

**SHORT-STORY  
MASTERPIECES**

**J. Berg Esenwein**

**Vol. 3 - Russian**

## The Project Gutenberg eBook of Short-story masterpieces, Vol. III - Russian

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

**Title:** Short-story masterpieces, Vol. III - Russian

**Author:** Various

**Editor:** J. Berg Esenwein

**Release date:** July 19, 2024 [eBook #74071]

**Language:** English **Original publication:** Massachusetts: The Home correspondence school, 1912

**Credits:** Andrés V. Galia and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net> (This book was produced from images made available by the HathiTrust Digital Library.)

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SHORT-STORY  
MASTERPIECES, VOL. III - RUSSIAN \*\*\*

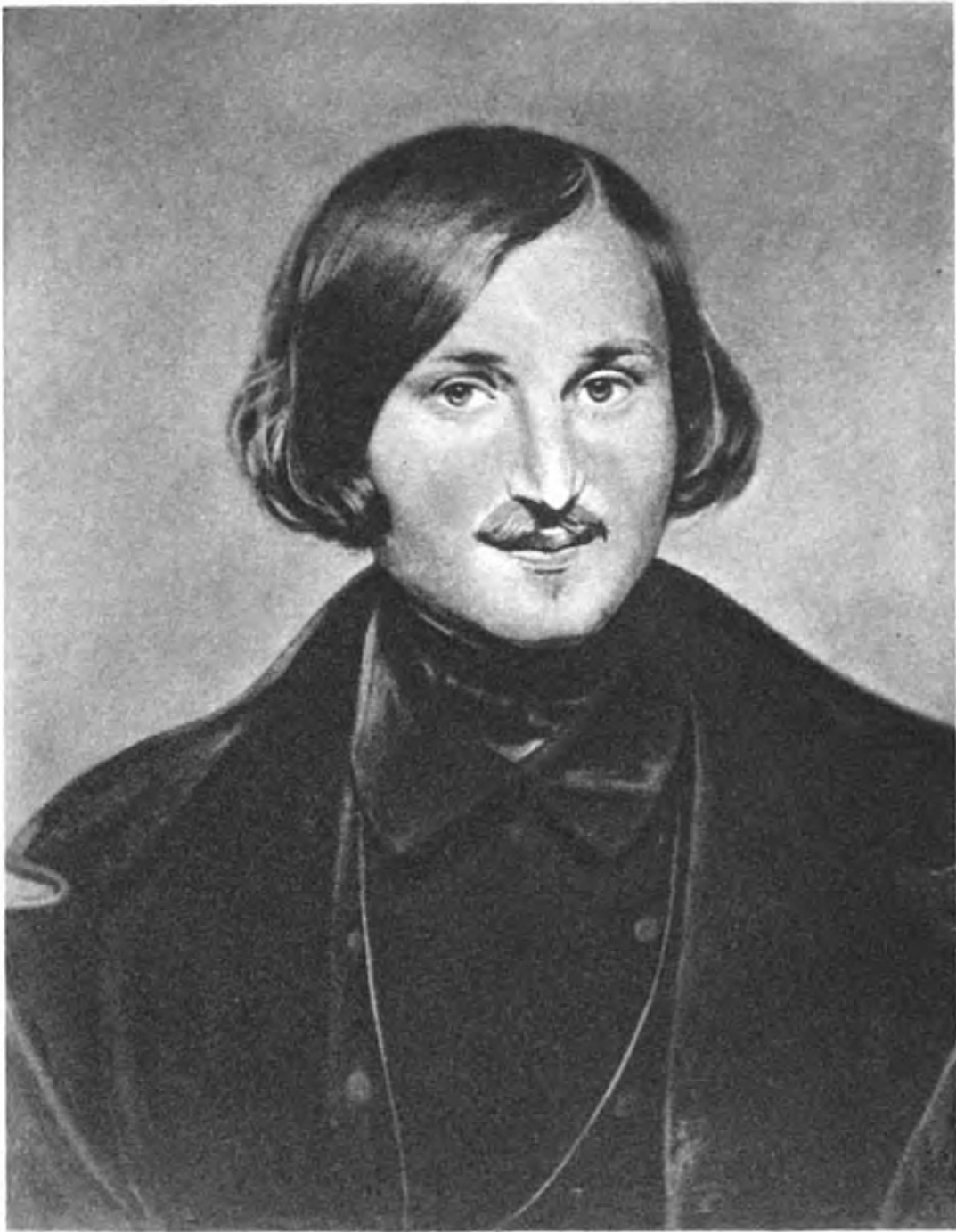
## TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

In the plain text version text in *italics* is enclosed by underscores (italics); SMALL CAPS are represented in upper case as in SMALL CAPS; words in **bold** are represented as in =bold=, and superscript <sup>text</sup> is represented with the sign <sup>{text}</sup>.

A number of words in this book have both hyphenated and non-hyphenated variants. For the words with both variants present the one more used has been kept.

Obvious punctuation and other printing errors have been corrected.

The book cover was modified by the Transcriber and has been added to the public domain.



**Nikolai V. Gogol**

# SHORT-STORY MASTERPIECES

VOLUME III—RUSSIAN

DONE INTO ENGLISH  
BY JOHN COURNOS

INTRODUCTIONS BY  
J. BERG ESENWEIN

*Editor of Lippincott's Magazine*

THE HOME CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL  
Springfield, Massachusetts  
1913



Copyright 1912 and 1913—J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY  
Copyright 1913—THE HOME CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL

## CONTENTS - VOLUME III

	PAGE
General Introduction:	
The Russian Short-Story	<a href="#"><u>5</u></a>
Pushkin and the New Era	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
Story: The Snow-Storm	<a href="#"><u>31</u></a>
Gogol, the First Russian Realist	<a href="#"><u>53</u></a>
Story: The Cloak	<a href="#"><u>69</u></a>
Turgenev the Emancipator	<a href="#"><u>125</u></a>
Story: The District Doctor	<a href="#"><u>139</u></a>
Tolstoi, Artist and Preacher	<a href="#"><u>157</u></a>
Story: A Long Exile	<a href="#"><u>175</u></a>

## THE RUSSIAN SHORT-STORY

In introducing the volumes of this series which deal with the work of French fictionists I commented upon the real distinction existing between the French short-story and the short-story in French, asserting that the former is a precise term because the greater number of worthy short-stories in French really exhibit the typical French spirit and are therefore French.

The Russian short-story is even more pronouncedly national in theme, in tone, and in treatment than is its French contemporary; indeed, Muscovite literature is the most markedly national of any in Europe. This would not be so significant a statement were modern Russian literature—by which I mean all such literature which really counts—more than a century old; but this ancient, remote, and self-sufficient people really lived for so long a time apart from the great highways of Continental thought that they were not nationally conscious of those titanic upheaving and levelling passions whose fitful and at times appalling force shook France, England, and even Poland to the very heart and forced their thinkers to express the spirit of the revolutionary era in undying prose.

Instead, Russian writers of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries occupied their pens with imitations of foreign—chiefly French—literature, or wrote minute local descriptions which were important not so much for what they were as for what they pointed to—a new national consciousness.

---

But in order to get an understanding of modern Russian literature we turn backward in our swift survey. When Peter the Great, that much magnified and more maligned potentate, ascended the throne, he found Russia the home of bigotry, prejudice, and barbarism. But before his unceremonious blows the doors swung reluctantly open, and from the west a steady concourse of European ideas, often accompanied in person by their thinkers, moved through the gates and penetrated every upper circle. Naturally, literature was the first of the arts to throb with this infusion of outside blood, and naturally, also, its first expressions were in that form of flattery which is alleged to be most sincere.

But when national consciousness is awakened, national pride soon begins to utter lusty sounds, and its theme is certain to be as national as its form of expression. So, with the dawn of the nineteenth century—Lomonosoff, Kantemier, Sumarakov, the Empress Catherine, Von Viezin, Derzhavin, Karamsin, and Zhukovski having in the previous century done fine service in poetry, history, and the drama—there opened a new era: the period of artistic Russian fiction. The barbaric richness and fearless crudity of the old poetry were exchanged for sophisticated prose.

Kriloff deserves special mention here, even though to Gogol and Pushkin must go the trail-blazers' honor. His fables and tales were distinctly in advance of previous similar work, but the real fictive creators were yet to come. Kriloff was at once the last of the old and the first of the new prose-writers.

---

It is a curious coincidence that the youngest two literatures of the world, American and Russian, should each have contributed so materially to the development of the short-story. During the eighteenth century American literature was compassing a slow growth; but in Russia literature was virtually sleeping. Later, both come to effective expression at about the same time. While Irving, Hawthorne, Poe, Harte, Stockton, James, and O. Henry were telling wonderful stories in our land, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoevski, Korolenko, Garshin, Chekhov, Andreev, and Gorki were doing the like in Russia. The balance dips toward America for literary art, but for sheer strength it unmistakably drops on the side of the Slav.

Thus throughout the nineteenth century and till now the short-story has been a form to be reckoned with in any adequate estimate of Russian writers, just as in the two other literatures whose recent development follows similar lines—American and French.

When the modern short-story was born in its technical perfection in America, France, and Russia almost simultaneously, the French Revolution had worn out most of its evil effects and the New Spirit was beneficently at work in every enlightened land. The superior value of human beings, the benumbing effects of slavery, the priceless qualities of real liberty, and the absolute necessity for an enlightenment which should be something more than education, became ideals worth fighting and dying for.

It is important to note here that great short-stories from that day to this have developed themes vital to the people for whom and by whom they were written.

---

But we must look deeper than the spirit of an *era* if we are to account for a national tone in any given literature, and in the characteristic Russian temperament we shall in this case find the inspiring cause.

The word *Slav* has given to the world our word *slave*. In the pathetic and expressive phrase of Waliszewski, “The Slav race, the latest comer into the world of civilization, has always been at school, always under some rod or sway. Whether it be the Oriental and material conquests of the thirteenth century, or the Western and moral one of the eighteenth, it merely undergoes a change of masters.” Yet in the face of all this the Russian people has persistently maintained, and even accentuated, its personality. To me, this personality is marked by six great characteristics: *hugeness, passion, simplicity, religiousness, suffering, and fatalism*. Herzen said that “sadness, skepticism, irony, are the three strings of Russian literature—the skepticism is not typical; the other qualities are.”

In looking for the typical and distinctive elements of national character in Russian literature we must remember that they are more to be observed in the tone of the author considered than in the characters he portrays, and this for a perfectly obvious reason: Russia is a land of extremes, not alone of

condition but of advancement. One class outrivals the Parisian in refinement of desires, while no people in Europe can surpass the remoter peasant in his stolidity; the greatest wealth is just across the way from the most tax-oppressed poverty; high-minded patriotism sits on the same park-bench with a Red maniac; skepticism and religious credulity run to astounding contra extremes.

Of course, the Russian composite character is modified by the antipodal nature of its society, but its literature is enriched by a vast variety of types, and when, as in the stories of Tolstoi, these types appear in dramatic juxtaposition; the effect is unique.

It would be interesting to trace here each of these six nationally characteristic traits, but all are either dwelt upon in the succeeding introductory studies or are clearly illustrated in the accompanying stories; it may therefore be enough to point out in brief how naturally each takes its place in the sum total of Russian temperament.

The physical vastness of this self-sufficient land, with its sweep of continent-wide, continent-long domain, must at once suggest the bigness of its spirit. Even its people grow big and Norse-like in frame, while the centuries of indifference to the outlanders' views and ideals culminate readily in direct, fearless self-expression.

Passion, too, finds a similar origin, encouraged by Tartar fire, Cossack physicality, and the composite life bred of oriental contact.

Simplicity is often in our day written down as the sign of ignorance, or at least of inexperience of the great world; but in the Russian character it has mainly a nobler origin. What need for hesitation, finesse, caution in word and attitude, when one is certain of being the chosen of Heaven? Not even the Jew is more firmly convinced and poised than the Muscovite.

The essential religiousness—the mystical religiousness—of the Slav is as old as his history. In fact, his Aryan origin, so often boasted of, points to the Hindu origin of his religious attitude of mind. True, many of his matter-of-fact appeals to divine things are habitual rather than reverential and often have too close association with base dealing to be convincing; still the peasant particularly is colored in all his life by his church and her tenets.

The Russian countenance is typically sad, almost despairing. The yoke worn for so many ages by the masses, the bitterness of a life devoted to service for the “big man,” the hopelessness born of petty and major oppressions, result for the Russian, as for all barbaric peoples—for Russia is still largely barbaric—in a resigned suffering which has not yet begun to be mitigated by the great increase of revolutionary ideas among the people. Indeed, protest against the ruling order has thus far yielded only greater present sadness, how hopeful soever the future may be.

And lastly we have that most terrible, most pathetic, most depressing temper—fatalism. And yet this is not the precise word, for no single English word expresses the pessimism, the apathy, the expectation of nothing, the anticlimax of ambition in which a whole race begins as a Napoleon and—peters out.

All this may sound unlovely. And doubtless it is, for loveliness is not the tone of Nihilism, nor is beauty the consort of despair. Yet the towering ambition that ends in puny deeds shows even now signs of a more effective result, and larger liberties, the outgrowth of contact with the world without, must sooner or later bring to life a more ardent and hope-cherishing Russia.

---

The short-story of today in Russia is strong—terribly strong, for the most part, for it is not charming, certainly. But as an augury of what the Russian people will yet become it has a thousand-fold more promise than may be found in the perfumed politeness of an anæmic fiction such as floods the magazines of England and America. Notwithstanding all her gloom, Russia’s strength is her bow of promise.



## PUSHKIN AND THE NEW ERA

Alexander Sergyevitch Pushkin

was born in Moscow, June 7, 1799, at a time when Russia was aswirl with various currents.

Therefore, to gain some clear vision of the distinguished service which he rendered the literature of his native land, we must at least glance at the great intellectual and political tides—they were largely coincident—which swept Russia, first away from her own self-sufficient life, then toward France, next in the direction of Germany, and finally out into a national thought-channel of her own.

Pushkin is one of those writers who are big enough to have founded and dominated an era, not solely because of his own preëminent genius, but for the deeper reason that he represented in himself the culmination of a series of national steps, each as definite as it was important.

For all the centuries of her life up to the nineteenth, Russia had lived a separate existence from that of her great neighbors. In seeking a cause for this condition, we must remember that the imperial bigness of Russia, and her remote location, are not the only factors entering into her segregate character. The *great* factor is that Russia is much more largely Asiatic in spirit than it is European. The typical Slav of today is, temperamentally, though not in a precise sense racially, a mixture of Tartar fierceness, old Slavonic stolidity, and Hindu *Nirvana*, which, being translated into Russian, is essentially Nihilism. Yet, today as for many centuries, the Slavic race is as truly homogeneous as any can be.

During this long era of Russia's ultra-exclusiveness, the polished periods of Montaigne

and the brilliant dramas of Corneille, Racine, and Molière were delighting France, and Spenser, Milton, and Dryden were doing rare things for English literature. At the same time, nationally unconscious of all this, Russia was singing its epical and ballad folk-songs, with only now and then a note of premeditated art sounding forth.

Here indeed was a true poetry *of* the people—which, as Dr. Gummere has pointed out, is a very different thing from that pseudo-folk-poetry which is merely *about* the people. Still, it required influences from without to bring Russian literature to artistic national expression.

The great autocratic rulers of Russia, and her leading nobles, at last began to feel the allurements of the French, and Peter the Great even travelled abroad, coming home imbued with new ideas for a progressive nation. When a giant people, long content to be sufficient unto itself, awakens to see that other ideals of life, other habits of thought, other standards of conduct, have brought other great nations to a brilliancy of position which its own solitary bigness has not enabled it to attain, the first feeling is one of contempt for "those others," as the French would say. Later comes a naïve passion to imitate. And finally, enter a whole train of foreign influences, good and bad.

So it was with Russia after the powerful, rough, and somewhat benevolently autocratic reign of Catherine II, at whose court Pushkin's father was a complacent noble. The French tongue, which even Pushkin himself called "the language of Europe," already prevailed at the Russian court, and the literature of the country consisted chiefly of imitations of the pseudo-classical French school, adaptations, or even translations, from other languages, and here and there a struggling voice which lifted itself with difficulty above the imitative clack. All three of these types Catherine herself fostered—intermittently, though still with some success.

But the alarming revolutionary ideas bruited from France, and the Napoleonic campaign against Russia, caused a powerful revulsion of feeling toward Germany and away from France.

In Germany, however, Young Russia met the same humanistic tendencies and passion for free thought with which France had been gradually impregnating the empire of the Slavs. Add to this the influence of Byron's poetry, now stirring Europe, and we have the external forces which drove Russia to look at her own self with honest eyes—forces which at length found their literary climax in Pushkin's giving to his native land a literature which was of the Russians, for the Russians, and by a Russian—a literature born of the Russian spirit, breathing her ideals, speaking her marvellously expressive tongue in new combinations of beauty, and set against a background of her soil and her cities.

A further remarkable influence was operating to prepare both Russia and Pushkin for the work of new creation: in the hands of Zhukovski and others who immediately preceded our author, the Russian language began suddenly to assume a flexibility and richness which, as I have intimated, were destined to be still more greatly enlarged by the gifts of Pushkin.

The author-to-be wasted no time beginning his career. Even at the age of ten, while an unstudious but omnivorously reading school-boy, he made deft imitations of French verse and the French drama, while at twelve he knew four or five languages and was reading Rousseau, Voltaire, and Molière with avidity. At this age the lad became a pupil in the College Tsarskoié-Siélo, in 1811, the year of its founding by Alexander I. But while he absorbed enough to cause his wild genius to flourish, he was incorrigible, and always in hot-water—except among his comrades, by whom his dash, impudence, and wit made him to be both admired and feared.

When Pushkin was only fifteen, the *European Messenger* published anonymously a series of clever but obscene Russian verses in the style of Ossian and Parry. The name of the author soon leaked out, however, and when the following year the boy read on a public speech-day a suitable poem entitled "Recollections of Tsarskoié-Siélo,"

he was hailed as a gifted poet. The poetic form was miraculous—the thought, just about what a precocious lad could produce.

In 1817 Pushkin was graduated, and entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At once he was lionized by literary society, and became the leader of a brilliant but rakish clique—the story of their escapades would read like

a tenderloin police-docket. At length, in 1820, the year when “*Ruslan and Lyudmila*,” his first great poem, was published, he committed some folly too outrageous to be condoned—probably an especially licentious expression in verse—and was banished to South Russia, where, wandering among the Caucasus ranges which color all his later work, and living near the romantic Black Sea, he remained for several years; until, in 1824, his banishment was commuted to confinement to his father’s estates. In a literary way this date marks the beginning of his new era, for he now began to bring into final form the master-poem, “*Eugene Onyegin*,” on which he had been working for several years—of which more presently.

Some—why, I cannot conceive—have attributed Pushkin’s ungovernable disposition to the mixed blood that flowed in his veins, as was the case with the elder Dumas. Pushkin’s maternal great-grandfather was that Abram Hannibal, “Peter the Great’s Arab favorite,”

who was really an Abyssinian slave. The African youth was educated in France by his royal master and godfather, later admitted to his friendship, and eventually married to a Russian lady. Their son became a great Russian general. The poet himself bore unmistakable marks of his ancestry in his short curly hair and thick, sensuous lips, though his eyes were blue, his skin fair, and his hair light in hue.

During these earlier years of his short life, Pushkin was profoundly influenced by Byron, and even was willing to be called “the Russian Byron.” Indeed, his license-loving and liberty-adoring nature was quite like that of his English model. This influence is seen not only in his poetic methods, but in his teachings and in his themes. The poem “*Poltava*,” published in 1829, takes *Mazeppa* for its hero, and his poetic masterpiece, “*Eugene Onyegin*,” published in 1828, is really *Don-Juanesque*. Nor is it difficult to trace other evidences of this frankly admiring spirit.

Singularly enough, “*Eugene Onyegin*” (which Tschaikovsky has made the subject of an opera) is at once in the style of Byron (somewhat resembling his “*Beppo*”), while in theme, locale, and handling it throws off the trammels of Byronism, and indeed all foreignism, and becomes the first really great work of modern Russian literature. Whatever the original debt Pushkin owed to the author of “*Don Juan*,” in this and later work he strikes out with all the self-confidence and attainment of an original genius.

So tender, so pathetic, yet so humorous, so full of human understanding, so informed with the spirit of contemporary Russian society, is this remarkable work, that its author achieved immortality in its writing. Thus did the years of exile on the paternal manor bear notable fruit.

Because this creation sets so lasting an initial mark, by establishing Russian literature upon a basis of art, it seems worth while to recite its argument here in full.

Eugene Onyegin is a “Byronic young society man,” who is recalled to the country from his city dissipations by his father’s death. Here he lives, for a long time avoiding all contact with his less cultivated neighbors. A young poet, Vladimir Lensky, the son of one of these manorial families, returns from abroad, and a congenial friendship springs up between the young men.

Lensky, who is betrothed to Olga Larin, persuades Onyegin to call upon her family with him.

Tatyana, Olga’s elder sister, at once falls in love with Onyegin, and writes him a letter of frank avowal—one of the most famous passages of the drama. But Onyegin gently turns her aside by assuming the rôle of a fatherly adviser, and the incident remains unknown to all except themselves and Tatyana’s old nurse. Soon afterwards, Lensky induces Onyegin to go to the Larins’ on the occasion of Tatyana’s name-day festival.

For the sake of preventing gossip in a district given over to small talk, Onyegin yields and goes.

At table, by the innocent scheming of her family, he is placed opposite to Tatyana, and finds the situation so embarrassing that he determines to revenge himself on the innocent Lensky by flirting with Olga, who is shortly to become Lensky’s wife. During the evening, Olga, pretty but weak-natured, accepts Onyegin’s attentions with such interest that Lensky challenges him. Heart-sick at the results of his momentary unjust anger, Onyegin would gladly apologize, were it not that Lensky has chosen as his representative an old fire-eater and tattler who would misrepresent his motives and perhaps compromise Tatyana.

Therefore, he accepts—and Lensky falls. Onyegin then goes off on his travels. Olga soon consoles herself with a handsome officer, and after their marriage goes with him to his regiment. Tatyana, however, who is of a

reserved, intense character, pines, refuses all offers of marriage, and, by the advice of friends, is finally taken to Moscow for the winter. There, as a wall-flower at her first ball, she captivates a prince from St. Petersburg—a distinguished and socially important general.

She follows her parents' wishes and marries him.

When Onyegin returns to the capital a few years later, he finds, to his great astonishment, "that the little country girl whom he has patronized, rejected, almost scorned, is one of the great ladies of the court and society." He falls madly in love with her, in his turn, but she gives him not the slightest sign of friendship. Driven to despair by this coldness, he writes her three letters, but she does not reply. Then, entering her boudoir unexpectedly, through the carelessness of her servants, he finds her in tears, reading his letter.

He again avows his love. She is obliged to confess that she loves him still, but finally makes him understand that she will be true to her kind and high-minded husband. Thus the drama ends.

After the production of his masterpiece, followed a notable poetic tragedy, "Boris Godunov,"

in which may be discerned the author's admiration for the methods of Shakespeare, to whom he turned, yet not slavishly, after freeing himself from the overshadowing Byron.

It is inevitable that we should speculate upon the splendid work which might have come from the pen of this greatest of Russian poets had he not fallen in his prime. The story is sad and sordid enough. In 1831, having been restored to imperial favor, he had married the beautiful Natalya Nikolaevna Gontcharoff, and they plunged into society, loaded with recognition by the court.

He had been married but five years when society began to gossip about "the lovely Madame Pushkin" and Baron George Hekkeren-Dantes, the natural son of the Dutch minister to Russia. Pushkin attached no blame to his wife for the indiscretions of the infatuated young chevalier of the Guards, but challenged him nevertheless. Dantes averted a meeting by marrying Pushkin's sister. Still the gossip persisted, and eventually, being refused access to the Pushkin home, Dantes made his persecutions so patent, and was so seconded by the elder Hekkeren, that the poet challenged the father.

The son intervened, adopted the quarrel, and in a duel at St. Petersburg Pushkin was killed, January 29, 1837, being only thirty-eight years old.

The last six years of Pushkin's life established his claim to greatness not only as a poet and a dramatist, but also as a master of Russian prose.

We may not term him a novelist, but as a writer of prose tales he set a new mark in the literature of his land. When we recall that it was in the first years of that significant decade, 1830-1840, that Poe, Balzac, and Mérimée perfected and brought to its modern form the short-story, we shall realize what a great forward step was being made in Russia at the very same time when Pushkin produced his "Prose Tales." His longer tales, "A Prisoner of the Caucasus" and "The Captain's Daughter," exhibit little plot, but they are notable impressionistic stories, full of rich and effective coloring.

Two of his shorter stories I outline, both on account of their intrinsic interest and for the fact that they illustrate the romantic vein which runs through all of Pushkin's work. Else how could he ever have turned to Byron? Gogol, a contemporary of Pushkin and in some senses his successor, was the father of Russian realism.

The two may be said to be the joint parents of Russian fiction.

"The Queen of Spades" is like a "Weird Tale"

by Hoffmann, or a conception of Poe's. It ranks as one of the world's great short-stories.

At the house of a cavalry officer, several young Russians are gambling. One of them asks Herman why he never plays. He replies, "Play interests me greatly, but I hardly care to sacrifice the necessities of life for uncertain superfluities."

Tomsky says that he can understand Herman's being economical, but that he cannot understand why his own grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedorovna, should not play, for, although she is eighty years of age, she knows a secret which makes winning at faro certain. Tomsky then goes on to relate how the old woman secured the secret from a friend of hers in order to save her from the disastrous results of enormous losses in cards. The secret consists of choosing three certain cards in succession. This plan she followed, winning every time, and was soon out of debt.

Being in need of funds, Herman is impressed with the story, and begins to haunt the outside of the aged Countess's home. In order to gain admission and learn the secret, he contrives to flirt with Lisaveta Ivanovna, the Countess's ward, who at length arranges a way in which he can gain admission to the house while the family are attending a ball. He is to pass through the Countess's apartments and await the girl in her sitting-room, but instead of doing this the young officer secretes himself in the apartments of the Countess. After she is in bed he emerges and demands the names of the three cards, placing a pistol at her brow, but assuring her that he means no harm if she will do as he asks. She tremblingly tells him that it was only a jest, that there is nothing in the report of her knowledge, but Herman insists, and after a short time he grasps her arm roughly and is about to renew his threats when he finds that she is dead.

Presently Herman makes his way to Lisaveta's apartment, where he tells her all. She realizes that she is not loved, and discerns the true reason why the young man has sought her acquaintance.

However, she helps him to get out of the house safely.

The next night he drinks heavily and throws himself on his bed without undressing. During the night he awakes with a start and sees looking in at the window some one who quickly disappears.

Presently he hears the shuffling of loose slippers, the door of his room opens, and a woman in white enters. As she comes close to his bed, the terrified man recognizes the Countess. "I have come to you against my will," she says abruptly, "but I was commanded to grant your request. The trey, the seven, and the ace are the magic cards. Twenty-four hours must elapse after the use of each card, and after the three have been used you must never play again."

The phantom then turns and walks away.

The next night he enters a fashionable gambling club in St. Petersburg, stakes forty thousand rubles, and wins a huge sum. The next night he chooses a seven-spot and wins ninety-four thousand rubles.

The following evening he went again. His appearance was the signal for the cessation of all occupation, every one being eager to watch the development of

events. He selected his card—an ace.

The dealing began: to the right, a queen; to the left, an ace.

“The ace wins,” remarked Herman, turning up his card without glancing at it.

“Your queen is killed,” remarked Tchekalinsky quietly.

Herman trembled; looking down, he saw, not the ace he had selected, but the queen of spades. He could scarcely believe his eyes. It seemed impossible that he could have made such a mistake. As he stared at the card, it seemed to him that the queen winked one eye at him mockingly.

“The old woman!” he exclaimed involuntarily.

The croupier raked in the money while he looked on in stupid terror. When he left the table, all made way for him to pass. The cards were shuffled, and the gambling went on.

Herman became a lunatic. He was confined at the hospital at Oboukov, where he spoke to no one, but kept constantly murmuring in a monotonous tone: “The trey, seven, ace! The trey, seven, queen!”

“The Shot” is in a different vein, being a tale of singular dramatic intensity. There is a legend that it is largely biographical, Pushkin himself having coolly eaten cherries, as did the Count, while under fire in a duel.

A group of military men stationed in the dull little town of N—— welcome to their society the one eligible civilian, a certain Silvio, a taciturn man of thirty-five, who has retired from the Hussars. He lives meagrely in a small house, where he frequently entertains the officers with the best he has, which always includes plenty of champagne. The walls of this house are punctured with bullet-holes, for its occupant is a marvellous shot with the pistol. Regarding his past, he says practically nothing, but every one feels that some tragic event has stamped his career.

One day a new-comer among the officers quarrels with Silvio, and slaps his face. Much to the surprise and disappointment of all, Silvio does not challenge him, but accepts a lame explanation.

It takes some time for Silvio to rehabilitate himself with his friends, but his good qualities at last accomplish this, except with one officer, who tells the story.

One day Silvio, all excitement, announces that a change has come in his affairs, and that he must leave N——. He packs his goods, and invites the

officers to a final feast. At its close he asks the narrator to remain, and tells him this story, to explain why he avoided challenging his offender.

Some years before, while serving in the Hussars, Silvio was known as a great rake and an incorrigible duellist. His popularity waned, however, with the advent of a brilliant young Count, of whom he soon became jealous, and upon whom he fixed a quarrel. In the duel which followed, the Count won the first shot, and pierced his adversary's cap, but showed such nonchalance—having coolly eaten cherries while standing to receive Silvio's shot—that the latter decided to relinquish his chance until a later time. In all these years a favorable opportunity had not come in which to make the Count show fear, and that was why Silvio was not willing to risk his life by engaging in another duel, even though he knew he was a remarkable shot: he was holding himself for his revenge. And now his opening had come, for he had just learned that the Count had married a beautiful young woman and was enjoying his honeymoon.

The narrator never sees Silvio again, but some time after the latter has left N——, the narrator goes back to his own native village, and there meets Count and Countess B——. At their first meeting their visitor is interested by seeing two bullet-holes which have pierced a painting. It transpires that Count B—— is the very one with whom Silvio fought his duel.

The Count then narrates the sequel.

Shortly after their marriage, the Count returned with his bride to his estates, where he was startled to find Silvio, claiming the right of the shot which was his due. The Count gallantly yielded to him and stood up in his drawing-room, but Silvio a second time declined to shoot, and proposed that they again draw for the first shot.

The Count won, and shot over Silvio's head, making one of the two bullet-holes. At this juncture the Countess came in and flung herself at Silvio's feet. In shame, the Count made her rise, and Silvio prepared to take his shot, whereupon the Countess threw herself upon her husband's breast. As he saw Silvio point his weapon at them both, at last the Count showed terror, although not for himself. Being satisfied with this exhibition of fear, natural though it was, Silvio declined to shoot. As he left the room, he turned, however, and, almost without looking, took a parting shot at the

painting, which he penetrated with a bullet-hole precisely below that which had been made by the Count's bullet.

And so this strange man passed out of their lives.



“The Snow-Storm” seems to me to be

Pushkin's greatest short-story. It has a well-defined plot, a surprising dénouement, the action marches on to its climax, and both local color and characterization are of a high order. It is especially remarkable for its having been produced at the very opening of the decade which gave to the world the modern short-story.

## THE SNOW-STORM

*By Alexander Pushkin*

Towards the close of the year 1811, during that very memorable epoch, there lived in the village of Nenaradova the good Gavrila Gavrilovich R——. He was famed throughout the district for his hospitality and good-nature; and his neighbors continually kept coming to his house to partake of food and drink, and to play the game of Boston at five kopecks with his wife, Prascovia Petrovna. Others came, however, to inspect their daughter, Maria Gavrilovna, a graceful, pale, seventeen-year-old girl. She was considered a rich match, and many a visitor had had designs upon her for himself or for his son.

Maria Gavrilovna had been brought up on French novels, and consequently was in love. The object chosen by her for her love was a poor army lieutenant, who was now on a leave of absence in his native village. It goes without saying that the young man returned her passion. The parents of the girl, however, having noted the mutual inclinations of the pair, forbade their daughter even to think of him; while him they received even worse than if he were a dismissed petty official.

Our lovers exchanged notes, and saw each other every day, alone, in the pine wood or in the old chapel. There they vowed to each other eternal love, bewailed their fate, and formed all sorts of plans. Their discussions carried on in this way naturally brought them to the following conclusion: “If we can’t exist without each other, and the will of stern parents stands in the way of our felicity, why shouldn’t we manage without them?” Needless to

say, this happy idea originated in the mind of the young man, and that it appealed strongly to the romantic imagination of Maria Gavrilovna.

Winter came on, and interrupted their meetings. This, however, only served to quicken the correspondence. Vladimir Nikolaevich, in every letter, entreated her to give herself to him, to wed secretly, to remain in concealment a while, and then to throw themselves at the feet of the parents, who, to be sure, would be touched finally by the heroic constancy and unhappiness of the lovers, and undoubtedly say to them, "Children, come to our arms!"

Maria Gavrilovna hesitated a long time; and several of the plans to run away she rejected. At last she consented. On the appointed day she was to do without supper and escape to her room on the plea of a headache. Her maid was in the plot. The two of them were to make their way into the garden by means of the back-stairs. Outside the garden a sledge would stand ready to take them straight to the church of Jadrino, a village five versts away, where Vladimir would await them.

On the eve of the decisive day Maria Gavrilovna hardly slept at all. She spent the night in packing some linens and dresses to take with her; and wrote a long letter to a sentimental girl friend, and another to her parents. She bade them farewell in the most touching terms, and excused her action on grounds of a terrible overruling passion, concluding by saying that she should consider it the most blessed moment of her life when she should be permitted to throw herself at the feet of her beloved parents. Having sealed both letters with a Toula seal, on which were engraved two flaming hearts, accompanied by an appropriate inscription, she threw herself on her bed just before daybreak, and dozed off.

Terrible dreams, however, kept crowding upon her and constantly awakened her. Now it seemed to her that the very moment she entered the sledge for her journey her father stopped her and with a most painful rapidity dragged her over the snow and cast her into a dark, bottomless abyss.... Then she flew about precipitately, with an indescribable oppression of the heart. Then she saw Vladimir lying on the grass, pale, bleeding. Dying, he entreated her in shrill voice to make haste to wed him.... Still other shapeless, incoherent visions continued to pass before her. In the end she arose, looking more pale than usual, with a real headache. Her father and her mother noticed her

agitation; their gentle solicitude and their ceaseless inquiries, “What is the matter with you, Masha? Are you ill, Masha?” rent her heart. She tried to quiet them, to appear cheerful, but she could not.

The evening came. The thought that this was the last day she would spend in the midst of her family oppressed her. She scarcely could breathe. Secretly she was bidding each one a separate farewell, as well as all the objects which surrounded her. When the supper was announced her heart beat violently. In a trembling voice she said that she could not eat, and wished her father and her mother good-night. They kissed her and, according to their custom, also blessed her.

Once in her own room, she threw herself into the arm-chair and wept. Her maid tried to prevail upon her to be calm and to take courage; everything was ready—in another half-hour Masha would leave forever her paternal home, her room, her quiet, girlish life....

Outdoors, the snow was falling; the wind howled, the shutters rattled and shook; all seemed to her to assume the aspect of a warning, the sad presaging of disaster. Soon everything in the house grew quiet and sank into slumber.

Masha wrapped a shawl around her, put on a long, warm mantle, took into her hands her treasure-casket, and walked down the back-stairs. The maid followed her with two bundles. They entered the garden. The storm did not subside; the wind blew in their faces, as if it sought to stop the young culprit. With the greatest difficulty, they reached the end of the garden. On the road a sledge awaited them. The chilled horses would not stand still, and Vladimir’s coachman was restlessly walking in front of them, trying to quiet them. He assisted the young lady and her maid into the sledge, and in disposing of the bundles and the casket, then seized the reins, and off the horses flew.

Having thus committed the maiden to the care of fate and the skill of Tereshka, the coachman, we will now return to our young lover.

The whole day long Vladimir spent in driving about. His first morning errand was to the priest at Jadrino—it was with the greatest difficulty that he prevailed upon him; he then journeyed to find witnesses from among the neighboring land-owners. The first to whom he appeared was the retired,

forty-year-old cornet Dravin, who consented with alacrity. This adventure, he assured Vladimir, recalled to him his earlier days and his pranks in the Hussars. He persuaded Vladimir to remain for dinner, and assured him that there would be no trouble about the other two witnesses. Indeed, immediately after dinner there appeared Surveyor Schmidt, with mustaches and spurs, and the son of the chief of police, a youngster of sixteen years, who had only lately joined the Uhlans. Not only were they in sympathy with Vladimir's plans, but they even swore to lay down their lives for him. Vladimir embraced them joyously, and returned home to get everything ready.

It had already been dark for some time. He sent off the trusty Tereshka to Nenaradova with his troika, after giving him most exact instructions; while for himself he ordered a small sledge with a single horse. He left alone for Jadrino, where two hours hence Maria Gavrilovna was also due to arrive. The road was familiar to him; and altogether it meant a twenty-minute journey.

Hardly, however, had Vladimir reached the open field, when the wind rose; immediately it developed into a blinding snow-storm, so that he could not see anything. In a remarkably short time the road became hidden under the snow, while the surrounding landmarks were obliterated in the nebulous, yellowish haze through which flew about great white flakes of snow. The sky and the earth merged into one. Vladimir found himself in the field, and it was in vain that he tried to find the road again. The horse advanced at random, and now drove into a snowdrift and now fell into a hole—the sledge kept on upsetting. Vladimir made an effort not to lose the right direction. It seemed strange to him, however, that after a half-hour's driving he had not yet reached the Jadrino wood.

Another ten minutes passed—still no wood in sight. Vladimir drove across a field which was intersected by deep ditches. The storm did not abate, the sky did not clear. The horse began to grow tired, and the perspiration rolled down his body in large drops, notwithstanding the fact that he was being half-buried in snow almost continually.

At last Vladimir concluded that he was not driving in the right direction. He stopped, tried to recall, to consider, and decided that he ought to take to the right; which he did. His horse made way slowly. He had been on the road

more than an hour. Jadrino could not be very distant. On and on he drove his horse, but there seemed to be no end to the field—only snowdrifts and ditches. The sledge kept on upsetting, he kept on righting it. Time passed; Vladimir began to fret.

At last a dark shape seemed to loom up ahead. Vladimir jerked the reins in that direction. On closer approach, he saw it was a wood. “Thank God!” he thought, “now it is near.” He kept going along the edge of the wood, hoping to strike the familiar road, or to make a detour of the forest. Jadrino, he knew, was situated somewhere behind it. He soon found the road, and drove into the darkness among the trees, which stood in their winter nakedness. The wind could not make much headway here; the road was smooth; the horse braced itself, and Vladimir regained confidence.

On and on he continued his journey—and still no Jadrino in sight; there was no end to the road. In consternation, Vladimir became aware that he had entered an unfamiliar forest. Despair seized hold of him. He lashed the horse; the poor animal went off at a canter, but soon slowed down, and after a quarter of an hour relapsed into a walk, despite all exertions on the part of the unhappy Vladimir.

Gradually the wood grew less dense, and Vladimir came out again into the open. No Jadrino in sight. It must have been about midnight. Tears gushed from his eyes; he drove about at random. The storm quieted down, the clouds dispersed; before him lay a valley, covered with a white, undulating carpet. The night was sufficiently clear. He discerned not far off a tiny village, consisting of some four or five houses. Vladimir drove towards it. At the very first cottage he sprang out of his sledge, ran to the window, and began to knock. In a few minutes the wooden shutter went up, and an old man stuck out his gray beard.

“What do you want?”

“Is Jadrino far from here?”

“Is Jadrino far from here!”

“Yes, yes, is it far?”

“Not far—ten versts or so!”

At this answer Vladimir caught hold of his hair and stood motionless, like one condemned to death.

“And where do you come from?” continued the old man.

Vladimir had no courage left to reply to the question.

“Can you, old man,” he asked, “procure me horses to take me to Jadrino?”

“How should we have horses?” answered the peasant.

“Can you at least give me a guide? I will pay as much as he wants.”

“Wait,” said the old man, lowering the shutter. “I’ll send my son out to you. He’ll guide you.”

Vladimir waited. A minute had not elapsed when he began knocking again. The shutter went up again, the same gray beard made its appearance.

“What do you want?”

“Well, where’s your son?”

“He’ll be out soon. He’s putting on his boots. Are you cold? Step in and warm yourself.”

“Thanks, send your son out quickly.”

The gate creaked; a lad came out with a heavy stick in hand. He went in front, now indicating, now searching for, the road hidden under snowdrifts.

“What hour is it?” Vladimir asked him.

“It will soon be daylight,” replied the young peasant.

Vladimir spoke not another word.

The cocks were crowing and it was already light when they reached Jadrino. The church was closed. Vladimir paid his guide and drove to the priest’s house. His troika was not there. What news awaited him!

Let us return, however, to the good land-owners of Nenaradova and see what is passing there.

Nothing out of the way.

The old people had had their sleep and had gone to the dining-room—Gavrila Gavrilovich in his night-cap and flannel jacket, Prascovia Petrovna in her dressing-gown of wadding. The samovar was brought in, and Gavrila Gavrilovich sent the maid to ask Maria Gavrilovna about her health and how she had rested. The maid returned, announcing that the young lady had slept badly, but was feeling better now, and that presently she would be in to breakfast. Very shortly, in fact, the door opened, and Maria Gavrilovna came forward to greet her papa and mamma.

“How is your head, Masha?” asked Gavrila Gavrilovich.

“Better, Papa,” replied Masha.

“Masha, you must have got a headache yesterday from the fumes of the heater,” said Prascovia Petrovna.

“Perhaps so, Mamma,” answered Masha.

The day passed happily, but by night Masha was taken ill. A doctor was sent for from town. He arrived towards evening and found the sick girl in delirium. She developed high fever, and for two weeks the poor girl was at death’s door.

No one in the house knew what had happened. The letters written by her on the eve of her planned elopement were burned; her maid, fearing the wrath of her master, had said a word to no one. The priest, the retired cornet, the mustached surveyor, and the little Uhlan were quiet, and with good reason. Tereshka, the driver, never uttered a superfluous word, even when in drink. The secret was thus well kept by more than a half-dozen conspirators. Maria Gavrilovna herself gave away her secret while in delirium. Her words, however, were so incoherent that her mother, who never left her bedside, could only gather that her daughter was passionately in love with Vladimir Nikolaevich, and that this love was apparently the cause of her illness. She held counsel with her husband, and with some of the neighbors, and in the end they unanimously decided that there was no getting around fate, that poverty was no crime, that the man was the thing—not wealth, and so on. Such moral discourses are astonishingly useful in those instances when we are at a loss to find justification for our actions.

In the meantime, the young lady was returning to health. Vladimir hadn’t been seen for a long time in the house of Gavrila Gavrilovich. He had been

frightened away by the previous receptions accorded him. It was proposed to send for him and to announce to him his unawaited good fortune: the consent to marriage. Imagine the amazement of the proprietors of Nenaradova when in answer to their proposal they received from him a half-insane letter! He informed them that his foot would never be set in their house, and implored them to forget an unhappy man, for whom death alone remained as an alleviation. In the course of a few days it was learned that Vladimir had joined the army. This was in the year 1812.

For a long time they dared not tell this to the convalescent Masha. She never spoke about Vladimir. Several months having passed, she one day discovered his name among the distinguished and the dangerously wounded at the battle of Borodino, whereupon she fainted, and it was feared that high fever would recur. God be thanked, however, the fainting fit had no serious consequences.

Another sorrow visited her: Gavril Gavrilovich died, leaving her heiress to all his estates. But her wealth did not comfort her; she free-heartedly shared the affliction of the poor Prascovia Petrovna, and vowed never to part with her. Together they left Nenaradova, the place of their sorrowful memories, and went to live on one of their estates.

Here also many suitors paid court to the lovely heiress; but she gave none the slightest hope. Her mother occasionally tried to persuade her to choose a mate; in answer, Maria Gavrilovna would only shake her head and grow thoughtful. Vladimir no longer existed; he had died in Moscow, on the eve of the entry of the French. His memory Masha held sacred; at least, she kept all that could remind her of him: there were the books he had read, his drawings, his notes, and poems he had copied for her. The neighbors, who knew her story, wondered at her constancy, and with great curiosity awaited the hero who would in the end triumph over the melancholy fidelity of this virgin Artemis.

In the meantime, the war ended with glory. Our regiments were returning from alien soil. The nation greeted them with joy. The musicians played the victorious songs, "*Vive Henri-Quatre*," Tyrolese waltzes, the airs from "*Joconda*." Some of the officers who had entered upon the campaign mere lads were returning from the battles grown into manhood, decorated with crosses. The soldiers talked gaily among themselves, mingling constantly

with their speech German and French words. It was a never-to-be-forgotten time! A time of glory and joy! How strongly beat the Russian heart at the word “fatherland”! How sweet were the tears at meeting again! How harmoniously did we combine the feeling of national pride with love for the Czar! And for him—what a moment!

Women—the Russian women—were in those days incomparable! Their usual coldness vanished. Their rapture was really intoxicating when, upon meeting the victors, they cried, “Hurrah!” and threw their caps into the air....

Who from among the officers of that day does not confess that to the Russian women he owed his best, most valued reward?... During that brilliant time Maria Gavrilovna lived with her mother in the ——— Province, and did not see how both capitals celebrated the return of the troops. In the country districts and in the villages the general enthusiasm was perhaps even stronger. The appearance of an officer in such places was always the occasion of real triumph to him, and the lover in the frock coat had a hard time of it in his presence.

We have already stated that, notwithstanding her coldness, Maria Gavrilovna, as before, was surrounded by suitors. All of them, however, were compelled to step aside when there appeared one day in her castle the wounded Colonel of the Hussars, Bourmin, with the cross of St. George in his buttonhole, and with “an interesting pallor” on his face, to use the words of the young ladies of the place. He seemed to be about twenty-six years old. He arrived, on leave, at his estate, which neighbored upon that of Maria Gavrilovna. Maria showed him distinction. Before him her usual pensiveness vanished. It cannot be said that she played the coquette with him; but the poet, making note of her conduct, would have said:

*Se amor non è, che dunche?...*

Bourmin was indeed a most charming young man. He possessed precisely that sense which is pleasing to women—a sense of decorum and alertness, without pretensions; and an easy humor. His behavior towards Maria Gavrilovna was simple and free; but, no matter what she said or did, his soul and his glances followed her. He seemed a quiet, unassuming sort of man, though rumor had it that he had been quite a rake in his day, which did

not, however, injure him in the eyes of Maria Gavrilovna, who (like young ladies generally) was most willing to overlook little larks which indicated boldness and a spirited character.

But above all (more than his gentleness, more than his agreeable speech, more than his interesting pallor, more than his bandaged arm) the silence of the young Hussar stirred her curiosity and imagination. She could not but feel conscious that she pleased him immensely; undoubtedly, he too, with his keenness of perception, and experience, had noted her preference for him; and she could not explain why she had not yet seen him at her feet and had not heard his declaration. What restrained him? Was it the timidity which is inseparable from true love, or pride, or the coquetry of a shrewd wooer? This was a riddle to her. Having reflected on the matter, she concluded that timidity was the sole reason; and this decided her to encourage him with greater attention, and, if the circumstances permitted it, even tenderness. She anticipated the most surprising dénouement; and with impatience awaited a romantic explanation. A secret, whatever its nature may be, is always oppressive to the feminine heart. Her aggressive tactics had the desired result; at least, Bourmin fell into such a pensive mood, and his dark eyes fixed themselves with such a fire upon Maria Gavrilovna, that the decisive moment seemed close at hand. The neighbors talked of the forthcoming marriage as of a thing settled, and the good Prascovia Petrovna rejoiced that her daughter had found at last a worthy mate.

The old mother was sitting one day in the drawing-room, playing patience, when Bourmin entered and immediately inquired after Maria Gavrilovna.

“She is in the garden,” answered the old lady. “You go out to her, and I’ll await you here.”

Bourmin went into the garden, and the old lady crossed herself and thought, “The matter will be settled today.”

At the pond, under a willow, Bourmin found Maria Gavrilovna, dressed in white, looking like a real heroine of a novel. After the first questions, Maria Gavrilovna purposely refrained from sustaining the conversation, intending in this manner to create a mutual embarrassment, from which it was possible to free oneself only by an instant and decisive explanation. That

was, in fact, what happened. Bourmin, feeling the embarrassment of his position, said that he had long sought an opportunity to reveal his heart to her, and requested a moment's attention from her. Maria Gavrilovna closed the book and cast down her eyes as a sign of assent.

"I love you," said Bourmin. "I love you passionately." (Maria Gavrilovna blushed and inclined her head even lower.) "I have behaved imprudently in yielding to the sweet pleasure of seeing and hearing you every day." (Maria Gavrilovna recalled the first letter of St. Preux.<sup>[1]</sup>) "It is too late now to resist my fate: the mere recollection of you, your lovely, incomparable image, shall be the torment and consolation of my life. It is still left to me, however, to execute a weighty responsibility, to reveal to you a terrible secret which will raise between us an insurmountable barrier."

"It has always existed," interrupted Maria Gavrilovna, in an excited manner. "I could never be your wife."

"I know," he answered quietly. "I know that you once loved; and that he died, and that you had mourned for three years.... My good, adorable Maria Gavrilovna! Please don't deprive me of my last consolation: the thought that you would have consented to make my happiness if—Please, not a word—for God's sake, not a word! You torture me. Yes, I know it, that you would have been willing to become mine, but I—I am a most unhappy creature.... I am already married!"

Maria Gavrilovna looked at him in amazement.

"Yes, I am married," continued Bourmin; "and this is the fourth year of my marriage, and I don't know—who my wife is, where she is, or whether I shall ever see her."

"What are you saying?" exclaimed Maria Gavrilovna. "How strange! But continue—I also have something to tell—do me the kindness, continue!"

"In the beginning of the year 1812," resumed Bourmin, "I was making haste to rejoin my regiment at Wilna. Having arrived late one night at a station, I ordered horses to be harnessed immediately, when suddenly a terrible snow-storm broke out, and the station-master and the drivers advised me to wait. At first I agreed, but an incomprehensible restlessness took possession of me; it seemed to me as if some one were prodding me on. The storm, however, showed no signs of abatement. I could stand it no

longer, ordered the horses to be harnessed, and proceeded on my journey in the very height of the storm. The driver took a notion into his head to drive along the river, which would shorten the journey by three versts. The banks were buried under snowdrifts; we drove past the place where we should have turned into the road, and so chance took us into strange parts. The storm did not quiet down. I saw a small light in the distance, and asked to be driven there. We arrived in a village; there was light in the wooden church. The church was open; within the outside enclosure stood several sledges; people could be seen walking about on the porch of the church. ‘This way! This way!’ cried a number of voices. I ordered my man to drive up closer. ‘What made you so late, pray?’ some one said to me. ‘The bride has fainted; the priest doesn’t know what to do; we were just getting ready to go home. Come quickly!’ Silently I sprang out of my sledge and entered the church, which was but dimly lighted by two or three candles. The girl was sitting on a bench in a dark corner of the church; another was rubbing her temples. ‘Thank God,’ said the latter, ‘you have made up your mind to come! You have almost killed her!’ The old priest approached me with the question, ‘Shall we begin?’ ‘Begin, begin, Father,’ I replied absently. The girl was raised on her feet. She seemed to me not at all bad-looking .... An incomprehensible, unforgivable heedlessness .... I stood beside her before the pulpit; the priest made haste; three men and the maid supported the bride, and were giving her all their attention. We were married. ‘Now kiss each other,’ they said to us. My wife turned towards me her pale face. I made a movement to kiss her .... She cried out, ‘Oh, it is not he, not he!’ and fainted away. The witnesses directed on me their frightened eyes. I turned round and left the church without the slightest interference, threw myself into my sledge, and cried out, ‘Let her go!’”

“My God!” cried out Maria Gavrilovna. “And you don’t know what became of your poor wife?”

“I don’t know,” answered Bourmin. “I even don’t know the name of the village where I was married. I can’t remember by what station I went. At that time I attached so little importance to my wicked lark, that, after leaving the church, I slept soundly and awakened only next morning, having reached by that time the third station. My servant, who was then with me, died in the campaign, so that I haven’t the slightest hope of finding

her upon whom I played such a horrible joke, and who now is so terribly avenged.”

“My God! My God!” said Maria Gavrilovna, grasping his hand. “So, then, it was you! And you do not recognize me?”

Bourmin became pale ... and threw himself at her feet ....

## FOOTNOTES:

[1] In *La Nouvelle Heloise*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.



## GOGOL, THE FIRST RUSSIAN REALIST

Professor William Lyon Phelps has

noted that the year 1809 gave many great men to literature, among them Darwin, Tennyson, Poe, Lincoln, Gladstone, Holmes, and Gogol.

Thus in a period of expanding ideas the Russian genius was born, March 19 (March 31), of a small land-owner's family, at the town of Sorotchintzi, government of Poltava, in the land of the Cossacks—in Little Russia, or the Ukraine, as it is variously called.

When the lad of twelve was sent to school at Niéjine, a town near Kiev, he found that the pupils prided themselves upon having their own college journal. In this he soon published an early novel, "The Brothers Tviérdislavitchy,"

and later a tragedy, "The Robbers." He also contributed certain satires and ballads—all equally sophomoric. Certainly in these beginnings there were no deep marks of genius. To record that Gogol was a poor student is to bring to mind amusingly the number of great littérateurs who were either dismissed from college or showed no genius for application. I have often wondered how, in the face of such alluring evidence, professors of literature succeed in convincing ambitious young quill-drivers that their better course would be conscientious devotion to the curriculum. At all events, Gogol really derived more benefit from the training he secured while writing for the school theatre than from his mathematical and linguistic studies.

Upon leaving college, in 1828, the young enthusiast—romantic, dreaming of great deeds for his country, and taking himself much too seriously—went to the inevitable St. Petersburg, thinking that he could easily secure

employment there. But he was disillusionized, for his talent excited no interest whatever. So, taking some hardly-saved money which his mother had sent him for another purpose, he embarked for foreign parts—some say for America. But his heart failed him, and he got no farther than Lübeck, where he left the boat, and, after three days’

wandering about the city, returned to St. Petersburg and secured employment as a copying clerk in the Ministry of Domain. Let us not forget this experience as we read “The Cloak.”

In this billet he remained for a year, chafing under the grinding routine, whose pressure at length compelled him to resign. He took up acting next, but his voice was not considered to be strong enough, and he then became a tutor in the families of the nobility in the Russian capital. Eventually he was appointed to a professorship of history in the University. His

opening address was altogether brilliant, but, never a thorough student, he soon sounded the depths of his knowledge, and his students complained that he put them to sleep. That ended his teaching.

All these successive failures—for such they really were—drove him to the one means of self-expression: literature. He now published a few

modest essays in the leading journals. These attracted some attention and brought about his introduction to Pushkin, who received him warmly, and advised him to write of the land and people that he knew so well. This wise counsel resulted in a collection of brilliant fictional sketches entitled “Evenings at a Farm Near Dikanka” (1828-1831).

The most important of these is probably “St. John’s Eve.” It is instinct with the superstitious beliefs of his native province. The story is soon told, how that a young man, finely favored of body, falls in love with the daughter of his farmer-employer. His attentions having been discovered, he is flatly dismissed, whereupon a certain Mephistophelian character who has been doing tricky things about the village offers to procure for the youth a plentiful supply of gold wherewith to win the favor of the girl’s father.

This leads to a night meeting with a witch, accompanied with all the traditional manifestations.

Under an incantation, the young man

digs, finds a coffer, and is about to take out the gold, when the witch admonishes him that he first must perform a duty—thrust a knife into a large bag which stands before him. He refuses, and tears open the bag, when to his horror the form of his sweetheart's little brother is disclosed.

The demon-man pictures all that the youth is about to lose by his unwillingness to murder the child; and, thus tempted, he plunges in the knife.

Thereafter all things go according to promise—he has plenty of gold, wins the favor of the father, and marries the girl, but he can never get over his settled melancholy as he thinks upon his terrible deed. Eventually—quite in the manner of all the tales which involve the sale of the soul to the devil—he disappears and goes to his Master.

The whole story is told with a remarkable handling of the weird. Perhaps no tale of witchcraft was ever more vividly and brilliantly handled—it is typical, both in matter and manner, of the Ukraine.

And this leads me to say that those writers are most interesting who are the most distinctly national, and by “national” I mean those who temperamentally exhibit the typical characteristics of their land, who glory in its peculiar traits, and who in their writings picture and interpret its spirit.

Little Russia is neither north nor south, but, for reasons which the scientists may explain, displays quite marvellously the elements of both north and south in the two great seasons of the year. The few short summer months are saturated with flaring sunshine, causing the fields fairly to leap toward the farmer, full-handed with harvests. In these halcyon days the people revel in the miraculous transformation of nature, but when winter comes, the land of the Dnieper feels the sweep of icy northern winds quite as bitterly as do the dwellers on the Neva.

The population, too, is just as antipodal—in fact, it is really complex. Little Russia was at one time dominated by the Turks, who left many of their oriental traits among the people they had conquered; later, the Ukraine was subdued by Poland, which “transmitted something of its savage luxury to its vassals;” then Tartar hordes constantly swept across its borders and kept alive the joy of savage warfare; finally the Cossack leagues established themselves in the Ukraine and set up a wild chivalry upon whose

picturesque exploits the Little Russian has ever since dwelt with prideful interest.

Gogol was born with a full measure of the Cossack spirit, descended, as he was, directly from this stock. His native Poltava is the very heart of the Cossack country, and Gogol's grandfather, who was his first teacher, infused the young spirit with all the imagery and fanciful extravagance of Cossack folk-lore. His mother, too, of whom he speaks most tenderly in his "Confessions of an Author," poured into his ears the legends of her land.

This primal literary equipment was bestowed upon a temperament that never ceased to be mystical, religious, and at the last melancholy—traits that are characteristic of almost every great Russian writer.

Gogol was also a humorist, but from the strangest reason, a reason which, unhappily, several other humorists shared with him: he wrote grotesque and laughter-provoking conceits to keep his mind from brooding on dark and depressing visions. Perhaps it may have been bodily weakness—for Gogol was small, weazened, unlovely to look upon, and often ill—or perhaps the result of an intensely religious nature turned in upon itself, but some cause constantly evoked in him the wildest hallucinations. Once while suffering the extremes of chilling penury in St. Petersburg, he contemplated suicide.

He saw Death, and thus writes of the vision to his mother:

Mother, dearest mother, I know you are my truest friend. Believe me, even now, though I have shaken off something of the dread, even now, at the bare recollection of it, an indescribable agony comes over my soul. It is only to you that I speak of it. You know that I was in my boyhood endowed with a courage beyond my years. Who, then, could have expected I should prove so weak? But I saw her—no, I cannot name her—she is too majestic, too awful for any mortal, not merely for me, to name. That face, whose brilliant glory in one moment burns into the heart; those eyes that quickly pierce the inner soul; that consuming, all-penetrating gaze: these are the traits of none that is born of woman. Oh, if you only had seen me in that moment! True, I could hide myself from all, but how hide myself from myself? The pains of hell, with every possible torture, filled my breast. Oh, what a cruel condition! I think, whatever the hell prepared for sinners may be, its tortures cannot equal mine. No, that was not love. At least, I never heard of love like that.... And then, my heart softened; I recognized the inscrutable finger of Providence that ever watches over us, and I blessed Him, who thus marvellously had pointed out the path wherein I should walk. No; this being whom He sent to rob me of quiet, and to topple down my frail plans, was no woman.... But I pray you, do not ask me who she is. She is too majestic, too awful, to be named.

A later series of short-stories and sketches appeared from 1831 to 1833 under the title of “Mirgorod.”

The first part of this collection constitutes one of the great romances of history—“Taras Bulba.”

It is long enough to be a short novel, and, indeed, it is a novel in plot. Briefly, it tells the story of a mighty Cossack colonel, whose name gives the work its title. The romance opens with his two sons, Ostap and Andrii, coming home from school and meeting their Homeric old father and gentle, homely, and adoring mother. The father cannot be convinced that his boys have not been injured by their course at school until he engages in violent fisticuffs with Ostap. Almost immediately, to the heart-breaking of the old lady, who plays a small part in the whole scheme of her husband’s life, Taras Bulba personally takes his boys away to the great Cossack camp, where these corsairs of the steppes are gathered waiting for some chance of foray, or a war that may promise them spoils. The revelling scenes of the camp are pictured with tremendous verve, and the doughty, fear-despising, Jew-abusing Cossack is pictured to the life.

At length, a cause of war against the Tartars is cooked up and their city besieged. One night, Andrii, the younger son of Taras Bulba, is awakened by the gliding of a woman’s figure near his sleeping quarters. She proves to be the servant of a beautiful Tartar maiden, the daughter of the Governor of the beleaguered city, who with all the other inhabitants is dying of starvation.

Andrii gathers some provisions and follows the old woman by a secret underground passage into the city, where he meets the young beauty, who had previously enchanted him with a single glance while he was on the march from his home to the Cossack camp. For the sake of her love he renounces his own people and fights tremendously against them in the subsequent battle.

During the *mêlée* he meets his father, who slays him with a single blow and scarcely regrets the death of his traitorous son. Ostap is captured and carried away to a distant city. Knowing that his son is to be executed with torture, old Taras Bulba arises from his bed of many wounds and, after a long

journey, makes his way to the foot of the scaffold in the public square. The boy suffers terribly, but is brave to the end.

But when they took him to the last deadly tortures, it seemed as though his strength were failing. He turned his eyes about.

Oh, God! all strangers, all unknown faces! If only some of his relatives were present at his death! He would not have cared to hear the sobs and anguish of his feeble mother, or the unreasoning cries of a wife, tearing her hair and beating her white breast; he would have liked to see the strong man who could refresh him with a wise word, and cheer his end. And his strength failed him, and he cried in the weakness of his soul, "Father, where are you? Do you hear all?"

"I hear!" rang through the universal silence, and all that million of people shuddered in concert.

Force is its prime quality—physical, mental, religious. "In this story," writes Professor Phelps, "the old Cossacks, centuries dead, have a genuine resurrection of the body. They appear before us in all their amazing vitality, their love of fighting, of eating and drinking, their intense patriotism, and their blazing devotion to their religious faith. Never was a book more plainly inspired by passion for race and native land. It is one tremendous shout of joy"—which even tragedy cannot silence.

Gogol was a stylist of no mean order, as "Taras Bulba" well demonstrates. It is full of Homeric passages, whose pungent vigor even survives translation. And for sheer beauty what can surpass this, the opening passage of "Night in May"?

Do you know the beauty of the nights of Ukraine?

The moon looks down from the deep, immeasurable vault, which is filled to overflowing and palpitating with its pure radiance. The earth is silver; the air is deliciously cool, yet almost oppressive with perfume.

Divine, enchanting night! The great forest trees, black, solemn, and still, reposing as if oppressed with thought, throw out their gigantic shadows. How silent are the ponds! Their dark waters are imprisoned within the vine-laden walls of the gardens. The little virgin forest of wild cherry and young plum-trees dip their dainty roots timidly into the cold waters; their murmuring leaves angrily shiver when a little current of the night wind stealthily creeps in to caress them.

The distant horizon sleeps, but above it and overhead all is palpitating life; august, triumphal, sublime!

Like the firmament, the soul seems to open into endless space; silvery visions of grace and beauty arise before it. Oh, the charm of this divine night!

Suddenly life, animation, spreads through forest, lake, and steppe. The nightingale's majestic trill resounds through the air; the moon seems to stop, embosomed in clouds, to listen. The little village on the hill is wrapt in an enchanted slumber; its cluster of white cottages gleams vividly in the moonlight, and the outlines of their low walls are sharply clear-cut against the dark shadows. All songs are hushed; silence reigns in the homes of these simple peasants.

But here and there a twinkling light appears in a little window of some cottage, where supper has waited for a belated occupant.

Gogol's reputation as a humorist is strongly supported by his comedy "Revizor" ("The Inspector-General"). It is held to be the best comedy in the Russian language, and, while it brought out no immediate followers, it did arouse an immense amount of amused discussion at the time of its production.

The plot is simple enough. The officials of a provincial government office are looking for the arrival of an inspector, who is supposed to be coming *incognito* to inspect their accounts. A traveller happens to arrive at the inn, and him they all suppose to be the dreaded official. Made anxious by their guilty consciences, each attempts to plead his own cause with the supposed judge, and no one hesitates to denounce a colleague in order to better his own standing.

The traveller is at first amazed, but he is astute enough to accept the situation and pocket the money. The confusion grows until the crash of the final thunderbolt, when the real inspector arrives upon the scene.

In his "Confessions of an Author," Gogol says: "In the 'Revizor,' I tried to present in a mass the results arising from the one crying evil of Russia, as I recognized it in that year; to expose every crime that is committed in those offices, where the strictest uprightness should be required and expected. I meant to satirize the great evil. The effect produced upon the public was a sort of terror; for they felt the force of my true sentiments, my real sadness and disgust, through the gay satire."

The play was received with uproarious laughter all over the empire, but it is a singular comment upon the Russian character of the period to observe that, while it produced so great a furor that the Czar read it with tears of

laughter and afterwards handsomely pensioned the author, it led to no official reforms.

A single specimen of its dry humor will illustrate.

I quote from Turner's "Studies in Russian Literature."

The prefect is alarmed at the intelligence that his superior, the revising [inspecting] officer, may be expected on any day or at any hour, and begs the postmaster to open all the letters that may in the meantime pass through his office. That exemplary official informs him that such has always been his custom, "not from any state reason," as he takes care to explain, "but from curiosity;" some of the letters he had opened being so entertaining that he really could not find the heart to send them on, but had kept them in his desk. When reminded by a cautious colleague that this is likely to get him into trouble with the public, the prefect cuts short the remonstrance by crying out, "Oh, *batoushka* [a diminutive term of endearment, meaning practically 'little father'], don't you see this is a family affair of our own? What have the public to do with it?"

Gogol founded the realistic school in Russia when he produced his masterpiece "Dead Souls,"

a work sufficiently powerful to raise him at once to the pinnacle of literary fame. The idea of the book consists of the ingenious plan of a certain Tchitchikoff, who had lost his place in consequence of his misdemeanors in the custom-house having been discovered. In order to retrieve his fortune he visits different landed proprietors and buys from them the names of all their serfs who have died since the last census. Having thus established an ownership, he succeeds in borrowing large sums of money by giving the names of the dead serfs as security, since these dead souls have been legally made over to him. Naturally, the bankers think that they are making the loan upon good live collateral. What becomes of Tchitchikoff, we do not know, for Gogol destroyed the manuscript of the last section of his work—some say, in a fit of abstraction; others, under the influence of religious enthusiasm.

Upon this framework, the author has produced a series of remarkable descriptions—not pure realism, indeed, in our modern acceptance of the term, but rather akin to the realism of Dickens. Its truthful picture of Russian life, its repellent yet attractive qualities, its penetratingly keen analysis of character, caused Pushkin to exclaim when Gogol read him the first chapters of his book, "God, how miserable life is in Russia!"

Rarely do power and delicacy unite in a stylist as they do in Gogol. For the one, we may find an origin in his love for the sun-steeped and snow-blown plains of his native Cossack country—a love which constantly manifested itself in a real nostalgia, yet never brought him back for long from his wanderings, especially in Italy. But for the other, that delicate power of evocation—that compound of Loti’s subtlety of nature-sense, Hoffmann’s light fantasy, and Daudet’s airy narrative manner, half-humorous, half-pathetic—for this we must look to some inborn

faculty. In any other writer we might trace this gossamer lightness to much commerce with the thoughts of women. But no woman ever entered largely into Gogol’s life, and when he died, on March 4, 1852, being not yet forty-three years of age, his mother—always his mother—was still his only love. His last days were shadowed by a growing ineptitude. His frail body weakened by religious fastings, his resources scattered by prodigal gifts, his mind enfeebled and depressed—his passing was sad, lonely, and almost unnoticed.

Gogol was the first great prose artist in Russian literature. In the tale and the sketch, in comedy, in romance, and in realism, he not only blazed new trails but penetrated so far into the unknown that others for a long time followed only at a distance. But follow they did, for, as one of his compatriot wits has observed, “We have all hidden under ‘The Cloak.’”

The masterpiece of fantastic narration and character delineation which follows in translation was published, under the title “Shinel,” in 1839, when Gogol was thirty. It is overlong, according to our modern standards, yet not as a piece of artistic workmanship. Its humor, its suggestiveness, its pathos, its whimsicality, all rank it with the world’s great short fictions.



# THE CLOAK

*By Nikolai Gogol*

In the department of —— but it is better not to name the department. Nothing is more annoying than all kinds of departments, regiments, law courts—in a word, any branch of public service. Nowadays things have come to such a pass that every individual considers all society offended in his person. Only lately, I have heard it told, a complaint has been received from a district chief of police—I don't remember of what town—in which he sets forth clearly that the Imperial institutions are on the wane, and that the Czar's sacred name is being uttered in vain; and in proof of his assertion he appended to the petition a voluminous romance, in which a district chief of police is made to appear at least once every ten pages, often in a hopelessly drunken condition. Therefore, to avoid all unpleasantness, it is better to designate the department in question as a *certain department*.

---

So, in a *certain department* there served a *certain official*—in no way a remarkable official, at least in appearance; short of stature, somewhat pockmarked, somewhat red-haired, somewhat even dull-sighted, with a bald

forehead, wrinkled cheeks, and a complexion that is known as hemorrhoidal. Poor man—the St. Petersburg climate was to blame! As for his official rank—with us a man's rank comes before all!—he was what is called a perpetual titular councillor, a type which, as is well-known, has evoked the jests of many writers, following the praiseworthy custom of belaboring those who cannot bite back.

The official's name was Bashmachkin. As is quite evident, it was derived from *bashmak* [shoe]; but when, at what period, and in what manner, nothing is known. It is certain that his father and grandfather, and even brother-in-law—in fact, all the Bashmachkins—wore shoes, which were reheelled three times a year.

His name was Akaki Akakievich. Perhaps it may seem to the reader as somewhat odd and far-fetched; but he may rest assured that it was by no means far-fetched, and that, owing to the circumstances which led to it, any other name would have been impossible. This is how it happened.

Akaki Akakievich, if my memory serves me right, was born in the evening of the 23rd of March. His mother, the wife of an official, and a very good woman, made all the proper preparations for baptizing the child. She lay on her bed opposite the door, and at her right hand stood the godfather, a most excellent man, Ivan Ivanovich Eroshkin by name, who served as the chief clerk of the Senate; and the godmother, Arina Semenovna Bielobrushkova, the wife of an officer, and a woman of rare virtues. They offered the mother her choice of three names: Mokiya, Sossiya, and that of the martyr Khozdazat.

“No,” said the mother. “What a lot of names!”

So as to please her, they turned to another page in the calendar, and hit upon the names of Traphili, Dula, and Varakhasi.

“That sounds like a judgment!” muttered the sick woman. “What names! I truly never heard the like. Varadat and Varukh would have been bad enough, but Traphili and Varakhasi!”

They turned to another page. The result was: Povsikakhi and Vakhtisi.

“Enough,” said the mother. “I now see that it is fate. And since it is so, I think he had better be called after his father. Akaki was his father's name,

let the son too be Akaki.”

In such manner he became Akaki Akakievich.

The child was christened, at which he wept and made a bad grimace, as if he foresaw that he was to be a titular councillor. That is how it all came about. We have mentioned it so the reader might judge for himself that it was entirely due to circumstance, and that to have given him any other name would have been impossible.

When and how he entered the department, and who appointed him, no one could remember.

However much the directors and chiefs were changed, he was always to be seen in the one and same spot, the same attitude, the same occupation, always the letter-copying official, so that afterwards the conviction grew that he came into the world as he was, in uniform and with his bald spot. No one showed him the slightest respect in the department. The porters not only did not rise from their seats when he passed, but did not even glance at him; he might have been a common fly that flew through the reception room. His chiefs treated him with a sort of cold despotism. Some insignificant assistant to the head clerk would thrust a paper under his very nose, without saying so much as “Copy,”

or “Here is an interesting little case,” or, in fact, anything pleasant, as is usual among well-bred officials. And he would accept the paper, without looking to see who gave it to him, and whether he had a right to do so; he would take it and immediately start to copy it.

The young officials made merry at his expense so far as their official wit would permit. In his presence they invented stories about his life.

Of his seventy-year-old landlady they said that she beat him; they asked him when their wedding would be, and, strewing small pieces of paper over his head, called it snow. Not a single word would Akaki Akakievich answer to this, as though no one were near him. It did not even affect his tasks; in the midst of all these taunts he made not a single error in copying. Once, however, when the jesting became unbearable, because they pushed his elbow while he was at his work, he exclaimed:

“Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?”

And there was something strange in these words and the voice in which they were uttered.

There was something in it which stirred one's pity; so that, in fact, a young man, only recently appointed, who, following the example of others, permitted himself to make fun of him, suddenly stopped short, like one stunned, and from that time everything seemed to him to undergo as it were a transformation and to assume a new aspect. Some invisible power repelled him from his companions, with whom he had become acquainted on the assumption that they were well-bred, estimable men. And for a long time afterward, even in his merriest moments, there appeared before his eye the little official with the bald forehead, and his penetrating words: "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?"

And in these touching words other words resounded: "I am thy brother!" At this thought the young man would cover his face with his hands, and many a time later in the course of his life he shuddered at seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage

uncouthness hidden under the delicate and cultivated worldliness, and, oh, God! even in the man whom the world acknowledges as honorable and honest.

It would be no easy matter to find another man who attended so faithfully to his duties.

It is not enough to say that he labored with zeal; no, he labored with love. This copying presented to him a sufficiently varied and agreeable existence. Enjoyment showed on his face; he had his favorites among the letters, and when they came his way he was not himself; he would smile, wink, and work his lips, so that by looking at his face it seemed that you could read every letter which his pen put down. Were he rewarded according to the measure of his ardor, he would, to his own astonishment, have been made even a councillor of state. But his companions had their little joke about his work.

It would be untrue to say that *no* attention was paid him. One kindly director, wishing to reward him for his long service, ordered him to be given something more dignified to do than mere copying; namely, he was requested to draw up some sort of report to another office of an already

concluded affair; all that he was required to do was to change the heading, and to alter certain words from the first to the third person. This entailed him such labor that he began to perspire, to wipe his forehead, saying finally, "No, better give me copying." From that time on he was let alone in his copying. Aside from this copying, nothing seemed to exist for him.

He gave no thought to his dress. His uniform was not green, but rather a reddish-mealy color.

Its collar was narrow and low, so that his neck, though not really long, seemed inordinately long as it projected from the collar, quite like the necks of the plaster cats with wagging heads that one sees carried upon the heads of foreign peddlers. And something always clung to his uniform; it was a bit of straw, or perhaps a thread. Besides, he had the unfortunate tendency, while walking in the street, to go past a window precisely at the moment when they threw out of it all kinds of rubbish; hence he always carried about on his hat pieces of melon-rind and articles of a similar nature. Not once in his life did he direct his attention upon what was happening daily in the street—quite unlike his colleague, the young official, whose glance was sufficiently far-reaching and keen to observe when any one's trouser-straps became undone on the opposite sidewalk, which always called forth upon his face a smile of gratification. But Akaki Akakievich, when he happened to look at all, saw in everything only the clear, even strokes of his written lines, and only when, from goodness knows where, a horse's head suddenly popped over his shoulder and sent a whole gust of wind from its nostrils into his face, did he begin to notice that he was not in the middle of a line, but in the middle of the street.

On arriving home, he would sit down immediately at the table, gulp down quickly his cabbage-soup, eat a piece of meat with onion without noticing their taste, consuming everything—together with flies or anything else which

the Lord happened to send at the moment.

Becoming conscious of the swelling of his stomach, he would rise from the table, take down a bottle of ink, and begin to copy papers which he had brought home. If such were wanting, he had the habit of making a special copy for his personal gratification, particularly if the paper happened to be

remarkable, not indeed so much on account of the beauty of its style, but of its being addressed to some new or important person.

Even in those hours when the gray sky of St.

Petersburg became altogether extinct, and the entire official multitude had already dined to satiety, each as he could, according to his means and whim; when all had rested after the departmental grating of pens, running about for one's own affairs and those urgent ones of strangers—indeed, all the work which tireless man had willingly created for himself, even far beyond any actual need; when officials hasten to devote the rest of the evening to pleasure—the more alert going to the theatre; those on the street employing their time looking at the bonnets; one spending his evening in paying compliments to some pretty girl, the star of a small official circle; another—and this being the more frequent rule—visiting a colleague on the fourth or third floor, in two small rooms, with an antechamber or kitchen, and some fashionable pretensions such as a lamp or another article costing many sacrifices, perhaps a dinner or an outing; in a word, at the very hour that all the officials scatter among the confined quarters of their friends to play whist, at the same time sipping their tea out of glasses with cheap sugar, smoking long pipes, relating now and then titbits of gossip emanating from superior society, which the Russian can never, under any circumstances, deny himself, even when there is nothing to talk about, repeating the eternal anecdote concerning the commandant to whom word had been sent that the tails of the horses on the Falconet monument had been cut off; in short, just at the hour when all seek to divert themselves, Akaki Akakievich indulged in no kind of diversion.

No one could say that he had ever been seen at any kind of evening party. Having written to his heart's desire, he would go to bed, smiling anticipately at the thought of the morrow: what will the Lord send him for the next day's copying?

So flowed on the peaceful life of this man, who on a salary of four hundred rubles a year was yet content with his lot; and perhaps it would have continued to flow on to a good old age, were it not for the fact that the path of human life is strewn with all sorts of ills, not alone for titular councillors, but also for private, actual, court, and various other councillors, even for those who render counsel unto no one, and take none themselves.

St. Petersburg contains a powerful enemy to all those receiving four hundred rubles a year salary or thereabouts. This foe is none other than our northern cold, though otherwise it is said to be very healthy. At nine o'clock in the morning, precisely at the hour when the streets are filled with officials on their way to their departments, the cold begins to give them all, without discrimination, such powerful and biting nips upon their noses that the poor officials are at a loss where to hide them. At such a time, when even those occupying superior positions suffer the pain of cold in their foreheads, and tears start to their eyes, the poor titular councillors are sometimes unprotected. Their only salvation lies in their ability to scamper quickly over five or six streets in their scant cloaks, and then warm their feet in the porter's room; incidentally thawing out in the process all their faculties and abilities for official service which had become frozen on the way.

Akaki Akakievich had for some time felt the cold piercing his back and shoulders with unwonted vigor, notwithstanding the fact that he tried to cover the distance from his house to the department as quickly as possible. He finally thought to see whether the fault did not lie in his cloak. Examining the garment very carefully at home, he made a discovery: that in two or three places—to be precise, in the back and shoulders—it had become like a thin canvas; the cloth, in fact, was threadbare to the point of transparency, while the lining too had gone to pieces.

It should be mentioned that the cloak of Akaki Akakievich served as an object of ridicule to the officials; they even had deprived it of the dignified name of cloak and called it a cape. To confess the truth, it was of a rather curious construction; year by year its collar diminished

more and more, because it served to patch other parts. The patching itself did not exhibit much sartorial art; and was, in fact, ill done and ugly.

Seeing where the trouble lay, Akaki Akakievich decided to take the cloak to Petrovich, a tailor who lived somewhere on the fourth floor, up a dark staircase, and who, notwithstanding his one eye and pockmarked face, busied himself, with fair success, mending trousers and frocks of officials and others; that is to say, when he was in sober condition and was not up to something or other.

It is really not necessary to speak much concerning this tailor, but as it is customary that in a story the character of each person be clearly defined, there is no help for it; so let us have Petrovich too. Once he was known simply as Grigori and was a gentleman's serf; he began to call himself Petrovich when he received his release, and started to drink in no small measure on all holidays, at first only on the great ones, and afterwards indiscriminately upon all church celebrations which were marked by a cross in the calendar. Again, he was faithful to traditional custom, and in quarrelling with his wife called her a street woman and a German. As we have mentioned the wife, it becomes necessary for us to say a word or two about her also; unfortunately, little is known about her, except

that she was Petrovich's wife, that she wore a cap instead of a shawl, and could not boast of good looks; at least, only the soldiers of the guard ever looked under her cap upon meeting her, giving vent to their feelings by fingering their mustaches and mumbling something in a peculiar voice.

Ascending the staircase leading to Petrovich, a staircase wet with dishwater and reeking of that smell of spirits which affects the eyes, and which is, as is well-known, a never-absent characteristic of all dark stairways of St. Petersburg houses—ascending the staircase, Akaki Akakievich was thinking of what Petrovich would demand for the job, and he mentally decided not to give him more than two rubles. The door was open, because the housewife was frying some sort of fish, and had so filled the room with smoke that you could not see so much as the roaches. Akaki Akakievich passed through the kitchen, unobserved even by the housewife, and finally entered the room where he saw Petrovich sitting on a large, unpainted wooden table, his legs tucked in under him like a Turkish pasha.

His feet, after the manner of tailors sitting at their work, were bare, and first of all that caught one's eye was the big toe, very familiar to Akaki Akakievich, with its mutilated nail as thick and as powerful as a turtle's shell. On his neck hung a skein of silk and thread, and upon his knees lay a garment. He had already spent some three minutes in trying to thread his needle, and was therefore very wroth at the darkness and even at the thread, and growled under his breath: "It won't crawl through, the barbarian! You've pricked me, confounded rascal, you!"

Akaki Akakievich felt unhappy because he had come precisely at the moment when Petrovich was angry; he preferred to deal with Petrovich when that individual was somewhat discouraged, or, as his wife expressed it, when “he had sunk down with brandy, the one-eyed demon!” In such a condition Petrovich, as a rule, readily came down in price, and thanked you profusely into the bargain. Afterwards, it is true, his wife would visit the customer, saying, with weeping eyes, that her husband had been drunk, and had charged too cheaply. Well, you would add a ten-copeck piece, and have the best of it at that. On the present occasion, however, Petrovich to all appearances was sober, and therefore gruff, uncommunicative, and in a condition to demand

the devil only knows what a price! Akaki Akakievich felt this, and would gladly have beat a retreat, but it was too late. Petrovich had already fixed his one eye intently upon him, and Akaki Akakievich greeted him rather unwillingly: “How are you, Petrovich?”

“And how are you, sir?” returned Petrovich, and slanted his gaze towards the hands of Akaki Akakievich, in order to see what sort of booty he had brought.

“Ah—here I am to you, Petrovich, this——”

It should be noted that Akaki Akakievich expressed himself chiefly by means of prepositions, adverbs, and particles of speech which have no meaning whatsoever. And if the matter was very difficult, he was in the habit of not completing his phrases, so that very often when his sentence began with the words, “This, in fact, is quite——” nothing would come of it, and he himself would forget to continue, thinking he had said what he had to say.

“Well, what is it?” asked Petrovich, and at the same time surveyed with his one eye the entire uniform from the collar to the cuffs, the back, the coat-flaps, and the button-holes; they were all familiar to him, for they were his own work. Such is the tailor’s habit; it is the first thing he does upon meeting one.

“Well, I here—this, Petrovich—about the cloak—the cloth, you see, everywhere in other places, is quite strong—it is a trifle dusty, and looks old, but it is new, only here in one place, just a little on the back, and a trifle

too on the shoulder—bit worn through, and on this shoulder a bit—do you see?—and that’s all. Not much to do——”

Petrovich took the cape, spread it on the table, examined it for a long time, shook his head, and reached out his hand towards the window-sill for his round snuff-box, on the lid of which was the portrait of some general or other, whose identity was lost, however, because a finger had been thrust straight through the face and the hole glued over with a square bit of paper. Having taken a pinch of snuff, Petrovich held up and examined the cape against the light, and again shook his head; then turned it, lining upwards, and once more shook his head. Again he removed the lid of his snuff-box, and, having applied some of its contents to his nose, he pocketed the case, and finally said:

“No, it is impossible to mend it. It’s a miserable garment!”

Akaki Akakievich’s heart sank at these words.

“And why impossible, Petrovich?” he asked in a voice almost that of an imploring child.

“There’s nothing—only a bit worn-out at the shoulders. You surely have some pieces——”

“It’s easy enough to find pieces,” answered Petrovich, “but how is one to sew them on? The cloth is all rotten. Put a needle to it—and it goes apart.”

“Let it; you can put another patch there.”

“There’s nothing to lay the patches on; there’s no way of strengthening it—it is beyond all help.

You may thank the stars that it’s cloth; or else a wind would come along and blow it away.”

“Well, yes, better strengthen it. How is it, in fact, this——”

“No,” said Petrovich decisively, “nothing can be done. It’s a thoroughly bad job. You’d better make gaiters out of it for cold winter days, because stockings are not sufficiently warm. The Germans invented them, in order to make more money.” (Petrovich took advantage of every opportunity to make thrusts at the Germans.) “As for the cloak, it’s quite evident you want a new one.”

At the word *new* all grew dark before the eyes of Akaki Akakievich, and everything in the room began to go round. Only one object he saw clearly: the general with the mutilated face on the lid of Petrovich's snuff-box.

"How a new one?" he asked, as if he were in a dream. "Why, I have no money for it."

"Yes, a new one," repeated Petrovich, with a savage calm.

"Well, and if I order a new one, how will it——?"

"That is, you want to know how much it would cost?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'd have to put down a hundred and fifty," said Petrovich, and compressed his lips significantly. He liked powerful effects, he liked to stun suddenly and completely, and then to look askance in order to see what kind of face the victim might make after such words.

"A hundred and fifty rubles for a cloak!"

shrieked the poor Akaki Akakievich, perhaps for the first time since his birth, for he had always been distinguished for the subdued quality of his voice.

"Yes-s," said Petrovich; "and that's for a cheap one. If you wish a bit of marten fur on the collar, and to line the hood with silk, it will mount up to two hundred."

"Petrovich, please!" said Akaki Akakievich in a pleading voice, not hearing, and not trying to hear, the words of Petrovich and all his effects.

"Mend it somehow, so it will last just a little while longer."

"No, it's of no use—it will only be a waste of time and money," answered Petrovich.

After these words Akaki Akakievich left the place completely crushed. As for Petrovich, he remained standing for a long time, compressing his lips significantly; nor did he resume his work, but thought with gratification of how he upheld his own dignity and at the same time did not prove a traitor to sartorial art.

Akaki Akakievich went into the street feeling as in a dream. “Well, what an affair!” he said to himself. “Well, really, I never thought it would come to that!” After a brief silence he added: “So that’s how it is! So at last it has come to that! And I, really, never even imagined that the matter stood like that!” Another silence followed, after which he muttered: “So that’s how it is! Well, really, somehow unexpected—it’s impossible—a kind of predicament!”

Having said this, instead of going home, he went in the exactly opposite direction, altogether unconscious of the fact.

On the way he collided with a chimney sweep, who blackened his shoulder; a whole hatful of lime fell upon him from the top of an unfinished house. He did not notice the things that happened to him, and only when he ran against a watchman, who, having placed his halberd beside him, was shaking snuff out of a case upon his horny hand, did he become slightly conscious of where he was, and that only because the watchman said: “Why do you push yourself into a man’s very face? What’s a sidewalk for?”

This caused him to look around and to turn homeward.

It was only at home that he began to collect his thoughts, and to view the situation in its true and clear aspect. He began to argue with himself no longer in an incoherent manner, but reasonably and frankly, as with a sensible companion, with whom one might discuss any intimate and personal matter.

“Well, no,” said Akaki Akakievich. “Just now Petrovich is not in the right mood to talk with; he now that—his wife, it seems, must have given him a beating. I had better go to him on Sunday morning; after Saturday night he will be cross-eyed and sleepy; he will want to get drunk, and his wife won’t give him the money, and at such a time a ten-copeck piece in his hand—and he will be more sociable, and the cloak then and there——”

So argued Akaki Akakievich with himself.

He now felt more cheerful, and waited until the first Sunday, when, seeing from afar Petrovich’s wife leave the house, he made haste to carry out his plan. Petrovich was, in fact, squint-eyed after Saturday; his head drooped, and he was quite sleepy; notwithstanding all this, the moment he knew what

the business was about he at once grew alert, as if the very Satan prompted him.

“Impossible,” he said. “You must order a new one.”

At this, Akaki Akakievich slipped a ten-copeck piece into his hand.

“Thank you, sir; I will drink a bit to your health,” said Petrovich. “As for the cloak, you need not worry about it; it is nothing but a rag.

I will make you a handsome new cloak; let us settle that.”

Akaki Akakievich still insisted on his mending it, but Petrovich would not listen, and said: “There’s no way out of it; I shall have to make you a new one; and you may depend upon it, I will do my best. It is even possible that I shall make it according to the new fashion: the collar will fasten with silver hooks underneath.”

When Akaki Akakievich began to comprehend that a new cloak was an absolute necessity, his spirits sank utterly. How indeed was it to be done? Where was the money to come from? He could of course depend for a great part of it upon his customary holiday gift. But there was a new pair of trousers to order; there was the old debt to pay the cobbler for putting on new tops to old boots; he also needed three shirts and at least two undergarments which it is impolite to mention in print; in a word, there would not be a copeck left, and even if the director should prove so generous as to allot as his share forty-five or fifty rubles instead of forty, there would be the merest trifle left, which, considered in connection with the cloak money, would seem as a drop in the sea; though of course he knew that Petrovich would sometimes get a sudden notion to charge the devil knows what an exorbitant price, so that even his wife could not restrain herself from exclaiming: “Are you out of your wits, you fool! At one time he will take almost nothing for his work, but at another time he is mad enough to ask more than the thing is worth!” Although Akaki Akakievich knew quite well that Petrovich would undertake to make the cloak for eighty rubles, where were even the eighty rubles to come from? He could manage to provide half of it, perhaps even a trifle more; but where was he to find the other half?

First of all, the reader should be informed where the first half was to come from. Akaki Akakievich had the habit of putting away, for every ruble he

spent, a two-copeck piece into a small box, kept under lock, and with a small hole in the top for the dropping in of the money. At the expiration of every six months he would exchange the collected coppers for silver. He had been doing this for a long time, and in the course of several years had managed in this manner to save more than forty rubles.

With the first half in hand, the question now was: how to procure the other half? After much deliberation, Akaki Akakievich decided that it would be necessary to curtail the ordinary expenses for at least a period of one year, to deprive himself of his evening tea, to light no candles; and if there was anything that had to be done, to do it in the landlady's room by her candle. He also could, when in the street, step more lightly and cautiously upon the stones, almost on tiptoe, and save thereby his heels from wearing out too quickly. He could give his laundress as little wash as possible; and, in order not to wear his clothes out, could throw them off upon arriving home and remain solely in his cotton dressing-gown, an ancient garment spared mercifully by time.

To tell the truth, these deprivations came hard in the beginning, but gradually he became used to them; he even learned to go hungry in the evening; but in compensation he nourished himself spiritually, eternally bearing in his thoughts the idea of the new cloak. From this time on, it seemed as if his existence had become fuller, as if he had married, as if some other person was living with him, as if he were not alone, but some pleasant companion had consented to share his lot in life with him—and this companion was none other than the cloak, thickly wadded and so strongly lined as never to wear out. He became as it were livelier, even more characterful, as befits a man who has a clear and a firm aim in life. Doubt and indecision seemed to have vanished from his face and manner, and indeed all his wavering and more undefined characteristics became less noticeable.

At times even a sparkle showed in his eyes, and his mind indulged in the most daring thoughts.

Why not, for instance, marten on the collar?

Such a thought made him absent-minded; and upon one occasion, in copying a paper, he almost made an error, which caused him to cry almost aloud, "Oh!" and to make a sign of the cross.

At least once a month he visited Petrovich, to talk over the cloak with him—where best to buy the cloth, the question of its color, and its price—and, though somewhat agitated, he always returned feeling happier in the thought that the time was at last approaching when everything would be bought and the cloak made.

The matter went even faster than he anticipated.

Surpassing all his hopes, the director allotted him not forty or forty-five rubles, but sixty! Perhaps he felt that Akaki Akakievich needed a cloak, or else it was an accident, but the fact was, Akaki Akakievich found himself with twenty unexpected rubles. This circumstance hastened matters. Another two or three months of hunger, and Akaki Akakievich found himself with eighty rubles. His heart, usually tranquil, began to throb.

On the first free day he went shopping with Petrovich. They purchased a very good cloth, and at a reasonable price, because they had considered the matter for a full six months before, and hardly a month passed but that they visited the shops to inquire prices; besides, Petrovich himself said that better cloth couldn't be found.

For lining, they selected a cotton cloth, but so strong and thick that, to use the words of Petrovich, it was better than silk, and in appearance even showy and shiny. Marten fur proved too expensive, and so in its place they purchased the very best obtainable cat-skin, which in the distance could be mistaken for marten. Petrovich worked on the cloak two weeks; there was much quilting, otherwise it would have been finished sooner. For his labor Petrovich charged twelve rubles—he couldn't possibly take less; it was all done with silk, in small double stitches, which afterwards Petrovich went over with his own teeth, creating various patterns in the process.

It was—it is difficult to say precisely on what day; but probably the most triumphant day in Akaki Akakievich's life was when Petrovich at last brought the cloak. He brought it in the morning, just before the time necessary to start for the department. It could not have arrived at a more opportune moment, because a severe cold had set in, and it seemed to threaten to become even colder. Petrovich himself brought the cloak, as befits a good tailor. His face expressed such an extraordinary significance as Akaki Akakievich never had beheld there before.

It was evident that he felt he had done no small thing, and that he had suddenly revealed in himself the abyss which separates these tailors who sew on mere linings and do mending, from those who make an entire new garment. He drew out the cloak from a handkerchief in which he brought it. The handkerchief had just come from the laundress; so, folding it, he put it in his pocket for use. Holding up the cloak proudly in both hands, he very deftly threw it on Akaki Akakievich's shoulders, after which he pulled it down with his hand from behind, and let it hang unbuttoned. Akaki Akakievich, like a man wise in years, wished to try the sleeves. Petrovich helped him into them. The sleeves too fitted well.

In short, the cloak was all that was wanted of it.

Petrovich did not let the opportunity pass to remark that only because he conducted his establishment without a signboard and in a small street, and had known Akaki Akakievich for so long, had he charged him so cheaply, and that on Nevski Prospect they would have charged him seventy-five rubles for the work alone. Akaki Akakievich did not wish to argue the matter with Petrovich, and feared all large amounts, of which the tailor loved to speak soundingly. Akaki Akakievich paid and thanked Petrovich, and set forth in his new cloak to the department.

Petrovich followed him, and for a long time his gaze lingered on the cloak from a distance; then, making a short cut through a side street, he reappeared to view the cloak from another point—namely, directly in front.

As for Akaki Akakievich, he walked on, experiencing exultation in every part of his body.

At every step he felt conscious of the new cloak upon his shoulders, and several times he even smiled from internal gratification. Indeed, the cloak had two advantages: it was warm and it was handsome. He did not notice the road at all, and suddenly found himself in the department.

He threw off the cloak in the porter's room, and, after surveying it, he confided it to the special care of the attendant. It is impossible to tell how every one in the department suddenly knew that Akaki Akakievich had a new cloak, and that the cape no longer existed. All at once ran into the porter's room to inspect the garment. They began to congratulate him, so that at the beginning he smiled and afterwards even felt ashamed. When,

however, every one surrounding him said that the new cloak should be christened, and that at least he should give them all a party some evening, Akaki Akakievich lost his head completely, and did not know what to do, what to say, and how to get out of it. For several minutes, blushing, he tried to assure them, in a sufficiently naïve manner, that the cloak was not at all a new one, that it was, in fact, an old cloak. In the end, one of the officials, who served as assistant to the head clerk, evidently wishing to show that he was not at all proud and did not condescend towards his inferiors, said: "So be it. I, instead of Akaki Akakievich, will give the party, and I invite you all to my house tonight. As it happens, it is my birthday."

Naturally, the officials then congratulated the head clerk's assistant, and accepted the invitation eagerly. Akaki Akakievich at first wished to decline, but every one started to impress upon him how discourteous it was, and that it was a shame and a disgrace, so that he could not refuse.

Besides, he afterwards began to feel pleasure in the thought that he would have an opportunity to spend an evening in his new cloak.

That entire day was like a triumphant holiday for Akaki Akakievich. He returned home in the happiest possible frame of mind, threw off his cloak, and hung it carefully on the wall, his eye revelling once more in the cloth and the lining; he afterwards held up beside it for comparison the old cape, now all fallen to pieces. He laughed, so great was the difference. And even a long time after dinner he smiled each time the condition of his old cape occurred to him. He dined cheerfully, and did not copy any papers afterwards, but rested upon his bed until it grew dark. Afterwards, wasting no time, he dressed himself, placed the cloak across his shoulders, and went into the street.

Just where the inviting official lived, we unfortunately cannot say; our memory is beginning to fail us, and the St. Petersburg streets and houses have so badly massed and mixed themselves in our head that it is most difficult to establish any kind of order out of all the chaos.

However that may be, at least it is certain that the official lived in the better part of the city, from which may be guessed that it was anywhere but near Akaki Akakievich's neighborhood.

At first he had to pass through several dimly lighted, deserted streets, but in proportion as he approached the official's residence the streets grew more lively, more populous, and more brightly illuminated; pedestrians grew in greater numbers; women too, handsomely dressed, began to appear; some of the men even wore beaver collars; peasants with their wooden fence-rail sledges, hammered over with yellow-headed nails, were more rarely met with; on the other hand, drivers with red velvet caps, in lacquered sledges, with bearskin coverings, were becoming more frequent; and beautifully ornamented carriages flew swiftly through the street.

Akaki Akakievich gazed upon all this as upon a novelty; it was now several years since he had passed an evening in the streets. He paused with curiosity before a lighted shop-window, to look at a picture in which was represented a handsome woman taking off her shoe and baring her entire foot very prettily, while behind her a man with whiskers and a handsome mustache peeped through the door of another room. Akaki Akakievich shook his head and laughed, and then continued his journey. Why did he laugh?

Was it because he had met a thing altogether unfamiliar to him, but for which, however, every one cherishes some sort of feeling, or was it because he thought about it as many other officials would? "Ah, those French! What is there to say? When they want to do anything like that, they do it rather well!" And it is possible that he did not think such a thing at all. After all, it is impossible to steal into a man's soul and to discover all that he thinks.

At last he reached the house in which lived the head clerk's assistant. This man resided in grand style; the staircase was lighted by a lamp; his quarters were on the second floor. Entering the vestibule, Akaki Akakievich observed several rows of galoshes on the floor. Among them, in the middle of the room, stood the samovar; it was humming and emitting clouds of steam. The walls were covered with cloaks and mantles, among which were even a few with beaver collars or with velvet lapels. Behind the wall were audible the noise and conversation, which suddenly grew clear and loud when the door opened and the servant came out with a trayful of empty glasses, a cream-jug, and a sugar-bowl. It was evident that the officials had arrived some time ago and had had their first glass of tea.

Akaki Akakievich, having hung up his cloak himself, entered the room, and his astonished gaze took in at once the lights, the officials, the pipes, and the card-tables, and he was confused by the sound of conversation rising from all sides and the noise of moving chairs. He paused very awkwardly in the middle of the room, pondering what he should do. But he had already been noticed, and he was received with shouts; every one running towards the vestibule to survey his cloak anew. Although Akaki Akakievich was somewhat astonished, still, being a simple-hearted man, he could not help but feel flattered, seeing how well his cloak was liked. Afterwards, it goes without saying, they forgot him and his cloak, and returned quite properly to the tables appointed for whist. All this—the noise, the conversation, and the size of the gathering—all this was strange to Akaki Akakievich. He simply did not know what to do with himself, where to put his hands, his feet, and his entire body; finally he seated himself near the players, looked at the cards, or into the face of now one, now another, and after a time began to grow drowsy, and to feel a certain feeling of weariness, all the more because his accustomed hour for going to bed had long passed.

He wished to bid his host good-night, but he was not permitted to depart; they insisted that he drink a glass of champagne in honor of his new garment. In another hour supper was served; it consisted of a relish, cold veal, pastry, sweets, and champagne. Akaki Akakievich was made to drink two glasses of champagne, after which the room assumed to him a livelier aspect; nevertheless, he could not forget that it was twelve o'clock, and that he should have been home long ago. In order that the host might not detain him, he stole silently out of the room, sought out in the anteroom his cloak, which, to his sorrow, he found lying on the floor. He brushed it, removed every speck of dust from it, put it on his shoulders, and descended the stairs into the street.

The street was as yet all alight. Some of the petty shops, those permanent clubs of servants and all sorts of people, were open; others, however, which were closed, showed a long streak of light through the entire length of the door-crack, suggesting that they did not lack company, probably servants of both sexes, who were concluding their gossip and conversation, and keeping their masters in complete ignorance of their whereabouts. Akaki Akakievich walked on in a happy frame of mind, started even to run, for an unknown reason, after a woman who flashed by him like lightning. After

this, however, he paused and resumed his former leisurely pace, wondering at his own sudden spurt. Very soon there stretched before him the deserted streets, not particularly cheerful even by day, and much less so by night. Now they seemed even more than usually dark and lonely; the lights were growing further apart; then came wooden houses and fences; not a soul anywhere; only the snow sparkled in the streets; and the slumbering, low-roofed cabins with closed shutters looked melancholy against the snow. He was approaching the spot where the street cut through a vast square, with houses on the other side barely visible across the desert space.

In the distance, God knows how far, a tiny flame glimmered in a watchman's box, which seemed to verge on the edge of the world. Akaki Akakievich's cheerfulness diminished here perceptibly.

He entered the square not without a certain involuntary fear; not without some foreboding of evil. He glanced behind him and on both sides—a sea appeared to surround him.

“No, it is better not to look,” he thought, and walked on with closed eyes; and when he opened them to see whether or not he had reached the end of the square, he suddenly beheld before him, almost under his very nose, some bearded individuals, precisely what sort he could not distinguish. Everything grew dark before his eyes, and his heart began to throb.

“But, I say, the cloak is mine,” said one of the men in a loud voice, seizing him by the collar.

Akaki Akakievich wished to cry out, “Help!”

when the other man put his fist, the size of an official's head, to his very mouth, and said, “Just try to make a noise!”

Akaki Akakievich only felt conscious of how they removed the cloak from his shoulders, then gave him a parting kick, which sent him headlong into the snow; after that he felt no more.

In a few minutes he recovered consciousness and rose to his feet, but no one was to be seen.

He felt cold, and the absence of his cloak; he began to shout, but his voice did not seem to reach the bounds of the square. Desperate, not ceasing to shout, he started to run across the square straight towards the watchman's

box, beside which stood the watchman, leaning upon his halberd, and looking, as it were, with eager expectancy for an explanation as to this strange fellow's running and shouting. Akaki Akakievich, having reached him, began to shout in a gasping voice that he was asleep and did not attend to his business, and let people rob a man. The watchman replied that he saw nothing except two men stop and talk to him in the middle of the square, and that he thought they were his friends; he also suggested that rather than waste time on talk he should report the matter to the police captain, and that he would find the man who had taken the cloak.

Akaki Akakievich arrived home in complete disorder. His hair, which thrived in no large numbers upon his temples and the back of his head, was in a dishevelled state; while his entire body was covered with snow. His old landlady, on hearing a loud knocking on the door, sprang quickly out of bed, and with only one shoe on ran to open the door, holding her nightgown, out of modesty, to her breast. Having opened the door, she drew back upon seeing the condition of her lodger. When he explained what had happened she wrung her hands and advised him to inform the district chief of police at once; that a lesser official would only promise without doing anything; besides, she had some acquaintance with the chief, because Anna, her former cook, had just become a nurse at his house. She saw him very often pass her house, and, moreover, she knew that he went to church every Sunday, and that as he prayed he looked cheerily at the same time upon all, and therefore was, to all appearances, a good man. Having listened to this suggestion, Akaki Akakievich very sadly betook himself to his room, and how he spent the night there may be imagined by those who have the faculty of putting themselves in the place of others.

Early next morning he visited the district chief and was told that he was asleep; he went again at ten, with the same result; at eleven they told him the chief was not at home; when he went at dinner-time, the clerks in the anteroom would not admit him, but demanded to know the business that brought him; so that finally Akaki Akakievich for once in his life showed a spark of courage and said firmly that he must see the district chief personally, that they dared not refuse him, as he came from the department upon official business, and that if they persisted he would present a complaint against them, which would make them sorry.

The clerks dared not reply to this, and one of them went in to call the chief.

Instead of directing his attention to the important point of the case, he began to cross-examine Akaki Akakievich. Why was he returning home so late? Did he stop on the way in any disorderly house? In the end Akaki Akakievich was so completely confused that he went out not knowing whether anything would be done about the cloak or not.

The entire day he did not appear in the department—the first time in his life. The next

day he arrived at his place looking very pale and in his old cape, which had grown even sadder-looking.

The news of the robbery of the cloak—notwithstanding the fact that some of the

officials did not permit even this opportunity to pass without laughing at Akaki Akakievich—nevertheless touched many. They decided to

take up a collection for him, but succeeded in obtaining a mere trifle; as the officials had already spent considerable money in subscribing for the director's portrait, and for a book, at the suggestion of the chief of the bureau, who was a friend of the author; hence the insignificance of the sum.

Some one, out of pity, wished at least to help Akaki Akakievich with good advice; and so he told him not to go to the captain, for though the captain might really wish to earn the approbation of the chiefs and find the cloak in some way or other, the cloak itself would nevertheless remain with the police, unless he could show legal proof that it was his; he ought therefore to apply to a certain *important personage*; and this *important personage*, by dealing with the proper persons, could hasten and expedite matters. There was nothing else to do but to turn to the *important personage*.

What was the precise function of the *important personage* remains unknown to this day. One point should be made clear: that this particular *important personage* only recently had become an important personage, and that until quite lately he had been an unimportant personage. And aside from that, his position was not even now considered important when compared with that of other more important personages. There will always be, however, a circle of people to whom what is unimportant to other people is sufficiently important. Then, again, he bent all his efforts to increase his importance through numerous other means, as, for instance, he instituted

the custom of having his inferiors lined up on the stairway to greet his arrival at the department; he also insisted that no one should venture to appear before him directly, but that everything should follow in most unrelenting order: the collegiate registrar should report to the government secretary, the government secretary to the titular councillor, or to whoever was the proper official, and that in this manner the business should finally come to him.

This habit of imitation has infected all of Holy Russia: every one imitates and mimics his superiors. It is even said that a certain titular councillor, when promoted to the head of some small separate office, immediately partitioned off a private room, calling it the “audience chamber;” he placed at the door two attendants in red collars and braid, whose sole duty consisted in taking the door by the handle and opening it to every comer, although the “audience chamber”

had barely room enough to contain an ordinary writing-table.

The ways and manners of the *important personage* were impressive and imposing, but somewhat overdone. The main principle of his system was strictness. “Strictness, strictness—and strictness,” he used to say generally: and always when pronouncing the last word looked significantly at the person whom he was addressing; although this was altogether unnecessary, because the ten officials, constituting the entire mechanism of his office, were afraid of him; and, seeing him even from afar, they would stop all work and assume a respectful attitude until their chief had passed through the room. His usual conversation with his inferiors consisted almost entirely of three phrases: “How dare you? Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you realize who stands before you?” Otherwise, he was a good-natured man and solicitous towards his comrades; but the rank of general unhinged his mind completely. Upon receiving this rank, he lost his head, and did not know what to do with himself. When he happened to be in the company of his equals he still managed to do the proper thing, to be a gentleman, and in many respects quite a clever fellow; but once in the company of folk even a single rank below him, he simply became helpless; he was silent, and his condition aroused sympathy, the more so as he himself felt that he could have passed the time incomparably happier. At times the desire to join in some conversation or circle was strongly evident in his eyes; but the following thought always arrested him: would it not be regarded as a

familiarity, and would it not detract from his importance? In consequence of such reasoning, he remained in the same eternal mood of silence, uttering only rarely some monosyllabic sounds; and thereby earning the name of a most wearisome person.

Before an *important personage* of this type appeared our Akaki Akakievich, and at a most inopportune moment—that is to say, for himself, but opportune for the *important personage*.

The *important personage* was in his cabinet, conversing very cheerfully with an old acquaintance and friend of his youth, whom he had not seen for many years. It was at such a time that they told him of a certain Bashmachkin who wished to see him. He asked abruptly, “Who is he?”

They answered him, “Some sort of official.”

“Ah, let him wait, now is not the time,” said the *important personage*. It is necessary to mention here that the *important personage* simply lied: he had the time to spare; he had already talked over everything with his friend, and the conversation had begun some time ago to lag with long silences; and they merely continued to tap each other on the leg, and exclaim, “That’s how it is, Ivan Abramovich!” “That’s so, Stephen Varlamovich!” Nevertheless, he caused the official to wait, in order to show his friend, a man some time out of the service and living in a village, how long he compelled officials to wait for him in the anteroom.

Finally, having conversed to his heart’s content, and having had also his fill of silence and smoked a cigar in a very comfortable chair with an easy back, he bethought himself all of a sudden, as it were, and said to the secretary who stood at the door with papers needing his signature, “Oh, yes, I believe an official is waiting to see me; tell him to come in.” On seeing Akaki Akakievich’s humble aspect and his shabby uniform, he suddenly turned to him and said, “What is it you wish?” He put this question abruptly and in a hard voice, which he had practised in his own room, when alone, and before the mirror, a full week before receiving his present position and rank.

Akaki Akakievich, who already felt a certain timorousness, became somewhat confused, and, so far as his power of speech would permit, explained, with an even more frequent employment than usual of the word

“that,” that his cloak was quite new, and had been stolen in a most inhuman manner, and that he was now applying to him to use his influence with the chief of police or some one else to find his cloak.

The general, for some reason or other, regarded such conduct as familiar. “What, dear sir,”

said he in his abrupt manner, “are you ignorant of the rules? Why do you come to me? Do you not know how such matters are managed? You should have first presented a petition to the office; it would have then gone to the chief clerk, then to the clerk of the division, then to the secretary, and the secretary would have reported it to me——”

“But, Your Excellency,” said Akaki Akakievich, gathering together his final remnant of courage, and breaking out into a terrible perspiration, “I, Your Excellency, have presumed to trouble you because, you see, the secretaries are that—an untrustworthy race——”

“What! what! what!” ejaculated the *important personage*. “Where do you get the courage? Where did you get such ideas? What a spirit of impertinence has spread among the young generation against their chiefs and superiors!”

The *important personage*, apparently, had not noticed that Akaki Akakievich was already a man of about fifty, and that if he could be called a young person, it was only in comparison with one who was seventy.

“Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you realize who stands before you? Do you realize it? Do you realize it? Answer me!”

At this point he stamped his foot, and raised his voice to such a high pitch that even a man different from Akakievich would have been frightened. Akaki Akakievich grew faint; he reeled; trembled from head to foot; then his legs gave way under him; if several attendants had not run in to support him, he would have fallen to the floor. They carried him out more dead than alive. The *important personage*, much gratified that the effect he produced far exceeded all expectation, and thoroughly intoxicated with the thought that even a word from him could deprive a man of his senses, looked askance at his friend, to see how that individual regarded the matter, and observed, not without satisfaction, that his friend was in a most

uncomfortable state, and was beginning to show on his part certain signs of fear.

How he managed to descend the stairway and into the street—of this Akaki Akakievich remembered nothing. He was unconscious of either hands or feet. Never before in his life had he been so reprimanded by a superior, let alone an unfamiliar one. He walked in the snow-storm which whistled through the streets; his mouth open, he staggered along the sidewalks; the wind blew upon him in St. Petersburg fashion from all four sides and every crossing. In an instant it had blown a quinsy down his throat, and he arrived at home all swollen and too weak to utter a word. He lay down on his bed.

The next day a high fever developed. Thanks to the generous assistance of the St. Petersburg climate, the illness advanced more rapidly than could be expected; and when the doctor appeared and felt his pulse, there was nothing for him to do except to prescribe a poultice, for no other reason but that the patient be not deprived of the beneficent aid of medicine; at the same time he predicted his inevitable end in thirty-six hours, after which he turned to the landlady and said: “And you, my woman, had better not lose any time about it, and order a pine coffin for him, as an oak one will be too expensive.”

Did Akaki Akakievich hear these fatal words?

And if he heard them, did they agitate him?

Did he bewail the bitterness of his life? It is uncertain, because he spent his last hours in fever and delirium. Visions, one stranger than the other, continued to appear before him. Now he saw Petrovich and ordered him to make a cloak with traps for thieves who he imagined were constantly under his bed; and he more than once called for his landlady to drag a thief from under his bed-cover. Then he inquired why the old cloak hung in front of him when he had a new one. Several times he fancied himself as standing before the general, addressing him as “Your Excellency,” and pleading with him after the reprimand; and finally he began to utter imprecations, employing the most terrible words, so that the aged housekeeper, never before having heard the like, made a sign of the cross, all the more since these curses usually followed after the words “Your Excellency.” Later he began to utter sheer nonsense; one thing, however, was evident: all his incoherent words and thoughts hovered around the one and the same cloak.

At last poor Akaki Akakievich gave up his spirit. The usual legal procedure with regard to his room and his effects was not followed, because in the first place there were no heirs, and in the second, because he left so little property, namely, a bundle of goose-quills, a quire of white official paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons that had come off his trousers, and the cape already familiar to the reader. To whom all this fell, God knows; this, I must confess, did not interest even him who relates this story.

They bore Akaki Akakievich away and buried him. And so St. Petersburg was left without Akaki Akakievich, as though he had never been there. A being disappeared, who was protected by none, dear to none, interesting to none, and who did not even attract to himself the attention of the student who does not let an opportunity slip by to put a pin through a common fly and to examine it under the microscope—a being who endured humbly the ridicule of his brother officials and went to his grave without having experienced a single notable event, but for whom nevertheless, at the very close of his life, came a radiating guest in the shape of a cloak, which cheered for an instant his sorry existence; and upon whom there afterwards descended an intolerable misfortune, such as descends even on the heads of the mighty of this world!

A few days after his death, an attendant was sent to his house to request him to report immediately at the department; but the attendant returned to his chief with the rather unsatisfactory answer that he could not come, and to the question, “Why?” replied, “Well, you see, he’s dead. He was buried four days ago.” In this manner did they hear of Akaki Akakievich’s death in the department, and the next day, in his place sat a new official, much taller in stature, and forming his letters not quite so upright, but very much inclined and aslant.

But who could have imagined that this was not the end of Akaki Akakievich, and that he was destined to live through several stirring days after his death, in compensation, as it were, for his unnoticed life? But it so happened, and our poor history takes an unexpectedly fantastic conclusion.

St. Petersburg was suddenly startled by rumors that on the Kalinkin Bridge and in its vicinity there had begun to appear nightly a corpse, in the shape of an official, seeking a stolen cloak, and that, under the pretense that it was the stolen cloak, he dragged off, regardless of rank or calling, every one’s

cloak from his shoulders, whether it was cat-skin, beaver, raccoon, fox, or bear—in short, every variety of fur and skin which man had thought of for his covering. One of the department officials saw the dead with his own eyes, and immediately recognized in him Akaki Akakievich; this, however, so frightened him that he began to run with all his might, and was therefore unable to observe him closely, but only saw him raise a threatening finger from afar.

Complaints began to come in from all quarters that the backs and shoulders, not alone of titular, but even of court, councillors were being exposed to the danger of a cold, because of this frequent deprivation of their cloaks. The police made arrangements to catch the corpse, at all costs, either alive or dead, and to deal with him most severely, as an example to others. In this they almost succeeded. A watchman in Kirishkin Lane seized the corpse by the collar on the very spot of his misdeeds; for he was in the act of dragging off the frieze cloak of a retired musician, who in his day had blown the flute. The watchman's shout for help fetched two comrades to his side, and into their hands he committed the marauder, while he himself thrust his hand for a moment into his boot for his snuff-box, in order to refresh temporarily his frozen nose. The snuff, however, must have been of such poor quality that even the corpse could not stand it.

Ere the watchman, who had closed his right nostril with his thumb, had time to apply a half-handful of the snuff to his left nostril, the corpse sneezed so violently that the three of them were soon wiping their eyes; and while they were doing this he vanished so completely that they were not even sure whether he had been actually in their hands. Henceforth the watchmen were so apprehensive of dead men that they even refrained from laying their hands on the living, and only dared to exclaim at a distance, "Hey, there, go your way!" As for the dead official, he began to appear even beyond the Kalinkin Bridge, creating no slight terror among all timid people.

We have, however, wholly neglected a *certain important personage*, who had been the actual cause of the fantastic turn taken by this true history. First of all, in justice to the *certain important personage*, it is necessary to say that immediately after the departure of the poor, totally crushed Akaki Akakievich he experienced an emotion akin to pity. It was not new to him

—this feeling of sympathy; his heart was really accessible to many good impulses, notwithstanding the fact that his rank often interfered with their outward manifestation. No sooner had his friend gone than he began to think about the poor Akaki Akakievich. And nearly every day thereafter there appeared before him the pale Akaki Akakievich, who was unable to bear up under an official reprimand. The thought agitated him to such an extent that after a week had passed he resolved even to send an official to learn his condition, and to see whether he could really assist him. When it was reported to him that Akaki Akakievich had died suddenly of fever, he was dumbfounded, suffered the reproaches of conscience, and was in poor spirits all day long.

Desiring some diversion and to drive away the disagreeable impression, he went in the evening to the house of one of his friends, where he found a likely crowd, all the more pleasant because nearly every one was of the one and the same rank, so that he was not in any way embarrassed.

This fact had a most astounding effect on his spirits. He opened his heart, made himself very agreeable in conversation; in short, he passed a charming evening. After supper he drank two glasses of champagne, an excellent method, as every one knows, of arousing cheerfulness.

The champagne communicated in him an inclination towards various enterprises, and he decided not to go directly home, but to visit a certain well-known lady named Karolina Ivanovna—probably of German extraction—with whom he was on quite friendly terms. It should be mentioned that the *important personage* was no longer a young man, but a good

husband and the respectable father of a family.

His two sons, one of whom was already in the government service, and a good-looking, sixteen-year-old daughter, with a trifle arched but rather pretty little nose, came in every morning to kiss his hand, and say, “*Bon jour, Papa.*” His wife, a woman still fresh and not at all bad-looking, first gave him her hand to kiss and then kissed his. The *important personage*, however, though content with his domestic caresses, thought it elegant to maintain friendly relations in another part of the city. This friend was hardly prettier or younger than his wife; but many such mysteries exist on earth, and to solve them is none of our affair.

The *important personage*, therefore, descended the staircase, entered his sledge, and said to the driver, "To Karolina Ivanovna!"

Then, wrapping himself luxuriously in his warm cloak, he settled into that happy mood, better than which cannot be even imagined by the Russian.

It is that state when you are not thinking of anything in particular, but the thoughts crowd in upon you of themselves, one pleasanter than the other, and calling for no exertion on your part to pursue them or seek them. Gratified beyond measure, he recalled all the gay features of the evening, all the remarks and all the stories that made the little circle laugh. Many of these he repeated in a low voice, and found them just as funny as before.

Occasionally, however, he was hindered by an impetuous wind, which, arising suddenly, God only knows whence and why, cut his face, and beat snow into it, or caused the collar of his cloak to burst out like a sail, and then blew it back over his head, with a supernatural force, as it were, and this gave him no end of trouble to disentangle his head out of its folds.

Suddenly the *important personage* felt some one grip him by the collar. Turning around, he noticed a man of small stature, dressed in a shabby old uniform, and, not without terror, recognized in him Akaki Akakievich. The face of the man was pale as snow, like that of a dead man. But the horror of the *important personage* exceeded all bounds when he saw the mouth of the corpse open, and, while it breathed upon him the terrible odor of the grave, he heard it utter the following remarks: "Ah, so here you are at last! At last I have you that—caught you by the collar! I need your cloak! You didn't give a thought to mine, and even reprimanded me. Well, now give me yours!"

The poor *important personage* almost died of fright—despite his manifestation of character in his office and before his inferiors generally, and although every one, on noting his manly figure and aspect, could not help but remark, "What a strong character!" Here, however, he, like many others possessed of an heroic exterior, was so terrified that, not without cause, he felt as though he would die on the spot. With his own hands he flung the cloak off his shoulders, and shouted to the driver in an unnatural voice, "Home, at full speed!" The driver, hearing the tone, generally

employed in critical moments, and accompanied in this case by something much more emphatic, assumed the physical attitude of an emergency, flourished his whip, and darted off like an arrow.

In six minutes or so, the *important personage* was before his own house. Pale, frightened, and without his cloak, instead of being at Karolina Ivanovna's, he was in his own house; and he managed somehow to reach his own room, where he passed the night in great agitation, so that the next morning at tea his daughter said, "You are very pale today, Papa." But Papa was silent, and said not a word to any one about what had happened, where he had been, and whither he was bound. This event made a powerful impression on him. He even much more rarely said to his subordinates, "How dare you? Do you realize who stands before you?" and if he did utter these words, it was not until he had heard out all the facts of the case.

Still more remarkable was it that from that day on the corpse of the official ceased to appear.

Evidently the general's cloak fitted his shoulders perfectly; at least, no more stories were heard about the dragging-off of cloaks. Many active and anxious people, however, were very apprehensive, and insisted that the corpse was still at large in certain remote sections of the city. In fact, one watchman in the Kolomen district saw with his own eyes the apparition stalk forth from behind a house; but, being rather weak physically, he dared not arrest him, but simply followed him in the darkness, until at last the apparition suddenly turned upon him and said, "What do you want?" and displayed such a fist as is never seen on a living man. The watchman replied, "Nothing," and started back. The apparition, however, looking very tall and wearing enormous mustaches, directed his footsteps seemingly towards the Obukhov Bridge and vanished in the nocturnal darkness.



## TURGENEV THE EMANCIPATOR

Turgenev was the most cosmopolitan of the Russian fiction-writers, yet with all his long residence in Berlin, Baden, and Paris, with all his broad culture and varied linguistic attainments, he never ceased to choose Russian themes and yield a passionate devotion to his fatherland.

Ivan Sergieevich Turgenev was born on the 28th of October, 1818, in the government of Orel.

His father, a dissipated Russian military officer, died while Ivan was still young, leaving the lad in charge of his mother, who was about six years the senior of her husband. The woman was even less fitted by temperament to be a careful mother than was Lady Byron, and the youth of the future novelist was stained with bitter tears. Her vindictive spirit she retained to the last, and, dying in old age, she constantly refused to receive the visits of her son.

Doubtless these disillusioning home experiences affected young Turgenev, for he early declared that he would never marry—and maintained his resolution. Likewise, his ideals of motherhood seem to have suffered, for the maternal qualities of his women characters never rise to the highest.

German, French, and English he early learned from instructors at home—Russian he picked up from the servants of the ancestral estate on which he was born. First, he went to Moscow to study, later the University at St. Petersburg held him for three years as a student, and Berlin completed his academic training—particularly in philosophy, for the subject was at that time interdicted in the Russian schools for fear of its levelling effects.

That was a vitally formative thought-period for Europe, the years between 1835 and 1842, and during such of them as Turgenev spent in the German capital he became impregnated with free thought in all its phases, and never thereafter could he breathe without oppression the air of his restricted Russia. Thus the propaganda of emancipation which the great novelist subtly spread by means of his fiction, without ever becoming a physically present leader, was first of all inspired by his life at home and fanned to enthusiasm by contact with intrepid thinkers in Germany.

There must have been something sweetly noble in this fine, robust young giant for him to have emerged from his sad and jarring home-life, and the autocracy of his natal “Nest of Nobles,” with so deeply rooted a hatred of serfdom and all cruel inequalities. Like the young Lincoln, he swore to strike a blow against slavery; like Lincoln, he lived to witness its overthrow, though upon a more equitable and permanently satisfactory basis than did his American contemporary.

Turgenev, however, was not a militant emancipator.

He was too calm, too forbearing, too much the typical man of culture, for this. Indeed, the Russian literary system of dealing with abuses may be said to be typified by Turgenev’s method—he merely described. But his pictures were so vital that he must have mixed his reds with the bloody sweat of knouted serfs, and gotten his blacks from the smoky gloom of pestilent cabins which lined the noisome roadways on ten thousand manors. All Russia saw and gasped—and

reformed. Thus did his first work of distinction, the twenty-five “Sportsman’s Sketches”—published from 1847 to 1851, and in book-form in

1852—do their mighty work for mankind.

In earlier days Turgenev was, with all enlightened Russia, an admirer of the poet-fictionist Gogol. A letter in eulogy of this author on his death in 1852 was severely rebuked by the Czar’s banishing its writer to his estates, where he remained, busily engaged in writing, until 1855.

Then he saw that Russia could best be served at a distance. He was out of sympathy with the extreme Slavophile party, yet he loved Russia. What better course opened before him than to live in an atmosphere where

freedom could breathe, and where his powerful pen might not only do service for Russia among Russians, but in all of Europe as well.

And this ambition he abundantly realized.

His residence in Baden as the friend of Madame Viardot, and, be it said, of her husband, and his later life in Paris, whither he repaired shortly after the close of the Franco-Prussian War—for he never lived again in Russia—brought him brilliantly before a constantly increasing company of notables, of whom he was at the last

easily chief. His gigantesque figure, crowned with that silvery hair and beard, was a loved and familiar sight until he succumbed to a malignant cancer which attacked the spinal cord, and Turgenev passed over, on the 3rd of September, 1883, at the age of sixty-five.

A pessimist is one who looks upon the unequal struggle of life and can discern no hand to succor the deserving weak from the rapacious strong.

Sitting while a lad in a Russian garden, Turgenev beheld a fight-to-a-finish between a serpent and a toad. Then and there began his doubts of a beneficent Providence, which culminated in his quiet, and never aggressive, spiritual pessimism.

In this he is only one with most great Russian literary artists. And, singularly enough, he too passed into a final era of mysticism, though not so completely as did his compeer Tolstoi, as witness that fine symbolical sketch, "The Song of Triumphant Love."

An interesting contrast presents itself in the characters of Tolstoi and Turgenev. The one, aggressively Christian, harsh in the judgment of his opponents, and intolerant of what he adjudged to be error; the other, meek, gentle, considerate, largely tolerant, and quietly forceful. Tolstoi was the lion aroused and warring even when preaching non-resistance; Turgenev, the lion resting with dignified forbearance because of a great serenity within. Both were men of might, yet ethically and artistically at variance. It is pleasant to record, however, that the quarrel which separated them for sixteen years did not prevent Turgenev from responding at once when in later life Tolstoi sought a reconciliation. The interview was charged with amity, but, naturally, Turgenev could not adopt his old-time friend's extreme religious views. So when they had parted, Tolstoi's praise was

modified—Turgenev was “an unpleasant man”—while the latter had only warm words for the religionist. In a later essay in this series it is recorded how Turgenev from his death-bed besought Tolstoi to return to the field of Romance, in which “thou hast no rival amongst us.”

---

Turgenev was one of the greatest novelists of all time—the greatest, as it seems to me, of all impressionistic novelists. Except in the one quality of unity—for his work was on its surface fragmentary in structure—this preëminent Russian met perfectly Poe’s ideal of impressionism: he felt an impression of character or of nature and then reproduced in his reader just what he himself felt. And this impression was oftenest elevated above the merely physical. Brutalities, gaucheries, physicalities, were to him expressions of the man in whose inner life the novelist was more deeply interested than in the outer. Thus his realism is neither so physical as Zola’s nor so materialistic in philosophy as Maupassant’s.

Turgenev’s pessimism is social, and not primarily moral; hence character is always the big element in his novels and shorter fictional pieces.

As with Tolstoi, so with Turgenev, plot is a negligible quantity. Yet in a way that quite defies any explanation but one, the final impression is fairly unified, and certainly tremendously effective. That one explanation is that all the scattered pictures of traits, appearances, oddities, mannerisms of bearing and speech, and, above all, the marvellous reproduction of *characteristically* personal language, result in an individual presentment of character unequalled for vividness

in all fiction. Turgenev lets no significant detail escape. The units may be trivial, the entire effect is almost always big. The little thing he seizes upon shows us with the infallibility of a master diagnostician the trends of character. The sum of it all is wizardry.

All this is true primarily of his great novels.

Here I have space only for mention, at the same time venturing to place them in the order of their importance: "A House of Gentlefolk" ("A Nest of Nobles"), a masterpiece of depiction; "Fathers and Children," a severe castigation of the old and the new in Russia; "On the Eve," a pessimistic inquiry as to whether there is hope of better things for his fatherland; "Rudin," a character study of unusual penetration; "Torrents

of Spring," in which a devilish woman ruins the hero; "Smoke," a brilliant but bitter satire on things Russian; and "Virgin Soil," whose "villain," as in all of the author's novels, is a woman!

---

In discussing Turgenev's shorter fictions, we must remember that most of them were written from seventy to forty years ago, and all show that fine disregard of form which only a master may entertain without inviting failure. Here, as in his novels, character is all. Other story-tellers often make the story preëminent—Turgenev never. His favorite method is to hold up many facets of a character, letting the light—here a gleam, there a full radiance—fall on each. He is a master of monologue and of dialogue. Even the jerky pauses are eloquent. The vagueness of a mind is never asserted; it is shown indubitably.

The inept man, the supernumerary of

society, the man who is engrossed in self, the despairing peasant bound to the wheel, the reflective but weak-willed dreamer—speech, physical habits, and physical traits reveal them all as relentlessly as a scalpel uncovers diseased tissue. This is the wonder of Turgenev's fictional power. He has brought suggestive description to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  power. No fictionist has even approached him in this respect.

One further quality deserves special mention, for I have already referred to his hatred of serfdom and his scorn for the superfluous social orders it built up. It is that of nature description. Turgenev was an Englishman in his love of gunning (although in later life he disapproved of the needless slaughter of innocents). Consequently, many of his tales—particularly his notable “A Sportsman’s Sketches”—abound in fine nature passages. Here is one from “Yermolai and the Miller’s Wife.”

A quarter of an hour before sunset in springtime you go out into the woods with your gun, but without your dog. You seek out a spot for yourself on the outskirts of the forest, take a look round, examine your caps, and glance at your companion. A quarter of an hour passes; the sun has set, but it is still light in the forest; the sky is clear and transparent; the birds are chattering and twittering; the young grass shines with the brilliance of emerald.... You wait. Gradually the recesses of the forest grow dark; the blood-red glow of the evening sky creeps slowly on to the roots and the trunks of the trees, and keeps rising higher and higher, passes from the lower, still almost leafless branches, to the motionless, slumbering tree-tops....

And now even the topmost branches are

darkened; the purple sky fades to dark-blue. The forest fragrance grows stronger; there is a scent of warmth and damp earth; the fluttering breeze dies away at your side. The birds go to sleep—not all at once—but after their kinds; first the finches are hushed, a few minutes later the warblers, and after them the yellow buntings. In the forest it grows darker and darker. The trees melt together into great masses of blackness; in the dark-blue sky the first stars come timidly out. All the birds are asleep. Only the red starts and the nuthatches are still chirping drowsily....

And now they too are still. The last echoing call of the peewit rings over our heads; the oriole’s melancholy cry sounds somewhere in the distance; then the nightingale’s first note. Your heart is weary with suspense, when suddenly—but only sportsmen can understand me—suddenly in the deep hush there is a peculiar croaking and whirring sound, the measured sweep of swift wings is heard, and the snipe, gracefully bending its long beak, sails smoothly down behind a dark bush to meet your shot.

It is illuminating to observe Turgenev’s well-nigh invariable method of story-telling. First he will draw in a setting with much attention to detail and introducing characters who add nothing to the story proper but do add immeasurably to the atmosphere—and atmosphere is

miraculously handled by this master. Then he will begin to show phases of the leading character.

And when at last we have formed a perfect picture of the person in his surroundings, a dramatic, a pathetic, a deep-revealing flash comes forth in

the form of an anecdote or an incident—and the story is done. Character pictures, mostly *in statu quo*—these are the master's offerings. Plot, in the modern sense, is almost unknown to Turgenev—as character-drawing, alas, is almost a lost art to the short-story writer of today! But it must be said that only an artist of the first order could carry his method to success.

A list of Turgenev's short fictional pieces—technical short-stories they are not—would

number more than fifty, many of them almost novelettes in length. Some of the best are “Assia,” “The Jew,” “A Lear of the Steppes,”

“Mumu,” “First Love,” “The Brigadier,” and “The Song of Triumphant Love.”

In the following outline and translated passages taken from M. de Vogüé's distinguished discussion of “Russian Novelists,” we may gain a good view of Turgenev's method and style.

In “A Living Relic,”<sup>[2]</sup> Turgenev as the narrator strongly wakes a human chord. On a hunting expedition, he enters by chance an abandoned shed, where he finds a wretched human being, a woman, deformed, and unable to move. He

recognizes in her a former serving-maid of his mother's, once a gay, laughing girl, now paralyzed, stricken by some strange and terrible disease.

This poor creature, reduced to a skeleton, lying forgotten in this miserable shed, has no longer any relations with the outside world. No one takes care of her; kind people sometimes replenish her jar with fresh water. She requires

nothing else. The only sign of life, if life it can be called, is in her eyes and her faint respiration.

But this hideous wreck of a body contains an immortal soul, purified by suffering, utterly resigned, lifted above itself, this simple peasant nature, into the realms of perfect self-renunciation.

Lukerya relates her misfortune: how she was seized with this illness after a fall in the dark; how she had gone out one dark evening to listen to the

songs of the nightingales; how gradually every faculty and every joy of life had forsaken her.

Her betrothed was so sorry; but, then, afterwards he married; what else could he do? She

hopes he is happy. For years her only diversion has been to listen to the church-bells, and the drowsy hum of the bees in the hives of the apiary near-by. Sometimes a swallow comes and flutters about in the shed, which is a great event, and gives her something to think about for several weeks. The people that bring water to her are so kind, she is so grateful to them! And gradually, almost cheerfully, she goes back with the young master to the memories of old days, and reminds him how vain she was of being the leader in all the songs and dances; at last, she even tries to hum one of those songs.

“I really dreaded to have this half-dead creature try to sing. Before I could speak, she uttered a sound very faintly, but the note was correct; then another, and she began to sing ‘In the Fields.’... As she sang there was no change of expression in her paralyzed face or in her fixed eyes. This poor little forced voice sounded so pathetic, and she made such an effort to express her whole soul, that my heart was pierced with the deepest pity.”

Lukerya relates her terrible dreams, how Death has appeared before her; not that she dreads his coming, but he always goes away and will not deliver her. She refuses all offers of assistance from her young master; she desires nothing, needs nothing, is perfectly content. As her visitor is about to leave her, she calls him back for a last word. She seems to be conscious (how feminine is this!) of the terrible impression she must have made upon him, and says:

“Do you remember, master, what beautiful hair I had? You know it reached to my knees....

I hesitated a long time about cutting it off, but what could I do with it as I am? So—I cut it off.... Adieu, master!”

---

In “The District Doctor,” which is appended in a new translation, we find a fuller and even more characteristic specimen of Turgenev’s story-telling.

Both reveal the warm heart of the great man, and his unfailing sympathy, which his own painful despair was never allowed to suppress.

## FOOTNOTES:

[2] From "A Sportman's Sketches."



## THE DISTRICT DOCTOR

*By Ivan Turgenev*

Returning from a distant field one autumn day, I fell ill with a bad cold. Luckily for me, the fever caught me in the district town, in a hotel. I sent for the doctor. After a half-hour, the district physician appeared—a dark, meagre little man. He prescribed the customary sudorific and a mustard-plaster; and dexterously inserting into his cuff my five-ruble note—coughing dryly and glancing sideways as he did so—he was about to depart, but somehow began to talk and remained.

The fever made me restless; anticipating a sleepless night, I was glad to have some one to chat with. Tea was brought in. The doctor was in a conversational mood. He was not a bad fellow, and expressed himself well and divertingly.

How strange it is with men! You have known one for a long time and are intimate with him, yet not once have you ventured to talk with him frankly, from your very soul; another you have hardly become acquainted with, and yet—either you tell him or else he tells you, as if in confessional, his very inmost thoughts. I do not know how I earned the confidence of my new acquaintance; but he somehow or other “got started,” as they say, and told me a really remarkable tale, which I present here to the sympathetic reader.

I shall try to express the story in the doctor’s own words.

“You don’t know,” he began in a faltering, trembling voice (such is the effect of the unmixed Berezovsk snuff)—“you don’t know the judge of this place, Pavel Luikich Muilov?...

No?... Well, it doesn't matter." The doctor coughed and wiped his eyes. "Any way, to be exact, it happened during Lent, in the thaw season. I was sitting in the judge's house, playing 'preference.' Our judge is a good fellow, and loves to play the game. Suddenly"—the doctor employed the word *suddenly* often—"I was informed that some one came for me.

'What does he want?' I asked. 'It's some one with a note; it must be from a sick person.' I read the note, and, sure enough, it was from some one ill.... Well, all right—that, you see, is my bread.... The note was from a widow, and here was the case as she put it:

"My daughter is dying; come at once, for God's sake! I am sending the horses to fetch you."

"But that was not all.... Her house was some twenty versts from town; a black night outdoors, and the roads simply mean! She was as poor as a mouse, too. 'Lucky,' I thought, 'if I get two rubles.' Still, duty before everything—you can't let a person die! Suddenly I handed over my cards to Councillor Kalliopin, and started for home. To be sure, there was a coach waiting for me near the porch; and a couple of working horses, very big-bellied, and with hides like felt; the driver, out of respect, was sitting with his hat off. 'Well,' said I to myself, 'it's plain to be seen your masters haven't got much gold.'...

You may laugh, but here is a fact worth considering.... When the driver sits like a prince, and keeps his cap on his head, and even laughs under his beard, and flourishes his whip—you may count on a couple of bank-notes! But this, you could see, was an altogether different matter. Still, there was no way out of it; duty before everything. Quickly I collected my most indispensable medicines, and off I went.

"Believe me, I don't see how I got there. A wretched road, puddles, snow, mud, ruts, suddenly a dam burst somewhere—misery, in short!

Any way, I got there. It was a small, thatched-roofed house. There was a light in the windows.

It meant they were awaiting me. I was met by a little old lady, very dignified-looking, in a cap.

'Save her!' she cried. 'She is dying!' 'Don't be alarmed,' I told her, and asked to be shown the patient.... 'This way, please!'

“I was led into a small but clean room, in one corner of which hung an ikon-lamp. On the bed lay a twenty-year-old maiden, unconscious; in a high fever. Here also were her two sisters, frightened and in tears. ‘Only yesterday,’ they said, ‘she was altogether well, and ate with appetite; but this morning she complained of pains in her head, and tonight suddenly she is like this.’... ‘Don’t be alarmed,’ I once more reassured them—as you know, it’s one of the doctor’s obligations—and proceeded to my task.

I bled her, applied mustard-plasters, and prescribed a mixture. And all the time I couldn’t take my eyes from her—upon my word, I never saw such a face ... a beauty, in fact! I was torn by compassion. Such a lovely face, and eyes!... There, thank God, she had grown quieter; perspiration had set in. She was coming to herself; she glanced around her, smiled, moved her hand across her face.... Her sisters bent over her, they asked her, ‘What is the matter with you?’ ‘Nothing,’ she answered, and turned away.... When I looked again she was asleep. I advised quiet; and so we all, on our tiptoes, made our way out, and the maid alone remained in the room, in case of an emergency.

“In the drawing-room the samovar was steaming.

They gave me tea, and I was invited to stay overnight.... I agreed; it was late, where else could I go? The little old lady continued to sigh. ‘Don’t worry,’ I said to her. ‘Your daughter shall live. And you too need some rest—it is two o’clock.’... ‘And you’ll see that I’m awakened if anything should happen?’ ...

I promised.

“The old lady and the girls went to their rooms; my own bed was made in the drawing-room. I lay down, but could not sleep, which was unusual for me. I could not get my patient out of my mind. Finally, I could stand it no longer, and arose. I thought to myself I’d take a peep at her and see how she was coming along. Her bedroom was right next to the drawing-room. I opened the door quietly—and my heart beat violently.

There was the maid asleep, her mouth agape; and snoring, mind you, the wretch! As for the patient, she lay with her face turned in my direction, her

arms stretched out, poor girl! I approached closer. Suddenly she opened her eyes and fixed them on me!... ‘Who are you?’

‘Who are you?’... I became confused.

‘Don’t be frightened, miss. I’m the doctor come to attend to you.’ ‘You are the doctor?’

‘Yes, the doctor.... Your mother sent to town for me; and in a day or two, with God’s help, we’ll put you on your feet.’ ‘Yes, yes, Doctor, please don’t let me die ... please.’

‘Miss, what are you saying!’ ‘She’s feverish again,’ I thought to myself. I felt her pulse; sure enough, high fever. She looked at me ... and suddenly she took my hand....

‘I will tell you,’ she went on, ‘why I do not wish to die. I will tell you, I will tell you ... now we are alone; only to you, to no one else.... Listen.’... I bent over her; she placed her lips to my very ear, brushing my cheek with her hair—I must confess, it made my head swim—and began to whisper....

I understood nothing.... Delirious....

She continued to whisper very rapidly; it didn’t at all sound like Russian.

When she ceased she trembled, let her head drop on the pillow, and shook a warning finger at me.

‘Remember, Doctor, tell no one!’... Somehow, I managed to quiet her; I then gave her a drink, awakened the maid, and left her.”

At this juncture the doctor again, with a movement of exasperation, took a pinch of snuff, and for an instant seemed affected.

“However,” he continued, “the next day, contrary to my expectation, my patient did not improve. After some deliberation on my part, I suddenly made up my mind to remain, despite the fact that other patients were awaiting me....

As you know, one can’t afford to neglect these—the practice suffers. Well, in the first place, my patient was really in desperate straits; and then again, to confess the truth to you, I felt strongly attracted towards her; besides, I

took a liking to the entire family. Though poor people, they were highly educated.... The father of the family was a learned man, an author; I need not add that he died poor. He managed, however, to give his children an excellent bringing-up. He also left quite a number of books. Whether it was because of this that I attended the patient so assiduously or for other reasons, there is no question that those in the house grew to love me like one of their own kin....

“In the meantime the thaw made the roads very bad; all communication, one might say, was cut off. The medicine was obtained from town with considerable difficulty.... The patient did not improve.... Days came, and days went.... Just then something ... something——” The doctor

paused. “Upon my word, I don’t know how to express myself.”... Once more he helped himself to the snuff; he laughed, and swallowed his tea in a gulp. “Well, not to beat about the bush, my patient ... how should one put it? ... she fell in love with me....

Or rather, you see, it was not exactly that ...

but ... upon my word, how should one——”

The doctor grew embarrassed and blushed.

“No,” he went on with some animation; “how could she fall in love with me? One must know one’s own value. She was an educated, clever, and well-read girl; while I had almost entirely forgotten even the little Latin that I once knew. As for my looks”—the doctor surveyed himself with a smiling glance—“it seems to me I also have nothing to boast of. Still, God did not make me a fool; I will not call black that which is white. I know a thing or two. For instance, I understood perfectly that Alexandra Andreyevna—that was her name—did not actually love me, but rather felt a sort of friendliness towards me, or perhaps it was just respect.

Though it is possible she herself misunderstood this feeling, yet she was in such a state that—well, you may judge for yourself.... However,”

the doctor added, as he continued his broken speeches, which he uttered without stopping to take breath, and with evident confusion, “it seems I have gotten off the track somewhat....

You simply will not understand what I am saying.... Well, I will try to tell everything in its order.”

He finished his glass of tea, and, speaking more calmly, resumed his story.

“That’s the way it happened. My patient grew worse and worse. You, my friend, are not a physician; therefore, it is hard for you to understand just what the young doctor experiences in his soul when he begins to suspect that the disease is mastering him. Where is his self-confidence then? Your courage simply oozes out of you; words can’t describe it. A notion takes possession of you that you have forgotten all you ever knew, that the patient has lost faith in you, and that the others are beginning to notice your bewilderment and to report new symptoms to you reluctantly; they glance at you from under their eyebrows, they whisper among themselves....

How mortifying! There should be some medicine, you permit yourself to think, to counteract this disease—if you only knew which one! Perhaps that’s the one. You try it—no, that’s not it!

You haven’t given the mixture sufficient time to work ... and you try another. Or you turn the pages of your pharmacopœia ...

thinking you might hit upon something....

In the meantime a person is dying; another doctor might have saved him. A consultation is necessary, you argue to yourself; you don’t feel like taking the entire responsibility. What a fool you are made to look, under the circumstances!

After a time, of course, you get used to it. A person dies—well, it isn’t your fault, you have done everything according to rules. It is even more painful when the relatives show blind faith in you, while in your own heart you know you are unable to help.

“It was such a faith that the family of Alexandra Andreyevna exhibited towards me, forgetting that the daughter was in danger. I too, on my part, reassured them that it was nothing; and all the time my heart was in my mouth. To add to my misfortunes, the roads grew so bad from the thaw that it took the driver a whole day sometimes to fetch the medicines.

“As for me, I remained in the room of the patient, couldn’t tear myself away. I used to tell her amusing anecdotes and to play cards with her. I sat

through whole nights with her. Her mother used to thank me with tears in her eyes; but I thought to myself, 'I'm not worthy of your thanks.' To be candid with you—nothing is to be gained now by concealing the truth—I fell in love with my patient. And Alexandra Andreyevna too became attached to me; there were times indeed when she wouldn't permit any one but me in her room. She loved to chat with me—she'd ask me where I had studied, how I lived, who were my kin, whom did I know?

I felt that she had no right to talk; and yet I couldn't think of forbidding her. I'd sometimes put my hands to my head, and I'd reproach myself: 'What are you doing, murderer?'...

And she'd take my hand and hold it, and continue to look at me long, very long; at times she would turn away, utter a sigh, and then she would mutter, 'How good you are!' Meanwhile her hands were burning; her eyes grew large and dark. 'Yes,' she would say; 'you are a good, kind man, not at all like our neighbors ... not in the least.'... How

my poor heart would go a-fluttering! And all the time 'Alexandra Andreyevna, be quiet,' I'd say to her.... 'Believe me, I am grateful, I don't know how I have earned it ... only, please be quiet, for God's sake, be quiet....

Everything shall come out all right, and you shall get well.' I should tell you, however," added the doctor, bending forward and raising his eyebrows, "that they had had little to do with the neighbors, because the poorer folk weren't up to them, while pride stood between them and the rich. I tell you, they were a highly-educated family—which was flattering to me, to be sure.

"From my hands alone she would take her medicine.... She'd raise herself, poor girl, with my help, swallow it, and then glance at me....

How my poor heart would go a-fluttering!

And all the time she was growing worse and worse. 'She will die,' was my thought, 'she will certainly die.' Believe me, I would as lief have descended into the grave myself; and there was her mother standing about; her sisters too were anxious, as they looked into my eyes....

Surely their faith couldn't last much longer.

‘Well, what today?’ they’d ask. ‘Nothing, nothing,’ I’d reply; but, in truth, my mind was in a whirl.

“One night I sat as usual at the bedside of my patient. The maid too was sitting in the room, and snoring for all she was worth.... She too, poor girl, was exhausted. Alexandra Andreyevna had been feeling badly all that evening; the fever tormented her. Until midnight she tossed about, and finally fell asleep; at least, she lay motionless. In a corner, before the ikon, a lamp was burning. I sat there, my head in my hands, dozing.

“Suddenly—it was as if some one gave me a thrust in the side—I raised my head....

Good God! Alexandra Andreyevna, with her eyes wide open, was gazing at me.... Her lips were parted, her cheeks burning. ‘What is the matter?’ ‘Doctor, am I going to die?’ ‘God forbid!’ ‘No, Doctor, no, please don’t tell me that I shall live ... don’t tell me....

If you only knew ... listen to me, for God’s sake, don’t conceal from me my true state!’

She said this with panting breath. ‘If I were only sure that I shall die ... I’d tell you all, all!’ ‘Alexandra Andreyevna, I entreat you!’

‘Listen to me,’ she said: ‘I haven’t slept at all; I have been looking at you a long time....

For God’s sake! ... I believe you;

you are a good man and an honest man; I conjure you by all that is holy upon earth—to tell me the truth! If you only knew how important it is that I should know!... Doctor, for God’s sake, tell me, am I in danger?’ ‘What am I to tell you, Alexandra Andreyevna, I beg of you?’

‘I entreat you, for God’s sake!’ ‘I can’t conceal it from you, Alexandra Andreyevna, you are really in danger, but the Lord is merciful.’...

‘I shall die, I shall die!’... And

she actually seemed overjoyed; her face lit up with radiance; I became alarmed. ‘Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid; death does not terrify me.’ Suddenly she raised herself, and propped herself up on her elbow. ‘Well, now I can tell you that I am grateful to you from my very soul, that you are

a good, honest man, and that I love you.’... I gazed on her as on one mad; it was painful to me, as you may well understand....

‘Do you hear? I love you!’...

‘Alexandra Andreyevna, how have I earned your love?’ ‘No, no, you don’t understand me ...

thou dost not understand me.’<sup>[3]</sup> ... And suddenly she stretched out her arms, seized my head between her hands, and kissed me....

Believe me, I nearly cried out.... I threw myself on my knees and hid my head in the pillows.

She was silent; her fingers trembled in my hair; I could hear her weeping. I tried to quiet her, to reassure her.... I really don’t know what I said to her. ‘You’ll awaken the maid, Alexandra Andreyevna,’ I said to her....

‘Indeed, I am grateful ... believe

me ... calm yourself.’ ‘Enough, enough,’

she repeated. ‘God be with them all; let them awaken, let them come—it is all the same; since I shall die.... But why do you tremble, why are you afraid? Lift your head....

Or perhaps you don’t love me, perhaps I have been deceived.... If so, please forgive me.’

‘Alexandra Andreyevna, what are you saying?

... I love you, Alexandra Andreyevna.’

She looked straight into my eyes, and opened her arms. ‘Then embrace me.’ ...

“To speak candidly, I can’t quite comprehend how it was that I didn’t lose my mind that night.

There was the feeling that she was consuming herself, also that she was not in her senses; and that were it not for the fact that she considered herself as dying, she wouldn’t have thought of me. Say what you will, it’s a hideous thought to be dying at twenty years of age without having loved some one; that is what tortured her, that is why in her desperation she clung to me—do you grasp the idea? She held me there in her embrace. ‘Have pity on me,

Alexandra Andreyevna, and have pity on thyself,' I said to her. 'Why, should I?' was her reply. 'What is there to pity, since I must die?'... She repeated this incessantly. 'If I only knew that I'd remain alive and go among respectable young ladies, I'd feel ashamed, dreadfully ashamed ... but what does it matter to me now?' 'Who told you you're going to die?'

'Oh, no, enough of this, you shan't fool me, you don't know how to lie, look at yourself.' 'You shall live, Alexandra Andreyevna, I shall save you; then we will ask your mother for her blessing....'

'We will marry, we will be happy.' 'No, no, I have your word for it, I must die....'

You had promised me.... You told me so.'...

"I felt bitter at heart, and for many reasons.

And judge for yourself; often small things happen, trifling in themselves, yet they are painful.

It occurred to her to ask me my Christian name.

As ill luck will have it, I am called Trifon; yes, Trifon, Trifon Ivanich. In the house I was simply called Doctor. There was no help for it. 'Trifon, miss,' I replied. She looked amused, and she shook her head; then she whispered something in French—something that didn't sound quite nice; then she laughed; it was unpleasant to me, I assure you. In such a manner I passed almost the entire night with her. In the morning I left her, almost not in my own senses. I reëntered her room later in the morning, after tea. Good God! she was hardly recognizable; a corpse couldn't have looked worse. I swear to you, upon my honor, I really can't understand how I endured the torture. Three days and three nights more my patient lingered ... and what nights they were! And the things she said to me!... Then the final night—imagine to yourself; I was sitting beside her, and there was in my heart but one prayer to God: 'Take her as soon as possible, and me also.'... Suddenly, unexpectedly, her mother entered the room.... I had already told her the day before that there was but little hope, and that it would be well to have a priest. The sick girl, seeing her mother, blurted out, 'I'm glad you came.... Look at us, we love each other, we have promised ourselves to each other!'

‘What is she saying, Doctor, what is she saying?’

I grew deathly pale. ‘She’s delirious, it’s the fever.’... But she went on: ‘Enough, enough, only a little while ago you spoke differently to me, and even accepted a ring from me ... why do you dissemble? My mother is good-hearted, she will forgive. She will understand; but I’m dying—there’s no reason why I should lie; give me your hand.’... I sprang up and ran out of the room. The old mother, of course, guessed the true state of affairs.

“I’ll not go on, however, tiring you with any further details. As it is, I find it painful to recall it all. The girl died the next day. May the Holy Kingdom be hers!” added the doctor quickly and with a sigh. “Before she died she requested her kin to go out of the room and to leave me alone with her. ‘Forgive me,’ she said to me. ‘I perhaps am guilty before you ... my illness ... but, believe me, I never loved any one so much ... don’t forget me ...

take care of my ring.’”

The doctor turned away his face; I took his hand.

“Eh!” he sighed, “let’s chat about something else, or perhaps you’d rather have a game of ‘preference,’ for a trifle? It’s not for our kind to give way to elevated feelings. There’s but one thing left for us—to manage that our children don’t squall, and our wives don’t scold. Since those days, you see, I have entered, as one might say, into the legal bonds of matrimony....

Well.... I married a merchant’s daughter, who brought me a *dot* of seven thousand rubles.

Her name is Akulina; it goes just right with Trifon. She is an ill-tempered dame, but fortunately she sleeps all day long.... Did you say ‘preference’?”

We began to play preference, at a copeck.

Trifon Ivanich succeeded in winning from me two rubles and a half, and left late, much gratified with his victory.

## FOOTNOTES:

[3] The change from *you* to *thou* is significant here, because among the Russians *thou* is employed only in familiar or intimate sense.



## TOLSTOI, ARTIST AND PREACHER

As a man of letters, Lyoff Nikolaievitch, Count Tolstoi, holds undisputed place in the first rank; as a philosophical preacher of reform, his position is much less secure. And it is sadly ironical that one who was so ready to lay aside those fictional laurels which all men yielded to him readily, has not been accorded the preëminence among moralists which he held to be of so much greater worth.

The last twenty years of his abundant life disclosed in this greatest of all Russians that which was always really present—the single eye, with its gaze constantly set upon ethical ideals. Even a swift survey of his life and its so closely interpenetrating work will bear out this estimate—perhaps surprisingly.

In 1828, on September 9—August 28, old style—Tolstoi was born at Yasnaia Polyana, in the

government of Tula, Russia. For several centuries his wealthy and noble family was distinguished in military and state affairs as well as in literature, one of his ancestors, Peter Tolstoi, having been the intimate of Peter the Great.

Lyoff's father, Nikolai, and his mother, the Princess Volkhonsky, died while he was yet a lad, leaving him in charge of an aunt. He inherited a rich estate which his father had succeeded in thriftily disencumbering from the debts of extravagance contracted by his own father.

The future author was educated at home, spent some time (1843-44) at the University of Kazan, did further private work at home, for a while studied

law in St. Petersburg, alternated between his estates and the social life of the great cities, and eventually entered the army in 1851.

It was during this period that he gathered much of the material for his early stories, notably “The Cossacks,” a short novel of unmistakable power and insight; and the rambling autobiographical stories, “Childhood,” “Boyhood,” and “Youth,”

generally combined under the first title. When the Crimean War broke out, in 1853, Tolstoi was transferred to the army of the Danube, and distinguished himself for bravery before Sevastopol—as well as by his three notable sketches which bear the name of this great siege, “Sevastopol in December,” “Sevastopol in May,” and “Sevastopol in August.”

Tolstoi’s life as a soldier was that of a rake—in which he differed not at all from the young noblemen of the period. But this wild career does not seem to have interfered with his fondness for moralizing, nor with his conviction that he was the spiritual Moses, divinely commissioned to lead the Russian people out of the wilderness.

His youthful diary confesses that the three passions to which he yielded, gambling, sensuality, and vanity, were moral stumbling-blocks; and with naïve premonition he wrote: “There is something in me which makes me think that I was not born to be just like everybody else.”

But the most remarkable youthful forecast is found in the words which Professor Phelps quotes from Tolstoi’s journal of this period: “The man who has no other goal than his own happiness is a bad man. He whose goal is the good opinion of others is a weak man. He whose goal is the happiness of others is a virtuous man. He whose goal is God is a great man.” In these cumulative epigrams we have a summary of Tolstoi’s creed.

However far afield he wandered in middle years, distressed by doubts and confused by jangling voices, the sturdy seeking-soul of him followed this great light with the single eye of an honest man, and this altruistic doctrine he preached with increasing loftiness, through excommunication and charges of insanity, down to the very end.

That so extreme a theory should lead him often into blind avenues, and that the phantoms of many inconsistencies should challenge his way, was inevitable; yet Tolstoi stands before the world today as a good man and an

earnest one, who never lay upon a couch of down while he preached abnegation for others.

An insatiable psychological curiosity possessed the Russian master from youth to the close of his fiction-writing years. In the exercise of this minute observing power, he is as amazing a realist as was Balzac, and when he confines his examinations to humans he is quite as profoundly interesting, but rather tiresome when he records the numberless details of inanimate nature.

A character so given to scrutiny would naturally be introspective, so that his novels are markedly autobiographical. And it is always the struggling, set-upon, brooding character which the novelist chooses through which to depict his own nature. How different from the romantic self-exploitation of Byron! In "Childhood,"

*Nikolenka* is Tolstoi himself, as *Olénine* is in "The Cossacks." So too in *Levine* of "Anna Karenina," *Pozdnichev*, of "The Kreutzer Sonata,"

and *Nekhlioudov*, of "Resurrection" (his final creed-summary), we have pictures of the self-recognized characteristics and beliefs of the author.

Each of these distinguished novels exhibits the same loosely-knit, diffuse, and digressive literary method, and the same marvellous perfection of character analysis and description.

Each, also, advances a step toward that morbid idealism which was always seeking a new expression for a philosophy which was never finally set, but remained a shifting formulary to the last.

"War and Peace" is a huge study of the times of Napoleon and Alexander, brilliant and tedious by turns, and requiring leisure for its reading—in the last analysis, a really great novel. "Anna Karenina" treats with great frankness and high moral purpose contemporaneous Russian society.

Both these remarkable books abound in striking comparisons, witty comments, well differentiated character work, and convincing pictures of their times.

Shortly after finishing these works, Tolstoi emerged from his groping, pessimistic, skeptical, nihilistic philosophy and "discovered" the Sermon on

the Mount. Thenceforward he was the Preacher. It is true that, as his devoted wife playfully said, he changed his views every two years, yet his devotion to his altruistic creed—the creed of his youth, as we have seen—was so firm that neither the dying adjurations of his friend Turgenev nor the clamors of the forty-five peoples into whose separate languages his writings have been translated could induce him to return to fiction—he felt that the mantle of a new spiritual leadership was upon his shoulders, and thenceforward the story-teller's art, when exercised at all, was to be merely a means to the ulterior end of teaching.

A great number of didactic essays wearing the transparent gauze of fiction came from Tolstoi's pen in this period, as well as many religious and ethical treatises, besides one astounding, ideal-smashing discussion, "What is Art?" Radicalism is the native air of reform, and our author was fond of drastic measures in practice and in theory.

The communism of his middle period found new emphasis in the later long essay, "What, Then, Must be Done?" Yet his was a directly contrary individualism of personal philosophy. Contradictory again was his abandonment of the city and adoption of the peasant life on his own estates. Indeed, one looks in vain for consistency in the working-out of his whole career; and yet, while the general course swerved startlingly time and again, no one could doubt the naïve sincerity of this sophisticated, simple mind, this nobleman peasant, this iconoclastic gentle man, this nihilistic Christian, this pessimistic idealist, this contradictory soul of single purpose, this incarnation of selfish unselfishness. For there can be no doubt that Tolstoi's character was greater than his confused system of ethics, just as his intellect was greater than his philosophy. Think of the supreme selfless egoism that could permit a wife with whom he lived as with a sister for years—probably ever since he propounded his extreme marital theories in "The Kreutzer Sonata"—to copy as often as ten times the myriad pages of his works, all laboriously by hand! And yet, because his followers demanded that he should exemplify his doctrines, and partly also because this eighty-two-year-old father of ten children could not live peacefully under stress of the divided beliefs of the home, he broke the heart of this devoted woman by leaving home secretly by night, and died thus in retreat shortly after, November 20 (O. S. Nov. 7), 1910. For four days the Countess Sophia was beneath the roof where her husband lay ill, yet only at the last did she

venture to come into his room, drop on her knees by his bedside, and kiss the hand that for conscience' sake had smitten her! Strange contradiction of human life when this idealizer of family love, this apostle of gentleness, this generous soul who could withhold nothing from the needy, make over his estate to his family years before he died, refuse to receive royalties from his books, beg the public to forget his masterpieces of fiction and read only his tractates, labor in the fields and eat peasant bread—when this great soul could love-starve the aged helpmeet who had been his strength for three-score years!

---

In the midst of so many vague and divergent expressions throughout his whole literary career, and especially in “My Religion” and “Resurrection,”

it is difficult to crystallize what Tolstoi taught. But this seems to me to be the gist: We have two natures: the animal nature, which decays and dies, and the spiritual, which lives forever. Life consists in doing those things which gratify our desires, and thus bring happiness.

But when we attempt to live and gain happiness by the gratification of our animal natures we meet only disappointment, for animal desires can never be really satisfied. Therefore we need to be regenerated, which is nothing more than the enthronement of our spiritual natures and the denying or casting-out of our animal natures.

The gratification of our spiritual selves is found in Love, the only good, and the essence of love consists not in self-pleasing but in seeking our happiness in the happiness and well-being of others. Thus do we obey the law of God and become one with Him. In the exercise of our desires for the well-being of others we will not only deny ourselves all carnal desires, but never oppose force by force—love will be sufficient to overcome all enemies. We must not even flee from suffering, danger, or death, but accept each as good, whereupon it will cease to have power to harm us. This life of

love is opposed to all selfish acquisition of property. To be truly happy, we must get back to the soil, abandon the artificialities of city life, labor for our food, and give to others.

Though Tolstoi turned so often, and finally without backsliding, to the peasant class, he did not so much champion their cause as he gemmed a crown for the obscure life as such. He could not pity those whose ways were laborious, because to him no other career than bodily toil could bring the highest good. The outbursting, fiercely passionate soul of all his later years was for the pitiable masses who still chose swords rather than plowshares, who preferred a lawsuit to a loss, who loved the city more than the country, who saw joy in the factory and none in the farm.

Those who have only a shivering admiration for the terrors of Russian fiction in general will find in Tolstoi's short-stories much that is sweet and gentle; yet, being the most Russian of all Russian fiction-writers, he could but cry aloud with the pity of his people. But greater than his pity was his passion for preaching.

Sermons big and little lurk in every corner of his stories to fix you with their relentless eyes.

Even when the tale is not clearly didactic, a swift vision of moral relations is sure to come to him who reads. For an instance, take "My Dream," the story of a Russian prince whose daughter runs away with a married man and bears him a child. At length the sister-in-law of the prince pleads with him to forgive his daughter.

Here is his severe reply:

"I have suffered enough. I have now but one desire, and that is to put her in such a position that she will be independent of others, and that she shall have no further need of communicating with me. Then she can live her own life, and my family and I need know nothing more about her. That is all I can do."

But the woman-heart crystallizes the teaching of the story when she replies:

"Michael, you say nothing but 'I.' She too is 'I.'"

There is a fine, high spirit, too, in "Where Love is, There God is Also."

Martin Andyeich was an honest Russian cobbler whose wife and children had died, leaving him with but one child, a small boy, upon whom he had set his heart. But that child also died, and Martin reproached God. At length a pilgrim monk directed him to the gospels, and the cobbler became a devout follower of their teachings.

One day he heard a Voice which bade him look tomorrow into the street, for Christ would come to him. The Lord did not appear, however, and for a long while the only one with whom Martin conversed was a chilled old snow-sweeper, to whom the cobbler gave hot tea to drink, as he explained to him the gospel; after which the grateful old man left. Martin continued to look for Christ, but He did not come—though he did see a poorly clad woman with a little child. These he fed and warmed, hearing her story and bestowing an old jacket to cover her thin summer garments.

He next acted as mediator between an old woman and a mischievous boy who had stolen her apples; and to her also he expounded the new truth which had possessed him—the doctrine of love. Thus all day long he had looked for the Christ and had not seen him. But now as he returned to his cellar a Presence declared itself as He who had said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” “And Martin then understood that his dream had not deceived him, and that the Saviour had really come to him that day, and he had really received Him.”

One of the stories in Tolstoi’s earlier style is “A Prisoner in the Caucasus.”

Zhilin was an officer in the Caucasus in wartime.

His aged mother persuaded him to come home once more to see her, and to marry the girl she had chosen to be his bride. The roads were impassable. The Tartars killed or carried into the mountains all Russians they captured. For this reason a military escort passed twice a week from fortress to fortress. Travelling thus, Zhilin became impatient at delays and decided to ride on alone. Kostuilin, another mounted officer, decided to go with him. They had not gone far when they were taken by the Tartars, bound, and held in a Tartar village for ransom. After many weeks, they escaped, only to be retaken and brought back to the village. And now the hut in which they

were thrown and their food were worse than before. Again, after many weeks, Zhilin, with the aid of a Tartar maid, escaped, and finally reached the fortress. "You see," he told his comrades, "I was going home to be married. But no; that is evidently not to be my fate." Eventually he and his comrades ransomed Kostuilin for five thousand rubles.

I relate this perfectly plotless tale to show how on a slender thread of actual incident Tolstoi could hang a tremendous weight, for this story, with its naked truth-telling as to conditions, forced the government to act, by the sheer force of public opinion, and this is a miracle in Russia.

Another plotless story whose ten thousand words pile up a tremendous impression of character is "An Old Acquaintance." The narrative, told in the first person by Prince Nelshiludof, is of how, during an expedition in the Caucasus, he met an acquaintance from Moscow. The splendor of the night in the open and the recreations of the officers are given in gems of description.

During a game of skittles, Guskof, a cashiered officer who now lives with the adjutant, comes to the prince, who seems faintly to recollect having met him before. After some general conversation, the officers retire for either sleep or gambling, leaving the prince and Guskof alone.

Upon being asked if they had not met before, Guskof reminds the prince of their having met at the home of Guskof's sister in Moscow, and this leads to further reminiscences.

During a long walk that night, Guskof, who constantly by his own story exhibits his weakness of character, tells how he once was of the highest society of St. Petersburg, but had been—through a liaison and a resulting duel—put under arrest and later cashiered. But this weakness is further shown when he goes on to lament his treatment at the hands of other officers with whom he comes in contact. He expresses a feeling of great disgust at their mode of spending their leisure hours. He admits that he is a moral coward—which is proven later. At length, after further conversation, which inspires a mixed feeling of disgust and pity in the prince, Guskof borrows from him some money. Suddenly, the bursting of a shell causes Guskof to cringe in abject terror, and in the confusion he disappears, but later is seen by the prince in a tent offering in a maudlin voice the money which he had borrowed, and boasting of how "his friend the

prince” was rich, and how he had just gotten ten rubles from him.

Perhaps the pity of life, and the tragic results of its sins, are nowhere more piercingly set forth than in Tolstoi’s short-story “Korney Vasiliev”—structurally, his most perfect little fiction, for generally situation rather than plot makes the stronger appeal to our author.

Korney, a well-to-do merchant, after a temporary absence, is returning to his home. While en route, Kuzma, his driver, tells him that Martha, Korney’s wife, has taken a new workman in the house—Yevstiquey, her former lover, and that she is again living with him. The affair, says Kuzma, is the talk of the village.

Korney does not know whether to believe the unreliable Kuzma, but on arriving home sets out to find out for himself. He distributes the presents he had brought back with him—one for his little daughter Agatha, one for his son Theodore, one for his wife, and so on. At bedtime, no longer able to restrain himself, he blurts out his suspicions to his wife, who first ridicules them, but finally, under her husband’s blows, admits their truth, and spitefully suggests that little Agatha is not a child of Korney’s, but of Yevstiquey’s.

The child, coming into the room, is  
brutally used by him—her arm being broken.

At the end of this violent scene, Korney leaves his home.

After seventeen years, now a broken old man, Korney is returning home, begging his way. After he left his wife he had taken to drink, spent all his money, and, being unreliable, no one would keep him long at work. The idea takes hold of him that it is his wife who has been the cause of all his misery, and his one thought is, before she dies, to go to her and show her what she has made of him. He is very weak, but manages to make his way to a village, where a kindly young peasant woman, seeing his plight, takes him in for the night and gives him food, drink, and shelter.

Noticing that she has a lame arm, he mentions it, and the fact is revealed that she is Agatha, in whose eyes he recognizes Yevstiquey. He breaks down, but does not reveal himself, though in his heart he is sorry for what he did to the girl.

In the morning he trudges on toward his wife's village. He knocks on the door, and a woman comes out. He recognizes his wife, but how old and haggard she has grown—she who had been so beautiful and so strong! And all the resentment vanishes from his heart, and in its place springs up a terrible pity. Everything else about the place seems also to have undergone change. Even after he says appealingly, "Martha, let us die together!" she still pretends not to recognize him, takes him for a tramp, and tells him to go from the door. However, his son Theodore—an image of his father when he was young—takes pity on the old man, not knowing who he is, and, angry at his mother for her unkindness, brings to the old man some black bread. The father is touched, and, even weaker than he was, drags himself back to Agatha's village and begs for shelter, which is given him.

In the meantime, Martha's conscience gives her no peace, and, learning what direction old Korney has taken, she follows. Arrived at her daughter's house, she finds a crowd there mourning the old man, who has died, and from his dignified old face she does not know whether he had forgiven her or not.

---

The story that follows in translation is one of the most representative of all the Russian's shorter work. It speaks its own praises.

## A LONG EXILE

(Early title, “God Sees the Truth, but Bides His Time”)

*By Lyoff Tolstoi*

In the town of Vladimir there lived a young merchant, Aksenof by name. He owned two shops and a home.

Aksenof was a fair, curly-headed, handsome fellow, always jolly and singing. In his youth, Aksenof drank much, and when he was intoxicated his ways were rough. Since his marriage, however, he had stopped drinking, except upon rare occasions.

One day, in summer, Aksenof prepared to go to Nijni Novgorod, to the fair. When he was bidding good-by to his wife she said to him:

“Ivan Dmitrievich,<sup>[4]</sup> don’t go this time. I dreamt a bad dream about you.”

Aksenof laughed and replied:

“You are always afraid that I might get a bit jolly at the fair!”

His wife said:

“I myself hardly know why I’m afraid, but I dreamt evil. I dreamt that you came home from town, and took off your hat; and I saw that your head was gray.”

Aksenof laughed.

“Well, that means good luck. You’ll see. I’ll make some nice bargains, and bring fine presents home.”

He bid his family farewell, and departed.

In the middle of his journey he met a merchant he knew, and they took lodgings together for the night. First they drank tea, and then they went to sleep in separate rooms which were near each other. Aksenof was not a heavy sleeper. Awaking in the middle of the night, and wishing to take advantage of its cool for travelling, he roused the driver and ordered him to harness the carriage. Having paid his host, he took his departure.

After he had covered some forty versts, he stopped again for food; and, having rested and had his dinner in the shelter of the hotel, he ordered tea, got hold of a guitar, and began to play. Suddenly there arrived a troika, jingling its bells, and from the carriage descended an official, accompanied by two soldiers. He approached Aksenof and asked, “Who are you? Where are you from?” Aksenof answered properly, and invited the official to tea. The latter, however, persisted in his inquiries: “Where did you sleep the past night?”... “Alone or with the merchant?”... “Did you see the merchant in the morning?”... “Why did you depart so early from the hotel?” Aksenof told all as it happened, and added, “Why do you ask all these questions? I’m not a thief or a highwayman. I’m travelling on my business, and I do not see why I should be asked questions.”

It was then that the official called to the soldiers, and said:

“I am a police official, and I am asking these questions because the merchant with whom you lodged the past night has been found murdered. Show us your things.... Search him!”

They entered the room, seized his travelling bag and sack, and started to unbind and search. Suddenly the official brought forth a knife from the sack, and roared out:

“Whose knife is this?”

Aksenof looked, and saw that a knife smeared with blood had been taken out of his sack, and he was frightened.

“And why is there blood on this knife?”

Aksenof wished to reply, but he couldn't utter a word.

“I—I don't know. I—the knife is—I—not mine——”

Then the official said:

“This morning the merchant was found stabbed in his bed. It wasn't possible for any one else to do it. The house was locked from the inside, and there was no one else in the house but you. Besides, the knife covered with blood has been found in your sack; and your face too shows it. Tell me, how did you kill him, and how much money did you get?”

Aksenof swore that he was not the guilty man, that he did not see the merchant after he had had tea with him, that the eight thousand rubles in his possession were his own money, and that the knife was not his. But his voice quavered, his face was pale, and he trembled from head to foot, like one guilty.

The official called the soldiers, ordered him bound and taken into the carriage. When, with his feet fast, he was thrust into the carriage, Aksenof crossed himself and began to cry. Aksenof's things and money were taken from him, and he was sent to prison in a near-by city. Inquiries were made in Vladimir to find out what sort of man he was, and it was generally agreed among the merchants and inhabitants of the city that while from the time of his youth Aksenof drank and had had a good time, he was a good-hearted man. Then began his trial. The charge against him was that he had killed the merchant and had stolen his twenty thousand rubles.

Aksenof's wife suffered intensely, and did not know what to think. Her children were still young, one a suckling. She took them all with her and arrived in the city where her husband was imprisoned. At first she was refused admission, but after many petitions she was led to her husband. When she saw him in prison apparel, in chains, among a lot of cut-throats, she fell to the ground, and it was a long time before she came to herself. Then she placed her children around her, sat down at his side, and began to tell him all about the domestic affairs and to ask him about all that had happened to him. After he had told her all, she said:

“Well, what's to be done now?”

He replied:

“It is necessary to send a petition to the Czar. It is wrong to let an innocent person suffer.”

To this, his wife said that a petition to the Czar had already been sent, but that it had not reached him. Thereupon Aksenof grew silent, and seemed much downcast. Then she reminded him:

“There was something, after all, in that dream—do you remember?—in which I saw you gray-headed. There, from sorrow you’ve really grown gray. You shouldn’t have gone on the journey.”

And as she ran her fingers through his hair, she said:

“Vania, my dear one, tell your wife the truth: didn’t you really do it?”

Aksenof replied, “And you too believe it!” He covered his face with his hands and wept. Later a soldier entered, and said that it was time for the visitors to depart. And Aksenof for the last time bid farewell to his family.

After his wife had gone, Aksenof began to recall his conversation with her. When he remembered that his wife too suspected him and asked him whether he had killed the merchant, he said to himself, “Now I see that, except God, no one can know the truth, and that it is only to Him we must appeal, and then await His mercy.” From that time on, Aksenof ceased to send petitions, ceased to hope, and only prayed to God.

Aksenof was sentenced to the knout and hard labor.

The sentence was carried out. He was lashed with the knout, and when the wounds healed he was driven with other convicts to Siberia.

In Siberia the convict lived twenty-six years, doing hard labor. The hair on his head grew white like snow, while his beard grew long, sparse, and gray. All his joy was gone. He was bent, walked slowly, said little, never laughed, and prayed to God often.

In prison Aksenof learned to make boots, and with the money earned thereby he purchased the Books of the Martyrs and read them when there was sufficient light in his cell; but on holidays he attended the prison chapel, read the Apostles, and sang in the choir—his voice still remained good. The authorities liked Aksenof for his quiet behavior, while his prison

comrades held him in esteem and called him “grandfather” and “holy man.” When the prisoners had any petitions to make to the authorities they always sent Aksenof as their spokesman; and when they had any quarrels among themselves, they always came before Aksenof for judgment.

From home Aksenof received no letters, and he did not know whether or not his wife and children were alive.

Once a new batch of convicts arrived at the prison. In the evening all the old convicts gathered around the new arrivals and put all sorts of questions to them, as to what town or village they had come from, and for what crime they had been sentenced. Aksenof also sat down on a bench near the new convicts, and, hanging his head, listened to what was being said. Among the new convicts was a tall, robust old man of sixty, with gray, trimmed beard. He was telling why he was sent away. He said:

“Well, brothers, it wasn’t for anything that I’ve got here. I unharnessed a horse from a shed. Got caught; stole the horse, they said. ‘I only wished to get there quicker,’ said I, ‘and I let the horse loose. And the driver was a friend of mine, besides. There’s nothing wrong in that,’ said I. ‘No,’ they said; ‘you stole the horse.’ But they couldn’t really say what and where I stole. Well, I’ve done things in my time for which I should have got here long ago if they had only caught me at it; but this once I’ve been driven here not according to law. To be honest, I’ve been in Siberia, but didn’t remain long.”

“Where do you come from?” asked one of the convicts.

“I’m from the town Vladimir, native of the place. I’m called Makar—and my paternal name Semenovich.”

Aksenof raised his head and asked:

“And have you heard, Semenich, in Vladimir town, of the Aksenofs, merchants? Are they alive?”

“To be sure, I’ve heard! They are rich merchants, though their father is in Siberia—a sinner like the rest of us. And you, old man, why are you here?”

Aksenof did not like to talk about his sorrow; so he sighed and said:

“For my sins I’ve been here twenty-six years at hard labor.”

Makar Semenov, however, persisted:

“But what sort of sins?”

Aksenof replied, “I must have deserved what I got.” Further than that he would not say, but the other prisoners told the new-comer why Aksenof was sent to Siberia. They related how some one had murdered a merchant while on a journey and had foisted the knife upon Aksenof, who had been sentenced, though innocent.

When Makar Semenov heard this he looked at Aksenof, clapped his hands upon his knees, and exclaimed:

“Well, that’s strange! Certainly is strange! You’ve grown old, grandfather!”

The rest began to ask him why he was astonished, and where he had seen Aksenof, but Makar Semenov made no reply. He only said:

“A miracle, brothers! That we should meet here!”

And these words suggested to Aksenof the thought that this man knew perhaps who had killed the merchant. He asked:

“Tell me, Semenich, have you heard about my case before? And have you ever seen me before?”

“Why shouldn’t I have heard! News flies quickly. But it was such a long time ago that what I had heard I had forgotten,” said Makar Semenov.

“Perhaps you’ve heard who killed the merchant?” asked Aksenof.

Makar Semenov broke into a laugh and said:

“To be sure, he killed him in whose sack was found the knife. And if some one else did slip the knife in the sack! Not caught, not a thief! Besides, how could any one have slipped the knife into the sack, since it was at your very head? You surely would have heard.”

When Aksenof heard these words, the thought came to him that this very man had killed the merchant. He arose and went away. Aksenof could not sleep the entire night. A melancholy came upon him, and images began to rise up before him. First, he imagined he saw his wife the same as she looked when she saw him off to the fair for the last time. He saw her as in life; he saw her face and eyes, and heard how she spoke and laughed. Then

he saw his children as they were then, little ones, one in a fur coat, another at the breast. And he recalled himself as he had been once—joyous, young; he recalled too how he looked as he sat in the hotel when they arrested him; how he played on the guitar, and how happy he had felt at that moment. And he recalled the place of execution, where he was knouted, and the man with the knout, and the throng all around, and the chains, and the convicts, and all the twenty-six years of his prison life; and his old age too he recalled. And such a melancholy came upon Aksenof, that death itself would have been welcome.

“And all on account of that scoundrel!” thought Aksenof.

Then came into his heart such a vindictiveness against Makar Semenof that he felt willing to die himself if only to revenge himself upon him. He read prayers the entire night, but could not calm himself. Next day he did not go near Makar Semenof and did not look at him.

So passed two weeks. Aksenof could not sleep nights, and such a melancholy would come upon him that he did not know what to do with himself.

Once at night, walking through the prison, he observed a stirring of soil under one of the sleeping-bunks. He stopped to look. Suddenly Makar Semenof leaped from under the bunk, and his frightened eyes looked at Aksenof. Aksenof wished to go on, so as not to notice him; but Makar caught him by the hand, and told him how he had dug a passage under the walls, and how every day he disposed of dirt by carrying it out with him in his boots and emptying it in the street, when sent out to work. He continued:

“Only be silent, old man, and I’ll show you the way out. But if you tell, I’ll get a knouting, which will be the worse for you—I’ll kill you.”

When Aksenof looked at his enemy, he trembled from wrath, released his hand from Makar’s, and said:

“I have no reason for escaping, and you can’t kill me, for you’ve killed me long ago. As to telling on you, I may do it or not—as God wills it, so I shall do.”

The next day, when the convicts were sent out to work, the soldiers noticed that Makar Semenof was emptying dirt out of his boots. They searched the

prison and discovered a hole. Presently the superintendent arrived and questioned every one who had dug the hole. All denied it. Those who knew would not give Makar Semenov away, because they knew that for this affair he would be knouted half to death. Then the superintendent turned to Aksenof. He knew that the exile was a just man, and so he said to him:

“Old man, I know you to be truthful; tell me, before God, who did this?”

Makar Semenov stood there as if nothing were happening, looked at the superintendent, and did not even glance at Aksenof. Aksenof, however, stood with his hands and lips all a-tremble, and for a long time he could not utter a word. He thought, “Suppose I should hide him—but why should I forgive him, when he has ruined me? Why shouldn’t I be revenged for my misery? Then, again, to tell on him would mean a knouting. But what put the thought into my head? Would it make my burden lighter to bear?”

The superintendent repeated his question:

“Now, come, old man, tell the truth: who did the digging?”

Aksenof glanced at Makar Semenov and said:

“I can’t tell, Your Honor. God forbids me to tell. And I won’t tell, do with me whatsoever you will—I’m at your mercy.”

The superintendent struggled with him, but Aksenof would say nothing more.

So they never knew who had dug the hole.

The next night, when Aksenof lay down in his bunk and had hardly closed his eyes, he became conscious that some one came near him and sat down at his feet. He looked into the dark and recognized Makar. Aksenof spoke first:

“What more do you want from me? What are you up to now?”

Makar Semenov remained silent. Aksenof raised himself and said:

“What is it you want? Begone! Or else I’ll call a soldier.”

Makar Semenov bent over close to Aksenof and said in a whisper:

“Ivan Dmitrievich, forgive me!”

Aksenof said, "Forgive you for what?"

"It was I who killed the merchant, and it was I who slipped the knife into your sack. I wished to kill you too, but there was a noise outdoors, and so I slipped the knife in and crawled out through the window."

Aksenof was silent, and he did not know what to say. Makar Semenov let himself down from the bunk, performed a genuflection, and said:

"Ivan Dmitrievich, forgive me, forgive me for God's sake! I will let them know that I killed the merchant, and they will let you go free. Then you can return home."

Aksenof replied:

"It is easy for you to say that, but it is for me to suffer. Where can I go now?... My wife is dead; my children have forgotten me; there is nowhere for me to go...."

Makar Semenov did not rise from the ground; he beat his head against the earth and continued saying:

"Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me! When they put the lash on me, it was much easier for me to bear than to look at you now.... And to think that you had pity on me—and did not tell. Forgive me, for the sake of Christ! Forgive me, accursed wretch that I am!"

Then he began to weep.

When Aksenof saw that Makar Semenov was weeping, he too wept, and said:

"God will forgive you; perhaps I am a hundredfold worse than you!"

And all at once he felt as if something were lifted from his soul. And he ceased to yearn for home, and did not wish to leave the prison, but thought only of the final hour.

Makar Semenov did not listen to Aksenof, and confessed his guilt. But when Aksenof's release arrived, he was already dead.

## FOOTNOTES:

[4] It will be observed that Aksenof is also called Dmitrievich (*Son of Dmitri*) and Dmitrich, and that the name of another character is variously spelled Semenof, Semenovich, and Semenich. The translator has preserved these forms as they are in the original. Such changing of name-forms is by no means uncommon in Russian stories.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SHORT-STORY  
MASTERPIECES, VOL. III - RUSSIAN \*\*\*

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

# THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at [www.gutenberg.org/license](http://www.gutenberg.org/license).

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If you are not located in the United States, you

will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website ([www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- • You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- • You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- • You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- • You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER

WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at [www.gutenberg.org/contact](http://www.gutenberg.org/contact)

#### Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States.

Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit

[www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate).

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including

checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: [www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate).

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.