

THE THEME OF MONEY IN THREE NOVELS
OF D. N. MAMIN-SIBIRIAK

by

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ABSTRACT

Dmitrii Narkisovich Mamin (1852-1912) was born in a small village in the Urals not far from Ekaterinburg. He wrote under the pseudonym of Sibiriak. As a native of the Urals, he used this region as a setting for many of his short stories and novels. This made Mamin-Sibiriak unique among Russian writers of the nineteenth century. While others wrote about European Russia, the area that Mamin-Sibiriak chose was relatively unknown, even to his fellow-countrymen. During his lifetime, the contemporary critics A. Skabichevskii, V. Al'bov and others acknowledged Mamin-Sibiriak's talent and analyzed his works, but they failed to appreciate fully the importance of his writings, because they were concerned primarily with the ideological implications. When evaluating his contribution as a writer, the Soviet critics E. Bogoliubov and A. Gruzdev stressed only the problems of class struggle in his early works. They ignore his later works, which are primarily concerned with moral problems, education, the arts, with professional people, and with the interactions of these elements. So far, only one of his novels, Privalovskie milliony, has been translated into English, and he is relatively unknown to the western world. The English critic, R. Hare, considers Mamin-Sibiriak to be a minor writer and mentions only one of his novels,

Privalovskie milliony (English title: The Privalov Fortune), as well as a collection of children's stories which are nevertheless, in his opinion, "equal to the best of Chekhov."

This study will include the following novels:

Privalovskie milliony (The Privalov Fortune, 1883), Gornoe gnezdo (The Mountain Nest, 1884), and Zoloto (Gold, 1892).

In these novels Mamin-Sibiriak depicts a phase of the industrial revolution in the Urals and the subsequent social and psychological changes that took place in this part of Russia. The universal theme of money and its effects on human nature is a dominant leitmotif in these novels, reaching beyond the confines of Russian society. His uniqueness lies in developing this theme by choosing the local Ural setting and introducing a large number of colourful characters from the different strata of Russian society.

His works are an important link in the development of the Russian novel at the end of the nineteenth century. His writing technique is imaginative and objective at the same time, and although his moral concern is obvious, his writing never gives the impression of didacticism.

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INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the nineteenth century many gifted writers appeared on the Russian literary scene. One of them was Dmitrii Narkisovich Mamin-Sibiriak. He was a prolific writer, noted for his creative ability. He wrote fourteen novels, two plays, a large number of short stories and novelettes, as well as ethnographic sketches and a collection of short stories for children. His contribution to Russian literature fills many volumes. In his own words, "If all were put together they would constitute approximately one hundred volumes."¹ Starting his career as a journalist, he appeared in literary circles at the beginning of the 1880s as a mature writer. He published in the leading literary journals of his day: Vestnik Evropy (Herald of Europe), Syn otechestva (Son of the Fatherland), Russkaia mysl' (Russian Thought), Otechestvennye zapiski (Notes of the Motherland); he was well known to the reading public and was highly regarded by his contemporaries, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Chekhov, Korolenko, Leskov, Gorky and others.

Mamin-Sibiriak spent most of his life in the Urals, where he amassed a great deal of distinctive information that was adeptly incorporated into the fabric of his work. His best novels, novelettes and stories are set against a Ural background. The unique traits of life in the Urals resulted from the unusual historical development of the region, which

was different from European Russia. Through his work Mamin-Sibiriak introduced the Russian reader to the Urals. "By his writing the author has opened up a whole area of Russian life hitherto unknown in literature."²

The history of development of the Ural region is quite unusual, abounding in features that deserve special attention. From ancient times the natural resources had attracted the Russian people to this area. The first Russian settlers came in search of furs. The depletion of fur resources in European Russia forced hunters to move eastward in search of valuable pelts in the forests of the Urals and Siberia. Sable, squirrel, fox and other furs highly valued in those days lured the Russian hunters. As they moved eastward they pushed out the local inhabitants — Tartars, Bashkirs, and others — and on the former lands of these native peoples they built settlements, which in time grew into cities.

In the history of the Ural region several families became very famous. Stroganov merchants, who settled there in the middle of the sixteenth century, acquired vast tracts of land. In 1558 the Tsar granted them the rights to extensive properties along the Chusovaia and Kama rivers, and thus the development of this region was begun.

As the Ural region was rich in gold, platinum, silver, tin, copper, iron ore, precious stones, and timber, it became one of the main industrial regions of Russia. With

the discovery of the Urals' wealth came a strong and steady flow of settlers, including the usual fortune-hunters and entrepreneurs. Factories, mills and huge industrial complexes sprang up, requiring a large and constant supply of labour. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, peasant serfs were brought, and attached to industrial mills. Until that time the peasants living in the Urals were free men.

At the end of the seventeenth century rapid growth in the mining industry took place. The founder of this branch of industry in the Urals was Nikita Demidovich Demidov (1656-1725). One of his descendants served as Mamin-Sibiriak's model for Laptev, one of the principal characters in his novel Gornoe gnezdo (The Mountain Nest).

The presence of vast stands of virgin timber provided a constant source of charcoal, making possible the development of a huge iron industry in the Urals. The Demidov family built fifty-five mills in this region. Mamin-Sibiriak was born and grew up in one of the settlements that belonged to the Demidov family. The iron and steel works setting in Privalovskie milliony (The Privalov Fortune) and Gornoe gnezdo are based on his recollections of these enterprises.

Favourable economic conditions were not the only reason for the development of the Uräl region. Political reasons also figured prominently. The latter arose as a

direct result of two kinds of government action: forced deportations and free settlement for military and strategic reasons. During the "Time of Trouble" — the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth — peasants and town dwellers escaped to the Ural region. The lawlessness, hunger, and severe living conditions in the central areas of Russia forced them to seek their fortunes in the Urals and elsewhere. By the middle of the eighteenth century, deportations that began at the end of the sixteenth century had become a permanent punitive measure, and a steady source of population flow to the Ural region.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century an imperial decree initiated a movement to settle peasants in the Ural region to develop grain cultivation. This was followed by Cossack settlements to guard the Siberian frontier. After the religious split of 1667 the Old Believers escaped to the Urals, which at the time was a frontier territory, where they hid in the forests, establishing religious communes.

This brief history of the region shows that the Urals attracted strong, determined and freedom-loving people. The enterprising adventurers in search of wealth, criminals escaping from the law, and political and religious dissenters all found freedom here. All these elements created a heterogeneous, individualistic society, and left their mark on the

social history of the region. Many of the features that marked the growth and development of the Ural region are echoed in the writings of Mamin-Sibiriak. In his work the author demonstrates a profound knowledge of the turbulent and unusual nature of life in the Urals. His great artistic talent made these works unique, very characteristic and singularly colourful. Mamin-Sibiriak paid a great deal of attention to the most vivid epoch of Ural history — namely the period of intensive industrial development and the blossoming of capitalism, stretching from the 70s to the 90s of the past century — and this has ensured for him a place in Russian literary history.

The vigorous growth of capitalism changed many aspects of life in Russia. It changed the class structure of society and left its imprint on the minds of the people. Mamin-Sibiriak very clearly described this spiritual and economic change, which was manifest in the new types of people that emerged with the changing times.

The Russian critic, V. Al'bov, in an essay on the works of Mamin-Sibiriak, states:

Page after page, the author unfolds before the reader the brilliant pictures of characters and scenes, detailing step by step the history of capital in different branches of industry, sometimes spread over huge districts and regions. He traces its influence on the pre-capitalistic way of life, lays bare the strata of society which are held together by it, and analyzes their relative positions and the consequent social situations.

The author does not restrict himself to the economic evolution of the society. He follows the infiltration of capital into all spheres of human life, into the family, into legal relationships, into morals, into all notions, and into science and literature.³

Against this background he created excellent novels that described the conditions and day-to-day life of the period. He presented the inner world of Ural society in its many aspects, with its many contradictions and conflicts. He gave the reader an insight into people who were motivated by a single aim — to create the potential to make money and to become rich themselves. Many of the personalities in the novels were derived directly from life. Mamin-Sibiriak writes in an article:

Characters are in abundance here; one has but to take a brush and paint them. The Urals, as far as human types are concerned, are an inexhaustible source — something fantastic and incredible is present all around.⁴

The personalities of people living in the Urals fascinated Mamin-Sibiriak. In showing their motivation, their striving to reach their goals, and in demonstrating how their ambitions affected those around them, the author found his main vehicle for describing his heroes. He was intrigued by the histories of the wealthy families who had long controlled industry in the Urals. The questions of inheritance, both financial and genetic, are major issues in his novels. The problem of strong fathers and weak sons

figures prominently. Critics of his time noted similarities between his work and that of the French naturalist, E. Zola. In one of his novels, The Privalov Fortune, naturalistic elements are distinctly present, although this is not the case in his other works: they bear only faint traces of naturalism.

His novels have a far-reaching grasp of reality, which is profoundly formulated. In his novels the reader is presented with a many-sided perception of the entire historical epoch. This is achieved primarily by a very detailed and thorough description of day-to-day life. Nearly all segments of society, with the exception of the aristocracy, are presented in his novels. Here the reader finds mining industry millionaires, gold mine owners, merchants, bankers, managers of plants and factories, professional people such as economists, engineers, lawyers, doctors, and teachers. There are foreigners — Germans and Poles — who, in most cases, occupy executive positions; and the common people — the workers and peasants, religious dissenters, and native groups, like the Bashkirs and the Tartars.

Although Mamin-Sibiriak was widely read by the public, the contemporary critics were either indifferent, inconsistent, or hostile towards him as a writer.

N. K. Mikhailovskii, a prominent critic of the time, avoided discussing Mamin-Sibiriak's works. As the leader of

the Populist literary movement, he could not find any merit in writings produced by one who was not a true follower of the Populist ideology.

Another distinguished critic, A. M. Skabichevskii, was not consistent in his criticisms of Mamin-Sibiriak's works. His criticism of the earlier works was extremely caustic. In his later article, dated 1896, however, he placed Mamin-Sibiriak on the same level as A. P. Chekhov, V. G. Korolenko and V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, and even above Émile Zola.⁵

Mamin-Sibiriak's works were misunderstood by another critic, E. Anichkov, who said that his novels were "dry narratives without originality and lacking consistency in the artistic conception."⁶

While other pre-revolutionary critics, V. Al'bov and P. Bykov, saw Mamin-Sibiriak as a writer dealing solely with the customs and morals of Ural society, the Soviet critics E. Bogoliubov and A. Gruzdev deny this view and classify him as a sociologist. It is true that Mamin-Sibiriak outlined the historical and economic processes taking place in his native region, the Urals; however, these changes were characteristic for all of Russia at that time.

Russian writers before the 70s often analyzed personal and intimate problems of individual characters. Mamin-Sibiriak considers similar issues on a much wider scope.

Here he is a follower of M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, who urged his contemporaries to leave the "confining framework of the family-type novel."⁷ Saltykov-Shchedrin wrote: "To elaborate, as before, on the love affairs of the landed gentry, has become unthinkable."⁸

There are several reasons for the pre- and post-revolutionary critics' indifference towards Mamin-Sibiriak's works. The main reason was that he was not a member of any political group. He was a relativist and did not confine his creative activity to the narrow scope of the political-ideological trends of the period. Nor did he link his work with any of the concepts of life which prevailed at that time. As a result of this, he never imposed on his reader any preconceived solutions. He posed the problems as he thought they existed, trying to present them truthfully.

Soviet critics recognize Mamin-Sibiriak's talent because they are able to find in his work material illustrating the class struggle. This is especially true of the novels set in the Urals. However, it should be noted that the Soviet critic, E. A. Bogoliubov, writes that

. . . although the principal works of Mamin-Sibiriak stand closer to the Marxist concept of the world, at the same time Mamin-Sibiriak failed to master the Marxist truth completely.⁹

The novels written by Mamin-Sibiriak in St. Petersburg, which discuss the problems of the life of the intelligentsia,

problems of art, the education and upbringing of the younger generation, the emancipation of women, the problems of journalism and the press, and so on, are never considered by Soviet critics. Indeed, they are not even published, so that Soviet readers cannot judge for themselves the literary stature of the writer.

Outside the Soviet Union the name of Mamin-Sibiriak is mentioned only in passing in a number of sources. From 1916 to 1946 some criticisms of his work were published, but these were generally one-sided and not always accurate. Sometimes he is considered to be a populist,¹⁰ or an ethnographer,¹¹ to the exclusion of everything else. In other instances, he has been identified as a follower of P. O. Melnikov-Pecherskii, because he depicted the lives of religious dissenters on various occasions. Perhaps the most correct description of Mamin-Sibiriak has been given by the English critic, Richard Hare, who speaks of him as a realist, presenting the industrial revolution and the development of capitalism in Russia against the traditions and life of the Urals and Siberia, and describes him as a skilful writer, comparable to Chekhov.¹²

The theme of money runs as a leitmotif through many of Mamin-Sibiriak's works. There can be no doubt that he sees the quest for material wealth as the cause of greed and selfishness:

Our time is the time of complex and extensive combinations of interrelated forces. Certain phenomena existing in the internal life of a state, indeed of all states, are bound together organically and are controlled by inexorable laws. This may be seen by looking at all economic phenomena, particularly at the combination of fateful international forces, defined and computed only recently, which governs everything everywhere. We are talking, dear reader, about the flywheel that drives all the wheels, gears and shafts of Europe, the flywheel called Capital, the influence of which is felt everywhere and from which one cannot escape.¹³

In Mamin-Sibiriak's novels, money appears in many forms. It takes the form of an inheritance in Privalovskie milliony, of earned wealth in Gornoe gnezdo, and of fortuitous wealth obtained as the result of a lucky strike in a gold field in the novel Zoloto. These three novels, chosen for discussion, will show the variety of conflicts which the proximity to wealth creates, and the effects it has on various characters. For some, wealth represents an opportunity to do good deeds for one's fellow man, for others it is the magic password to a world of adventure, success, power, luxury and many other forms of self-fulfilment.

CHAPTER I

PRIVALOVSKIE MILLIONY

Wealthy industrialists and their attitude towards money

Riches are as nothing
in the wrong hands.
— Russian proverb.

The novel Privalovskie milliony depicts the living conditions, customs and morals of a district town located in a rich metallurgical and gold-producing region of the Urals in the eighteen-seventies, at the time of great industrial development. The author focuses his attention upon the rich industrial elite of the town, a society whose main interest is the acquisition of money. The heroes of the novel are mill and factory owners, gold miners, bankers, merchants, middlemen and fortune-seekers.

The novel centres on the conflict between Sergei Privalov, heir to the rich Shatrovskii mills, and his three trustees, who looked after the business until he reached maturity. The author traces the history of the accumulation of the Privalov fortune over 150 years. He then describes the slow disintegration of the estates, at the hands of careless heirs and trustees, and finally its forfeiture to the State treasury as a result of the machinations of greedy and unscrupulous trustees. He contrasts the character of Sergei Privalov, the heir, who is not interested in money, with those of the trustees, who were scheming with their relatives and friends to lay their hands on the Privalov millions. The motives of the trustees, and the methods they

use to achieve their goal of self-enrichment, are described in great detail by the author.

The plot of the novel has its roots in the actual history of the development of the famous Kyshtymskii metallurgical works located in the Urals. Mamin-Sibiriak was acquainted with the principal personalities involved in the scandal of the inheritance of the Zotovs (prototype of Sergei Privalov), and used them as models for his own characters. Ekaterinburg society, in which Mamin-Sibiriak lived for many years, gave him a rich background of information to depict the colourful personalities of the Ural industrial magnates in his novel. The characters are based on well-known industrialists of the time, such as Kharlamov, Riazanov, and others.¹ The richness and abundance of such characters in the Urals stimulated Mamin-Sibiriak's artistic creativity. B. Udintsev, in his book Pevets Urala (Minstrel of the Urals), writes that the reader of the time could have easily recognized the town of Uzel, described in the novel, as Ekaterinburg. The description of the Irbit fair, the largest and most important of its kind in Siberia, is realistic and true even to the smallest detail. The millionaires' houses are represented with photograph-like accuracy.² The descriptions of the mill-site, the village, and the Bashkir steppes convey to the reader the diversity of the Ural panorama, and show the artistic skill of the author.

The beginning of the novel finds Sergei Privalov in

Uzel, where he has just arrived from Petersburg after an absence of fifteen years. The heir intends to free the factories from the debts incurred by his stepfather, to sell some of his mills, and to pay off some of the "historical creditors", the Bashkirs and peasants, who were rendered landless as a result of the shady deals perpetrated against them by his forefathers, who acquired Bashkir lands and established mills on them.

Privalov feels a personal responsibility towards these dispossessed people and wants to rectify the injustices brought upon them by his forefathers. Moreover, he perceives industrialization as an evil and wishes to counteract its effects by raising the level of agriculture in this Ural area. He dreams of organizing a grain trade and building a flour mill on a rational basis, thus freeing the peasants and small producers from dependence on rich property owners.

Two opposite forces are at play in the novel. On the one hand, we find the skilled businessmen, the state trustees, interested in personal gain, which they can derive by managing the estate; on the other hand, Privalov stands alone among this group of "sharks". He is a humanitarian and philanthropist who dreams of using his money to help his fellow men. He stands out in sharp relief against the other characters and constitutes an antithesis to the main theme of the novel — which is the acquisition of riches and self-enrichment.

The struggle between good and evil unfolds in the course of the novel, juxtaposing the idealistic hero, Sergei Privalov, and a group of egotists who strive to enhance their personal fortunes by any means. The bitter struggle for money waged by the trustees, Polovodov and Liakhovskii, with the help of cheats and adventurers, gradually intensifies. The author exposes the very roots of the repulsive and despicable methods used by the characters in the pursuit of money. To get rich is the goal; to attain it everything is permissible: selling one's own wife and daughter, or one's own honesty and honour. An atmosphere of complete moral disintegration of the upper class prevails throughout the novel. However, the novel goes beyond the description of Uzel society and embraces a much wider picture of human nature, its foibles and its greed. A culminating point is reached in the description of the Irbit Trade Fair.³

Irbit . . . was a kind of Babylon, attracting men of the most diverse countries, nations, tongues and religions. It was a turbulent sea which swallowed up anyone who ventured near it. A thirst for gain brought people together from all the four winds and this mob of many tongues and tribes did excellently in understanding mutual interests, needs and requirements.⁴

Mamin-Sibiriak uses the fair as a device to show the weaknesses of humanity in general. However, one of the essential traits inherent in the people in the novel is dwelt upon and examined in minute detail: the infatuation with money, the drive to get rich. By contrasting various

characters, the author reveals the deeper motives for this pursuit of riches: to some riches give power, to others it is a source of pleasure, luxury, or of means to buy the affection of the opposite sex.

The composition of the novel presents a deployment of opposing forces: the altruist Privalov versus the selfish industrial magnates. In order to present the many sides of the hero's personality, Mamin-Sibiriak places him at the very centre of the novel: the other characters, as well as various events, revolve around the hero, who thus becomes the focal point of all action in the novel. Concentric composition is used by the author, establishing a link between this novel and other Russian social-psychological novels of the first half of the nineteenth century.⁵ The hero, Privalov, is present throughout the novel, with the exception of a few chapters; but even there his presence is felt from the conversations of other characters.

Flashback and foretelling are composition techniques used by Mamin-Sibiriak to enhance the reader's interest in the fate of Privalov. An atmosphere of expectation, tension and suspense is created around Privalov from the beginning of the novel. Everyone expects the heir to act. Scenes follow one another showing the ideological and business conflicts which arise between Privalov and his former trustee, Bakharev. In this part begins the love relationship between the hero

and Nadezhda Bakhareva — a relationship which, however, remains unresolved. The inheritance business is postponed. The hero talks, procrastinates, takes no steps to clear up business matters. In the first two parts, Uzel society is presented in a state of chaos; an amorphous mass of people united only by their interest in Privalov and his wealth.

In the third and fourth parts, this society weaves an intricate web and ensnares the hero, after gauging the weak sides of his personality. At the outset, Privalov is the centre of the action; the trustees move around him in a state of expectation. Later, they begin to act. Gradually Privalov loses his central position, is pushed to the side and becomes a spectator of his own downfall. The fifth and last part of the novel describes the Irbit Fair, during which the complex relationship between Privalov and his opponents is clarified. There, Privalov finds out that his wife, Zosia, is unfaithful to him and that his inheritance has fallen into the hands of Polovodov, one of the trustees. He finally understands that his ideals and good intentions will not and never could have been realized. He is left alone, empty-handed, morally crushed, and this initiates his spiritual and physical disintegration.

The author skillfully uses Khiona Zaplatina, a match-maker of Uzel, who has access to a number of households in various social strata, to introduce quickly all the major

characters who, in one way or another, will have some effect on the hero. The personality of the hero is revealed through his contacts and relationships with these characters. It is a fragmented approach, and the hero is seen through the prism of impressions and opinions of the people around him. The various traits of the hero's personality, as well as those of other characters in the novel, slowly emerge in the process of these interactions.

Mamin-Sibiriak, like most educated people of his time, was interested in the natural sciences, and was fascinated by the ideas put forward by Darwin and others. He believed that personality is a product of environment and heredity. Many characters shown in the novel are treated in accordance with this belief. The heredity factor is strongly stressed. Mamin-Sibiriak builds up his characters and their behaviour in reference to their milieu and that of their fathers and forefathers. Using the technique of flashback, he shows clearly how traits are inherited. Two generations are simultaneously presented in the novel: fathers and sons. This is particularly true of the families directly connected with the hero: the family of his first love and second wife, Nadezhda Bakhareva; that of his mistress, Antonina Polovodova; and of his first wife, Zosia Likhovskaia.

Similarities with Émile Zola's framework can be perceived in Mamin-Sibiriak's novel. Critics have often compared

him to Zola. The writer himself, in an autobiographical novel Cherty iz zhizni Pepko (Features from the Life of Pepko), expressed his intention to create a series of novels, "similarly as did Zola in Rougon",⁶ in which he intended to show how the biological hereditary force can direct and shape the characters of the heroes. The preoccupation with the forces of heredity is expressed most strongly in Privalovskie milliony.

In "The Differences between Balzac and myself," Zola states:

I Choose, above all, a philosophical tendency, not in order to exhibit it, but so that it may link my books together. The best would perhaps be materialism, that is to say the belief in forces about which I need never be explicit. The word force does not compromise me.⁷

The force chosen by Zola was heredity, modified by the influence of environment. In his books, Les Rougon-Macquart, there were to be

. . . two elements: one, the purely human, physiological element, the scientific study of a family . . . the second, the effect of the modern era on this family, its breakdown through the ravaging passions of the epoch, the social and physical action of the environment.⁸

Mamin-Sibiriak uses both the hereditary and the environmental factors which influence the development of his protagonist, Sergei Privalov.

What kind of person is Privalov? How does he fight to regain his inheritance which will give him the means to fulfill

his dreams and ideals? What method of action does he take in respect to his opponents, the trustees?

As it has already been pointed out, Mamin-Sibiriak gives his hero the central position in his novel and develops a psychological characterization from fragments. This cumulative process follows two main planes: the external, based on the hero's actions in his social environment; and the internal, centred on his inner spiritual life. On the external plane, Mamin-Sibiriak studies his hero from several angles. This external side widens and expands as the hero enters the high society circle of Uzel; his multi-faceted roles appear in a contrasting light as the novel develops and as his involvement deepens. He is, first of all, the heir to the Privalov firm, the last of a famous family of metallurgical magnates. His position imposes upon him the duty to continue the family business. Secondly, Privalov is a millionaire, a fabulously wealthy person, whose wishes, power and riches command the respect and adulation of the entire society. Members of this society see Privalov through the filter of their personal greed, as a distorted image of wealth. Finally, Privalov is a bachelor, a desirable catch for local young ladies. These various roles hide the real personality of the heir; only after he has lost his money does Uzel society see him as he really is: a modest, shy and ordinary person. The aura which surrounds wealth has been stripped. The falsity

and hollowness of Uzel high society are exposed, their bankrupt moral values blown apart.

The physical portrait of Sergei Privalov is given in a disjointed description as seen through the eyes of Vera Bakhareva, youngest daughter of Vasily Bakharev, the foster-father and former guardian of Privalov. She has observed him secretly when he first came to their house:

Vera was perfectly content with what she had seen. . . . She approved of his height, his voice, even his gingerish beard. Yet he had irregular features and prominent cheekbones, small brown eyes and a large mouth, and was scarcely handsome.⁹

Privalov was a millionaire (Vera was a practical-minded young thing, conscious of that word's magic qualities).¹⁰

Here, apart from a purely physical description of his hero, the author points out the distinguishing trait of Privalov's personality, namely his kindness: "His eyes were kind."¹¹ This is echoed in the words of Maria Bakhareva, Privalov's foster-mother and a close friend of his deceased mother, on seeing him for the first time after a long separation: "He's so much like his mother . . . a kind person."¹²

Privalov was very fond of his mother, and he treasured everything connected with her. He inherited her physical features and some traits of her character. "Privalov's hair was much like his mother's, and he liked it for that."¹³ This identification with the qualities of his mother exposes

his nature: he has inherited her weak but gentle character.

The conflict between what Privalov wants to do and what he is expected to do comes out in a conversation with Bakharev. Bakharev sees Privalov as the heir to the famous firm, and therefore he must continue in the mining business and fulfill his social obligations. To Privalov, however, the inheritance and the family business are a burden:

"Privalov explained that he did not like the iron and steel business and thought it was an artificially developed branch of industry."¹⁴

Influenced by his university education in Petersburg and the liberal ideas of the time, Privalov intends to settle his debts with his "historical creditors"¹⁵ and wants to compensate the peasants and the Bashkirs for the loss of their land to his forefathers. Moreover, he intends to start in a new business, the wheat trade.

To the old Bakharev, Privalov is a traitor to his family's interests. The conflict between the role imposed on him by society, and his personal wishes is shown in the novel. These opposing ideas are revealed by the exposition of the hero's social and hereditary past.

Who were Sergei Privalov's ancestors and how did they gain their fortune? On his paternal side, they were the first settlers in Bashkir territory. There were often conflicts between the first settlers and the local inhabitants,

the free nomadic Bashkirs, whose lands were being invaded and stolen by the settlers. In these newly-acquired domains Privalov's forefathers fought against men and nature. In this struggle they developed qualities which made them rich and successful: tenacity, willpower and energy. Such acquired traits, tempered in the struggle of the first settlers for survival, were lacking in their descendants. The idle life, the lack of purpose made them parasites, living off the dividends of their fortune. They showed little interest in the mines and mills, and left their administration to managers. This continued from one generation to the next, until the once strong and rich Privalov family found themselves on the verge of total ruin. The process of disintegration took place over several generations, and Sergei Privalov's father, Aleksandr, would have been ruined if he had not married Varvara Guliaeva, the daughter of a millionaire gold-mine owner. Pavel Guliaev, Sergei's maternal grandfather, was of Old Believer stock: his ancestors had escaped to the Urals to save themselves from religious persecution. He was a simple gold-miner in Siberia. Within ten years, however, he returned to the Urals a millionaire, having discovered several gold-bearing veins. But, "In spite of his millions, Guliaev thought himself the unhappiest man in the world for having no sons, only one daughter, Varvara."¹⁶

The marriage between Aleksandr and Varvara was a matter

of convenience, firstly to save the Shatrovskii mills from ruin, and, secondly, to join two of the best-known families in the Urals. "As for his son-in-law, Guliaev had never liked him. He only respected his name, and it was to that name that Varvara had been sacrificed."¹⁷ Upon Guliaev's death, Aleksandr Privalov inherited his huge fortune. Before this event, Aleksandr was "weak-willed and kind"; however, the possession of such enormous wealth changed him:

The old man's prophecy was soon to come true. . . . Alexander Privalov let himself go. He laughed when told that Guliaev had left all his fortune to his grandson. As his own son's trustee he took charge of all the Guliaev interests. . . . All Bakharev's efforts, and those of Privalov's wife, to safeguard Sergei's interests, were of no avail. Alexander Privalov had waited too long, had swallowed too much from his father-in-law, to let anything stand in his way. . . .

Privalov's monstrous wealth went to furnish a life unexampled in the annals of the Urals. The multi-millionaire, much like some French monarch, was prepared to pay tens of thousands of rubles for something new, something refreshing in the way of entertainment, something that, if only for a moment, would bring his over-indulged, deadened nerves back to life. The Guliaev mansion in Uzel was furnished with princely splendour. What went on within its walls defies the imagination in this, our calculating, penny-pinching age. Suffice it to say that the Russian character had its full, unrestrained fling. From morning to night the Privalov palace wallowed in voluptuousness. Every welcome and unwelcome guest was feasted there. And at the same time, in the same house, in a secret chapel, endless sectarian services were held round the clock. . . . All sense of restraint evaporated, the golden mean of life was flung overboard. Life brimmed over the top, engulfing everything that lay in its path. Ordinary luxuries, ordinary extravagance soon lost their appeal. They sufficed no longer. A kind of savage debauch

succeeded them. The road was laid with red broad-cloth for miles ahead for the drunken company to drive along it in hot-blooded troikas; the horses were given champagne to drink instead of water, and were even bathed in champagne. Countless guests found a second home in the Privalov mansion, and a veritable harem of beauties recruited from among Privalov's serfs ministered to their lusts.

Alexander Privalov went berserk. Wine and women no longer stimulated his deadened sensibilities, benumbed by wanton depravity. It had come to a stage when he needed groans, wails, the sight and smell of blood to arouse him.

Sashka Kholostov, a retired Cossack officer, ruled supreme in his entourage. This Sashka, an athletically built giant, could drink a dozen bottles of champagne without batting an eyelid and take on full-grown bears single-handed in mortal combat to entertain his patron. The man was a veritable beast by mistake in human shape. He held sway in the mansion, and Privalov would not let him out of his sight even for an hour. They even slept in one bedroom. Privalov needed only to say that he was bored, and Sashka instantly thought up something to divert him. But the round of pleasures given to man is extremely limited. Soon Sashka had to resort to downright outrages. Privalov's unhappy wife, naturally, had no sympathy for the ugly facts of the life that surrounded her. . . . Lonely, utterly lost in this vortex, she could do little more than detest Sashka with all her soul, thinking him the root of all the iniquity.¹⁸

Prompted by Sashka, his favourite companion, he became viciously jealous of his wife and mistreated her. Money perverted Aleksandr Privalov, deformed and warped his unstable personality, emotionally unbalancing him, finally turning him into a sadist and a murderer. Money was the cause of Sergei's mother's death:

The wealthy heiress . . . lost her mind and died in Bakharev's home, where she was brought more dead

than alive after one of the corporal "lessons" administered by her husband.¹⁹

Aleksandr Privalov became the victim of his own money. Stiosha, a Gypsy, his second wife, and Sashka, her lover, both deadly afraid of him, flung Privalov to his death from a third-storey window.

Sergei Privalov inherited some of the traits of both his father and his mother. Friends and enemies of Privalov expressed the same opinion:

"D'you know, dear, what undid the Privalovs? Lack of character. They were all either a model of kindness or a model of beastliness. No idea of the golden mean."²⁰

Bakharev also thought that in Privalov's veins flowed the "hereditary Privalov blood." People who knew him well — Maria, for example — said:

"I can't make him out. There is something missing in him. It's lack of character, I suppose. He makes up his mind to go somewhere, and ends up somewhere else."²¹

Oscar Spiegel, a keen observer of people, and the main manipulator in the case of the estate stewardship, who was responsible for Privalov's losing his estate, was aware of it. Summing up Sergei's character, Spiegel said:

"Privalov? Privalov. Hm. Privalov is a complex character, though he may look simple. He's at odds with himself all the time. Besides the Shatrov mills he also inherited many of the failings and weaknesses of his forefathers. It is just those weaknesses that you must take note of — he has inherited a most fundamental weakness — love of women."²²

Sergei's upbringing and education did not prepare him for the role of millionaire and mill owner. Although he was surrounded by riches, his childhood was lonely, and the only bright moments were those spent in Bakharev's house. The tragic death of his mother and the callous attitude of his father made him hate the life shaped by wealth. His education did not prepare him for the task of taking over either the mining mills or the firm. In fact, Sergei knew nothing about mining:

Privalov felt a total stranger in this realm of fire and iron, an outsider who speechlessly inspected everything he was shown. He avoided asking questions lest the workmen discovered his ignorance.²³

All his adult life was spent in Petersburg. Everything in the Urals was unfamiliar to him. He had no business insight and, while in Petersburg, Sergei never had any experience in financial transactions. When he returned to the Urals, he found himself totally unprepared to compete with the ruthless businessmen of Uzel.

Sergei Privalov's arrival and the fate of his fortune became the talk of the entire town of Uzel. For example, the feelings of the self-appointed matchmaker, Khiona Zaplatina, are described as follows:

The very prospect of entering into a close relationship with a real millionaire went to her head. She was touched by the instinct that moves all true artists, wishing to serve the corporal embodiment of the great Privalov fortune like a Brahman serves his Brahma.²⁴

In contrast with his social standing as a millionaire, and contrary to the expectations of the town, Privalov's wants are modest. His life in the capital had been very simple, and mostly dull. Upon arriving in Uzel, he took a ruble-a-day room, and later was content with the three small rooms which he rented from Khiona Zaplatina.

Privalov's millions make him an attractive catch. However, after further acquaintance, mature women realize that the unfortunate Sergei is somewhat dull, that "he lacks audacity, the kind of audacity women like . . . a fortune does not make a woman love a man."²⁵ Unfortunately for Privalov, Nadezhda Bakhareva, the girl with whom he falls in love, in contrast to everyone else in the novel, is not awed by his millions. Sergei's money makes it difficult for her to get to know him well. Nadezhda is very proud, and feels slighted to be the bride in an arranged marriage. She expresses this opinion: "If I didn't have to appear before him as a piece of merchandise, I should have been much nicer to him."²⁶

Privalov's inner life is unfolded through psychological eavesdropping by the author. In the novel there are asides in which the hero daydreams or muses. His sentimentality, his sensitive nature and his sense of obligation towards other people are shown in these asides. The artistic device which the author uses to stress the feeling of compassion

for the hungry and destitute Bashkirs is the nightmare. In his dreams, Privalov feels oppressed by his millions: "I want nothing of yours — not a single thing. Your millions weigh heavily upon me."²⁷

In contrast to Privalov's indifferent attitude towards money, Mamin-Sibiriak shows the persons whose goal in life is the acquisition of wealth. They are Polovodov and Liakhovskii, Privalov's trustees, greedy and dishonest, and Bakharev, his former guardian, a straightforward, hard-working businessman, who is proud of his acquisitions and achievements.

Unlike Privalov, whose psychological make-up and appearance have been exposed by Mamin-Sibiriak through the minds and attitudes of people surrounding him, and without any reference to personal possessions (Privalov owned three suitcases), his opponents are presented through their material possessions and through their environment.

In describing Liakhovskii's character, Mamin-Sibiriak follows Gogol's tradition. Liakhovskii is a typical miser whose appearance and surroundings resemble those of Plushkin. He is a "veritable moth-eaten 'dummy'", whose "greed and oddities" created "thousands of stories" in Uzel.²⁸ Privalov's first encounter with Liakhovskii happens in his study, and is described as follows:

Liakhovskii was seated in an old leather armchair
 . . . everything . . . struck the eye with its

inordinate modesty, even a hint of squalor. The wall-paper was a faded blue; the ceiling had long turned a dirty gray, and there were cobwebs in the corner; the parquet floor was badly worn and covered with a shabby lacklustre carpet which . . . looked like a large soiled blotch. . . .

Liakhovskii's own appearance was in harmony with that of his study. His small meagre frame, much as the carpet under his feet, appeared from afar like a dirty blotch, with the one difference that it was perched in a shabby armchair. Although it was summer, . . . the master himself was in an old quilted overcoat. A scarf was wrapped round his gaunt neck. One could scarcely tell his age. He belonged to that category of people, petrified and withered like old toothpicks, whose age was incalculable.²⁹

Liakhovskii's attitude towards money had become an obsession which dimmed his thinking:

To acquire for the mere sake of acquiring had long since become a shell that had grown more and more solid with every year and gradually obliterated the living being in Liakhovskii.³⁰

However, Mamin-Sibiriak reaches further and deeper in his study of this character. Liakhovskii is not just a Gogolian grotesque mask of greed; inside the "shell" lives a human capable of love and feeling, even if for only one person. For his daughter, Zosia, he is a kind and loving father.

A further insight into Liakhovskii's miserliness and his attitude to money comes to light when he refuses to lend money to Bakharev when the latter has suffered a financial setback. Bakharev originally set Liakhovskii up in business, but Liakhovskii refuses to acknowledge his moral obligation

to his former benefactor.

Money is also the cause of Liakhovskii's death. His pathological meanness, his insatiable greed for money, and envy of those richer than he, lead him to his end. Liakhovskii dies of a heart attack on hearing that his former manager is about to open a mill.

Another trustee, Polovodov, is a businessman of the "newest type"³¹ in the Urals. He is a banker, the newly emerging type of his day. He is well educated, has travelled abroad, knows his food and wine. He needs money to live in luxury. All his life is spent in the pursuit of pleasure. He is the soul of local society: he organizes excursions, picnics and other functions. Polovodov has an amorous disposition and is always in love with someone. He is inconsistent and continuously changes his attitudes: in life he vacillates between being an Anglophile and a Slavophile:

A kind of inanity came over him from time to time, and on one occasion, for instance, he went off abroad, kicked his heels at various spas, spent some time in Paris, made a trip to Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula, and returned an Englishman from head to foot, in an Indian pith helmet and a dusty-green shirt, and with a distinct Albion drawl. He decorated his Uzel home in the manner of Englishmen and for two years played the part of an Uzel squire. When the wind changed, Polovodov gave up his helmet, . . . and changed the house to its present state. His marriage to Antonina was an upshot of his current passion for the earthy treasures of folk culture; he liked her plump shoulders, her white neck, and, besides, she fitted in wonderfully as the mistress of the newly decorated Russianized home with its painted ceilings and cockerels.³²

Money is his ideal, the guiding force in his life, the source of all pleasures. To obtain it he is prepared to go to any lengths. To put through a brilliant scheme he pushes his wife into an affair with Privalov. He is in love with Zosia, but, seeing the affair between Privalov and his wife come to an end, he tries to marry Zosia to Privalov to achieve his ends.

As the manager of Privalov's estate, Polovodov gains considerable benefits. However, these benefits cannot satisfy his greedy nature. He then steals a huge sum of money and must leave the Urals. He goes to Paris accompanied by Zosia, and there, haunted by government agents, he finally commits suicide. Polovodov's death is thus attributable to money and greed.

Vasilii Bakharev, at one time also a trustee of the Privalov estate, is a positive type of businessman in the novel. He is the solid, honest, hard-working and successful gold-mine prospector. Brought up in the Old Believers' faith and in the patriarchal tradition, he is by nature decisive, brave and full of energy. His fortune is built by his own industry. He loves the uncertainty of gold prospecting and gold mining. To him, the accumulation of wealth is just a means of showing that whatever a man wants he can achieve by himself, using his own intelligence. His daughter says of him:

. . . for Father gold-mining is clothed in an aura of Guliaev and Privalov traditions, and he's a fanatic who views gold-mining as a ritual rather than a source of wealth.³³

He is not a conservative in his attitudes and thinking. He realizes that times change, he values education and encourages his older children, Nadezhda and Konstantin, to study. His household is divided into two parts, both architecturally and in terms of social organization. His younger children, Victor and Vera, remain with their mother, while the older ones are their father's concern. Though his wife is an Old Believer and runs her household accordingly, Bakharev respects her and her ways.

Bakharev is an extremely honest man. In contrast with the other two trustees of the Privalov estate, Liakhovskii and Polovodov, who consider the estate as a source of personal gain, Bakharev managed the estate honestly as a matter of obligation. His attitude, which so strongly contrasts with that of Liakhovskii and Polovodov, explains why he left his position as a trustee in a moment of righteous anger at the conduct of the two men.

Mamin-Sibiriak uses two main techniques to describe the characters of his novel who come into contact with the hero. He gives a detailed and meticulous description of the outward appearance, clothing and furniture of the associates and opponents of the business people in Privalov's circle.

Thus the reader comes to recognize Liakhovskii as a miser from the description of his office, Polovodov as a pretentious person from the description of his house, Bakharev's progressive spirit from the description of his portion of the house.

To depict the people emotionally involved with the hero, Mamin-Sibiriak uses a multi-dimensional approach, placing them in their environment and showing them at various activities. He applies this technique to Privalov's first love, Nadezhda, to his mistress, Antonina Polovodova and to Zosia Liakhovskaia, his first wife.

Nadezhda Bakhareva, like Privalov, is utterly uninterested in money. Early in life, Nadezhda observed and recognized the clash between the two opposite philosophies at work in her father's household. On the one hand, she respects her conservative mother, but, like her progressive father, she sees the advantages of the education she is given and, like him, she would like to change the Old Believer ways of life.

Moreover, Nadezhda is aware of the social injustices of her time. She sees the discords engendered by the idle life led by the women of her age; she is unhappy in the role of a rich debutante. Like the social crusader of the times, she is appalled by the senseless squandering of huge fortunes, by the parasitic life of rich and idle people

while there is so much unhappiness and poverty everywhere. True daughter of Bakharev, she not only thinks about the social ills but she works at changing them. She is determined, persistent and strong-willed. She moves away from the family, lives independently and works to implement her ideas. She shares her life with an exiled revolutionary, Loskutov. Their relationship is based on love and mutual respect. Whereas Privalov is a dreamer, aware of society's ills but incapable of transforming his ideas into positive action, Nadezhda, the social activist, is his opposite.

Antonina Polovodova is very different from Nadezhda. Her father was a professional card player, and her mother, although one of an unpretentious family of twelve, gave herself airs. Money was an important factor in Antonina's family. Her sisters' marriages are arranged essentially with a view to monetary considerations, as is her own with Polovodov, the possessor of both money and social position. Antonina has not had much formal education, but she is well prepared to play her role in society. She is interested in clothes, dances, social outings and gossip. She is often bored by her monotonous life and, to relieve this boredom, as well as to please her husband and to help him in his machinations against Privalov, she agrees to become Privalov's mistress. She is the victim of her husband's uncontrolled greed for money. By becoming his accomplice she loses her

social position and ruins her life.

The beautiful Zosia Liakhovskaia, the object of her father's love and attention, is permitted to do whatever she wishes. She is spoiled and impatient. Her mother, an alcoholic, had never had any part in her upbringing. Nevertheless, Zosia was well educated at home by tutors provided by her father. She has lived all her life in luxury and, for her, money is a necessity which she takes for granted. Zosia enjoys challenging situations and strong sensations, owns a pure-bred stallion which she rides recklessly, and has an untamed falcon and a bear-cub for pets. She is fascinated by Loskutov, not because she loves him but because she suspects that he is in love with Nadezhda Bakhareva. This offers her a worthy challenge, and she tries to win him over from Nadezhda. She bestows all her attention upon him and finally declares her love for him. However, for the first time she meets someone who does not submit to her will. On being rebuffed, she suffers a nervous breakdown and almost dies.

Like Nadezhda, Zosia is a strong personality, but she lacks a sense of purpose and direction. She is inconsistent and highly strung. With her, the least disappointment brings on hysterics. "Blood means a lot," states her father, "and there is so much bad blood in Zosia, so very, very much."³⁴ She is impulsive, acts hastily, as, for example,

in marrying Privalov. After her marriage she becomes bored with her husband and starts an affair with Polovodov which ultimately leads to her complete physical and mental disintegration.

In conclusion, we can say that in each of Mamin-Sibiriak's leading characters, two factors — heredity and environment — dominate the behaviour and development of personality. An individual's life is an expression of his character make-up. His fate depends upon and is determined by this make-up. The influence of the environment is expressed by the role which money plays in the life of the characters.

The environment which influenced Privalov's life — his stay in the Bakharev household and his studies at the university in Petersburg — have laid positive foundations and given him an aim in life. However, the absence of practical knowledge and the lack of contact with people of the business world prevent him from implementing his ideals and bringing them to fruition. In the Ural environment, he is a misfit.

Privalov has inherited "the Privalov family blood." On the one side he has a degenerate father, on the other a kind-natured mother. Although throughout the novel he is depicted with the positive traits inherited from his mother, nevertheless at the end, in a time of personal crisis, when

his wife is unfaithful to him, the negative traits inherited from his father come to the fore — with the result that he turns to self-indulgence. He is saved from this state by his second marriage, to Nadezhda.

Both hereditary and environmental influences can be observed in the case of the Bakharev family. Here there are four children, and the influence of the parents and of their ideals and attitudes toward money are most important in the shaping of the children's characters. The older ones, Konstantin and Nadezhda, are under the influence of their father who is honest, clever, logical, hard-working and not involved with money. Bakharev keeps the best from past traditions and adapts it to the present. This attitude is passed on to his older children and they are successful in life: Konstantin is a good engineer and Nadezhda a kind person who, after her personal tragedy — the death of her common-law husband, Loskutov — lives to help others. The younger children, Victor and Vera, who grew up under their mother's influence, are badly spoiled and lacking in purpose. As a result, Victor is lazy, a gambler and a wastrel, and his idle life leads him ultimately to murder. From an early age, Vera is materialistic and money-oriented. In contrast to Nadezhda and Konstantin, Vera and Victor are self-centred individuals.

The same yardstick can be held up to the Liakhovskii

family. Zosia, although endowed with a brilliant mind, a good education and a strong will, achieves nothing in her life. As a result of her hereditary traits and bad upbringing, she is inconsistent, undisciplined, selfish, and devoid of ideals. As for Liakhovskii's son David, he is completely useless, a hopeless drunkard, like his mother.

The elder Liakhovskii is destroyed by his greed for money and his envy of the riches of others. The accumulation of wealth has become his obsession, pushing into the background all other interests in life. In the end this leads to the deterioration of his health, and the worsening of his financial circumstances; the combination of these factors results in his premature death. Obsessed with the idea of taking revenge against his former manager, he has neglected to write a will and, consequently, his beloved Zosia is left penniless, and the inheritance goes to his worthless son.

As for the banker Polovodov, his instability of character and his greed, nurtured by constant contact with money — his environment — are the cause of his downfall.

In Privalovskie milliony, Mamin-Sibiriak describes several representatives of the industrial magnate class and shows the various means they use to accumulate wealth. A prototype of a business man is created by the author, but at the same time there can be seen glaring dissimilarities. His characters range from extremely conservative to men of

the old pioneer days yet with a broad imagination and approach to business, to the "new type" which was emerging at the time of writing of the novel.

The Soviet critic T. Dergachev stressed this artistic uniqueness of Mamin-Sibiriak in creating vital characters, when he wrote:

Each character is retained in the memory as an individual and at the same time as a type. Mamin-Sibiriak considers the typical as attesting the internal law of existence which is more perceptible in something outstanding or under the critical conditions that cause the human personality to fully expose itself rather than in average, mass or commonplace situations. Thus his types are always portrayed vividly as individuals.³⁵

In this novel, Mamin-Sibiriak concentrated his attention on three wealthy families who are connected with Privalov; but in the next novel, Gornoe gnezdo, the panorama of society is expanded by the inclusion of a larger number of diverse personalities.

CHAPTER II

GORNOE GNEZDO

Money as a means of attaining position and power

One insect smothers another,
a worm devours another worm, the
cheerfully chirping bird equally
cheerfully eats the insect and
the worm and itself falls victim
to a cat or a hawk. The mystery
of life is created in this mêlée
of gobbling up one another.

— Mamin-Sibiriak¹

In the novel Gornoe gnezdo, Mamin-Sibiriak follows the same theme as in Privalovskie milliony. Here, however, he introduces another attitude to wealth. He depicts the extreme servility of humans in their worship of wealth. The novel portrays a mining and engineering society in the Urals — a society that is totally subservient to its master. Mamin-Sibiriak describes "the all-powerful clique which has dominated and still dominates all the business affairs of the Ural region" and "the mores and personality types of the bigwigs — the administrators and mill owners."²

In contrast to Privalovskie milliony, which presents a number of plant owners, manufacturers and gold mine operators, Gornoe gnezdo portrays only one millionaire. All the other personalities in the novel are subordinate to him. They are the administrators, managers, engineers and other employees of Laptev's enormous empire of iron and steel mills.

Unlike Privalov, the millionaire Laptev is not concerned with the origin of his wealth. Although the head of the firm, he feels no responsibility to the people he employs; he does not understand and has no desire to learn the intricacies of mining. He is indifferent toward his wealth, takes it for granted and is totally unconcerned about the whole mining industry that has provided him with his luxurious life-style.

The driving force behind the Laptev mining and industrial empire is an intricate administrative system. In the structure of the private mill ownership there is a complex internal hierarchy, which the author defines in the following way:

Imagine a completely conical mountain, at the apex of which is Laptev himself, the owner of the mills; below, from all directions, hundreds of people race up, crawling, scrambling, jostling one another and overtaking one another. The higher one gets, the greater is the pressure; at the apex immediately below the owner, there is room for only a few people, and those lucky ones who get here find it the hardest to maintain their balance and not to tumble down the mountain.³

The novel unravels a Machiavellian intrigue: people strive to capture the attention of their master, Laptev, in order to gain his favour. Mamin-Sibiriak exposes many facets of human subservience to wealth through his analysis of the people caught up in the intrigue. He demonstrates that those who have gained favour with the wealthy owner are rewarded in various ways: for some it is a material gain, for others

the winning of a prestigious position, while still others find the key to a gay and carefree life.

The novel is very simply constructed. In Gornoe gnezdo, one event acts as the compositional centre. That is the arrival of the millionaire, Laptev, to view his Kukharski industrial estates, comprising seven iron and steel mills, five hundred thousand desiatins of land, populated by almost fifty thousand people. During this visit to the estates an issue concerning "the Land-ownership Charter" was to be decided. This charter defined the rights and obligations of the newly-liberated serfs and the special privileges of the landowner-industrialists. In addition to this, some improvements were to be made in the administrative, economic and technical operations of the mills. However, nothing is resolved because of the intrigues and rivalries between the administrators from Petersburg and the Ural mill managers, and the indifference and ignorance of the owner.

A struggle for power and influence develops between a group of mill administrators and Raisa Goremykina, the wife of the chief manager. The instigator of the struggle is Tetiuev, the chairman of the zemstvo, who is "tired of dancing to the tune of an old woman"⁴ and wants to make a few changes on behalf of the workers and peasants.

As the struggle for power unfolds, many administrative members of the mining industry are drawn in. Laptev's

arrival gives them an opportunity to improve their positions. They are all motivated by the possibility of personal gain. Mamin-Sibiriak calls this struggle "the war of red and white roses." He divides all the characters into two groups, the large court and the small court. The large court (bol'shoi dvor) consists of the people from the capital, who accompany Laptev, the Petersburg entourage. It includes Laptev's favourite, the administrator Prein; Professor Blinov, the economist; Nina, his mistress; and a large group of friends and hangers-on, including an orchestra, cooks and domestic servants. The small court (mal'yi dvor), or "the mountain nest", consists of local people from the top administrative sector of the mining industry — divided further into two camps. Goremykin, the chief manager, his wife Raisa, her advisor Sakharov, the "Russian Richelieu", and her "ladies-in-waiting" who are women of dubious reputation, form one group; the other group consists of the managers of the remaining six mills, their specialists and assistants. All these groups feud among themselves in the hope of gaining favour with Laptev.

The novel presents a series of scenes showing how people try to capture the attention of the all-powerful "nabob." Some try to attract his attention with excellent cuisine, others organize hunting and shooting expeditions, while still others prepare theatrical presentations. Raisa

Goremykina, knowing of Laptev's weakness for women, plans to ensnare him with her protégée, the beautiful Lusha Prozorova.

The novel is a portrait gallery of human personalities. Here the mastery of Mamin-Sibiriak is demonstrated through his use of various literary devices in portraying the characters. There are individual portraits and group portraits. Laptev is portrayed as a dandy: he loves colourful and stylish clothes. Raisa is depicted as a theatrical prima donna (teatral'naia koroleva). Nina resembles a grotesque theatrical puppet from Balagan (zataskanaia zamshevaia kukla). Laptev's entourage is described as a "faceless crowd" — people without individuality. Tetiuev and the aspiring managers of the mills are characterized as a group. They are conspirators ("all dressed in tuxedos") brought together by the same interests.

According to Skabichevskii, the novel Gornoe gnezdo is Mamin-Sibiriak's most successful in structure. It is concentric, inasmuch as all the parts of the book are tied together by one event, namely the arrival of Laptev, which integrates all the episodes of the novel into a whole.⁵ All the action occurs strictly within the bounds of the visit. A distinguishing feature of the novel is the device of arrested exposition which extends over ten chapters, or nearly one-third of the novel. In these chapters Mamin-Sibiriak unfolds the biography of the hero and the origins

of his wealth. Here, also, the dialogues between Raisa and Prozorov, the schoolmaster, are very important, because they shed light on the personalities of these characters, their past relationships and their inner convictions and regrets in life. There are historical references in these chapters, describing the evolution of conditions and the developments of the epoch. The day-to-day scenes of the Ural mining settlement provide in-depth information on local conditions.

Then the scene of Laptev's arrival follows. His reception by a crowd of several thousands shows the important position that he occupies in the life of the settlement. The reception scene, as described in the novel, serves to underline the fact that Laptev is a fabulously wealthy man. His arrival upsets the life patterns of everyone in the community. At the same time, the appearance of Nina, and dictatorial behaviour, cause similar confusion in Raisa's circle. In these chapters the division of the characters into two camps occurs: it is the beginning of the power struggle.

Then a number of scenes follow in very rapid succession. In the entertainment for Laptev, presented by his employees, the seamy sides of human nature are revealed — primarily their overwhelming servility, subservience, grovelling before wealth, and their insatiable greed. These same scenes show that Laptev is weak, that as a human being he is worthless, is unfamiliar with the environment in which

he finds himself, and is completely uninterested in solving certain problems, which was the purpose of his visit.

Developed concurrently with this theme is the love theme between proud Lusha Prozorova and insensitive Laptev. The culmination of the love theme accentuates Laptev's total incompetence as a man. It reveals that he is capable only of behaving like a spoiled child.

There are descriptions of the meetings where certain decisions were supposed to be made, and which lead to nothing because everyone is motivated only by hopes of personal gain. Laptev, his friends and attendants are all bored by the aspiring mill employees. The anecdotal twist in plot at the end of the novel (Chapter 29), Laptev's flight to Petersburg after his night rendezvous with a "madwoman", whom he mistook for Lusha, demonstrates the cowardly and weak nature of his character.

In the course of the novel none of the issues raised is resolved, nor are any of the human relationships concluded. The theme of the novel is simply used as a vehicle to show the grovelling before a wealthy magnate, and human greed, which destroys the vital energies of personalities.

Mamin-Sibiriak depicts women as the stronger sex. The men, with few exceptions, are weak. Raisa, Nina, Lusha each in their own way command attention and reveal their dominance over people or situations. Raisa is the omnipotent

ruler of the region's social and administrative life. Nina's role is similar, only she is confined to Laptev's circle. Lusha, a protégée of Raisa, functions independently of the circles, is a very proud young woman, has self-esteem and uses this quality to manipulate Laptev. The protagonist Laptev lacks these qualities and is a simple, ineffectual man.

The "nabob" Laptev,⁵ in spite of his enormous wealth, is "a spoiled child whose will-power was knocked off."⁶ A great disparity exists between him as a person and the position he occupies in society. He is not capable of governing his empire and does not like the responsibility of the mining and steel industry. He finds everything tedious and boring. He is super-saturated with worldly things. At thirty, he was a plump man with a tired, sluggish gaze. The only things that can jolt him out of his inertia are vicious jokes, brazen remarks, or fantastic and unusual stories. He is surrounded by a group of clowns and liars.

His character has an element of satire. The name Laptev belies both his origin and his personality. Lapot' is the name for crude and shapeless peasant footwear made of birch bark. In Russian the word is also used as a term of abuse, relating to someone's ineptness. It is paradoxical that a man of peasant origin becomes a god, venerated by the peasants. For them, he is the epitome of power, a lord and master who controls their destiny: "One word from him

and we are all done for, we shall go to the dogs."⁷ It is also a paradox that people around him expect him to be decisive, something of which he is incapable. This man-made god, this idol of peasants and administrators alike, has a number of serious shortcomings. Laptev is a dandy. He has a feminine passion for changing his clothes and he is fond of bright colours. Although this could be explained by the West-European tradition of changing for various occasions, this trait is exaggerated in his character. He is equally attentive to other aspects of his appearance, taking two hours to arrange his hair, and so on. Laptev is an epicure: his first preference is for tasty, unusual dishes, and second, for beautiful women.

He is a man devoid of ordinary judgement and common sense. He visits his estates dressed in a Scottish kilt, showing that his upbringing was alien to this environment. It indicates also that he fails to understand the conditions prevailing in his country — a failure which adds to his difficulty in dealing with the demands of his estates. In this respect, he is similar to Privalov in the first novel.

His respect for other human beings is limited to Prein and his valet Charles. All other people, in his opinion, can be bought with money. He buys the services of Blinov, the economist, relegating all authority to him. Consequently, he does not know how to deal with people on a non-money basis.

He cannot find a common language with Lusha, who quickly loses interest in his riches. In the Russian environment he is both a misfit and an incompetent person. All Laptev's affairs, personal business, are looked after by the "all-powerful" Prein — the only strong male character in this novel. By origin Prein is a German, by upbringing a cosmopolitan. He had been Laptev's guardian from the time Laptev became an orphan at the age of ten. He knew well the character of his charge. A good understanding of Laptev's personality, his ever-changing moods, has enabled him to have a great deal of influence over him. All this contributes to the fact that over the last twenty years Prein has gathered into his hands "all the mainsprings and threads of the complex economy of the mills,"⁸ from which he derived a good profit.

By nature, Prein is very easy to get along with and easy-going. His enemies consider him stupid, but his friends think he is clever. Those who are closer to him would say of him that "he did not like to be bored . . . and to everything else in the world he preferred feminine company."⁹ Prein is popular with women. In the beginning it is Raisa who has her eye on him, and in the end, Lusha. The latter he wins over with his keen mind and strong personality:

It was precisely his strength that attracted her to Prein: he was an all-powerful man who had

risen to his position by intelligence alone.¹⁰

Prein is one of the few people who does not debase himself before Laptev. Although he stands apart from the struggles for power and wealth, he nevertheless holds the strings to all intrigues, and has the final word in all matters.

Nina and Raisa are the strongest personalities in the novel, and it is they who generate the intrigues; Nina Leontevna is the mistress of the economist Blinov, and Raisa Goremykina, the wife of the manager of the largest mill. There is an analogy in the intrigues which are compared to the activity in a beehive that has two queen bees. But no beehive, regardless of its size, can support the presence of two queen bees, especially when they are both fighting for the same thing: power. Nina is more oriented towards money as a means to satisfy her greed, while Raisa seeks power for its own sake.

These two women are different in many respects. Each is the other's antithesis in origin, education and social conduct. Nina started as an ordinary cook. Raisa was an orphan from an aristocratic family, brought up in the higher social circles of the capital. These two women do not want to share their power and not once in the entire course of the novel do they meet face to face.

The two strong feminine personalities are described by different artistic approaches. Nina is pictured as a

grotesque theatrical puppet. She is described physically in the following way:

In the midst of this dubious society of dubious people Nina Leont'evna was a veritable pearl. Small in stature, with a heavy bosom, short fat arms and a fleshy round face, she was ugly as a witch, but she had a pair of tiny blue eyes with a penetrating, clever, and gay look and a sarcastic smile characteristic of her, exposing two rows of false teeth. Dressed in an incredible blue dress with flame-red and orange ribbons, she resembled a child's crude toy with needle holes to resemble the eyes and the mouth and whose arms and the rest were stuffed with oakum.¹¹

When she is shown in her relationship with the economist Blinov, she appears in much the same light:

In her nightshirt this pig-iron ingot bears a murderous resemblance to a soiled suede doll, but the General is afraid of this doll and is afraid to say what he is thinking at the moment. And he is thinking of his perishing friend Prozorov, who has been dear to him from student days.¹²

The same image is evoked when Nina's business acumen is described:

At this moment there was the rustle of a heavy silk dress against the floor in the next room and the squat figure of Nina Leont'evna, heavy and overlaid with fat, appeared in the doorway. As usual she was decked out in multi-coloured bows, rings and feathers; on her head the lace and ribbons looked like an iridescent comb. Tetiúev's first impression of Nina Leont'evna's appearance was that it could only be compared to the appearance at the door of a haystack with flowers on top.

The dealers cast penetrating glances at each other as persons who are meeting for the first time and do not trust each other. In her hand Nina Leont'evna held by a silver chain her pet monkey Koko jumping around.

"You are half an hour late," finally uttered Nina

in a rasping voice, glancing at her gold watch dangling from a diamond clasp on her bosom.

"I am sorry, I was detained," Tetiuev mumbled in confusion, never expecting such a reception, "I came directly from Maizel's."

"I know."

"There was a small meeting regarding our business."

"I know."

"She is not a woman, she is the Devil himself," thought Tetiuev, again looking at his hostess.

"The General will be at Evgenii Konstantinovich's for the whole evening, so you and I can have a leisurely discussion," continued Nina Leont'evna, lighting a cigar, "I hope we won't keep our cards in the dark, shall we? I, at least, look at this deal in a straightforward manner. For you I'll do everything that I promised, and you must let me have something in advance... something quite insignificant, like twenty thousand at this time."

Tetiuev shrank on learning of such an amount and mumbled some incoherent phrase. Now it finally became clear to him that he was actually dealing with the devil himself... He realized that he was looking at the true entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of the highest calibre, an entrepreneur of that fascinating circle where the deals are in hundreds of thousands and in millions.¹³

The portrait of Raisa is drawn by several different artistic methods. The particulars of her portrait are drawn to depict to a certain extent the heroine's different moods, her internal essence and the motives which drive her. The environment against which she is depicted is of great importance. The colours and other details of her clothing and her speech mannerisms all contribute to her composite image.

Raisa is a very strong and wilful woman. When Mamin-

Sibiriak introduces her for the first time in the novel, she is in her husband's study. He is the chief manager of the Kukharskii Mills. By doing this the author stresses that all the power is concentrated in her hands, not in those of her husband. In this study she receives Sakharov, who is her private adviser. With him she tries to work out a plan that would enable her to retain her lofty position, on which her material and social advancement depends:

Raisa Pavlovna was Caesar's wife in the small world of an industrial community, where everybody and everything bowed to her will in order to say evil things behind her back later.¹⁴

To protect her position she does not proceed directly, but uses all her feminine charms and wiles. To obtain information from Prozorov, her former lover and an old friend of Blinov, she goes to a great deal of trouble in grooming to impress him with her appearance:

She wore a blue alpaca dress trimmed with expensive lace; the beautifully arranged ruffles were caught with a turquoise brooch at her throat. Her hair, gathered in a morning coiffure, cleverly concealed a false plait which Raisa Pavlovna had been wearing for a long time.¹⁵

The furnishings of her private chambers, her bedroom and her sitting-room, show her exquisite taste and her love of luxury. Her dressing-room is described thus:

. . . exquisite blue room with satin wall coverings, damask draperies and walnut furniture in the style of a Louis. A marble wash stand, a low carved bedstead with a canopy over the headboard, several delicately carved small tables, chiffoniers in the

corners — the whole furnishings of the dressing-room gave it the appearance of both a bedroom and a boudoir. Thousands of trinkets were scattered around without purpose or order, because they had been left there and forgotten: Japanese boxes and small lacquered chests, several Chinese porcelain vases, empty candy-jars, those special feminine trinkets with which Paris is flooding the stores, cases of every size, shape and purpose, perfume bottles, whole stores of cosmetic aids...¹⁶

The third important female character, Lusha Prozorova, figures prominently in the schemes of Raisa Goremykina.

Early in the novel she is fascinated and strongly attracted by wealth, and Raisa attempts to encourage her desires. She receives the naive and modest Lusha in her luxurious chambers and so fans the flame of desire for material wealth that the older woman so quickly perceives in the young girl's eyes. She lets Lusha try on and wear her beautiful jewels:

. . . bracelets, earrings, brooches and necklaces. All of these things were tried on before a mirror and praised according to their worth. The girl was particularly taken with a brooch with a set-in eastern ruby of a rich blood colour. The expensive stone shone like a clot of freshly congealed blood.¹⁷

It occurs to Raisa to use Lusha as bait for Laptev. In the end, however, Lusha shows that she cannot be bought. She is discerning, as her name implies. She perceives that the true value of a person is completely unrelated to his wealth and for this reason she chooses Prein above Laptev as the one worthy of her affection. Lusha alone realizes this truth. All the other people in the novel are so blinded by Laptev's wealth that they cannot see beyond it.

In her luxurious quarters and seductive gown, Raisa entertains the almighty Prein, an intimate friend of hers, trying to find out about the likely future promotions and demotions in order to prepare herself for the struggle.

The colours of her attire reflect her changing moods. For an official visit upon Laptev's arrival, with the aim of showing him respect and gaining his trust, she puts on a dress of a subdued coffee colour, although she is fond of bright colours. At a ball she dresses tastefully in a gown of a fashionable colour, in which she is "striking and respectable and even a little more."¹⁸ She becomes ill when Nina usurps her position and threatens her by giving orders in her house in the presence of Laptev; she wears a white peignoir to show illness.¹⁹ On another occasion, when she learns of the decision of Prein and the group to dismiss her husband, she appears in Lusha's home dressed "in a dark shawl, . . . cloth slippers soaked through."²⁰

With single words or phrases, Mamin-Sibiriak constantly throws hints that there is something very false about Raisa, something artificial. Sometimes she appears like a stage queen, coming out with a speech "learned off by heart." Only with Sakharov is she rude and direct, using strong language such as calling him a "scoundrel" and telling him to "go to hell." With Lusha she is warm and frank, treating her like her own daughter, and yet scheming to use

her for her own ends. Generally, in society she is a polished grande dame, displaying a sound knowledge of French, which distinguishes her from other local female characters.

Thus, though Nina and Raisa are opposites in many respects, their mutual overwhelming desire for power and riches causes them both to struggle. The struggle is ruthless and they both use different methods. Nina proceeds directly to her goal while Raisa is more diplomatic and subtle. The difference in their personalities is made manifest at their moments of defeat, suffered first by Raisa and then by Nina. In the face of defeat Raisa throws off her proud, lofty mask and speaks in a sincere and simple way. On the other hand, Nina has to take out her anger on someone else. She takes revenge on harmless Prozorov, who at one time, by his wit, had placed her in an awkward position vis-à-vis Laptev.

The two powerful women hold the lives of their respective husbands in their hands. They have created their business careers for them, and rule their personal lives. Blinov's career was created by Nina, who was eager to "feast on the 'pie' of the works and to get rid of Raisa."²¹ Blinov is a famous theoretical economist, hired by Laptev to investigate conditions between the owner of the mills and his employees. Furthermore, he is a mediator in the conflict involving the land ownership charter, that is, the charter

that is to resolve the conflict between the owner of the mill and his peasants. In economic theory Blinov is "an admirer of Carey and partly of Malthus."²² However, the theory is too general and cannot be applied to the local conditions in the Urals. The inappropriateness of his theory is shown in a discussion between Blinov and Prozorov. Prozorov comes to the conclusion that Blinov reasons like a "Cannibal":

"It's very simple: you sold your soul to the Devil, that is, to the capitalists, and are now finding consolation in sophistry. You feel yourself that there is something wrong in what you are saying..."

"No, I don't feel that."

"So much the worse for you! If I perish I do so as an individual and nobody is the better or the worse for it, but you, in the name of your economic fantasies, want to tighten a deadly noose around tens of thousands of people. I cannot call your system otherwise . . . what is all this learned nonsense if you examine it carefully? The most unseemly juggling of scientific conclusions to placate the golden calf."²³

Blinov is a dry theoretician, not used to dealing with real people. In addition to this, he knows nothing of the industry. While examining the mills with Laptev, he looks at everything around him "with that perplexity with which an illiterate person looks upon an open book."²⁴

His external appearance is imposing. His tall, stately figure and grey moustache make a very good impression on everyone, especially the peasants. However, his outward appearance of strength and intelligence is contrary to his

personality. He is utterly devoid of strength of character, extremely naive, and obedient to Nina in every matter. His weakness is demonstrated by his absolute cowardice. This weakness makes him commit an act of disloyalty to his former fellow-student. At Nina's insistence, he adds a few remarks to Prozorov's file, dampening any hope that Prozorov might have for a future career.

Goremykin's position is created by his wife Raisa with the help of Prein. This ambitious woman is not satisfied with being the wife of an ordinary plant engineer. Goremykin is an honest person and a very good specialist. In everyday matters, however, he is "the simplest child." He does not see well and he is not articulate. These physical shortcomings are symbols of his nature. He is not aware of the intrigues in the social and factory life around him. He does not even suspect that he is under the threat of losing his comfortable position. His prime interest in life is to perfect the machinery and technical processes in the mill. He is content only when at the mill, where he feels more comfortable than at home. He stands out from the other managers because of his specialized technical education, his competence and his love and devotion to his work.

Sakharov's position is another result of Raisa's foresight. Noting his cunning mind and his ability to get along against heavy odds, she has engaged him as a secretary

and a personal adviser. The author calls him "a Russian Richelieu" to underline his unusual perspicacity. He is a product of serfdom and the author shows in his personality the vestiges of serfdom. He worships Laptev as someone very special, and feels very inadequate in his presence. Another trait of his personality is his cowardice, which is inconsistent with the bold decisions he often makes concerning business transactions.

The managers of the mills and their assistants are presented as a single, aggregate face: they are the "nest." The author does not place anyone from this group in a prominent position. When he describes the group, one can detect satire and ridicule in his tone. All these characters are motivated by the same desire and they all hold the stage for a brief moment. They all compete for Laptev's attention in the hope of taking the position of the chief manager, Goremykin. Individual characters arise only briefly to fawn at the feet of Laptev, and then rapidly fade into the group again.

Vershinin is the first one to please his master. He is an expert at making a good speech and telling jokes at the expense of others, but it is his fish soup that impresses Laptev. While Vershinin is the focus of the attention of the "nabob" the others envy him and try to outdo him. Maizel, another member of the group, prepares a hunter's dish from

the lip of an elk. This pleases his master and for a moment he enjoys his triumph, which "had caused severe suffering to the spirits of all the others."²⁵ Sakharov captures Laptev's attention for a moment by showing him a Tartar wrestling game, and once again "the rest burst with envy."²⁶ Yet another member of the group, Sarmatov, to please the master gathers together some of the women and makes them display their best attributes in a stage performance. Laptev responds by sending flowers to the girl with the most beautiful shoulders, and Sarmatov's flash of glory, as could be expected, is the object of envy of all the rest.

A unifying characteristic of this group is their inappropriateness for their Ural posts. Sarmatov is a retired artillery officer; Maizel, a German, also has a military background; and two others are colourless and stupid. They have neither the affinity nor the education to fit them to their posts in the Urals.

In this respect they resemble their master, Laptev. They do not understand the traditions of the region, do not value its natural environment, and often ridicule local customs. They wish only to make use of the available resources and exploit their employees to advance their own material status.

All the outings and meetings between Laptev and the "nest" should have resolved important issues concerning the

mining business; however, they are characterized by inactivity and a tone of light amusement. The only things to come out of these gatherings is a display of the keen interest of each individual to further his own career, and the pronounced indifference of the owner to the whole affair.

Prozorov is presented in sharp contrast to all the business men. He is one of a very few cultured men in the circle of industrial managers; he comes from an originally wealthy family that has recently been ruined. He inherits "the generous manners and ways of the Russian character."²⁷ He has received an excellent education in Moscow, and therefore great achievements are expected of him. However, his weakness of character, lack of consistency, and tendency for words instead of action result in an undistinguished business career and personal life. Initially a man of high ideals, he finally turns in desperation to drink, because of his own shortcomings and the situation in which he finds himself. He has reduced his life to ruins. Nevertheless, he remains extremely perceptive and conscious of the times. Mamin-Sibiriak shows that such a disparity between words and actions results in a pitiful character.

Under the influence of alcohol, Prozorov condemns man's mercenary nature and his world of material achievements. He says, speaking of Tetiuev:

"Ha, ha. Tetiuev has sold his birthright in the Zemstvo for a bowl of porridge and for this

reason he will go a long way: for all the scoundrels today the door is wide open . . . Rod'ka! [Sakharov] Spit in Tetiuev's face for me."²⁸

Like Prozorov, Tetiuev was initially an idealist, who had hoped to help the peasants, but instead has turned to wealth and accepted a position offered by Prein to work for Laptev in Petersburg.

When Prozorov's daughter Lusha goes away with Prein, he bitterly comments on the world in general:

"Raisa, my queen, do you think that I am crying because Lucretia will be one more victim of the Russian mining industry? No! The air that we breathe is filled with it . . . with prostitution. We see it in the arts, in the sciences, in dress, in thought and what can one say except that it is one insignificant component of the overall progress. Raisa, my queen, this is not what I am crying about, but the fact that Vitali Prozorov, a drunkard and a lost man in every respect, is the only honest man, the last of the Romans, ha, ha. Raisa, my queen, this is the real ancient tragedy. Oh God, what a time, what people, what stupidity! What boundless perfidy! Tetiuev and Rod'ka will now squeeze the peasants to the end, while the General [Blinov] will cover up their perfidy with his prostituted erudition. . . . Learning, sacred learning, she too has gone into bondage to the golden calf! And there will be, my dear queen Raisa, no end to your reign."²⁹

Prozorov remains a pathetic and ineffectual figure, not being able to find a place for himself in society:

"I am, queen Raisa, not a part of a body but only one of its essential attributes, I am just a sore tooth. Not even a tooth but a rotten root which aches, but of which there is not enough to be pulled out."³⁰

Mamin-Sibiriak has great ability to depict a vast panorama of human movement when it suits his purpose. He

describes very colourfully the crowd of peasants and workers who gather to see their overlord on his first visit to the region. There are two distinctly different facets to his descriptions of masses of people: their diversity as individuals, and their aggregate force in developing the area and contributing to its wealth. In describing the welcoming crowd, Mamin-Sibiriak writes:

The skilled workers in new armiaks [peasant's cloth coat] and homespun coats, the old men with staffs; the peasant women in kerchiefs . . . the mill workers easily distinguished from the others by their scorched, unnaturally red faces . . . day labourers, moulders and the working aristocracy. All these people . . . were now united with one common wish to cast a glance at their barin [overlord] for whom they burned themselves at the furnaces, for whom they heaved the huge red-hot ingots with tongs. . . . The mills had produced over anumber of generations a perfectly unique type of mill worker, one that was capable of super-human toil. The sinewy powerful arms, the red necks, hunched backs and strong and confident steps seemed to be specially evolved for work in the mills. Each body was put together of bones and muscles and emanated a unique industrial power.³¹

It is the effort of this labour force that helps to multiply the wealth of their overlord, Laptev. "And even weak children's hands participated in the gigantic efforts in the mills."³²

In sharp contrast to the productive crowd of workers, the author presents Laptev's entourage. He describes them as parasitic hangers-on:

These colourless young people laughed when Laptev laughed, looked in the direction he did,

drank when he drank and generally acted as a huge mirror in which was reflected every slight movement of their patron.³³

. . . dark shadowy figures in well-cut travelling clothes . . . looked on everyone from above . . . languidly exchanged stereotyped French phrases . . . that human chaff which envelops any well-known name, especially a rich, Russian, lordly name.³⁴

The description of nature occupies an important place in Russian literature and has been used by many writers for different purposes. In many passages in the novel Mamin-Sibiriak employs the full power of his descriptive ability. During Laptev's trip to inspect his mills, the author pays a great deal of attention to describing the Ural scenery. In describing the landscape he stresses two aspects. The first is the magnificent beauty of the northern regions, and the second is the great potential of the natural resources of the area: "It is the land itself which is the source of wealth." To emphasize the richness of resources the author uses the device of linking particular resources to individual mining communities. Thus the "lush" Balamutskii district is rich in forests, the picturesque Zaozernyi abounds in good water, and the beautiful Lugovoi has coal deposits. In the case of Mount Kurzhak, the image is even stronger:

. . . at right . . . towers the famous Mount Kurzhak, consisting almost entirely of iron ore, like a hat with a green top sitting askew on it.³⁵

The flowers in the fields shine like precious stones, writes the author, to remind the reader that the Ural Mountains are

rich in these as well.

Thus, Gornoe gnezdo is a novel of intrigues and machinations where the basest traits of human character are exposed. Mamin-Sibiriak, taking as a model a mining community in the Urals, shows how people at the head of the community struggle to gain better positions and more power. As most of them are not specialists in the field and cannot hope to advance on the merits of their technical abilities, they resort to intrigues, bribery and plain grovelling to achieve their ends. The men are weak and subservient to their wives and to the owner of the mills. The female protagonists, who realize that the gain of their men is also their gain, take charge of the situation and carry out intrigues, trying to jockey their partners into better positions.

The author shows how the seamy traits of human character surface in the course of this struggle.

The struggle for power becomes so intense that it overshadows all other problems. The persons in high administrative positions become so absorbed in their own dealings that they pay no attention to the conditions of the mill workers, on whose toil they depend and whom they keep in poverty.

In this novel the workers and peasants are shown as a mass: they are presented as a collective portrait rather

than as a group of individuals. It is in Zoloto, the last of the three novels chosen for discussion here, that Mamin-Sibiriak focuses his attention on the problems of the workers themselves: the small-scale prospectors, the gold-miners and those peasants who live in the gold-mining communities.

CHAPTER III

ZOLOTO

The gold-rush: The destructive power of "easy money"

In the novel Zoloto, Mamin-Sibiriak analyzes mankind's attitude towards gold. He depicts in it people who are influenced by the elemental force of gold, which they are completely powerless to resist. The majority of characters in the novel suffer from this epidemic — gold fever, in the course of which people lose the sense of rational thinking, and acquire the passion for easy gain. Preoccupied with their search for gold, they develop negative traits such as greed, envy, selfishness, callousness and cruelty towards their family and friends. These traits remain hidden until society undergoes some change similar to that which we discover in Zoloto, but when they surface, their power seems all-pervasive and anarchy rules the world. Possessed by the idea of finding gold, people embark upon risky ventures and commit crimes. When there is a possibility of acquiring gold, balanced people succumb to temptation, which usually destroys them.

In this novel people become rich in different ways. Some acquire wealth by hard work, some steal from those who work, others become rich by paying low prices for stolen or illegally mined gold and then selling it to the treasury at the regular price. In the course of the novel, all who come

into contact with gold undergo change. In their pursuit of gold and their desire to get rich quickly people become dehumanized, and love of gold becomes a terrible sickness to which they fall victim.

The period represented in the novel is the eighteenth-seventies, when relics of serfdom co-existed with the new conditions of life that were being slowly established in the Ural region. The author, using a flashback technique, gives a short description of the period of serfdom and also sheds light on the historical background for the formation of the gold-mining industry in the region. The Balchugovskii Gold Mining Centre initially depended on the labour of convicts who were sent there mainly from central Russia. The villages and settlements founded around the Balchugovskii Gold Centre were Balchugovka, Nizy and Fotianka, which were populated by convicts who had done penal servitude in the mines and were subsequently freed. Part of the population was formed by serfs who became free at the time of the emancipation, and by demobilized soldiers who settled there. In addition, in the vicinity there was a village, Taibola, inhabited by a sect of Old Believers who would not touch gold, since in their minds it was linked with the loss of freedom.

The novel describes life in the Balchugovskii gold mining centre in the Ural Mountains. The author uses the Berezovskii Gold Mining Enterprise, which he had had an

opportunity to see for himself, as a model for the industrial unit in the novel. In a letter to his mother, dated 15 September 1891, Mamin-Sibiriak mentioned that he had started a long novel entitled *Zoloto*, in which he was describing the life and customs of the Berezovskii Gold Mining Centre, located not far from Ekaterinburg (now called Sverdlovsk).¹

Mamin-Sibiriak presents here a broad picture of social and economic conditions. From this point of view the novel constitutes an accurate and thorough record of the conditions prevailing in the gold-mining community in the Urals at the time. This shows, as do the two novels discussed earlier, that Mamin-Sibiriak based his work on actual experience and that his novels are close to real life. The works of Mamin-Sibiriak were praised as "colourful illustrations to the bleak pages of history."²

The action in the book is based on the fact that the government treasury had opened up a vast gold-bearing area for public claim-staking, namely Kedrovskaiia Dacha, which spread over a huge area. As a result of the government decision, the population of the first two villages, almost to the last man, were ready to embark on a new adventure. At the beginning the Old Believers shunned the whole scheme, but in the end they too became infected with this gold fever and began to dig up even backyards, gardens, and finally their arable land, in a frenzied search for gold.

Mamin-Sibiriak presents in the novel two epochs, the old and the new, and shows the violent changes that have occurred in the course of the shift from the old established way of life to the new age of claim-staking. The old conditions were the result of long-drawn adjustments which had created a system under which people had elbow-room to work in and live, even if at times they violated the law in doing so. The government, by presenting the opportunity to people to stake claims, had changed the existing order of life in the three villages, and this act had two-fold repercussions. On the one hand it disrupted the existing order of life, while on the other it aroused a passionate greed. It destroyed the balance of the existing order and replaced it with an avaricious adventurism and an acquisitive spirit.

Lured by gold the men of the Nizy and Fotianka villages leave their permanent work at the gold mines, desert their families and head for their claims with high hopes of finding gold. They are seized with an uncontrollable desire to try their luck.

Village life is soon drawn to the local tavern. People gather around tables, exchanging incredible stories and listening to the "love talk" (liubovnye peregovory) of gold.³ The few fortunate ones treat their companions to drinks while others spend their last pennies on drowning

their sorrows.

The women, with few exceptions, remain unaffected by this passionate impulse to "get rich quick." They see gold as a symbol of instability and uncertainty. They feel that it is a sudden and short-lived wealth and define it as "wild money."⁴ Although the women in the novel are subordinate to their men, they are shown (as in Mamin-Sibiriak's other novels) as shrewder, more stable and more practical than their husbands; and it is they who maintain the continuity of village life and ensure its equilibrium — although the life of women in the industrial villages of the Urals was full of hardships. They were often abandoned by their menfolk for long periods of time, and left to lead their lonely lives, coping with many hardships.

In contrast with the preceding two novels, Mamin-Sibiriak speaks in this novel only of the ordinary working class. The only non-working class character is the manager, whose role in the novel is secondary. Throughout the book one is conscious of the presence of the masses. Individual personalities presented here are perceived as representatives of these crowds, although they are individual characters in their own right. I. Ignatov noted this artistic ability of Mamin-Sibiriak when he wrote:

Hardly any Russian writer exceeds Mamin in the artistic presentation of mass movements. Not that Mamin makes it his task to depict movements of

crowds, conflicts of masses. On the contrary, his attention is concentrated on the experiences and actions of individual persons. Yet those persons enter as parts into the scheme of general mass-life. Out of the descriptions of individuals arises the life of a great collective entity. This gift of presenting mass-movement makes Mamin one of our strongest and most original artists.⁵

The language used in the novel is that of common people and serves to represent the prevailing customs and existing legends that together produce an image of the culture of the community depicted. Mamin-Sibiriak is a master of regional speech as well as an authority on the area's folklore.⁶ His main distinction lies in his use of spontaneous, uncontrived and colourful language. It is devoid of the dry abstract qualities. He often uses local expressions in dialogue, giving it a unique individuality. However, he employs this device sparingly, never abusing it. He also treats his references to specific tasks in the gold mines with the same caution: he never overindulges in specialized technical terms and expressions.

M. Nevedomskii, in an article on Mamin-Sibiriak, writes that:

From a purely artistic standpoint, Mamin's assets are . . . an unusually rich vocabulary of the plain people's language, full of striking sayings and similes, shot through with a wealth of embellishments and by-words, and a marvelously fluent natural dialogue. In the latter he sometimes reaches perfection.⁷

The plot of the novel Zoloto is based on a single event. But here, as in the other novels, the retrospective

biographies of individual characters provide the reader with flashbacks to the historical background, describing an entire epoch which precedes the period of action in this novel.

Through the life-histories of people presented in the novel, the reader perceives the nature of the society in its historical perspective. Thus, for example, through the story of Zykov, an eighty-year-old foreman of the gold mine, the author describes penal deportations, conditions of work, the harsh rules, the lawlessness, and the prevailing immorality of the mores. By means of the conversation and the reminiscences of an old ex-convict, Grandmother Lukeria, the author describes the harsh fate of women in a penal community, where influential men took the prettier ones among the exiled women for their own use. Introduced into the plot are a number of old tales, sayings and superstitions making up the folklore of the Ural region. He gives us, for example, an old tale about a golden sow which was buried in an unknown location and which could be found only by a virgin.⁸ He reports the superstition that if a woman, an upper class woman (barynia) in particular, visited a mine and saw the gold, it would disappear.

Different characters appearing in the book all search for gold in their own ways. Foreman Zykov is searching for gold as a servant of the government, and later as an employee of Mansvetov and Company. ~~CompānymanGoldGtochim~~ is not a source of

employment, but assumes a central place in his value system, for he is proud to be in charge of such an important business. It is his consuming passion for locating gold that finally leads him to success, but the price he pays for it ruins him.

Karachunskii, the manager of the Balchugovskii Gold centre, is also a Company employee. He is a powerful man who, in his official capacity, controls the production of the gold mines and stands at the head of an established social order, permitting a limited measure of abuse and dishonesty by allowing certain elements to augment their income by a limited amount of pilfering of gold bullion.

There are three other important characters who belong to the same generation. These are Kishkin, Yastrebov and Grandmother Lukeria. Kishkin's life-long search for gold ends in his cheating his friends who, in turn, murder him.

Yastrebov has been involved in illegal business affairs throughout his entire life. He is a middleman: now, as well as in the old days, he buys up gold from workers who steal it from their employers. In his old age he becomes greedy and cheats his partner who, in revenge, reports him to the authorities. He is consequently sent off to penal servitude.

Grandmother Lukeria was initially a convict. Through hard work she gained for herself a highly respected position in the community, was sought after as an arbiter in domestic

disputes, and was well off at the beginning of the events narrated in the book. In the new world of the gold rush an opportunity arose for her to become rich by renting rooms and taking in lodgers. Contact with wealth leads to her moral disintegration. She quarrels with her son over money and perishes in a burning house while guarding her trunk containing the money which had been the source of discord between them.

The young generation in the novel is represented by Petr, Lukeria's son; Matiushka, a worker, and Myl'nikov, the village cobbler.

In the days before the opening of the Kedrovskaya Dacha all these people would have probably lived different lives. Matiushka was a good and willing worker, who was led astray by his contact with gold. Petr would have most likely lived the comfortable life of a prosperous peasant; and Myl'nikov, being an unsteady character, would have acted in some unpredictable, but not destructive way, as he does in the novel. Gold makes Myl'nikov destroy his own family. His misfortune is that he finds a pocket of gold. Influenced by this initial success, he expects his luck to continue and destroys his old house and ostentatiously builds an ornate new gate for his future home. But the gold is soon exhausted, his family left destitute and forced to move in with their grandfather Zykov, thus breaking away from Myl'nikov.

In the novel, essentially two distinct attitudes to gold are considered: those of people who are interested in gold for personal reasons, and those who have no such interest. For people in the first category, working with gold is a way to personal enrichment, for the others it means a passionate devotion to duty. Representing the latter category are Zykov and Karachunskii. Although their social positions are different they may be compared as individuals. Both these men possess a serious attitude towards duty. The new mine, Rublikha, in which both are engaged, presents a challenge to them, but the similarity ends at this. In terms of their attitudes towards people and life, they are very unlike.

Zykov's years of working in the mines has left a mark on his character. He is presented as a "fanatic", a "maniac" in his work. The mine becomes his idée fixe, which pushes into the background his family and all his other interests. Karachunskii comes to the conclusion that Zykov, in his devotion to duty and in his search for gold on the company's behalf, is "aimadman, rather armanaciac".⁹ His overbearing nature and his developed habit of ordering people about while working is extended to his family. At home he is a tyrant. He treats his sixty-year-old son Yakov as if he were a juvenile delinquent. When Yakov refuses to subordinate himself to his father's will and wishes to start work as an

independent gold prospector at Kedrovskaia Dacha, Zykov turns to the village elders with a request to have his son flogged.

Zykov's solid financial position makes him contemptuous of others — an attitude that compounds the unhappiness of his four daughters by a second marriage. The eldest, Tatiana, elopes with a fellow from a neighbouring village and marries without parental consent. For twenty years Zykov refuses to recognize her or her children's existence. The same happens to his favourite daughter, the beautiful Fenia. His strictness, his pride and inflexibility are the distinguishing features of his character. This is noted and succinctly pointed out by Grandmother Lukeria, as she berates him for his attitude towards three of his daughters:

"It's your own fault, you should have married Fenia off earlier. Here you are, through your pride you have kept Maria a spinster. . . . You should help Tatiana. The woman is working herself to death and you, you are nourishing your pride."¹⁰

Zykov is very loyal to his superiors. To him the name of the company for which he works is sacred. He is reluctant to expose pilfering by some of the employees, because he cannot bear to bring about a scandal and start judicial proceedings which would be likely to bring discredit to the company. Thus, there appear to be in him two standards. Within the family he is inflexible, but in respect to the company's interests he is capable of bending his conscience

for the sake of practical necessity.

As such a fanatical attitude towards work occupies his life wholly, nothing is left in him that may save him from being unloved and lonely. The only person for whom he has warm feelings is Oksia, his granddaughter by his eldest daughter. Significantly enough, this emotion can be traced to his first sight of the girl, when her clothes had been covered with mud from the mine. He did not know who she was when she came to his office for the first time, and his superstitions commanded him to chase her away from the mine, yet seeing her passion for working there he let her stay. Thus, even in his personal relations with people he is capable of flexibility, provided it happens against the backdrop of work and not in a solely personal context.

Gradually Zykov moves away from his family and becomes more and more involved in his work and in the passion to discover gold. He fails to notice what is happening at home, and his greed blinds him to the disintegration of his family. "There took place the complete destruction of a strong ancient family which had taken years to build."¹¹ This was brought about, as the author puts it, by a "natural disaster" — the passion for gold.

Thus Zykov is caught up in the sticky web of gold, but his passion is not expressed in his desire for gold for his own sake. His wish is to find gold for the company and

he finds it in the form of a large gold vein. But this discovery coincides with his perceiving the evils brought about by gold, which are suddenly made clear to him through Matiushka's confession that for gold he had killed Kishkin, Zykov's two grandchildren and Petr Krivoi (One-eyed). Armed with this conviction and the feeling of proprietorship (and indeed in his understanding the mine had always been a part of him), he decides to flood it and forever bury the gold which he has discovered. The inner conflict of the two loyalties drives him insane.

In day-to-day affairs Karachunskii is the opposite of Zykov:

In outer appearance, in his attitudes and habits he was a most ordinary bon vivant, . . . and no one in the mining community would have believed that Karachunskii had ever worked or understood anything in the mining business. . . . Karachunskii knew business very well and possessed the greatest secret of working unobtrusively. There are such unusual people, who throughout their lives move mountains, and yet are considered almost idlers.¹²

Karachunskii got on well with people and was

. . . an enemy of any form of repression. Best of all he preferred those half-measures, concessions and private deals through which such a complicated enterprise could be run.¹³

Under the mask of an idler Karachunskii conceals, as does Zykov, a feeling of pride and honour. Again like Zykov, he cannot allow the Gold Company's affairs to be considered in the courts (in consequence of a denunciation by Kishkin) and

see his name dragged through the mud. He sees the only way out in suicide. Thus, indirectly, he too is physically destroyed by gold.

As far as the other participants in the race for gold are concerned, there is one uniting and predominant feature in them. It is their desire to get rich by finding gold. Although Mamin-Sibiriak identifies greed as a general human characteristic and shows how all the characters appearing in the novel are tainted by greed, they are nevertheless presented as individuals. This individualization is achieved by the use of language. Mamin-Sibiriak is a great artist in this respect — he describes every personality as colourful, different and unique.¹⁴

As a contrast to the hard-working and devoted Zykov he presents Zykov's former co-worker Kishkin. Kishkin's only interest in life is to find gold and become rich. To him it is not a matter of responsibility to anyone else, but a personal gamble. He makes a fortune several times but can never make use of his riches. As he puts it himself, "I've drunk Madeira and lost about five thousand at cards."¹⁵ His inconsistency and adventurism in the gold mine business have led him to dishonesty. In his old age he becomes greedy and suspicious. He has a nickname — "Bump" (Shishka) — and it is said of him that he is "something small, insignificant and vile."¹⁶ At the outset of the story he is poor, old and

lonely, unnoticed by anyone. The opening of the Kedrovskaya Dacha gives him his last chance to get the better of his fate, to become rich and gain respect. However, his greed for gold leads him to cheat his partners. He refuses to share his find and tries to take control of the entire mine by himself. This promises to bring him great wealth. His riches awaken greed in his companions, who finally kill him in order to steal his money. Thus, in the end he is the victim of his wealth and actions.

The most repulsive personality in the novel is Petr, son of Grandmother Lukeria. In the course of the action of the novel, his gradual demoralization as a result of his contact with gold is described with vivid clarity. In the wake of the goldrush he chooses the profession of a middleman, which is an illegal profession. The author endows Petr with one physical deformity: he is blind in one eye. This deformity is symbolic in that his attitude to gold is distorted. He sees gold more acutely than the others. For profit he is ready to go to extremes. He commits three crimes, one against his mother, one against the village and the community in which he lives, and one against humanity in general. The latter is his part in the murder of two of Zikov's grandchildren, who had unwittingly witnessed his crime. He denounces Yastrebov, another middleman, and his partner, who paid better prices, giving people the opportunity

to live decently. Petr's denunciation deprives people of their livelihood. For his denunciation he is flogged by the village elders, and in revenge he sets fire to part of the village. Among the victims of the fire is his own mother. Having completely lost his human characteristics, this "tempting snake" hypnotizes Matiushka and leads him to participate in the robbing and murder of Kishkin, whom he envies because of his wealth. He refuses to share the gold with Matiushka and in the end is murdered by him. Thus, his greed and his disinclination to share the riches with his partner, Matiushka, brings about his own end.

The shoemaker Mylnikov, an unacknowledged son-in-law of Zykov, is a humorously drawn personality. He is an extremely lazy, flippant and inconsistent person. He has taught his wife and daughter his trade, and now enjoys a life of idleness. He spends a great deal of his time at the inn, the centre of the mining community life. He is infected with the gold fever, and after a bad experience with Kishkin, whose partner he was, and through various legal and illegal ventures, he succeeds, through Fenia, Karachunskii's mistress, in getting himself an allotment. As he is lazy, he forces his daughter Oksia to do all the heavy work. He supervises the mine twice weekly, and the rest of the time he spends drinking. He does not sell gold to Yastrebov at a higher price, but takes it to the Balchugovskii office, where

the price is lower but the business completely legal. The gold content in his allotment is not great and the reserves soon run out. Although essentially not greedy, Myl'nikov is an adventurer who suffers defeat in his personal life because of his weak characters.

In the case of Oksia, the shoemaker's daughter, Mamin-Sibiriak gives the fleeting illusion of the power of gold to benefit people. At the outset of the story, Oksia is found labouring in terrible conditions, being exploited by her father. Working underground in a one-man mine, she steals gold from her father, and having accumulated a sufficient amount, takes it to Matiushka, with whom she is in love. Here, gold takes her out of her own hopeless situation, but with the tragic fate of Matiushka her happiness, too, is very short-lived.

Oksia's husband Matiushka is endowed by the author with physical strength, beauty and a love for work. At the start of the novel he is presented as an excellent and willing worker. Contact with gold awakens in him a passion for wealth. His successive failures only increase his desire, which in the end causes his own downfall. In a moment of weakness he falls into temptation and commits a murder. Matiushka is the real victim of the gold fever. After confessing to Zykov, he is unable to be at peace with his own conscience and commits suicide.

The time factor plays a particularly important role in this novel. Its span extends over two years. During this brief period the action unfolds and the reader witnesses the disintegration of human character under the influence of gold; such as the destruction of family ties, growth of hatred, loose morals and crime, and the accumulation of tragic events finds its resolution in the action of the novel. At first glance, the four murders and two suicides give the impression of sensationalism (especially in the epilogue) and appear to be unnecessary. But upon deeper analysis, the events serve to emphasize and illuminate the horrifying picture of this life. The inflamed and malignant human greed, nurtured by a passion for gold, leads to the total destruction of the characters in the gold mine community.¹⁷

Mamin-Sibiriak creates a self-sustaining world. This world has its own characteristics, and the men and women inhabiting this world are identified both by individual traits and by the common trait of greed for gold. It is through an analysis of this universal value that Mamin-Sibiriak establishes a correspondence between the world of the novel and the world outside it. In a sense, then, Mamin-Sibiriak's technique is that of analyzing universals as perceived in a microcosmic context. Thus, his work assumes a significance, both local and timebound as well as universal and perennial.

CONCLUSION

The three novels analyzed here are connected both thematically and historically. The theme of money is developed against the social background of the industrial region of Russia, the Urals, at a time of rapid industrial progress, when large fortunes were concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. The author of these novels utilizes his knowledge of local history. In the plot of each of his novels, the action is located in a real place: for example, in Ekaterinburg (Uzel), the Irbit Trade Fair, the Kyshtymskii Mills (Shatrovskii) in Privalovskie milliony; the Nizhnii Tagil industrial region (Kukharskii Mill) in the novel Gornoe gnezdo; and the Berezovskii Gold Mine (Balchugovskii) in the novel Zoloto. Some of his protagonists had their prototypes in life, just as he took some of his fictional situations from contemporary Russian society. Laptev is modeled on Demidov, Prince San Donato, in Gornoe gnezdo; while the scandalous episode linked with the Zotov inheritance and its participants forms the basis of the plot of Privalovskie milliony.

Mamin-Sibiriak knew the life of the people of the Urals very well. His novels are full of colourful characters described with vividness and a comprehensive understanding of motives. Each individual in his artistic world is characterized by a special individual manner of speaking and mode

of expression. Some characters are outlined by elements of satire (Laptev the dandy, and Khiona Zaplatina the social climber), some by elements of grotesque (Liakhovskii the miser, and Nina the ruthless businesswoman).

Mamin-Sibiriak knew thoroughly the business of the industrial plants, the intrigues, greed and cowardly meanness that went hand-in-hand with the lust for gold, for money or riches in general. This knowledge gave him the power to describe so faithfully the human nature with its weaknesses, shortcomings and failures. He brings out in his heroes traits such as greed, envy, jealousy, lust for power, and the debasement of human dignity for the sake of material gain. But these features are not unique to the Russian society alone. They are universal traits, characteristic of the entire human race. The author succeeded in capturing this aspect of the human animal, by particularizing his characters: that is, by vividly describing the life and the environment of the Ural region. Thus, man is seen against the background of his milieu, and the interaction between the two is analyzed.

The psychological make-up of the heroes is manifest in the course of the presentation of the conflicts through which they pass. The uniqueness of Mamin-Sibiriak as an artist is shown in his ability to create a wide gallery of unforgettable character sketches.

All these characters have the one common desire to get rich. But money plays a different role in each person's life, although its role is never less than vital. For example, Privalov has no need for money as such. He wants it to improve the life of others. The miser Liakhovskii wants the money for its own sake. For Polovodov, money is a means to obtain pleasure. For Bakharev it is meaningless in itself, and he is interested in the process of gaining money as a kind of battle of wits. For women, too, money has different kinds of significance. For Nadezhda Bakhareva the value of money is nil; she condemns the rich who do not use their wealth to improve the lot of the less fortunate. Zosia Liakhovskaia sees money as something indispensable, as a part of her daily needs; while for Antonina Polovodova money is a status symbol. Laptev, the magnate, has no personality of his own, but functions entirely through the medium of money. Lusha, who is initially fascinated by his wealth, becomes quickly disillusioned with him when she perceives the emptiness of Laptev's personality. On the other hand, Tetiuev, who is initially presented as an idealist, loses his idealism when he comes into contact with Laptev and his riches. Many other personalities in Gornoe gnezdo see money as a means to acquire more power. In Zoloto is shown a primitive and simple society in which there are still present the vestiges of serfdom. This is an ignorant, uneducated society. Given

an opportunity to gain money, the men and women of this society are incapable of handling their newly acquired wealth, and act in an irresponsible and stupid manner. Although they are motivated in their actions by their greed for money, it is of no benefit to them when they acquire it.

An important part of Mamin-Sibiriak's technique is to use significant proper names which help to explain the characters. The names serve as symbols and help to express the nature, function and the destiny of many of the characters. Thus, for example, Privalov's name comes from the Russian verb privalit', which means to arrive unexpectedly. Evidently, the author wishes to associate with the character a sense of unexpectedness and show that Privalov was, after all, never quite prepared for his inheritance. Polovodov's name comes from polovod'e, meaning flood. He was inundated by money. He came by it quickly, dishonestly and, figuratively speaking, he was drowned in it. Nadezhda means hope: she is a symbol of hope for Privalov and for the society in which she lives. The name Laptev comes from lapot', a kind of shapeless footwear used by peasants, and implies the humble origin of the character, stressing his spineless personality. The ineffectual drunkard Prozorov's name is derived from the word prozorlivyi, meaning sagacious. He is indeed capable of seeing through people and is able to evaluate events. The economist Blinov's name stems from the

word blin, meaning pancake. To a Russian reader, familiar with the well-known saying "pervyi blin komom" — 'the first pancake is apt to come out in a lump' — Blinov's name suggests a failure, which indeed he turns out to be when confronted with the practical reality of life. Petr Krivoi's surname means crooked or one-eyed. His name implies that he is physically and spiritually deformed and is devoid of moral scruples. Myl'nikov means soapy: the name may signify that wealth is slippery or that his fortune is as ephemeral as a soap bubble.

Although man is firmly placed at the centre of the world created in the novels, Mamin-Sibiriak never loses sight of the world of nature against which man and his activities must be seen. Descriptions of nature form an integral part of his works, and his response to the natural scenery of the Urals expresses itself through some of the most sensitive word-painting existing in Russian prose fiction. Critics have given a great deal of attention to the parallel endeavours of writers and painters in representing nature. They have pointed out the similarity — the interaction, almost — between the works of Repin and Turgenev, and similar comparisons have been made between Chekhov and Levitan. It would be fruitful, though beyond the immediate scope of the present study, to place Mamin-Sibiriak's descriptions of nature side-by-side with the unforgettable canvases depicting natural

scenes, usually forest. I. Shishkin has been called "the minstrel of Russian forests" and his work considered to be among the finest of Russian landscape-painting. Especially outstanding is his painting "The Forest of Masts" (Karabel'-naia roshcha, 1898), in which the artist sees a grove of tall, straight trees as a stack of ship masts. It thus unites the artist's perception of the natural beauty of the trees with his recognition of their value as resources fulfilling human needs. The same sense of dichotomy may be seen in Mamin-Sibiriak's treatment of nature. To him, too, nature has a beauty of its own as well as the utilitarian value it assumes in relation to man. This duality of the role of nature in the universe perceived by man is expressed in Mamin-Sibiriak's novels through the medium of precise and yet evocative descriptions that function equally well as objective representation and personal value-judgement. The world that Mamin-Sibiriak creates is thus one that replicates the natural world in terms of man's physical and emotional needs.

Throughout recorded history man has been obsessed by the thought of possessing gold, and the power and prestige which it confers upon its owners. Over the millennia, this attitude has become deeply ingrained in the human psyche. Gold (the most powerful symbol of wealth) has been associated with the powers of good and evil, for, consciously and

subconsciously, man has associated the precious metal and its powers with attributes that are at once both demonic and divine. But gold by itself has no power. Only in the hands of man can it wield power, and the good or evil that gold may do depends wholly upon its relationship with mankind. Ideally, gold should be used for the good of the many, not for the pleasure of the fortunate few. Privalov is a man of such ideals. He wishes to use his money for the benefit of others, specifically for those who are less fortunate than himself. The author gives his hero a challenging role. Through conflicts with his unscrupulous trustees, Privalov undergoes a test of his capabilities. To implement one's ideals a man must be strong, and Privalov is not, as he bears the burden of his heredity and environment. The other nabob, Laptev, is even less aware of the potentiality of his wealth for good, and has not understanding of his responsibility to the people who help him in producing his wealth. The characters who come into closer contact with his money undergo a change, becoming, in most cases, subservient to him and greedy for his money. Thus his wealth has the negative function of awakening in people their baser destructive impulses. This destructive power of gold is one that is released by instincts intrinsic to humanity, and releases in turn all the worst in mankind, as Mamin-Sibiriak demonstrates in his works. These novels chart the human mind along

sociological as well as ethical co-ordinates. Mamin-Sibiriak proves himself to be not only a keen observer of social existence, analyzing man's relationship with his physical universe, but also lays bare the impulses in which human values lie rooted. The literary device that allows him to unite these purposes is the presentation of the perennial theme of man's lust for wealth, which, as we have already noted, takes the form of a frenzied search for gold in Zoloto. Since this universal theme is localized by Mamin-Sibiriak in the setting of the Urals, a setting he knew intimately from actual personal experience, his work assumes — in its sociological awareness — the importance, apart from its fictional significance, almost of a historic document.

That Mamin-Sibiriak's interest is not confined to a study of social conditions is shown by his intense and sustained interest in the darker secrets of the human heart. What makes people function? How are their loves, desires and frustrations formed? These are questions that are sounded against the all-enveloping presence of riches. By placing his characters in a acquisitive social framework he shows how wealth rather than intrinsic qualities become the visible attributes of people, so that behind the screen of gold the real person can hardly be seen. This is perhaps the most terrifying — for it is irrevocable — change that overtakes a man when he comes into contact with gold. But

the novelist's art lies less in arriving at this view as an exercise in abstract ethics, than in penetrating the souls of recognizably individualized characters.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Stated in Mamin-Sibiriak's letter to A. I. Annenskii dated March 2, 1912, St. Petersburg. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, Sobranie sochinenii, tom 1-8 (henceforth abbreviated to D.N.M-S, Sobr. soch.), tom 8 (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1954), p. 678.
2. V. V. Kuskov, "Vydaiushchiisia russkii demokrat Mamin-Sibiriak", Dmitrii Narkisovich Mamin-Sibiriak, Sto let so dnia rozhdeniia, 1852-1952 (henceforth abbreviated to Sto let) (Sverdlovsk: Knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1953), p. 8.
3. V. Al'bov, "Kapitalisticheskii protsess v izobrazhenii Mamina-Sibiriaka", Mir Bozhii, No. 1 (St. Petersburg: 1900), p. 116.
4. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, "S Urala", Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta, No. 107 (St. Petersburg: 1884), pp. 10. Quoted by M. A. Gorlovskii, Sto let.
5. A. M. Skabichevskii, "Dmitrii Narkisovich Mamin", Sochineniia A. M. Skabichevskogo v dvukh tomakh, tom 2 (St. Petersburg: 1903), p. 599.
6. E. Anichkov, "Mamin-Sibiriak", Mir Bozhii, No. 10 (St. Petersburg: 1905), p. 230.
7. This comment was made by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin with regard to the novels by Turgenev, Goncharov and Pisemskii, whose methods could no longer be employed to portray the contemporary complex problems of society. M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, Sobranie sochinenii, tom 8 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1965), p. 456.
8. Ibid., p. 464.
9. E. A. Bogoliubov, Novyi Mir, No. 10 (Moskva: 1952), p. 237.
10. Jahko Leavrin, An Introduction to the Russian Novel (New York-London: 1949), p. 236.
11. E. Lo Gatto, Storia della letteratura Russa (Firenze: 1950), p. 355.

12. R. Hare, Russian Literature from Pushkin to the Present Days (London: 1947), p. 158.
13. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, "Krizis ural'skoi gornoj promyshlennosti", Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, tom 1-12 (Petrograd: Izdanie A. F. Marksa, 1915), p. 235.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. B. Udintsev, Pevets Urala — D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak (Sverdlovsk: Sredne-Ural'skoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1969), p. 50.
2. Ibid., p. 52.
3. Irbit: town in the Sverdlovsk Oblast' (Urals) situated 125 miles northeast of Sverdlovsk (formerly Ekaterinburg). Irbit was founded in 1633 and ten years later became the site of the famous annual fair, the second largest in Russia, which for a long time was the focus for Russian trade with Siberia, Central Asia and China. The fair continued until 1930. This information is from S. V. Utechin, A Concise Encyclopaedia of Russia (New York: E. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 239.
4. D. Mamin-Sibiriak, The Privalov Fortune, translated by V. Shneerson (henceforth abbreviated to D. Mamin-Sibiriak, The Privalov Fortune) (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, ?), p. 400.
5. The concentric composition in The Privalov Fortune could be compared to Iu. Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time (1840), where four of the five stories of the novel centre around Pechorin; or N. Gogol's Dead Souls (1842), where the hero Chichikov's adventures unite all the chapters of the novel.
6. Discussion of this commentary on the naturalistic novel can be found in B. A. Bialik, Russkaia literatura kontsa XIX nachala XX veka, Devianostye gody (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Nauka, 1968), p. 180.
7. Elliott M. Grant, Émile Zola (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1966), p. 45.
8. Ibid., p. 45.

9. D. Mamin-Sibiriak, The Privalov Fortune, p. 23.
10. Vera is the youngest character in the novel, but she already understands the power given by wealth. By singling out this feature in Vera's personality, the author stresses the influence of the environment upon the views of the younger generation and upon the formation of their interests.
11. D. Mamin-Sibiriak, The Privalov Fortune, p. 23.
12. Ibid., p. 30.
13. Ibid., p. 68.
14. Ibid., p. 93.
15. Ibid., p. 94.
16. Ibid., p. 46.
17. Ibid., p. 50.
18. Ibid., p. 51.
19. Ibid., p. 54.
20. Ibid., p. 45.
21. Ibid., p. 150.
22. Ibid., p. 137.
23. Ibid., p. 246.
24. Ibid., p. 67.
25. Ibid., p. 99.
26. Ibid., p. 43.
27. Ibid., p. 249.
28. Ibid., pp. 172, 179.
29. Ibid., p. 161.
30. Ibid., p. 180.

31. Ibid., p. 128.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 152.
34. Ibid., p. 181.
35. I. Dergachev, Knigi i sud'by (Sverdlovsk: Sredne-Ural'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1973), p. 87.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, "V khudykh dushakh", Sobranie sochinenii, tom 1, p. 138. (In this chapter, the translation of quotations is mine.)
2. Ibid., tom 3, Prilozhenie, p. 617.
3. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Ibid., p. 154.
5. A. M. Skabichevskii, Sochinenia v dvukh tomakh (St. Petersburg: Z. N. Erlich, 1903), p. 216.
6. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, Sobranie sochinenii, tom 3, p. 141.
7. Ibid., p. 106.
8. Ibid., p. 142.
9. Ibid., p. 143.
10. Ibid., p. 296.
11. Ibid., p. 120.
12. Ibid., p. 127.
13. Ibid., pp. 159-162.
14. Ibid., p. 15.
15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 29.
17. Ibid., p. 31.
18. Ibid., p. 183.
19. Ibid., p. 126.
20. Ibid., p. 297.
21. Ibid., p. 143.
22. Ibid., p. 145.
23. Ibid., p. 148.
24. Ibid., p. 139.
25. Ibid., p. 240.
26. Ibid., p. 250.
27. Ibid., p. 44.
28. Ibid., p. 330.
29. Ibid., pp. 332-333.
30. Ibid., p. 331.
31. Ibid., p. 103.
32. Ibid., p. 105.
33. Ibid., p. 126.
- 34.] Ibid., p. 115.
35. Ibid., p. 229.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Letter to his mother dated June 23, 1891. D.H.M-S., Sobr. soch., tom 8, p. 736.
2. P. V. Bykov, "D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, Kriticheskoye

- biograficheskii ocherk", D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, tom 1 (Petrograd: F. A. Marks, 1915), p. 31.
3. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, Zoloto, Sobr. soch., tom 6, p. 147. (In Chapter III all translations of the quotations are mine.)
 4. Ibid., p. 144.
 5. I. Ignatov (quoted by M. Z. Ol'gin), A Guide to Russian Literature 1820-1917 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1921), p. 138.
 6. Mamin-Sibiriak wrote several legends based on Ural folklore. Discussion of this genre in his works can be found in the article by I. Dergachev, "Zhanr legendy v tvorchestve D. N. Mamina-Sibiriaka", Russkaia literatura 1810-1890 godov, Sbornik 5 (Sverdlovsk: Gos. institut im. A. M. Gor'kogo, 1973), pp. 99-122.
 7. M. Nevedomskii (quoted by M. Z. Ol'gin), A Guide to Russian Literature 1820-1917 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1921), p. 137.
 8. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, Zoloto, Sob. soch., tom 6, p. 92.
 9. Ibid., p. 190.
 10. Ibid., p. 64.
 11. Ibid., p. 191.
 12. Ibid., p. 56.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Characters individualized by lexical and linguistic peculiarity. In contrast to the laconic and direct Zykov, Myl'nikov is presented as one who is verbose in speech. He exaggerates, tells lies, tall stories, but this is done in an amusing way. Two-faced Petr reveals himself in the dialogues either through long intricate sentences or through short, abrupt, crude phrases, interspersed with swearing. This surfaces in the conversations with his mother, with Kishkin, Myl'nikov and Matiushka.
 15. D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, Zoloto, Sobr. soch., tom 6, p. 14.

16. Ibid., p. 57.
17. The surfacing of these human vices often becomes apparent in societies undergoing similar sudden changes in life style. Descriptions of such mad thirst for gold may also be found in English literature. Bret Harte wrote of the California gold rush, and Jack London about the Yukon Klondike.

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