

**EXHIBITION OF THE WORKS
OF VASSILI VERESTCHAGIN:
ILLUSTRATED DESCRIPTIVE
CATALOGUE**

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VARIOUS

**EXHIBITION OF THE WORKS
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CATALOGUE**



V. VERSTCHAGIN.

AMERICAN ART GALLERIES.

EXHIBITION OF THE WORKS
OF
VASSILI
VERESTCHAGIN

ILLUSTRATED
DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE.



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BULGARIAN.



SERBIAN WOMAN.



ROUMANIAN.

I trust that men will love me ; for my art
Speaks to the nobler feelings of the heart,
Renders good service by the charm of truth,
And for the vanquished ever pleads for ruth.

(Adapted from PUSHKIN.)



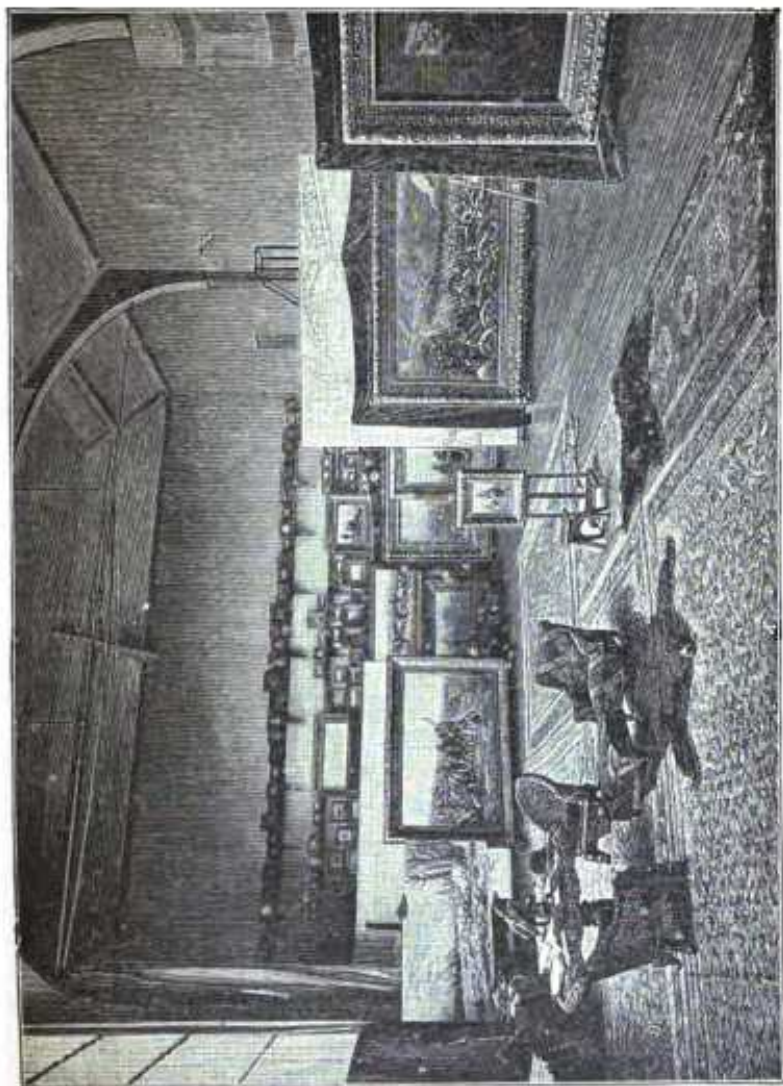
THE historical details, some of which directly, others indirectly, concern my studies and pictures of Palestine—that interesting land for every Christian—are founded chiefly on traditions so well preserved among the people of the East.

My own researches excepted, I have availed myself of the Gospels and old books, as well as of some modern compilations, such as Murray's *Syria and Palestine*, Cook's *Handbook for Palestine and Syria*, Isambert's *Orient*, Brother Lievin's *Terra Sainte*, etc. Some of the studies are very small, my intention having been to repaint them a larger size. Some are unfinished, owing to the suspicion of the Turks that I was drawing plans of the "Promised Land."

My impressions of travel in India formed themselves into a series of large pictures, in which I conceived the idea of representing the history of the conquest of a large Asiatic country by a handful of brave and enterprising Europeans. The first picture, commenced on a large canvas, was intended to portray the English Ambassadors in the presence of the Great Mogul in his celebrated audience hall at Agra. The next pictures were to represent different prominent events of Indian history, finishing with the triumphant entry of the Prince of Wales into Delhi, symbolical of the definitive conquest of the country. This last scene, which I witnessed in 1875, is the only one of the series completed, because the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war at that time took me away from my studio to the battle-fields.

* * * * *

Observing life through all my various travels, I have been particularly struck by the fact that even in our time people kill one another everywhere under all possible pretexts, and by every possible means. Wholesale murder is still called *war*, while killing individuals is called *execution*. Everywhere the same worship of brute strength, the same inconsistency; on the one hand men slaying their fellows by the million for an idea often impracticable, are elevated to a high pedestal of public admiration: on the other, men who kill individuals for the sake of a crust of bread, are mercilessly and promptly exterminated—and this even in Christian countries, in the name of Him whose teaching was founded on peace and love. These facts, observed on many occasions, made a strong impression on my mind, and after having carefully thought the matter over, I painted several pictures of wars and executions. These subjects I have treated in a fashion far from sentimental, for having myself killed many a poor fellow-creature in different wars, I have not the right to be sentimental. But the sight of heaps of human beings slaughtered, shot, beheaded, hanged



V. VERESTCHAGIN'S STUDIO.

under my eyes in all that region extending from the frontier of China to Bulgaria, has not failed to impress itself vividly on the imaginative side of my art.

And although the wars of the present time have changed their former character of God's judgments upon man, nevertheless, by the enormous energy and excitement they create, by the great mental and material exertion they call forth, they are a phenomenon interesting to all students of human civilization. My intention was to examine war in its different aspects, and transmit these faithfully. Facts laid upon canvas without embellishment must speak eloquently for themselves.

* * * * *

Next to the pictures where people are slain by the hundreds of thousands, there are some not uninteresting scenes of individual killing in the continual strife waged by the state against persons called criminals.

In olden and more barbarous times the aim of an execution was to torture the criminal by killing him as slowly as possible; now, on the contrary, the aim is to kill him as speedily as possible and shorten his sufferings. From this point of view the English method of *blowing from guns* (94, *g*), practiced in India, is the most humane—this mode of execution is sure, quick, and therefore nearly painless; at the same time the moral impression produced by it is very great, and well suited to the spirit of contemporary law.

The next most humane method of execution is by *hanging*, an old expedient, very much resorted to in Russia in modern times (94, *h*). This method is inferior to the former, because death is more lingering and cruel. But still it is an advance upon the very old system of crucifixion much practised by the Romans (94, *f*). By this latter the man who violated the law was nailed to the wood of the cross, and hung there often many days, during which time his sufferings must have been terrible.