**A.S.Pushkin. Eugene Onegin (tr.Ch.Johnston)**

**Пушкин. Евгений Онегин (пер. на англ. Ч. Джонстона) \***

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Translation by Charles H. Johnston.

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1 Notes are at end of each chapter.

**Translator's note**

Few foreign masterpieces can have suffered more than *Eugene Onegin* from

the English translator's failure to convey anything more than -- at best --

the literal meaning. It is as if a sound-proof wall separated Pushkin's

poetic novel from the English-reading world. There is a whole magic which

goes by default: the touching lyrical beauty, the cynical wit of the poem;

the psychological insight, the devious narrative skill, the thrilling,

compulsive grip of the novel; the tremendous gusto and swing and *panache* of

the whole performance.

Vladimir Nabokov's rendering into unrhymed iambics reproduces the exact

meaning, but explicitly disclaims any further ambition. While Nabokov admits

that in losing its rhyme the work loses its ``bloom'' he argues,

irrefutably, that no rhyming version can be literally accurate. It can

however certainly strive for something else. It can attempt to produce some

substitute for the ``bloom'' of the original, without which the work is

completely dead. It can try to convey the poet's tone of voice, whether

world-weary or romantic, the sparkle of his jokes, the flavour of his

epigrams, the snap of his final couplets. None of these effects can emerge

from a purely literal unrhymed translation. In fact, to offset the

inevitable loss in verbal exactness, a rhyming version can aim at a

different sort of accuracy, an equivalence or parallelism conveying, however

faintly, the impact of the original.

Apart from the overall difficulty of his task, the translator with

ambitions of this type will find that Pushkin's work presents him with two

particular problems.

The *brio* of the Russian text partly depends on a lavish use not only of

French and other foreign words, but of slang and of audacious Byronic-type

rhymes. If the translator produces nothing comparable, he is emasculating

his original. If he attempts to follow suit, he must do all he can to avoid

the pitfalls of the embarrassing, the facetious and the arch. {29}

Secondly, he must be on his guard against the ludicrous effect that the

feminine ending (for instance the *pleasure/measure* rhyme, which is so much

derided by Nabokov) can all too easily produce in English. He must not sing,

like Prince Gremin in one English version of Chaykovsky's opera:

``I wouldn't be remotely human

Did I not love the Little Woman.''

(The libretto of the opera, which was written and first performed more

than forty years after Pushkin's death, is by Chaykovsky himself and

Konstantin Shilovsky, a minor poet of the time. It is nominally based on

Pushkin's text, but in fact the relationship is not very close.)

Anyway, it should be possible now, with the help of Nabokov's literal

translation and commentary, to produce a reasonably accurate rhyming version

of Pushkin's work which can at least be read with pleasure and

entertainment, and which, ideally, might even be able to stand on its own

feet as English. That, in all humility, is the aim of the present text.

Acknowledgements are due to Messrs. Routledge and Kegan Paul for

permission to quote from Vladimir Nabokov's notes in volumes 2 and 3 of his

edition of *Eugene Onegin* (London, 1964. Revised edition, 1976).

I am much indebted to my friends Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, for his

interest and support, and Sir John Balfour, for his searching and

constructive criticism of the translation; to Professor Gleb Struve, for

generously giving me the benefit of his unrivalled scholarship and insight;

above all, to my wife Natasha, for her loving encouragement.

C. H. J.

{30}

**x x x**

Pétri de vanité, il avait encore plus de cette espèce d'orgueil qui

fait avouer avec la même indifférence les bonnes comme les mauvaises

actions, suite d'un sentiment de supériorité peut-être imaginaire.

*(Tiré d'une lettre particulière)*

{31} {32}

**x x x**

To Peter Alexandrovich Pletnev

Heedless of the proud world's enjoyment,

I prize the attention of my friends,

and only wish that my employment

could have been turned to worthier ends --

worthier of you in the perfection

your soul displays, in holy dreams,

in simple but sublime reflection,

in limpid verse that lives and gleams.

But, as it is, this pied collection

begs your indulgence -- it's been spun

from threads both sad and humoristic,

themes popular or idealistic,

products of carefree hours, of fun,

of sleeplessness, faint inspirations,

of powers unripe, or on the wane,

of reason's icy intimations,

and records of a heart in pain.

{33} {34}

**Chapter One**

To live, it hurries, and to feel it hastes.

Prince Vyazemsky

I

``My uncle -- high ideals inspire him;

but when past joking he fell sick,

he really forced one to admire him --

and never played a shrewder trick.

Let others learn from his example!

But God, how deadly dull to sample

sickroom attendance night and day

and never stir a foot away!

And the sly baseness, fit to throttle,

of entertaining the half-dead:

one smoothes the pillows down in bed,

and glumly serves the medicine bottle,

and sighs, and asks oneself all through:

"When will the devil come for you?"''

{35}

II

Such were a young rake's meditations --

by will of Zeus, the high and just,

the legatee of his relations --

as horses whirled him through the dust.

Friends of my Ruslan and Lyudmila,

without preliminary feeler

let me acquaint you on the nail

with this the hero of my tale:

Onegin, my good friend, was littered

and bred upon the Neva's brink,

where you were born as well, I think,

reader, or where you've shone and glittered!

There once I too strolled back and forth:

but I'm allergic to the North...[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_1)

III

After a fine career, his father

had only debts on which to live.

He gave three balls a year, and rather

promptly had nothing left to give.

Fate saved Evgeny from perdition:

at first Madame gave him tuition,

from her Monsieur took on the child.

He was sweet-natured, and yet wild.

Monsieur l'Abbé, the mediocre,

reluctant to exhaust the boy,

treated his lessons as a ploy.

No moralizing from this joker;

a mild rebuke was his worst mark,

and then a stroll in Letny Park.

{36}

IV

But when the hour of youthful passion

struck for Evgeny, with its play

of hope and gloom, romantic-fashion,

it was goodbye, Monsieur l'Abbé.

Eugene was free, and as a dresser

made London's *dandy* his professor.

His hair was fashionably curled,

and now at last he saw the World.

In French Onegin had perfected

proficiency to speak and write,

in the mazurka he was light,

his bow was wholly unaffected.

The World found this enough to treat

Eugene as clever, and quite sweet.

V

We all meandered through our schooling

haphazard; so, to God be thanks,

it's easy, without too much fooling,

to pass for cultured in our ranks.

Onegin was assessed by many

(critical judges, strict as any)

as well-read, though of pedant cast.

Unforced, as conversation passed,

he had the talent of saluting

felicitously every theme,

of listening like a judge-supreme

while serious topics were disputing,

or, with an epigram-surprise,

of kindling smiles in ladies' eyes.

{37}

VI

Now Latin's gone quite out of favour;

yet, truthfully and not in chaff,

Onegin knew enough to savour

the meaning of an epigraph,

make Juvenal his text, or better

add *vale* when he signed a letter;

stumblingly call to mind he did

two verses of the Aeneid.

He lacked the slightest predilection

for raking up historic dust

or stirring annalistic must;

but groomed an anecdote-collection

that stretched from Romulus in his prime

across the years to our own time.

VII

He was without that dithyrambic

frenzy which wrecks our lives for sound,

and telling trochee from iambic

was quite beyond his wit, we found.

He cursed Theocritus and Homer,

in Adam Smith was his diploma;

our deep economist had got

the gift of recognizing what

a nation's wealth is, what augments it,

and how a country lives, and why

it needs no gold if a supply

of *simple product* supplements it.

His father failed to understand

and took a mortgage on his land.

{38}

VIII

Evgeny's total store of knowledge

I have no leisure to recall;

where he was master of his college,

the art he'd studied best of all,

his young heyday's supreme employment,

its work, its torture, its enjoyment,

what occupied his chafing powers

throughout the boredom of the hours --

this was the science of that passion

which Ovid sang, for which the bard,

condemned to a lifetime of hard,

ended his wild career of fashion

deep in Moldavia the abhorred,

far, far from Italy, his adored.

(IX,[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_2)) X

How early he'd learnt to dissemble,

to hide a hope, to make a show

of jealousy, to seem to tremble

or pine, persuade of yes or no,

and act the humble or imperious,

the indifferent, or the deadly serious!

In languid silence, or the flame

of eloquence, and just the same

in casual letters of confession --

one thing inspired his breath, his heart,

and self-oblivion was his art!

How soft his glance, or at discretion

how bold or bashful there, and here

how brilliant with its instant tear!

{39}

XI

How well he donned new shapes and sizes --

startling the ingenuous with a jest,

frightening with all despair's disguises,

amusing, flattering with the best,

stalking the momentary weakness,

with passion and with shrewd obliqueness

swaying the artless, waiting on

for unmeant kindness -- how he shone!

then he'd implore a declaration,

and listen for the heart's first sound,

pursue his love -- and at one bound

secure a secret assignation,

then afterwards, alone, at ease,

impart such lessons as you please!

XII

How early on he learnt to trouble

the heart of the professional flirt!

When out to burst a rival's bubble,

how well he knew the way to hurt --

what traps he'd set him, with what malice

he'd pop the poison in his chalice!

But you, blest husbands, to the end

you kept your friendship with our friend:

the subtle spouse was just as loyal --

Faublas'[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_3) disciple for an age --

as was the old suspicious sage,

and the majestic, antlered royal,

always contented with his life,

and with his dinner, and his wife.

{40}

(XIII, XIV,) XV

Some days he's still in bed, and drowses,

when little notes come on a tray.

What? Invitations? Yes, three houses

have each asked him to a soirée:

a ball here, there a children's party;

where shall he go, my rogue, my hearty?

Which one comes first? It's just the same

to do them all is easy game.

Meanwhile, attired for morning strolling

complete with broad-brimmed bolivar,

Eugene attends the boulevard,

and there at large he goes patrolling

until Bréguet's unsleeping chime

advises him of dinner-time.

XVI

He mounts the sledge, with daylight fading:

``Make way, make way,'' goes up the shout;

his collar in its beaver braiding

glitters with hoar-frost all about.

He's flown to Talon's,[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_4) calculating

that there his friend Kavérin's[5](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_5) waiting;

he arrives -- the cork goes flying up,

wine of the Comet[6](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_6) fills the cup;

before him roast beef, red and gory,

and truffles, which have ever been

youth's choice, the flower of French cuisine:

and pâté, Strasbourg's deathless glory,

sits with Limburg's vivacious cheese

and *ananas,* the gold of trees.

{41}

XVII

More wine, he calls, to drench the flaming

fire of the cutlets' scalding fat,

when Bréguet's chime is heard proclaiming

the new ballet he should be at.

He's off -- this ruthless legislator

for the footlights, this fickle traitor

to all the most adored *actrices,*

this denizen of the *coulisses*

that world where every man's a critic

who'll clap an *entrechat,* or scoff

at Cleopatra, hiss her off,

boo Phaedra out as paralytic,

encore Moëna,[7](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_7) -- and rejoice

to know the audience hears his voice.

XVIII

Enchanted land! There like a lampion

that king of the satiric scene,

Fonvizin[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_8) sparkled, freedom's champion,

and the derivative Knyazhnín:[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_8)

there сzerov[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_8) shared the unwilling

tribute of tears, applause's shrilling,

with young Semyónova,[9](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_9) and there

our friend Katénin[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_8) brought to bear

once more Corneille's majestic story;

there caustic Shakhovskóy[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_8) came in

with comedies of swarm and din;

there Didelot[10](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_10) crowned himself with glory:

there, where the *coulisse* entrance went,

that's where my years of youth were spent.

{42}

XIX

My goddesses! Where are you banished?

lend ears to my lugubrious tone:

have other maidens, since you vanished,

taken your place, though not your throne?

your chorus, is it dead for ever?

Russia's Terpsichore, shall never

again I see your soulful flight?

shall my sad gaze no more alight

on features known, but to that dreary,

that alien scene must I now turn

my disillusioned glass, and yearn,

bored with hilarity, and weary,

and yawn in silence at the stage

as I recall a bygone age?

XX

The house is packed out; scintillating,

the boxes; boiling, pit and stalls;

the gallery claps -- it's bored with waiting --

and up the rustling curtain crawls.

Then with a half-ethereal splendour,

bound where the magic bow will send her,

Istómina,[11](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_11) thronged all around

by Naiads, one foot on the ground,

twirls the other slowly as she pleases,

then suddenly she's off, and there

she's up and flying through the air

like fluff before Aeolian breezes;

she'll spin this way and that, and beat

against each other swift, small feet.

{43}

XXI

Applause. Onegin enters -- passes

across the public's toes; he steers

straight to his stall, then turns his glasses

on unknown ladies in the tiers;

he's viewed the boxes without passion,

he's seen it all; with looks and fashion

he's dreadfully dissatisfied;

to gentlemen on every side

he's bowed politely; his attention

wanders in a distracted way

across the stage; he yawns: ``Ballet --

they all have richly earned a pension;''

he turns away: ``I've had enough --

now even Didelot's tedious stuff.''

XXII

Still tumbling, devil, snake and Cupid

on stage are thumping without cease;

Still in the porch, exhausted-stupid,

the footmen sleep on the *pelisses;*

the audience still is busy stamping,

still coughing, hissing, clapping, champing;

still everywhere the lamps are bright;

outside and in they star the night;

still shivering in the bitter weather

the horses fidget worse and worse;

the coachmen ring the fire, and curse

their lords, and thwack their palms together;

but Eugene's out from din and press:

by now he's driving home to dress.

{44}

XXIII

Shall I depict with expert knowledge

the cabinet behind the door

where the prize-boy of fashion's college

is dressed, undressed, and dressed once more?

Whatever for caprice of spending

ingenious London has been sending

across the Baltic in exchange

for wood and tallow; all the range

of useful objects that the curious

Parisian taste invents for one --

for friends of languor, or of fun,

or for the modishly luxurious --

all this, at eighteen years of age,

adorned the sanctum of our sage.

XXIV

Porcelain and bronzes on the table,

with amber pipes from Tsaregrad;[12](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_12)

such crystalled scents as best are able

to drive the swooning senses mad;

with combs, and steel utensils serving

as files, and scissors straight and curving,

brushes on thirty different scales;

brushes for teeth, brushes for nails.

Rousseau (forgive a short distraction)

could not conceive how solemn Grimm[13](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_13)

dared clean his nails in front of *him,*

the brilliant crackpot: this reaction

shows freedom's advocate, that strong

champion of rights, as in the wrong.

{45}

XXV

A man who's active and incisive

can yet keep nail-care much in mind:

why fight what's known to be decisive?

custom is despot of mankind.

Dressed like -- --,[14](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_14) duly dreading

the barbs that envy's always spreading,

Eugene's a pedant in his dress,

in fact a thorough fop, no less.

Three whole hours, at the least accounting,

he'll spend before the looking-glass,

then from his cabinet he'll pass

giddy as Venus when she's mounting

a masculine disguise to aid

her progress at the masquerade.

XXVI

Your curiosity is burning

to hear what latest modes require,

and so, before the world of learning,

I could describe here his attire;

and though to do so would be daring,

it's my profession; he was wearing --

but *pantaloons, waistcoat,* and *frock,*

these words are not of Russian stock:

I know (and seek your exculpation)

that even so my wretched style

already tends too much to smile

on words of foreign derivation,

though years ago I used to look

at the Academic Diction-book.

{46}

XXVII

That isn't our immediate worry:

we'd better hasten to the ball,

where, in a cab, and furious hurry,

Onegin has outrun us all.

Along the fronts of darkened houses,

along the street where slumber drowses,

twin lamps of serried coupés throw

a cheerful glimmer on the snow

and radiate a rainbow: blazing

with lampions studded all about

the sumptuous palais shines out;

shadows that flit behind the glazing

project in silhouette the tops

of ladies and of freakish fops.

XXVIII

Up to the porch our hero's driven:

in, past concierge, up marble stair

flown like an arrow, then he's given

a deft arrangement to his hair,

and entered. Ballroom overflowing...

and band already tired of blowing,

while a mazurka holds the crowd;

and everything is cramped and loud;

spurs of Chevalier Gardes are clinking,

dear ladies' feet fly past like hail,

and on their captivating trail

incendiary looks are slinking,

while roar of violins contrives

to drown the hiss of modish wives.

{47}

XXIX

In days of carefree aspirations,

the ballroom drove me off my head:

the safest place for declarations,

and where most surely notes are sped.

You husbands, deeply I respect you!

I'm at your service to protect you;

now pay attention, I beseech,

and take due warning from my speech.

You too, mamas, I pray attend it,

and watch your daughters closer yet,

yes, focus on them your lorgnette,

or else... or else, may God forfend it!

I only write like this, you know,

since I stopped sinning years ago.

XXX

Alas, on pleasure's wild variety

I've wasted too much life away!

But, did they not corrupt society,

I'd still like dances to this day:

the atmosphere of youth and madness,

the crush, the glitter and the gladness,

the ladies' calculated dress;

I love their feet -- though I confess

that all of Russia can't contribute

three pairs of handsome ones -- yet there

exists for me one special pair!

one pair! I pay them memory's tribute

though cold I am and sad; in sleep

the heartache that they bring lies deep.

{48}

XXXI

Oh, when, and to what desert banished,

madman, can you forget their print?

my little feet, where have you vanished,

what flowers of spring display your dint?

Nursed in the orient's languid weakness,

across our snows of northern bleakness

you left no steps that could be tracked:

you loved the opulent contact

of rugs, and carpets' rich refinement.

Was it for you that I became

long since unstirred by praise and fame

and fatherland and grim confinement?

The happiness of youth is dead,

just like, on turf, your fleeting tread.

XXXII

Diana's breast, the cheeks of Flora,

all these are charming! but to put

it frankly, I'm a firm adorer

of the Terpsichorean foot.

It fascinates by its assurance

of recompense beyond endurance,

and fastens, like a term of art,

the wilful fancies of the heart.

My love for it is just as tender,

under the table's linen shield,

on springtime grasses of the field,

in winter, on the cast-iron fender,

on ballroom's looking-glass parquet

or on the granite of the bay.

{49}

XXXIII

On the seashore, with storm impending,

how envious was I of the waves

each in tumultuous turn descending

to lie down at her feet like slaves!

I longed, like every breaker hissing,

to smother her dear feet with kissing.

No, never in the hottest fire

of boiling youth did I desire

with any torture so exquisite

to kiss Armida's lips, or seek

the flaming roses of a cheek,

or languid bosoms; and no visit

of raging passion's surge and roll

ever so roughly rocked my soul!

XXXIV

Another page of recollection:

sometimes, in reverie's sacred land,

I grasp a stirrup with affection,

I feel a small foot in my hand;

fancies once more are hotly bubbling,

once more that touch is fiercely troubling

the blood within my withered heart,

once more the love, once more the smart...

But, now I've praised the queens of fashion,

enough of my loquacious lyre:

they don't deserve what they inspire

in terms of poetry or passion --

their looks and language in deceit

are just as nimble as their feet.

{50}

XXXV

And Eugene? half-awake, half-drowsing,

from ball to bed behold him come;

while Petersburg's already rousing,

untirable, at sound of drum:

the merchant's up, the cabman's walking

towards his stall, the pedlar's hawking;

see with their jugs the milk-girls go

and crisply crunch the morning snow.

The city's early sounds awake her;

shutters are opened and the soft

blue smoke of chimneys goes aloft,

and more than once the German baker,

punctilious in his cotton cap,

has opened up his serving-trap.

XXXVI

Exhausted by the ballroom's clamour,

converting morning to midnight,

he sleeps, away from glare and glamour,

this child of luxury and delight.

Then, after midday he'll be waking;

his life till dawn's already making,

always monotonously gay,

tomorrow just like yesterday.

But was it happy, his employment,

his freedom, in his youth's first flower,

with brilliant conquests by the shower,

and every day its own enjoyment?

Was it to no effect that he,

at feasts, was strong and fancy-free?

{51}

XXXVII

No, early on his heart was cooling

and he was bored with social noise;

no, not for long were belles the ruling

objective of his thoughts and joys:

soon, infidelity proved cloying,

and friends and friendship, soul-destroying;

not every day could he wash down

his beefsteak with champagne, or drown

his Strasbourg pie, or point a moral,

full of his usual pith and wit,

with cranium aching fit to split;

and though he liked a fiery quarrel --

yet he fell out of love at last

with sabre's slash, and bullet's blast.

XXXVIII

The illness with which he'd been smitten

should have been analysed when caught,

something like *spleen,* that scourge of Britain,

or Russia's *chondria,* for short;

it mastered him in slow gradation;

thank God, he had no inclination

to blow his brains out, but in stead

to life grew colder than the dead.

So, like Childe Harold, glum, unpleasing,

he stalked the drawing-rooms, remote

from Boston's cloth or gossip's quote;

no glance so sweet, no sigh so teasing,

no, nothing caused his heart to stir,

and nothing pierced his senses' blur.

{52}

(XXXIX, XL, XLI,) XLII

Capricious belles of grand Society!

you were the first ones he forswore;

for in our time, beyond dubiety,

the highest circles are a bore.

It's true, I'll not misrepresent them,

some ladies preach from Say and Bentham,

but by and large their talk's a hash

of the most harmless, hopeless trash.

And what's more, they're so supercilious,

so pure, so spotless through and through,

so pious, and so clever too,

so circumspect, and so punctilious,

so virtuous that, no sooner seen,

at once they give a man the spleen.

XLIII

You too, prime beauties in your flower

who late at night are whirled away

by drozhkies jaunting at full power

over the Petersburg *pavé* --

he ended even your employment;

and in retreat from all enjoyment

locked himself up inside his den

and with a yawn took up his pen,

and tried to write, but a hard session

of work made him feel sick, and still

no word came flowing from his quill;

he failed to join that sharp profession

which I myself won't praise or blame

since I'm a member of the same.

{53}

XLIV

Idle again by dedication,

oppressed by emptiness of soul,

he strove to achieve the appropriation

of other's thought -- a splendid goal;

with shelves of books deployed for action,

he read, and read -- no satisfaction:

here's boredom, madness or pretence,

here there's no conscience, here no sense;

they're all chained up in different fetters,

the ancients have gone stiff and cold,

the moderns rage against the old.

He'd given up girls -- now gave up letters,

and hid the bookshelf's dusty stack

in taffeta of mourning black.

XLV

Escaped from social rhyme and reason,

retired, as he, from fashion's stream,

I was Onegin's friend that season.

I liked his quality, the dream

which held him silently subjected,

his strangeness, wholly unaffected,

his mind, so cold and so precise.

The bitterness was mine -- the ice

was his; we'd both drunk passion's chalice:

our lives were flat, and what had fired

both hearts to blaze had now expired;

there waited for us both the malice

of blind Fortuna and of men

in lives that were just dawning then.

{54}

XLVI

He who has lived and thought is certain

to scorn the men with whom he deals;

days that are lost behind the curtain,

ghostlike, must trouble him who feels --

for him all sham has found rejection,

he's gnawed by serpent Recollection,

and by Repentance. All this lends,

on most occasions between friends,

a great attraction to conversing.

At first Onegin's tongue produced

a haze in me, but I grew used

to his disputing and his cursing;

his virulence that made you smile,

his epigrams topped up with bile.

XLVII

How often, when the sky was glowing,

by Neva, on a summer night,

and when its waters were not showing,

in their gay glass, the borrowed light

of Dian's visage, in our fancies

recalling earlier time's romances,

recalling earlier loves, did we,

now sensitive, and now carefree,

drink in the midnight benediction,

the silence when our talk had ceased!

Like convicts in a dream released

from gaol to greenwood, by such fiction

we were swept off, in reverie's haze,

to the beginning of our days.

{55}

XLVIII

Evgeny stood, with soul regretful,

and leant upon the granite shelf;

he stood there, pensive and forgetful,

just as the Poet[15](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_15) paints himself.

Silence was everywhere enthralling;

just sentries to each other calling,

and then a drozhky's clopping sound

from Million Street[16](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_16) came floating round;

and then a boat, with oars a-swinging,

swam on the river's dreaming face,

and then, with an enchanting grace,

came distant horns, and gallant singing.

Yet sweeter far, at such a time,

the strain of Tasso's octave-rhyme!

XLIX

O Adrian waves, my invocation;

O Brenta, I'll see you in dream;

hear, once more filled with inspiration,

the magic voices of your stream,

sacred to children of Apollo!

Proud Albion's lyre is what I follow,

through it they're known to me, and kin.

Italian nights, when I'll drink in

your molten gold, your charmed infusion;

with a Venetian maiden who

can chatter, and be silent too,

I'll float in gondola's seclusion;

from her my lips will learn and mark

the tongue of love and of Petrarch.

{56}

L

When comes my moment to untether?

``it's time!'' and freedom hears my hail.

I walk the shore,[17](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_17) I watch the weather,

I signal to each passing sail.

Beneath storm's vestment, on the seaway,

battling along that watery freeway,

when shall I start on my escape?

It's time to drop astern the shape

of the dull shores of my disfavour,

and there, beneath your noonday sky,

my Africa,[18](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_18) where waves break high,

to mourn for Russia's gloomy savour,

land where I learned to love and weep,

land where my heart is buried deep.

LI

Eugene would willingly have started

with me to see an alien strand;

but soon the ways we trod were parted

for quite a while by fortune's hand.

His father died; and (as expected)

before Onegin there collected

the usurers' voracious tribe.

To private tastes we each subscribe:

Evgeny, hating litigation,

and satisfied with what he'd got,

made over to them his whole lot,

finding in that no deprivation --

or else, from far off, he could see

old Uncle's end was soon to be.

{57}

LII

In fact one day a note came flying

from the agent, with this tale to tell:

Uncle, in bed, and near to dying,

wished him to come and say farewell.

Evgeny read the sad epistle

and set off prompter than a whistle

as fast as post-horses could go,

already yawned before the show,

exercised, under lucre's banner,

in sighs and boredom and deceits

(my tale's beginning here repeats);

but, when he'd rushed to Uncle's manor,

a corpse on boards was all he found,

an offering ready for the ground.

LIII

The yard was bursting with dependants;

there gathered at the coffin-side

friends, foes, priests, guests, inured attendants

of every funeral far and wide;

they buried Uncle, congregated

to eat and drink, then separated

with grave goodbyes to the bereaved,

as if some goal had been achieved.

Eugene turned countryman. He tasted

the total ownership of woods,

mills, lands and waters -- he whose goods

till then had been dispersed and wasted --

and glad he was he'd thus arranged

for his old courses to be changed.

{58}

LIV

It all seemed new -- for two days only --

the coolness of the sombre glade,

the expanse of fields, so wide, so lonely,

the murmur where the streamlet played...

the third day, wood and hill and grazing

gripped him no more; soon they were raising

an urge to sleep; soon, clear as clear,

he saw that, as in cities, here

boredom has just as sure an entry,

although there are no streets, no cards,

no mansions, no ballrooms, no bards.

Yes, spleen was waiting like a sentry,

and dutifully shared his life

just like a shadow, or a wife.

LV

No, *I* was born for peace abounding

and country stillness: there the lyre

has voices that are more resounding,

poetic dreams, a brighter fire.

To harmless idleness devoted,

on waves of *far niente* floated,

I roam by the secluded lake.

And every morning I awake

to freedom, softness and enjoyment:

sleep much, read little, and put down

the thought of volatile renown.

Was it not in such sweet employment

such shadowy and leisured ways,

that once I spent my happiest days?

{59}

LVI

O flowers, and love, and rustic leisure,

o fields -- to you I'm vowed at heart.

I regularly take much pleasure

in showing how to tell apart

myself and Eugene, lest a reader

of mocking turn, or else a breeder

of calculated slander should,

spying my features, as he could,

put back the libel on the table

that, like proud Byron, I can draw

self-portraits only -- furthermore

the charge that poets are unable

to sing of others must imply

the poet's only theme is ``I.''

LVII

Poets, I'll say in this connection,

adore the love that comes in dream.

In time past, objects of affection

peopled my sleep, and to their theme

my soul in secret gave survival;

then from the Muse there came revival:

my carefree song would thus reveal

the mountain maiden,[19](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_19) my ideal,

and captive girls, by Salgir[20](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_6_20) lying.

And now, my friends, I hear from you

a frequent question: ``tell me who

inspires your lute to sounds of sighing?

To whom do you, from all the train

of jealous girls, devote its strain?

{60}

LVIII

``Whose glance, provoking inspiration,

rewards the music of your mind

with fond caress? whose adoration

is in your poetry enshrined?''

No one's, I swear by God! in sadness

I suffered once from all the madness

of love's anxiety. Blessed is he

who can combine it with the free

fever of rhyme: thereby he's doubled

poetry's sacred frenzy, made

a stride on Petrarch's path, allayed

the pangs with which his heart was troubled,

and, with it, forced renown to come --

but I, in love, was dull and dumb.

LIX

Love passed, the Muse appeared, the weather

of mind got clarity new-found;

now free, I once more weave together

emotion, thought, and magic sound;

I write, my heart has ceased its pining,

my thoughtless pen has stopped designing,

beside unfinished lines, a suite

of ladies' heads, and ladies' feet;

dead ash sets no more sparks a-flying;

I'm grieving still, but no more tears,

and soon, oh soon the storm's arrears

will in my soul be hushed and dying.

*That's* when I'll sit down to compose

an ode in twenty-five cantos.

{61}

LX

I've drawn a plan and a projection,

the hero's name's decided too.

Meanwhile my novel's opening section

is finished, and I've looked it through

meticulously; in my fiction

there's far too much of contradiction,

but I refuse to chop or change.

The censor's tribute, I'll arrange:

I'll feed the journalists for dinner

fruits of my labour and my ink...

So now be off to Neva's brink,

you newborn work, and like a winner

earn for me the rewards of fame --

misunderstanding, noise, and blame!

{62}

*Notes to Chapter One*

1 ``Written in Bessarabia.'' Pushkin's note.

2 Stanzas IX, XIII, XIV, XXXIX, XL and XLI were omitted by Pushkin.

3 Hero of Louvet's novel about betrayed husbands.

4 ``Well-known restaurateur.'' Pushkin's note.

5 Hussar and friend of Pushkin.

6 Vintage 1811, the year of the Comet.

7 Heroine of Ozerov's tragedy *Fingal*.

8 Playwrights of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

9 Actress in tragedy.

10 Dancer and choreographer.

11 Ballerina, once courted by Pushkin.

12 Constantinople.

13 French encyclopedist.

14 Pushkin leaves blank the name of Onegin's model dandy.

15 A mocking reference to Mikhail Muraviev's poem ``To the Goddess of

the Neva.''

16 Millyonaya, a street parallel to the Neva, and one block away from

it.

17 ``Written at Odessa.'' Pushkin's note.

18 ``The author, on his mother's side, is of African descent...''

Pushkin's note.

19 Refers to the Circassian girl in Pushkin's poem *The Caucasian*

*Prisoner*.

20 River in the Crimea. The reference is to the harem girls in

Pushkin's poem *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.

**Chapter Two**

O rus!

Horace

O Russia!

I

The place where Eugene loathed his leisure

was an enchanting country nook:

there any friend of harmless pleasure

would bless the form his fortune took.

The manor house, in deep seclusion,

screened by a hill from storm's intrusion,

looked on a river: far away

before it was the golden play

of light that flowering fields reflected:

villages flickered far and near,

and cattle roamed the plain, and here

a park, enormous and neglected,

spread out its shadow all around --

the pensive Dryads' hiding-ground.

{63}

II

The *château* was of a construction

befitting such a noble pile:

it stood, defiant of destruction

in sensible old-fashioned style.

High ceilings everywhere abounded;

in the saloon, brocade-surrounded,

ancestral[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_1) portraits met the view

and stoves with tiles of various hue.

All this has now gone out of fashion,

I don't know why, but for my friend

interior décor in the end

excited not a hint of passion:

a modish taste, a dowdy touch --

both set him yawning just as much.

III

The rustic sage, in that apartment,

forty years long would criticise

his housekeeper and her department

look through the pane, and squash the flies.

Oak-floored, and simple as a stable:

two cupboards, one divan, a table,

no trace of ink, no spots, no stains.

And of the cupboards, one contains

a book of household calculations,

the other, jugs of applejack,

fruit liqueurs and an Almanack

for 1808: his obligations

had left the squire no time to look

at any other sort of book.

{64}

IV

Alone amid all his possessions,

to pass the time was Eugene's theme:

it led him, in these early sessions,

to institute a new regime.

A thinker in a desert mission,

he changed the *corvée* of tradition

into a small quit-rent -- and got

his serfs rejoicing at their lot.

But, in a fearful huff, his thrifty

neighbour was sure, from this would flow

consequences of hideous woe;

another's grin was sly and shifty,

but all concurred that, truth to speak,

he was a menace, and a freak.

V

At first they called; but on perceiving

invariably, as time went on,

that from the backdoor he'd be leaving

on a fast stallion from the Don,

once on the highway he'd detected

the noise their rustic wheels projected --

they took offence at this, and broke

relations off, and never spoke.

``The man's a boor; his brain is missing,

he's a freemason too; for him,

red wine in tumblers to the brim --

but ladies' hands are not for kissing;

it's *yes* or *no,* but never *sir.*''

The vote was passed without demur.

{65}

VI

Meanwhile another new landowner

came driving to his country seat,

and, in the district, this *persona*

drew scrutiny no less complete --

Vladimir Lensky, whose creator

was Göttingen, his *alma mater,*

good-looking, in the flower of age,

a poet, and a Kantian sage.

He'd brought back all the fruits of learning

from German realms of mist and steam,

freedom's enthusiastic dream,

a spirit strange, a spirit burning,

an eloquence of fevered strength,

and raven curls of shoulder-length.

VII

He was too young to have been blighted

by the cold world's corrupt finesse;

his soul still blossomed out, and lighted

at a friend's word, a girl's caress.

In heart's affairs, a sweet beginner,

he fed on hope's deceptive dinner;

the world's *éclat,* its thunder-roll,

still captivated his young soul.

He sweetened up with fancy's icing

the uncertainties within his heart;

for him, the objective on life's chart

was still mysterious and enticing --

something to rack his brains about,

suspecting wonders would come out.

{66}

VIII

He was convinced, a kindred creature

would be allied to him by fate;

that, meanwhile, pinched and glum of feature,

from day to day she could but wait;

and he believed his friends were ready

to put on chains for him, and steady

their hand to grapple slander's cup,

in his defence, and smash it up;

< that there existed, for the indulgence

of human friendship, holy men,

immortals picked by fate for when,

with irresistible refulgence,

their breed would (some years after this)

shine out and bring the world to bliss. >[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_2)

IX

Compassion, yes, and indignation,

honest devotion to the good,

bitter-sweet glory's inspiration,

already stirred him as they should.

He roamed the world, his lyre behind him;

Schiller and Goethe had refined him,

and theirs was the poetic flame

that fired his soul, to burn the same;

the Muses' lofty arts and fashions,

fortunate one, he'd not disgrace;

but in his songs kept pride of place

for the sublime, and for the passions

of virgin fancy, and again

the charm of what was grave and plain.

{67}

X

He sang of love, to love subjected,

his song was limpid in its tune

as infant sleep, or the unaffected

thoughts of a girl, or as the moon

through heaven's expanse serenely flying,

that queen of secrets and of sighing.

He sang of grief and parting-time,

of something vague, some misty clime;

roses romantically blowing;

of many distant lands he sang

where in the heart of silence rang

his sobs, where his live tears were flowing;

he sang of lifetime's yellowed page --

when not quite eighteen years of age.

XI

But in that desert his attainments

only to Eugene showed their worth;

Lensky disliked the entertainments

of neighbouring owners of the earth --

he fled from their resounding chatter!

Their talk, so sound on every matter,

on liquor, and on hay brought in,

on kennels, and on kith and kin,

it had no sparkle of sensation,

it lacked, of course, poetic heart,

sharpness of wit, and social art,

and logic; yet the conversation

upon the side of the distaff --

that was less clever still by half.

{68}

XII

Vladimir, wealthy and good-looking,

was asked around as quite a catch --

such is the usual country cooking;

and all the neighbours planned a match

between their girls and this *half-Russian.*

As soon as he appears, discussion

touches obliquely, but with speed,

on the dull life that bachelors lead;

and then it's tea that comes to mention,

and Dunya works the samovar;

and soon they bring her... a guitar

and whisper ``Dunya, pay attention!''

then, help me God, she caterwauls:

``Come to me in my golden halls.''

XIII

Lensky of course was quite untainted

by any itch for marriage ties;

instead the chance to get acquainted

with Eugene proved a tempting prize.

So, verse and prose, they came together.

No ice and flame, no stormy weather

and granite, were so far apart.

At first, disparity of heart

rendered them tedious to each other;

then liking grew, then every day

they met on horseback; quickly they

became like brother knit to brother.

Friendship, as I must own to you,

blooms when there's nothing else to do.

{69}

XIV

But friendship, as between our heroes,

can't really be: for we've outgrown

old prejudice; all men are zeros,

the units are ourselves alone.

Napoleon's our sole inspiration;

the millions of two-legged creation

for us are instruments and tools;

feeling is quaint, and fit for fools.

More tolerant in his conception

than most. Evgeny, though he knew

and scorned his fellows through and through,

yet, as each rule has its exception,

people there were he glorified,

feelings he valued -- from outside.

XV

He smiled as Lensky talked: the heady

perfervid language of the bard,

his mind, in judgement still unsteady,

and always the inspired regard --

to Eugene all was new and thrilling;

he struggled to bite back the chilling

word on his lips, and thought: it's sheer

folly for me to interfere

with such a blissful, brief infection --

even without me it will sink;

but meanwhile let him live, and think

the universe is all perfection;

youth is a fever; we must spare

its natural right to rave and flare.

{70}

XVI

Between them, every topic started

reflection or provoked dispute:

treaties of nations long departed,

and good and ill, and learning's fruit,

the prejudices of the ages,

the secrets of the grave, the pages

of fate, and life, each in its turn

became their scrutiny's concern.

In the white heat of some dissension

the abstracted poet would bring forth

fragments of poems from the North,

which, listening with some condescension,

the tolerant Evgeny heard --

but scarcely understood a word.

XVII

But it was passion that preempted

the thoughts of my two anchorites.

From that rough spell at last exempted,

Onegin spoke about its flights

with sighs unconsciously regretful.

Happy is he who's known its fretful

empire, and fled it; happier still

is he who's never felt its will,

he who has cooled down love with parting,

and hate with malice; he whose life

is yawned away with friends and wife

untouched by envy's bitter smarting,

who on a deuce, that famous cheat,

has never staked his family seat.

{71}

XVIII

When we've retreated to the banner

of calm and reason, when the flame

of passion's out, and its whole manner

become a joke to us, its game,

its wayward tricks, its violent surging,

its echoes, its belated urging,

reduced to sense, not without pain --

we sometimes like to hear again

passion's rough language talked by others,

and feel once more emotion's ban.

So a disabled soldier-man,

retired, forgotten by his brothers,

in his small shack, will listen well

to tales that young moustachios tell.

XIX

But it's the talent for concealing

that ardent youth entirely lacks;

hate, love, joy, sorrow -- every feeling,

it blabs, and spills them in its tracks.

As, lovingly, in his confession,

the poet's heart found full expression,

Eugene, with solemn face, paid heed,

and felt himself love's *invalide.*

Lensky ingenuously related

his conscience's record, and so

Onegin swiftly came to know

his tale of youthful love, narrated

with deep emotion through and through,

to us, though, not exactly new.

{72}

XX

Ah, he had loved a love that never

is known today; only a soul

that raves with poetry can ever

be doomed to feel it: there's one goal

perpetually, one goal for dreaming,

one customary object gleaming,

one customary grief each hour!

not separation's chilling power,

no years of absence past returning,

no beauties of a foreign clime,

no noise of gaiety, no time

devoted to the Muse, or learning,

nothing could alter or could tire

this soul that glowed with virgin fire.

XXI

Since earliest boyhood he had doted

on Olga; from heart's ache still spared,

with tenderness he'd watched and noted

her girlhood games; in them he'd shared,

by deep and shady woods protected;

the crown of marriage was projected

for them by fathers who, as friends

and neighbours, followed the same ends.

Away inside that unassuming

homestead, before her parents' gaze,

she blossomed in the graceful ways

of innocence: a lily blooming

in deepest grasses, quite alone,

to bee and butterfly unknown.

{73}

XXII

And our young poet -- Olga fired him

in his first dream of passion's fruit,

and thoughts of her were what inspired him

to the first meanings of his flute.

Farewell the games of golden childhood!

he fell in love with darkest wildwood,

solitude, stillness and the night,

the stars, the moon -- celestial light

to which so oft we've dedicated

those walks amid the gloom and calm

of evening, and those tears, the balm

of secret pain... but it's now rated

by judgement of the modern camp

almost as good as a dim lamp.

XXIII

Full of obedience and demureness,

as gay as morning and as clear,

poetic in her simple pureness,

sweet as a lover's kiss, and dear,

in Olga everything expresses --

the skyblue eyes, the flaxen tresses,

smile, voice and movements, little waist --

take any novel, clearly traced

you're sure to find her portrait in it:

a portrait with a charming touch;

once I too liked it very much;

but now it bores me every minute.

Reader, the elder sister now

must be my theme, if you'll allow.

{74}

XXIV

Tatyana[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_3) was her name... I own it,

self-willed it may be just the same;

but it's the first time you'll have known it,

a novel graced with such a name.

What of it? it's euphonious, pleasant,

and yet inseparably present,

I know it, in the thoughts of all

are old times, and the servants' hall.

We must confess that taste deserts us

even in our names (and how much worse

when we begin to talk of verse);

culture, so far from healing, hurts us;

what it's transported to our shore

is mincing manners -- nothing more.

XXV

So she was called Tatyana. Truly

she lacked her sister's beauty, lacked

the rosy bloom that glowed so newly

to catch the eye and to attract.

Shy as a savage, silent, tearful,

wild as a forest deer, and fearful,

Tatyana had a changeling look

in her own home. She never took

to kissing or caressing father

or mother; and in all the play

of children, though as young as they,

she never joined, or skipped, but rather

in silence all day she'd remain

ensconced beside the window-pane.

{75}

XXVI

Reflection was her friend and pleasure

right from the cradle of her days;

it touched with reverie her leisure,

adorning all its country ways.

Her tender touch had never fingered

the needle, never had she lingered

to liven with a silk *atour*

the linen stretched on the tambour.

Sign of the urge for domination:

in play with her obedient doll

the child prepares for protocol --

that corps of social legislation --

and to it, with a grave import,

repeats what her mama has taught.

XXVII

Tatyana had no dolls to dandle,

not even in her earliest age;

she'd never tell them news or scandal

or novelties from fashion's page.

Tatyana never knew the attraction

of childish pranks: a chilled reaction

to horror-stories told at night

in winter was her heart's delight.

Whenever *nyanya* had collected

for Olga, on the spreading lawn,

her little friends, Tatyana'd yawn,

she'd never join the game selected,

for she was bored by laughs and noise

and by the sound of silly joys.

{76}

XXVIII

She loved the balcony, the session

of waiting for the dawn to blush,

when, in pale sky, the stars' procession

fades from the view, and in the hush

earth's rim grows light, and a forewarning

whisper of breeze announces morning,

and slowly day begins to climb.

In winter, when for longer time

the shades of night within their keeping

hold half the world still unreleased,

and when, by misty moon, the east

is softly, indolently sleeping,

wakened at the same hour of night

Tatyana'd rise by candlelight.

XXIX

From early on she loved romances,

they were her only food... and so

she fell in love with all the fancies

of Richardson and of Rousseau.

Her father, kindly, well-regarded,

but in an earlier age retarded,

could see no harm in books; himself

he never took one from the shelf,

thought them a pointless peccadillo;

and cared not what his daughter kept

by way of secret tome that slept

until the dawn beneath her pillow.

His wife, just like Tatyana, had

on Richardson gone raving mad.

{77}

XXX

And not because she'd read him, either,

and not because she'd once preferred

Lovelace, or Grandison, or neither;

but in the old days she had heard

about them -- nineteen to the dozen --

so often from her Moscow cousin

Princess Alina. She was still

engaged then -- but against her will;

loved someone else, not her intended,

someone towards whose heart and mind

her feelings were far more inclined --

this Grandison of hers was splendid,

a fop, a punter on the cards,

and junior Ensign in the Guards.

XXXI

She was like him and always sported

the latest fashions of the town;

but, without asking, they transported

her to the altar and the crown.

The better to dispel her sorrow

her clever husband on the morrow

took her to his estate, where she,

at first, with God knows whom to see,

in tears and violent tossing vented

her grief, and nearly ran away.

Then, plunged in the housekeeper's day,

she grew accustomed, and contented.

In stead of happiness, say I,

custom's bestowed us from on high.

{78}

XXXII

For it was custom that consoled her

in grief that nothing else could mend;

soon a great truth came to enfold her

and give her comfort to the end:

she found, in labours and in leisure,

the secret of her husband's measure,

and ruled him like an autocrat --

so all went smoothly after that.

Mushrooms in brine, for winter eating,

fieldwork directed from the path,

accounts, shaved forelocks,[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_4) Sunday bath;

meantime she'd give the maids a beating

if her cross mood was at its worst --

but *never* asked her husband first.

XXXIII

No, soon she changed her old demeanour:

girls' albums, signed in blood for choice;

Praskovya re-baptized ``Polina'';

conversing in a singsong voice;

lacing her stays up very tightly;

pronouncing through her nose politely

the Russian N, like N in French;

soon all that went without a wrench:

album and stays, Princess Alina,

sentiment, notebook, verses, all

she quite forgot -- began to call

``Akulka'' the onetime Selina,

and introduced, for the last lap,

a quilted chamber-robe and cap.

{79}

XXXIV

Her loving spouse with approbation

left her to follow her own line,

trusted her without hesitation,

and wore his dressing-gown to dine.

His life went sailing in calm weather;

sometimes the evening brought together

neighbours and friends in kindly group,

a plain, unceremonious troop,

for grumbling, gossiping and swearing

and for a chuckle or a smile.

The evening passes, and meanwhile

here's tea that Olga's been preparing;

after that, supper's served, and so

bed-time, and time for guests to go.

XXXV

Throughout their life, so calm, so peaceful,

sweet old tradition was preserved:

for them, in Butterweek[5](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_5) the greaseful,

Russian pancakes were always served;

< ...

... >[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_2)

they needed kvas like air; at table

their guests, for all they ate and drank,

were served in order of their rank.

{80}

XXXVI

And so they lived, two ageing mortals,

till he at last was summoned down

into the tomb's wide open portals,

and once again received a crown.

Just before dinner, from his labours

he rested -- wept for by his neighbours,

his children and his faithful wife,

far more than most who leave this life.

He was a good and simple *barin;*[6](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_6)

above the dust of his remains

the funeral monument explains:

``A humble sinner, Dimitry Larin,

beneath the stone reposes here,

servant of God, and Brigadier.''

XXXVII

Lensky, restored to his manorial

penates, came to cast an eye

over his neighbour's plain memorial,

and offer to that ash a sigh;

sadly he mourned for the departed.

``Poor Yorick,'' said he, broken-hearted:

``he dandled me as a small boy.

How many times I made a toy

of his Ochákov[7](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_7_7) decoration!

He destined Olga's hand for me,

kept asking: "shall I live to see"...''

so, full of heart-felt tribulation,

Lensky composed in autograph

a madrigal for epitaph.

{81}

XXXVIII

There too, he honoured, hotly weeping,

his parents' patriarchal dust

with lines to mark where they were sleeping...

Alas! the generations must,

as fate's mysterious purpose burrows,

reap a brief harvest on their furrows;

they rise and ripen and fall dead:

others will follow where they tread...

and thus our race, so fluctuating,

grows, surges, boils, for lack of room

presses its forebears to the tomb.

We too shall find our hour is waiting;

it will be our descendants who

out of this world will crowd us too.

XXXIX

So glut yourselves until you're sated

on this unstable life, my friends!

its nullity I've always hated,

I know too surely how it ends.

I'm blind to every apparition;

and yet a distant admonition

of hope sometimes disturbs my heart;

it would be painful to depart

and leave no faint footprint of glory...

I never lived or wrote for praise;

yet how I wish that I might raise

to high renown my doleful story,

that there be just one voice which came,

like a true friend, to speak my name.

{82}

XL

And someone's heart will feel a quiver,

for maybe fortune will have saved

from drowning's death in Lethe river

the strophe over which I slaved;

perhaps -- for flattering hope will linger --

some future dunce will point a finger

at my famed portrait and will say:

*he* was a poet in his day.

I thank him without reservation,

the peaceful Muses' devotee,

whose memory will preserve for me

the fleeting works of my creation,

whose kindly hand will ruffle down

the laurel in the old man's crown!

{83}

*Notes to Chapter Two*

1 Pushkin first wrote ``imperial portraits''; but this he later altered

``for reasons of censorship'' because, as Nabokov explains, ``tsars were not

to be mentioned in so offhand a way''.

2 Lines discarded by Pushkin.

3 ``Sweet-sounding Greek names like Agathon... etc., are only current

in Russia among the common people.'' Pushkin's note.

4 Serfs chosen as recruits for the army had their forelock cut off.

5 The week before Lent.

6 Gentleman, squire.

7 Fortress captured from the Turks in 1788.

**Chapter Three**

Elle était fille, elle était amoureuse.

Malfilâtre

``You're off? why, there's a poet for you!''

``Goodbye, Onegin, time I went.''

``Well, I won't hold you up or bore you;

but where are all your evenings spent?''

``At the Larins'!'' ``But how mysterious.

For goodness' sake, you can't be serious

killing each evening off like that?''

``You're wrong.'' ``But what I wonder at

is this -- one sees from here the party:

in first place -- listen, am I right? --

a simple Russian family night:

the guests are feasted, good and hearty,

on jam, and speeches in regard

to rains, and flax, and the stockyard.''

{84}

II

``I don't see what's so bad about it.''

``Boredom, that's what so bad, my friend.''

``Your modish world, I'll do without it;

give me the homely hearth, and lend...''

``You pile one eclogue on another!

for God's sake, that will do. But, brother,

you're really going? Well, I'm sad.

Now, Lensky, would it be so bad

for me to glimpse this Phyllis ever

with whom your thoughts are so obsessed --

pen, tears, and rhymes, and all the rest?

Present me, please.'' ``You're joking.'' ``Never.''

``Gladly.'' ``So when?'' ``Why not tonight?

They will receive us with delight.''

III

``Let's go.'' The friends, all haste and vigour,

drive there, and with formality

are treated to the fullest rigour

of old-lime hospitality.

The protocol is all one wishes:

the jams appear in little dishes;

on a small table's oilcloth sheen

the jug of bilberry wine is seen.[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_1)

{85}

IV

And home was now their destination;

as by the shortest way they flew,

this was our heroes' conversation

secretly overheard by you.

``You yawn, Onegin?'' ``As I'm used to.''

``This time I think you've been reduced to

new depths of boredom.'' ``No, the same.

The fields are dark, since evening came.

Drive on, Andryushka! quicker, quicker!

the country's pretty stupid here!

oh, *à propos:* Larin's a dear

simple old lady; but the liquor --

I'm much afraid that bilberry wine

won't benefit these guts of mine.''

V

``But tell me, which one was Tatyana?''

``She was the one who looked as still

and melancholy as Svetlana,[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_2)

and sat down by the window-sill.''

``The one you love's the younger daughter?''

``Why not?'' ``I'd choose the other quarter

if I, like you, had been a bard.

Olga's no life in her regard:

the roundest face that you've set eyes on,

a pretty girl exactly like

any Madonna by Van Dyck:

a dumb moon, on a dumb horizon.''

Lensky had a curt word to say

and then sat silent all the way.

{86}

VI

Meanwhile the news of Eugene coming

to the Larins' had caused a spout

of gossip, and set comment humming

among the neighbours round about.

Conjecture found unending matter:

there was a general furtive chatter,

and jokes and spiteful gossip ran

claiming Tatyana'd found her man;

and some were even testifying

the marriage plans were all exact

but held up by the simple fact

that modish rings were still a-buying.

Of Lensky's fate they said no more --

they'd settled that some years before.

VII

Tatyana listened with vexation

to all this tattle, yet at heart

in indescribable elation,

despite herself, rehearsed the part:

the thought sank in, and penetrated:

she fell in love -- the hour was fated...

so fires of spring will bring to birth

a seedling fallen in the earth.

Her feelings in their weary session

had long been wasting and enslaved

by pain and languishment; she craved

the fateful diet; by depression

her heart had long been overrun:

her soul was waiting... for someone.

{87}

VIII

Tatyana now need wait no longer.

Her eyes were opened, and she said

``this is the one!'' Ah, ever stronger,

in sultry sleep, in lonely bed,

all day, all night, his presence fills her,

by magic everything instils her

with thoughts of him in ceaseless round.

She hates a friendly voice's sound,

or servants waiting on her pleasure.

Sunk in dejection, she won't hear

the talk of guests when they appear;

she calls down curses on their leisure,

and, when one's least prepared for it

their tendency to call, and sit.

IX

Now, she devours, with what attention,

delicious novels, laps them up;

and all their ravishing invention

with sheer enchantment fills her cup!

These figures from the world of seeming,

embodied by the power of dreaming,

the lover of Julie Wolmar,[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_3)

and Malek Adel,[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_4) de Linar,[5](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_5)

and Werther, martyred and doom-laden,

and Grandison beyond compare,

who sets *me* snoring then and there --

all for our tender dreamy maiden

are coloured in a single tone,

all blend into Eugene alone.

{88}

X

Seeing herself as a creation --

Clarissa, Julie, or Delphine[6](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_6) --

by writers of her admiration,

Tatyana, lonely heroine,

roamed the still forest like a ranger,

sought in her book, that text of danger

and found her dreams, her secret fire,

the full fruit of her heart's desire;

she sighed, and in a trance coopted

another's joy, another's breast,

whispered by heart a note addressed

to the hero that she'd adopted.

But ours, whatever he might be,

ours was no Grandison -- not he.

XI

Lending his tone a grave inflection,

the ardent author of the past

showed one a pattern of perfection

in which his hero's mould was cast.

He gave this figure -- loved with passion,

wronged always in disgraceful fashion --

a soul of sympathy and grace,

and brains, and an attractive face.

Always our fervid hero tended

pure passion's flame, and in a trice

would launch into self-sacrifice;

always before the volume ended

due punishment was handed down

to vice, while virtue got its crown.

{89}

XII

Today a mental fog enwraps us,

each moral puts us in a doze,

even in novels, vice entraps us,

yes, even there its triumph grows.

Now that the British Muse is able

to wreck a maiden's sleep with fable,

the idol that she'll most admire

is either the *distrait* Vampire,

Melmoth,[7](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_7) whose roaming never ceases,

Sbogar,[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_8) mysterious through and through,

the Corsair, or the Wandering Jew.

Lord Byron, with his shrewd caprices,

dressed up a desperate egoism

to look like sad romanticism.

XIII

In this, dear reader, if you know it,

show me the sense. Divine decree

may wind up my career as poet;

perhaps, though Phoebus warns, I'll see

installed in me a different devil,

and sink to prose's humble level:

a novel on the established line

may then amuse my glad decline.

No secret crimes, and no perditions,

shall make my story grim as hell;

no, quite naively I'll retell

a Russian family's old traditions;

love's melting dreams shall fill my rhyme,

and manners of an earlier time.

{90}

XIV

I'll catalogue each simple saying

in father's or old uncle's book,

and tell of children's plighted playing

by ancient limes, or by a brook;

and after jealousy's grim weather

I'll part them, bring them back together;

I'll make them spar another round,

then to the altar, to be crowned.

I'll conjure up that swooning fashion

of ardent speech, that aching flow

of language which, so long ago,

facing a belle I loved with passion,

my tongue kept drawing from the heart --

but now I've rather lost the art.

XV

Tatyana dear, with you I'm weeping:

for you have, at this early date,

into a modish tyrant's keeping

resigned disposal of your fate.

Dear Tanya, you're condemned to perish;

but first, the dreams that hope can cherish

evoke for you a sombre bliss;

you learn life's sweetness, and with this

you drink the magic draught of yearning,

that poison brew; and in your mind

reverie hounds you, and you find

shelter for trysts at every turning;

in front of you, on every hand,

you see your fated tempter stand.

{91}

XVI

Tatyana, hunted by love's anguish,

has made the park her brooding-place,

suddenly lowering eyes that languish,

too faint to stir a further pace:

her bosom heaves, her cheeks are staring

scarlet with passion's instant flaring,

upon her lips the breathing dies,

noise in her ears, glare in her eyes...

then night comes on; the moon's patrolling

far-distant heaven's vaulted room;

a nightingale, in forest gloom,

sets a sonorous cadence rolling --

Tatyana, sleepless in the dark,

makes to her nurse low-voiced remark:

XVII

``I can't sleep, *nyanya:* it's so stifling!

open the window, sit down near.''

``Why, Tanya, what...?'' ``All's dull and trifling.

The olden days, I want to hear...''

``What of them, Tanya? I was able,

years back, to call up many a fable;

I kept in mind an ancient store

of tales of girls, and ghosts, and lore:

but now my brain is darkened, Tanya:

now I've forgotten all I knew.

A sorry state of things, it's true!

My mind is fuddled.'' ``Tell me, *nyanya,*

your early life, unlock your tongue:

were you in love when you were young?''

{92}

XVIII

``What nonsense, Tanya! in those other

ages we'd never heard of love:

why, at the thought, my husband's mother

had chased me to the world above.''

``How did you come to marry, *nyanya?*''

``I reckon, by God's will. My Vanya

was younger still, but at that stage

I was just thirteen years of age.

Two weeks the matchmaker was plying

to see my kin, and in the end

my father blessed me. So I'd spend

my hours in fear and bitter crying.

Then, crying, they untwined my plait,

and sang me to the altar-mat.

XIX

``So to strange kinsfolk I was taken...

but you're not paying any heed.''

``Oh nurse, I'm sad, I'm sad, I'm shaken,

I'm sick, my dear, I'm sick indeed.

I'm near to sobbing, near to weeping!...''

``You're ill, God have you in his keeping,

the Lord have mercy on us all!

whatever you may need, just call...

I'll sprinkle you with holy water,

you're all in fever... heavens above.''

``Nurse, I'm not ill; I... I'm in love.''

``The Lord God be with you, my daughter!''

and, hands a-tremble, *Nyanya* prayed

and put a cross-sign on the maid.

{93}

XX

``I am in love,'' Tatyana's wailing

whisper repeated to the crone.

``My dearest heart, you're sick and ailing.''

``I am in love; leave me alone.''

And all the while the moon was shining

and with its feeble glow outlining

the girl's pale charms, her loosened hair,

her drops of tears, and seated there,

in quilted coat, where rays were gleaming

on a small bench by Tanya's bed,

the grey-haired nurse with kerchiefed head;

and everything around was dreaming,

in the deep stillness of the night,

bathed in the moon's inspiring light.

XXI

Tatyana watched the moon, and floated

through distant regions of the heart...

A thought was born, and quickly noted...

``Go, nurse, and leave me here apart.

Give me a pen and give me paper,

bring up a table, and a taper;

good night; I swear I'll lie down soon.''

She was alone, lit by the moon.

Elbow on table, spirit seething,

still filled with Eugene, Tanya wrote,

and in her unconsidered note

all a pure maiden's love was breathing.

She folds the page, lays down the plume.,

Tatyana! it's addressed... to whom?

{94}

XXII

I've known too many a haughty beauty,

cold, pure as ice, and as unkind,

inexorably wed to duty,

unfathomable to the mind;

shocked by their modish pride, and fleeing

the utter virtue of their being,

I've run a mile, I must avow,

having decyphered on their brow

hell's terrifying imprecation:

``Abandon hope for evermore.''[9](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_9)

Our love is what they most abhor;

our terror is their consolation.

Ladies of such a cast, I think,

you too have seen on Neva's brink.

XXIII

Thronged by adorers, I've detected

another, freakish one, who stays

quite self-absorbed and unaffected

by sighs of passion or by praise.

To my astonishment I've seen her,

having by her severe demeanour

frightened to death a timid love,

revive it with another shove --

at least by a regretful kindness;

at least her tone is sometimes found

more tender than it used to sound.

I've seen how, trustful in his blindness,

the youthful lover once again

runs after what is sweet, and vain.

{95}

XXIV

Why is Tatyana guiltier-seeming?

is it that she, poor simple sweet,

believes in her elected dreaming

and has no knowledge of deceit?

that, artless, and without concealing,

her love obeys the laws of feeling,

that she's so trustful, and imbued

by heaven with such an unsubdued

imagination, with such reason,

such stubborn brain, and vivid will,

and heart so tender, it can still

burst to a fiery blaze in season?

Such feckless passion -- as I live,

is this then what you can't forgive?

XXV

The flirt has reason's cool volition;

Tatyana's love is no by-play,

she yields to it without condition

like a sweet child. She'll never say:

``By virtue of procrastinating

we'll keep love's price appreciating,

we'll draw it deeper in our net;

first, we'll take vanity, and let

hope sting it, then we'll try deploying

doubts, to exhaust the heart, then fire

jealousy's flame, to light desire;

else, having found his pleasure cloying,

the cunning prisoner can quite well

at any hour escape his cell.''

{96}

XXVI

I see another problem looming:

to save the honour of our land

I *must* translate -- there's no presuming --

the letter from Tatyana's hand:

her Russian was as thin as vapour,

she never read a Russian paper,

our native speech had never sprung

unhesitating from her tongue,

she wrote in French... what a confession!

what can one do? as said above,

until this day, a lady's love

in Russian never found expression,

till now our language -- proud, God knows --

has hardly mastered postal prose.

XXVII

They should be forced to read in Russian,

I hear you say. But can you see

a lady -- what a grim discussion! --

with *The Well-Meaner*[10](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_10) on her knee?

I ask you, each and every poet!

the darling objects -- don't you know it? --

for whom, to expiate your crimes,

you've made so many secret rhymes,

to whom your hearts are dedicated,

is it not true that Russian speech,

so sketchily possessed by each,

by all is sweetly mutilated,

and it's the foreign phrase that trips

like native idiom from their lips?

{97}

XXVIII

Protect me from such apparition

on dance-floor, at breakup of ball,

as bonneted Academician

or seminarist in yellow shawl!

To me, unsmiling lips bring terror,

however scarlet; free from error

of grammar, Russian language too.

Now, to my cost it may be true

that generations of new beauties,

heeding the press, will make us look

more closely at the grammar-book;

that verse will turn to useful duties;

on me, all this has no effect:

tradition still keeps my respect.

XXIX

No, incorrect and careless chatter,

words mispronounced, thoughts ill-expressed

evoke emotion's pitter-patter,

now as before, inside my breast;

too weak to change, I'm staying vicious,

I still find Gallicism delicious

as youthful sinning, or the strains

of Bogdanóvich's[11](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_11) refrains.

But that's enough. My beauty's letter

must now employ my pen; somehow

I gave my word, alas, though now

a blank default would suit me better.

I own it: tender Parny's[12](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_12) rhyme

is out of fashion in our time.

{98}

XXX

Bard[13](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_8_13) of *The Feasts,* and heart's depression,

if you'd still been with me, dear friend,

I would have had the indiscretion

to ask of you that you transcend

in music's own bewitching fashion

the foreign words a maiden's passion

found for its utterance that night.

Where are you? come -- and my own right

with an obeisance I'll hand over...

But he, by sad and rocky ways,

with heart that's grown unused to praise,

on Finland's coast a lonely rover --

he doesn't hear when I address

his soul with murmurs of distress.

XXXI

Tatyana's letter, treasured ever

as sacred, lies before me still.

I read with secret pain, and never

can read enough to get my fill.

Who taught her an address so tender,

such careless language of surrender?

Who taught her all this mad, slapdash,

heartfelt, imploring, touching trash

fraught with enticement and disaster?

It baffles me. But I'll repeat

here a weak version, incomplete,

pale transcript of a vivid master,

or *Freischütz* as it might be played

by nervous hands of a schoolmaid:

{99}

Tatyana's Letter to Onegin

*``I write to you -- no more confession*

*is needed, nothing's left to tell.*

*I know it's now in your discretion*

*with scorn to make my world a hell.*

*``But, if you've kept some faint impression*

*of pity for my wretched state,*

*you'll never leave me to my fate.*

*At first I thought it out of season*

*to speak; believe me: of my shame*

*you'd not so much as know the name,*

*if I'd possessed the slightest reason*

*to hope that even once a week*

*I might have seen you, heard you speak*

*on visits to us, and in greeting*

*I might have said a word, and then*

*thought, day and night, and thought again*

*about one thing, till our next meeting.*

*But you're not sociable, they say:*

*you find the country godforsaken;*

*though we... don't shine in any way,*

*our joy in you is warmly taken.*

*``Why did you visit us, but why?*

*Lost in our backwoods habitation*

*I'd not have known you, therefore I*

*would have been spared this laceration.*

*In time, who knows, the agitation*

*of inexperience would have passed,*

*I would have found a friend, another,*

*and in the role of virtuous mother*

*and faithful wife I'd have been cast.*

*{100}*

*``Another!... No, another never*

*in all the world could take my heart!*

*Decreed in highest court for ever...*

*heaven's will -- for you I'm set apart;*

*and my whole life has been directed*

*and pledged to you, and firmly planned:*

*I know, Godsent one, I'm protected*

*until the grave by your strong hand:*

*you'd made appearance in my dreaming;*

*unseen, already you were dear,*

*my soul had heard your voice ring clear,*

*stirred at your gaze, so strange, so gleaming,*

*long, long ago... no, that could be*

*no dream. You'd scarce arrived, I reckoned*

*to know you, swooned, and in a second*

*all in a blaze, I said: it's he!*

*``You know, it's true, how I attended,*

*drank in your words when all was still --*

*helping the poor, or while I mended*

*with balm of prayer my torn and rended*

*spirit that anguish had made ill.*

*At this midnight of my condition,*

*was it not you, dear apparition,*

*who in the dark came flashing through*

*and, on my bed-head gently leaning,*

*with love and comfort in your meaning,*

*spoke words of hope? But who are you:*

*the guardian angel of tradition,*

*or some vile agent of perdition*

*sent to seduce? Resolve my doubt.*

*Oh, this could all be false and vain,*

*a sham that trustful souls work out;*

*{101}*

*fate could be something else again..,*

*``So let it be! for you to keep*

*I trust my fate to your direction,*

*henceforth in front of you I weep,*

*I weep, and pray for your protection..,*

*Imagine it: quite on my own*

*I've no one here who comprehends me,*

*and now a swooning mind attends me,*

*dumb I must perish, and alone.*

*My heart awaits you: you can turn it*

*to life and hope with just a glance --*

*or else disturb my mournful trance*

*with censure -- I've done all to earn it!*

*``I close. I dread to read this page...*

*for shame and fear my wits are sliding...*

*and yet your honour is my gage*

*and in it boldly I'm confiding''...*

{102}

XXXII

Now Tanya's groaning, now she's sighing;

the letter trembles in her grip;

the rosy sealing-wafer's drying

upon her feverish tongue; the slip

from off her charming shoulder's drooping,

and sideways her poor head is stooping.

But now the radiance of the moon

is dimmed. Down there the valley soon

comes clearer through the mists of dawning.

Down there, by slow degrees, the stream

has taken on a silvery gleam;

the herdsman's horn proclaimed the morning

and roused the village long ago:

to Tanya, all's an empty show.

XXXIII

She's paid the sunrise no attention,

she sits with head sunk on her breast,

over the note holds in suspension

her seal with its engraven crest.

Softly the door is opened, enter

grey Filatevna, to present her

with a small tray and a teacup.

``Get up, my child, it's time, get up!

Why, pretty one, you're up already!

My early bird! you know, last night

you gave me such a shocking fright!

but now, thank God, you're well and steady,

your night of fretting's left no trace!

fresh as a poppy-flower, your face.''

{103}

XXXIV

``Oh nurse, a favour, a petition...''

``Command me, darling, as you choose.''

``Now don't suppose... let no suspicion...

but, nurse, you see... Oh, don't refuse...''

``My sweet, God warrants me your debtor.''

``Then send your grandson with this letter

quickly to O... I mean to that...

the neighbour... you must tell the brat

that not a syllable be uttered

and not a mention of my name...''

``Which neighbour, dear? My head became

in these last years all mixed and fluttered.

We've many neighbours round about;

even to count them throws me out.''

XXXV

``How slow you are at guessing, *nyanya!*''

``My sweet, my dearest heart, I'm old,

I'm old, my mind is blunted, Tanya;

times were when I was sharp and bold:

times were, when master's least suggestion...''

``Oh *nyanya, nyanya,* I don't question...

what have your wits to do with me?

Now here's a letter, as you see,

addressed to Onegin''... ...'Well, that's easy.

But don't be cross, my darling friend,

you know I'm *hard to comprehend...*

Why have you gone all pale and queasy?''

``It's nothing, nurse, nothing, I say...

just send your grandson on his way.''

{104}

XXXVI

Hours pass; no answer; waiting, waiting.

No word: another day goes by.

She's dressed since dawn, dead pale; debating,

demanding: *when* will he reply?

Olga's adorer comes a-wooing.

``Tell me, what's your companion doing?''

enquired the lady of the hall:

``it seems that he forgot us all.''

Tatyana flushed, and started shaking.

``Today he promised he'd be here,''

so Lensky answered the old dear:

``the mail explains the time he's taking.''

Tatyana lowered her regard

as at a censure that was hard.

XXXVII

Day faded; on the table, glowing,

the samovar of evening boiled,

and warmed the Chinese teapot; flowing

beneath it, vapour wreathed and coiled.

Already Olga's hand was gripping

the urn of perfumed tea, and tipping

into the cups its darkling stream --

meanwhile a hallboy handed cream;

before the window taking station,

plunged in reflection's deepest train,

Tatyana breathed on the cold pane,

and in the misted condensation

with charming forefinger she traced

``OE'' devotedly inlaced.

{105}

XXXVIII

Meanwhile with pain her soul was girdled,

and tears were drowning her regard.

A sudden clatter!... blood was curdled...

Now nearer... hooves... and in the yard

Evgeny! ``Ah!'' Tatyana, fleeting

light as a shadow, shuns a meeting,

through the back porch runs out and flies

down to the garden, and her eyes

daren't look behind her; fairly dashing --

beds, bridges, lawn, she never stops,

the *allée* to the lake, the copse;

breaking the lilac bushes, smashing

parterres, she runs to rivulet's brink,

to gasp, and on a bench to sink.

XXXIX

She dropped... ``It's he! Eugene arriving!

Oh God, what did he think!'' A dream

of hope is somehow still surviving

in her torn heart -- a fickle gleam;

she trembles, and with fever drumming

awaits him -- hears nobody coming.

Maidservants on the beds just now

were picking berries from the bough,

singing in chorus as directed

(on orders which of course presume

that thievish mouths cannot consume

their masters' berries undetected

so long as they're employed in song:

such rustic cunning can't be wrong!) --

{106}

The Song of the Girls

*``Maidens, pretty maidens all,*

*dear companions, darling friends,*

*pretty maidens, romp away,*

*have your fill of revelry!*

*Strike the ditty up, my sweets,*

*ditty of our secret world,*

*and entice a fellow in*

*to the circle of our dance.*

*When we draw a fellow in,*

*when we see him from afar,*

*darlings, then we'll run away,*

*cherries then we'll throw at him,*

*cherries throw and raspberries*

*and redcurrants throw at him.*

*Never come and overhear*

*ditties of our secret world,*

*never come and like a spy*

*watch the games we maidens play.''*

{107}

XL

They sing; unmoved by their sweet-sounding

choruses, Tanya can but wait,

listless, impatient, for the pounding

within her bosom to abate,

and for her cheeks to cease their blushing;

but wildly still her heart is rushing,

and on her cheeks the fever stays,

more and more brightly still they blaze.

So the poor butterfly will quiver

and beat a nacreous wing when caught

by some perverse schoolboy for sport;

and so in winter-fields will shiver

the hare who from afar has seen

a marksman crouching in the green.

XLI

But finally she heaved a yearning

sigh, and stood up, began to pace;

she walked, but just as she was turning

into the *allée,* face to face,

she found Evgeny, eyes a-glitter,

still as a shadow, grim and bitter;

seared as by fire, she stopped. Today

I lack the strength required to say

what came from this unlooked-for meeting;

my friends, I need to pause a spell,

and walk, and breathe, before I tell

a story that still wants completing;

I need to rest from all this rhyme:

I'll end my tale some other time.

{108}

*Notes to Chapter Three*

1 Stanza left incomplete by Pushkin.

2 Heroine of Zhukovsky's poem of the same name.

3 *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloise.* by Rousseau, 1761.

4 Hero of *Mathilde,* by Sophie Cottin, 1805.

5 Lover of *Valérie,* by Madame de Krudener, 1803.

6 *Delphine,* by Madame de Staël, 1805.

7 *Melmoth the Wanderer,* by C. R. Mathurin, 1820.

8 *Jean Sbogar,* by Charles Nodier, 1818.

9 *``Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate.* Our modest author has

translated only the first part of the famous verse.'' Pushkin's note.

10 Magazine (1818) edited by A. Izmaylov.

11 Russian poet and translator from the French.

12 French poet (1755-1814). Author of *Poésies Erotiques.*

13 Evgeny Baratynsky (1800-1844). Poet and friend of Pushkin.

**Chapter Four**

La morale est dans la nature des choses.

Necker

(I, II, III, IV, V, VI,[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_1)) VII

With womankind, the less we love them,

the easier they become to charm,

the tighter we can stretch above them

enticing nets to do them harm.

There was a period when cold-blooded

debauchery was praised, and studied

as love's technique, when it would blare

its own perfection everywhere,

and heartless pleasure was up-graded;

yes, these were our forefathers' ways,

those monkeys of the good old days:

now Lovelace's renown has faded

as scarlet heels have lost their name

and stately periwigs, their fame.

{109}

VIII

How dull are acting and evasion,

diversely urging the same plea,

earnestly striving for persuasion

on points that all long since agree --

and always the self-same objection;

how dull to work for the correction

of prejudice that's never been

harboured by maidens of thirteen!

Who's not disgusted by cajoling,

threats, vows, and simulated fears,

by six-page letters, rings and tears,

gossip, and tricks, and the patrolling

of aunts and mothers, and the thrall

of husband's friendship -- worst of all!

IX

Evgeny thought in just this fashion.

From his first youth he'd known the force,

the sufferings of tempestuous passion;

its winds had blown him far off course.

Spoilt by the habit of indulgence,

now dazzled by one thing's effulgence,

now disenchanted with the next,

more and more bored by yearning's text,

bored by success' giddy trifle,

he heard in stillness and in din

a deathless murmur from within,

found that in laughter yawns could stifle:

he killed eight years in such a style,

and wasted life's fine flower meanwhile.

{110}

X

Though belles had lost his adoration,

he danced attendance with the best;

rebuffed, found instant consolation;

deceived, was overjoyed to rest.

He followed them without illusion,

lost them without regret's contusion,

scarcely recalled their love, their spite;

just like a casual guest who might

devote to whist an evening party,

who'd sit, and at the end of play

would say goodbye and drive away,

go off to sleep quite hale and hearty,

and in the morning wouldn't know

that self-same evening where he'd go.

XI

Yet Tanya's note made its impression

on Eugene, he was deeply stirred:

that virgin dream and its confession

filled him with thoughts that swarmed and whirred;

the flower-like pallor of the maiden,

her look, so sweetly sorrow-laden,

all plunged his soul deep in the stream

of a delicious, guiltless dream...

and though perhaps old fires were thrusting

and held him briefly in their sway,

Eugene had no wish to betray

a soul so innocent, so trusting.

But to the garden, to the scene

where Tanya now confronts Eugene.

{111}

XII

Moments of silence, quite unbroken;

then, stepping nearer, Eugene said:

``You wrote to me, and nothing spoken

can disavow that. I have read

those words where love, without condition,

pours out its guiltless frank admission,

and your sincerity of thought

is dear to me, for it has brought

feeling to what had long been heartless:

but I won't praise you -- let me join

and pay my debt in the same coin

with an avowal just as artless;

hear my confession as I stand

I leave the verdict in your hand.

XIII

``Could I be happy circumscribing

my life in a domestic plot;

had fortune blest me by prescribing

husband and father as my lot;

could I accept for just a minute

the homely scene, take pleasure in it --

then I'd have looked for you alone

to be the bride I'd call my own.

Without romance, or false insistence,

I'll say: with past ideals in view

I would have chosen none but you

as helpmeet in my sad existence,

as gage of all things that were good,

and been as happy... as I could!

{112}

XIV

``But I was simply not intended

for happiness -- that alien role.

Should your perfections be expended

in vain on my unworthy soul?

Believe (as conscience is my warrant),

wedlock for us would be abhorrent.

I'd love you, but inside a day,

with custom, love would fade away;

your tears would flow -- but your emotion,

your grief would fail to touch my heart,

they'd just enrage it with their dart.

What sort of roses, in your notion,

would Hymen bring us -- blooms that might

last many a day, and many a night!

XV

``What in the world is more distressing

than households where the wife must moan

the unworthy husband through depressing

daytimes and evenings passed alone?

and where the husband, recognizing

her worth (but anathematising

his destiny) without a smile

bursts with cold envy and with bile?

For such am I. When you were speaking

to me so simply, with the fires

and force that purity inspires,

is *this* the man that you were seeking?

can it be true you must await

from cruel fortune such a fate?

{113}

XVI

``I've dreams and years past resurrection;

a soul that nothing can renew...

I feel a brotherly affection,

or something tenderer still, for you.

Listen to me without resentment:

girls often change to their contentment

light dreams for new ones... so we see

each springtime, on the growing tree,

fresh leaves... for such is heaven's mandate.

You'll love again, but you must teach

your heart some self-restraint; for each

and every man won't understand it

as I have... learn from my belief

that inexperience leads to grief.''

XVII

So went his sermon. Almost dying,

blinded to everything about

by mist of tears, without replying

Tatyana heard Evgeny out.

He gave his arm. In sad abstraction,

by what's called *machinal* reaction,

without a word Tatyana leant

upon it, and with head down-bent

walked homeward round the kitchen garden;

together they arrived, and none

dreamt of reproving what they'd done:

by country freedom, rightful pardon

and happy licence are allowed,

as much as in Moscow the proud.

{114}

XVIII

Agree, the way Eugene proceeded

with our poor girl was kind and good;

not for the first time he succeeded

in manifesting, as he could,

a truly noble disposition;

yet people's malice and suspicion

persisted and made no amends.

By enemies, no less by friends

(it's all the same -- you well correct us),

he found all kinds of brickbat hurled.

We each have enemies in this world,

but from our friends, good Lord protect us!

Those friends, those friends! it is, I fear,

with cause that I've recalled them here.

XIX

What of it? Nothing. I'm just sending

to sleep some black and empty dreams;

but, inside brackets, I'm contending

there's no ignoble tale that seems

cooked-up where garret-vermin babble,

endorsed by fashionable rabble,

there's no absurdity as such,

no vulgar epigram too much,

which smilingly your friend, supported

by decent company, has not,

without a trace of spite or plot,

a hundred times afresh distorted;

yet he'd back you through thick and thin:

he loves you... like your kith and kin!

{115}

XX

Hm, hm. Distinguished reader, tell me

how are your *kith and kin* today?

And here my sentiments impel me

for your enlightenment to say

how I interpret this expression:

our kin are folk whom by profession

we have to cherish and admire

with all our hearts, and who require

that in the usual Christmas scrimmage

we visit them, or without fail

send them good wishes through the mail

to ensure that till next time our image

won't even cross their minds by stealth...

God grant them years and years of health!

XXI

Of course, the love of tender beauties,

surer than friendship or than kin,

will loyally discharge its duties,

in midst of trouble, storm or din.

Of course. Yet fashion's wild rotation,

yet a capricious inclination,

yet floods of talk around the town...

the darling sex is light as down.

Then verdicts from her husband's quartet

are bound, by every virtuous wife,

to be respected all through life:

and so your faithfullest supporter

will disappear as fast as smoke:

for Satan, love's a splendid joke.

{116}

XXII

*Whom* then to credit? *Whom* to treasure?

On whom alone can we depend?

Who is there who will truly measure

his acts and words to suit our end?

Who'll sow no calumnies around us?

Whose fond attentions will astound us?

Who'll never fault our vices, or

whom shall we never find a bore?

Don't let a ghost be your bear-leader,

don't waste your efforts on the air.

Just let *yourself* be your whole care,

your loved one, honourable reader!

Deserving object: there can be

nothing more lovable than he.

XXIII

Then what resulted from the meeting?

Alas, it's not so hard to guess!

Love's frantic torments went on beating

and racking with their strain and stress

that youthful soul, which pined for sadness;

no, all devoured by passion's madness

poor Tanya more intensely burns;

sleep runs from her, she turns and turns...

and health, life's sweetness and its shimmer,

smiles, and a maiden's tranquil poise,

have vanished, like an empty noise,

while dear Tatyana's youth grows dimmer:

so a storm-shadow wraps away

in dark attire the new-born day.

{117}

XXIV

Poor Tanya's bloom begins to languish,

and pale, and fade without a word!

there's nothing can employ her anguish,

no sound by which her soul is stirred.

Neighbours in whispered tones are taking

council, and with profound head-shaking

conclude that it's high time she wed!...

But that's enough. At once, in stead,

I'll gladden your imagination,

reader, by painting you a scene

of happy love. For I have been

too long, against my inclination,

held in constraint by pity's touch:

I love my Tatyana too much!

XXV

From hour to hour a surer capture

for Olga's beauty, Lensky gives

his soul to a delicious rapture

that fills him and in which he lives.

He's always with her: either seated

in darkness in her room, or treated

to garden walks, as arm in arm

they while away the morning's calm.

What else? Quite drunk with love's illusion,

he even dares, once in a while,

emboldened by his Olga's smile,

and plunged in tender shame's confusion,

to play with a dishevelled tress,

or kiss the border of her dress.

{118}

XXVI

He reads to Olga on occasion,

for her improvement, a *roman*,

of moralistical persuasion,

more searching than Chateaubriand;

but in it there are certain pages

(vain twaddle, fables of the ages,

talk that might turn a young girl's head)

which with a blush he leaves unread.

As far removed as they were able

from all the world, they sat and pored

in deepest thought at the chess-board

for hours, with elbows on the table --

then Lensky moved his pawn, and took,

deep in distraction, his own rook.

XXVII

Even at home his occupation

is only Olga: he relieves

with careful schemes of decoration

an album's loose and floating sheaves.

Sometimes a landscape's represented,

a tomb, a Cyprian shrine's invented,

a lyre, and on it perched, a dove --

in ink with colour-wash above;

then on the leaves of recollection,

below the others who have signed

he leaves a tender verse behind,

a dream's mute monument, reflection

of instant thoughts, a fleeting trace

still after many years in place.

{119}

XXVIII

Often of course you'll have inspected

the album of a country miss

where scribbling friends have interjected

frontwise and back, that way and this.

With spelling scrambled to perdition,

the unmetric verses of tradition

are entered here, in friendship's gage,

shortened, or lengthened off the page.

On the first sheet you'll find a question:

``Qu'écrirez-vous sur ces tablettes?''

and, under, ``toute à vous Annette'';

then, on the last page, the suggestion:

``who loves you more than I, let's see

him prove it, writing after me.''

XXIX

There you're entirely sure of finding

two hearts, a torch, and a nosegay;

and there, love's protestations, binding

*until the tombstone;* there one day

some regimental bard has added

a stanza villainously padded.

In such an album, friends, I too

am always glad to write, it's true,

convinced at heart that my most zealous

nonsense will earn indulgent looks,

nor will my scribbling in such books

attract the sneering of the jealous,

or make men seriously discuss

if I show wit in jesting thus.

{120}

XXX

But you, grand tomes I loathe with passion,

odd volumes from the devil's shelf,

in which the rhymester-man-of-fashion

is forced to crucify himself,

portfolios nobly illustrated

with Tolstoy's[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_2) brush, or decorated

by Baratynsky's[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_3) wondrous pen,

God's thunder burn you up! And when

some splendid lady is referring

to me her best in-quarto tome,

the fear and rage with which I foam!

Deep down, an epigram is stirring

that I'm just longing to indite --

but madrigals I've got to write!

XXXI

No madrigals were for inscribing

by Lensky in his Olga's book;

his style breathed love, and not the gibing

coldness of wit; each note he took,

each news of her he'd been imbibing --

all was material for transcribing:

with lively and pellucid look,

his elegies flow like a brook.

So you, inspired Yazýkov,[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_4) sobbing

with bursts of passion from the heart,

sing God knows whom, compose with art

a suite of elegies that, throbbing,

sooner or later will relate

the entire story of your fate.

{121}

XXXII

But soft! You hear? A scowling critic,

bidding us to reject for good

the elegy, grown paralytic,

commands our rhymester-brotherhood:

``oh, quit your stale, your tedious quacking,

and your alas-ing and alack-ing

about what's buried in the past:

sing about something else at last!''

All right, you want the resurrection

of trumpet, dagger, mask and sword,

and dead ideas from that old hoard,

all brought to life at your direction.

Not so? ``No, sirs, the ode's the thing,

that's the refrain that you should sing,

XXXIII

``as sung of old, in years of glory,

as instituted long ago.''

Only the ode, that solemn story!

Enough, my friends; it's all so-so.

Remember the retort satiric!

Is *Others' View,*[5](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_5) that clever lyric,

really more bearable to you

than what our sorrowing rhymesters do?

``The elegy's just vain protesting,

empty the purpose it proclaims,

while odes have high and noble aims...''

That point I wouldn't mind contesting,

but hold my tongue, lest it appears

I'll set two ages by the ears.

{122}

XXXIV

In love with fame, by freedom smitten,

with storm and tumult in his head,

what odes Vladimir might have written --

but Olga would have never read!

Bards of our tearful generation,

have you read lines of your creation

to your loved ones? They do maintain

that this of all things for a swain

is the supreme reward. Precisely,

blest the poor lover who reads out

his dreams, while she whom they're about,

that languid beauty, listens nicely --

blest... though perhaps her fancy's caught

in fact by some quite different thought.

XXXV

But I myself read my bedizened

fancies, my rhythmic search for truth,

to nobody except a wizened

nanny, companion of my youth;

or, after some dull dinner's labour,

I buttonhole a wandering neighbour

and in a corner make him choke

on tragedy; but it's no joke,

when, utterly worn out by rhyming,

exhausted and done up, I take

a rambling walk beside my lake,

and duck get up; with instant timing,

alarmed by my melodious lay,

they leave their shores and fly away.

{123}

XXXVI[6](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_6)

< My gaze pursues them... but on station

the hunter in the wood will swear

at verse, and hiss an imprecation,

and ease his catch with all due care.

We each enjoy a special hobby,

each of us has his favourite lobby:

one sees a duck and aims his gun,

one raves in verse like me, and one

hunts cheeky flies, with swatter sweeping,

one leads the multitude in thought,

one finds in war amusing sport,

one wallows in delicious weeping;

the wine-addict adores the cup:

and good and bad are all mixed up. >

XXXVII

But what about Eugene? With reason

reader, you ask, and I'll expound --

craving your tolerance in season --

the programme of his daily round.

In summertime -- for he was leading

a hermit's life -- he'd be proceeding

on foot, by seven o'clock, until

he reached the stream below the hill;

lightly attired, like the creator

of Gulnare, he would play a card

out of the hand of that same bard:

he'd swim this Hellespont; then later

he'd drink his coffee, flutter through

the pages of some dull review,

then dress...

{124}

(XXXVIII) XXXIX

Books, riding, walks, sleep heavy-laden,

the shady wood, the talking stream;

sometimes from a fair, black-eyed maiden

the kiss where youth and freshness gleam;

a steed responsive to the bridle,

and dinner with a touch of idle

fancy, a wine serene in mood,

tranquillity, and solitude --

Onegin's life, you see, was holy;

unconsciously he let it mount

its grip on him, forgot to count

bright summer days that passed so slowly,

forgot to think of town and friends

and tedious means to festive ends.

XL

Our evanescent northern summer

parodies winter in the south;

it's like a vanishing newcomer --

but here we must control our mouth.

The sky breathed autumn, time was flowing,

and good old sun more seldom glowing;

the days grew shorter, in the glade

with mournful sound the secret shade

was stripped away, and mists encroaching

lay on the fields; in caravan

the clamorous honking geese began

their southward flight: one saw approaching

the season which is such a bore --

November stood outside the door.

{125}

XLI

Dawn comes in mist and chill; no longer

do fields echo with work and shout;

in pairs, their hunger driving stronger,

on the highroad the wolves come out;

the horse gets wind of them and, snorting,

sets the wise traveller cavorting

up the hillside at breakneck pace;

no longer does the herdsman chase

his beasts outdoors at dawn, nor ringing

at noontime does his horn resound

as it assembles them around;

while in the hut a girl is singing;

she spins and, friend of winter nights,

the matchwood chatters as it lights.

XLII

Hoar-frost that crackles with a will is

already silvering all the plain...

(the reader thinks the rhyme is *lilies:*

here, seize it quick for this quatrain!)

Like modish parquetry, the river

glitters beneath its icing-sliver;

boy-tribes with skates on loudly slice

their joyous way across the ice;

a red-foot goose, weight something fearful,

anticipates a swim, in stead

tries out the ice with cautious tread,

and skids and tumbles down; the cheerful

first flakes of snow whirl round and sink

in stars upon the river-brink.

{126}

XLIII

In backwoods, how d'you pass this season?

Walking? The country that you roam

is a compulsive bore by reason

of its unvarnished monochrome.

Riding on the lugubrious prairie?

Your horse, blunt-shoed and all unwary,

will find the ice elude his grip

and, any moment, down he'll slip.

Or, in your lonely homestead, moping,

you'll read: here's Pradt,[7](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_7) here's Walter Scott!

to pass the evening. No? then tot

up your accounts, and raging, toping,

let evening pass, tomorrow too --

in triumph you'll see winter through!

XLIV

Childe-Harold-like, Eugene's devoting

his hours to dreaming them away:

he wakes; a bath where ice is floating;

and then, indoors the livelong day,

alone, and sunk in calculation,

with a blunt cue for the duration,

from early morning on he will

at two-ball billiards prove his skill;

then, country evening fast arriving,

billiards are dropped, cue put to bed:

before the fire a table's spread;

Evgeny waits: and here comes driving,

with three roan horses in a line

Vladimir Lensky. Quick, let's dine!

{127}

XLV

From widow Clicquot and from Moët,

the draught whose blessings are agreed,

in frosted bottle, for the poet

is brought to table at full speed.

Bubbles like Hippocrene are spraying;

once, with its foaming and its playing,

(a simile of this and that)

it held me captive; tit for tat,

friends, recollect how I surrendered

my last poor lepton for a sup!

recall, by its bewitching cup,

how many follies were engendered;

how many lines of verse, and themes

for jokes, and rows, and merry dreams!

XLVI

Yet hissing froth deals a malicious,

perfidious blow to my inside,

and now it's Bordeaux the Judicious

that I prefer to Champagne's tide;

to Aÿ's vintage in the sequel

I find myself no longer equal;

for, mistress-like, it's brilliant, vain,

lively, capricious, and inane...

But in misfortune or displeasure,

Bordeaux, you're like a faithful friend,

a true companion to the end,

ready to share our quiet leisure

with your good offices, and so

long life to our dear friend, Bordeaux!

{128}

XLVII

The fire was dying; cinders faintly

covered the golden coal -- the steam

tumbled and whirled and twisted quaintly

its barely noticeable stream.

The hearth was low beyond all stoking.

Straight up the chimney, pipes were smoking.

Still on the board, the beakers hissed,

and evening now drew on in mist...

(I like a friendly conversation,

the enjoyment of a friendly drink,

at hours, which, why I cannot think,

somehow have got the designation

of *time between the wolf and dog*.)

Now hear the friends in dialogue:

XLVIII

``Tell me, our neighbours, are they thriving?

and how's Tatyana? Olga too,

your dashing one, is she surviving?''

``Just half a glass more... that will do...

All flourishing; they send their duty.

Take Olga's shoulders now -- the beauty!

What breasts! What soul!... We'll go one day

visit the family, what d'you say?

if you come with me, they'll be flattered;

or else, my friend, how does it look?

you called there twice, and since then took

no notice of them. But I've chattered

so much, I'm left no time to speak!

of course! you're bidden there next week.''

{129}

XLIX

``I?'' ``Saturday. The invitation

Olinka and her mother sent:

Tatyana's name day celebration.

It's right and proper that you went.''

``But there'll be such a rout and scrabble

with every different kind of rabble...''

``No, no, I'm sure the party's small.

Relations. No-one else at all.

Let's go, our friendship's worth the labour!''

``All right, I'll come then...'' ``What a friend!''

He drained his glass down to the end

by way of toast to their fair neighbour;

then he began to talk once more

of Olga: love's that kind of bore!

L

Lensky rejoiced. His designated

rapture was just two weeks ahead;

love's crown, delectable, awaited

his transports, and the marriage-bed

in all its mystery. Hymen's teasing,

the pain, the grief, the marrow-freezing

onset of the incipient yawn,

were from his vision quite withdrawn.

While under the connubial banner

I can see naught, as Hymen's foe,

beyond a string of dull tableaux,

a novel in Lafontaine's[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_9_8) manner...

my wretched Lensky in his heart

was just created for the part.

{130}

LI

And he was loved... at least he never

doubted of it, so lived in bliss.

Happy a hundredfold, whoever

can lean on faith, who can dismiss

cold reason, sleep in sensual welter

like a drunk traveller in a shelter,

or, sweeter, like a butterfly

in flowers of spring it's drinking dry:

but piteous he, the all-foreseeing,

the sober head, detesting each

human reaction, every speech

in the expression of its being,

whose heart experience has cooled

and saved from being charmed or fooled!

{131}

*Notes to Chapter Four*

1 Stanzas I to VI were discarded by Pushkin.

2 Count F. P. Tolstoy (1783-1873), well-known artist.

3 See Chapter Three, note 13.

4 Poet and acquaintance of Pushkin.

5 Satiric poem by Ivan Dimitriev, 1795. The reference is -- summarizing

very briefly -- to a controversy between different literary cliques about

the relative merits of the classic ode and the romantic elegy.

6 Stanza discarded by Pushkin, also stanza XXXVIII.

7 Dominique de Pradt (1759-1837), voluminous French political writer.

8 August Lafontaine (1758-1851), German novelist of family life.

**Chapter Five**

O, never know these frightful dreams,

thou, my Svetlana!

Zhukovsky

I

That year the season was belated

and autumn lingered, long and slow;

expecting winter, nature waited --

only in January the snow,

night of the second, started flaking.

Next day Tatyana, early waking,

saw through the window, morning-bright,

roofs, flowerbeds, fences, all in white,

panes patterned by the finest printer,

with trees decked in their silvery kit,

and jolly magpies on the flit,

and hills that delicately winter

had with its brilliant mantle crowned --

and glittering whiteness all around.

{132}

II

Winter!... The countryman, enchanted,

breaks a new passage with his sleigh;

his nag has smelt the snow, and planted

a shambling hoof along the way;

a saucy kibítka is slicing

its furrow through the powdery icing;

the driver sits and cuts a dash

in sheepskin coat with scarlet sash.

Here comes the yard-boy, who has chosen

his pup to grace the sledge, while he

becomes a horse for all to see;

the rogue has got a finger frozen:

it hurts, he laughs, and all in vain

his mother taps the window-pane.

III

But you perhaps find no attraction

in any picture of this kind:

for nature's unadorned reaction

has something low and unrefined.

Fired by the god of inspiration,

another bard[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_1) in exaltation

has painted for us the first snow

with each nuance of wintry glow:

he'll charm you with his fine invention,

he'll take you prisoner, you'll admire

secret sledge-rides in verse of fire;

but I've not got the least intention

just now of wrestling with his shade,

nor his,[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_2) who sings of Finland's maid.

{133}

IV

Tanya (profoundly Russian being,

herself not knowing how or why)

in Russian winters thrilled at seeing

the cold perfection of the sky,

hoar-frost and sun in freezing weather,

sledges, and tardy dawns together

with the pink glow the snows assume

and festal evenings in the gloom.

The Larins kept the old tradition:

maid-servants from the whole estate

would on those evenings guess the fate

of the two girls; their premonition

pointed each year, for time to come,

at soldier-husbands, and the drum.

V

Tatyana shared with full conviction

the simple faith of olden days

in dreams and cards and their prediction,

and portents of the lunar phase.

Omens dismayed her with their presage;

each object held a secret message

for her instruction, and her breast

was by forebodings much oppressed.

The tomcat, mannered and affected,

that sat above the stove and purred

and washed its face, to her brought word

that visitors must be expected.

If suddenly aloft she spied

the new moon, horned, on her left side,

{134}

VI

her face would pale, she'd start to quiver.

In the dark sky, a shooting star

that fell, and then began to shiver,

would fill Tatyana from afar

with perturbation and with worry;

and while the star still flew, she'd hurry

to whisper it her inmost prayer.

And if she happened anywhere

to meet a black monk, or if crossing

her path a hare in headlong flight

ran through the fields, sheer panic fright

would leave her dithering and tossing.

By dire presentiment awestruck,

already she'd assume ill-luck.

VII

Yet -- fear itself she found presented

a hidden beauty in the end:

our disposition being invented

by nature, contradiction's friend.

Christmas came on. What joy, what gladness!

Yes, youth divines, in giddy madness,

youth which has nothing to regret,

before which life's horizon yet

lies bright, and vast beyond perceiving;

spectacled age divines as well,

although it's nearly heard the knell,

and all is lost beyond retrieving;

no matter: hope, in child's disguise,

is there to lisp its pack of lies.

{135}

VIII

Tatyana looks with pulses racing

at sunken wax inside a bowl:

beyond a doubt, its wondrous tracing

foretells for her some wondrous role;

from dish of water, rings are shifted

in due succession; hers is lifted

and at the very self-same time

the girls sing out the ancient rhyme:

``The peasants there have wealth abounding,

they heap up silver with a spade;

and those we sing for will be paid

in goods and fame!'' But the sad-sounding

ditty portends a loss; more dear

is ``Kit''[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_3) to every maiden's ear.

IX

The sky is clear, the earth is frozen;

the heavenly lights in glorious quire

tread the calm, settled path they've chosen...

Tatyana in low-cut attire

goes out into the courtyard spaces

and trains a mirror till it faces

the moon; but in the darkened glass

the only face to shake and pass

is sad old moon's... Hark! snow is creaking...

a passer-by; and on tiptoe

she flies as fast as she can go;

and ``what's your name?'' she asks him, speaking

in a melodious, flute-like tone.

He looks, and answers: ``Agafon.''[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_4)

{136}

X

Prepared for prophecy and fable,

she did what nurse advised she do

and in the bath-house had a table

that night, in secret, set for two;

then sudden fear attacked Tatyana...

I too -- when I recall Svetlana[5](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_5)

I'm terrified -- so let it be...

Tatyana's rites are not for me.

She's dropped her sash's silken billow;

Tanya's undressed, and lies in bed.

Lel[6](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_6) floats about above her head;

and underneath her downy pillow

a young girl's looking-glass is kept.

Now all was still. Tatyana slept.

XI

She dreamt of portents. In her dreaming

she walked across a snowy plain

through gloom and mist; and there came streaming

a furious, boiling, heaving main

across the drift-encumbered acres,

a raging torrent, capped with breakers,

a flood on which no frosty band

had been imposed by winter's hand;

two poles that ice had glued like plaster

were placed across the gulf to make

a flimsy bridge whose every quake

spelt hazard, ruin and disaster;

she stopped at the loud torrent's bound,

perplexed... and rooted to the ground.

{137}

XII

As if before some mournful parting

Tatyana groaned above the tide;

she saw no friendly figure starting

to help her from the other side;

but suddenly a snowdrift rumbled,

and what came out? a hairy, tumbled,

enormous bear; Tatyana yelled,

the bear let out a roar, and held

a sharp-nailed paw towards her; bracing

her nerves, she leant on it her weight,

and with a halting, trembling gait

above the water started tracing

her way; she passed, then as she walked

the bear -- what next? -- behind her stalked.

XIII

A backward look is fraught with danger;

she speeds her footsteps to a race,

but from her shaggy-liveried ranger

she can't escape at any pace --

the odious bear still grunts and lumbers.

Ahead of them a pinewood slumbers

in the full beauty of its frown;

the branches all are weighted down

with tufts of snow; and through the lifted

summits of aspen, birch and lime,

the nightly luminaries climb.

No path to see: the snow has drifted

across each bush, across each steep,

and all the world is buried deep.

{138}

XIV

She's in the wood, the bear still trails her.

There's powdery snow up to her knees;

now a protruding branch assails her

and clasps her neck; and now she sees

her golden earrings off and whipping;

and now the crunchy snow is stripping

her darling foot of its wet shoe,

her handkerchief has fallen too;

no time to pick it up -- she's dying

with fright, she hears the approaching bear;

her fingers shake, she doesn't dare

to lift her skirt up; still she's flying,

and he pursuing, till at length

she flies no more, she's lost her strength.

XV

She's fallen in the snow -- alertly

the bear has raised her in his paws;

and she, submissively, inertly --

no move she makes, no breath she draws;

he whirls her through the wood... a hovel

shows up through trees, all of a grovel

in darkest forest depths and drowned

by dreary snowdrifts piled around;

there's a small window shining in it,

and from within come noise and cheer;

the bear explains: ``my cousin's here --

come in and warm yourself a minute!''

he carries her inside the door

and sets her gently on the floor.

{139}

XVI

Tatyana looks, her faintness passes:

bear's gone; a hallway, no mistake;

behind the door the clash of glasses

and shouts suggest a crowded wake;

so, seeing there no rhyme or reason,

no meaning in or out of season,

she peers discreetly through a chink

and sees... whatever do you think?

a group of monsters round a table,

a dog with horns, a goatee'd witch,

a rooster head, and on the twitch

a skeleton jerked by a cable,

a dwarf with tail, and a half-strain,

a hybrid cross of cat and crane.

XVII

But ever stranger and more fearful:

a crayfish rides on spider-back;

on goose's neck, a skull looks cheerful

and swaggers in a red calpack;

with bended knees a windmill dances,

its sails go flap-flap as it prances;

song, laughter, whistle, bark and champ,

and human words, and horse's stamp!

But how she jumped, when in this hovel

among the guests she recognized

the man she feared and idolized --

who else? -- the hero of our novel!

Onegin sits at table too,

he eyes the door, looks slyly through.

{140}

XVIII

He nods -- they start to fuss and truckle;

he drinks -- all shout and take a swill;

he laughs -- they all begin to chuckle;

he scowls -- and the whole gang are still;

he's host, that's obvious. Thus enlightened

Tanya's no longer quite so frightened

and, curious now about the lot,

opens the door a tiny slot...

but then a sudden breeze surprises,

puts out the lamps; the whole brigade

of house-familiars stands dismayed...

with eyes aflame Onegin rises

from table, clattering on the floor;

all stand. He walks towards the door.

XIX

Now she's alarmed; in desperate worry

Tatyana struggles to run out --

she can't; and in her panic hurry

she flails around, she tries to shout --

she can't; Evgeny's pushed the portal,

and to the vision of those mortal

monsters the maiden stood revealed.

Wildly the fearful laughter pealed;

the eyes of all, the hooves, the snozzles,

the bleeding tongues, the tufted tails,

the tusks, the corpse's finger-nails,

the horns, and the moustachio'd nozzles --

all point at her, and all combine

to bellow out: ``she's mine, she's mine.''

{141}

XX

``She's *mine!*'' Evgeny's voice of thunder

clears in a flash the freezing room;

the whole thieves' kitchen flies asunder,

the girl remains there in the gloom

alone with him; Onegin takes her

into a corner, gently makes her

sit on a flimsy bench, and lays

his head upon her shoulder... blaze

of sudden brightness... it's too curious...

Olga's appeared upon the scene,

and Lensky follows her... Eugene,

eyes rolling, arms uplifted, furious,

damns the intruders; Tanya lies

and almost swoons, and almost dies.

XXI

Louder and louder sounds the wrangle:

Eugene has caught up, quick as quick,

a carving-knife -- and in the tangle

Lensky's thrown down. The murk is thick

and growing thicker; then, heart-shaking,

a scream rings out... the cabin's quaking...

Tanya comes to in utter fright...

she looks, the room is getting light --

outside, the scarlet rays of dawning

play on the window's frosted lace;

in through the door, at swallow's pace,

pinker than glow of Northern morning,

flits Olga: ``now, tell me straight out,

who was it that you dreamt about?''

{142}

XXII

Deaf to her sister's intervention,

Tatyana simply lay in bed,

devoured a book with rapt attention,

and kept quite silent while she read.

The book displayed, not so you'd know it,

no magic fancies of the poet,

no brilliant truth, no vivid scene;

and yet by Vergil or Racine

by Scott, by Seneca, or Byron,

even by *Ladies' Fashion Post,*

no one was ever so engrossed:

Martin Zadéka was the siren,

dean of Chaldea's learned team,

arch-commentator of the dream.

XXIII

This work of the profoundest learning

was brought there by a huckster who

one day came down that lonely turning,

and to Tanya, when he was through,

swapped it for odd tomes of *Malvina,*

but just to make the bargain keener,

he charged three roubles and a half,

and took two *Petriads* in calf,

a grammar, a digest of fable,

and volume three of Marmontel.

Since then Martin Zadéka's spell

bewitches Tanya... he is able

to comfort her in all her woes,

and every night shares her repose.

{143}

XXIV

Tatyana's haunted by her vision,

plagued by her ghastly dream, and tries

to puzzle out with some precision

just what the nightmare signifies.

Searching the table exegetic

she finds, in order alphabetic:

bear, blackness, blizzard, bridge and crow,

fir, forest, hedgehog, raven, snow

etcetera. But her trepidation

Martin Zadéka fails to mend;

the horrid nightmare must portend

a hideous deal of tribulation.

For several days she peaked and pined

in deep anxiety of mind.

XXV

But now Aurora's crimson fingers

from daybreak valleys lift the sun;

the morning light no longer lingers,

the festal name day has begun.

Since dawn, whole families have been driving

towards the Larins' and arriving

in sledded coaches and coupés,

in britzkas, kibítkas and sleighs.

The hall is full of noise and hustle,

in the salon new faces meet,

and kisses smack as young girls greet;

there's yap of pugs, and laughs, and bustle;

the threshold's thronged, wet-nurses call,

guests bow, feet scrape, and children squall.

{144}

XXVI

Here with his wife, that bulging charmer,

fat Pústyakov has driven in;

Gvozdín, exemplary farmer,

whose serfs are miserably thin;

and the Skotínins, grizzled sages,

with broods of children of all ages,

from thirty down to two; and stop,

here's Petushkóv, the local fop;

and look, my cousin's come, Buyánov,

in a peaked cap, all dust and fluff, --

you'll recognize him soon enough, --

and counsellor (retired) Flyánov,

that rogue, backbiter, pantaloon,

bribe-taker, glutton and buffoon.

XXVII

Here, in his red peruke and glasses,

late of Tambov, Monsieur Triquet

has come with Kharlikov; he passes

for witty; in his Gallic way

inside a pocket Triquet nurses,

addressed to Tanya, certain verses

set to well-known children's glee:

``réveillez-vous, belle endormie.''

He found them in some old collection,

printed among outmoded airs;

Triquet, ingenious poet, dares

to undertake their resurrection,

and for *belle Nina,* as it read,

he's put *belle Tatiana* instead.

{145}

XXVIII

And from the nearby Army station

the Major's here: he's all the rage

with our Mamas, and a sensation

with demoiselles of riper age;

his news has set the party humming!

the regimental band is coming,

sent at the Colonel's own behest.

A ball: the joy of every guest!

Young ladies jump for future blisses...

But dinner's served, so two by two

and arm in arm they all go through;

round Tanya congregate the misses,

the men confront them, face to face:

they sit, they cross themselves for grace.

XXIX

They buzz -- but then all talk's suspended --

jaws masticate as minutes pass:

the crash of plates and knives is blended

with the resounding chime of glass.

And now there's gradually beginning

among the guests a general dinning:

none listens when the others speak,

all shout and argue, laugh and squeak.

Then doors are opened, Lensky enters,

Onegin too. ``Good Lord, at last!''

the hostess cries and, moving fast,

the guests squeeze closer to the centres;

they shove each plate, and every chair,

and shout, and make room for the pair.

{146}

XXX

Just facing Tanya's where they're sitting;

and paler than the moon at dawn,

she lowers darkened eyes, unwitting,

and trembles like a hunted fawn.

From violent passions fast pulsating

she's nearly swooned, she's suffocating;

the friends' salute she never hears

and from her eyes the eager tears

are almost bursting; she's quite ready,

poor girl, to drop into a faint,

but will, and reason's strong constraint,

prevailed, and with composure steady

she sat there; through her teeth a word

came out so soft, it scarce was heard.

XXXI

The nervous-tragical reaction,

girls' tears, their swooning, for Eugene

had long proved tedious to distraction:

he knew too well that sort of scene.

Now, faced with this enormous revel,

he'd got annoyed, the tricky devil.

He saw the sad girl's trembling state,

looked down in an access of hate,

pouted, and swore in furious passion

to wreak, by stirring Lensky's ire,

the best revenge one could desire.

Already, in exultant fashion,

he watched the guests and, as he dined,

caricatured them in his mind.

{147}

XXXII

Tanya's distress had risked detection

not only by Evgeny's eye;

but looks and talk took the direction,

that moment, of a luscious pie

(alas, too salted); now they're bringing

bottles to which some pitch is clinging:

Tsimlyansky wine, between the meat

and the *blancmanger,* then a fleet

of goblets, tall and slender pretties;

how they remind me of your stem,

Zizi, my crystal and my gem,

you object of my guileless ditties!

with draughts from love's enticing flask,

you made me drunk as one could ask!

XXXIII

Freed from its dripping cork, the bottle

explodes; wine fizzes up... but stay:

solemn, too long compelled to throttle

his itching verse, Monsieur Triquet

is on his feet -- in utter stillness

the party waits. Seized with an illness

of swooning, Tanya nearly dies;

and, scroll in hand, before her eyes

Triquet sings, out of tune. Loud clapping

and cheers salute him. Tanya must

thank him by curtseying to the dust;

great bard despite his modest trapping,

he's first to toast her in the bowl,

then he presents her with the scroll.

{148}

XXXIV

Compliment and congratulation;

Tanya thanks each one with a phrase.

When Eugene's turn for salutation

arrives, the girl's exhausted gaze,

her discomposure, her confusion,

expose his soul to an intrusion

of pity: in his silent bow,

and in his look there shows somehow

a wondrous tenderness. And whether

it was that he'd been truly stirred,

or half-unwittingly preferred

a joking flirt, or both together,

there was a softness in his glance:

it brought back Tanya from her trance.

XXXV

Chairs are pushed outward, loudly rumbling,

and all into the salon squeeze,

as from their luscious hive go tumbling

fieldward, in noisy swarm, the bees.

The banquet's given no cause for sneezing,

neighbours in high content are wheezing;

ladies at the fireside confer,

in corners whispering girls concur;

now, by green tablecloths awaited,

the eager players are enrolled --

Boston and ombre for the old,

and whist, that's now so keenly fêted --

pursuits of a monotonous breed

begot by boredom out of greed.

{149}

XXXVI

By now whist's heroes have completed

eight rubbers; and by now eight times

they've moved around and been reseated;

and tea's brought in. Instead of chimes

I like to tell the time by dinner

and tea and supper; there's an inner

clock in the country rings the hour;

no fuss; our belly has the power

of any Bréguet: and in passing

I'll just remark, my verses talk

as much of banquets and the cork

and eatables beyond all classing

as yours did, Homer, godlike lord,

whom thirty centuries have adored!

< XXXVII[7](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_7)

At feasts, though, full of pert aggression,

I put your genius to the test,

I make magnanimous confession,

in other things you come off best:

your heroes, raging and ferocious,

your battles, lawless and atrocious,

your Zeus, your Cypris, your whole band

have clearly got the upper hand

of Eugene, cold as all creation,

of plains where boredom reigns complete,

or of Istómina, my sweet,

and all our modish education;

but your vile Helen's not my star --

no, Tanya's more endearing far.

{150}

XXXVIII

No one will think that worth gainsaying,

though Menelaus, in Helen's name,

may spend a century in flaying

the hapless Phrygians all the same,

and although Troy's greybeards, collected

around Priam the much-respected,

may chorus, when she comes in sight,

that Menelaus was quite right --

and Paris too. But hear my pleading:

as battles go, I've not begun;

don't judge the race before it's run --

be good enough to go on reading:

there'll be a fight. For that I give

my word; no welshing, as I live. >

XXXIX

Here's tea: the girls have just, as bidden,

taken the saucers in their grip,

when, from behind the doorway, hidden

bassoons and flutes begin to trip.

Elated by the music's blaring,

Petushkóv, local Paris, tearing,

his tea with rum quite left behind,

approaches Olga; Lensky's signed

Tatyana on; Miss Kharlikova,

that nubile maid of riper age,

is seized by Tambov's poet-sage;

Buyánov whirls off Pustyakova;

they all have swarmed into the hall,

and in full brilliance shines the ball.

{151}

XL

Right at the outset of my story

(if you'll turn back to chapter one)

I meant to paint, with Alban's[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_8) glory,

a ball in Petersburg; but fun

and charming reverie's vain deflection

absorbed me in the recollection

of certain ladies' tiny feet.

Enough I've wandered in the suite

of your slim prints! though this be treason

to my young days, it's time I turned

to wiser words and deeds, and learned

to demonstrate some signs of reason:

let no more such digressions lurk

in this fifth chapter of my work.

XLI

And now, monotonously dashing

like mindless youth, the waltz goes by

with spinning noise and senseless flashing

as pair by pair the dancers fly.

Revenge's hour is near, and after

Evgeny, full of inward laughter,

has gone to Olga, swept the girl

past all the assembly in a whirl,

he takes her to a chair, beginning

to talk of this and that, but then

after two minutes, off again,

they're on the dance-floor, waltzing, spinning.

All are dumbfounded. Lensky shies

away from trusting his own eyes.

{152}

XLII

Now the mazurka sounds. Its thunder

used in times past to ring a peal

that huge ballrooms vibrated under,

while floors would split from crash of heel,

and frames would shudder, windows tremble;

now things are changed, now we resemble

ladies who glide on waxed parquet.

Yet the mazurka keeps today

in country towns and suchlike places

its pristine charm: heeltaps, and leaps,

and whiskers -- all of this it keeps

as fresh as ever, for its graces

are here untouched by fashion's reign,

our modern Russia's plague and bane.

XLIII[7](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_10_7)

... ...

< Petushkóv's nails and spurs are sounding

(that half-pay archivist); and bounding

Buyánov's heels have split the wood

and wrecked the flooring-boards for good;

there's crashing, rumbling, pounding, trotting,

the deeper in the wood, the more

the logs; the wild ones have the floor;

they're plunging, whirling, all but squatting.

Ah, gently, gently, easy goes --

your heels will squash the ladies' toes! >

{153}

XLIV

Buyánov, my vivacious cousin,

leads Olga and Tatyana on

to Eugene; nineteen to the dozen,

Eugene takes Olga, and is gone;

he steers her, nonchalantly gliding,

he stoops and, tenderly confiding,

whispers some ballad of the hour,

squeezes her hand -- and brings to flower

on her smug face a flush of pleasure.

Lensky has watched: his rage has blazed,

he's lost his self-command, and crazed

with jealousy beyond all measure

insists, when the mazurka ends,

on the cotillion, as amends.

XLV

He asks. She can't accept. Why ever?

No, she's already pledged her word

to Evgeny. Oh, God, she'd never...

How could she? why, he'd never heard...

scarce out of bibs, already fickle,

fresh from the cot, an infant pickle,

already studying to intrigue,

already high in treason's league!

He finds the shock beyond all bearing:

so, cursing women's devious course,

he leaves the house, calls for his horse

and gallops. Pistols made for pairing

and just a double charge of shot

will in a flash decide his lot.

{154}

*Notes to Chapter Five*

1 ``See *First Snow*, a poem by Prince Vyazemsky.'' Pushkin's note. For

Prince P. Vyazemsky (1791--1878), poet, critic and close friend of Pushkin,

see also Chapter Seven, XLIX.

2 ``See the descriptions of the Finnish winter in Baratynsky's *Eda*''.

Pushkin's note.

3 ``"Tomcat calls Kit" -- a song foretelling marriage.'' Pushkin's

note.

4 This Russianized version of the Greek Agatho is ``elephantine and

rustic to the Russian ear''. Nabokov. See note 3 to Chapter Two.

5 Girl in Zhukovsky's poem who practises divination, with frightening

results. See note 2 to Chapter Three.

6 Slavonic god of love.

7 Stanzas XXXVII, XXXVIII and XLIII were discarded by Pushkin.

8 Francesco Albani, Italian painter (1578-1660).

**Chapter Six**

La, sotto giorni nubilosi e brevi.

Nasce una gente a cui 'l morir non dole.

Petrarch

I

Seeing Vladimir had defected,

Eugene, at Olga's side, was racked

by fresh *ennui* as he reflected

with pleasure on his vengeful act.

Olinka yawned, just like her neighbour,

and looked for Lensky, while the labour

of the cotillion's endless theme

oppressed her like a heavy dream.

It's over. Supper is proceeding.

Beds are made up; the guests are all

packed from the maids' wing to the hall.

Each one by now is badly needing

a place for rest. Eugene alone

has driven off, to find his own.

{155}

II

All sleep: from the saloon a roaring

proclaims where ponderous Pústyakov

beside his heavier half is snoring.

Gvozdín, Buyánov, Petushkóv

and Flyánov, amply lubricated,

on dining-chairs are all prostrated;

the floor serves Triquet for his nap,

in flannel, and an old fur cap.

In the two sisters' rooms extended,

the maidens all are slumbering deep.

Only Tatyana does not sleep,

but at the window, in the splendid

radiance of Dian, sits in pain

and looks out on the darkened plain.

III

His unexpected apparition,

the fleeting tenderness that stole

into his look, the exhibition

with Olga, all have pierced her soul;

she can't make out a single fraction

of his intent; and a reaction

of jealousy has made her start,

as if a cold hand squeezed her heart,

as if beneath her, dark and rumbling,

a gulf has gaped... Says Tanya: ``I

am doomed to perish, yet to die

through him is sweetness' self. In grumbling

I find no sense; the truth is this,

it's not in him to bring me bliss.''

{156}

IV

But onward, onward with my story!

A new acquaintance claims our quill.

Five versts or so from Krasnogórie,

Lensky's estate, there lives and still

thrives to this moment, in a station

of philosophic isolation,

Zarétsky, sometime king of brawls

and hetman of the gambling-halls,

arch-rake, pothouse tribune-persona,

but now grown plain and kind in stead,

paterfamilias (unwed),

unswerving friend, correct landowner,

and even honourable man:

so, if we want to change, we can!

V

The world of fashion, prone to flatter,

praised his fierce courage in its day:

true, with a pistol he could shatter

an ace a dozen yards away;

it's also true, in battle's rapture,

the circumstances of his capture

had made his name, when, bold as bold,

down from his Kalmuck steed he rolled

into the mud, a drunken goner,

and taken by the French -- some prize! --

resigned himself to prison's ties,

like Regulus, that god of honour,

in order daily, chez Véry,[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_11_1)

to drain, on credit, bottles three.

{157}

VI

Time was, he'd been the wittiest ever,

so brilliantly he'd hoax the fools,

so gloriously he'd fool the clever,

using overt or covert rules.

Sometimes his tricks would earn him trouble,

or cause the bursting of his bubble,

sometimes he'd fall into a trap

himself just like a simple chap.

But he could draw a joking moral,

return an answer, blunt or keen,

use cunning silence as a screen,

or cunningly create a quarrel,

get two young friends to pick a fight,

and put them on a paced-out site.

VII

Or he knew how to reconcile them

so that all three went off to lunch,

then later slyly he'd revile them

with lies and jokes that packed a punch:

*sed alia tempora!* The devil

(like passion's dream, that other revel)

goes out of us when youth is dead.

So my Zaretsky, as I said,

beneath bird-cherries and acacias

has found a port for his old age,

and lives, a veritable sage,

for planting cabbage, like Horatius,

and breeding ducks and geese as well,

and teaching children how to spell.

{158}

VIII

He was no fool; appreciated

by my Eugene, not for his heart,

but for the effect that he created

of sense and judgement. For his part

his converse gave Onegin pleasure;

so it was not in any measure,

the morning after, a surprise

when our Zaretsky met his eyes.

His visitor from the beginning

broke greetings off, and gave Eugene

a note from Lensky; in between

Zaretsky watched, and stood there grinning.

Onegin without more ado

crossed to the window, read it through.

IX

Pleasant, in spite of its compression,

gentlemanly, quite precise,

Vladimir's challenge found expression

that, though polite, was clear as ice.

Eugene's response was automatic;

he informed this envoy diplomatic

in terms where not a word was spared:

*at any time he'd be prepared.*

Zaretsky rose without discussion;

he saw no point in staying on,

with work at home; but when he'd gone,

Evgeny, whom the repercussion

left quite alone with his own soul,

was far from happy with his role.

{159}

X

With reason, too: for when he'd vetted

in secret judgement what he'd done,

he found too much that he regretted:

last night he'd erred in making fun,

so heartless and so detrimental,

of love so timorous and gentle.

In second place the poet might

have been a fool; yet he'd a right,

at eighteen years, to some compassion.

Evgeny loved him from his heart,

and should have played a different part:

no softball for the winds of fashion,

no boy, to fight or take offence --

the *man* of honour and of sense.

XI

He could have spoken without harming,

need not have bristled like a beast;

he should have settled for disarming

that youthful heart. ``But now at least

it's late, time's passing... not to mention,

in our affair, the intervention

of that old duellistic fox,

that wicked, loose-tongue chatterbox...

True, scorn should punish and should bridle

his wit, according to the rules

but whispers, the guffaw of fools...''

Public opinion -- here's our idol,

the spring of honour, and the pin

on which the world is doomed to spin.

{160}

XII

Lensky at home awaits the answer,

impatient, hatred flaming high;

but here comes our loud-talking prancer

who swaggers in with the reply.

The jealous poet's gloom is lightened!

knowing the offender, he'd been frightened

lest he should by some clever trick

avert his chest from pistol's click,

smoothe his way out with humour's ointment.

But now Vladimir's doubts are still:

early tomorrow at the mill

before first light they have appointment,

to raise the safety catch and strain

to hit the target: thigh or brain.

XIII

Still blazing with resentment's fuel,

and set on hating the coquette,

Lensky resolved before the duel

not to see Olga; in a fret

watched sun and clock -- then by such labours

defeated, turned up at his neighbour's.

He thought that Olga'd be confused,

struck down as if she'd been accused,

when he arrived; not in the slightest:

just as she'd always been, she tripped

to meet the unhappy poet, skipped

down from the porch, light as the lightest,

the giddiest hope, carefree and gay,

the same as any other day.

{161}

XIV

``Last night, what made you fly so early?''

was the first thing that Olga said.

All Lensky's thoughts went hurly-burly,

and silently he hung his head.

Rage died, and jealousy's obsession,

before such candour of expression,

such frank *tendresse;* away they stole

before such playfulness of soul!...

he looks, in sweet irresolution,

and then concludes: she loves him yet!

Already borne down by regret,

he almost begs for absolution,

he trembles, knows not what to tell;

he's happy, yes, he's almost well...

(XV, XVI,[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_11_2)) XVII

Now brooding thoughts hold his attention

once more, at that beloved sight,

and so he lacks the strength to mention

the happenings of the previous night;

he murmurs: ``Olga's mine for saving;

I'll stop that tempter from depraving

her youth with all his repertoire

of sighs, and compliments, and fire;

that poisonous worm, despised, degrading,

shall not attack my lily's root;

I'll save this blossom on the shoot,

still hardly opened up, from fading.''

Friends, all this meant was: I've a date

for swapping bullets with my mate.

{162}

XVIII

If only Lensky'd known the burning

wound that had seared my Tanya's heart!

If Tanya'd had the chance of learning

that Lensky and Eugene, apart,

would settle, on the morrow morning,

for which of them the tomb was yawning,

perhaps her love could in the end

have reunited friend to friend!

But, even by accident, her passion

was undiscovered to that day.

Onegin had no word to say;

Tatyana pined in secret fashion:

of the whole world, her nurse alone,

if not slow-witted, might have known.

XIX

Lensky all evening, in distraction,

would talk, keep silent, laugh, then frown --

the quintessential reaction

of Muses' offspring; sitting down

before the clavichord with knitted

forehead, he strummed, his vision flitted

to Olga's face, he whispered low

``I think I'm happy.'' Time to go,

the hour was late. And now from aching

the heart inside him seemed to shrink;

parting with Olga made him think

it was quite torn in half and breaking.

She faced him, questioning: ``But you?...''

``It's nothing.'' And away he flew.

{163}

XX

Once home, he brought out and inspected

his pistols, laid them in their case,

undressed, by candlelight selected

and opened Schiller... but the embrace

of one sole thought holds him in keeping

and stops his doleful heart from sleeping:

Olga is there, he sees her stand

in untold beauty close at hand.

Vladimir shuts the book, for writing

prepares himself; and then his verse,

compact of amorous trash, and worse,

flows and reverberates. Reciting,

he sounds, in lyric frenzy sunk,

like Delvig[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_11_3) when he's dining drunk.

XXI

By chance those verses haven't vanished;

I keep them, and will quote them here:

``Whither, oh whither are ye banished,

my golden days when spring was dear?

What fate is my tomorrow brewing?

the answer's past all human viewing,

it's hidden deep in gloom and dust.

No matter; fate's decree is just.

Whether the arrow has my number,

whether it goes careering past,

all's well; the destined hour at last

comes for awakening, comes for slumber;

blessed are daytime's care and cark,

blest is the advent of the dark!

{164}

XXII

``The morning star will soon be shining,

and soon will day's bright tune be played;

but I perhaps will be declining

into the tomb's mysterious shade;

the trail the youthful poet followed

by sluggish Lethe may be swallowed,

and I be by the world forgot;

but, lovely maiden, wilt thou not

on my untimely urn be weeping,

thinking: he loved me, and in strife

the sad beginnings of his life

he consecrated to my keeping?...

Friend of my heart, be at my side,

beloved friend, thou art my bride!''

XXIII

So Lensky wrote, obscurely, limply

(in the romantic style, we say,

though what's romantic here I simply

fail to perceive -- that's by the way).

At last, with dawn upon him, stooping

his weary head, and softly drooping

over the modish word *ideal,*

he dozed away; but when the real

magic of sleep had started claiming

its due oblivion, in the hush

his neighbour entered at a rush

and wakened Lensky by exclaiming:

``Get up: it's gone six! I'll be bound,

Onegin's waiting on the ground.''

{165}

XXIV

But he's mistaken: Eugene's lying

and sleeping sounder than a rock.

By now the shades of night are flying,

Vesper is met by crow of cock --

Onegin still is slumbering deeply.

By now the sun is climbing steeply,

and little dancing whirls of snow

glitter and tumble as they go,

but Eugene hasn't moved; for certain

slumber still floats above his head.

At last he wakes, and stirs in bed,

and parts the fringes of his curtain;

he looks, and sees the hour of day --

high time he should be on his way.

XXV

He rings at once, and what a scurry!

his French valet, Guillot, is there

with gown and slippers; tearing hurry,

as linen's brought for him to wear.

And while with all despatch he's dressing

he warns his man for duty, stressing

that with him to the trysting-place

he has to bring the battle-case.

By now the sledge is at the portal --

he's racing millward like a bird.

Arrived apace, he gives the word

to bring across Lepage's[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_11_4) mortal

barrels, and then to drive aside

by two small oaktrees in a ride.

{166}

XXVI

While Lensky'd long been meditating

impatiently on the mill-dam,

Zaretsky, engineer-in-waiting,

condemned the millstones as a sham.

Onegin comes, and makes excuses;

but in Zaretsky he induces

amazement: ``Where's your second gone?''

In duels a pedantic don,

methodical by disposition,

a classicist, he'll not allow

that one be shot just anyhow --

only by rule, and strict tradition

inherited from earlier days

(for which he must receive due praise).

XXVII

Evgeny echoed him: ``My second?

He's here -- Monsieur Guillot, my friend.

I had most surely never reckoned

his choice could shock or might offend;

though he's unknown, there's no suggestion

that he's not honest past all question.''

Zaretsky bit his lip. Eugene

asked Lensky: ``Should we start, I mean?''

Vladimir to this casual mention

replies: ``We might as well.'' They walk

behind the mill. In solemn talk,

Zaretsky draws up a convention

with Guillot; while pourparlers last

the two foes stand with eyes downcast.

{167}

XXVIII

Foes! Is it long since from each other

the lust for blood drew them apart?

long since, like brother linked to brother,

they shared their days in deed and heart,

their table, and their hours of leisure?

But now, in this vindictive pleasure

hereditary foes they seem,

and as in some appalling dream

each coldly plans the other's slaughter...

could they not laugh out loud, before

their hands are dipped in scarlet gore,

could they not give each other quarter

and part in kindness? Just the same,

all modish foes dread worldly shame.

XXIX

Pistols are out, they gleam, the hammer

thumps as the balls are pressed inside

faceted muzzles by the rammer;

with a first click, the catch is tried.

Now powder's greyish stream is slipping

into the pan. Securely gripping,

the jagged flint's pulled back anew.

Guillot, behind a stump in view,

stands in dismay and indecision.

And now the two opponents doff

their cloaks; Zaretsky's measured off

thirty-two steps with great precision,

and on their marks has made them stand;

each grips his pistol in his hand.

{168}

XXX

``Now march.'' And calmly, not yet seeking

to aim, at steady, even pace

the foes, cold-blooded and unspeaking,

each took four steps across the space,

four fateful stairs. Then, without slowing

the level tenor of his going,

Evgeny quietly began

to lift his pistol up. A span

of five more steps they went, slow-gaited,

and Lensky, left eye closing, aimed --

but just then Eugene's pistol flamed...

The clock of doom had struck as fated;

and the poet, without a sound,

let fall his pistol on the ground.

XXXI

Vladimir drops, hand softly sliding

to heart. And in his misted gaze

is death, not pain. So gently gliding

down slopes of mountains, when a blaze

of sunlight makes it flash and crumble,

a block of snow will slip and tumble.

Onegin, drenched with sudden chill,

darts to the boy, and looks, and still

calls out his name... All unavailing:

the youthful votary of rhyme

has found an end before his time.

The storm is over,[5](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_11_5) dawn is paling,

the bloom has withered on the bough;

the altar flame's extinguished now.

{169}

XXXII

He lay quite still, and strange as dreaming

was that calm brow of one who swooned.

Shot through below the chest -- and streaming

the blood came smoking from the wound.

A moment earlier, inspiration

had filled this heart, and detestation

and hope and passion; life had glowed

and blood had bubbled as it flowed;

but now the mansion is forsaken;

shutters are up, and all is pale

and still within, behind the veil

of chalk the window-panes have taken.

The lady of the house has fled.

Where to, God knows. The trail is dead.

XXXIII

With a sharp epigram it's pleasant

to infuriate a clumsy foe;

and, as observer, to be present

and watch him stubbornly bring low

his thrusting horns, and as he passes

blush to descry in looking-glasses

his foolish face; more pleasant yet

to hear him howl: ``that's me!'' You'll get

more joy still when with mute insistence

you help him to an honoured fate

by calmly aiming at his pate

from any gentlemanly distance;

but when you've managed his despatch

you won't find that quite so much catch...

{170}

XXXIV

What if your pistol-shot has smitten

a friend of yours in his first youth

because some glance of his has bitten

your pride, some answer, or in truth

some nonsense thrown up while carousing,

or if himself, with rage arousing,

he's called you out -- say, in your soul

what feelings would assume control

if, motionless, no life appearing,

death on his brow, your friend should lie,

stiffening as the hours go by,

before you on the ground, unhearing,

unspeaking, too, but stretched out there

deaf to the voice of your despair?

XXXV

Giving his pistol-butt a squeezing,

Evgeny looks at Lensky, chilled

at heart by grim remorse's freezing.

``Well, what?'' the neighbour says, ``he's killed.''

Killed!... At this frightful word a-quiver,

Onegin turns, and with a shiver

summons his people. On the sleigh

with care Zaretsky stows away

the frozen corpse, drives off, and homing

vanishes with his load of dread.

The horses, as they sense the dead,

have snorted, reared, and whitely foaming

have drenched the steel bit as they go

and flown like arrows from a bow.

{171}

XXXVI

My friends, the bard stirs your compassion:

right in the flower of joyous hope,

hope that he's had no time to fashion

for men to see, still in the scope

of swaddling clothes -- already blighted!

Where is the fire that once ignited,

where's the high aim, the ardent sense

of youth, so tender, so intense?

and where is love's tempestuous yearning,

where are the reveries this time,

the horror of disgrace and crime,

the thirst for work, the lust for learning,

and life celestial's phantom gleams,

stuff of the poet's hallowed dreams!

XXXVII

Perhaps to improve the world's condition,

perhaps for fame, he was endowed;

his lyre, now stilled, in its high mission

might have resounded long and loud

for aeons. Maybe it was fated

that on the world's staircase there waited

for him a lofty stair. His shade,

after the martyr's price it paid,

maybe bore off with it for ever

a secret truth, and at our cost

a life-creating voice was lost;

to it the people's blessing never

will reach, and past the tomb's compound

hymns of the ages never sound.

{172}

(XXXVIII,[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_11_2)) XXXIX

Perhaps however, to be truthful,

he would have found a normal fate.

The years would pass; no longer youthful,

he'd see his soul cool in its grate;

his nature would be changed and steadied,

he'd sack the Muses and get wedded;

and in the country, blissful, horned,

in quilted dressing-gown adorned,

life's real meaning would have found him;

at forty he'd have got the gout,

drunk, eaten, yawned, grown weak and stout,

at length, midst children swarming round him,

midst crones with endless tears to shed,

and doctors, he'd have died in bed.

XL

Reader, whatever fate's direction,

we weep for the young lover's end,

the man of reverie and reflection,

the poet struck down by his friend!

Left-handed from the habitation

where dwelt this child of inspiration,

two pines have tangled at the root;

beneath, a brook rolls its tribute

toward the neighbouring valley's river.

The ploughman there delights to doze,

girl reapers as the streamlet flows

dip in their jugs; where shadows quiver

darkly above the water's lilt,

a simple monument is built.

{173}

XLI

Below it, when sprang rains are swishing,

when, on the plain, green herbs are massed,

the shepherd sings of Volga's fishing

and plaits a piebald shoe of bast;

and the young city-bred newcomer,

who in the country spends her summer,

when galloping at headlong pace

alone across the fields of space,

will halt her horse and, gripping tightly

the leather rein, to learn the tale,

lift up the gauzes of her veil,

with a quick look perusing lightly

the simple legend -- then a haze

of tears will cloud her tender gaze.

XLII

Walking her horse in introspection

across the plain's enormous room,

what holds her in profound reflection,

despite herself, is Lensky's doom;

``Olga,'' she thinks, ``what fate befell her?

her heartache, did it long compel her,

or did her grief soon find repair?

and where's her sister now? and where,

flown from society as we know it,

of modish belles the modish foe,

where did that glum eccentric go,

the one who killed the youthful poet?''

All in good time, on each point I

will give you a complete reply.

{174}

XLIII

But not today. Although I dearly

value the hero of my tale,

though I'll come back to him, yet clearly

to face him now I feel too frail...

The years incline to gloom and prosing,

they kill the zest of rhymed composing,

and with a sigh I now admit

I have to drag my feet to it.

My pen, as once, no longer hurries

to spoil loose paper by the ream;

another, a more chilling dream,

and other, more exacting worries,

in fashion's din, at still of night,

come to disturb me and affright.

XLIV

I've learnt the voice of new ambition,

I've learnt new sadness; but in this

the first will never find fruition,

the earlier griefs are what I miss.

O dreams, o dreams, where is your sweetness?

where (standard rhyme) are youth and fleetness?

can it be true, their crown at last

has felt time's desiccating blast?

can it be true, and firmly stated

without an elegiac frill,

that spring with me has had its fill

(as I've so oft in jest related)?

Can it be true, it won't come twice --

and I'll be thirty in a trice?

{175}

XLV

Well, I must make a frank confession,

my noon is here, and that's the truth.

So let me with a kind expression

take leave of my lightheaded youth!

Thank you for all the gifts I treasure,

thank you for sorrow and for pleasure,

thank you for suffering and its joys,

for tempests and for feasts and noise;

thank you indeed. Alike in sorrow

and in flat calm I've found the stuff

of perfect bliss in you. Enough!

My soul's like crystal, and tomorrow

I shall set out on brand-new ways

and rest myself from earlier days.

XLVI

Let me look back. Farewell, umbrageous

forests where my young age was passed

in indolence and in rampageous

passion and dreams of pensive cast.

But come, thou youthful inspiration,

come, trouble my imagination,

liven the drowsing of my heart,

fly to my corner like a dart,

let not the poet's soul of passion

grow cold, and hard, and stiff as stock,

and finally be turned to rock

amid the deadening joys of fashion,

< amongst the soulless men of pride,

the fools who sparkle far and wide,[6](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_11_6)

{176}

XLVII

amongst the crafty and small-minded,

the children spoilt, the mad, the rogues

both dull and ludicrous, the bunded

critics and their capricious vogues,

amongst devout coquettes, appalling

lickspittles who adore their crawling,

and daily scenes of modish life

where civil treacheries are rife,

urbane betrayals, and the chilling

verdicts of vanity the bleak,

men's thoughts, their plots, the words they speak,

all of an emptiness so killing -- >

that's the morass, I beg you note,

in which, dear friends, we're all afloat!

{177}

*Notes to Chapter Six*

1 Café-restaurant in Paris.

2 Stanzas XV, XVI and XXXVIII were discarded by Pushkin.

3 Anton Delvig, poet and close friend of Pushkin.

4 Jean Lepage, Parisian gunsmith.

5 ``A deliberate accumulation of conventional poetical formulae by

means of which Pushkin mimics poor Lensky's own style... but the rich and

original metaphor of the deserted house, closed inner shutters, whitened

window-panes, departed female owner (the soul being feminine in Russian),

with which XXXII ends, is Pushkin's own contribution, a sample as it were of

what he can do.'' Nabokov.

6 These lines and the first twelve lines of stanza XLVII were discarded

by Pushkin.

**Chapter Seven**

Moscow, loved daughter of Russia,

where can we find your equal?

Dmitriev

``How can one not love mother Moscow?''

Baratynsky

``You criticize Moscow? why make such a fuss

of seeing the world? what on earth could be better?''

``A place where you'll find none of us.''

Griboedov

I

By now the rays of spring are chasing

the snow from all surrounding hills;

it melts, away it rushes, racing

down to the plain in turbid rills.

Smiling through sleep, nature is meeting

the infant year with cheerful greeting:

the sky is brilliant in its blue

and, still transparent to the view,

the downy woods are greener-tinted;

from waxen cell the bees again

levy their tribute on the plain;

the vales dry out, grow brightly printed;

cows low, in the still nights of spring

the nightingale's begun to sing.

{178}

II

O spring! o time for love! how sadly

your advent swamps me in its flood!

and in my soul, o spring, how madly

your presence aches, and in my blood!

How heavy, and how near to sobbing,

the bliss that fills me when your throbbing,

caressing breath has fanned my face

in rural calm's most secret place!

Or from all notion of enjoyment

am I estranged, does all that cheers,

that lives, and glitters, and endears,

now crush with sorrow's dull deployment

a soul that perished long ago,

and finds the world a darkling show?

III

Or, unconsoled by the returning

of leaves that autumn killed for good,

are we recalled to grief still burning

by the new whisper in the wood?

or else does nature, fresh and staring,

set off our troubled mind comparing

its newness with our faded days,

with years no more to meet our gaze?

Perhaps, when thoughts are all a-quiver

in midst of a poetic dream,

some other, older spring will gleam,

and put our heart into a shiver

with visions of enchanted night,

of distant countries, of moonlight...

{179}

IV

It's time: kind-hearted, idle creatures,

dons of Epicurean rule,

calm men with beatific features,

graduates of the Levshin[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_12_1) school,

Priam-like agricultural sages,

sensitive ladies of all ages --

the spring invites you to the land

now warmth and blossom are on hand,

field-work, and walks with inspiration,

and magic nights. In headlong course

come to the fields, my friends! To horse!

With mounts from home, or postal station,

in loaded carriages, migrate,

leave far behind that city-gate.

V

Forsake, indulgent reader -- driven

in your *calèche* of foreign cast --

the untiring city, where you've given

to feasts and fun this winter past;

and though my muse may be capricious,

we'll go with her to that delicious

and nameless rivulet, that scene

of whispering woods where my Eugene,

an idle monk in glum seclusion,

has lately wintered, just a space

from young Tatyana's dwelling-place,

dear Tanya, lover of illusion;

though there he's no more to be found,

he's left sad footprints on the ground.

{180}

VI

Amidst the hills, down in that valley,

let's go where, winding all the time

across green meadows, dilly-dally,

a brook flows through a grove of lime.

There sings the nightingale, spring's lover,

the wild rose blooms, and in the covert

the source's chattering voice is heard;

and there a tombstone says its word

where two old pinetrees stand united:

``This is Vladimir Lensky's grave

who early died as die the brave'' --

the headpiece-text is thus indited --

the year, his age, then: ``may your rest,

young poet, be for ever blest!''

VII

There was a pine-branch downward straying

towards the simple urn beneath;

time was when morning's breeze was swaying

over it a mysterious wreath:

time was, in evening hours of leisure,

by moonlight two young girls took pleasure,

closely embraced, in wending here,

to see the grave, and shed a tear.

Today... the sad memorial's lonely,

forgot. Its trodden path is now

choked up. There's no wreath on the bough;

grey-haired and weak, beneath it only

the shepherd, as he used to do,

sings as he plaits a humble shoe.

{181}

(VIII,[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_12_2) IX,) X

Poor Lensky! Set aside for weeping,

or pining, Olga's hours were brief.

Alas for him! there was no keeping

his sweetheart faithful to her grief.

Another had the skill to ravish

her thoughts away, knew how to lavish

sweet words by which her pain was banned --

a Lancer wooed and won her hand,

a Lancer -- how she deified him!

and at the altar, with a crown,

her head in modesty cast down,

already there she stands beside him;

her eyes are lowered, but ablaze,

and on her lips a light smile plays.

XI

Poor Lensky! where the tomb is bounded

by dull eternity's purlieus,

was the sad poet not confounded

at this betrayal's fateful news?

Or, as by Lethe's bank he slumbered,

perhaps no more sensations lumbered

the lucky bard, and as he dozed

the earth for him grew dumb and closed?...

On such indifference, such forgetting

beyond the grave we all must build --

foes, friends and loves, their voice is stilled.

Only the estate provides a setting

for angry heirs, as one, to fall

into an unbecoming brawl.

{182}

XII

Presently Olga's ringing answer

inside the Larins' house fell mute.

Back to his regiment the Lancer,

slave of the service, was *en route.*

Weltered in tears, and sorely smarting,

the old dame wept her daughter's parting,

and in her grief seemed fit to die;

but Tanya found she couldn't cry:

only the pallor of heart-breaking

covered her face. When all came out

onto the porch, and fussed about

over the business of leave-taking,

Tatyana went with them, and sped

the carriage of the newly-wed.

XIII

And long, as if through mists that spurted,

Tanya pursued them with her gaze...

So there she stood, forlorn, deserted!

The comrade of so many days,

oh! her young dove, the natural hearer

of secrets, like a friend but dearer,

had been for ever borne off far

and parted from her by their star.

Shade-like, in purposeless obsession

she roams the empty garden-plot...

in everything she sees there's not

a grain of gladness; tears' repression

allows no comfort to come through --

Tatyana's heart is rent in two.

{183}

XIV

Her passion burns with stronger powder

now she's bereft, and just the same

her heart speaks to her even louder

of far-away Onegin's name.

She'll not see him, her obligation

must be to hold in detestation

the man who laid her brother low.

The poet's dead... already though

no one recalls him or his verses;

by now his bride-to-be has wed

another, and his memory's fled

as smoke in azure sky disperses.

Two hearts there are perhaps that keep

a tear for him... but what's to weep?

XV

Evening, and darkening sky, and waters

in quiet flood. A beetle whirred.

The choirs of dancers sought their quarters.

Beyond the stream there smoked and stirred

a fisher's fire. Through country gleaming

silver with moonlight, in her dreaming

profoundly sunk, Tatyana stalked

for hours alone; she walked and walked...

Suddenly, from a crest, she sighted

a house, a village, and a wood

below a hill; a garden stood

above a stream the moon had lighted.

She looked across, felt in her heart

a faster, stronger pulsing start.

{184}

XVI

She hesitates, and doubts beset her:

forward or back? it's true that he

has left, and no one here has met her...

``The house, the park... I'll go and see!''

So down came Tanya, hardly daring

to draw a breath, around her staring

with puzzled and confused regard...

She entered the deserted yard.

Dogs, howling, rushed in her direction...

Her frightened cry brought running out

the household boys in noisy rout;

giving the lady their protection,

by dint of cuff and kick and smack

they managed to disperse the pack.

XVII

``Could I just see the house, I wonder?''

Tatyana asked. The children all

rushed to Anisia's room, to plunder

the keys that opened up the hall.

At once Anisia came to greet her,

the doorway opened wide to meet her,

she went inside the empty shell

in which our hero used to dwell.

She looks: forgotten past all chalking

on billiard-table rests a cue,

and on the crumpled sofa too

a riding whip. Tanya keeps walking...

``And here's the hearth,'' explains the crone,

``where master used to sit alone.

{185}

XVIII

``Here in the winter he'd have dinner

with neighbour Lensky, the deceased.

Please follow me. And here's the inner

study where he would sleep and feast

on cups of coffee, and then later

he'd listen to the administrator;

in morning time he'd read a book...

And just here, in the window-nook,

is where old master took up station,

and put his glasses on to see

his Sunday game of cards with me.

I pray God grant his soul salvation,

and rest his dear bones in the tomb,

down in our damp earth-mother's womb!''

XIX

Tatyana in a deep emotion

gazes at all the scene around;

she drinks it like a priceless potion;

it stirs her drooping soul to bound

in fashion that's half-glad, half-anguished:

that table where the lamp has languished,

beside the window-sill, that bed

on which a carpet has been spread,

piled books, and through the pane the sable

moonscape, the half-light overall,

Lord Byron's portrait on the wall,

the iron figure[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_12_3) on the table,

the hat, the scowling brow, the chest

where folded arms are tightly pressed.

{186}

XX

Longtime inside this modish cloister,

as if spellbound, Tatyana stands.

It's late. A breeze begins to roister,

the valley's dark. The forest lands

round the dim river sleep; the curtain

of hills has hid the moon; for certain

the time to go has long since passed

for the young pilgrim. So at last

Tatyana, hiding her condition,

and not without a sigh, perforce

sets out upon her homeward course;

before she goes, she seeks permission

to come back to the hall alone

and read the books there on her own.

XXI

Outside the gate Tatyana parted

with old Anisia. The next day

at earliest morning out she started,

to the empty homestead made her way,

then in the study's quiet setting,

at last alone, and quite forgetting

the world and all its works, she wept

and sat there as the minutes crept;

the books then underwent inspection...

at first she had no heart to range;

but then she found their choice was strange.

To reading from this odd collection

Tatyana turned with thirsting soul:

and watched a different world unroll.

{187}

XXII

Though long since Eugene's disapproval

had ruled out reading, in their place

and still exempted from removal

a few books had escaped disgrace:

Don Juan's and the Giaour's creator,

two or three novels where our later

epoch's portrayed, survived the ban,

works where contemporary man

is represented rather truly,

that soul without a moral tie,

all egoistical and dry,

to dreaming given up unduly,

and that embittered mind which boils

in empty deeds and futile toils.

XXIII

There many pages keep the impression

where a sharp nail has made a dent.

On these, with something like obsession,

the girl's attentive eyes are bent.

Tatyana sees with trepidation

what kind of thought, what observation,

had drawn Eugene's especial heed

and where he'd silently agreed.

Her eyes along the margin flitting

pursue his pencil. Everywhere

Onegin's soul encountered there

declares itself in ways unwitting --

terse words or crosses in the book,

or else a query's wondering hook.

{188}

XXIV

And so, at last, feature by feature,

Tanya begins to understand

more thoroughly, thank God, the creature

for whom her passion has been planned

by fate's decree: this freakish stranger,

who walks with sorrow, and with danger,

whether from heaven or from hell,

this angel, this proud devil, tell,

what is he? Just an apparition,

a shadow, null and meaningless,

a Muscovite in Harold's dress,

a modish second-hand edition,

a glossary of smart *argot*...

a parodistic raree-show?

XXV

Can she have found the enigma's setting?

is this the riddle's missing clue?

Time races, and she's been forgetting

her journey home is overdue.

Some neighbours there have come together;

they talk of her, of how and whether:

``Tanya's no child -- it's past a joke,''

says the old lady in a croak:

``why, Olga's younger, and she's bedded.

It's time she went. But what can I

do with her when a flat reply

always comes back: I'll not be wedded.

And then she broods and mopes for good,

and trails alone around the wood.''

{189}

XXVI

``She's not in love?'' ``There's no one, ever.

Buyánov tried -- got flea in ear.

And Ivan Petushkóv; no, never.

Pikhtín, of the Hussars, was here;

he found Tatyana so attractive,

bestirred himself, was devilish active!

I thought, she'll go this time, perhaps;

far from it! just one more collapse.''

``You don't see what to do? that's funny:

Moscow's the place, the marriage-fair!

There's vacancies in plenty there.''

``My dear good sir, I'm short of money.''

``One winter's worth, you've surely got;

or borrow, say, from me, if not.''

XXVII

The old dame had no thought of scouring

such good and sensible advice;

accounts were done, a winter outing

to Moscow settled in a trice.

Then Tanya hears of the decision.

To face society's derision

with the unmistakeable sideview

of a provincial *ingénue,*

to expose to Moscow fops and Circes

her out-of-fashion turns of phrase,

parade before their mocking gaze

her out-of-fashion clothes!... oh, mercies!

no, forests are the sole retreat

where her security's complete.

{190}

XXVIII

Risen with earliest rays of dawning,

Tanya today goes hurrying out

into the fields, surveys the morning,

with deep emotion looks about

and says: ``Farewell, you vales and fountains!

farewell you too, familiar mountains!

Farewell, familiar woods! Farewell,

beauty with all its heavenly spell,

gay nature and its sparkling distance!

This dear, still world I must forswear

for vanity, and din, and glare!...

Farewell to you, my free existence!

whither does all my yearning tend?

my fate, it leads me to what end?''

XXIX

She wanders on without direction.

Often she halts against her will,

arrested by the sheer perfection

she finds in river and in hill.

As with old friends, she craves diversion

in gossip's rambling and discursion

with her own forests and her meads...

But the swift summer-time proceeds --

now golden autumn's just arriving.

Now Nature's tremulous, pale effect

suggests a victim richly decked...

The north wind blows, the clouds are driving --

amidst the howling and the blast

sorceress-winter's here at last.

{191}

XXX

She's here, she spreads abroad; she stipples

the branches of the oak with flock;

lies in a coverlet that ripples

across the fields, round hill and rock;

the bank, the immobile stream are levelled

beneath a shroud that's all dishevelled;

frost gleams. We watch with gleeful thanks

old mother winter at her pranks.

Only from Tanya's heart, no cheering --

for her, no joy from winter-time,

she won't inhale the powdered rime,

nor from the bath-house roof be clearing

first snow for shoulders, breast and head:

for Tanya, winter's ways are dread.

XXXI

Departure date's long overtaken;

at last the final hours arrive.

A sledded coach, for years forsaken,

relined and strengthened for the drive;

three carts -- traditional procession --

with every sort of home possession:

pans, mattresses, and trunks, and chairs,

and jam in jars, and household wares,

and feather-beds, and birds in cages,

with pots and basins out of mind,

and useful goods of every kind.

There's din of parting now that rages,

with tears, in quarters of the maids:

and, in the yard, stand eighteen jades.

{192}

XXXII

Horses and coach are spliced in marriage;

the cooks prepare the midday meal;

mountains are piled on every carriage,

and coachmen swear, and women squeal.

The bearded outrider is sitting

his spindly, shaggy nag. As fitting,

to wave farewell the household waits

for the two ladies at the gates.

They're settled in; and crawling, sliding,

the grand barouche is on its way.

``Farewell, you realms that own the sway

of solitude, and peace abiding!

shall I see you?'' As Tanya speaks

the tears in stream pour down her cheeks.

XXXIII

When progress and amelioration

have pushed their frontiers further out,

in time (to quote the calculation

of philosophic brains, about

five hundred years) for sure our byways

will blossom into splendid highways:

paved roads will traverse Russia's length

bringing her unity and strength;

and iron bridges will go arching

over the waters in a sweep;

mountains will part; below the deep,

audacious tunnels will be marching:

Godfearing folk will institute

an inn at each stage of the route.

{193}

XXXIV

But now our roads are bad, the ages

have gnawed our bridges, and the flea

and bedbug that infest the stages

allow no rest to you or me;

inns don't exist; but in a freezing

log cabin a pretentious-teasing

menu, hung up for show, excites

all sorts of hopeless appetites;

meanwhile the local Cyclops, aiming

a Russian hammer-blow, repairs

Europe's most finely chiselled wares

before a fire too slowly flaming,

and blesses the unrivalled brand

of ruts that grace our fatherland.

XXXV

By contrast, in the frozen season,

how pleasantly the stages pass.

Like modish rhymes that lack all reason,

the winter's ways are smooth as glass.

Then our Automedons are flashing,

our troikas effortlessly dashing,

and mileposts grip the idle sense

by flickering past us like a fence.

Worse luck, Larina crawled; the employment

of her own horses, not the post,

spared her the expense she dreaded most --

and gave our heroine enjoyment

of traveller's tedium at its peak:

their journey took them a full week.

{194}

XXXVI

But now they're near. Already gleaming

before their eyes they see unfold

the towers of whitestone Moscow beaming

with fire from every cross of gold.

Friends, how my heart would leap with pleasure

when suddenly I saw this treasure

of spires and belfries, in a cup

with parks and mansions, open up.

How often would I fall to musing

of Moscow in the mournful days

of absence on my wandering ways!

Moscow... how many strains are fusing

in that one sound, for Russian hearts!

what store of riches it imparts!

XXXVII

Here stands, with shady park surrounded,

Petrovsky Castle; and the fame

in which so lately it abounded

rings proudly in that sombre name.

Napoleon here, intoxicated

with recent fortune, vainly waited

till Moscow, meekly on its knees,

gave up the ancient Kremlin-keys:

but no, my Moscow never stumbled

nor crawled in suppliant attire.

No feast, no welcome-gifts -- with fire

the impatient conqueror was humbled!

From here, deep-sunk in pensive woe,

he gazed out on the threatening glow.

{195}

XXXVIII

Farewell, Petrovsky Castle, glimmer

of fallen glory. Well! don't wait,

drive on! And now we see a-shimmer

the pillars of the turnpike-gate;

along Tverskaya Street already

the potholes make the coach unsteady.

Street lamps go flashing by, and stalls,

boys, country women, stately halls,

parks, monasteries, towers and ledges,

Bokharans, orchards, merchants, shacks,

boulevards, chemists, and Cossacks,

peasants, and fashion-shops, and sledges,

lions adorning gateway posts

and, on the crosses, jackdaw hosts.

(XXXIX,[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_12_2)) XL

This wearisome perambulation

takes up an hour or two; at last

the coach has reached its destination;

after Saint Chariton's gone past

a mansion stands just round a turning.

On an old aunt, who's long been burning

with a consumption, they've relied.

And now the door is opened wide,

a grizzled Calmuck stands to meet them,

bespectacled, in tattered dress;

and from the salon the princess,

stretched on a sofa, calls to greet them.

The two old ladies kiss and cry;

thickly the exclamations fly.

{196}

XLI

``Princess, *mon ange!*'' ``Pachette!'' ``Alina!''

``Who would have thought it?'' ``What an age!''

``How long can you... ?'' ``Dearest *kuzina!*''

``Sit down! how strange! it's like the stage

or else a novel.'' ``And my daughter

Tatyana's here, you know I've brought her...''

``Ah, Tanya, come to me, it seems

I'm wandering in a world of dreams...

Grandison, cousin, d'you remember?''

``What, Grandison? oh, Grandison!

I do, I do. Well, where's he gone?''

``Here, near Saint Simeon; in December,

on Christmas Eve, he wished me joy:

lately he married off his boy.''

XLII

``As for the other one... tomorrow

we'll talk, and talk, and then we'll show

Tanya to all her kin. My sorrow

is that my feet lack strength to go

outside the house. But you'll be aching

after your drive, it's quite back-breaking;

let's go together, take a rest...

Oh, I've no strength... I'm tired, my chest...

These days I'm finding even gladness,

not only pain, too much to meet...

I'm good for nothing now, my sweet...

you age, and life's just grief and sadness...''

With that, in tears, and quite worn out,

she burst into a coughing-bout.

{197}

XLIII

The invalid's glad salutation,

her kindness, move Tatyana; yet

the strangeness of her habitation,

after her own room, makes her fret.

No sleep, beneath that silken curtain,

in that new couch, no sleep for certain;

the early pealing of the bells

lifts her from bed as it foretells

the occupations of the morning.

She sits down by the window-sill.

The darkness thins away; but still

no vision of her fields is dawning.

An unknown yard, she sees from thence,

a stall, a kitchen and a fence.

XLIV

The kinsfolk in concerted action

ask Tanya out to dine, and they

present her languor and distraction

to fresh grandparents every day.

For cousins from afar, on meeting

there never fails a kindly greeting,

and exclamations, and good cheer.

``How Tanya's grown! I pulled your ear

just yesterday.'' ``And since your christening

how long is it?'' ``And since I fed

you in my arms on gingerbread?''

And all grandmothers who are listening

in unison repeat the cry:

``My goodness, how the years do fly!''

{198}

XLV

*Their* look, though, shows no change upon it --

they all still keep their old impress:

still made of tulle, the self-same bonnet

adorns Aunt Helen, the princess;

still powdered is Lukérya Lvovna,

a liar still, Lyubóv Petrovna,

Iván Petróvich still is dumb,

Semyón Petróvich, mean and glum,

and then old cousin Pelagéya

still has Monsieur Finemouche for friend,

same Pom, same husband to the end;

*he's* at the club, a real stayer,

still meek, still deaf as howd'youdo,

still eats and drinks enough for two.

XLVI

And in their daughters' close embraces

Tanya is gripped. No comment's made

at first by Moscow's youthful graces

while she's from top to toe surveyed;

they find her somewhat unexpected,

a bit provincial and affected,

too pale, too thin, but on the whole

not bad at all; and then each soul

gives way to nature's normal passion:

she's their great friend, asked in, caressed,

her hands affectionately pressed;

they fluff her curls out in the fashion,

and in a singsong voice confide

the inmost thoughts that girls can hide.

{199}

XLVII

Each others' and their own successes,

their hopes, their pranks, their dreams at night --

and so the harmless chat progresses

coated with a thin layer of spite.

Then in return for all this twaddle,

from her they strive to coax and coddle

a full confession of the heart.

Tatyana hears but takes no part;

as if she'd been profoundly sleeping,

there's not a word she's understood;

she guards, in silence and for good,

her sacred store of bliss and weeping

as something not to be declared,

a treasure never to be shared.

XLVIII

To talk, to general conversation

Tatyana seeks to attune her ear,

but the salon's preoccupation

is with dull trash that can't cohere:

everything's dim and unenthusing;

even the scandal's not amusing;

in talk, so fruitless and so stale,

in question, gossip, news and tale,

not once a day a thought will quiver,

not even by chance, once in a while,

will the benighted reason smile,

even in joke the heart won't shiver.

This world's so vacuous that it's got

no spark of fun in all its rot!

{200}

XLIX

In swarms around Tatyana ranging,

the modish Record Office clerks

stare hard at her before exchanging

some disagreeable remarks.

One melancholy fop, declaring

that she's ``ideal'', begins preparing

an elegy to her address,

propped in the door among the press.

Once Vyázemsky,[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_12_4) who chanced to find her

at some dull aunt's, sat down and knew

how to engage in talk that drew

her soul's attention; just behind her

an old man saw her as she came,

straightened his wig, and asked her name.

L

But where, mid tragic storms that rend her,

Melpomene wails long and loud,

and brandishes her tinsel splendour

before a cold, indifferent crowd,

and where Thalia, gently napping,

ignores approval's friendly clapping,

and where Terpsichore alone

moves the young watcher (as was known

to happen long ago, dear readers,

in our first ages), from no place

did any glasses seek her face,

lorgnettes of jealous fashion-leaders,

or quizzing-glasses of know-alls

in boxes or the rows of stalls.

{201}

LI

They take her too to the Assembly.

The crush, the heat, as music blares,

the blaze of candles, and the trembly

flicker of swiftly twirling pairs,

the beauties in their flimsy dresses,

the swarm, the glittering mob that presses,

the ring of marriageable girls --

bludgeon the sense; it faints and whirls.

Here insolent prize-dandies wither

all others with a waistcoat's set

and an insouciant lorgnette.

Hussars on leave are racing hither

to boom, to flash across the sky,

to captivate, and then to fly.

LII

The night has many stars that glitter,

Moscow has beauties and to spare:

but brighter than the heavenly litter,

the moon in its azure of air.

And yet that goddess whom I'd never

importune with my lyre, whenever

like a majestic moon, she drives

among the maidens and the wives,

how proudly, how divinely gleaming,

she treads our earth, and how her breast

is in voluptuous languor dressed,

how sensuously her eyes are dreaming!

Enough, I tell you, that will do --

you've paid insanity its due.

{202}

LIII

Noise, laughter, bowing, helter-skelter

galop, mazurka, waltz... Meanwhile

between two aunts, in pillared shelter,

unnoticed, in unseeing style,

Tanya looks on; her own indictment

condemns the *monde* and its excitement;

she finds it stifling here... she strains

in dream toward the woods and plains,

the country cottages and hovels,

and to that far and lonely nook

where flows a little glittering brook,

to her flower-garden, to her novels, --

to where *he* came to her that time

in twilight of *allées* of lime.

LIV

But while she roams in thought, not caring

for dance, and din, and worldly ways,

a general of majestic bearing

has fixed on her a steady gaze.

The aunts exchanged a look, they fluttered,

they nudged Tatyana, and each muttered

at the same moment in her ear:

``Look quickly to the left, d'you hear?''

``Look to the left? where? what's the matter?''

``There, just in front of all that swarm,

you see the two in uniform...

just look, and never mind the chatter...

he's moved... you see him from the side.''

``Who? that fat general?'' Tanya cried.

{203}

LV

But here, with our congratulation

on her conquest, we leave my sweet;

I'm altering my destination

lest in forgetfulness complete

I drop my hero... I'll be truthful:

``It is a friend I sing, a youthful

amateur of caprice and quirk.

Muse of the epic, bless my work!

in my long task, be my upholder,

put a strong staff into my hand,

don't let me stray in paths unplanned.''

Enough. The load is off my shoulder!

I've paid my due to classic art:

it may be late, but it's a start.

{204}

*Notes to Chapter Seven*

1 Vasily Levshin (1746-1826), writer on gardening and agriculture.

2 Stanzas VIII and IX and XXXIX were discarded by Pushkin.

3 A statuette of Napoleon.

4 See note 1 to Chapter Five.

**Chapter Eight**

Fare thee well, and if for ever,

Still for ever, fare thee well.

Byron

Days when I came to flower serenely

in Lycée gardens long ago,

and read my Apuleius keenly,

but spared no glance for Cicero;

yes, in that spring-time, in low-lying

secluded vales, where swans were crying,

by waters that were still and clear,

for the first time the Muse came near.

And suddenly her radiance lighted

my student cell: she opened up

the joys of youth, that festal cup,

she sang of childhood's fun, indited

Russia's old glories and their gleams,

the heart and all its fragile dreams.

{205}

II

And with a smile the world caressed us:

what wings our first successes gave!

aged Derzhávin[1](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_1) saw and blessed us

as he descended to the grave.

... ...

III

The arbitrary rules of passion

were all the law that I would use;

sharing her in promiscuous fashion,

I introduced my saucy Muse

to roar of banquets, din of brawling,

when night patrol's a perilous calling;

to each and every raving feast

she brought her talents, never ceased,

Bacchante-like, her flighty prancing;

sang for the guests above the wine;

the youth of those past days in line

behind her followed wildly dancing;

among my friends, in all that crowd

my giddy mistress made me proud.

{206}

IV

When I defected from their union

and ran far off... the Muse came too.

How often, with her sweet communion,

she'd cheer my wordless way, and do

her secret work of magic suasion!

How often on the steep Caucasian

ranges, Lenora[2](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_2)-like, she'd ride

breakneck by moonlight at my side!

How oft she'd lead me, by the Tauric

seacoast, to hear in dark of night

the murmuring Nereids recite,

and the deep-throated billows' choric

hymnal as, endlessly unfurled,

they praise the Father of the world.

V

But then, oblivious of the city,

its glaring feasts, and shrill events,

in far Moldavia, fit for pity,

she visited the humble tents

of wandering tribesmen; while the ravage

of their society turned her savage,

she lost the language of the gods

for the bleak tongue of boorish clods --

she loved the steppe-land and its singing,

then quickly something changed all this:

look here, as a provincial miss

she's turned up in my garden, bringing

sad meditations in her look,

and, in her hand, a small French book.

{207}

VI

Now for the first time she's escorted

into the social whirlabout;

jealously, shyly, I've imported

her steppeland charms into a *rout.*[3](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_3)

Through the tight ranks -- aristocratic,

military-foppish, diplomatic --

past the grand ladies, see her glide;

she sits down calmly on one side,

admires the tumult and the pressing,

the flickering tones of dress and speech,

the young hostess, towards whom each

new guest is gradually progressing,

while men, all sombre, all the same,

set off the ladies like a frame.

VII

She enjoys the stately orchestration

of oligarchical converse,

pride's icy calm, the combination

of ranks and ages so diverse.

But who stands there, in this selected

assembly, silent and dejected?

All who behold him find him strange.

Faces before him flash and change

like irksome phantoms, null as zero.

Is spleen his trouble, or the dumb

torment of pride? And why's he come?

Who on earth is he? not... our hero?

No doubt about it, it's Eugene.

``How long has he been on the scene?

{208}

VIII

Still as he was? has he stopped prancing?

does he still pose, and play the freak?

Now he's returned, what role's he dancing?

what play will he present this week?

For what charade is he apparelled?

Is he a Melmoth, a Childe Harold,

a patriot, a cosmopolite,

bigot or prude? or has he quite

a different mask? is he becoming

someone like you and me, just nice?

At least I'll give him some advice:

to drop all that old-fashioned mumming;

too long he's hoaxed us high and low...''

``You know him, do you?'' ``Yes and no.''

IX

However has he earned so vicious,

so unforgiving a report?

Is it that we've become officious

and prone to censure in our thought;

that fiery souls' headstrong enthusing

appears offensive or amusing

to the complacent and the null;

that wit embarrasses the dull;

that we enjoy equating chatter

with deeds; that dunces now and then

take wing on spite; that serious men

find, in the trivial, serious matter;

that mediocre dress alone

fits us as if it were our own?

{209}

X

Blest he who in his youth was truly

youthful, who ripened in his time,

and, as the years went by, who duly

grew hardened to life's frosty clime;

who never learnt how dreamers babble;

who never scorned the social rabble;

at twenty, was a fop inbred,

at thirty, lucratively wed;

at fifty, would prolong the story

by clearing every sort of debt;

who, in good time, would calmly get

fortune, and dignity, and glory,

who all his life would garner praise

as the perfection of our days!

XI

Alas, *our* youth was what we made it,

something to fritter and to burn,

when hourly we ourselves betrayed it,

and it deceived us in return;

when our sublimest aspiration,

and all our fresh imagination,

swiftly decayed beyond recall

like foliage in the rotting fall.

It's agony to watch the hollow

sequence of dinners stretch away,

to see life as a ritual play,

and with the decorous throng to follow

although one in no manner shares

its views, its passions, or its cares!

{210}

XII

To be a butt for the malicious

is agony, if I may speak,

and in the eyes of the judicious

to pass for an affected freak,

or for a lamentable manic,

a monster of the *gens* Satanic,

or for that Demon[4](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_4) of my dream.

Onegin -- now once more my theme --

had killed his best friend in a duel;

without a goal on which to fix,

lived to the age of twenty-six;

was finding leisure's vacuum cruel;

and with no post, no work, no wife,

had nothing to employ his life.

XIII

He was the slave of a tenacious,

a restless urge for change of place

(an attribute that's quite vexatious,

though some support it with good grace).

He's gone away and left his village,

the solitude of woods and tillage,

where every day a bloodstained shade

had come to him in field and glade;

started a life of pointless roaming,

dogged by one feeling, only one --

and soon his travels had begun,

as all things did, to bore him; homing,

like Chatsky,[5](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_5) he arrived to fall

direct from shipboard into ball.

{211}

XIV

There came a murmur, for a fleeting

moment the assembly seemed to shake...

that lady the hostess was greeting,

with the grand general in her wake --

she was unhurried, unobtrusive,

not cold, but also not effusive,

no haughty stare around the press,

no proud pretentions to success,

no mannerism, no affectation,

no artifices of the vain...

No, all in her was calm and plain.

She struck one as the incarnation --

Shishkov,[6](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_6) forgive me: I don't know

the Russian for *le comme il faut.*

XV

Ladies came over, crossed to meet her,

dowagers smiled as she went by;

and bending deeply down to greet her

men made their bows, and sought her eye;

girls as they passed her spoke less loudly,

and no one in the room so proudly

raised nose and shoulders high and wide

as did the general at her side.

You'd never class her as a beauty;

and yet in her you'd not detect --

rigorously though you'd inspect --

what London calls, with humble duty

to fashion's absolute dictate,

a *vulgar* touch. I can't translate.

{212}

XVI

And yet, although it's past conveying,

I really dote upon the word:

it's new to us, beyond gainsaying;

from the first moment it was heard

it had its epigram-potential[7](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_7)...

But let's return to our essential,

that lady whose engaging charm

so effortlessly can disarm.

She sits with Nina[8](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_8) at a table --

bright Northern Cleopatra she:

but you'll undoubtedly agree

that marble Nina's proved unable

to steal away her neighbour's light

or dim her, dazzle as she might.

XVII

``Can it be she?'' Eugene in wonder

demanded. ``Yes, she looks... And yet...

from deepest backwood, furthest under...''

And every minute his lorgnette

stays fixed and focused on a vision

which has recalled, without precision,

forgotten features. ``Can you say,

prince, who in that dark-red béret,

just there, is talking to the Spanish

ambassador?'' In some surprise

the prince looks at him, and replies:

``Wait, I'll present you -- but you banish

yourself too long from social life.''

``But tell me who she is.'' ``My wife.''

{213}

XVIII

``You're married? No idea whatever...

Since when is this?'' ``Two years or more.''

``To...?'' ``Larina.'' ``Tatyana? never!''

``She knows you?'' ``Why, we lived next door.''

So to his wife for presentation

the prince bring up his own relation

and friend Evgeny. The princess

gazes at him... and nonetheless,

however much her soul has faltered,

however strongly she has been

moved and surprised, she stays serene,

and nothing in her look is altered:

her manner is no less contained;

her bow, as calm and as restrained.

XIX

I don't mean that she never shivered,

paled, flushed, or lost composure's grip --

no, even her eyebrow never quivered,

she never even bit her lip.

However closely he inspected,

there was no trace to be detected

of the old Tatyana. Eugene tried

to talk to her, but language died.

How long he'd been here, was her query,

and where had he arrived from, not

from their own country? Then she shot

across to her consort a weary

regard, and slipped away for good, ...

with Eugene frozen where he stood.

{214}

XX

Was she the Tanya he'd exhorted

in solitude, as at the start

of this our novel we reported,

in the far backwoods' deepest heart,

to whom, in a fine flow of preaching,

he had conveyed some moral teaching,

from whom he'd kept a letter, where

her heart had spoken, free as air,

untouched by trace of inhibition,

could it be she... or had he dreamed?

the girl he'd scorned in what he deemed

the modesty of her condition,

could it be she, who just had turned

away, so cool, so unconcerned?

XXI

Eugene forsakes the packed reception,

and home he drives, deep-sunk in thought.

By dreams now sad in their conception,

now sweet, his slumbers are distraught.

He wakes -- and who is this who writes him?

Prince N. respectfully invites him

to a *soirée.* ``My God! to her!...

I'll go, I'll go!'' -- and in a stir

a swift, polite reply is written.

What ails him? he's in some strange daze!

what moves along the hidden ways

in one so slothful, so hard-bitten?

vexation? vainness? heavens above,

it can't be youth's distemper -- love?

{215}

XXII

Once more he counts the hour-bells tolling,

once more he can't await the night;

now ten has struck, his wheels are rolling,

he drives there like a bird in flight,

he's up the steps, with heart a-quiver

led to the princess, all a-shiver,

finds her alone, and there they sit

some minutes long. The words won't fit

on Eugene's lips. In his dejection,

his awkwardness, he's hardly said

a single thing to her. His head

is lost in obstinate reflection;

and obstinate his look. But she

sits imperturbable, and free.

XXIII

Her husband enters, thus concluding

their unattractive *tête-à-tête;*

he and Onegin start alluding

to pranks and jokes of earlier date.

They laugh. The guests begin arriving.

Already now the talk was thriving

on modish malice, coarse of grain

but salt; near the princess a vein

of unaffectedly fantastic

invention sparkled, then gave way

to reasoned talk, no dull hearsay,

no deathless truths, nothing scholastic;

and no one's ear could take offence

at such vivacious, free good sense.

{216}

XXIV

High rank, of course, and fashion's glasses,

Saint Petersburg's fine flower was there --

the inevitable silly asses,

the faces met with everywhere;

ladies of riper years, delicious

in rose-trimmed bonnets, but malicious;

a girl or two, without a smile

to crack between them; for a while

one listened to a chief of mission

on state affairs; there was a wit,

a grey-haired, perfumed exquisite,

a joker in the old tradition,

acute and subtle -- in a word

all that today we find absurd.

XXV

There, with epigrammatic neatness,

was one who raged and raged again,

against the tea's excessive sweetness,

the boring wives, the ill-bred men,

a novel, vague and superficial,

two sisters who'd received the initial,[9](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_9)

the lies that in the press run rife,

the war, the snowfall, and his wife.

... ...

{217}

XXVI

There was -- --,[10](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_10) so notorious

through baseness of the soul that he,

in albums, blunted the censorious

cartoonist-pencils of Saint-Priest;[11](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_11)

another of the ball-dictators,

a fashion-plate for illustrators,

stood in the door, cherubic, mute,

frozen in his tight-fitting suit;

a far-flung traveller who was creaking

with foppery and too much starch,

set the guests smiling at his arch,

affected pose -- and an unspeaking

unanimous exchange of looks

entered his sentence in the books.

XXVII

But my Eugene that night directed

his gaze at Tatyana alone --

not the plain, timorous, dejected

and lovelorn maiden whom he'd known,

but the unbending goddess-daughter

of Neva's proud imperial water,

the imperturbable princess.

We all resemble more or less

our Mother Eve: we're never falling

for what's been given us to take;

to his mysterious tree the snake

is calling us, for ever calling --

and once forbidden fruit is seen,

no paradise can stay serene.

{218}

XXVIII

In Tanya, what a transformation!

how well she'd studied her new role!

how soon the bounds of rank and station

had won her loyalty! What soul

would have divined the tender, shrinking

maiden in this superb, unthinking

lawgiver to the modish world?

Yet once for him her thoughts had whirled,

for him, at night, before the indulgence

of Morpheus had induced relief

she once had pined in girlish grief,

raised a dull eye to moon's refulgence,

and dreamt that she with him one day

jointly would tread life's humble way!

XXIX

Love tyrannises all the ages;

but youthful, virgin hearts derive

a blessing from its blasts and rages,

like fields in spring when storms arrive.

In passion's sluicing rain they freshen,

ripen, and find a new expression --

the vital force gives them the shoot

of sumptuous flowers and luscious fruit.

But when a later age has found us,

the climacteric of our life,

how sad the scar of passion's knife:

as when chill autumn rains surround us,

throw meadows into muddy rout,

and strip the forest round about.

{219}

XXX

Alas, Eugene beyond all query

is deep in love, just like a boy;

spends light and darkness in the dreary

brooding that is the lover's ploy.

Each day, despite the appeals of reason,

he drives up in and out of season

to her glass porch; pursues her round

close as a shadow on the ground;

and bliss for him is when he hotly

touches her hand, or throws a fur

around her neck, or when for her

he goes ahead and parts the motley

brigade of liveries in the hall,

or else lifts up a fallen shawl.

XXXI

But she refuses to perceive him,

even if he drops or pines away.

At home she'll equably receive him,

in others' houses she may say

a word or two, or stare unseeing,

or simply bow: within her being

coquettishness has got no trace --

the *grand monde* finds it out of place.

Meanwhile Onegin starts to languish:

she doesn't see, or doesn't mind;

Onegin wastes, you'd almost find

he's got consumption. In his anguish

some vote a doctor for the case,

others prescribe a watering-place.

{220}

XXXII

But go he won't: for him, a letter

fixing an early rendezvous

with his forefathers would seem better;

but she (for women, that's not new)

remains unmoved: still he's persistent,

active, and hopeful, and insistent:

his illness lends him courage and

to the princess, in his weak hand,

he sends a letter, penned with passion.

He deemed, in general, letters vain,

and rightly so, but now his pain

had gone in no uncertain fashion

past all endurance. You're referred

to Eugene's letter, word for word.

{221}

Onegin's Letter to Tatyana

*``I know it all: my secret ache*

*will anger you in its confession.*

*What scorn I see in the expression*

*that your proud glance is sure to take!*

*What do I want? what am I after,*

*stripping my soul before your eyes!*

*I know to what malicious laughter*

*my declaration may give rise!*

*``I noticed once, at our chance meeting,*

*in you a tender pulse was beating,*

*yet dared not trust what I could see.*

*I gave no rein to sweet affection:*

*what held me was my predilection,*

*my tedious taste for feeling free.*

*And then, to part us in full measure,*

*Lensky, that tragic victim, died...*

*From all sweet things that gave me pleasure,*

*since then my heart was wrenched aside;*

*freedom and peace, in substitution*

*for happiness, I sought, and ranged*

*unloved, and friendless, and estranged.*

*What folly! and what retribution!*

*``No, every minute of my days,*

*to see you, faithfully to follow,*

*watch for your smile, and catch your gaze*

*with eyes of love, with greed to swallow*

*your words, and in my soul to explore*

*your matchlessness, to seek to capture*

*its image, then to swoon before*

*your feet, to pale and waste... what rapture!*

*{222}*

*``But I'm denied this: all for you*

*I drag my footsteps hither, yonder;*

*I count each hour the whole day through;*

*and yet in vain* ennui *I squander*

*the days that doom has measured out.*

*And how they weigh! I know about*

*my span, that fortune's jurisdiction*

*has fixed; but for my heart to beat*

*I must wake up with the conviction*

*that somehow that same day we'll meet...*

*``I dread your stern regard surmising*

*in my petition an approach,*

*a calculation past despising --*

*I hear the wrath of your reproach.*

*How fearful, in and out of season*

*to pine away from passion's thirst,*

*to burn -- and then by force of reason*

*to stem the bloodstream's wild outburst;*

*how fearful, too, is my obsession*

*to clasp your knees, and at your feet*

*to sob out prayer, complaint, confession,*

*and every plea that lips can treat;*

*meanwhile with a dissembler's duty*

*to cool my glances and my tongue,*

*to talk as if with heart unwrung,*

*and look serenely on your beauty!...*

*``But so it is: I'm in no state*

*to battle further with my passion;*

*I'm yours, in a predestined fashion,*

*and I surrender to my fate.*''

{223}

XXXIII

No answer comes. Another letter

he sends, a second, then a third.

No answer comes. He goes, for better

or worse, to a *soirée.* Unheard

she appears before him, grim and frozen.

No look, no word for him: she's chosen

to encase herself inside a layer

of Twelfth Night's chillest, iciest air.

To batten down their indignation

is all those stubborn lips desire!

Onegin looks with eyes of fire:

where are distress, commiseration?

No tearstains, nothing. Wrath alone

is graven on that face of stone.

XXXIV

Perhaps some secret apprehension

lest signs of casual weakness drew

her husband's or the world's attention...

Ah, all that my Onegin knew...

No hope! no hope! He leaves the revel,

wishes his madness to the devil,

drives home -- and plunging deeper in,

once more renounces world and din.

And he remembers, in the quiet

of his own room, how cruel spleen

had once before, across the scene

of social buzz and modish riot,

tracked him, and put him in duress,

and locked him in a dark recess.

{224}

XXXV

Once more he turned to books, unchoosing,

devouring Gibbon and Rousseau,

Manzoni and Chamfort,[12](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_12) perusing

Madame de Staël, Bichat,[13](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_13) Tissot,[14](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_14)

Herder, and even at times a Russian --

nothing was barred beyond discussion --

he read of course the sceptic Bayle[15](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_15)

and all the works of Fontanelle[16](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_16) --

almanacs, journals of reflection,

where admonitions are pronounced,

where nowadays I'm soundly trounced,

but where such hymns in my direction

were chanted, I remember when --

*e sempre bene,* gentlemen.

XXXVI

What happened? Though his eyes were reading,

his thoughts were on a distant goal:

desires and dreams and griefs were breeding

and swarming in his inmost soul.

Between the lines of text as printed,

his mind's eye focused on the hinted

purport of other lines; intense

was his absorption in their sense.

Legends, and mystical traditions,

drawn from a dim, warm-hearted past,

dreams of inconsequential cast,

rumours and threats and premonitions,

long, lively tales from wonderland,

or letters in a young girl's hand.

{225}

XXXVII

Then gradually upon sensation,

and thought, a sleepy numbness steals;

before his eyes, imagination

brings out its faro pack, and deals.

He sees: in slush, stretched out and keeping

motionless as one soundly sleeping

in bed, a young man, stiff and chilled;

he hears a voice; ``well, what? he's killed!''

And foes he sees, long-since forgotten,

a rogue, a slanderer, a poltroon,

young traitresses by the platoon,

comrades despised, and comrades rotten;

a country house -- and *one* who still

sits there beside the window-sill!

XXXVIII

He got so used to this immersion,

he almost lost his mind, expired,

or joined us poets. His conversion

would have been all that we required!

It's true, the magnet-like attraction

of Russian verse, its force in action, --

my inept pupil, at that hour,

so nearly had them in his power.

Who could have looked the poet better,

as in the nook he'd sit alone

by blazing fireplace, and intone

*Idol mio* or *Benedetta,*

and on the flames let fall unseen

a slipper, or a magazine?

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XXXIX

The days flew past; by now the season

in warmer airs was half dispersed.

He's neither died, nor lost his reason,

nor turned a poet. In the burst

of spring he lives, he's energetic;

he leaves one morning the hermetic

apartment where a double glaze

has kept him warm in chimney's blaze

while, marmot-like, he hibernated --

along the Neva in a sleigh,

past ice-blocks, blue and squared away,

he drives in brilliant sun; striated

along the street lies dirty snow;

and like an arrow from a bow

XL

over the slush, where is he chasing?

You've guessed before it all began:

to his Tatyana, yes, he's racing,

my strange, incorrigible man.

He goes inside, corpse-like of feature...

the hall's without a living creature,

the big room, further, not a cat.

He opens up a door. What's that

that strikes him with such force and meaning?

The princess, sitting peaked and wan,

alone, with no adornment on;

she holds a letter up, and leaning

cheek upon hand she softly cries

in a still stream that never dries.

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XLI

Who in that flash could not have reckoned

her full account of voiceless pain?

Who in the princess for that second

would not have recognized again

our hapless Tanya! An emotion

of wild repentance and devotion

threw Eugene at her feet -- she stirred,

and looked at him without a word,

without surprise or rage... his laden,

his humbly suppliant approach,

his dull, sick look, his dumb reproach --

she sees it all. The simple maiden,

whose heart on dreams was wont to thrive,

in her once more has come alive.

XLII

Tatyana leaves Onegin kneeling,

looks at him with a steady gaze,

allows her hand, that's lost all feeling,

to meet his thirsty lips... What daze,

what dream accounts for her distraction?

A pause of silence and inaction,

then quietly at last says she:

``Enough, stand up. It's now for me

to give you honest explanation.

Onegin, d'you recall the day

when in the park, in the *allée*

where fate had fixed our confrontation,

humbly I heard your lesson out?

Today it's turn and turn about.

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XLIII

``For then, Onegin, I was younger,

and also prettier, I'll be bound,

what's more, I loved you; but my hunger,

what was it in your heart it found

that could sustain it? Only grimness;

for you, I think, the humble dimness

of lovelorn girls was nothing new?

But now -- oh God! -- the thought of you,

your icy look, your stern dissuasion,

freezes my blood... Yet all the same,

nothing you did gave cause for blame:

you acted well, that dread occasion,

you took an honourable part --

I'm grateful now with all my heart.

XLIV

``Then, in the backwoods, far from rumour

and empty gossip, you'll allow,

I'd nothing to attract your humour...

Why then do you pursue me now?

What cause has won me your attention?

Could it not be that by convention

I move in the *grand monde*? that rank,

and riches, and the wish to thank

my husband for his wounds in battle

earn us the favour of the Court?

that, for all this, my shame's report

would cause widespread remark and tattle,

and so in the *salons* could make

a tempting plume for you to take?

{229}

XLV

``I weep... In case there still should linger

your Tanya's image in your mind,

then know that your reproving finger,

your cold discourse, were less unkind --

if I had power to choose your fashion --

than this humiliating passion

and than these letters, and these tears.

At least you then showed for my years

respect, and mercy for my dreaming.

But now! what brings you to my feet?

What trifling could be more complete?

What power enslaves you, with your seeming

advantages of heart and brain,

to all that's trivial and inane?

XLVI

``To me, Onegin, all this glory

is tinsel on a life I hate;

this modish whirl, this social story,

my house, my evenings, all that state --

what's in them? All this loud parading,

and all this flashy masquerading,

the glare, the fumes in which I live,

this very day I'd gladly give,

give for a bookshelf, a neglected

garden, a modest home, the place

of our first meeting face to face,

and the churchyard where, new-erected,

a humble cross, in woodland gloom,

stands over my poor nurse's tomb.

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XLVII

``Bliss was so near, so altogether

attainable!... But now my lot

is firmly cast. I don't know whether

I acted thoughtlessly or not:

you see, with tears and incantation

mother implored me; my sad station

made all fates look the same... and so

I married. I beseech you, go;

I know your heart: it has a feeling

for honour, a straightforward pride.

I love you (what's the use to hide

behind deceit or double-dealing?)

but I've become another's wife --

and I'll be true to him, for life.''

XLVIII

She went -- and Eugene, all emotion,

stood thunder-struck. In what wild round

of tempests, in what raging ocean

his heart was plunged! A sudden sound,

the clink of rowels, met his hearing;

Tatyana's husband, now appearing...

But from the hero of my tale,

just at this crisis of his gale,

reader, we must be separating,

for long... for evermore. We've chased

him far enough through wild and waste.

Hurrah! let's start congratulating

ourselves on our landfall. It's true,

our vessel's long been overdue.

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XLIX

Reader, I wish that, as we parted --

whoever you may be, a friend,

a foe -- our mood should be warm-hearted.

Goodbye, for now we make an end.

Whatever in this rough confection

you sought -- tumultuous recollection,

a rest from toil and all its aches,

or just grammatical mistakes,

a vivid brush, a witty rattle --

God grant that from this little book

for heart's delight, or fun, you took,

for dreams, or journalistic battle,

God grant you took at least a grain.

On this we'll part; goodbye again!

L

And my companion, so mysterious,

goodbye to you, my true ideal,

my task, so vivid and so serious

and yet so light. All that is real

and enviable for a poet,

in your pursuit I've come to know it:

oblivion of life's stormy ways,

sweet talk with friends. How many days

since, through the mist that dreams arise on,

young Tanya first appeared to me,

Onegin too -- and there to see,

a free romance's far horizon,

still dim, through crystal's magic glass,

before my gaze began to pass.

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LI

Of those who heard my opening pages

in friendly gatherings where I read,

as Sadi[17](http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt%20\%20fn_13_17) sang in earlier ages,

``some are far distant, some are dead''.

They've missed Eugene's completed etching.

But she who modelled for the sketching

of Tanya's image... Ah, how great

the toll of those borne off by fate!

Blest he who's left the hurly-burly

of life's repast betimes, nor sought

to drain its beaker down, nor thought

of finishing its book, but early

has wished it an abrupt goodbye --

and, with my Eugene, so have I.

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*Notes to Chapter Eight*

1 Gavrila Derzhávin (1745-1816), ``Russia's first outstanding poet''

(Nabokov). While still at the Lyceum in Tsarskoe Selo, in 1815, Pushkin read

some of his verses to him. The stanza was unfinished.

2 *Lenore,* romantic ballad by Gottfried August Bürger, 1773.

3 ``*Rout* (Eng.), an evening assembly without dancing; means properly

crowd.'' Pushkin's note.

4 Refers to Pushkin's poem *The Demon,* of 1823.

5 Hero of Griboedov's *Woe from Wit*, 1824.

6 Admiral Alexander Shishkov (1754-1841) championed the purity ot the

Russian language against the encroachment of foreign words.

7 Probably an allusion to Bulgárin, an unfriendly critic of Pushkin's

work.

8 Nina Voronskoy, imaginary belle of Petersburg society.

9 Court decoration given to the Empress's ladies-in-waiting. Stanza

unfinished.

10 Name left blank by Pushkin.

11 Count Emmanuel Sen-Pri (1806-1828) had a reputation as a cartoonist.

He was the son of the Comte de Saint-Priest, a French émigré.

12 Author of *Maximes et Pensées,* Paris, 1796.

13 Author of *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort,* Paris,

1799.

14 Author of *De la santé des gens de lettres,* Lausanne and Lyon, 1768.

15 Pierre Bayle, French philosopher.

16 Author of *Dialogues des Morts,* 1683.

17 Persian poet of the thirteenth century.

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