and moreover he would scarcely have all the materials at his disposal when painting this great work of art. The trees are exactly as they grow on the temple area, and there is a stone which has been discovered among the

ruins of the temple debris. It contains the injunction against Gentiles not to trespass on the temple enclosure, declaring that if they should be slain they would have only themselves to blame, thus allowing the Jewish fanaticism to have its own way on the holy ground. The Latin version of this injunction has not been found but Polienov inserts it on the other side of the great staircase. This staircase is the main error in the reconstruction of the temple. It can not have existed, and the injunctions against trespassing were inserted in the balustrade which surrounded the platform or *chil*.

The following data with regard to the artist's life we owe to Mrs. Frances C. P. Corse of St. Petersburg. He was a historical genre and landscape painter, born in St. Petersburg in 1844. He received his education in the Petrobavodsk gymnasium and afterwards in the university. He studied in the Imperial Academy of Art where in 1869 he received the second gold medal



CHRIST AND THE ADULTERESS.

By Tintoretto.

for his picture "Job and his friends," and in the following year the first gold medal for "Christ raising the daughter of Jairus," which picture, with two others, is at present in the Academy. In 1872 he was sent abroad by the Academy and painted in Paris the "Arrest of Countess d'Etremont," by virtue of which he was admitted to the Academy in 1876. In the Russo-Turkish War he was commissioned by the Crown Prince, later Alexander III, to paint scenes from the war. After this he moved to Moscow and in 1884 he visited Egypt and the Holy Land. He has several pictures in the Tretiakoff gallery in Moscow and two in the Alexander Museum in St. Petersburg, a portrait of Alexander III, and the "Woman take in Adultery." The latter was painted in 1888, exhibited in the same year and bought by the emperor. His subjects are mostly biblical.

The Royal Academy of Venice possesses one of Tintoretto's presenta-

tions of the adulteress before Christ, which is counted as one of the best of this Venetian master, and he has painted the same subject repeatedly. It is of special interest because it characterizes the times, and exploits before our eyes the aristocratic circles of Venice. Among the portraits here immortalized we find Titian, and in the right corner Tintoretto himself. We call special attention to one of the characteristics of Tintoretto, which is his masterly treatment of the hands and the gestures expressive of the sentiments of the several persons. In addition we might add what does not appear in a photographic reproduction that the charm of the colors belongs to the best that was produced during the Renaissance.

A Hungarian Counselor, M. Marcel d'Nemes, of Budapest, has in his art collection another picture representing the same subject in a similar treatment



THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

By Titian.

by the same artist. Even many of the individuals in the group are identical with those in the one here reproduced, but the two central figures are somewhat different. The Christ is a more positive character and occupies the position of prominence in the center, and the model here used for the adulteress is utilized in the Budapest picture for that of a mother among the group of persecutors while the victim is of a fairer type but still gentle and submissive.

Titian's adulteress is as beautiful as any of Titian's heroines, but in his presentation of the whole scene is more like a display of living pictures, and the figures and details are as if intended for a theatrical show. Even the cords with which the woman is bound indicate that the act itself is not to be taken seriously, and the pleasant expression in her face anticipates nothing so horrible as the danger of being stoned.