**EVGENIE ONEGIN**

**A Romance in Verses**

**by**

**Alexander Pushkin**

**Done into English verse**

**by**

**Bayard Simmons**

**1950.**

**EVGENIE ONEGIN.**

**A Romance in Verses.**

Steeped in vanity, he had in addition that kind of pride which makes one confess with the same indifference, bad as well as good actions, this being prompted by a feeling of superiority, possibly imaginary.

Extract from a private letter

[In French in Pushkin’s manuscript]

I thinking not the proud world to amuse,

But loving the attention of good friends,

Would greatly like to introduce

A pledge, which an indifferent poet tends,

Feeling it more deserving of your soul,

More worthy of that severed reverie

Of poetry, with its high-heavenly goal,

And thoughts sublime in their simplicity:

But let that be ⎯ it needs not I extol

Sweet poesy ⎯ take from a partial hand

The multi-coloured chapter of my tale,

Part laughable, part to assail

A sense of pity that will understand,

A simple-folkish tale, you will agree,

But idealistic; full of carefree art;

Insomnia; what the cold mind can see;

Revealing the sad notes of the heart.

**FIRST CHAPTER**

And to live he hurries, hastens he to feel.

*K. Viazemsky*

I

“Heigh ho, what a fatigue, and what a bore,

To sit all day beside a dying man,

And only steal away when he doth snore,

And for the half-dead some amusements plan;

To give him medicine; his brow to fan;

To think when you his crumpled pillow shake,

‘When will the devil this old devil take?’

My uncle lives a life of rectitude,

An honest man, if ever there were such,

But given much, I fear, to platitude ⎯

It seems to me he utters them too much;

But when this fever his old bones did touch

Upon his relatives he forced respect;

On his example others made reflect.”

II

Such were the thoughts of a young hare-brained fellow,

Seated in mail-coach, flying in the dust

Unto an invalid’s much rumpled pillow;

The heir of all his relatives he must

Go to his uncle ⎯ it is only just.

To be an heir, great Zeus wills it so,

Thus to his uncle must this play-boy go,

Friends of Ludmilla, and of Ruslan too,

Without more preface, and at this same hour,

Allow me, friends, to introduce to you

Onegin, my good chum, of wealth and power,

When that Greek god with heirships rich did dower;

Born by Nevá, where you, perhaps, were born,

Where once I walked, ere I from it was torn

III

Serving his country nobly, without fear,

His father lived by making many a debt,

Three brilliant balls he gave to friends each year,

And lost, no doubt, much money at roulette:

A bankrupt he became, without regret,

Of Evgenie then Destiny took care,

And in his teaching *Madame* had her share.

In due course le Monsieur took her place,

Frisky the child grew up, but still was nice;

*Monsieur l’Abbé*, a Frenchman poor with grace,

Was qualified to give him good advice,

He taught the infant jokingly that vice

Is bad; his pranks he meets with moral talks,

And in the Summer Garden with him walks.

IV

Rebellious youth, which comes to all in time,

Came to Evgenie, as it came to you,

With tender sadness, or with hopes sublime:

*Monsieur*, discharged, then disappeared from view.

Behold, Evgenie, to youth’s freedom new! ⎯

Freedom of movement, and of love and passion ⎯

A London *Dandy*, dressed in latest fashion

In perfect French our youth could speak and write,

The gay mazurka he could lightly tread;

In ball-room arts, which women so delight,

He was proficient, and, of course, well bred.

His easy bow left little to be said.

Then what more do you want? The world divided

Such brains and charms were not to be derided.

V

We all were something, somehow just then learning,

And so, praise God, it is not difficult

By what we learned, repute to be now earning;

Our industry now reaps a good result.

Onegin was ⎯ his friends must all exult ⎯

In judgment of assessors far from mellow,

Somewhat pedantic, but a learned fellow.

He had, it seemed, a talent fortunate

Which him enabled to touch lightly on

Whatever subject came up for debate,

He took no sides, but put the *pro* and *con*,

He seemed expert in trivial conversation,

But on important matters he did know

How silent keep, save for a witty *mot*.

VI

Latin is out of fashion nowadays:

But still, as always, you the truth to tell,

He knew enough of orators verse and phrase

In rough and ready way their sense to spell,

And quote satiric lines from Juvenal;

To put a *vale* at his letter’s end,

When he desired to mystify a friend.

Also he recalled, not without mistake,

Two verses from the neid

But he had no device to undertake

To dig into a subject somewhat arid

Dust chronological, in which lies hid

The world’s great age, but he from Romulus

Unto our day told anecdotes to us.

VII

Evgenie had no zeal for sounds, no zest,

No urge to slay his sire for witty word,

Iambus could not tell from anapest ⎯

Perhaps he thought the difference absurd.

Homer and Theocritus he abjured,

But Adam Smith, economist, he read,

Who shared the means by which all prosperd.

At least, that’s what the Scottish writer claimed,

And in Onegin’s view, his thought was deep,

At more production by more work he aimed,

The way to wealth was by production cheap.

Though lacking gold a country need not weep,

Wealth lay in *simple products* made by hands;

Yet Evgenie’s own father mortgaged lands.

VIII

I have no time to tell you more about

The many things my friend Evgenie knew,

But in one sphere his genius stood out,

And genius the gift is of but few;

There is a science old, yet ever new;

Though old, this science always is in fashion,

It is the science of the tender passion.

From early years Evgenie had excelled

In knowledge of a man’s ways with a maid,

In this his knowledge was unparalleled

And with address his destined part he’d played.

It brought him joy, by torture sometimes paid;

And Naso sang this science and he died

Martyred in Moldavia ⎯ unsatisfied!

IX

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X

Upon the gamut of emotions he

Quite early in his life knew how to play;

This happy hypocrite in turns could be

All things he would appear, on any day:

Languid, indifferent, attentive, gay.

If he had ardent hopes, these hopes he hid,

His burning jealousy seemed almost frigid.

He could inspire great confidence, persuade;

Proud, taciturn, and yet obedient;

Sometimes great eloquence this yout essayed,

Yet in love-letters, oh, how negligent!

He could forget himself in languishment!

But in his gaze did tenderness appear,

From his sly eye there welled obedient tear!

XI

That is not all: anew he could appear

And jokingly astonish innocence;

Could frighten by a quick assumed despair;

Or could amuse by pleasant deference;

By swift emotion break through deference,

With passion and an innate cleverness

He knew how to extort unwilled caress,

He could implore, demand a declaration

Eavesdrop upon the manner of the hour;

Love could pursue, sometimes ’gainst inclination,

And with his science win, or gain by art,

A rendezvous that did with prudence part.

And later, when with his she was alone,

In quietude he taught a first lesson.

XII

Early in life already he could vex

The heart, if any, of coquettes!

How swiftly ruin rivals of his sex,

Snaring them in his cunningly laid nets!

How his sarcastic tongue caused them regrets!

Yet you, you blessed husbands, were his friend,

Not dreaming how soon this friendship could end!

Evgenie was by these old men caressed,

By the old pupil of the sly Foblace;

He treated them as a most welcome guest,

That old distrustful man with foolish face,

That strutting cuckold, with majestic grace

Pleased with himself and everything in life,

Especially with his dinner and his wife.

XIII XIV

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XV

It happened that while he was yet in bed

To him were brought some dainty little notes.

What’s this? Some invitations? Enough said!

Three invitations over which he gloats;

A ball that means white whirling petticoats;

A children’s party? Well, it’s all the same,

Where’er he goes it’s all the same old game.

Meanwhile he rises, dons his evening dress,

Puts Bolivar’s sombrero on his head ⎯

The jury are given to the like excess! ⎯

And to the boulevard his carriage sped

For he upon its spacious walks would tread,

Till the non-slumbering Bréguet intimate

That he must dress for dinner or be late.

XVI

Already dark he climbs into his sleigh,

It is a beautiful frosty night

“Make room! Make room! And “Clear the way!”

The horses gallop for the cries excite;

His beaver shines like silver bright,

Because on it there lies a frosty dust:

Dine in Talon’s restaurant the young man must,

There, to be sure, Kaverin for his waits;

He shoots the ceiling with the champagne corks;

The waiter sets before him many plates,

A roast-beef *saignant*, Limburg cheese that walks,

And truffles, food of which a young man talks!

Pineapple golden, and a Strasburg pie,

The flower of French *cuisine* to satisfy!

XVII

Thirst still is calling for the full wine-glass

The hot fat of the cutlets to assuage,

But watchful Bréguet tellss how time did pass

And that the ballet now is on the stage,

He pays his bill and enters his equipage,

Which speedily unto the playhouse brings

The worthy citizen of the stage wings

This staunch supporter of the ballet’s art

Breathes deeply in the playhouse freedom’s air

To charming actresses he gives his heart,

Which later he retrieves to their despair.

An *entrechat* he finds beyond compare,

Phèdre, or Cleopatre, he will hiss

Call for Moina, unknown, charming miss.

XVIII

A magic land! For there in ancient years

Fonvisin, satire’s most courageous lord,

The shining friend of liberty, appears,

Making the playhouse his great sounding board;

There imitative Kniajnin men applaud;

There Ozerov with Semenova shares

The people’s plaudits, mingled with their tears,

There our Katenin once more brought to life

The genius majestic of Corneille;

There stinging Shakhovskoi, a man of strife,

A noisy swarm of comedies did play;

There glorious Didlo triumphed in his day

There, within the shadow of the wings,

When young I loitered dreaming glorious things,

XIX

My goodness! Ah, why, and where, are you?

Listen, dear ladies, to my plaintive voice;

Are you the same transcendent ones I knew?

Did you relieve, but not replace?

Shall I yet hear your choices, my first choice?

The Russian Terpsichore shall I see,

So full of life, and light, and jollity?

Or will my gloomy gaze no longer find

Your friendly faces on a tedious stage?

Are there a few of you yet left behind,

Or must I at a new world silent rage?

Through disappointed lorgnette read a page

That has been turned; to stifle a bored yawn;

And think of those from that stage now withdrawn.

XX  
  
The theatre is full, the boxes shining,

The stalls and fauteuils are all excited;

The gods now clap, impatience not confining

The curtain’s raising has the house delighted

By Istomina, elfin and bedighted,

Obedient always to the magic bow,

Amid a crowd of nymphs, upon one tow.

She, with the other feet, a circle makes

Then sudden jumps, and like a sylph she flies,

From lips of olus a feather breaks

The playhouse shakes with new delighted cries;

How they the ballerina idolize!

She bends her body, gracefully unbends,

One foot the other beats; the movement ends.

XXI

The world appears; Onegin now appears

Tramping the feet of the audience in the stalls;

His eyes, behind his lorgnette search each row,

His gaze on ladies in the boxes falls;

He glances over parterre; scans the walls;

All things he sees, but is unsatisfied

With faces, dresses, many things besides.

With men friends first exchanging formal bows,

He turns attention to the stage,

Yawns ostentatiously, and then avows

That it is time new dances to engage;

That the old corps should start a pilgrimage;

That ballets he has smiled on long enough,

That Didlo bores him with his old poor stuff.

XXII

The cupids, demons, and the serpents, all

Still noisily are jumping on the boards;

The weary footmen in the entrance-hall

Are sleeping on the fur-coats of their lords;

The audience emotion deep records,

It claps, stamps, coughs, blew noses, even hissed:

The drowsy footmen knew not what they missed!

The lanterns in and outside still are shining,

The freezing horses stamp upon the snow,

Irked by their harnesses; coachmen are repining,

Holding their frozen hands out to the glow

Of the street bonfires; bitter words they throw

Against all masters; Onegin soon is out

And driving home, to dress without a doubt.

XXIII

Shall I for you a truthful picture draw

Of a rich dressing-room, a cabinet,

In which a pupil studies fashion’s show

And dresses for a party, ball, or banquet?

There are all things for clothing and the toilet,

That fashion needs, and peddling London sells,

Brought over Baltic waves in trading vessels,

In fair exchange for timber and for fats.

All things are there taste hungry Paris makes

Cravats and gloves, and hosiery and hats;

The taste of Paris here makes few mistakes.

There beauty ever follows in the wakes

Of wealth and luxury: so it appears

To a philosopher of eighteen years.

XXIV

The amber on the pipes of Istanbul

Should we “Tsargrad,” “Constantinople,” write?)

The porcelain and bronzes wonderful

Upon the tables cause us great delight;

To taste fastidious a lovely sight!

The perfumes in the battle of cut glass

Were many, costly, in a word, first class.

Combs, scissors straight and curved, and little files,

And thirty brushes, all of different kind,

For finger-nails and teeth, may cause us smiles,

And also of old Rousseau us remind.

That generating it difficult did find

To understand how freedom-loving Grimm

Dared clean his finger-nails in front of him.

XXV

For businesslike, I deem a man can be

Yet think about the beauty of one’s nails;

Why argue vainly with the century?

To rail against the *Zeitgeist* naught avails,

For habit is a despot who prevails.

A second Chadaev, I must confess,

Was my Evgenie in regard to dress

He was afraid of scorn of his attire

And so pedantic in the clothes he wore;

To be a dandy did he aspire,

A man of fashion, not a country boor.

Three houses daily spend the man before

His mirrors, like to Venus ⎯ who can doubt?  
Going to a ball in masculine rig-out..

XXVI

Here would I describe my friend’s attire

As if before the learned world I spake;

You would find in it much one could admire;

The latest fashion it, make no mistakes:

In it, of course we should find something daring

But nor enough to start beholden sneering,

For, after all, description is my trade,

I am describing man and things each day,

But ’tis no easy task I have essayed,

With *pantalons*, and *frac*, also *gilet*,

The Russian for these garments I can’t say

These foreign words which in my poem strung

Are not in our official Dictionary.

XXVII

Now we another matter touch upon:

We hurry to the bright lights of a ball,

Whither Onegin in a coach has gone

Along the sleeping street, past houses tall,

Upon whose façades gloomy shadows fall;

The merry lights of carriage lanterns show

A sparkling rainbow pattern in the snow.

From a grand house the light from windows shining

Makes yet more patterns on the snowy ground;

Shadows upon the window-blinds designing,

Show where some charming ladies can be found;

Also where clever, rich young men abound.

These silhouettes upon the window-blind,

Give foretaste of the joys that lie behind.

XXVIII

Our hero now strides through the entrance-hall,

Passing the janitor, an arrow sped,

Flies up the marble steps, and joins the ball,

Passing to smooth the sleek hair on his head,

While news of his arrival quickly spread,

He enters as the tired musicians play,

And sees the throng dance a mazurka gay.

What gaiety and noise is all around!

The little feet of ladies nice are flying;

The tinkling spurs of cavalry abound,

Their wearers for the little feet are sighing,

For love not war these warriors would be dying,

The jealous whispers of the warriors’ wives

Almost the music drowns, as they look kniives.

XXIX

During my carefree days of youth’s desires

I crazy was attending many balls;

What declarations daring them inspires!  
How love these scales protecting icy walls!

What sport for passing notes, arranging calls!

Oh spouses, however, have a care,

I warn you that the ball room is a snare!

And you, good matrons, you must look severely

Upon your daughters through a strict lorgnette

They are your treasures, whom you love most dearly,

If not ⎯ God save us! ⎯ you may soon regret ⎯

If not your daughter ⎯ so, do not forget;

I now am writing of the things I know

Because I have not sinned since long ago.

XXX

Alas, how much of life did I destroy

On this or that pursuit of sinful fun;

But hardly was I then more than a boy

And did those foolish things most youths have done,

And though by now the wisdom I have won,

I still would go to balls; yes, even now,

If morals did not suffer, I would go!

I like the frenzy of the ardent youth,

The brilliancy, the pressing of the throng,

The gravity, and ⎯ I must speak the truth ⎯

The ladies’ dresses; that cannot be wrong,

I like their little feet ⎯ two missed too long!

But in all Russia hardly will you find

Three slender pairs like those I have in mind.

XXXI

Ah, where and when, in what far wilderness,

Will you, oh madman, those two feet forget?

Ah, little feet, that I would fain caress,

Where are spring flowers pressed by your gentle weight?

Are they enfolded in an Eastern state?

Or in the North, on sad, new-fallen snows

Leave they no trees where their owner goes?

You liked, I know, the soft luxurious touch

Of carpets deep; and I not long ago,

My fatherland for you forgot too much;

The thirst for praise and glory I let go;

You made are quite ignore my sharpest woe;

Exile was naught; now sadness trying yields,

Recalling your light footfall on our fields.

XXXII

The bosom and the cheeks of Flora charm,

But Terpsichore’s feet I much prefer;

More beautiful than bosom, cheek, or arm

The feet of me I know ⎯ beyond compare;

A foot foreshadows other parts more rare:

Two little feet in this beholder fires

Imagination and self-willed desires

I like the feet of Elvina, my friend.

Under the table with long table-cloth;

In spring, upon green grass at winter’s end;

In winter, when the north wind in his wrath,

The keen air stirs, ’tis then, upon my oath,

On fire-place curb those feet appeal to me;

On ball-room floor, or rocks beside the sea.

XXXIII

The sea before a storm I can recall

How greatly did I envy every wave

Which shoreward rushed, at those small feet to fall

And with caressing touch those dear feet lave,

With admiration, her who owned them love

My jealously would each wave’s love eclipse,

Would touch your darling feet with my own lips!

No, never in my youthful ardent days

Did my tormented soul have such desire

To kiss the lips of Armids; them to praise;

Kiss the bright roses on the cheeks of fire;

Or the soft breasts, that always men inspire;

No, never in the transports of my passion

Was my soul tortured in more hideous fashion.

XXXIV

Another day comes readily to mind:

Sometimes in my most secret reverie

A lucky stirrup in my hand I find

And feel a little foot, and, then ⎯ Ah, me!

Imagination stirs, my blood runs free,

My faded heart, how deeply this doth move;

Again my anguish, and again my love….

Enough, enough; I will not glorify

The haughty my garrulous old lyre;

Justice to them the passion should deny,

Also the songs that passions oft inspire;

Their looks disdainful rouse a poet’s ire:

The words of Circe, I believe,

Like her small feet, still foolish men desire.

XXXV

What of Onegin? Half-asleep he

As from the ball he to his bed doth come:

The restless Petersburg, as he can see,

Already is awakened by the dawn.

The city stirred n mansion and in slum;

The merchants rise, the hawkers their day planned,

The cabman pulls up at his usual stand,

From Okhta the milkwoman hurries by

With joy of fresh warm milk in town to sell,

She treads the crisp white snow, which now doth lie

Unsullied yet where yesternight it fell.

The pleasant noise of morning much can tell

Of shutters taken down, and as we pass

The German baker opes his *Was ist das*?

XXXVI

Tired by the hubbub of the crowded ball,

Changing the morning into yesternight,

The child of pleasure and gay life did fall

Asleep upon his bed, that shut out light;

The city’s work and noise were banished quite;

He will not wake till it is past midday,

When once again he will resume his play.

Monotonous yet multicoloured fun,

Where yesterday resembles much the morrow;

The same old round forever to be done;

Where pleasure reigns, that never learns of sorrow;

But though in pleasure did our playboy wallow,

Was a happy man, one truly free,

With soul untroubled, body sound and healthy.

XXXVIII

No, no; his early feelings in him cool,

The gay world’s hubbub become a bore;

He half-suspects that he may be a fool,

That lovely woman him attracts no more,

That female treachery his heart makes sore,

That friends are tedious, most friendship weary,

That he will shun them all, or very nearly.

For, after all, he could not always stuff

Himself with beef-steaks and with Strasburg pie;

Of champagne surely he had quite enough.

To silly folk he could not make reply

With witty words when head ached horribly

At last he stopped behaving like a lord,

No longer wished the battle, lead, and sword.

XXXVIII

Sickness, of which it is high time to tell,

Afflicted him, ’twas like the English spleen;

A *hypochondria*, which on him fell ⎯

Another word that doth the same thing mean ⎯

Slowly possession took of this eighteen

Year philosopher, but, glory be to God,

He did not shoot himself though that is odd.

Indifferent he had become to life.

Like Childe Harold he was filled with gloom;

He turned his back on pleasure and on strife;

And when he entered in a drawing room,

He seemed a portent of impending doom;

No games, nor charming looks, nor female sigh,

Could interest, and gossips passed him by.

XXXIX XL XLI

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XLII

Whimsical ladies of the great world, you

Were first of those from whom he turned away,

But in our time I hold it to be true

The *haut ton* can be boring; though a gay

Old Lady talks of Bentham and of Say

But by and large, though, innocent their chatter

This conversation is devoid of matter.

And, may I say, they are so ⎯ undepraved,

And so majestically, and oh, so clever,

So full of piety ⎯ their souls are saved! ⎯

So careful of their good repute that never

Can man approach them ⎯ man is a deceiver! ⎯

So unattainable are they to men

Their very looks a fellow give the spleen.

XLIII

And you, young beauties, who in the late hours

Are on St. Petersburg’s paved roads conveyed

By daring cabs ⎯ to what enchanting bowers?

He you abandoned too, so rumour said:

Your stormy pleasures he no more essayed.

Onegin, in retreat from fellow-men,

Yawned, and reached out for paper and for pen.

He wanted them to write, to speak his mind,

But stubborn labour of the author’s trade

Soon sickened him, and naught he left behind;

He perseverance lacked, I am afraid;

Hours at his desk apparently dismayed.

No clique of squabbling writers did he join

I do not criticize them ⎯ I am one.

XLIV

And then, again, to idleness devoted,

Of his soul’s emptiness the young man tired,

’Twas time he deemed his knowledge be promoted

A most praiseworthy aim the youth inspired,

A world-wide knowledge now must be acquired,

A corps of books he to his book-shelf led,

Then took down one by one, and read, and read.

But all in vain, he read without much sense;

This he found tedious and that a cheat

One had no conscience, that was all pretence,

The thought of ancient times was obsolete

On all were chains his purpose to defeat;

So, goodbye, dusty family on the shelf;

Their black silk curtain was fixed by himself.

XLV

The world forsaken somehow did not end,

But folly to forsake did I admire;

At this time I became Onegin’s friend,  
Neither had scathe less passed through fire,

In both the warmth of heart seemed to expire:

I like his features and his cold, clear mind;

Devotion to his dreams did pleasing find,

Life wearied us, although we both were young,

And I was bitter, he was full of gloom;

While I my heart relieved with acid tongue,

Evgenie oft was silent as the tomb;

The malice of blind Fortune seemed to doom

Two eager youngsters in our separate ways,

In the fresh early morning of their days.

XLVI

He who has lived and thought, he is the one

Who in his soul the people can but spurn;

He who has felt, as both of us had done,

Grieves for the days that never can return;

For one a light extinguished will not burn,

The other one recalls each past mistake,

Both tortured by remorse as by a snake.

To conversation all this lends a charm

And though at first Onegin’s talk did me

Somewhat confuse, his wounding words no harm

Did cause our friendship and fidelity.

We could dispute, but often would agree;

His bitter jokes proceeded from his bile,

His epigrams malicious made me smile.

XLVII

How often in the summer’s evening light

When the night sky above Neva shone

In a translucent and pervasive light,

When Neva’s mirror did not then imprison

Diana’s features like a shining swan,

We sat recalling lives of our past years,

All the romance of two young cavaliers.

Emotion stirred us now again carefree,

By evening air and wine intoxicated,

The night affectionate moved him and one,

Like to a sleeping prisoner translated;

From dungeon to a green-wood, rusticated;

We backward flew in silent meditation

To early years of love and celebration.

XLVIII

His soul now overflowing with regrets,

Leaning the while on Neva’s granite walls

Evgenie stood and looked upon its wavelets ⎯

A poet’s apt deception this recalls ⎯

All things were quiet save the watchman’s calls,

And the faint rumbles of a distant cart,

In Million Street, that home of sumptuous art.

Also a boat in which the oars are shipped,

Was floating on the sleeping stream;

It made no noise as it below us slipped,  
It seemed a figure floating in a dream,

Until the sound of distant trumpets came:

Most sweet of sounds which to the night belong,

Torquatus octaves in a poet’s song.

XLIX

Oh Adriatic waves of Brenta’s shore!

No: when I see you, when I hear your voice,

Full of inspiration I shall be once more

Apollo’s children’s children will rejoice;

But now, alas, they may not have that choice;

Because of the proud lyre of Albion

I know it well, as if I there had gone.

I in imagination still can go

To the warm nights of golden Italy,

And with Venetian maiden floating slow,

In a mysterious gondola will be

Floating down the Grand Canal towards the sea,

Always thinking, sometimes talking, as we move,

The language of Petrarca and of love.

L

When will the hour of freedom come to me?

’Tis time, and more than time! ⎯ I call to her;

I walk the shore invoking liberty,

And wait with great impatience for good weather;

The sails of ships by magic I would lure,

’Neath the storm’s cloak, disputing with the waves.

On the sea’s highway seek I that which saves

When dawns the day on which I cut and run?

The time has come the boring beach to leave;

Yet in the midday surge beneath the sun

Of Africa I will for Russia grieve,

Great gloomy Russia in which I believe;

My native land, from which I now would part,

But where I loved, and buried lies my heart.

LI

Onegin really was with me to go

To visit foreign countries and strange lands,

But we were parted by a sudden blow ⎯

Why these things happen no one understands,

We only know that destiny them sends.

His father died; the son to his house went;

Found there his creditors ⎯ a regiment!

Each one of us has his won sense and mind:

Evgenie hating law suits, satisfied

With his own lot, nor to his welfare blind,

Left to the creditors what fate denied

To him; they could the legacy divide!

This sowed him troubles and it spared him:

He of his uncle’s death perhaps did guess.

LII

For soon and suddenly he had received

News from the manager of the estate

Of his rich uncle: he would be bereaved;

Hurry he must, or he would be too late:

Uncle for nephew was affectionate;

The old man wished to see him ere he dies;

Dying rich uncles cannot be denied!

Evgenie drove at once at headlong speed;

Evgenie yawning, even then felt bored!

For money’s sake he would pretend and plead,

And weep and sigh and call upon the Lord;

Set up his bedside till he died, or snored.

He to that bedside hastily was led,

But found him on the table ⎯ he was dead.

LIII

The household staff he found obsequious;

To the rich dead there came from every side

His friends and foes, and those who really make a fuss

Of funerals: they properly him observed:

The priests and guests with food and drink were plied.

And after this, in an important way,

They parted, feeling duty done that day.

Behold Onegin, now a country squire,

Sole master of great forests and farm-lands;

Rural factories he also did acquire;

And water-mills for timber he expands;

Large sums of money now this youth commands.

The former rebel, and the spendthrift mad,

Is rich, respectable, and also glad.

LIV

For two whole days he loved the lonely fields,

So new, attractive, they appear to him;

The forest’s shady coolness to him yields

A pleasure; likewise, the murmuring stream;

On the third day this pleasure had grown dim;

No more amused by grove, and field, and hill,

Of these amenities he had his fill!

Later they brought him sleep, their beauties bored,

For village life he soon found tedious;

The rustic folk he speedily abhorred;

Though palaces, and balls, and cards, and fuss,

And verses to declaim, e’en to discuss,

Were not, his spleen returned to his young life;

Like his own shadow or a faithful wife.

LV

I think that I was born for peaceful life,

A village life, and its tranquillity;

The city’s bustle, and the big town’s strife,

The lyre’s voice repress, and that means ⎯ me.

In rustic parts creative dreams can be

More vivid, and the poet’s thought profound

When he is taught by Nature on her ground.

To leisure innocent myself devoting,

I wander near a dear, deserted lake;

Then *far niente*’s pleasant law promoting,

To freedom, leisure, I each morning wake;

Though flying glory, there did me forsake,

My years of idleness in shadowed ways,

To me still seem the happiest of days.

LVI

Love, idleness, the village, fields and flowers,

Of you I am enamoured in my heart!

And as I linger in these country bowers

My taste and friend Onegin’s seem apart

I think that rural life makes great art.

A mocking reader, or an editor,

Regarding me may later on declare,

In some ingenious slander that I tried

To draw of my own self a self-portrait,

Like Byron, the great troubadour of pride.

I care not if I did, but wish to state

He is a foolish critic thus to prate:

The poet often wrote, and still can write

Of others only, self ignoring quite.

LVII  
  
All poets, appositely I remark,

Are friends of love, which haunts their waking-dream.

I too have dreamed of love, but keep this dark,

That love should secret be, I once did deem;

But later on my Muse took up this theme:

Then did I carefree sing a romantic maiden,

And captive females slaves in Salgir hidden.

There is a question that I often hear

From you, my friend, “For whom doth sigh your lyre?

Whose name in dedication will appear

Who is the maid who sets your soul on fire

Or who is she your verses will inspire?

Among the crowd of jealous maidens, who

Will your song praise, to rivals causing gloom.”

LVIII

“Whose was the look, disturbing inspiration,

And yet rewarding by a soft caress,

Confiding singing wrought in meditation?

To whom did you your praise address?”

By God, my friends, not me, I must confess!

Love’s mad alarm I did experience

Without much pleasure and with little sense.

How fortunate that one whom love has troubled

Who it combines with fever and sweet rhymes;

With this poetic force is more than doubled.

Behind Petrarca, in our modern times

He strides, and up Parnassian slopes he climbs;

His glory calms the torments of his heart;

But I in love was dumb and lacking art.

LIX

But passion spent, my Muse again apparent,

Returning from a quiet holiday;

The dark mind having once again been cleared,

This poet now is free for work, or play;

Once more he can his proper work essay,

Combining feelings, thoughts, with magic sounds,

That can more minds beyond their narrow bands.

I now am writing, and the heart not grieving,

My pen no longer in the margin drawn

Beside unfinished verses, heart relieving,

Women’s small feet, and hands, and, sometimes, claws.

I will not waste my time on this because

The ash extinguished now no longer glows ⎯

My poem will be twenty-five cantos!

LX

Already on this plan I spent much thought,

Decided what shall be my hero’s name;

Meanwhile the first of chapters has been wrought

Of my romance, but will it bring me fame?

Some for its contradictions me will blame,

For there are many, but I have severely,

Looked it over, and sought to write it clearly.

But contradictions I will not convert;

I to the censorship will pay my debt;

The proofs of this my labour I expect

The journalists will eat, without regret

I fondly hope, a most substantial diet!

To Neva’s shore my new creation goes,

To be received with noise, abuse, and blows!

SECOND CHAPTER

O rus! [O country!]

Hor. [Horace]

O Rus! [O Russia!]

I

The village where Evgenie was thus bored,

Was a small, charming corner in the wild;

A spot that its new owner did afford

Occasion then to bless its schools so mild;

Perhaps he did; perhaps he it reviled.

The manor-house, protected by a hill

From boisterous winds, was bordered by a rill.

Before it many-coloured members lay,

The crops, then ripening, adorned the fields;

On distant villages a light did play,

Their habitation golden sunshine gilds,

The sight of which aesthetic pleasure yields;

The huge, neglected garden, deep in shade,

Seemed for the pleasure hamadryads made.

II

The country mansion fitly was designed,

As manor houses ought to be;

With solid walls; and quiet and refined,

In fashion of a former century,

With large and lofty rooms, all symmetry

The drawing-room wall were hug with silken stuff,

And of the tsar’s portraits there were quite enough:

Of miscellaneous tiles the stoves were made:

Now this appeared a little shabby, old;

I really don’t know why, but all seemed frayed.

But Evgenie, my friend, so young and bold,

Took all this in with eye unfriendly, cold;

For equally the mansion’s weary lord

Was with a ball-room, new or ancient, bored.

III

Onegin settled down within the room

Where his old uncle had for forty years

Been quarrelling with his housekeeper, or groom;

He crushes flies and from the window peers.

The furniture, though simple, not endears:

Oak floor, two cupboards, table, and divan,

Or settee, stuffed with feathers, or with down,

But nowhere in that room one spot of ink.

The bookshelves early Evgenie explored,

In one of them he found ⎯ what do you think! ⎯

A note-book of expenses, which him bored;

Another, home-made liqueurs ⎯ quite a horde!

A calendar (year ‘eight), and apple-water:

Could uncle read with business to look after?

IV

Among his empty acres all alone,

If only to fill the fly-blown hours,

Evgenie thought for old ways to atone,

And new rules to establish in his bowers.

The desert sage used his manorial powers,

Remitting service to the manor’s lord,

For a light tax the peasant could afford.

The serf was grateful, destiny he blessed;

Onegin’s neighbours turned unfriendly eyes

Upon his scheme; one it did much detest

It would do harm most terrible, he sighs;

One, slyly smiling, asked if it was wise.

And all, from lowest to exalted rank,

Decided that he was a dangerous crank.

V

When first Evgenie to his village came,

His neighbours one and all would visit him,

But soon this stopped ⎯ Evgenie was to blame

If their opinion of the youth was dim:

No doubt some wished to tear him limb from limb,

For when observed approaching from the road,

At once Onegin from his back-door strode,

Where waited him a stallion from the Don,

The fleetest horse that ever man did own;

On this he leapt; was like an arrow gone.

His neighbours said he was an ill-bred clown,

A free-mason, and that he drank alone

Red wine in tumblers; that he did not say

“No, sir,” but “no” *tout court*, also “Good-day!”

VI

About this time a new landowner came

Galloping to a neighbouring estate;

He also earned his neighbours’ praise and blame;

His manners were the cause of much debate.

His name to you I now communicate:

Vladimir Lensky, with soul from Goettingen,

In praise of life, a beauty among men.

A worshipper of life was he, a poet,

From foggy Germany he learning brought;

A metaphysic question? ⎯ he would know it,

For German metaphysics he was taught

A fiery soul, with speech that seemed distraught,

His talk of freedom scarcely could be bolder;

His long black curls were reaching to his shoulder.

VII

His soul no time had yet to faint and fade

From the world’s cold corruption and excesses;

His heart, warmed by caresses of a maid,

A true friend’s greeting prized above caresses.

A cheerful ignorance his dear heart blesses:

Fond hopes sustain a young mind that was lured

By the new noise and brilliance of the world.

His heart had doubts, which sweet day-dreams consoled,

Life’s aim for him a puzzle was, attractive,

Its problems to be solved by action bold;

On them his over-sanguine mind was active,

He tried to get these problems in perspective;

In short, he listened to what people said

Of life’s true aim, and on it broke his head.

VIII

This he believed; a soul akin to his

By destiny to him must be united;

That every day, awaiting married bliss,

Wasting, she felt uncomfortably blighted;

That all his friends were ready and delighted

To get in chains to save his spotless honour,

And that their hands would never shrink in horror  
To break the vessel of a slanderer;

That some there be chosen by kindly fate

. . . . . . . . .

. . . . . . . . .

. . . . . . . . .

IX

Early in life emotions surged around,

Rage, and regret, the clean love of the good;

In him was fame’s sweet torment to be found,

An influence disturbing his young blood;

With lyre in had he wandered through the world;

Schiller and Goethe with poetic fire

Did Lensky’s verse illumine and inspire.

This man, most fortunate, did not disgrace

The Muses’ songs and elevated art;

Most arts in his young bosom had their place,

Though poesy was nearest to his heart.

There elevated freedom’s played their part;

In his melodious voices all could see

The charm of dignified simplicity.

X

He sand of Love, to love obedient,

And his sweet song was resonant and clear,

As are the thoughts of maiden innocent;

Or slumber of an infant without fear;

Or as the errant moon can oft appear

In carefree deserts of nocturnal skies,

Goddess of secrets and of tender sighs.

He sand of separation and its sadness,

A mystic *something*, and a *distant haze*;

About romantic roses full of gladness;

Of distant lands where he spent silent days;

His vivid tears emotion deep betrays:

He sang the faded bloom that life had been;

And all this at an age not yet eighteen.

XI

In that wide wilderness of empty space,

Where Evgenie alone his gifts could prize,

Young Lensky liked not feasts, no would them grace,

The lords of nearby hamlets did despise:

He shunned their noisy conversation wise

About hay-harvests, husbandry of wine,

About dog-kennels, and their kin, and kine.

Their conversation truly did not shine

With feelings high ⎯ it lacked poetic fire;

No witty repartee did it enshrine,

Nor to the arts of social life aspire;

At any rate, they did not them acquire.

The gossip of dear wives was much less clever,

With talk of household cares, or secret lover.

XII

Wealthy and handsome, Lensky was received

In country mansions as a nubile man;

“A catch,” if daughters’ mothers were believed,

The daughters told, “Dear, catch him if you can,”

So after him his neighbours’ daughters ran.

When he came in at once the conversation

Starts on the tedious life of celebration.

A new word that, I think, but let us one ⎯

They call the neighbour to the samovar,

And Dunia pours out tea, hands cake, or scone,:

Her parents whisper, then bring her guitar;

“Dunia, take notice!” they signal from afar.

And then (my God!) the girl begins to squawk,

“*Dear friends, into the chamber walk*,”

XIII

But Lensky certainly had no desire

The heavy ties of wedlock to embrace;

But with Onegin Lensky did aspire

Their lives in friendship soon to interlace;

Two scholars they in a barbaric place.

And friends did they become in every sense,

Yet not at first, because of difference.

The wave and rock, sweet poesy and prose,

The ice and fire may mix, somewhat pell-mell;

Such mutual difference did not dispose

At first to friendship; then the barriers fell,

And friendship grew ⎯ they both of them rode well.

So people friends become, one must confess,

From *having nothing else to do*, no less!

XIV

But no such friendship is between us wrought:

Defying all and every superstition,

We then consider others naught and Nought;

Ourselves we think of as ⎯ The Number One,

And look in time to be Napoleon;

The millions of two-footed beasts are fools

Destined to serve the master as his tools.

But my Evgenie was not hard to bear,

Although he certainly the people knew

And generally he at them did sneer:

Exceptions to this rule were very few;

But some folk in his estimation grew:

He felt he could not their advance reject,

And secretly their virtue did respect.

XV

He listened to friend Lensky with a smile,

Noted the poet’s fiery conversation,

Whose thought, unfixed as yet, was lacking guile;

Observe he, too, the lack of inspiration.

In fact, Onegin was all observation,

For all was new, and sometimes seemed absurd

But on his lips restrained the cooling word.

He thought ’twas silly to interfere

With a good friend’s quite temporary bliss;

The time would come when bliss would disappear

Without his intervention; he thought this

Would sober him, and would not come amiss;

Meanwhile ⎯ the world’s perfection let him praise,

Forgive the fever of his youthful days.

XVI

All things around this led to grave disputes,

And drew them on to deeper mediation:

Of science, they discussed its latest fruits,

And treaties made by any ancient nation;

They spoke of good and evil, and damnation;

Guessed at the fatal secrets of the tomb;

Surveyed, in turn, life, destiny, and doom:

All to the judgement of young minds was brought.

The poet, in opinions somewhat hot,

Was reading, reading, gathering new thought,

In deep research himself he quite forgot.

He on some poems of the North did dote;

And Evgenie, with quiet condescension,

Listened, though much was past his comprehension.

XVII

The passions much more often occupied

The searching of each young anchoret;

Onegin, who their stormy power defied,

With sigh involuntary showed regret.

Happy that man whom they no longer fret;

Who from their sway at last knew how to go;

More blissful he that sway did never know.

Blessed is that one who by sharp separation

The heat of passion now has learned to cool,

His thus the life that has the least vexation,

Not being used by passion as a tool;

Nor taught by jealousy in her hard school:

Who did not trust to an elusive deuce,

And thus his grandsire’s capital reduce.

XVIII

When we shall need the flag of silence sage;

When passions fires shall be extinguishd;

And when, in cooling, they no longer rage,

Their transports bated, if they are not dead;

When we are humble, past impatience fled;

We like to listen to the stormy tongue

Of passion’s likeness in a stranger young.

Such talk as this our hearts can greatly move;

So in the self-same way an invalid

Intently harkens to a tale of love,

The stories amorous of whiskered blade,

Recounting what he said, and passion did.

That invalid, forgotten in his hut,

Hears zealously a tale of lust and rut.

XIX

In fair exchange for sympathetic hearing,

The ardent youth emotions will not hide;

Love’s grief, or joy, his auditor is sharing,

A young man’s heart doth on his sleeve abide;

All to his auditor will he confide.

In love Onegin was a veteran,

And listened gravely like an alderman.

So when the poet, liking his confession,

Was of his heart’s emotions speaking out,

To trusting conscience he gave full expression,

And of love’s secrets almost seemed to shout:

Evgenie easely learned much about

His young friend’s love, told with abundant feeling,

But nothing new to us was he revealing.

XX

Ah, how he loved: we in our later days

No longer to that peak of love can rise;

Only the soul insane a poet has,

Condemned to love, knows such great joys, or sighs.

Always and everywhere his heart supplies

One single vision, one supreme desire,

One grief habitual, one consuming fire!

His soul alone cannot be changed in him

By cooling influence of spot remote;

Long years of separation cannot dim

That searing flame the poet’s heart once smote;

Though to the Muses he long hours devote,

Though foreign beauties, science, and the noise

Of pleasure come, they make no counterpoise.

XXI

By Olga captivated when a boy,

Not knowing yet the torments of the heart,

To watch her childish passions brought him joy ⎯

He to Onegin such facts did impart,

Telling his story with a simple art;

Told how within the shadow of the wood

He shared her childish dreams, and found life good.

Their fathers, who were neighbours and good friends,

In concert planned their offsprings’ wedding crowns,

Their destiny directing to joint ends.

Their dwellings were remote from any towns;

The nearby woods, pictures of greens and browns;

Her doting parents could in Olga see

A lily hidden there from moth and bee.

XXII

She made a gift to Lensky, the young poet,

The first sweet dream of all his youthful dreams;

And thoughts about her, when he came to blow it

Gave soul unto his flute, which pensive seems;

Sometimes it monad, at other times it screams,

Goodbye, farewell, to childhood’s golden games!

Another kind of pleasure him inflames.

He now began to seek the wood’s dense grove,

For their was solitude and quietness,

And night, and stars, and moon, all made for love.

The moon, the lampion that heaven doth bless,

Friend of our prowling in the evening darkness;

Now we, when we the lamp of heaven meet,

Think she outshines the dull lamps on the street.

XXIII

Always a modest maid, obedient,

Always as gay as is the early morning,

Artless as a poet’s life she went;

Nice as the kiss of love; a smile adorning

Her eyes, of sky-blue, almost truth suborning;

The curls of flax, her voice and movements light,

All things in Olga . . . . but no more I write,

Enough is said, and I would be concise:

Take any novel; in it you will find

Her portrait surely; and it will be nice;

Such portraits I have seen times out of mind,

But now they bore me, as if I were blind;

Bore me immeasurably; so please allow

Me to her elder sister to turn now.

XXIV

Tatiana was her elder sister’s name . . . .

She is the heroine of our romance;

Unusual, yes; but it is not a shame

That we within our pages it advance;

No cause there is to look at it askance:

It smacks of old times, or a serving-maid,

But, pleasant sounding, it cannot degrade.

And truly we must all of us confess

We education lack, have little taste

In choosing names (or putting them in verse!)

Such lack of culture has at times disgraced.

But I no more your time and mine will waste;

A certain primness is not education,

It is often a downright affectation.

XXV

And therefore Tatiana she was named.

Unlike her sister, she could catch no eye

By beauty; nor for rosy cheeks be fames;

A sad and silent maiden, very shy,

Like row in forest her timidity.

And in the bosom of her family

She seemed as strange limb on the family tree.

She knew not how to flatter, wheedle, fawn

When asking aught of father or her mother;

A child herself, she sat apart, withdrawn;

Among a crowd of children, like no other,

She did not play nor jump ⎯ it was a bother.

Often the whole day long she sat alone

Silent at a window, as if made of stone.

XXVI

For Tatiana’s friend was pensiveness,

Even from her infant cradle-days;

A tender melancholy did possess

The dreamy girl who at the window stays;

Her fingers knew not needles and their ways;

She bent not over the embroidery frame,

To animate it with design or name.

In a young female the desire to rule

Is manifested early in her games;

Watch how she deals with an obedient doll,

How breeches of the doll’s decorum blames;

How gravely does she point out that which shames,

Full serious repeating to the dummy

The lessons inculcated by her mummy.

XXVII

But Tatiana even at that age

Did not take dolls into her tender hands;

Nor have with Dolly conversations sage,

Of the town’s talk, or fashion’s vain demands,

Of childish pranks she never understands;

She was attracted by those tales of fright

One tells in winter-time at dead of night.

And when her nurse was on the meadow wide

Gathering for Olga friends to play with her,

That which she wanted was to go aside,

Not play the childish game of Catch-the-Burner:

She knew full well the life she did prefer.

The shrieks and laughter she found tedious,

The giddy games she thought a foolish fuss.

XXVIII

Before pale dawn lightens the eastern sky

She likes to come out on the balcony,

To watch the stars, as one by one they die

Before the dawn-light coming quietly,

When morning’s messenger, the breeze, doth hurry,

Announcing that a new day is at hand,

When light and warmth will night and cold withstand.

In winter-time, the night’s shadows deep

Possess for longer half the universe,

And longer all that half in silence keep,

The languid East, as ’neath a wizard’s curse,

With misty moon to guard it like a nurse,

’Tis then our heroine’s most strange delight

To wake, and dress herself by candle-light.

XXIX

Early in life she used to read romances;

They were for her a substitute for living;

The rogues of Richardson the girl entrances,

And Rousseau’s frauds she almost is forgiving;

She loved them both despite all their deceiving.

Her father, who was quite a kindly fellow,

Knew nothing of the books beneath her pillow.

He father, as I said, a kindly man,

Belonging to a century now past,

Saw in the books no harm, nor did he plan

His daughter’s reading in the very least;

Of reading he was no enthusiast;

He never read himself, nor could enjoy

Romances, which he deemed a silly toy.

XXX

Her mother also about Richardson

Was crazy, though she, too, him never read;

Nor was it that she liked more Grandison

Than Mister Lovelace; simply be it said,

Because, long since, the lady visited

Her cousin Princess Aline in Moscow,

And often heard from her about these two.

Her husband at that time was not her spouse,

Her suitor only ⎯ by necessity,

She loves another, and she him endows

With all the virtues of the English dandy;

A sergeant of the Guards and gambler he:

She sighed for one who by his heart and mind

She much preferred, but Fate was most unkind.

XXXI

Like him she always dressed in latest fashion

And most becomingly, to suit her style;

But, disregarding the lady’s passion,

The girl was made to wed by force and guile

The other man, to dwell in rural exile.

For her wise husband to assuage her grief

Left for his village soon, which brought relief.

But not at first; she tore her hair and wept,

She sought by all means to divorce her spouse;

But by degrees her lot she did accept,

Got busy with her duties in his house,

Got used to it, content to keep her vows.

Habit is given us from realms above:

A substitute for happiness and love.

XXXII

Domestic habit had made sorrow sweet,

Like time it can the greatest grief repel;

Time brought her a discovery so great

That she to heaven was raised from former hell.

A secret she found out that worked quite well:

This secret, which the wife employed discreetly,

Was how to subjugate her spouse completely.

Henceforward all things in her life went right;

A sovereign’s power she in the household wields;

She salted mushrooms ’gainst the winter’s night;

She superintended labour in the fields;

Each serf sent to the army meekly yields:

She beat the maids, th’estate she made to pay,

And in all this her husband had no say.

XXXIII

In albums of young maids she used to write

With her heart’s blood, Praskovia called Pauline,

Spoke in a sing-song way, wore corsets tight,

The Russian *N* with French she would combine

She made it nasal, which to her seemed fine;

But all that soon was changes, a new phase come,

Forgotten Princess Pauline, corset, album,

The touching verses in her copy-book

Doled out to albums as they were required;

No longer she on them much trouble took,

It seems her muse no more her lyre inspired ⎯

Perhaps the lady was a little tired;

At any rate, forsaking ode and sonnet,

She donned a padded dressing-gown and bonnet.

XXXIV

But her husband loved her heartily,

Although not interested in her schemes;

He trusted her in everything, carefree;

He ate and drank, in dressing-gown it seems;

His life rolled on untroubled by bad dreams;

Sometimes, of evenings, the good family

Their neighbours entertained ⎯ *sans crmonie*.

Then was grand gossip, which if sometimes dad,

More often made them laugh at this and that;

The time passed pleasantly, and all were glad,

Meantime, while family and friends did chat,

Miss Olga to prepare the tea slipped out;

Then supper came; then it was time for bed;

Their callers left, for everything was said.

XXXV

They in their peaceful life the customs kept

Of country-fold in dear departed days;

Folk songs they sang, folk dances dance, or leapt,

Pancakes at Shrove-tide ate, and them did praise,

Twice yearly, thoughts turned to holy ways ⎯

Fast and confession; while the folk were yawning

Three tears they dropped upon the “flowers of dawning.”

Trinity once passed, these simple folk prefer

The country fair with roundabouts and swings;

Cow-parsley is all right, and so is prayer,

But more the fun the country fair now brings,

Kvass as free as air, and porcine sucklings;

For these good things are offered up their thanks;

Their guests were served according to their ranks.

XXXVI

And in this manner both of them grew old.

At last the doors swung open of the grave

Before the husband with the heart of gold,

And kindly death to him a new crown gave:

Such is our lot, or master, serf, or slave.

He died one hour before his dinner-time,

All unexpectedly before his prime.

His neighbours mourned him, and his faithful wife,

His children’s grief was equally sincere;

A simple, kindly man was he in life,

And where his coffin lay his family dear

A monument did raise with message clear:

*A humble sinner, brigadier, God’s slave,*

*Dimitri Larin, at peace lies in this grave.*

XXXVII

To his penates Vladimir returning,

Stopped at his neighbour’s humble monument;

Weeping his ashes, his own heart was burning;

And heavy sighs burst from his bosom pent,

As he spoke gloomily this sad lament:

“ ‘Poor Yorick!’ he has held me in his arms;

Now he lies there beyond all earthly harms.

How often I in childhood have played

With medal won upon Ochakov’s field!

He destined Olga to me, and he said

In joking manner, which so much concealed,

‘Shall I that day see ere to death I yield?’ ”

And full of sorrow Vladimir there wrote

For Dimitri a threnody of note.

XXXVIII

There also honoured he his family dead,

The patriarchal bones of dam and sire;

In tears, a sad inscription he prepared. . . .

The will of Providence doth man inspire

Children to beget, and bribes him with desire:

The seed that he has sown springs up, ripens, drops,

Then Providence arranges other crops. . . .

In such a way the giddy human tribe

Grows up, is agitated, passionate,

And, like their fathers, snatch at Nature’s bribe;

The daughters, like their mothers, life create.

This done, they push their parents through the gate

Of the all-swelling tomb: without a doubt

Our children’s children, too, will push us out!

XXXIX

Meanwhile, of this light life drink deep, my friends!

I understand its trivial nothingness,

And know the way in which the trivial ends.

I am attached but little, I confess,

To Madame Life, who me does not caress.

But sometimes distant hopes my heart disturb,

For hope breaks in, though reason it would curb.

It would be sad for me this world to leave

In exit unremarked that lacks all trace;

Not for the sake of praise I write, nor grieve

If memory a poet’s name efface.

With beauty my sad tale I fain would grace,

That one line of my poem should recall

I was a true friend, faithful to you all.

XL

That sound would touch perhaps a kindred heart,

A verse of mine be saved by destiny;

A line I wrought with such poetic art

That it from Lethe’s stream should rescued be.

Maybe (a flattering hope!) the world will see

Some future ignoramus pointing out

My portrait saying: yes, he was a poet!

So, future worshippers, my thanks receive,

You who may live in some far distant day,

You, who ⎯ unless my hopes should me deceive ⎯

Will interest in poet old display,

And his creations ere they fade away;

Patting the old man’s bays with kindly hand,

And deeming you his message understood.

THIRD CHAPTER

Elle tait fille, elle tait amoureuse.

*Malfiltre*

I

“Whither away? Where to? Oh, what a bard!” ⎯

“Farewell, Onegin, it is time to go.” ⎯

“I am not keeping you, upon my word,

But where tonight you will be, I would know.” ⎯

“Why, at the Larins.” ⎯ “Really, is that so!

Mercy on us! Do you not find it hard

To kill your time in Larin’s house and yard?” ⎯

“Not in the least” ⎯ “I cannot understand

What you, my friend, at Larin’s home can see:

A simple Russian family, owning land,

With zest for visitors, is not for me.

Though doubtless there they drink a lot of tea,

Eat jam, indulging in much conversation

Of rain, and flax, and similar vexation!”

II

“I do not see myself great harm in it.” ⎯

“Yes, there is boredom; that is harm, my friend.” ⎯

“I hate your modish world; it is the limit!

More nice it is if I my evening spend

In a domestic circle and unbent . . . “ ⎯

“Again an eclogue! Dry up, for God’s sake!

What, are you going? Pity on me take.

Now, listen, Lensky, can I with you go

To see this Phillida, object of your thought,

Your pen, your tears, your rhymes, your so-and-so?

Me introduce; to her let me be brought.” ⎯

“Surely, you joke.” ⎯ “No.” ⎯ “I am glad.” ⎯ “I’m caught.

When do we go?” ⎯ “Why, right now, at our leisure;

They will receive us with the greatest pleasure.”

III

“Come, let us ride.” The friends go galloping;

Arrived, before them quite a feast is spread,

The entertainment of old times they bring;

These young men did not starve. How they were fed!

It was a most hospitable homestead.

The young guests were from saucers eating jam,

Drinking cranberry-water made by madam.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

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. . . . . . . . . . . .

IV

Our heroes homeward fly by shortest road

Let us now eavesdrop on their conversation,

As they discuss this latest episode.

“Well, friend Onegin, was it all vexation?

You yawn.” ⎯ “A habit, Lensky; I beg pardon!”

“Tell me, Onegin, are you bored still more?”

“No, my dear Lensky, no more than before.

Meanwhile, Andrushka, it will soon be dark,

Come, hurry up; go on, go on, push on!

A silly spot is this, I would remark!

And, by-the-bye, now that we are alone,

Madame Larina quite nice is, I own;

A dear old lady, full of grace and charm,

But fear her cranberry-water does me harm.”

V

“Tell me, Lensky, which is Tatiana?” ⎯

“Well, the young lady, silent and so sad,

Who at the window sat, like Svetlana.” ⎯

“You love the younger; is that so, my lad?

I find that strange, perhaps a little mad.

Were I a poet, like you, I should choose

The elder; no life doth Olga’s face infuse,

Resembling the Madonna of Van Dyck.

Her figure, too, is round, her face is red

Like to this silly moon, yes, much alike,

When from this silly sky the stars are fled.

Ah well, I shall be glad to get to bed.”

His friend’s reply of course was far from gay,

He silent was thereafter all the way.

VI

Meanwhile Onegin’s visit much impressed

The Larins’ friends and neighbours in the village;

One friend said this, another that thing guessed,

And this divertimento held the stage;

The country lanes were full of gossip sage;

The judgments passed were not without some sin,

For Tatiana they a bridegroom destine.

Some even were reported to affirm

The wedding was in detail all arranged,

The priest engaged who would this task perform;

That the betrothal rings had been exchanged;

While others said the couple were estranged;

Of Lensky’s wedding gossip had subsided,

For long ago it was by them decided.

VII

Tatiana heard this gossip; she was vexed;

Unwillingly she thought, but strange delight,

Quite inexplicable, her heart perplexed.

A thought was born a maiden to excite;

A seed was sown that sprouted in one night:

A time there comes to all, as from above;

That time had come to her; she was in love.

For months, nay years, imagination grew,

She burned with languor in an inward fire;

That fire flared up, and now, at last, she knew

Her heart’s great hunger, its immense desire

To own, be owned, to give and to acquire;

One overwhelming thought her mind oppressed ⎯

Someone would come and she should be possessed.

VIII

Waiting was over: eyes were open now:

She saw; she knew; she said: that man is he!

He is the lover who my field shall plough.

Alas! For days and nights, no more carefree,

For restless slumber, now all hot and lonely;

All things of him are full, repeat at length

His virtues, and they give her magic strength.

She wearies now of domestic caressing,

Tender solicitude of serf and friend;

A gloom profound the maiden is possessing,

The stay of visitors she wants to end;

She curses the long hours these people spend

At the old homesteads; will they never go

And leave her to her thoughts of joyful-woe.

IX

Now with what great attention doth she read

Romances stuffed with piteous words and sweet,

With what enchantment drinks alluring fraud,

If only it her pleasant thoughts repeat.

Imagination’s force can animate

Our bookish heroes: Julie Valmar’s lover,

Malek-Adel, de Linar, or another,

Like Werther, known as the rebellious martyr,

And Grandison, most surely without peer,

Both fitting subjects for a poet’s lyre,

Who makes us go to sleep devoid of fear.

To this dear visionary they appear

To take the form of one sole image, one

United being, Onegin alone.

X

In the wood’s solitude our Tania goes,

Wandering there with her most dangerous book;

Herself compares with heroines, that chose

Her favourite authors when they undertook

The fair sex to explain: she oft doth look

Into her treasure, for ’tis there she finds

Her secret fever and like troubled minds.

She deeply sighs and to herself assigns

A stranger ecstasy, a stranger grief,

Than Julia’s, Clarissa’s, or Delphine’s,

Or any of her heroines-in -chief,

Heroic women, quite beyond belief:

She through the hero’s letter now has gone;

But our own hero is no Grandison.

XI

Time was when an impassioned writer chose

A style of dignity, an impressive way,

And to his reader to present his heroes

As all perfection, with no feet of clay,

Who from the path of virtue never stray.

Tender, yet clever, was the man reputed,

And always most unjustly persecuted.

He nursed in him a fire of purest passion,

This handsome man with an attractive face;

He sacrificed himself in purest fashion;

If he could save another from disgrace,

The modest hero would himself efface;

In the last chapter vice was beaten down,

The good received a most deserving crown.

XII

But nowadays all minds are in a fog,

Normality to us brings only sleep;

The modern novel is a catalogue

Of vice agreeable, while virtues weep.

The fictions of the British Muse now creep

Through troubled visions of the sleeping girl,

Depicting pensive vampire, or wicked earl.

Or it may be of Melmot, gloomy tramp;

Or the Eternal Jew; or Corsair bold;

Or Sbogar, truly a mysterious scamp.

Lord Byron doth the lamp of genius hold,

And, in the many stories he has told,

Envelops all in a romanticism

Melancholic, and hopeless egotism.

XIII

My friends, say, is there any sense in it?

Perhaps, it may be, by the will of heaven,

That I shall cease to function as a poet,

And cast aside a gift from heaven given,

Which to improve the writer much has striven;

And disregarding Phoebus and his woes,

Abase myself to writing humble prose.

Then what about a novel in the older fashion

Will occupy my merry passing out,

I’ll not describe in words of horrid passion

A secret villainy, nor will I shout

Of all its torments, but simply write about

A Russian family and love’s sweet dreams,

While old tradition through each chapter dreams.

XIV

Their simple annals I will then repeat,

Of father, or of uncle, the old man;

The stream that flows at the old lime-trees’ feet,

Where children meet by pre-arrangd plan.

A woman’s jealousy, which leaves her wan;

Of quarrels, separation, I will tell,

Of reconcilement and the marriage bell.

I will recall the speeches passionate,

Hot anger, and the words of piteous love,

Which in days past, I must in candor state,

Came to my tongue, fidelity to prove,

As I, at my fair mistress’ feet, the strove:

What piteous words I at the lady tossed,

But nowadays the habit I have lost.

XV

My Tatiana, Tatiana dear!

Your destiny already you have given

Unto a tyrant fashionable, I fear;

For your salvation vainly I have striven:

He will destroy you, your dear hand be riven.

I know not how you from your thoughts to save,

And shield your life from consequences grave.

Meantime you are, in blind delusive hope,

Awaiting, calling for, the dark delight

Blind love must always in the darkness grope,

But love is sure the prospect will be bright;

You plan your happy meetings in the light;

For you have drunk the poison of desire,

And visions of your tempter you inspire.

XVI

Anxiety in love doth Tatiana drive,

She goes into the garden there to grieve;

To reach the seat is all she can contrive,

Of strength her grief the maiden did bereave:

Her eyes she close, sighs made her bosom heave;

Her cheeks burn by a momentary flame,

Her tender lips breathe forth the lover’s name. . . .

Night has descended, the pale moon come up

And slowly climbs the black vault of the sky;

The nightingale sings in a dark tree top,

And on her bed doth Tatiana lie;

She cannot sleep, but only toss and sigh;

She almost seems to lie beneath a curse;

Then quietly she speaks to her old nurse.

XVII

“Nanny, I cannot sleep: it’s stuffy here!

Open the window, then come sit by me.” ⎯

“What is the matter, Tania?” ⎯ “Do not fear,

I am not ill, but I am very weary.

Tell me of ancient times to make me sleepy.”⎯

“About what, Tania? My memory is poor,

Though once I knew old tales by the score.

I formerly old fairy tales heard

Of evil spirits and of maidens pure;

I still remember some, not too absurd,

These tales have gaps in them, you may be sure,

Also the meaning of them is obscure . . . .” ⎯

“To speak of old times you are not averse;

Tell me, were you in love then, dearest nurse?”

XVIII

“Well, Tania, well! Enough! At that old time

Much talk concerning love we did not hear;

My son-in-law would thinks such talk a crime

And threaten punishment to cause me fear.”

“But how was it you married, nanny dear?”

“God’s will, it seems; for junior was my Vania,

And I was only thirteen, dearest Tania.

It took two weeks my marriage to arrange,

A match-maker did on my people call,

They sent me off to live with people strange;

My father gave his blessing, that was all.

I cried, for me the prospect did appal;

Also I wept when bridesmaids loosed my plait

And, singing, led me to the church ⎯ my fate!”

XIX

“Thus was I brought to a strange family. . . .

You are not listening to what I say. . . .” ⎯

“Ah, nanny, I am grieving; grieving, nanny,

And I feel sick, and have felt sick all day;

I ready am to sob, to tears give way! . . .” ⎯

“My child you are unwell; oh Lord save us,

I hope your illness is not dangerous.

Holy water. . . . let us sprinkle. . . .” ⎯ “I’m not ill,

I’m. . . . you know, dear one, I’m. . . . I am in love.” ⎯

“My child, dear child, may the Lord keep you still

And pour upon you blessings from above!”

The kind old nurse her piety did prove;

With her old flabby hand, with muttered prayer.

She crossed the maid that was so much to her.

XX

“I am in love,” she whispered once again

In piteous words to her old companion.

“Dear heart, you are unwell; have you no pain?” ⎯

“I am in love, and want to be alone.”

Meanwhile the moonbeams through the window shone,

And, by their pallid light illuminated,

Tania’s languid beauty seemed translated.

The moon, if curious, could have seen

Her tear-stained cheeks and her unplaited hair,

And by the bed of our young heroine

An aged woman seated on a chair,

Who strove to stem the current of despair;

She wore a kerchief on her grey head,

And words of consolation whisperd.

XXI

Then Tatiana, looking at the moon,

Was flying in her thoughts far, far away. . . .

But an idea comes to the maiden soon. . . .

“I want to be alone; go, nanny, pray!

Bring me a pen and paper, and them lay

Upon the table. . . . push it to my bed;

I want to be alone: goodnight.” she said.

Now everything is still, she is alone.

The moon shines on her, she begins to write;

One name ⎯ Evgenie ⎯ through her mind doth run,

A name to ring a heart and yet delight:

What she then wrote in due course I will cite.

What is this letter scribbled in night’s gloom?

For whom, my Tatiana, say, for whom?

XXII

I have know women beautiful who were

Cold as a winter’s day, as clear, as clean;

But unapproachable, these dames, I swear,

Implacable, improbable, I ween;

Incomprehensible they to me have been.

Virtue, and modishness, appear inborn,

Icebergs are they, whose company I scorn.

I ran from them this poet now avows;

It seems that I a note of hell had read:−

*Lasciate ogni speranza!* on their brows,

And from these ports of hell this poet fled.

These females love not, though they sometimes wed.

All proferred love such ladies much abhor:

Perhaps you them have seen on Neva’s shore.

XXIII

Others there were among love’s worshippers.

I saw some whim-swayed women in the throng;

Self-loving, and indifferent each appears

To sighs impassioned, flattery’s sweet song.

With what astonishment I found among

These ladies, that their harsh, austere behaviour

Beat down the love of a young timid lover.

Yet they know well how it attract again,

Attract, at least, by fain regret,

Or tone of speech, which simulated pain,

At least it seemed a tender note to get.

Within the lover’s heart it did beget

A new-found courage and urbanity;

He repursues his darling vanity.

XXIV

Just why was Tatiana more to blame?

Is it because she simple was, direct?

She knew no fraud, why should she then know shame?

Believes she in her vision most select.

Should we then her natural love not respect?

She is obedient to inclination,

By heaven gifted with imagination.

Also she clever is, with vivid will,

She has a passionate yet tender heart;

She is a rebel, but I think you still

Will her forgive, although she did impart

Her feelings to her lover without art.

It was a giddy, not a reckless passion,

That she avowed in such straightforward fashion.

XXV

In cold-blood judge the flirts and the coquettes,

But Tatiana’s love is all sincere;

Herself in love the maiden quite forgets,

She unconditionally loves, ’tis clear,

Lets no base calculations interfere;

She gives herself at once, without delay,

Like a dear child, living for the day

Too much ingenious a man to tease,

She does not say, if him I should repel,

The price of love I by this means increase;

He will fall in a net as all men fell

Since time began; in torment be as well.

Indifference the clever woman feigns

And keeps her captive lover in his chains.

XXVI

Another difficulty I foresee;

Saving the honour of my fatherland.

A simple duty now devolves on me,

And one that patriots will understand.

When Tatiana her love-letter planned,

She wrote in French, for Russian she knew badly;

I must it translate, and I do this gladly.

She did not read the Russian magazines,

And she wrote poorly in our own proud tongue;

All poets know just what that practice means. . . .

But up till now, our ladies young

Love-letters write in French ⎯ I think that wrong:

Why they a foreign tongue must write, God knows,

But they in correspondence use French prose.

XXVII

I know your thoughts, you think it is desired

To force the ladies Russian books to read!

A terror, eh, that this should be required?

They “Well-Intentioned” would more likely heed!

I turn to you my poets, and I plead,

Is it not true the objects of your verse

Speak Russian like their servants, maybe worse?

Think, you have dedicated your full heart;

Your sins impelled you, and you secret wrote,

But they their tongue disfigures; lacking art

With difficulty they their thoughts denote;

Their mother tongue is murdered in their throat:

Do you not find that it is passing strange

A foreign tongue they for their own exchange?

XXVIII

Give me not, God, that I meet at a ball,

Or even on the porch when I am leaving,

A seminarist in a yellow shawl,

Or an academician unperceiving!

For faulty Russian speech I am not grieving:

Without mistake in grammar, or in style,

’Tis like some rosy lips without a smile.

Perhaps, some day, for my calamity

A flock of Russian women beautiful,

Though lacking somewhat in humanity,

Will try to teach us all to speak by rule,

Instruct in perfect verses, as in school;

But I. . . . no, I will not discuss such ways,

But keep the manner of the good old days.

XXIX

Speech irregular, prattle negligent,

Clumsy pronunciation of some word,

Is in my breast as redolent,

Causing my heart to tremble when ’tis heard;

Much speech correct and stiff is quite absurd:

For Gallicisms I do not repent,

They are but like the signs of youth misspent,

Or certain verses of Bogdanovich.

But that’s enough: I must to business get

With a young lady’s letter, about which

I gave my word, and I did not forget;

Yet I would almost that rash word regret.

The pen of tender Parny nowadays

Unfashionable is and lacking praise.

XXX

Singer of feasts, of sadness, and of rest,

If you, dear poet, still remained with me,

I would immodestly make this request,

That you would grant me this my urgent plea

To put in foreign words the language free

Of maiden passionate and importune,

Victim of love, her leading to misfortune.

Where are you now? I need your magic lyre;

My rights to you I transmit with a bow. . . .

He wanders ’mid the Finnish rocks so dire,

Wanders alone, for none is with him now;

The victor’s laurels fade upon his brow;

He wanders lonely and can never know

My need of him; he hears not of my sorrow.

XXXI

Tatiana’s letter now before me lies,

A saintly letter that I holy keep.

I read it with deep grief and tear-dimmed eyes,

Nor can stop reading, even as I weep.

What words of tenderness from her pen leap!

What influence suggested, made he state

The longing of her breast, so passionate?

I cannot understand, but here it is,

Not quite complete, and in a weak translation,

A pallid picture of a vivid bliss,

And torment bordering on damnation.

Or like the *Freischutz* played, sans animation,

By timid fingers of girls in a school

Correctly played, but nothing wonderful.

*Tatiana’s letter to Onegin*

I write to you ⎯ what can I say? What more?

This only: that I love, and love implore.

It is within your power ⎯ that well I know ⎯

To punish with contempt, a crushing blow.

But if of pity you have but one drop

In your compassion I can nourish hope.

At first I silent wanted to remain,

But proved too weak to undergo that strain;

If you will trust, then you will never know

My shame, but can on me some hope bestow.

If in our village you I sometimes see ⎯

Say, once a week ⎯ that would be bliss to me

Only to hear then your dear conversation;

To speak one word to you, that were elation!

To think of this alone by day and night

Till our next meeting, what surprise delight!

But you are an unsocial man, I’m told,

Our village life find tedious and cold,

And we. . . . we do not shine in anything

But you in artless way are welcoming.

Why did you visit us? Oh, why; oh, why?

In our forgotten village I would die

And live in peace, you never having known;

Nor from this bitter torment should I moan.

And yet, who knows, perhaps the passing days

Will bring that balm a troubled soul allays,

I then would find some man, a heart-true friend,

His virtuous wife become; a mother end.

Another man! . . . No, no one on this earth

Will know what I can give, a true-heart’s worth,

Save you alone, for heaven this did decide ⎯

’Tis heaven’s will that I with you abide;

My whole life hitherto was but a pledge

Of our sure meeting, and a privilege;

I know full well the Heavenly Powers me gave

You, as my guardian, till I reach the grave. . . .

You have appeared to me in many dreams,

Invisible, but dear to me, it seems;

Your gaze was wonderful, and ravishing,

And in my soul your voice did sweetly sing,

Long past. . . . no, no, it could not be a dream!

It surely is that thing that once did seem.

The moment that you came, at once I knew;

I was benumbed, inflamed, but sure that you

And that dear one in dreams seen only dim

Were one, and to myself I said: That’s him!

Is that not true? Have I not really heard

You speaking in the silence, my soul’s lord,

When I was giving alms unto the poor,

Or finding solace in a silent prayer

For the anxiety of soul perturbed?

At that same moment what then me disturbed>

Was it not you, dear vision, darkly seen,

Who to my couch’s head did softly lean,

Whispering words of comfort and of love,

My guardian-angle come from heaven above?

My guardian-angel! Or my tempter sly?

Resolve my doubts: from hell, or from on high?

Perhaps all this is truly only nonsense,

Deception due to inexperience,

And destiny be quite another thing. . . .

Let be what be! All that fate will bring!

My fate from now on place I in your hands,

My destiny now hangs on your commands;

My tears run down, as you I stand before,

Yet your defence of me I still implore. . . .

Imagine, unbefriended and alone,

Not understood, exhausted, and undone,

I wait that word which raises or destroys.

I wait the doom pronounced by one sole voice:

One single look my hopes would yet revive,

Or of its fairest dream my soul deprive;

To heavenly bliss I can with you approach,

Or you can break me by deserved reproach!

I now have done! I fear this to re-read. . . .

With shame my fainting heart doth plead;

Your honour is my only warranty,

To it I trust myself courageously. . . .

XXXII

Occasionally she would sigh or moan;

The finished letter trembles in her hand;

To fasten it she puts a pink seal on,

Moistened by her tongue, feverish, inflamed.

Her missive ready is fore her to send.

Her pretty head the girl bends to her shoulder,

Her night gown slipped would charm a chance beholder.

The moonbeams have already grown more pale,

The night-mist now is rising from the ground;

The surface of the stream in that still vale,

More clearly to be seen, is silver found;

The morning light illuminates all around:

The shepherd’s horn wakes sleepy villager,

But Tatiana, trance-held, does not stir.

XXXIII

She of the dawn appears all unaware,

Immobile sits she with her head inclined,

Dressed in her night-robe, and with loosened hair;

The cut-out seal she does not press to bind

The letter’s flap, for absent is her mind.

She does not hear the gently opened door,

Her grey-haired Philipievna her before,

When her kind nanny brings tea on a tray:

“Get up, my child, ’tis time for you to rise.

What, up already, lovey; oh, I say!

Oh, little early bird, what a surprise!

Last night I was afraid, I don’t disguise.

But, Glory be to God, you now are well,

Your face as radiant as the poppy’s petal.”

XXXIV

“Ah, nanny, will you do this thing for me. . . .” ⎯

“Of course I will, my own dear child, I will.” ⎯

“But do not think. . . . do not suspect. . . . really. . . .

Do not refuse. . . . ah, nanny, think no ill.” ⎯

“Your wish, my friend, by God I will fulfil.” ⎯

“Well, then, your grandson please to send

With this note to O. . . . to this neighbour. . . . friend

And order him, please, not a word to say,

And careful be to mention not my name. . . .” ⎯

“To whom, my dear? He will go right away,

But, please forgive me, if I am to blame,

I now am silly and my memory lame,

There are so many neighbours within call,

I really think I could not count them all.” ⎯

XXXV

“Oh, nanny, nanny, you are dense and dull!” ⎯

“I do my best, but am already old;

Old, my dear one; with blunted mind, dear soul;

But I was sharp when young, I have been told,

I understood quite well the master bold. . . .” ⎯

“Ah, nanny, will you make me tear my hair,

For your past cleverness what do I care?

See here, the matter I put in this letter

To Onegin.” ⎯ “Well, the matter is all right;

Do not be cross, dear soul, I will do better;

I did not understand, I was not bright. . . .

But why so pale again, as yester night?” ⎯

“Oh, never mind, th’attack will soon be gone,

But, please, now send for your grandson.”

XXXVI

A day has flown and there is no reply;

Another came: again no, nothing yet.

Pale as a shadow, Tania doth sigh;

Dressed in her best, with most careful *toilette*,

Tatiana waits, with hope and with regret.

Meanwhile, Olga’s lover rings the door-bell.

“Welcome, and tell me, have you brought your pal?”

(The hostess put this question straight to him)

“It seems he has forgotten us somehow.”

Tatiana blushed; her secret thoughts are grim;

“He promised to be here to-day, I know,”

Said Lensky to his hostess with a bow,

“But correspondence him delayed, I think;”

A word which made poor Tatiana shrink.

XXXVII

Dark was coming; on the table shining

The evening samovar was boiling hot;

Beneath a china tea-pot, on it warming,

A light steam-cloud was wandering about.

Miss Olga’s hand the perfumed tea poured out;

The servant boy was handing guests the cream;

By window Tatiana seemed to dream.

Her breath congealed the window glass,

She rubbed the glass that she might see outside,

And watched to see who would arrive or pass.

With what impatience must she still abide

A further visitor fore whom she prayed!¬

And with her charming little finger she

Wrote on the misty glass and *O* and *E*.

XXXVIII

Meantime her soul was in continual pain,

Her languid look was clouded by her tears

Then, suddenly, familiar sounds were plain,

A horse that gallops! Nearer! . . . . He appears!

Evgenie! “Ah!” and Tatiana disappears,

Like to a shadow, she from back-door ran;

Look back she dare not, nor will, nor can.

She flies, she flies; around the bed of flowers,

Across the rustic bridge, along the lea,

Down lake-side avenue of leafy bowers,

Breaking off twigs upon the lilac-tree,

Quite unaware of this as she did flee.

All out of breath she sinks down on a seat,

Bewildered, frightened, in a word, deadbeat.

XXXIX

“He has come here! Evgenie’s here!” she cries,

“Oh, God! What did he think, what will he say?”

Her heart is full of torment, but she tries

To nurture a dark dream of hope; to pray;

Trembling she asks, “Oh, will he come this way?”

She waits: comes he? No, she has nothing heard

But women’s voices and a hidden bird.

For in the garden certain servant-girls,

Gathering berries, fruit of bushes, trees,

To Tatiana’s ears ⎯ to irk and please.

(They sing by order: for the idea is

That singing they could eat no single berry;

The master shows a country shrewdness: very!)

*Song of the Servant-girls.*

Girls, girls, dark eyes, lovely curls,

Darlings all, little or tall,

Play, girls, play, be gay, be gay,

Be merry, picking berry!

Sing a song, sing a sweet song.

To make glad a lusty lad,

One who in our dance would prance,

Brought along by our sweet song.

When we allure the lad here,

From afar to where we are,

Let us run, run, each dear one

Full of fun, dears, full of fun;

Let him know, too, why we throw

Our berries, and ripe cherries,

Red currants, and raspberries;

Let him know, darlings, also,

Eavesdropping we are stopping;

What shame to spy on our game!

Girlies, be gay, be merry,

Picking berry, sweet berry.

XL

They sang, and Tatiana with neglect

To their resounding voices listend,

And sought her scattered voices to collect.

Impatiently she sighed, as she awaited

Her trembling heart be calmed, her cheeks, less red.

But still her heart beat fast; she could not doubt

That in her cheeks her fire had not died out.

Thus a poor butterfly is often shining,

And beats together its bright rainbow wings,

When by a school-boy caught, and so repining.

Thus, too, a little hare, before he springs

And flies the bullet that so cruelly stings,

In winter fields is crouching to the ground

Seeing a hunter aim, or unleash hound.

XLI

At last she sighed and from her seat arose,

Intending to return toward her home;

Along the lake-side avenue she goes,

But straight to her she sees Evgenie come,

A shadow terrible he seems of doom;

She stopped at once as though burned by a fire,

From suffocation almost did expire.

I, too, dear friends, must stop, for I to-day

Lack strength to write of this important meeting

I, after so much talking, must ⎯ I say ⎯

Go for a walk, this chapter now completing;

But do not fear your interest I’m cheating,

When I have had a rest I yet will tell

That which my hero, and heroine, befell.

FOURTH CHAPTER

La morale est dans la nature des choses

*Necker*

I II III IV V VI

VII

Take notice, that the less we love a woman,

Easier to be liked by her is it;

To do this is an efficacious plan

More surely her to ruin in love’s net;

Lust and seduction never this forget.

In former days love’s science famous was,

Blowing its trumpet amid loud applause,

Enjoyment and delight, but ⎯ no, not love.

Yet this amusement, so important deemed,

Is worthy the old ape ⎯ no turtle-dove!¬

In the much-lauded “good old days” it seemed:

The fame of Lovelace, highly once esteemed,

Shabby because with glory of red heels,

While a fine wig the lack of brains conceals.

VIII

Who is not weary of hypocrisy,

Repeating something in another way;

With pompous speech make somebody agree

With truisms accepted every day;

To hear old arguments, the yea and nay,

To treat deliberation as “all rot,”

Discuss those things that were not, and are not

In a girl’s mind at thirteen years of age!

Who is not tired of menaces and threats,

Implorings, oaths, and false fear of the stage,

And notes six pages long; also of cheats,

Slander, and rings, the tears the ring begets,

The chaperoning of the aunts and mothers,

The husband’s heavy friendship, or the brother’s.

IX

In such a manner was Evgenie thinking.

Victim of errors at an early age,

And passions all unbridled, wenching, drinking;

Spoiled by bad habits at life’s youthful stage,

His copy-book showed many a blotted page.

Charmed for a while by one thing or another,

But also disenchanted by another.

He tired slowly by achieved desire,

Was wearied too by easy-won success,

He listened to his conscience’s cross-fire,

In noise and silence, often with distress:

In such a way Evgenie killed eight years

And hid his boredom by his laughs and jeers.

X

Already he by love is not bemused,

He flirts, but love of beauties is not pressed;

And if betrayed, he was content to rest.

He looked for them by habit, but sans zest,

When partings came, he left without regrets,

Their love and wickedness he soon forgets.

In such a way can an indifferent guest

Come for an evening of cards and whist;

The game is finished; home to his own nest.

He drives away in rain, or shine, or mist,

And if he won he counts himself as blessed;

Arrived, he quietly goes off to sleep;

Knows not what company he next will keep.

XI

When Tania’s note Onegin did receive,

He found himself unusually moved:

This maiden’s visions were not make-believe;

His thoughts were troubled, though he disapproved;

It seemed that circumspection him behoved.

Recalling then her pallid, gloomy face

His soul in sinless sleep his steps retrace.

Perhaps the fire of feelings blazed again,

And for the moment warmed his colder heart;

He did not wish to cheat, nor cause her pain,

Nor make a soul of innocence to smart;

An innocent young girl is not a tart.

Now let us over to the garden fly,

Where Tatiana almost wished to die.

XII

They met, were silent minutes two or three,

Then Evgenie advanced and to her said,

“Do not deny it, this you wrote to me;

I was surprised, but I your letter read:

It left me not a little agitated.

I like the frank confession of your love,

I deem it innocent and from above.

But your so frank avowal all the same

Emotions stirred in me, stilled long ago.

I do not want to praise you, nor to blame,

Nor on your pride inflict the slightest blow;

I would not shame you; that you surely know;

I by a frank confession will repay,

Will artless be in what I have to say.”

XIII

“If I my life had wanted to be bound

By the domestic sphere, the family;

If joy in fatherhood I could have found,

If fate to be a husband destined me,

And for a moment should I captured be

By pictures of the patriarchal life;

Then surely none but you should be my wife.

I would not seek another for my bride ⎯

The simple, unembroidered truth that is.

True to my past ideals I should abide,

And you are my ideal of family bliss;

A faithful woman comrade in a crisis;

A pledge of all things beautiful and good;

I then would be. . . . happy as I could!”

XIV

“But I am not created for that bliss,

My soul is stranger to domestic ways;

In vain are your perfections: I lack this

Domestic touch in these my salad days:

Also I am not worth of your praise.

Believe me (conscience tells me it is thus)

Marriage would torment only cause to us.

Despite a lot of loving you at first,

Accustomed to you, I shall love no more;

Then you will weep; I disregard your outburst,

Your tears touch not my heart, but only bore ⎯

No, drive me crazy; I will rage and roar.

Judge, then, for yourself, what kind of roses

Will Hymen give such ill-assorted spouses!”

XV

“I know of nothing worse in all the land

Than is a family where the poor wife

Is grieving for an undeserving husband;

Her loneliness is bound to stir up strife;

Hostile emotions in them both are rife:

The weary husband, knowing the wife’s price,

Is frowning, silent, angry, coldly-jealous!

Such one am I: did you for this thing look

With your clear, clean and passionate young soul?

When with simplicity you undertook

To write with cleverness about your goal?

Think you, that you were cast fro such a rle?

That destiny severe with life will plot,

Deciding that should be your future lot?

XVI

“None can renew his soul although he strove;

Visions and years cannot return to me;

I love you, Tania, with a brother’s love,

Love you, it may be, yet more tenderly.

Eschewing anger, this you will agree:

A maiden’s fancy changes many times

Her day-dreams, as a poet changes rhymes;

Or as a little tree discards its leaves

With every shift from winter into spring;

When it a new impulse from life receives

Its plumage it renews like birds that sing;

Time yet a welcome lover you will bring. . . .

But you must learn yourself to govern now,

Not all will understand you, as I do.”

XVII

Thus preached to Tatiana Evgenie,

And listened to this priest a broken maid,

Who through her blinding tears could nothing see,

And, hardly breathing, ton him nothing said.

He offered her his arm; her hand she laid

Upon the young man’s arm *mechanically;*

Bent her small head; her forces strove to rally

Thus round the kitchen-garden they went home;

Together they appeared; none seemed to mind;

No one them scolds when in his house they come:

The country freedom has its laws that bind,

Laws fortunate, as you will also find

In haughty Moscow, that great city proud;

In both we all can do what is allowed.

XVIII

You will, I think, dear reader, quite agree

My pal to the sad Tania did behavre

In a nice way; indeed did we not see

How more than once he evidence here gave

Of that nobility his soul did have.

Although of malice of the was the victim,

For many folk no mercy had for him,

His enemies, and we must add, his frie3nds

(Which truly is, perhaps, one and the same)

Mistreated him for this or other ends.

We all have enemies, who us defame,

But save us from our “friends”, as they proclaim!

Oh God, these friends, these many friends, or few;

I them recall for I have reason to!

XIX

But why? Just so: of course you want to know.

I put to sleep my visions empty, black;

But *in parenthesis* note this is so:−

No slander vile, uttered by liar or hack,

In a poor garret, cheered on by (alack!)

Worldly society, the veriest scum,

Nor vulgar, evil, absurd epigram,

Which our friend would not tell with fatuous smile,

Within the circle of respected folk;

And all without intended malice vile,

A hundred times repeated by mistake,

Or sometimes even treated as a joke:

But all the while he shields you like a rock:

He loves you like a relative ⎯ the shark!

XX

Ha! Ha! Gentle reader, your relations,

How stands it with them all? I hope quite well.

Allow me: it may please, with few exceptions,

If I the meaning of *relations* tell ⎯

Another way your *relatives* to spell.

Which way we say it does not matter much,

But all should know that relatives are such:

We are obliged to flatter them, caress,

And, with our soul, to love them and esteem;

We also have to visit them at Christmas,

A thing that oft is tiresome in extreme;

Or else through letters we must on them beam,

So that, for the remainder of the year,

They do not think of us, nor interfere.

XXI

The love of tender beauties is more sure

Than that of friends, and, certainly, of kin;

For even in the stormy gales’ uproar

You keep your rights in the rebellious din:

Of course that is so; in that sphere you win.

But fashion’s wind, and nature’s wilful urge,

And worldly-wise opinion all submerge. . . .

Ah, the dear fair sex, light as feather-down!

The spouse’s high regard for virtuous wife,

Must be respected always; wear the crown;

Just so your loyal friend, sometimes in life,

Will fall in love and with romance be rife:

This is a fact that no amount of cloaking

Can hide, for Satan then with love is joking.

XXII

Well, then, whom to love? Whom, indeed, to trust?

The one who will not faith in him betray?

Who deeds and speeches in one ball will thrust,

And with our yard-stick measure them alway?

(If *alway* you for *always* let me say!)

Who is not sowing slander all about us?

Who of our health and soul makes undue fuss?

One who our vice beholds with toleration?

One who will never tedious become?

My reader, cast aside all your vexation,

Seek not a ghost, invisible and dumb.

Love you yourself! ⎯ you will not find that irksome:

A most deserving subject: nothing surely

More pleasing is, more satisfactory.

XXIII

What was the consequence of that swift meeting?

Ala,, it is not difficult to guess!

The torrents maddening of love repeating

To a grief-greedy soul would never cease;

No, Tatiana’s love but did increase;

Her gloomy passion, burning more and more,

Drove slumber from her bed worse than before.

Her health, once radiant, witnessed a decline,

The flower and sweet of life began to fade,

Her smile, her virgin peace, no more did shine,

Her pleasant, youthful tasks were not essayed,

Bright, happy days departed from the maid;

The youth of our dear Tania now grows dim,

Her new-born day is overcast and grim.

XXIV

Alas, our Tania is withering;

Pale and extinguished, with a silent tongue!

Nothing amuses, nor her soul is moving,

The neighbours all whisper themselves among,

Shaking their heads, while looking grave and sidelong:

’Tis time, ’tis time indeed, she married be! . . .

But that’s enough of that, for I must quickly

Cheer up and sweeten your imagination,

Of happy love a glowing picture paint

.I love my Tania much, to desolation,

I am distressed, my soul in me is faint;

It seems I too have Tania’s complaint:

Forgive me, but of Tatiana I

Can write no more just now, but only sigh.

XXV

Captivated by Olga’s beauty,

Which grew on Vladimir each passing hour,

He gave himself to sweet captivity,

With burning ardour and a youthful vigour.

With her he sat in darkened room, or bower

In her home’s garden, where they both would walk

In morning sunshine arm in arm and talk!

But what of that? By love intoxicated,

And troubled by a shy and tender shame,

He only dares sometimes, when much elated

By Olga’s smile, which makes his ardour flame,

With a fair wayward curl to play a game,

Or, like a bold and an abandoned flirt,

Would kiss the hem of the young lady’s skirt.

XXVI

Sometimes to Olga Vladimir would read

A moral-teaching novel, or romance,

In which the author of the chosen screed

Knows more than Chateaubriand ⎯ well, perchance ⎯

About the ways of nature’s governance,

But pages two or three will Lensky skip

And, blushingly, apply a censorship

In solitude they go, far from everyone,

Or, thinking deeply, at a chessboard sit;

They work at chess, the game is hardly fun,

As serious this game as Holy Writ.

They lean upon the table, never fidget;

Then Lensky, thinking of Miss Olga’s look,

Absently with his pawn takes his own rook.

XXVII

Returning to his house and home ⎯ what then?

He with his Olga still is occupied.

With zeal he is adorning for her often

The pages of a scrap-book open wide3:

He pictures draws on them of countryside,

Or gravestones, or, maybe, a Cyprian shrine,

Or two doves on a lyre, a neat design.

Lightly he draws them with a pen or paint;

Or on the pages small of memories,

Lower than other signatures, more faint,

He leaves a verse of tender fantasies,

A silent monument to reveries;

A record long of momentary thought,

For years the same words come to him unsought.

XXVIII

Most certainly you more than once have seen

The album of a simple country maid;

One by the which her female friends have been

By blotches and smudges on its leaves betrayed;

Verses unscanned, by memory essayed,

Inserted here as sign of friendship true,

Lines, short or long, of many points of view.

On page one you are almost bound to meet:

*Qu’crivez-vous, ma chre, sur ces tablettes,*

Signed, with a flourish, *tout vous. Annette;*

Like questions you will find on many a sheet.

At the last page’s foot this neat couplet:

*“Let him (her) who loves more my darling friend*

*Write in this album nearer to the end.”*

XXIX

Here you will find two hearts, a torch, and flowers;

Yes, certainly, and, probably, will read

A pledge of love, *“until the grave devours:”*

Here is an Army poetaster’s screed

Of raffish verse, his signature knock-kneed.

In such an album, friend, I must confess,

I too am pleased to write with cheerfulness.

For I am sure my writing in that book,

Each piece of zealous nonsense, howe’er small,

Will earn me a benevolent young look;

And later on the owner cannot tell,

With a sly smile ⎯ important airs as well ⎯

Whether my lines were only so much rot,

Or did I lie in a sharp way, or not.

XXX

But one that from the devil’s bookshelf comes!

Unmatchd volumes, all with bindings rare,

You, cursd tribe of beautiful albums,

The fashionable rhyme-makers’ despair;

(The brush miraculous of Tolstoi there,

Or Baratinsky’s pen in not a few)

May God’s great thunder strike, and blast, and burn you!

So when a lady glamorous presents

To me her quarto-sized in which to write3,

Dainty and, maybe, redolent of scents,

Anger and shuddering my soul excite;

Yet I must smile and take ⎯ I am polite.,

I write a madrigal to please madam,

But yearn to make a scorching epigram!

XXXI

Lensky a madrigal is not then writing

Within the album of Miss Olga young;

His pen is then his ardent love reciting,

Not coldly jesting, witty words among;

What he had learned by eye, or ear, or tongue

About young Olga, Lensky writes about it.

In elegies, truth-laden, do not doubt it.

So you, dear poet, Yazikov, inspired,

In your heart’s transport certainly did sing;

God knows whom ’tis that you so much admired,

But it sufficed to your collection bring

An elegy all loaded with feeling.

Maybe the story of your destiny

In that collection, reader, you can see.

XXXII

Hush! Do you hear? A critic most severe

Is now ordering us to cast aside

The shabby wreath of elegy all sear,

And shouting to us other things beside,

As “fellow-rhymers, listen while I chide;

Stop weeping, quacking, and do not regret

The *past*, the *what-has-been*; new subjects get:

Enough, ’tis time to sing of something yet!” ⎯

“You’re right, no doubt, and to us will point out

The mask, the dagger, and, of course, the trumpet,

With that dead capital your deepest thought.

Give orders that to life it shall be brought:

Is that not so, my friend?” ⎯ “no, not al all!

Write odes, dear sirs, and heed this clarion-call.”

XXXIII

“Write odes as written in the mighty years,

The ode as instituted in old days . . . .” ⎯

“The ode triumphal only! No, my dears.

Enough, my friends, it is the same both ways.

Do you recall the satirist who says:

A lyric poet from a *strange style* stable,

Is it the case you find more tolerable

Than are the gloomy makers of our rhyme?”⎯

“But in this elegy all things seem trivial,

And wanting in a sense of the sublime;

The aim seems empty, almost pitiful:

An ode is high and noble, e’en celestial . . . .”

Here we could argue, but I silent am,

I let two epochs fight, dear sir, or madam.

XXXIV

In the disturbance of his stormy thought,

The worshipper of freedom and of glory,

Vladimir, odes would write, in ferment wrought,

But Olga did not read them, even briefly.

Did ever our young poets tearfully

Read their creations to their lovely mistress?

’Tis said there’s no reward more high than this.

And rightly so, for blissful is the lover

Who reads the visions that his soul has made

Unto a beautiful female approver,

The object of his songs, the girl aforesaid,

A beautiful and pleasing-languid maid!

Blissful . . . . although, perhaps, that lovely she

Diverted is by something else entirely.

XXXV

But I the visions of my teeming brain,

Its fruits dressed in harmonious device,

Am reading only to my youth’s companion,

Unto my old and ever-faithful nurse.

Or after dinner tedious ⎯ to be precise ⎯

Unto a neighbour who has dined with me,

Whose coat I catch, and will not set him free

Till, in a corner, I the fellow choike

By reading to him a great tragedy.

Or (seriously, without any joke)

When wrestling with my rhymes I am all weary,

And wander near my lake all wild and sedgy;

Then, hearing singing of my verses sweet,

A flight of wild duck makes a quick retreat.

XXXVI XXXVII

What of Onegin? Brothers, by-the-bye,

Your patience I bespeak for this my tale;

I’ll tell you how Evgenie’s hours did fly

Describe his occupations in detail;

(Fly, did I say; they moved more like a snail!)

Onegin lived a perfect anchoret.

In summer up at seven he would get

And, lightly dressed, would to the river go,

Like to the singer famous of Hulnare,

And swim this Hellespont, the which did flow

At the hill’s foot, where the weeping-willows are.

This done, a faithful subject of the Tsar,

His coffee drank, and read a magazine,

A little dirty; dressed and felt quite clean . . . .

XXXVIII XXXIX

Onegin walks, and reads, and deeply sleeps,

Near the stream’s murmur, and in woodland shade;

Sometimes a young, fresh kiss this farmer reaps

From white-faced, black-eyed, yet a willing maid:

His bridle’s touch his mettled horse obeyed.

A dinner, somewhat fanciful, but good;

White wine; and quietness, and solitude.

Such was Onegin’s holy-hermit life;

He to this life without a struggle yields;

Within his mind there are no conflicts rife;

In carefree languor he surveys his fields,

When summer’s sun a soothing lordship wields;

Forgotten is the town and former friends,

The tedious social round which never ends.

XL

Our Northern summer when the chill winds blow,

A parody of Southern winters is,

Glimpsed once, and is no more: that we all know,

Although we do not like confessing this.

Already cool-breathed autumn doth dismiss

Warm-hearted summer; and the little sun

Shines not so long, and day is sooner done.

The shade mysterious of the dark wood

Becomes less so as leaves fall with sad sound;

The autumn mist does more and more intrude,

And lies along the fields the farms surround.

The flight of quacking geese now Southward bound

Flees from the weary times of winter hard;

November stands already in the court-yard.

XLI

The dawn is getting up in darkness cold;

The fields now lack the noise of cheerful labour;

The wolf is starving, and is rendered bold,

He and his mate are on the roads that neighbour

The little town; the horse is feeling terror

And snorts and shies; his master with much care

Drives full-speed up the hill, and says a prayer.

When dawn arrives the herdsman drives no cows

From byre to meadow; no more his noontide horn

Is summoning his cattle from the meadows;

In a small hut a maiden sings, forlorn,

About a young man faithless and forsworn,

As she her spinning-wheel is busy turning,

With winter night’s good friend, a torch, then burning.

XLII

Here is the frost, which cracks and decomposes,

Upon the fields the silver rime is thick . . . .

(The reader is expecting the rhyme *roses*;

Well, here it is, so take it, reader, quick!)

The river, dressed in ice, is span-and-spick

(Or spick-and-span, if you prefer it so)

Cleaner than parquet fine the ice doth glow.

A gleeful throng of noisy, shouting boys

The surface of the ice cut with their skates ⎯

Perhaps the greatest of all winter’s joys.

A heavy goose, that know not of the Fates,

Steps on the ice and falls, and so elates

The merry throng; a cheerful first snow falls

Curling and shining in the tiny squalls.

XLIII

Ah, what to do in such a spot remote

When winter comes and the white fields are bare?

Who on monotony can truly gloat,

And can one gallop on the steppe severe?

For if a horseshoe is the worse for weasr

The horse may slip on the uncertain ice,

His rider throw ⎯ most certainly not nice.

Then sit you down ’neath a deserted roof

And read: for here is Pradt and Walter Scott.

You do not wish to; you have read enough?

Then check accounts; be angry; drink a lot;

The evening long will somehow pass, I wot.

Tomorrow you repeat this dreary round,

And nicely pass the winter, I’ll be bound.

XLIV

Like Childe Harold, Onegin himself gave

Up to a bout of pensive laziness:

Arising, he in icy tub doth lave

And, after, stays at home in working-dress,

Adding accounts alone in quietness;

Then armed with a defective billiard-cue,

He plays two balls, and wins, then starts anew.

The morning passed, the evening draws on,

The billiards left, the cue is laid aside,

The time is killed; the implement forgotten;

A table now is laid the fire beside,

An open fire that is its owner’s pride.

Evgenie waits; his friends Vladimir calls:

“Serve dinner, quickly!” then his master bawls.

XLV

Veuve Cliquot, or the blessed wine of Mot,

In frozen bottle, that at once is brought,

Is set upon the table for the poet.

That sparkling wine with Hippocrene is fraught;

It captivated me, and, likewise, taught:

For it I often in the past would give

My last poor lepta, but it made me live.

My friends, do you recall its magic stream,

And all the nonsenses that liquor made;

Its genial warmth has made our merry dream,

Also provoked disputes, I am afraid!

How many jokes and verses we essayed,

Because in us a wild creative urge,

Roused by that nectar, through our veins did surge.

XLVI

But treacherous it is by noisy foam,

And for my stomach’s sake I now prefer

The wise *Bordeaux* should in it find a home ⎯

With bubbly *A* can I no longer bear

*A* a mistress is, beyond compare,

Brilliant and flighty, very much alive,

But wilful, empty; I will not with her strive.

But you, Bordeaux, are much more like a friend,

A faithful chum in pleasure and in grief,

Always, everywhere, to the bottle’s end,

Ready to serve one quickly; to be brief;

To share our leisure; or to bring relief.

And so, good health to Bordeaux, my good friend,

Always may he serve me to the end!

XLVII

The fire is dying and the glowing coal

Is by dull ashes almost overlaid;

The smoke curls upward to the chimney-hole

Thin and unnoticed, as it were, afraid.

The fire unto their warmth lends little aid.

Tobacco smoke from the men’s pipes doth go

Up through the chimney to the frost and snow.

Still hissing as the dusk is coming on,

Two wine-cups light upon the table stand . . . .

A pleasant time when day is nearly done!

(I like that friendly hour, the borderland

’Twixt light and dark, but do not understand

Why fold call it “between the wolf and dog”).

But listen now to the friends’ dialogue.

XLVIII

“Well, how are our good neighbours; tell me, how

Is Tatiana, how your Olga jolly?”

“Pour half a glass more, if you want to know . . . .

Enough, old man . . . . Well, all the family

Are in good health; they send greetings by me.

Ah, how my Olga’s shoulders have improved,

And what a bosom! Worthy to be loved!

And what a soul! . . . We sometime there must call;

You will oblige them, for, as well you know,

Twice you have peeped in there, and that is all;

Your nose you do not at their threshold show:

A favour you can on us all bestow.

Yes, here . . . . my memory plays hide-and-seek!

You are invited there with me next week. ⎯

XLIX

“I?” ⎯ “Yes, Saturday. Olga and her mother

Bade me invite you ⎯ Tania’s name day it.

You can come with me, therefore make no pother,

You have no reason not to make this visit.” ⎯

“No reason, Lensky; people make me vomit;

A heap of country bumpkins will be there,

All kinds of rabble . . . .” ⎯ “No one, I am sure.

None will be there but their own family;

Do me this favour, am I not your friend?

Well, how about it?” ⎯ “Lensky, I agree.” ⎯

“How nice you are!” ⎯ and there he makes and end

And drains his glass to Madam his good friend;

But having won, he does not homeward move

But speaks again of Olga: such is love!

L

He cheerful was; for in two weeks’ time

Fate, or some one, had fixed the happy date.

The mystery of the nuptial bed sublime

Awaits his ecstasy, the married state.

And here is something that I must relate:

Of Hymen’s worries never did he think,

Or the cold time of yawning, when men drink.

But we, the enemies of Hymen’s bond

See in domestic life one vast fatigue,

From which one spouse or other may abscond,

Or both of them find solace in intrigue;

But Lensky, far from this by many a league,

Was born it seems for a domestic life,

A Lafontaine romance with a sweet wife.

LI

He was loved . . . . at any rate he thought so,

And he was happy, surely a great thing;

A hundredfold is blessed, removed from woe,

Who to a faith whole-heartedly can cling;

Who, as in sleep, a quiet mind is resting.

Like a drunk traveller sleeps when too elated,

Or butterfly by flower intoxicated.

But pitiful that one who knows it all,

Whose head is firmly on his shoulders set;

Who hates all movements and all words with gall,

For he their meaning never can forget;

Who sees the world as one vast trap, or net.

Whose heart is cold from long experience,

And seeks to build around it a high fence.

FIFTH CHAPTER

Oh, do not know these terrible dreams,

Thou, my Svetlana!

*Zhoukovsky*

I

The autumn weather, without sledging, skating,

Stood in he courtyard for a long, long time;

Nature for winter patiently was waiting:

The snow but fell in January’s prime;

On the third night it covered autumn’s grime.

Early next morning, looking at the yard,

Tatiana saw the snow there white and hard.

On flower-beds, on roof, and fence it lay;

And ice upon the window-panes did freeze,

Fantastic patterns did it there display;

Bright winter’s silver covered all the trees.

The merry magpies made a sight to please

Upon the yard; and on the father hills

Winter’s white carpet covers all, and chills.

II

Winter! . . . . . In it peasant doth exalt,

His sledge the first time travels on the road;

His little horse the snow finds difficult,

But somehow draws along his heavy load;

A daring covered-sledge, one  *la mode*.

Is flying fast and scattering the snow;

The coachman’s red belt on his coat doth show.

A boy from out the courtyard now doth run,

His dog, his “little beetle”, he doth put

Into his small sledge; both enjoy the fun.

Frozen the wanton’s little finger, but

He laughs, despite the pain; and in his hut

His mother, through the window, shakes at him

A warning finger, looking somewhat grim . . . .

III

But it may be that pictures of this kind

Will not attract, all nature bare and base;

Not much of elegance you here will find.

If such you need, seek in another place.

Warmed up by inspiration, full of grace,

With florid style, although in vivid measures,

Another poet paints our winter pleasures.

He will attract you, of this I am sure,

He paints the season in verse passionate,

His sledges’ secret outings have allure.

But I have no intention to compete,

My picture for my purpose is complete;

Nor for the nonce will I endeavour, too,

The Finnish maiden’s singer to outdo.

IV

Tatiana (a Russian in her soul,

Though the young woman could not have known why)

The Russian winter loved to see unroll

In its cold beauty, in the fields and sky:

The dawn-light reddened snow, all crisp and dry;

The sledges gay on the white road flee;

The evenings dim about Epiphany.

In the old homestead evenings such as these

By long tradition ended in a feast:

The servant-maids, young mistresses to please,

Were telling fortunes ⎯ Beauty and the Beast;

Each year to those by marriage yet unblessed,

They prophesied a husband military,

A campaign ⎯ separation customary.

V

In all the legends strange of country fold,

Now and in old times, Tania believed;

Predictions by the moon in her awoke

Anxiety, not easily relieved.

All sorts of omens were by her received.

All things that are, it seems, could sometimes show

That which would happen, how the world would go.

By such forebodings she was much oppressed:

A mincing tom-cat, sitting on the stove,

Washing his face, or purring and at rest,

A sign undoubted was that some folk drove

Their carriage to her home, as time would prove.

And seeing on her left the crescent moon,

She trembled, paled, and seemed about to swoon.

VI

And when a shooting-star Tatiana sees

’Gainst the dark sky, a golden streak of fire,

She in confusion quickly makes her pleas,

Before it break up, scatter, and expire,

That it to her accord her heart’s desire.

Or when she meets a monk all dressed in black,

Or hare the roadway cross, why then ⎯ alack! ⎯

At once she fears some great calamity.

These are the portents of impending fate.

Although she knows not what that fate may be,

She dreads the things these things adumbrate.

She knows not what to do, she can but wait

Full of forebodings sorrowful, though she

Began her journey joyful and carefree.

VII

Well, what of that? Tania found a charm,

A secret charm, e’en in the heart of fear:

Kind Nature indicates escape from harm;

All things have contraries; that much is clear.

The holy days of Christmastide draw near.

Impetuous youths who boldly fortunes tell

Are balanced by old age, so all is well!

For heady youth lacks pity and is hard,

It sees the future clear, immense, and far;

Old age is cautious, always on its guard,

And peers through glasses at no distant star,

But at the coffin-lid, at things that are:

It matters little; hope to both is lying

In childish prattle to the young and dying.

VIII

Our Tania gazes at the drowned bees-wax

With curious look: its pattern strange she finds,

And something wonderful the girl unpacks.

Another game to please the childish minds,

Is “Rings in Water,” where Destiny unwinds

As one by one the rings are taken out;

The ring that Tania drew said much, no doubt.

This ceremony goes to an old song:

“*The peasants there are all of them quite rich:*

*Silver they dig, with spade with handle strong;*

*To one we sing, as to a tsarevich,*

*Fortune and glory!*” There some folk are which

Find this song sad: maidens preferring that

They should all sing about *The Little She-Cat*.

IX

The night is frosty, the whole sky is clear;

The stars in their celestial choir now sing

To those who can their tones melodic hear,

As they harmoniously are westering . . . .

Tania in the court-yard they see coming,

Where she, in sleeveless frock, turnst to the moon

A mirror; its image shows thereon.

Sh . . . . a sound of crunching snow . . . . a passer-by;

On tiptoe to the stranger flies the maid,

Her little voice sounding more tenderly

Than a sweet tune on a reed-pipe played:

*What is your name?* she asks, as if afraid.

The stranger paused a moment, then passed on,

Uttering one word gruffly, “Agaphon”.

X

Acting upon her nanny’s sage advice,

The girl a table just for two had laid

In secret ⎯ of all places! ⎯in the bath-house,

For fortune-telling there would be essayed

That night, but suddenly was Tania scared . . . .

And I ⎯ upon the thought of one Svetlana ⎯

I too am scared for my dear Tatiana.

But let that be . . . . ’tis not for us to tell

Fortunes with Tatiana, but relate

What happens to her, and to wish her well.

The maiden first discarded her silk belt,

Then her soft couch the girl’s weight lightly felt.

Lel, god of love, about her pillow creeps;

Her mirror under it, Tatiana sleeps.

XI

A strange and vivid dream did Tania oppress.

She walks on lawn snow-covered; and it seems

Encircling that white lawn is a sad darkness;

Before her, in snow drifts, a stream, or streams,

Not frozen yet in winter’s chains, she deems.

She hears the noise of the stream’s rushing waves,

Dark and grey-headed, darker shores it laves.

Two flimsy planks are fastened by the ice;

A dangerous, shaky bridge these timbers make;

A bridge like this, one would not traverse twice.

As Tania looks, she sees these old boards shake

Above the stream; her limbs begin to quake.

Before that abyss, dangerous and dark,

Tatiana halted, but did not awake.

XII

Tatiana is repining at the tide ⎯

A barrier, a vexing separation;

She sees no one upon the other side,

No helping hand to aid her transportation;

She gives way more and more to her vexation;

But suddenly she hears a slight commotion,

Looks back, and sees the snow-drift is in motion.

What is thereunder, causes it to move?

It is a big and shaggy-haired old bear;

Tatiana ⎯ ah! He growled and at her drove,

His Paw put out with its sharp claws to tear.

Oh how the trembling maiden this did scare!

With frightened, hurried steps she crossed the stream,

The bear her followed ⎯ what a nasty dream!

XIII

Dear Tatiana dares not look behind,

And with quick steps the maiden hastens on;

But no way can our Tatiana find

To leave the bear; from her rude lackey run;

Growling, the shaggy beast still lumbers on.

Before them both a forest soon appears,

The frowning beauty of tall pines and firs.

The branches all are tipped with tufts of snow;

And through the tops of aspens, birches, limes,

The pinpoint lights of night’s bright candles show,

As she, awake, had seen them many times:

No path is there for these benighted pilgrims.

Bushes are covered, gullies blocked, by snow,

In which they sink more deeply as they go.

XIV

Tania wildly into the forest goes,

The bear behind; the soft snow reached her knees;

Sometimes the branches dealt her sudden blows

Upon the neck, or thorns her ear-rings seize;

Deeper she sinks into the snow, she slower

Once she had dropped her pocket-handkerchief;

She cannot it retrieve for time is brief.

Always behind, the lumbering bear she hears,

She tries to run, but moves by fits and starts,

For nothing hampers movement like great fears;

Blindly she stumbles, she no bird that darts.

She is ashamed to gather up her skirts,

Her modest scruples hinder swifter flight;

Strength failing her, exhausted is she quite.

XV

Collapsing in deep snow, she waits for death,

The bear is on her, quickly he doth catch

The girl, who does not move, and holds her breath;

Senseless, submissive, she does not shriek nor scratch,

And her passivity the beast doth match;

He carries her along a forest road

To where among the pines a poor hut stood.

Around the hut is as great wilderness,

Like the poor cabin, buried deep in snow;

Within the cabin, shouting limitless,

But brightly shining, doth one window glow;

The bear called out, as he let Tania go,

“Lo, my god-father, warm yourself inside,”

Then picked her up and through the door did stride.

XVI

Coming too again, Tania looks around:

The bear is gone; she, in the entrance-hall;

Behind a door, screams heard, and clanking sound

Of glass, as at a feast funeral.

The young girl sees no sense in this at all,

But carefully is looking through a crack;

What sees she there? . . . . A scene demoniac.

Monsters around a table finds she there;

One has long horns, but with it a dog’s face;

Another a cock’s head; a witch doth there appear,

A he-goat’s beard her pointed chin doth grace;

A haughty skeleton seems quite in place,

Also a dwarf that has a little tail,

And many monsters more to make one quail.

XVII

Here is a being strange, half crane, half cat;

A crayfish there doth on a spider ride;

A skull upon a goose’s neck, one that

In red clown’s cap, wild whirling is inside.

And there aw windmill Tania has spied

Dancing a squatting dance and waving sails;

A medley of strange noises there prevails,

Barking, guffaws, singing, whistling, champing;

But what was Tania thinking when she saw,

(’Mid human talk and noise of horses stamping

Among these monster guests of tooth and claw)

One dear to her, of whom she stands in awe?

The hero ⎯ Evgenie ⎯ of our romance

Sits at the table and at the door doth glance.

XVIII

He makes a sign: the guests all busy get;

He drinks: the company all drink and shout;

He laughs, and louder laughter doth beget;

He frowns, and all are silent roundabout;

There he is master, one can hardly doubt:

And Tania, now not scared as heretofore

But curious, a little opes the door . . . .

A high wind suddenly blew through the room,

Out went the light of many a little lamp;

The monsters much confused sit in the gloom,

Their voices rise, and some are heard to stamp

As they get up, preparing to decamp;

Onegin, thundering, makes for the door,

The hubbub now is growing more and more.

XIX

Now Tania is frightened once again,

And, hastily, she tries to run away:

Impossible; some force doth her detain;

She wants to scream; cannot; then tries to pray,

But nowise can she lessen her dismay.

And when Evgenie opens wide the door,

The monsters see her and they loudly roar.

The eyes of all that evil-looking host

Are turned on her, she sees their wicked gleam;

She cannot say what frightens her the most,

Eyes, hoofs, and crooked trunks, alike they seem

With tails, tusks, bloody tongues, in her wild dream,

To point at her; a crowd of greedy swine,

Are shouting at her: “Mine she is; she’s mine!”

XX

“*She’s mine*,” Evgenie cries in voice of thunder;

At once the motley crew has vanishd;

The maiden there remained in frozen wonder,

Her friend with her, but all the rest had fled.

He seats her in a corner, bends his head

Towards her shoulder; light doth sudden blind

When Olga enters, Lensky close behind.

Onegin starts up, full of wild alarms,

His dazzled eyes are wandering around,

And, furious, Onegin waves his arms,

His rising anger knows no bourn, no bound,

His guests unwelcome scolds he long and sound;

And while the quarrel flows above her head,

Poor Tatiana lies there nearly dead.

XXI

This altercation loud became, and heated,

When, suddenly, Evgenie seized a knife;

A moment later Lensky falls defeated,

Then darkness thickens round this scene of strife;

A scream unbearable, a scream for life

Resounds . . . . and as the wretched hovel shakes,

Excess of horror Tatiana wakes . . . .

Her eyes she opens, sees that it is day,

For light pours through the frosty window glass,

The golden light of dawn on all doth play;

The door then opens, through it doth Olga pass;

Fairer than Northern dawn, that comely lass,

And than a swallow, lighter: “Well,” says she,

“Whom in your dream, dear Tania, did you see?”

XXII

But Tania no notice of her took,

She to her sister did not wish to speak;

In bed, she turns the pages of a book,

Which some might think was somewhat dull, or bleak.

In it would one no poet’s fictions seek,

Nor his wise truths; of fictions, not a jot;

But Virgil, Racine, Byron, Walter Scott,

“The Ladies’ Fashion Journal,” Seneca,

Ne’er interested anyone as much;

It was, my friends, by Martin Zadeka,

Head of the Haldei sages, and, as such,

On dreams, and on the future, he did touch,

I cannot say I know his writings well,

But dreams he would interpret, fortunes tell.

XXIII

Zadeka’s book, this great creation deep,

Into the country’s loneliness was brought

By pedlar wandering, from him got cheap ⎯

Three roubles fifty kopecks for the lot,

After some chaffer seven books were bought:

*Malvina*, some folk fables, and a grammar,

Two Petriades, Marmontel; the pedlar

Of this last author had but volume three.

Martin Zadeka became later on

Tania’s best-loved book in this small library.

Its contents Tania often pored upon,

And from this rigmarole some comfort won.

It strengthened her when sorrows made her weep;

With it, inseparably, she would sleep.

XXIV

Tatiana is much worried by her dream.

How it interpret: that she does not know;

This vision terrible she can but deem

Portends great evil, some tremendous blow:

And so to Zadeka the girl does go.

In alphabetic order she finds there

A list of symbols, first of which is *bear*.

There, too, are *bridge*, and *darkness*, *fir* and *forest*,

*Hedgehog* and *snowstorm*, *tempest*, lastly *witch* ⎯

She never thought, it seems, to look for *mare’s nest*.

Her darkness still remained as black as pitch;

Zadeka cannot solve her doubts, the which

Promised the dreamer some adventures sad;

She worried till at last her dream did fade.

XXV

“But now the youthful dawn with golden hand

The sun from out the morning valleys leads,

With merry festival of name-day, and ⎯”

In verse of an old poet one this reads:

We drop the parody, our tale proceeds.

From morn the Larin’s house is full of guests;

Most welcome, but a few whom one detests.

Of Larin’s neighbours came whole families,

In carriages and cabs, in sledges, carts;

In entrance hall, the jostling human species,

In sitting-room, young men with their sweethearts,

The bark of pugs, loud kiss a girl imparts,

Noise, guffaws, scraping feet, and at the door

The children’s cries, the nurses’ shouts, uproar.

XXVI

With his stout spouse fat Poustiakov arrives;

Gvosdin, good manager of his estate.

Owner of pauper serfs, good Gvosdin thrives:

The Skotinins arrive a little late

And bring their children ⎯ how those children ate!

Their ages ranged from two to thirty years:

The country dandy, Petoushkov, appears.

And my first cousin, Bouyanov was there,

With a peak-cap, and down upon his clothes

(You’ve surely seen him at the church or fair,

He is the sort that everybody knows).

Flianov, late counsellor, to Larin’s goes,

A heavy gossip-maker, an old cheater,

Taker of bribes, a joker, a huge eater.

XXVII

With family of Panfil Kharlikov

There came a Frenchman, a Monsieur Triquet,

Who recently arrived, it seems, from Tambov.

A Frenchman true, he brought with him that day,

A charming couplet, writ in French, and gay,

For Tania: *Rveillez vous, belle endormie*,

A tune well-known to French gaminerie.

This couplet was among the ancient songs

That in an almanac had Triquet found,

Where it no doubt most properly belongs;

But Triquet brought it from that dusty mound;

That perspicacious poet it unbound;

*Belle Tatiana* he did substitute

For *belle Nina* ⎯ a rascal absolute!

XXVIII

And from the nearest suburb there arrived

The company commander in the army,

Idol of old maids, and mothers, who derived

Delight and comfort from his courtesy.

He enters . . . . ah, what news, what jollity!

Soon there will be a military band

Sent on the colonel’s own express command.

What joy: the gathering will be a ball!

Beforehand girls are jumping up and down.

The meal is served, and now the couples all

Go arm in arm to tables which do groan

Beneath the weight of food which them doth crown.

The girls against Miss Tatiana pressed,

The crowd sits at the board and themselves crossed.

XXIX

For a brief while is conversation stopped;

The mouths are masticating. From all sides

Plates, crockery, are rattling; corks soon popped;

The sound wine-glasses make then overrides

In cheerfulness all else the host provides.

Oh, what a hubbub is on every hand,

Almost as loud as military band!

Then suddenly comes Lensky through the door,

With him Onegin. “Ah, God!” the hostess cried,

“At last!” The guests them welcome with uproar,

Greetings are shouted, chairs are pushed aside,

New covers brought, with viands they are plied.

Opposite Tania they are made to sit;

The guests show pleasure at this timely visit.

XXX

She is more pale than is the morning noon,

She trembles more than doth the hunted roe,

She ready is to fall into a swoon;

Just what to think and do she does not know;

Her darkening eyes she lifts not, but they glow;

A fire impassioned blazes in her soul,

Which she contrived by steadfast self-control.

Yet, nonetheless, she stifles and falls sick,

She does not hear the greetings of the friends;

But will and reason conquer weakness quick,

Her power of reason her weak heart defends,

And it at length her weakness quite transcends.

To utter words of greeting she was able

And, peaceful-seeming, remain at the table.

XXXI

For long Evgenie thought he could not bear

Appearances of tragi-nervousness,

Swooning of women and the ready tear:

Enough he had of feminine distress.

Already angry at his carelessness

In promising to come to this huge fedast.

Tatiana’s trembling moved him not the least.

Sulking with vexation with cast-down look,

He took an oath to make friendly Lensky rage,

And be revenged of what he undertook.

His mind became at once a private stage

On which there moved caricatures savage

Of all the guests who so offended him;

Friend Lensky was, of course, the chiefest victim.

XXXII

Evgenie, naturally, was not alone

Able to perceive Tania’s confusion;

But a rich pie (too salt!) by far outshone

The sight of a young lady’s deep dejection;

And here was Simlian wine in such profusion

Between the roast and the blanc-mange brought in

In bottles with the corks all sealed with resin.

After the wine, a row of glasses, long

And thin, ⎯ friend Zizi, thin as was your waist;

Zizi, my soul’s crystal,object of my song

When I was young and found you to my taste;

Attractive phial of love in days long past;

A liquor from which youth has never shrunk;

You, girl, from whom it happened I was drunk.

XXXIII

Freed from its wet cork doth the bottle pop,

The wine doth fizz; and then, with dignity,

The poetaster Triquet lurches up

Upon his feet; you will recall that he

Was troubled by a couplet; the company

Before the orator keeps silence deep,

And Tatiana tries hard not to weep.

Triquet then turns to her, in hand a note

From which he sings a ditty out of tune;

The guests applaud, ’tis excellent they vote.

Tania curtsies and thanks him for his rune,

And feels again the fear that she will swoon.

The poet great, yet modest, raised his glass,

And to the lady did his couplet pass.

XXXIV

Greetings continud, and congratulations,

And Tatiana nicely thanked them all.

Evgenie’s turn came after these orations,

And in his soul he pity did recall

To see her features tired, the eyes that fall;

In silence bowed he to the maiden slender,

The look within his eyes was passing tender

Ws it that pity truly touched his heart,

Or was he only playing pranks, coquetting?

Was it unwitted, or taken in good part?

Was he so soon his anger quite forgetting?

Howe’er that be, in that gay, noisy setting,

His look then manifested tenderness;

On Tania it acts like a caress.

XXXV

The chairs, now pushed aside, are heard to rattle,

The crowd now rolls into the sitting-room;

Retreats the army from the gastric battle;

Like to a noisy swarm of bees they zoom

From a nice bee-hive to a nicer bloom:

Pleased by the dinner, unable to eat more,

One neighbour before neighbour now will snore.

The ladies sit before an open fire;

The girls are in owned corner whispering;

Card-tables green, for those who them desire,

Are set up, and at them sit quarrelling

The players; boston, lumber, noisy playing,

And whist, most famous of this chanceful game:

Of greedy boredom offspring; all the same.

XXXVI

The warriors of whist by now have played

Eight rubbers, and right times have changed their seat;

Then welcome tea is brought for tempers frayed.

I like to count old Time by what I eat,

My dinner, tea and supper. For we meet

All in the countryside without much trouble;

Our stomach is our watch, our guardian-angel.

And, bye-the-bye, in passing I now note

That in my verse I speak of such a feast;

The dishes of a pleasant *table d’hte*,

Of wine to fat an antidote at least,

Of corks that hit the ceiling fired with zest.

As you, blind Homer great, Homer divine,

Idol of centuries wrote of food and wine.

XXXVI XXXVIII XXXIX

But in the tea is brought: the girls have then

Hardly the time to take the cup in hand,

The saucer daintily held ⎯ not like the men,

When, suddenly, one heard the army band

In the long ballroom, where flute and fife resound.

Petroushkov, setting down his tea with rum,

Approaches Olga, to the dance they come,

Lensky takes Tatiana, aned my poet

From Tambov town did Kharlikova take,

Overripe in years, if you must know it;

Bouyanov a much better choice did make,

Taking Poustikova proved him wide awake.

Everyone is moving to the ball,

And bright lights shine in beauty on them all.

XL

In the beginning of my long romance

(In the first chapter to be quite precise)

I wished to picture a great ball, or dance,

At Petersburg, like Alban’s picture nice;

But was distracted more than once or twice

By empty visions, and by memories

About the little feet of some dear ladies.

On your slight traces, charming little feet,

It is enough for me to be deceived!

But it is tine that I should grow discreet,

I from my youth by time have been bereaved;

A stake businesslike should be achieved;

And from this fifth note-book I cast out

Digressions, and my story set about.

XLI

The whirlwind of the waltz, to flute and fife,

Monotonous and crazy goes its way,

Like to a noisy whirlwind of young life,

Turning and twirling as the dancers sway,

Couple after couple in their best array,

Onegin whispers into Olga’s ear;

The time for his revenge is growing near.

He dances with her; leads her to a chair;

And sits with her, and talks of this and that,

Two minutes later this gay laughing pair

Resume their dance, continuing their chat:

Lensky himself cannot believe his eyes,

Becomes excited, and so ⎯ less than wise.

XLII

The gay mazurka next is heard resounding,

A genteel, cheerful noise that fills the hall;

In ancient days the furniture was bounding,

The parquet creaking underneath the heel;

The picture-frames were shaking; trembling all.

But now ’tis not so; we like the ladies glide

Over the polished boards most dignified.

But in the village and small country-town

Its pristine beauties the mazurka keeps,

Moustaches, clicking heels, jumping up and down,

Are still the same: no tyrant fashion sweeps

Away all manner, and the youth still leaps.

I own that the old ways me also please.

New fashions for some Russians are disease.

XLIII XLIV

My cousin Bouyanov, the quarrelsome,

Tania and Olga to our hero drove;

A choice presented, with a dreadful outcome,

A choice between duration and self-love

Quickly Onegin with Olga off did move;

He leads her through the dance most cleverly,

And bending to her, whispers tenderly

Some trivial madrigal; he squeezed her hand

And her self-loving face more colour shows.

My Lensky has seen her ⎯ her future husband!

His jealousy is roused and overflows,

He flushes red, his indignation glows;

The poet waits to the mazurka’s end;

To a cotillion he invites his friend.

XLV

But she refused him. Him? …. refused? But why?

Well, Olga’s promise is now Onegin’s ⎯

Oh, God, what hears he? Would she him deny?

Is’t possible? She, hardly out of napkins,

Already a coquette, a child who sins!

One who now knows already to be sly,

One who has learned already to betray!

Lensky no strength has to endure this blow;

And, cursing female pranks and faithlessness,

He rushes out; he will his false friends show!

His horse demanded, he, in great distress,

Gallops away. A pair of pistols ⎯ no less ⎯

Two bullets for them, and an early date,

Will suddenly decide a poet’s fate.

SIXTH CHAPTER

L sotto i giorni nubilosi i brevi

Nasce una gente a cui l’morir non dole

*Petr.*

[There, under foggy and short days,

A people is born, to whom death is not grievous*]*

*[Petrach]*

I

Seeing that Vladimir himself had hid,

Onegin, once again by boredom chased,

Seated near Olga, a trifle frigid,

Sank into thoughts in which revenge was placed,

It pleased him that friend Lensky was disgraced.

Olga was yawning, too; the dance was long;

Her eyes sought Lensky in the dancing throng.

At last it finished; all to supper go;

The beds are made, and from the entrance hall

To the maids’ room are many in a row.

A quiet sleep is needed now by all,

For young and old are wearied by the ball;

And my Onegin was the only one

To seek his bed at home when all was done.

II

All things are quiet now: in sitting room

The heavy Poutiakov doth loudly snore,

With him his other-half, so buxom!

Grosdin, Bouyanov, Petoushkov, many more,

With Fllianov (not quite well), on chairs, or floor,

Are lying; Monsieur Triquet, with the rest,

In an old sleeping-cap and knitted vest.

The girls, in Tania’s or in Olga’s room,

Are all embraced in young folks’ healthy sleep;

Alone poor Tania sleeps not, thinks of doom,

Sits at the window, trying not to weep;

Diana kisses her, as she doth peep

Out on the darkling fields, but not so dark

As life to her seems ⎯ one great question-mark.

III

Recent events have left as deep impress

Upon her soul; his unexpected coming;

And in his eyes momentous tenderness;

And, most, which sent the blood through her veins drumming

His strange behaviour, which she found alarming,

With Olga; why, she cannot understand;

Done in the sight of Olga’s future husband!

Her jealous sorrow is a great black cloud,

As though a cold hand squeezed her very heart;

As though an abyss, deep and dark, and loud,

Were at her feet, and terror did impart.

“He will destroy me, for I have no art

Perdition to escape; from which the pain

Will pleasant be; so why should I complain?”

IV

But onward, forward, onward move, my story!

A person new upon us now doth call.

He lived near Lensky’s village, Krasnogorie,

Five versts from him who fled that fatal ball.

Zaretsky is his name; I well recall

He in old days was quite a brawling fellow;

He still lives in good health, now much more mellow.

Then he was leader of the card-playing folk,

The head of loungers, tribune in a bar;

But now is kind and simple, loves a joke,

A loyal friend, a peaceful landowner,

Even an honest man, much better far.

He, bachelor-father of a family,

Shows how things improved in this our century!

V

In days gone by the world’s loud flattering voice

Was raised in praise of his infernal pluck;

’Tis true his pistol’s shot could pierce an ace

At fifteen yards, and this was not by luck;

Such trigger-skill beholders left awestruck.

And one must say, in battle also he

Himself distinguished, fighting daringly.

Once, in the battle’s true intoxication,

He fell from Kalmuck horse into the mud;

He valiantly had tried to save the nation,

But he was drunk as Zuzia, or a lord,

And by the French seized as a hostage proud!

This Regulus would go in chains again

At Veri’s for three bottles of good wine.

VI

Also in former times Zaretsky knew

Amusingly to tease and hoax a fool;

A clever man he neatly took in, too;

Although his jokes in general were not dull,

The joker was the person punishd;

In other words, entangled in his nets.

Right merrily he knew how to dispute;

His blunt, or sharp, retorts, caused some regrets.

After some calculations, he was mute,

At other times he quarrelled like a brute;

Worse still he quarrels caused between young friends,

Such bitterness as in a duel ends.

VII

Or he will them induce to make it up

In order to have lunch, the three of them;

And, later on, to base dishonour stoop,

To slander them, and rob them of esteem;

By a gay joke he disputants condemn.

*Sed alia tempora!* Now with lively youth

Courage is passing; like love’s dream, in truth.

But now, as I have said, my Zaretsky

Is living yet the life of the true sage,

Sheltered at last beneath the rock-cherry

And the acacia from all storms that rage;

He, like Horatius, can plant a cabbage,

Breed ducks and geese, a rooster and a pullet,

And teach a little child the alphabet.

VIII

Zaretsky, as a man, was rarely stupid,

He spoke with reason upon this and that;

And my Evgenie liked his daring spirit,

But had reserves about the fellow’s heart,

Although with pleasure he with his would chat.

So in the morning he was not surprised

When called upon, but he had not surmised

The reason for his very early call.

After the greetings Zaretsky at once

Delivered him a note which told him all;

Zaretsky gave it with a daring glance:

From Lensky it, demanding a response;

Onegin wondered why his friend should write

And read his missive ’neat the window’s light.

IX

The letter was a pleasant, noble one,

Conveying a short challenge or *cartel*:

Clearly, politely, and with coldness done,

Lensky called his friend to fight a duel.

Onegin shrugged, and though he was not cruel,

He turned at once to the ambassador,

Said he was *always ready*, and no more.

Zaretsky rose, without an explanation,

Informed Onegin that he could not stay,

He had much work at home, a great vexation;

He bowed, and then at once he went away

Before Onegin one more word could say:

And Evgenie, alone now with his soul,

Was anything but pleased in his new role.

X

No wonder: in severe analysis,

Calling himself unto a secret judgment,

Himself did he accuse of that and this:

Firstly, it was not right, he had not meant

To joke with love last night with ill-intent,

Especially with a love so shy, so tender:

’Twas thoughtless of him to be its offender.

And, secondly; oh, let the poet make

A fool of himself, for at eighteen years

It is a pardonable, if rash mistake.

Evgenie loved the youth and for his fears:

He ought to show himself, it now appears,

Not passion’s slave, nor his emotion’s toy,

A man of reason, not a headstrong boy.

XI

A man of honour can his feelings show,

But never should he bristle like a beast;

A young hearts to disarm he, too, should know.

“But it is too late; or late, at least . . . .

Besides ⎯ he thinks ⎯ now that old duellist

Has mixed himself up eith this sorry business;

He is a wicked gossip! What a mess! . . .

Contempt should surely requite foolish words:

But, oh, the whisper, and the foolish laugh . . . .

They sting one’s self-esteem as wielded whipcords.”

And all this poisoned, pestilential stuff

By public thought, “fair honour’s spring!” Enough.

And on such thoughts the world is ever turning;

“Public opinion” is this rubbish burning.

XII

The poet waits for his reply at home,

Impatiently, with animosity;

And here the neighbour talkative has come,

Onegin’s answer brings triumphantly.

That jealous man is brimful now with glee!

For all the time his poet was afraid

The play-boy on him some new joke had played,

Turning his breast away from vengeful pistol.

Now are his doubts all settled and decided:

Tomorrow he will play a strange new role.

Before the dawn he and that one accursd

Unto the mill must come; the triggers cockd;

One friend upon another friend will fire,

Aim at the calf, or, fatally, much higher.

XIII

Lensky, the passionate, had no desire

Olga to see before the duel took place,

To hate a coquette gratified his ire;

He looked upon the sun and the clock face;

At last he waved his hand, with a grimace ⎯

And found himself once more at Larin’s house,

To seek the girl intended for his spouse.

He thought to make Olenka much ashamed,

Her to astonish by his coming there;

That she would humbly let herself be blamed;

But nothing of the sort, she as before

Jumped from the porch when he was drawing near:

Brisk, sanguine, gay, in other words, carefree,

The same exactly as she used to be.

XIV

“Why did you leave so early yestereve?”

Olenka’s question was first asked of him.

Jealousy vanished; he no more could grieve;

His jaw relaxed, his lips no longer grim,

He silent hung his head; his eyes were dim;

Before this tender, gay simplicity,

Vexation, anger from his heart did flee.

He sees, he marks, him Olga still can love!

He looks on her again with sweet emotion,

Yet he had come the lady to reprove!

His love for her is deeper than the ocean,

Now he will show her his supreme devotion;

Trembling he stands, but can find no word:

He happy is and well ⎯ but quite absurd.

XV XVI XVII

But soon the poet is again not gay;

Pensive and gloomy before Olga dear,

He has not strength to speak of yesterday;

He thinks: “I’ll be her saviour; that is clear:

I will not let that vicious man draw near,

And by his flattery and fire of sighs

Tempt her young heart again with leers and lies.

Nor will I tolerate that this vile worm

The little stem of my fair lily gnaw,

To blight the blossom, and it to deform,

Fading half-opened ere the sun it saw.”

All this, my friends, meant he would not withdraw;

That these two friends would at each other shoot;

That none should stay arrangements now afoot.

XVIII

If he but knew what a sore, secret wound

Was burning in dear Tatiana’s heart!

If Tatiana knew she might have swooned;

But if she knew, to keep these two apart

From “honour’s field” she would use every art;

Yes, every art of love she would employ

These friends to unite in mutual joy!

But of this quarrel Tatiana knows

Exactly nothing, none of it could guess,

For no one yet this challenge did disclose,

And neither man to her would it confess ⎯

Specially Evgenie, cause of her distress;

Perhaps her kindly nanny could have known,

But, truly, she was not a guessing one.

XIX

Throughout that evening Lensky was *distrait*,

Sometimes was silent, then was gay once more;

The Muse’s children always are that way;

He frowned, and sat the harpsichord before,

And on it strummed as though it him did bore;

Or he at Olga would direct his glances,

And whisper, “I am happy: she entrances.”

But it is time to go; the hour is late;

His heart is torn, and he is full of sadness,

Again he is in an unhappy state,

He knows that he is in a thorough mess.

When farewell said he and her hand did press,

Olga demanded, looking in his eyes,

“What is the matter?” ⎯ “So,” only he replies.

XX

When he arrived at home, examination

Of duelling pistols then the poet made;

Their length and shining barrels caused elation,

Then in their box these lethal toys he laid.

This done he undressed slowly, unafraid;

By candle-light he opened treasured Schiller,

A gently German poet, not a killer.

But one sole thought possessed him then,

His sad heart in him kills desire for sleep;

Vladimir shuts his book and takes a pen,

He sees his Olga, and his heart doth leap;

Her beauty thrills him, almost he could weep.

He reads aloud love’s nonsense lyrical,

Like Delvig drunken at a festival.

XXI

His verses, by some accident, were saved;

I have them by me and present them here:

“Whither? Oh, where have you yourself removed

My golden days of spring, of the young year?

What doth the coming night for me prepare?

In vain to pierce night’s blackness now I strive,

Deep darkness hides it till the dawn arrive.

No matter, for fate’s law is ever right.

Will I fall forward by an arrow hit,

Or will it pass me in non-fatal flight?

All, all is good: all actions men befit,

Slumber, awakening; entrance, exit.

Blessed the day of troubles, and survival,

And blest is, too, oblivion’s arrival!”

XXII

“The ray of day will shine in morrow’s dawning,

The glowing light of morning all things lave,

And I ⎯ ere that perhaps shall travel groaning

Down to the shade mysterious of the grave.

Will aught remembrance of this poet save?

Will Lethe’s slow, dark flood, before sunset,

Me swallow up; the busy world forget?

But thou, O maiden beautiful, wilt thou

Over an early urn shed loving tears,

And think: He loved, to me alone did vow

To dedicate his stormy life . . . hopes . . . fears;

The brief, sad dawning of his youthful years! . . .

O my heart’s friend, my own desird friend,

Come, oh, come; thy spouse am I until the end! . . .”

XXIII

So *slothfully* and *darkly* Lensky wrote

(*Romanticism* that the scholars call;

But no romanticism I there note;

Nor have we to consider this at all).

Bending his tired head on a word fashionable,

The word *ideal*, Lensky’s eyes did close,

When dawn arrived he fell into a doze.

But just when he forgets himself and sleeps,

Influenced thereto by poesy’s soft charm,

Into the silent room his neighbour creeps,

And wakes the sleeper with a war’s alarm

“Up, up, my friend, ’tis time for you to arm,

’Tis time to make a hurried exodus,

Onegin probably now waits for us.”

XXIV

But he was wrong: Evgenie was asleep,

Still sleeping like a log, his mind carefree.

Already night’s deep shadows slowly creep

Away from Russia to the western sea:

Vesper meets a cock, crowing lustily;

A wandering snow-fall whirls, while passing by;

Bright Phoebus now climbs up the eastern sky.

But Evgenie still slumbers in his bed;

Then presently he stirs and slowly wakes

He sees the shadows of the night have fled,

He draws the curtains and, still sleepy, looks;

’Tis time that he an early journey makes:

With death, or life, he had a rendezvous;

Which it would be he neither cared nor knew.

XXV

Quickly he rings the bell; Guillot it hears

His French man-servant soon comes running in;

At his young master anxiously he peers,

And offers slippers and his dressing-gown,

And silken underwear, both warm and thin.

Evgenie in a hurry is to dress,

And quickly they achieve this more or less.

Next Evgenie, as he draws on his socks,

Informs his valet he must with him drive,

And take with him the usual battle-box.

The light sledge soon made ready, they arrive

At the water-mill; with words decisive

Onegin tells the man behind to carry

Lepage’s fatal barrels, and not tarry.

XXVI

Leaning upon the mill-dam, Lensky waits

Impatiently for long his quondam friend;

While Zaretsky, mechanic rural, states

The millstones are not good and him offend.

Onegin’s words apologetic end

The waiting; Zaretsky, classic, pedant,

To Onegin expressed astonishment:

“But where, Onegin, is your second, where?”

His sense of fitness outraged and upset;

To lay a man out one should well prepare,

Not just somehow, not flibbertygibbet,

But the art’s rules resolved not to forget:

All should be done as in the olden days

(And for this, surely, we must give him praise).

XXVII

“My second?” said Evgenie; “this is he;

My second is my friend, Monsieur Guillot;

There can be no objection that I see

To introducing him; though few him know,

He is an honest fellow ⎯ very so.“

Zaretsky bit his lip: Onegin said,

“Do we begin?” ⎯ “At once,” Lensky replied.

So off they went behind the water-mill,

What time Zaretsky and the honest one

Discussed the duel’s rules with great good will,

Deciding then and there what should be done:

Agreement reached their duty was begun.

While they conferred, the enemies both stood

With eyes cast down, their private thoughts ⎯ not good.

XXVIII

Enemies! How long ago has thirst for blood

One from another these men separated?

How long ago these two deemed it good

To share their leisure, meals, and thought and deed!

Now silently, maliciously, they speed,

Cold-bloodedly the ruin to prepare

Of him, his foe, who former joys did share;

’Tis like a nightmare, or an unread dream . . . .

Can they not laugh before the hand is scarlet?

Clasp still the palm that clean they once did deem?

To part in friendly manner, and forget

Affronted honour and the fatal bullet?

But animosity is sore afraid

Of a false shape, and thus is love betrayed.

XXIX

Behold, the pistols are already shining:

The hammer makes the little ramrod rattle;

The bullets are the well-ground barrels priming;

A trigger has been tried before the battle;

The grayish powder poured into death’s chattel;

The flints are screwed securely in their place;

It but remains for foe his foe to face.

Behind a near-by stump Guillot doth stand;

The ready foes must now their cloaks discard;

Zaretsky carefully their places planned ⎯

Thirty-two steps; the snow is crisp and hard;

All ready now, nothing is hap-hazard.

Each duellist with pistol took his place

To look, at last, straight in the other’s face.

XXX

“Now approach.” Cold-bloodedly, not aiming yet,

Quietly, evenly, with deadly stride

The foes advance four paces with firm gait;

Evgenie firs his weapon raised: a wide?

Or will his pistol now be cast aside?

Wait. Five paces yet; Lensky then takes aim,

Onegin fired first, and won that game.

For life and death is all a game to Fate,

Men, pieces moved as pleases Destiny,

A tsar at last will hear the cry, “Check Mate!”

Can lesser men from destiny then flee?

A second more or less, and ⎯ where are we? . . .

The fixd hour for Lensky now doth sound,

The poet drops his pistol to the ground.

XXXI

Slowly he puts his hand upon his breast,

And down he falls to redden the white snow;

His blood spurts from a hole drilled in his chest;

A glassy look his candid eyes do show;

No torment there, but death at one swift blow:

In such a way the snow slides down a hill,

Shining in sunlight, beautiful, but chill.

Onegin swiftly to the youngster hurries,

At once the world around seems bitter cold;

He looks, he calls him in the light snow flurries,

In vain, in vain . . . . The poet’s tale is told;

He is no more. The youthful singer bold

Has reached the end, the tempest now is blown,

Youth’s blossom faded, life’s altar overthrown.

XXXII

Unmoving he was lying on the ground,

And strange the languid peace upon his forehead.

His blood was pouring, steaming, from the wound;

It soon would cease and he be stiff and dead;

The spirit, or the vital spark, is fled.

One moment since, his hear knew inspiration,

Hope, love and hate, and high elation.

Where life had flamed, remains no single spark:

His body now is a deserted house ;

All rooms in silence are and it is dark;

The shutters did departing servants close;

The windows whitewashed, and only God knows

Where is the hostess; the entrance is locked fast;

And of the tenant every trace is lost.

XXXIII

Pleasant it is by mocking epigram

To make a foe indifferent to rage;

Pleasant it also is, dear sir or madam,

To see him, lowering horns, behold his image

Within the mirror of your verses sage,

And be ashamed himself to recognise.

More pleasant it, my friends, if with loud cries,

He like a fool will howl: that’s me, that’s me!

More pleasing still, silent for him prepare

An honest coffin, timber from hardwood tree,

And at his forehead pale, with special care,

Take aim, from distance honourable . . . . But tear

His life out by the roots; to his fathers send

Your foe: that were a doubtful pleasure, friend!

XXXIV

But what of it? If you, pistol in hand,

Beat down and kill your comrade and your friend,

Who thoughtless, maybe drunk, with words unplanned,

Insulted, or by trifles did offend

Your honour, and at your light quarrel’s end ⎯

Himself, perhaps, moved by his own vexation ⎯

Forces a fight, what is your estimation?

Tell me, what feelings would possess your soul,

When he, unmoving, lies upon the ground

With death on forehead, in his chest a hole,

While *rigor mortis* his young muscles bound;

When he is silent, deaf to every sound,

Including your despairing, desperate call;

Will not that situation you appal?

XXXV

Squeezing his pistol, did Onegin look

On Lensky in an anguish of remorse;

Accomplished was the task he undertook.

His neighbour also looked upon the corpse:

“Well, what?” said he: “The fellow’s killed, of course.”

Killed! . . . Onegin shudders at this awful word,

And goes to fetch his servants, deeply stirred.

The icy corpse Zaretsky then puts down

Upon the sledge and covers up the face;

This treasure safely stowed, his work is done.

The horses fly at a terrific pace

(They sense the dead) and almost break a trace;

They snort, and their steel bits are white with foam,

As they, like arrows swift, bring Lensky home.

XXXVI

You are, my friends, our poet pitying,

Cut off untimely in his joyful hopes;

With him are gone the songs he will not sing;

Just out of clothes the helpless infant wraps,

His blossom fades before it fully opes.

Where now the eager poet’s agitation?

Where now the singer’s noble aspiration?

Where, too, the tender feelings, daring thought?

Where, also, the desires of stormy love,

The thirst for knowledge, fruitful labour sought,

The fear of vice and shame; and, all else above

(The gift of all the gifts Apollo gave),

Visions unearthly of a spirit free,

A poet’s dreams of sacred poesy?

XXXVII

Perhaps it was that for the world’s great good,

Or for, at least, its glory, he was born;

His lyre, now silent, little understood,

Could down the centuries acceptance earn,

And thunder like the music of a horn;

Perhaps he thought a high rank he would own,

A poet on the steps of the world’s throne.

Perhaps his suffering shade has borne away

A secret, holy, life-creating voice,

One that his country and mankind could sway.

But he has been destroyed ⎯ by his own choice!

No longer needs he fear the shame, the vice.

Beyond the grave no hymn of times will sound,

Nor his tribe’s blessing penetrate the ground.

XXXVIII XXXIX

But it perhaps would only be like this:

The usual lot the poet would await.

The years of youth once gone, the world would miss

The fire within his soul, which would abate.

A change would set in, and the man a mate

Would wed; the poet with his muses part,

With them, the songs of youth, a single heart.

Contented in the country would he be,

And wear a padded dressing-gown ⎯ and horns;

He would know life as a reality;

At forty years of age have gout and corns,

Be bored, grow fat, while he with drink suborns

His life too soon, until on one fine day,

’Mid women whimpering, he passed away.

XL

Whatever might have been, this fact remains ⎯

The lover young, the dreaming poet died,

And his friend’s hands his red blood ever stains!

There is a quiet spot on the left side

Of the small village where did once reside

The foster-child of imagination,

Who sang of truth and beauty with elation.

There are two pines sprung from the selfsame root;

Beneath them flows a little winding stream,

And to this spot the ploughman comes afoot

To rest awhile, perchance to doze and dream.

There women reapers come, so it would seem,

To fill their jugs in that dense, welcome shade:

There the rude monument for Lensky made.

XLI

Under this tree (as soon as the spring rain

Begins to fall upon the fields of wheat)

The shepherd sings about the fisherman

Upon the Volga, while the man doth plait

His motley shoes of bast, coloured and neat;

And the young lady from the town who spent

Holiday here surveys this monument,

Reining her steed after her headlong ride.

There will she pause, and draw aside her veil,

And read the simple rune on one who dies

Before his time, while heavy thoughts assail

Her tender heart; a sigh will she exhale,

And in her eyes an unexpected tear,

Clouding her vision, unbidden will appear.

XLII

With ambling pace she rides the open fields,

Sunk deeply for a while in reverie;

For long her soul unwillingly then yields

To day-dreams on a poet’s destiny;

“Poor Olga, what became of her? Was she

In her heart secret suffering for long?

Where is her sister, shallow and headstrong?

And where, too, is that handsome runaway,

Of fashion’s beauties fashionable foe;

Where is that playboy freak, who was not gay,

Who dealt the poet that most fateful blow?

He was, indeed, a dull and gloomy fellow.”

I, sometime, you will give a full report,

But at the moment I must cut it short.

XLIII

So, not now; no! Although I love my hero

With all my heart; although I will return

To him of course; now I must let him go.

I have no time just now and him must spurn,

Though, as I Said, my heart for him doth burn.

My years incline me more to prose severe,

And sprightly rhymes less frequently appear.

For I ⎯ I must confess it with a sigh ⎯

Behind my heroine more slowly trail;

My pen behind her no more seems to fly:

My old desire seems lost, my strength to fail.

New cares, solicitudes, my heart assail;

Fresh visions, day-dreams, different, severe,

Trouble my soul, and old dreams disappear.

XLIV

I recognize the voice of new desires;

I have experienced a sorrow new;

And for the first, what hope I had expires;

For that old sorrow, no regrets I knew.

Visions of sweetness: why are you so few?

Where is the rhyme eternal for dear youth?

Is’t possible this is the naked truth:

Its crown is faded, faded right away.

And it in fact is this (straightforwardly

Speaking that dreadful thing that I must say,

Eschewing all device of elegy)

My springtime days have ever flown from me;

That they to me are never turning back,

To one near thirty years ⎯ alas, alack!

XLV

Yes, yes, my noon, my midday doth arrive,

This fact I must confess I clearly see.

Well, be it so; I would not it revive,

But say goodbye to what was early me.

Oh, my light, easy youth, my thanks to thee!

I thank thee for thy manifold delights,

The sadness, torments dear, the feasts, the nights!

My thanks for everything, for all thy gifts,

In calm and trouble, youth brought me delight;

But years roll on, and age the scene now shifts.

Enough! Be off, my youth; take flight, take flight!

Midday has come, while youth was nearer night.

To-day a start on newer ways will see,

A rest from my past life; but youth, I thank thee!

XLVI

One final backward look. Farewell, dear shades,

Where my days floated in a spot remote,

Long days of laziness, and passion’s escapades,

And ms, the pensive soul did there promote.

But Inspiration young, on whom I dote,

Stir up my heart, keep poesy alive,

Without your aid a poet cannot thrive,

Come, Inspiration, come; oh, fly to me,

Visit that corner where I now reside;

The poet’s soul must never coold be,

Grow cruel, and stale, and dull, and satisfied,

In this world’s whirlpool, where, with you, dear friends,

I am engulfed; but poetry transcends.

SEVENTH CHAPTER

Moscow, beloved daughter of Russia,

Where can one find thy peer?

*Dmitriev.*

Not to love our own Moscow: is that possible?

*Baratinsky.*

Persecution on Moscow! What it means to see the world!

Where is it better?

Where we are not.

*Griboedov.*

I

The melted snow runs from the neighbouring hill

On to the flooded fields in muddy streams,

Chased by the sun of Spring; the ditches fill.

Nature now stirs, and smiling through her dreams,

She greets year’s morning, while the bright sun beams.

The skies are blue, the wood, still lacking leaves,

By miracle a downy green achieves.

The bee is flying from her waxen cell

To gather tribute from the open field.

The valleys, drying, summer’s dust foretell,

And many-coloured are again revealed;

The herds are noisy; in the woods concealed

The nightingale raises his lovely voice

In the night’s silence; all who hear rejoice.

II

How sad for me thy apparition, Spring!

Spring, time of love, and languid trouble, too!

Then in my soul and in my blood I sing,

With tenderness my heart is charged anew.

What sheer delight when spring’s soft breezes blew

Upon my face in country quietude!

Or is all this but high-flung platitude?

Is it to me that Spring’s delight is strange,

And everything that brings us light and joy,

Is only Winter undergoing change,

Leading to boredoms; pleasures that now cloy;

And weariness, that new life can annoy?

That all the sunlight and soft winds that blow

Are nothing to a soul dead long ago?

III

Or do we now recall a bitter loss?

And cannot welcome the return of leaves

That Autumn has destroyed; that we are cross,

For that new noise within the woods us grieves.

Or in our withered souls, which age bereaves

Of youthfulness, to which there is no return,

Nature revived is something we would spurn.

Perhaps another Spring comes to our thought,

A *revenant* in our poetic dream,

And so a trembling to our heart is brought,

Brought by the vision of as distant stream,

Of a night wonderful, a moon to gleam,

On water still, a nightingale to sing . . . .

Dear vision of an earlier, kindlier spring.

IV

Behold the springtime: you men of leisure;

You men of taste, you Epicurean sages;

You men detached, yet fortunate in pleasure;

You, nestlings, you, pupils in Levshin’s cages;

Village Priams, where Hecuba still rages;

And, ladies dear, with sensibility;

Spring is now calling all unto the country.

It is the time of warmth, of works, and flowers,

A time for walks inducing inspiration,

Of nights seductive, bedded in green bowers.

Then to the fields, my friends, leaving vexation!

Haste; hurry now; you have one destination!

In coaches, carriages, or by mail-horses,

Leave the town gates, and good-bye to remorses!

V

And you, indulgent reader, well-disposed,

Who ride in open carriage from abroad,

Leave you the noisy town where you reposed

During the winter, somewhat overawed,

But where, rejoicing, often you guffawed;

Come with my wilful and capricious Muse,

Let us go listen to the wood’s sweet noise.

It is not far, over a river nameless,

Unto the village of my friend Evgenie,

Where he a hermit, idle, I confess,

Dwelt in the winter, very, very gloomy:

Tatiana lived in the vicinity;

My dear day-dreamer’s house sees him no more . . . .

But a sad trace he left behind its door.

VI

Let us go, friend, among the hills that lie

In semi-circle round the little stream,

That a green meadow gently passes by,

Which in the sunshine doth like silver gleam,

Or, when night falls, like gold, in a moonbeam:

It flows to join a river where a bird,

The nightingale, is in a lime grove heard.

That lover of the spring there sings all night,

There, too, one hears the brook’s soft melody;

The wild-rose opens to the morning light;

And there, beneath two aged pines, we see

A grave-stone to be read by passer-by:

“Vladimir Lensky, perished as the brave ⎯

Year ⎯ age ⎯ Poet young, rest peaceful in this grave.”

VII

In days gone by, the early morning breeze

Above the modest urn a wreath would swing,

A wreath mysterious, fastened to the trees;

In the past days, late leisure hours would bring

Two friends, who wept, the other then embracing;

The moon looks coldly on, and nothing hears,

As Lensky’s grave they water with their tears.

But now . . . . forgotten is that monument;

The path that leads there now is overgrown;

No wreath is on the branch above it bent;

Beneath the pines the shepherd sits alone;

Gray-haired and sickly, in an undertone

He sings, as formerly, a plaintive song,

And plaits his shoes of bast, simple and strong.

VIII IX X

O my poor Lensky! Not long did she weep,

Nor the young bride-to-be long languishing;

Alas, her sorrow was by no means deep,

Another man her solace soon did bring;

Her torment by love’s flattery took wing;

An uhlan knew how her to captivate,

That uhlan now is loved ⎯ well, such is fate . . . .

And here already she is at the altar,

Her head bent shyly ’neath the bridal crown;

A little shame-faced, but she does not falter,

Fire lights the eyes so modestly cast down;

Lensky is dead, the soldier is her own;

Upon her lips the slightest smile did play;

They both were young, and nature had its way.

XI

O my poor Lensky! Were you, beyond the grave,

In that abode of deaf eternity ⎯

O singer gloomy, honourable, brave,

Were you confused by news of treachery?

Or, over sleeping and oblivious Lethe,

The poet, in insensibility

By nothing is confused, in bliss doth lie,

Our world now closed to him, forever dumb?

So! A forgetfulness, indifference,

Awaits us when to Lethe’s stream we come.

The voice of foes and friends; the turbulence

Of mistresses, give way to perfect silence;

While here an angry chorus of the heirs,

Disputing the estate, oft drowns their prayers.

XII

Soon in the Larin’s home is Olia’s voice

Silent become; it is no longer heard;

The uhlan, slave to duty, has no choice;

His regiment he joins; she is transferred;

Her mother weeps, tears bitter, and absurd;

The dear old lady hardly seems alive

When to the coach they go, away to drive,

But Tatiana could not shed one tear;

Only her sad face became deathly pale,

As one who sees a ghost, or knows great fear;

She was not one to wring her hands and wail;

When round the coach the young folk all assail

With farewell wishes, Tania said “Good-bye!”

With simple fervour, but her eyes were dry.

XIII

For long she watched their carriage disappear

Adown the road behind a cloud of dust . . . .

Then all alone was Tatiana dear!

Gone the young confidante she used to trusrt

Not for her wisdom, but because she must:

Her boon companion for so many years,

Her little dove, forever gone, she fears.

She wanders like a shadow without aim,

Into the empty garden often looks . . . .

In sport she finds no pleasure, nor a game,

Nor any comfort in her serious books.

She wanders in the woods and by the brooks;

But never, nowhere, does she find relief

For tears suppressed, a heart consumed with grief.

XIV

Her passion in a cruel solitude

Is burning brightly, burning yet more strong;

And yet more loudly does her heart allude

To one Onegin, distant for so long.

She will not see him more, he has done wrong;

Hate him she must, murderer of her brother,

The poet dead . . . . Already to another

His bride-to-be has given her fair hand:

Already none remembers that young life;

Forgotten is he in his native land,

Or if perchance is mourned, folk hide their grief.

The poet’s fame has faded like a whiff

Of smoke ascending to a clear blue sky

Perhaps two hearts still grieve . . . . For what, and why?

XV

It is that dark hour, light becoming dim:

The choirs of dancing folk are going home;

Still run the brooks; one hears the beetle’s hum;

One sees the river smoke and flame,

A fisher’s fire that twilight doth illume:

In open fields, by light of silver moon,

Sunk in her thoughts, now Tania walks alone.

She walks and walks, but, sudden, from a hill

She sees before her an old manor house,

A simple sight, but one that makes her thrill;

There is a village, with a wood quite close;

A small stream doth the manor’s garden pass.

Why does the lady by the manor linger?  
Why does her heart beat faster and much stronger?

XVI

Indeed, the lady is confused by doubt:

“Shall I go forward, am I turning back? . . .

He is not here. None knows me hereabout . . . .

This is an opportunity to take

A look at house and garden: his, alack!”

So Tatiana came down from the hill,

Her legs strode forward, in despite of will,

She hardly breathed, and yet she gazed around,

Her look is one of sheer perplexity;

The empty courtyard entered ⎯ what a sound!

The dogs rush at her, barking furiously.

The courtyard children came full noisily,

And chased the dogs away, and with respect

The nice young lady willingly protect.

XVII

“I wonder, could I see the master’s house?” ⎯

Ask Tania. The children quickly ran

To Anicia; and she, without a fuss,

Opened the house of her good gentleman,

And Tatiana enters and began

A tender search; she wanted all to see

Where lived our hero until recently.

Dear Tania walks, and looks, and walks again,

And the old woman showed her many things;

A billiard cue, which careless did remain

Upon the table; a hunting-crop he flings

On crushed settee: a few steps more this brings:

“And here you see the open fire-place;

Where Master sat alone, may God him bless!”

XVIII

“Here the late Lensky, our neighbour, used to dine

With him, to help to pas a winter’s night;

Here, come with me, please, to this chamber fine,

The Master’s study ⎯ quite a pleasant sight;

Here he would sleep, drink coffee, read, or write,

Or here the bailiff making his report:

Young Master to this room would most resort . . . .

Here the old Master also used to live;

On Sundays he would deign play cards with me

Against that window, action really sportive;

He the wore glasses, that better he should see.

God give his soul salvation; peacefully

May rest descend upon his little bones,

In the damp mother-earth, beneath the stones!”

XIX

Tatiana looks around on everything,

And there is tenderness in all her looks;

All things seem priceless, and they are reviving

Her languid soul, as by the water brooks

The thirsty hart revives: a heap of books

Is on a table, with lamp extinguishd;

A bed, with cover fine embroiderd;

And, through the window, an attractive view,

Seen dimly in the dusk by the moon’s light;

Lord Byron’s portrait, obviously new;

An iron doll, decidedly less bright,

Upon a pedestal, under a hat,

With frowning brows, which Tania much impressed,

And folded arms, across a many chest.

XX

For long, as one bewitched, did Tania stand

Struck by the signs of fashion in this cell;

But it is late; a cold wind blows around;

Dark is the valley; and asleep the dell

Beyond the misty stream; behind the hill

The moon herself has hid; it is high time

That our young pilgrim now should seek her home.

So Tatiana, all her trouble hiding,

Not without sighing, starts upon her way.

As though she would be ever there abiding,

She asks permission on another day

In the deserted house some hours to stay

That there some books he could then read alone:

She thanked Anicia warmly and was gone.

XXI

Two days had passed when she appeared again

At the abandoned shelter by the stream;

She early came, for she could not refrain;

Evgenie still bulked large in her day-dream;

And in the silent study, it would seem,

For quite a while the whole world she forgot;

Alone at last, and there, she wept a lot.

She, later, from the shelves took many a book,

Though she at first gave them no special heed;

But one great fact she could not overlook,

Our hero’s choice seemed strange, most strange indeed;

With avid soul she set herself to read:

Oh, what a revelation then she found;

A different world was opened up around.

XXII

Although, of course, we know that Evgenie

For long had lost all keen desire to read,

Still some exceptions there must always be,

A few creations for their life can plead:

The singer of Giaour and Juan indeed

Was of these spared, while two or three romances

His time reflecting, Evgenie entrances.

In these few books one met the modern man

Depicted truly, with immortal soul;

The writer sets him out as in a plan,

Selfish and dry, he lacks a worthy goal;

To measureless day-dreaming given whole.

His spiteful mind erupts in empty action,

His boiling energy lacks satisfaction.

XXIII

So many pages of the book retain

The sharp sign of the reader’s fingernail;

Each passage marked thus Tania reads amain;

The maiden’s vivid eyes take in each detail;

Her heart beat faster during this travail,

Each thought, remark, with which she did agree,

Or by which he was struck, was there to see.

On the books’ margins she would meet

The lines his wakeful pencil used to trace.

Onegin’s soul walked naked through that street,

Revealed itself, not dreaming of disgrace;

Sometimes by a short word, or by a cross,

Or hook of an interrogation sign,

He analysed each paragraph or line.

XXIV

Little by little Tania began ⎯

Glory to God! ⎯ more clear to understand

The inner nature of one fateful man,

One it would seem that Destiny had planned

To cause her sighs, her one-time hoped-for husband:

A strange man this, sad, dangerous, and evil,

Compound of heaven and hell, angel and devil.

Who is this man? An imitation, joke,

A trifling ghost, or something ⎯ much, much more?

A Muscovite who dons Childe Harold’s cloak,

Interpreter of stranger’s whims, a bore,

A lexicon of modish words, no more:

Is he a parody, an echo merely?

A man to trust, or leave alone severely?

XXV

Is’t possible that she the riddle solved?

Or that *the word* was by the lady found?

The hours fly by, but she is so involved

In her deep thoughts she does not hear a sound,

Forgets that she should now be homeward bound;

Is unaware two neighbours her discuss

And of her marriage make a lot of fuss.

“What can one do? My Tania is no child,” ⎯

Said her old mother in a mumbling tone ⎯

“Olenka is more young than she, more mild.

’Tis time indeed the girl should settle down;

But how to bring her ’neath the marriage crown?

To all I say she sharply answers, ‘No,

I will not marry’, but grieves and wanders so.

XXVI

“Is she in love, think you?“ ⎯ “With whom, indeed?

Bouyanov asked her hand and was refused,

While Ivan Petoushkov did not succeed.

The hussar Pikhtin came, with love suffused,

With flattering speech, at which she was amused;

I thought, this clever devil will prevail,

But not a bit! He like the rest did fail.”

“Well, little mother, why then no success.

To Moscow, surely, to the fair of brides!

The chances there, they say, are limitless.” ⎯

“O father mine, I money need; besides

Which time in Moscow quickly glides.” ⎯

“You have enough for one whole winter there;

If not, well, I a little loan can spare.”

XXVII

Not long in doubt that ancient dame abided

For much she liked the wise and good advice;

She quickly reckoned ⎯ and at once decided,

Moscow in winter was distinctly nice;

She would pack up and go there in a trice::

And Tatiana soon this news did hear.

Country simplicity, her features clear,

Must now be judged by as world exigent;

Outmoded dress, and not-so-new attire,

Old-fashioned mode of speech, and country accent,

To meet the mocking looks these things inspire

To Moscow’s coxcombs and their Circes dire ⎯

Oh terror! No, much better, and more safe,

The countryside; no city sneers there chafe.

XXVIII

But Tania rises with the sun’s first rays,

And, with a tender look in her soft eyes,

Swift to the fields she goes and these words says:

“Farewell, farewell, my own, my peaceful valleys,

And you, known hill-tops, and the lovely skies;

Farewell, you well-known woods, and nature gay,

I leave you, quiet world; I must away!

I now am changing all these scenes so dear

For the loud noise of brilliant vanity1 . . .

Good-bye my freedom; I must disappear,

Take on myself a strict urbanity,

To gain ⎯ who knows, a new calamity!

Whither go I; what am I aiming at?

And what now promises to be my fate?”

XXIX

Much longer did our Tatiana walk,

Now by a little hill, now by a stream,

Which her detain, who is in haste to talk

Unto her groves and meadows, it would seem;

They are the oldest friends of her young dream:

She hastens for the summer is fast flying:

When golden autumn comes; she, too, is dying.

For nature trembling is, and growing pale,

Like to a sickly victim richly dressed . . . .

Like cloudy North breathes forth; the icy gale

Is howling loud, a veritable tempest,

As though the dying autumn were possessed.

And here, behold, doth fairy winter stand

Shaking her snowy locks above the land.

XXX

The fairy winter came; sat down; spread out;

She hung in tufts on oaks and other trees;

Lay down upon the fields, a wavy carpet;

And hung white curtains round the hills that freeze;

To decorate the river’s shores doth please

Our prankish mother-winter, in white clad,

We, too, are pleased; nay, more, exceeding glad.

Only the heart of Tania is not glad,

She does not go our chilly friend to greet;

As winter’s snow spells *Moscow*, she is sad

To breathe the frosty air; a bitter-sweet,

To wash her face and bosom exquisite,

In virgin snow, got from the bath-house roof:

Her winter journey causes fear and grief.

XXXI

Yet the departure long has been delayed,

The day they fixed is past, is out of date;

The carriage, long-forgot, is now surveyed,

Cleaned, covered over, and pronounced first-rate.

The train consists, as I shall now relate,

Of sledges three, as usual piled high

With the domestic chattels, or well nigh.

Saucepans, and trunks, and jam in jars, and chairs,

Mattresses, quilts, and birds to kill and eat,

And pots and bowls, and other kitchen gears;

Impedimenta, but not all complete.

Now in the servants quarters noise of feet

That run are heard, and cries that farewell said:

And eighteen jades are in the courtyard led.

XXXII

The horses now are harnessed to coaches;

The cooks for lunch a dainty meal prepare;

The moment for departure now approaches,

The women quarrel, and the coachmen swear.

More goods are piled upon the chattels there;

On a thin, shaggy, sorry-looking horse

Sits a postillion ⎯ bearded, of course!

All is quite ready, servants now approach

To bid the masters goodbye at the gate;

They took their seats in the most worthy coach,

Which slowly forward slid, at pace sedate.

“Farewell, peaceful country, and remote estate!

Will I see you again? . . . and Tania sighs,

A flood of tears comes welling from her eyes.

XXXIII

In far future Russia may be able

To spare more time to an enlightened culture,

When (calculates a philosophic table)

Five hundred years are passed; beyond all measure

Travelling our roads then will be a pleasure:

Great causeways will be joining here with there,

And iron bridges over streams appear.

The hills themselves will then be cleft asunder,

And ’neath the rivers men will then dig out

Most daring vaults, and tunnels, works of wonder,

The very sight of which will make us shout:

And on the day that this is brought about,

The Christian world will have establishd

At every station inns with food and bed!

XXXIV

Now are our roads all bad, our bridges rot,

Because, it seems, these bridges are forgotten;

On stations there are bugs and fleas ⎯ a lot!

How can one sleep when one is vilely bitten?

There are no inns. In a cold hovel rotten

There hangs a high-priced, hungry bill-of-fare;

A huge pretence; they tease your belly there.

Meanwhile the cyclops of the village cure,

With Russian hammer and slow-burning fire,

The product of Europe, to be sure;

Light vehicles that meet with trouble dire

Upon the Russian roads of dust, or mire;

These men of might with large and sinewy hand

Bless the ruts and ditches of the fatherland.

XXXV

But on the other hand, in winter cold

The drive is easy, pleasant, not too long;

Smooth are the roads our journeying unfold

Like verse without a thought in modish song;

Our troikas tireless, our Automedons strong;

The versts fly by before our idle eyes,

As quick as stakes in fences, we surmise.

But, most unfortunate, a frugal mind

Was Madame Larin’s, and she chose to use

Her own poor jades; post-horses did she find

Were too expensive; them she did refuse.

Our maiden, willy-nilly, could not choose,

And travel’s boredom wholly her delights

For seven long days, and seven longer nights.

XXXVI

Already near their goal, they now behold

The white-stoned city, Moscow, proudly stand,

With ancient domes, each with its cross of gold;

Domes burning with fire; a fairyland.

Oh, brothers, I was glad when sudden opened

A semi-circle on delighted eyes:

Gardens, palaces, churches and their belfries.

How often during my sad separation,

In wanderings of my harsh destiny,

I thought of Moscow, jewel of my nation!

Moscow, O Moscow, what we owe to thee!

Listen: that name again ⎯ Moscow ⎯ you will see

How much this sound holds for a Russian heart!

And what we lose when we from her depart!

XXXVII

Here, circled by its woods, is Petrovsky,

Tsar Peter’s castle, though a thing of gloom,

Proud, proud, indeed of its more recent glory;

For here it was Napoleon met Doom,

While waiting, all in vain, in great stateroom

For kneeling Moscow with the Kremlin’s keys;

No, Moscow mine fell not upon her knees.

Her head was high, and worthy of the nation;

She made no gifts, nor a reception feast,

But quietly prepared a conflagration,

Which served to warm the conqueror at least;

Th’impatient hero, sunk in thought, here cast

His image upon the all-devouring flame,

A city burning, ruining his game.

XXXVIII

Farewell, O witness of a fallen glory,

O Peter’s castle! ⎯ That will do: don’t stop;

Forward! We must push onward with our story,

Before the poles of the white barrier drop:

Down the Tverskaya go we at a gallop.

The frozen snow has filled its dreadful hollows;

Our sledge runs smoothly; what we see now follows.

Sentry-boxes, street lamps, women, urchins, shops,

And palaces, and monasteries, with ground,

Men from Bokhara, peasants talking crops;

Tradesmen and huts, and Cossacks, all abound;

On boulevards bright chemist-shops are found:

Galleried towers, with lions on the gate,

And jackdaws perched on crosses, most sedate.

XXXIX XL

Two hours are passed in this fatiguing drive,

At last their sledge has halted at the gate

Before a mansion; the travellers arrive

At Kharriton, which is a lesser street;

Descended, go they an old aunt to meet,

A relative with but few years to live;

Ill for four years, the patient is consumptive.

The doors are flung open by a Kalmuk,

A mongol, spectacled and with gray hair,

A stocking in his hand he with him took

When answering the door; he needs repair

To torn and shabby caftan, it is clear.

The princess prostrate on a divan lies;

The ladies old embrace with tears and sighs.

XLI

“Princesse, mon ange!” ⎯ “Pachette!” they both exclaim;

“Alina!” ⎯ “Think of it!” ⎯ “So long ago!” ⎯

“For how long, cousin? Sit down, in God’s name.

How strange! A scene from a romance, I trow . . . .”

“This is my daughter Tania, you must know” ⎯

“Ah, Tania, come sit here, although I seem

In a delirium, or pleasant dream . . . .

My cousin, you remember Grandison?”

“What Grandison? . . . . To whom do you refer?

Oh, I remember Grandison. Go on,

I now recall that name: does he live here?” ⎯

“Yes, here in Moscow, but it is not near,

At Simeon: he called on Christmas Eve:

His son was married lately I believe.”

XLII

“And the other . . . . but lately we will tell

You about everything: is that not so?

To-morrow morning we, if all goes well,

To all her relatives will Tania show.

Unfortunately I myself can’t go;

Hardly, hardly, I can drag my feet.

You, too, must be exhausted: both deadbeat . . . .

Let us now rest . . . . my chest is very bad . . . .

E’en joy is now a burden unto me,

Not sorrow only . . . . to see you I am glad,

But I already suffer terribly;

In old age life can such a nuisance be . . . .

And here, exhausted, she began to weep,

And coughed and coughed until she fell asleep.

XLIII

The invalid’s caresses, and her joy

At seeing her had chased away her gloom,

But a slight malaise Tania did annoy,

In the new place, she misses her own room.

In a strange bed, poor sleep to her doth come;

The sound of bells, calling to morning work,

Waking the country maiden, her doth irk.

She rises, to the window goes; sits down;

The dawn is near, the darkness is less dense;

Her fields she cannot see; it is the town;

She feels that with the town she could dispense:

A courtyard, stable, kitchen, and a fence

Are all she sees, and all of them unknown:

Dear Tania feels a trifle woebegone.

XLIV

Now very day is Tania taken

To dine with relatives, for most part old;

She is much hugged, and left a little shaken,

By her grandparents, seeking to enfold

Within their heart the girl, so she is told.

Their welcome is caressing, warm, and gay,

To a young relative from far away.

There’s bread and salt; many an exclamation,

Such as, “How tall has Tatiana grown!”

“I fed with gingerbread our young relation!”

“It seems I to your christening had gone

Not long ago!” “I boxed your ears, I own!”

And the grandmothers in a chorus say,

“Our years, how swiftly do they fly away!”

XLV

But no change is there to be seen in them;

All things in them keep to a pattern old;

The aunt, the Princess Helen, is a gem,

But her tule bonnet is a tale that’s told.

Lubov Petrovna, still a liar bold;

Lukeria Lvovna yet has grace.

But still is putting white stuff on her face.

Ivan Petrovich continues to be mean ⎯

Stupid and mean they were in former days;

Pelageia Nikolavna still is seen

With Monsieur Finemouche, worthy old has-been;

She has the same dog and the same husband,

As deaf as formerly, and still a gourmand.

XLVI

Their daughters later Tania embrace,

But first these Moscow graces at her stare;

They silently take in all from feet to face;

They found her strange, with a provincial air;

Prim; pale and thin, as though she needed care;

But otherwise not at all bad looking,

Which covers most defects however shocking.

So, led thereto by native inclination,

They friendly with the girl in time became;

They took her to their house for osculation,

And, squeezing hands, they gave her a pet name;

Her curls they modish made, not locks to shame;

The secrets of their hearts they her entrust,

Those maiden secrets, which confide they must.

XLVII

They chant their own and other victories,

Their hopes, their escapades, their sweet day-dreams.

Their conversations flow with memories

For most part innocent, or so it seems;

But slander slight embellishes their themes.

Later, with emotion, they for payment press,

’Tis Tania’s turn her love-life to confess.

But Tania silent sits as in a trance,

She hears their talk without participation;

She nothing understands about romance,

And holds her tongue, to all her friends’ vexation:

Her face betrays no inner agitation.

Her own heart’s secret with its tears and bliss

She shares with none, although they coax and kiss.

XLVIII

To listen to the general conversation

Quite naturally was Tania’s desire,

But in the sitting-room the occupation

Of all there seemed ⎯ of this not one did tire ⎯

To speak disjointed nonsense, or aspire,

In an anaemic and an inane way,

Words slanderous, but boring quite, to say.

In the unfruitful dryness of their speech,

Their questions, gossip, and their banal news,

Not one bright flash of thought the tongue did reach

Even at random, if they did not choose,

Nor accidentally the tired mind amuse.

O empty world, one cannot in you meet

A foolishness even with smiles to greet.

XLIX

Archivean youngsters in a little crowd

At Tatiana somewhat primly look;

They talk among themselves, but not aloud;

Not well-disposed to hear these captious folk.,

But one sad jester never her mistook,

Ideal he finds her; leaning near the doors

Elegiac verse he for the girl outpours.

Once had Viazemsky Tatiana met

At a most tedious aunt’s, a crushing bore;

He for a while next Tatiana sat,

Holding attention by his talk superior.

An old man, noticing her rapt behaviour,

Arranged his wig, and at the girl did stare,

And made a few enquiries after her.

L

But where Melpomene’s great storm doth rage

In howl prolonged, compound of horrid sound,

Waving her tinsel cloak upon the stage,

Before the chilly audience around;

Where Thalia dozes in a quiet profound,

And to the friendly clapping pays no heed;

Where Terpsichore only meets the need

Of the young audience (as was oft the case

In former years, in your time and in mine);

Where jealous lorgnettes do the ladies grace,

Where, with binoculars, critics recline,

They did not turn to seek a face divine,

Peering from boxes and the row of stalls,

And say she pleases, or, mayhap appals.

LI

But she to the Assembly Rooms was brought,

A stuffy, crowded place, with cheerful noise;

The whirlwind of the dancing girls and boys;

The light attires, the well-thought, careful choice

Of women beautiful; gay lookers-on;

The nubile semi-circle of *haut ton*.

All this the visitor at once astounds,

While men of fashion in these rooms display

Their impudence, which decent folk dumbfounds,

Their waistcoats, and their unused lorgnettes gay.

Gallant hussars on leave come here to play.

They shine, allure, and make a noise like thunder,

Then off they go and leave some girls to ponder.

LII

Many the charming stars that deck the night;

In Moscow many lovely women dwell;

But there is one than all the stars more bright;

The moon in loveliness doth all excel.

And there is one my lyre can ever baffle;

One like a moon majestic; one alone,

Outshining women: a maid that maids outshone.

With what a heavenly ;pride she touches ground!

How much of languor doth her bosom stuff!

Her languid gaze, how wonderful is found! . . . .

But cease my lyre, that is enough, enough,

You lack the strength that shining orb to puff;

You have already tribute paid to madness,

Be you contented to record our gladness.

LIII

Noise, merry laughter, scurrying and bows,

Gallop, mazurkas, and the valse . . . . Meanwhile

Seated between two aunts, as in a doze,

Is Tatiana, and she does not smile;

She sees none in her self-imposed exile;

The foolish agitation of that world

Leaves quite untouched a flag that is self-furled.

’Tis stuffy there, and she in a daydream,

Is rushing forth to meet the fields’ true life;

The country villagers are what they seem,

Poor humble peasants, but removed from strife;

She would be by her stream, where flowers are rife,

Or in the dimness of the lime-trees’ shade;

There, where *he* came to speak to waiting maid.

LIV

Thus in her thoughts she wanders far away:

Forgotten was the world, the noisy ball;

Meanwhile two eyes were there that could not stray

Long from the girl ⎯ eyes of a general.

One aunt winked to the other here to tell;

A nudge brought Tania from her pleasant dream;

Each whispers: “Look left, quick!” ⎯ a whispered scream. ⎯

“Look to the left? Where, auntie? What is there?” ⎯

“Well, never mind just what, but quickly, look . . . .

In that small group you see in front, that’s where;

In parade uniform, as in a sketch-book . . . .

Now he has moved . . . . he goes towards that nook . . . .” ⎯

Six eyes him follow, four of him think well,

But two remark, “Oh him: that fat general?”

LV

Here let us pause, that I congratulate

Upon her victory, my Tania dear;

Then go aside, that we may not forget

That one I sing, who was no ballroom near . . . .

And, by-the-way, two words about him here:

*I sing my chum, that cavalier of mine,*

*His many whims ⎯ some that I here enshrine.*

*Bless my long work, O you, dear Epic Muse!*

*To me the faithful staff, so well earned, hand:*

*Let us not wander from the way you choose,*

*But go straight onward to Parnassian land.*

Enough. From off my shoulders slips the band

That bound my burden; I have fully paid

To classics homage; late, I am afraid.

EIGHTH CHAPTER

Fare thee well, and if for ever

Still for ever, fare thee well

*Byron.*

I

During the days when I was flourishing

Carefree in garden of the old Lyce,

When I Apuleius found ravishing,

And Cicero read not, but put away;

In valleys mystic of that other day,

Amid the call of swans in bright spring,

Near water still, the Muse her gifts did bring.

She first came to me in my student cell,

Which, on the sudden, was illuminated:

Her young devices I remember well,

She sang the joys of children, and restated

In words melodious that scintillated,

The glorious story of our ancient times,

Recording the heart’s throbs in happy rhymes.

II

The world then met my Muse with friendly smile;

Our first success gave strength unto out wings;

Old man Derzhavin, marking us erstwhile,

Blessed, on his journey grave-ward, him who sings.

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III

Imposing on my Muse one law alone ⎯

Partaking of the feelings of the crowd ⎯

The passions’ will, harmonic overtone,

I led my frisky muse to circles loud,

The noise of feasts, where dispute was allowed;

The menace of the city’s night patrol,

Past midnight, when we sang without control.

At all our crazy feasts she played her part,

Like a nice little, romping bacchanal,

Over her cup her wingd words would dary,

She sang there for the guests, for one and all;

Youngsters in former days for her did fall;

I, like my friends, adored her in the end,

And mighty proud was I of my gay friends.

IV

But I retird from their union,

And far away I ran . . . . she ran after me.

But often in tenderest communion,

My Muse delightful made my silent journey

By the white magic of a secret story!

How often, in the moonlight, on my steed,

We galloped in Caucasus; my Muse indeed

Like Lenore! Oft upon Taurida’s shore

To hear old Ocean’s music I was led;

In the night’s darkness there we heard no roar ⎯

Nereids, never-silent, whisperd.

And as unto the waves we listend

We heard a choir, as of the cherubim,

The father of the worlds praise in a hymn.

V

And in Moldavia, spot remote and sad,

Forgetting feasts in distant capital,

To visit humble tents my Muse was glad,

And ’mid the wandering gypsies pleased to dwell;

Among them she grew wild; beneath their spell

The speech of gods she speedily forgot,

Which may be a good thing, or maybe not.

Forget the godlike tones for the poor tongue,

For the steppes’ songs that pleasant were to her . . . .

Such things can happen to the wild and young:

But suddenly from this did she forebear:

Here in my garden next did she appear,

In guise of maiden from the provinces,

French book in hand, and sad thoughts in her eyes.

VI

Now, for the first time, to the social rout,

The city’s life, the rustic Muse I bring;

With jealous shyness I have brought her out,

For to her rural charms I fain would cling;

But I of the gay world have now to sing:

Behold her slipping through the narrow rows

Of courtiers, coxcombs, acknowledging their bows.

The dandy and the diplomat are there,

The military man, the lady proud;

She quiet sits and at the throng doth stare,

The noisy throng, with speech and music loud;

She sees the guests arriving, as they bowed

To the young hostess; the dark frame of men

Around the ladies, pictures which frames brighten.

VII

She likes the order of the conversation

Among the oligarchs so cold in pride,

Ranks and ages mixed win admiration.

But who is he now standing on one side?

Silent, confused, he through the throng did glide;

He seems a stranger, unknown to his hosts,

And others’ faces seem to him as ghosts.

What is that strained expression on his face?

A suffering look of haughtiness, or spleen?

Why is he here? Who is he? From what place?

Is’t possible Evgenie she has seen?

Can it be him? . . . Yes, verily, I ween.

It is Onegin, by all that’s marvellous! ⎯

How long ago was he first brought to use?

VIII

Is he the same man still? With firs doth burn?

More quiet he? Or playing still the fool?

Tell us, in what disguise did he return?

What will he teach us in his manner cool?

Whose mantle will he wear; live by what rule?

Melmot, a patriot, cosmopolite,

Childe Harold, quaker, devout-hypocrite?

Or will he show us quite another mask,

Or simply a good fellow will he be,

Like you, and me, the world entire? A task

Within his powers, as we before did see.

Here is advice, that he may take from me:

Retire from shabby fashion; quickly go . . . .

What, do you know him, then? Well, yes and no. ⎯

IX

Well, then, why is your view of his so shocking,

Your thought of him so very ill-disposed?

Is it because we worry without stopping,

We think ill thoughts, or no good ones disclosed?

Because impassioned souls so oft exposed

Us to their insults and their selfishness,

Or freedom-loving minds they oft oppress?

Or, maybe, ’tis because most conversations

We all too readily will take for deeds;

Because stupidity in many nations

Is shallow, giddy, and it evil breeds;

Because absurdity too oft succeeds

With the important; or mediocrity

Suits our poor shoulders, therefore right must be.

X

Fortunate he whose character was young

In his ripe years; and blissful is that one

Who ripe becomes when his years are far-flung;

Who knows, with years, what is to be done,

To bear the cold of life as age comes on;

Who does not give himself to empty dreams,

Nor place the social life outside his schemes.

Fortunate he who was at twenty deemed

A coxcomb, dandy, or a clever fellow;

At thirty married, with profit so it seemed;

At fifty years became distinctly mellow,

And free from private debts which so much swallow.

Who, in his turn, succeeds; of whom ’twas said

“Excellent man, N.N.” when he is dead.

XI

But it is sad to think that all in vain

The gods on us the gift of youth bestow;

That when of it we think it is with pain

That we betrayed it, though we did not know,

That youth us cheated, and the pristine glow

Of our fresh daydreams and our best desires

Was dimmed, and damned, and speedily expires,

Like rotten leaves, soaked by the autumn’s rain.

Unbearable before oneself to see ⎯

Again, I say, we thin of it with pain ⎯

Naught but a row of dinners, one long spree;

To think “the common crowd is not for me;”

To go behind it, sharing not its passions,

Nor its opinions, following the fashions.

XII

To noisy criticism subject be

(You surely will concur) is hard to bear;

To be accused of base hypocrisy,

Will cause all reasonable men to swear;

And who the mantle of a “crank” would wear?

A sorry spendthrift, or a monstrous man,

Who would be deemed, or even called, my Daemon?

I with Onegin now myself concern,

Who in a duel killed his own best friend;

Lived without aim and steady work did spurn;

He had no wife, and strode towards no end;

Already twenty-six, he could not mend;

He knew not how himself to occupy,

But tired of idleness as years slipped by.

XIII

A restfulness at length him overcame,

A great desire to have a change of scene

(Worry, perhaps, would be a better name;

A voluntary cross for some, I ween).

He left his village ⎯ formerly serene ⎯

The lonely fields, and that sequestered wood,

Now haunted by a shadow dyed with blood.

He started travelling without an aim,

And subject to one feeling, one alone,

But journeys’ ends were tiresomely the same,

Like all else he did, or he did own;

Each stop was brief, he soon must travel on:

Finally returned, he fell into a ball,

Like Chatsky, from the ship, hero and pitiful.

XIV

But now the throng round someone seemed to press

And whispers ran round the crowded ball . . .

A lady was advancing to the hostess,

With her a most important general.

She did not hurry, spoke she not at all;

Not cold was she, nor with a haughty look;

With no pretence, her leisured was she took.

She did not pull an amiable grimace,

She had no women’s tricks, or such device;

Her poise was perfect, and serene her face,

Simple her manner, lacking artifice,

She seemed to be a copy faithful, nice.

*Du comme il faut* . . . . Please, Shishkov, me forgive:

I know not how to translate this term expressive.

XV

Young ladies move up nearer; old ones smile

Upon the goddess; men, whilst bowing low,

To catch her gaze endeavour for a while;

The young girls pass her quietly and slow;

The general, whose eyes with pride did glow,

Was raising nose and shoulders much more high;

This was observed, and everyone knew why.

None present there could call her beautiful,

But from her nice small head to dainty feet

(To speak the truth, for I am dutiful)

No one could find in her, demure and sweet,

That quality which all else will defeat,

That in high London circles none have got,

And which they *vulgar* call. But I cannot . . . .

XVI

I must confess that much I like this word;

Also confess I cannot it translate;

It still is new to us, but ⎯ oh, my Lord,

I doubt if it will widely circulate,

Though useful in an epigram of hate . . . .

But to out lady let us now return,

My Muse to praise her ceaselessly doth yearn.

And there she was, sitting at a table

With brilliant Madame Nina Voronsky,

This Cleopatra of Neva, most able,

Witty, charming: you would no doubt agree

That Nina’s marble beauty could not be

Other than eclipsed by her fair neighbour,

A moon outshining stars in that night’s splendour.

XVII

Evgenie asks himself, “Can it be she?

Is’t possibly she? But really . . . . No . . . .

How could the steppe that village girl set free?”

His lorgnette follows whither she doth go;

Her face reminds of one he used to know;

“Prince, who is she in beret of dark wine,

Who speaks to the Ambassador of Spain?”

The prince looked at Onegin in amaze,

“You in society cannot have been

For a long time,” for following the gaze

Of Evgenie he saw the lovely queen,

And seemed amused at what he just had seen;

“I’ll introduce . . . .” ⎯ “She’s lovely, on my life!

But who is she?” ⎯ The prince replied, “My wife.”

XVIII

“So you are married! That I did not know!

How long was that” ⎯ “About two years.”

“To whom” ⎯ “Larina” ⎯ “Tatiana! Oh!” ⎯

“You know her?” “My estate is next to theirs.” ⎯

“Oh, come along.” And Evgenie he steers

Unto his wife to introduce, commend,

His distant cousin and his new-found friend.

The princess turned and fixed her gaze on him . . . .

And if emotion did her soul confuse,

If for a moment he and all were dim,

No blood rushed to her face it to suffuse;

This meeting might astonish or amuse;

She kept a perfect *ton*, ’neath his perusal,

Calmly bowed she to him, serene as usual.

XIX

She did not tremble ⎯ honestly I say it ⎯

Nor sudden flush, nor were her features pale . . . .

Did her eyebrows move? No, I deny that;

Although he looked at her with utmost zeal,

She did not press her lips, nor sigh exhale;

In her Onegin not one trace could find

Of the old Tatiana in his mind.

He wanted much to start a conversation

And ⎯ he could not. She then of him enquired

If he were here long, or upon vacation;

From where he came; how he his lands acquired;

Was he from her old country, much admired?

Then, with tired look, she to her husband turned;

Slipped out . . . . Evgenie felt he had been spurned.

XX

He stood immobile for a while and thought:

Was that his Tania, could she be the same

As that young modest girl that he had taught

How to behave, and lectured on her shame,

Telling her how to keep herself from blame.

That one who blushed, or paled, in spot remote,

When she had hope, or when her heart he smote.

Above all, one from whom he still doth keep

A letter, wherein all her heart she told,

Where all is out; on which the girl did weep;

That country girl ⎯ now self-possessed and bold ⎯

Whom he neglected; more, to whom was cold,

Leaving her to her modest, humble fate;

Indifferent, when standing here of late.

XXI

Full soon he leaves the crowded, noisy rout,

And, pensive, he is quickly driven home;

He slept, and dreamed a dream all long-drawn-out,

Into which dream Tatiana did come,

A vision sad and charming, sometimes irksome.

He woke, a letter then to him is brought,

In which Prince N. him humbly had besought,

To come that eve. “Oh God!” he thought, “to her! . . . .

I will be there; by God, I will, I will:”

Politely he to host sent scribbled answer.

What is the matter with him? Is he ill?

In what strange dream is he; and dreams he still?

What in the depth of his cold soul did move?

Pride? Or vexation? Or youth’s worry ⎯ Love?

XXII

Once more Onegin counts the fly-slow hours,

Can hardly wait the ending of the day;

Impatience him till ten o’clock devours,

When in his coach he speeds upon his way,

To trepidation once again a prey.

He found the princess, Tania, alone.

But cannot speak, his *savoir-faire* is gone.

Indeed, it almost seemed that he was dumb,

For words with difficulty pass his lips;

Gloomy and awkward had he now become,

He hardly answers her, or else he trips

Over his words, and cannot come to grips.

He is possessed with one great stubborn thought;

She quiet sits and free; he is distraught.

XXIII

From this distress the husband set him free,

Broke up this far from pleasant *t--te;*

He with Onegin now recalls with glee

Their pranks, and jokes, when they were less sedate;

Of deeds essayed they laugh, and even prate.

When, presently, some other guests arrived,

A general conversation was revived

By the thick salt of social wickedness.

Before the hostess the light nonsense shone

Without much malice, and devoid of primness;

A reasonable meaning helped it on,

Vulgarity and truth eternal gone:

No revelation there could ears distress,

By touch too liberal of vividness.

XXIV

The flower of all the capital was here,

The nobles, and exemplars of the modes,

Faces, well-known, that one meets everywhere,

Fools indispensable from great abodes;

Here ladies middle-aged, wicked-looking prudes,

In bonnets, and with roses, found their places;

Here a few maidens, with non-smiling faces.

Here in gold braid was an ambassador,

With weighty talk about affairs of state;

Here an old man, who lived so long before

That truly he seemed somewhat out of date;

With perfumed gray hair, he was quite ornate,

His subtle clever jokes in the old way

Seemed slightly funny in our latter day.

XXV

Here, too, was one for epigrams most eager,

But cross with every thing: his hostess’ tea,

Which was too sweet; the ladies were too meagre;

Good manner in the men he could not see;

With rumours of romance would not agree,

With lies in magazines, with war and strife,

With snow, a tsar’s awards, and with his wife.

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XXVI

Here was Prolasov, deserving of ill-fame

By the eternal baseness of his soul;

And here St. Priest, another well-known name,

Who made all pencils blunt by sketches droll

In ladies’ albums; one in another rle

Stood in the doorway, dictators of balls,

Like to a picture in popular journals,

And rosy as a cherub on a palm;

He was tight-laced, immovable and dumb;

Here also was one overstarched, and calm,

A passing traveller, but newly come,

A fellow impudent, and somewhat irksome,

A smile he would provoke, but never praise;

The guests pass sentence when they eyebrows raise.

XXVII

But my Onegin the whole evening long

Was occupied with Tania alone;

Not by a simple girl whose love was strong;

Though simple, poor, as she herself would own:

That country maiden was entirely gone,

Her place being taken by a cold princess,

By a quite unapproachable goddess

Of the luxurious, majestic Neva.

O people! All of you, I think, take after

Mankind’s ancestress, apple-eating Eva:

What’s given us we spurn with ceaseless laughter;

But called on ceaselessly by that old trickster,

The snake, to eat of that forbidden tree,

Because without it Eden could not be.

XXVIII

How greatly did our Tatiana change!

How firmly has she entered on her rle!

How quickly reached the manners strict and strange

Of high and narrow rank, oft lacking soul!

Who would look for that brat, tender and droll,

In this great legislatress of the ball,

Majestic, nonchalant to each and all?

And he who used to agitate her heart!

She in the past used in the night to grieve,

Till Morpheus crept within to play his part,

And to a virgin heart his solace give.

The moon her languid sighs did oft receive,

As she sat dreaming at the window sill

How she with him life’s journey could fulfil.

XXIX

All ages are submissive unto Love,

But to the young and to the virgin heart

Love’s transports do most beneficial prove,

As storms in spring to fields new life impart:

In passion’s rain the young crops make a start;

It penetrates the land to deepest root,

And brings abundant blossom and sweet fruit.

But in the late, that is, the fruitless age,

At turning point in our long-drawn-out year,

Sad the dead trace of passion at that stage:

Cold autumn’s gales, before they disappear,

Much do the surface of the fields besmear,

Transforming soon a meadow into marsh;

Then break the woodlands by behaviour harsh.

XXX

There is no doubt about this fact, alas!

Evgenie loves Tania like a child;

His day and night he doth in anguish pass;

His loving thoughts distracted are and wild;

From peace of mind he clearly is exiled.

Each day he drives up to her entrance-hall.

To circumspection listens not at all.

He, like a shadow, now is chasing her,

He happy is to be allowed to throw,

A fluffy boa on her shoulders fair;

To touch her hand will make his hotly glow.

He pushes men aside to let her go;

And if, perchance, her handkerchief she drops,

Its graceful restoration raises hopes.

XXXI

She does not notice him, howe’er he strives,

Striving at times almost to point of dying;

Receives him when he at her house arrives;

When visiting, about three words is saying;

Sometimes she greets him with a bow, denying

All speech with him, and sometimes not at all

She deigns to notice him, e’en at a ball.

There is no trace of coquetry in her ⎯

The highest ranks this do not tolerate.

Onegin now is drooping in despair,

She does not see, and leaves him to his fate;

He now is wan, and clearly losing weight;

Consumptive maybe, for he burns with fever,

Spa waters for him doctors, friends deliver.

XXXII

He does not go to spas, but he is ready

Beforehand to his ancestors to write

About a meeting soon, his tragedy;

But Tatiana’s interest is slight,

Or non-existent (such is the Sex all right),

But he is obstinate, he will not quit;

He still has hope, but worries quite a bit.

More bold than healthy ones, the invalid

Writes to the princess with a feeble hand

A message passionate, to make the heart bleed.

Though generally he could understand

Such letters futile were, he was unmanned

By his heart’s torment, now beyond his strength:

I give the letter here in its full length

*Onegin’s letter to Tatiana.*

I foresee all, you will insulted be

By what I say on a sad mystery;

The haughty look of your profound contempt,

That justly will your feelings represent!

What do I want? What is my aim, my goal

That makes me open now to you my soul?

What malicious joy, with every reason,

Perhaps to you I give on this occasion!

When I by chance you met sometime ago

You seemed a spark of tenderness to show;

I could not, dared not, then believe in it,

And no course to revive gave former habit;

I did not wish my freedom then to lose,

A freedom, much disliked, I ne’er did choose.

One thing us two did separate . . . .

Lensky had fallen, victim unfortunate . . . .

On that sad day I tore away my heart

From pleasant things, from all those did depart;

A stranger then to all, by nothing bound,

I thought: if peace and freedom can be found,

They are a substitute for happiness.

My God, how wrong I was: hence my distress!

No; you to see each minute, every day,

To follow beauty everywhere, alway,

To catch with loving eyes your lips’ sweet smile,

To watch the movement of your eyes the while,

To listen to your gentle speech for long,

To heed with all my soul perfection’s tongue,

To wait with anguish near you, lacking kiss,

Pale to become, extinguished . . . . That were bliss!

Yet fate of all this joy doth me deprive:

To meet you everywhere, how much I strive,

Each day, each hour, is precious unto me:

I wait in vain, in boredom, you to see;

The days allotted me by destiny

Are now become too burdensome to me.

And this I know: my days are few and counted;

Life to prolong my years to make endure,

Each morning when I wake I must be sure

I shall meet you that day, or soon be dead . . . .

I was afraid: what time I humbly pray,

Your look severe will see some tricky way

By which I then contemptibly shall broach

Unworthy things ⎯ I hear your sharp reproach.

Your heart I deem is not insensible,

But if it only knew how terrible

It is to languish with the thirst of love,

To burn, to blaze, to flame, yet not to move;

Sit, every moment seeking to subdue

The hot blood by the reason ⎯ hot for you.

To wish intensely to embrace your knees,

And, sobbing, at your feet pour out my prayers,

All, everything, a lover could express;

Yet, meanwhile, I, to my intense distress,

Must ever lead a quiet conversation,

Arming with falsest cold my speech, my look;

Gaze at you with a merry smile, mistook

By lookers-on ⎯ and you; height of vexation!

But be it so: I can no longer fight

Myself ⎯ my strength me fails: or wrong or right

All is decided: at this very hour

I place myself, my all, within your power.

XXXIII

No answer. He a message sends again:

To this, and a third letter, no reply.

Beside himself he almost is with pain,

Distractedly he drives to an assembly.

He entered . . . . She came then, and passed him by.

No word for him; by austere gaze not seen;

Ugh! Cold of January Sixth I ween.

Did not her lips so obstinate then want

Words to restrain of fierce indignation?

Onegin watchful stared, but nonchalant

The lady passed, with no trace of compassion.

Where is confusion in this glass of fashion?

Where stains of tears None, obviously none!

Anger, perhaps? Who knows, for she is gone.

XXXIV

Is there, perhaps, a trace of secret fear

That husband, or society, should guess

The accidental weaknesses most dear

To many women, which they don’t confess . . . .

All this Onegin knew, women’s artfulness . . . .

No hope, no hope in this; he goes away,

Cursing the madness that him led astray.

Sunk deep in rage, once more the world renouncing,

He in his silent study meditates;

Recalls the time when that same world denouncing,

Withdrew he to his uncle’s great estates,

Where hypochondria upon him waits;

That spleen which caught and took him by the collar,

And shut him in a corner dark and far.

XXXV

Again, all indiscriminate, he read,

Gibbon he read, Manzoni and Rousseau;

He conned the living, and perused the dead,

Herder, Chamfort, and poets Bysshe and Tasso;

Madame de Stel’s views he wished to know;

He ploughed through pages of the sceptic Bell;

And the creations read of Fontenelle;

Among the authors read were some of ours,

Of printed matter none he would reject;

The almanacs, the journals, too, he scours,

In which are sermons worthy of respect;

And critics seeking Pushkin to correct;

And where sometimes appeared in earlier day

Such madrigals to me ⎯ *e sempre bene!*

XXXVI

And to what end? His eyes were all this reading,

But from the books his thoughts were far away;

Visions, desires, and sorrows, all were pleading,

Deep, crowded in his soul, they him did sway:

His mind’s eye read between the lines alway.

His deep absorption in them was complete,

From his sad heart it seemed he would retreat.

The secret legends of the heart he read,

The dark, imperfect legends of old age;

Dreams, joined with nothing, passed within his head,

Menaces, rumours, and predictions sage;

Reading and dreaming did his pain assuage:

The vivid nonsense of a fairy-tale,

A maiden’s letters, gave him much regale.

XXXVII

Thus by degrees he falls into a sleep

Of mingled feelings and disordered thought;

Imagination out of this doth creep

And casts before him a Pharaoh *carte.*

Or sees a vision, of all the last he sought,

A youngster lying on the melting snow,

Sleeping a sleep that will no waking know.

He hears a voice: Well, what? The fellow’s dead!

Or he may see some long-forgotten foes,

Slanderers, cowards, other persons wicked,

With former comrades, contemptible he knows.

They pass, and still imagination glows:

A country house ⎯ at window he can see

She sits, sits there or long . . . . and always she! . . . .

XXXVIII

Accustomed was he to be lost in this,

That he at last was nearly out of mind,

A state the lawyers call *non compos mentis*

Or almost like a poet, some folk find.

To poesy, frustrated love is kind:

Almost he understood at that sad time

The form of Russian verses and of rhyme.

How much a poet now he paralleled

My senseless pupil sitting all alone,

In verses then he surely had excelled;

Before the fire he praised the Blessed One,

Humming *Benedetta*, or did intone

*Idol mio*, as in the fire did fall

His slippoer, or, maybe, an unread journal.

XXXIX

The days passed quickly, though he did not know it;

The warmer air the winter left behind;

But Evgenie did not become a poet,

He did not die, nor did hew lose his mind.

By spring revived, decision did he find.

One morning bright he left his chambers closed,

Where, like a marmot, through the frost he dozed.

He left the double windows, open fire,

Headlong his sledge is by Neva now flying:

What thought can such an energy inspire?

On piled up ice of blue the sun is playing,

The melting snow on dirty streets is lying.

Again we ask, whither is he streaming,

Who hastily leaves house and quiet dreaming?

XL

Beforehand you have guessed; correctly guessed;

His sledge to Tatiana quickly went,

Bearing my friend incorrigible, depressed,

Resembling one whose life is nearly spent,

Yet one who on some final quest is bent.

There’s not a soul within the entrance-hall,

And in the ball-room nobody at all.

He further seeks, domestics there are none;

One final door, and what he sees astounds;

The princess is before him, quite alone;

Astonishment Evgenie yet dumbfounds.

Indifferent to all that her surrounds,

Pale, and ill-dressed, and shedding copious tears,

She reads a letter ⎯ his, with all its fears.

XLI

Who in this moment could not read her dumb,

Dull suffering; who could not recognise

The former Tania, princess now become?

The country maiden now before his eyes,

In anguish of insane regrets and sighs

Evgenie flings himself before her feet,

And with his eyes her pity doth entreat.

She shudderd, but silent she remains,

And on Onegin bends her speechless gaze,

Without surprise or anger; nor complains;

She takes in all as in her former days,

His ill and wasted look, which, humble, prays:

She understands; once more a simple maid

With dreams, a tender heart, to which he prayed.

XLII

She makes no move to raise him from his knees,

Nor from his anguished face her eyes did turn;

Her hand she does not take from his

Hot, greedy lips, nor their possessor spurn . . . .

What are her thoughts, what fire in her did burn? . . .

In silence long Evgenie waits, and prays,

She quiet speaks, and this is what she says:

“Enough; get up. I frankly must explain

That which I feel, and that which you must know.

Onegin, to my garden come again,

As you once came; how many years ago?

Do you recall my hour of sharpest woe,

The alley where you met and lesson gave

To a young girl how young girls should behave.”

XLIII

“Onegin, now it is my turn to-day.

Then I was younger, better, so it seems;

I loved you then, but you, you went away.

What answer did you make to my heart’s dreams?

Severity; a brother’s love; such themes.

A humble maiden’s love was nothing new

In your experience ⎯ is that not true?

And now ⎯ by God! ⎯ my blood is running cold

When I recall the coldness of your look;

The sermon preached to me, in which you told

The moral maxims of a copy-book . . .

I blame you not, and when you me forsook

You acted nobly in my bitter hour:

I thank you with all my soul that man of honour . . . .”

XLIV

“Then ⎯ is this not so? ⎯ then in that far-off waste,

From idle gossip many miles remote,

You liked me not, I was not to your taste . . . .

Why now is your pursuit of me so hot?

Why, as your quarry, am I thus marked out?

Is not the cause of present anxiety

That I move now in high society?

Because I now am rich and eminent?

Because my husband was in battles hurt,

And for his deeds and youth so nobly spent

In wars, we earned great favour at the Court?

Because if now I yielded to what you sought

My ignominy would by all be seen,

And my seducer worldly honour glean?”

XLV

“You see my tears . . . . If you did not forget

Your Tania of old days, then you must know

I would prefer the old Evgenie yet

To him I see in tears before me now.

Prefer the stinging words he at me threw;

Severe reproach, and your cold conversation,

To these your letters, and your harming passion.

Then you at least had pity for my dream,

My childish folly, inexperience,

And for my tender years had some esteem . . . .

But now! ⎯ there at my feet in passion tense!

What brought you there? A trifle, lacking sense!

How can you with your heart and cleverness,

Be slave to feelings of such pettiness?”

XLVI

“For me, Onegin, what is all this richness,

This tinsel of a life that I deplore,

This whirlwind of the world, called my success,

My stylish house, my parties, and much more?

What is in them? Of this you may be sure

I should be glad if I could give away

This frippery, pretence, this very day.

I would exchange this glamour, heat, and noise,

For a wild garden, our poor early home,

A shelf of books, and other childish joys,

And for those spots where first I saw you come.

The humble burial-ground in which lies dumb,

Under a cross and ’neath the branches’ shade,

My poor dear nanny, who much of me hath made . . . .”

XLVII

“There happiness was possible, so near! . . . .

But destiny did there with me decide.

Carelessly I acted; wrong, perhaps, I fear;

My mother urged me on to be a bride,

Imploring me with tears she did not hide.

For her poor Tania all lots were the same . . . .

I now am married; you have lost the game.

Now you must leave, I ask you now to go;

In your heart there is pride, and honesty,

I love you (why be sly, and not say so?)

But to another they have given me,

For, as I said, decided destiny;

He gave his troth to me ⎯ I am no whim ⎯

And I forever shall be true to him.”

XLVIII

She left. He stands as one by thunder struck,

A tempest of emotion in his soul!

A sound of spurs he hears: oh, cursed luck,

Tatiana’s husband through the door did stroll ⎯

A situation certainly not droll.

And here my hero it is time to leave:

A wicked minute for him, I perceive.

We leave him, reader, for a long time . . . . ever.

Behind him wandered we the world around,

But ’tis enough, we see him no more, never,

We reach the spot to which we all were bound:

Hurrah, hurrah! the beach we now have found.,

When we set out, my reader, I and you,

It was a long time since; is that not true?

XLIX

Whoe’er you are, my reader, whether you

My friend be, or a foe, I wish to part

With you upon good terms, and so ⎯ “Adieu!”

For what you sought in careless lines ⎯ high art,

Relaxation, pictures vivid, or words tart,

Or even some grammatical mistakes,

God give you find in this book precious keepsakes.

May you, my friend or foe, find some small grain,

For your amusement; or your vision feed;

May my sad memories give to you no pain,

Nor stormy story make your heart to bleed:

May journalists find here their papers’ need.

Once more, I say, let us now part as friends,

And say “Farewell” as this my story ends.

L

To two, especially, I say farewell:

Strange fellow-traveller; my true ideal;

And you, my book, in which I sought to tell

A story in good faith with which you deal;

A work not long, but vivid, honest, real.

With you I knew the enviable life

A poet leads, remote from the world’s strife,

And with sweet conversation of dear friends.

How many, many days have crept away,

How much of labour spent ere story ends,

Since Tatiana came with me to stay,

With Evgenie, who in my dreams did stray,

At first but seen in magic crystal,

A tale of free romance and fatal pistol.

LI

But some to whom I read my early lines ⎯

Imagination’s child ⎯ in friendly meeting,

Are no more there, on them the sun ne’er shines;

Others now far, as Sadi was repeating;

Onegin, done without them, is retreating:

And One, from whom was Tatiana drawn,

That dear ideal ⎯ ah, whither is she gone? . . . .

Oh, much has gone in life’s great hurly-burly,

That festival by many counted fine;

But blissful is the one who left it early,

Who to the bottom did not drink his wine;

Who did not finish life’s romance, nor mine,

But sudden knew how with it to be done,

As I with my Onegin ⎯ he, too, has gone.

The End.