A NOTE ON V. V. ROZANOVA

V. ROZANOVA (b. 1856, d. 1919) occupies a unique place in Russian literature, mainly owing to *Solitaria*, published in 1912 and suppressed by the censor on account of its too outspoken tone on matters of Christianity and sex; *Fallen Leaves*, Bundle I, published in 1913, and *Fallen Leaves*, Bundle II, published in 1916.

On taking his degree in 1881, at the Moscow University, in the Faculty of History and Philology, Rozanov became a teacher in secondary schools in the provinces. A year before he took his degree he married Mlle. Souslov, the mistress of F. Dostoevsky¹—a union which turned out unhappily, and in 1886 husband and wife parted. Bored by his career as teacher, Rozanov entered the civil service in 1893 and went to live in Petersburg. In 1889 he had formed a new union, this time happily, as can be seen from his frequent references in *Solitaria* and *Fallen Leaves* to his "Friend." In 1899 he joined the staff of the reactionary daily the *Novoye Vremya*, and from that time until the suppression of the paper by the Bolsheviks in 1918, he was engaged in journalism. But apart from his journalistic activity Rozanov also published several books on philosophy and religion, as for instance, *On Understanding*, 1886; *The Legend of the Great Inquisitor* (a work on Dostoevsky, whom he very much admired), 1889; *The Place of Christianity in History*, 1890; *The Family Problem in Russia*, 1903; *The Russian Church*, 1909, etc.

On the *Novoye Vremya* Rozanov occupied a foremost position, for with considerable talent, though with utter

¹ Detailed account is to be found in the volume *Dostoevsky Portrayed by his Wife* recently published by Routledge in London and by Dutton in New York.
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cynicism, he dared to defend ideas and policies, which no reactionary journalist would have dreamt of supporting in the Press. Whether it was necessary for his paper to show that the Church acted nobly in excommunicating Leo Tolstoy; or to prove that Jews killed young Christian boys in order to use their blood for ritual purposes—Rozanov performed the task unblushingly, boldly, and most cynically. (But see his own explanation of this in *Solitaria.*) And while writing his journalistic articles in that vein in the *Novoye Vremya,* he wrote in a diametrically opposite vein, under a different pseudonym, and in other journals, articles directed against the Church and against dogmatic conceptions of Christianity. Why he behaved so, and generally what sort of man Rozanov was, may be gathered from his last three books, which though entirely personal and intimate, yet in their essence and form represent something quite new and original in Russian literature.

One point should be made clear. A great many of the aphoristic utterances, forming Rozanov's last three books, were jotted down by him whenever and wherever the idea might occur: in a railway car, in a cab, or even in the W.C.; on the soles of his slippers while bathing. His thoughts on prostitution he actually wrote down while following Souverin's coffin. Very many fragments bearing the mark "at numismatics" were recorded by him while examining or playing with his collection of rare coins.