



SVIATOSLAV HORDINSKIJ LEMBERG



Modern Ukrainian art is not so clearly defined as Polish or Czechish art. The Ukraine has a geographical and ethnographical being, but it is not a political entity. Some of the Ukrainians live under the Soviet Union, some in Poland and some in Roumania. Naturally the most various influences are at work. Lemberg is the center of the cultural life of Western Ukraina. The character of the town is determined by the very juxtaposition of Polish and Ukrainian characteristics. The predominant feature of Ukrainian intellectual life is the attachment of the people to the united church—that is, in the last resource, to Byzantine civilization, historically speaking. In the Ukrainian's attitude to art, this state of things is equivalent to an intimate relation to the ancient ikon paintings. In addition to this there is the still vital influence of a primitive folk-art, rich in coloring and full of creative power—and these are all preliminaries which are thoroughly favorable to the development of modern decorative art.

Sviatoslav Hordinskij comes of these surroundings. He was still a youth when he left his East European home and found his way to Paris. There he took a thorough survey of modern art in all its aspects. He was attracted above all by abstract painting, by cubism and surrealism. But he also created still-life studies noteworthy for the quality of the painting, although the impression of nature was the determining element. Finally, however, his decorative powers won the upper hand. Hordinskij deserted oil painting for commercial art. Here his various studies stood him in good stead. The ease with which he commands natural forms enables him to go as far in the reforming of reality as his decorative purpose demands, without the design ever appearing empty. On the other hand, the stylistic training of cubism had a noticeably good effect upon him and in the intellectual freedom with which he treats his themes we perhaps find an echo of surrealist influence.

So much for what he learned; but what gives Hordinskij's work its individual touch is the peculiarly personal manner in which traditional elements of Ukrainian style have awakened to new life in his designs. A specifically East European will to art is unmistakably expressed in these book covers and wrapping designs of his. There is something of the colorful brightness of peasant art from the Carpathians in them, something of the severity of Russian ikon painting and a peculiarly Slavic expression, at once violent and yet with an almost musical quality of tenderness. To this we must add the individual

