**“A RUSSIAN RAKE.”**

Being a paraphrase of the first book of Pushkin’s “Eugene Onegin,” in something like the metre of the original. 1883. [This rough translation appeared some years ago in the Proceedings of the Anglo-Russian Literary Society. C. P.−W.]

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Information about Clive Phillipps-Wolley (1853−1918) can be found on the web at

http://www.abcbookworld.com/view\_author.php?id=5603

I.

A perfect life without a flaw,

Till sickness laid him on his bed,

My grandsire lived: himself a law

By which our lesser lives were led.

Respect from all (or high or low),

The best he knew, or cared to know!

Yet, oh, my God! how slow to spread

The pillows for the sick man’s head:

What prostitution of one’s wit

To raise a smile on lips half cold,

With downcast eyes his medicine hold.

All day, all night, beside him sit,

And sighing to oneself still muse

“When will the Devil take his dues?”

II.

So thought the Scamp, by Jove's decree,

To all his kinsmens’ acres heir,

As through the dust post horses three

Pursued their journey “ventre-a-terre.”

Friends, then, of Russian and Liudmiel,

More preface were too much I feel,

Behold the hero of my song,

Onegin, born where roll along

Dark Neva’s waters: there, maybe,

You, reader, passed your early days

Or, later, set the town ablaze.

I lived there once. Alas! for me,

Just now I find the Northern air

More bitter than I well can bear.[[1]](#footnote-1)\*

III.

His father, after a career

Of honour, lived on other folk,

Gave just three dances every year;

And then, as such men will, “went broke.”

Fate kept my hero out of harm,

Whilst Madame led him by the arm;

Until a tutor took her place,

Who, seeing that the Scamp had grace,

And being himself a needy Frank,

Fearing to bore him, deemed it best

To teach him lessons half in jest;

To mildly chide each childish prank,

Be slow to lecture, swift to pardon,

But constant to the Summer Garden.[[2]](#footnote-2)+

IV.

At length to wilful manhood grown

He bade the tutor too, depart,

To lover’s hopes and lover’s moan

Abandoning his youthful heart.

Pray you behold him, free as air,

In latest style his close-cropped hair,

A perfect dandy, forth he goes

To see the world in London clothes,

His French was good: he’d write a letter

Which you could understand, I vow,

There was no stiffness in his bow,

And few danced a mazurka better.

What would you more? His world discerned

That he was “nice” and very learned.

V.

For bit by bit, somewhere, somehow,

We pick up learning, not at once,

But, thank the Lord, its seldom now

A man grows up an utter dunce.

As for Eugene, some well might fear

(Critics exacting and severe),

That though well read he was pedantic.

Faith! he would drive his rivals frantic

By the high air with which he’d touch

On every subject, saving such

As seemed too deep. Then wisely dumb

He waited for his chance to come

And woke a laugh, exposing sham

With unexpected epigram.

VI.

Latin has ceased to be the mode

And if I needs must tell you true

Onegin scarce could read an ode

An epitaph could just construe

Of Juvenal he’d chatter gaily,

Finish his letters with a “Vale,”

Would quote the neid’s verse divine

With but two blunders to the line,

And though from ancient history’s dust

He cared but little to unearth

Dull facts, he’d move your tears or mirth

With stirring tales of cut and thrust,

And stored his memory with lays

From Romulus to modern days.

VII.

Right little lust had he to learn

The rhymester’s rules: the verse Iambic

He could not if he would discern

From dithyramb or choriambic

Theocritus he found a bore,

While Homer wrote bad verse he swore;

From Adam Smith he culled the gist

And posed as an economist.

He knew an Empire’s richest store

Was not in gold, but in her soil

That native products, native toil

Were truer wealth than hoarded ore

His father failed to understand

And mortgaged every rood of land.

VIII.

Just now I’ve neither will nor leisure

To tell you all my hero knew

But that in which beyond all measure

His genius shone, his knowledge grew,

From childhood’s days his toil his pleasure

On which he spent his time his treasure

Was Love, that Love whose tender art

Love’s poet, Ovid, taught in song

And died Love’s martyr; all the strong

And bright life ended far apart

On vast Moldavian steppes, where he

Pined far from well-loved Italy.

IX.

(Missing in the Original.)

X.

An actor born, he’d hide his lust,

Display a passion never known,

Shake maiden’s faith or win her trust,

And make all moods alike his own.

As slave of love, or heart whole still,

Her lord, or minion of her will;

Sunk in deep gulfs of sullen ire,

Or bursting into words of fire,

Indicting notes in heart’s blood writ,

In which, forgetting self, he’d crave

Naught but her love this side the grave.

His eyes still seconding his wit

With fire to warm or flame to sear,

Or the soft suasion of a tear.

XI.

Anon he’d ape the innocent

To catch young girlhood at her play,

Cajole with flatteries little meant,

With feigned despair fond hearts betray.

By passion and by craft he wrought

To allay the fears young Conscience taught

To childish hearts and waited still

Coy kisses given against her will

By conquered beauty: how he strained

To catch the young heart’s wakening beat,

Arranged the trembling maid to meet,

And then in Cupid’s secrets trained

Gave her long lessons in that art

Taught lip to lip and heart to heart.

XII.

Aye, even the inveterate coquette

Was scarcely safe against his wiles,

And as for men! such snares he set

If they were rivals for the smiles

He courted, that their lives became,

Touched by his bitter tongue, mere shame.

The happy wed ne’er failed to gain

A place of friendship with Eugene.

He loved the rake who ere he wed

In Faublas ethics had been schooled,

The sage, too aged to be fooled,

And he with horns upon his head;

Who loves his dinner, trusts his wife!

XIII. and XIV.

Missing in original (or suppressed).

XV.

Whilst still in bed Onegin lay

His lackey used to bring the mail.

All invitations! on one day

Three hosts implore him “not to fail.”

Which shall it be? ball, birthday party

(To each the invitation’s hearty).

Which first, that is? To choose were vain

Where all so nobly entertain.

Meanwhile, in morning coat arrayed,

Upon his head a broad sombrero,

Along the boulevard our hero

Lolls through his daily promenade,

Until Breguet,[[3]](#footnote-3)\* thy wakeful chime,

Suggests it’s nearly dinner time,

XVI.

And dusk already. In a sleigh

He takes his seat. The driver's cries

Ring loud and shrill. In silvery spray

The frost upon his collar lies.

“To Talon’s quick!” he shouts (for therein

He knows his friend awaits, Kovarin).

Once there the good cork skyward goes,

In streams the Comet Vintage flows,

A juicy steak before them lies,

With truffles, flowers of kitchen-land

(For boys who have the ostrich brand

Of stomachs), fresh made Strasbourg pies,

And amidst fruit and golden pines

A lively Limbourg cheese reclines.

XVII.

Another bumper thirst demands

To wash the smoking cutlet down

The clock suggests with silent hands

A ballet challenges the town

To sit in judgment. Eugene’s part

In life, is critic of all art,

In town his fickle tongue does honour

To each danseuse and prima donna

To green room’s bright peculiar star

He speeds to judgment, joins the band

Of those who “really understand.”

To applaud each brilliant entrechat

To hiss this one: that one recall:

And make themselves observed by all.

XVIII.

Enchanted ground where satire’s lord,

Where freedom’s friend, Von Vizin reigned,

Fearless and bright; where apt in word,

And quick of wit, Kniajnin feigned,

Where Ozeroff in other years

Once shared the pit’s reluctant tears,

And shared the storm of hands with her

The Peoples’ young Semeonova.

There Didlo won his laurel crown.

Katenin raised again for us

The genius of Corneille in Russ,

Shakovsky brought the gallery down.

There on those boards, behind those scenes

Passed many an evening of my teens.

XIX.

My boyhood’s queens! divinely fair,

List to my grieving from afar

Whilst others fade, perchance somewhere

Unchanged, still beautiful you are.

Say, shall I hear the singing of your choir

Ever again? or ever mark the fire

And spirit of your dances? Is it true

That sorrowing I must seek the friends I knew

And seek in vain? with blood unstirred behold

The mirth of other? find the spirit fled

Which charmed my past, then turn away my head

And dreaming sadly of those days of old

Acknowledge that their glamour has departed,

And yawning, close my lorgnette, broken hearted?

XX.

The house is crammed! The boxes glisten

With jewelled beauty; pit and stalls

Are packed with people; aye! and listen

The gallery for its favourite calls.

Rustling, the curtain rises, Lo! she stands

Slave of the baton in the master's hands:

Half spirit and all beauty, round her press

Nymphs the companions of her loveliness.

One foot just touches earth, and one

Swings slowly round: she leaps, she flies,

As down is driven along the skies

Before the wind’s lips, and anon

Her form dilates or dwindles, while her feet,

True time to the quick music beat.

XXI.

The whole house cheers! Onegin enters,

Strides through the stalls on others’ toes,

The full force of his lorgnette centres

On lady strangers. Round the rows

On rows, he gazes : in his sight

Scarce one is dressed or looks aright.

Next, to the many men his friends,

A nod, a smile, a word, he sends;

And last, turns slowly to the stage,

Gazes, and then beneath his breath

Mutters “Great Scot, I’m sick to death

Of all this tommy rot; the age

Of ballets passes! much I’ve borne, I vow,

But even Didlo palls upon me now.”

XXII.

Still cupids, demons, dragons, monkeys

Upon the boards, loud revel kept

Within the porch the weary flunkeys

Still curled up in their shoubas slept

The lights still shone; the lamps still glowed

Upon the stage and down the road;

Blowing of noses, hissing, cheering,

Horses impatient of their gearing,

Stamping for cold, still proved the revel

Unfinished yet. The coachmen stood

Around the fire, to thaw their blood,

Wishing their masters at the devil;

When Eugene took the homeward route

To change again his evening suit.

XXIII.

Must I depict the inmost shrine

Where Fashion’s votary passed the day,

Where this aesthetic friend of mine

Would hourly dress and re-array?

Where every toy which London bears

To peddle for the rougher wares

Across the Baltic (fat and wood);

Where all that in her vainest mood

Parisian fashion could devise

To swell his profits, serve his pleasure,

Each useless but artistic treasure,

And all the latest luxuries

Adorned the private room, in plenty,

Of this philosopher-at-twenty.

XXIV.

Well, here’s a list of all his assets:

Pipe stems from Stamboul tipped with amber;

In crystal flagons, cut in facettes.

Perfumes, more fit for lady’s chamber

Than his; bronze statuettes, and china;

Scissors of all sorts; and, in fine, a

Rare medley; even for teeth and nails

A score of brushes scarce avails.

And that reminds me, apropos

Of finger nails, how famous Grimm,

Because he dared his nails to trim,

Provoked the wrath of Jacques Rousseau,

That gifted madman, Freedom’s knight,

Not, in this instance, in the right

XXV.

For surely men who find some beauty

In well-trimmed nails are not all asses;

War with his age is no man’s duty;

Custom’s the tyrant of all classes.

Eugene, in all that touched his clothes,

Fearing the comments of his foes,

Was the most careful man extant,

And what we Russians call a “phrant”

In dress a secret this between us

Three hours at least Eugene would pass

Posing before his looking-glass

Before he issued forth, like Venus,

When, dressed in all her husband’s clothes,

That merry goddess masquing goes.

XXVI.

Should I so loftily aspire,

Here might a cultured public get,

If curious, details of attire,

And latest modes in men’s toilette.

With reason I might be afraid,

But then description is my trade.

Still, waistcoats, evening suits, and trousers

Have no equivalent, I vow, sirs,

In Russian, and my luckless rhyme.

I do confess it on the spot,

Already is too polyglot. Forgive me!

I had shunned this crime

Had I at first been much less chary

Of reference to the dictionary.

XXVII.

The subject of this meditation

Not being clothes, our wisest course is

To seek with some precipitation

The ball. Onegin’s hired horses

Have long since scared, with jarring feet

The slumbers of that silent street,

Where, amidst mansions dark and blank,

The sleigh lamps blaze in double rank

Before the spacious portico

Of one great house in garden set:

A house whose myriad lights beget

A vivid iris on the snow;

A house whose every window frames

A silhouette of squires and dames.

XXVIII.

Arrived upon this scene, Eugene

Slips like an arrow past the sentry,

Darts up the marble steps: again

Smoothes back his hair and makes his entry.

The room is crowded: music floats,

No longer loud, in dreamy notes

Over the crowds which whispering gaze

At the Mazourka’s merry maze.

The spurs of guardsmen clash and ring,

Fair women’s feet, more swift than wing

Of swallow, skim across the floor,

While swifter far than swallow

The burning eyes of soldiers follow

The loveliness which they adore

Even jealousy’s discordant din

Is mellowed by the violin.

XXIX.

In glad gone days of Young Desire

A ball like this I deemed perfection,

When midst the dancing, words of fire

And love notes passed without detection.

Ye worthy Benedicts, I tender

Whatever service I can render,

And pray that all of you and each

Will mark the moral of my speech!

And you, my lady mothers, lend

A wakeful eye to your lorgnette,

Or those fair girls will stumble yet,

And do and do No! Heaven forefend!

I only sound such warning notes

Because I’ve long since sown my oats.

XXX.

Alas! in every sort of pleasure

The best years of my life have flown,

And yet, if sickness gave me leisure,

I still would go to balls, I own,

For still I love young manhood’s madness,

The crowd, the glitter and the gladness,

Fair woman’s studied elegance;

I love the feet which lead the dance,

Shapely and small: (I doubt you’d meet

If you should search it through and through

In Russia’s realm a pair or two).

But woe is me, one woman’s feet,

Her pretty feet! they haunt me still

When dreams my slumbering senses fill.

XXXI.

Ah where, and in what lonely wild,

Fool, will you manage to forget?

Say, little feet, that so beguiled,

’Mid what spring flowers ye wander yet?

Nursed in the gentle East’s repose,

Upon our Northland’s dreary snows

Ye left no track. A little while

Your light step touched my carpet’s pile

For that I lost my thirst for Fame

The greed of glory tempts no more

Little I miss my native shore,

Exile or home to me the same,

All my ambitions fade and pass

As fades yon light track through the grass.

XXXII.

Young Flor’s cheek, Diana’s breast

Are fair, but fairer far to me

Beyond compare with all the rest

Thy tiny foot, Terpsichore;

That foot which to enamoured eyes

Is full of priceless prophecies

Which, by the little it reveals,

The very heart from manhood steals

With the long tablecloth above it

In spring pressed on the meadow grass

In winter on the fender’s brass

Or by the sea alike I love it;

Nor least where polished parquetry

Mirrors its pretty coquetry.

XXXIII.

Well I remember, envious throes,

When once, before a storm awoke

Rank upon rank the wavelets rose

And clamorous round my lady broke;

Ah! how I wished that I were such

As they, those dainty feet to touch!

Not once I vow, when young desire

Filled all my boyish veins with fire,

Had such wild longings filled my breast

To touch the lips of pretty misses,

To redden their soft cheeks with kisses,

Or taste their bosoms’ sweet unrest;

No never once did Passion tear

At my poor breast as it did there.

XXXIV.

Her stirrup now, as in a dream,

A sacred dream of long ago,

I seem to hold: again I seem

The touch of that dear foot to know

In my hot hand. Once more desire

Wakes at her touch. My blood takes fire:

Imagination stirs again

This withered heart to love and pain.

But hold! Enough! Thou shalt not praise

These haughty belles, my gossip lyre

They are not worthy to inspire

A lover’s pain, a poet’s lays

Their lips, their feet, their witching eyes

Are full of nimble trickeries.

XXXV.

But where’s Onegin? Lo! he takes

From ball to bed his sleepy way,

While tireless Petersburg awakes,

And kettledrums reveille play.

The tradesman wakes; the pedlar starts,

The cabman to his stand departs;

The wheels of milk carts to and fro

Crunch crisply in the morning snow

The merry morning’s wakening hymn

Begins: shops open; every flue

Its smoky column to the blue

Of Heaven sends. The baker trim

(A German paper capped) throws wide

His window to the folk outside.

XXXVI.

Tired with the ball room’s noisy riot,

Turning his morning into night,

He sleeps in welcome shadowy quiet,

This child of luxury and delight,

Nor wakes till midday. Then, once more,

Till morning lives the old life o’er,

Dazzling but changeless; his to-day

The counterpart of yesterday.

And yet, amid such luxuries

In manhood’s flower, was Eugene free,

Or happy, tho’ he seemed to be

Hero of social victories?

Did he escape ill health, blue devils,

Or pass scot-free through all these revels?

XXXVII.

No! All too soon his heart grew chill.

The world’s din wearied him. The grace

Of woman, which once seemed to fill

His every thought, now found no place

With him. Friends, comrades, rivals, all

Even loves, oft changed, began to pall

On him, and when one day he found

Digestion’s pangs could not be drowned

In bumpers of champagne; that splitting

Headaches would follow drink to bed,

The words Onegin used were, so it’s said,

Not parliamentary, but fitting

Nay; though a fiery feather head,

He even lost his taste for steel and lead.

XXXVIII.

Little by little that disease

Whose cause he should long since have seen

Call it whatever name you please

(In Russian “handra,” English “spleen”) ⎯

Mastered Onegin. He ne’er tried,

Nor thought, thank Heaven, of suicide,

But turned on life a cold regard,

And like Childe Harold, gloomy, hard,

Frowned on the world. Nor virtue’s smile,

Nor gambler's greed, nor passion’s sigh

That mocks at maiden modesty,

Nor even scandal, could beguile

His sullen mood. By nothing moved,

He nothing noticed, nothing loved.

XXXIX., XL., XLI.

(Missing in the original.)

XLII.

Fashion’s fair dames, beneath your sway,

He lingered longest, though we know

Life in the highest cliques to-day

Is apt to be a trifle slow;

For though perhaps one woman may

Talk of “Bentham” and “Jean Say,”

The average run of ladies’ chatter

Is silly, sinless, stupid matter.

To such a length their virtues go,

So prudent are they, so correct,

So pious, proper circumspect

In every act so comme il faut,

To man so distant, I admit

I always get a bilious fit.

XLIII.

And you, my pretty ones, who fleet

In roving droshkies late at night

Over our bridges, down the street

Of Petersburg, your revels light;

And you, Eugene, abandoned.

In his den, Yawning, he turned him to his pen

And tried to write. Alas ! such work

Required some thought and thought proved irksome

To our Onegin. So no song,

Or other offspring of his quill

Ever entitled him to fill

A place amid the struggling throng

Of authors. Stay! I’ll make no fun of ’em,

Because it happens I am one of ’em.

XLIV.

Again to idleness given over,

He sought (a somewhat nobler goal),

Relief from ennui to discover

In bolting literature whole.

Set books before him, line on line,

Read and re-read without design,

Found Dullness here, Delirium there,

Lies, want of conscience, want of care,

And want of thought and all in fetters.

The old was sated, the up-to-date,

Raved feebly of the earlier great.

As to the ladies, to the letters,

He bade farewell and spread a pall

To cover books and dust and all.

XLV.

From Fashion’s burdens breaking free

We met, and bonds of friendship sealed,

Tired of the world’s frivolity,

His features to my heart appealed,

The dreaminess which held him still

In reveries against his will.

His individuality,

His wits, cold bitter quality,

Each drew me to him. He was sad,

And I was angered. Both had learned

Love’s cruel lesson. Life had burned

Low in our hearts, for either had,

From childhood’s dawn, by man or fate,

Been smitten and left desolate.

XLVI.

He who has lived and thought must feel

For man some measure of disdain.

O’er him who once has felt must steal

For days which cannot come again,

Some sorrow. When illusions perish

Regret survives to wring the heart

Until, from sufferings borne, the art

Of poet’s eloquence it teaches.

At first Onegin’s bitter tongue

Jarred on my listening ear; erelong

I grew accustomed to his speeches

Where jest and bitterness were knit

To give more flavour to his wit.

XLVII.

Ah me! how oft when Summer’s night

Hung darkly clear o’er Neva’s stream,

Whose laughing waters in their flight

Unmirrored left Diana’s beam:

We two along the bank would rove,

In dreams of early boyhood’s love:

In dreams of manhood’s first romance;

Till sinking into tender trance

All heart, all faith, we silent drank

The sweet night's breath, such draughts, so deep,

That like to prisoners in their sleep

Laid dungeon free on greensward bank,

We too in happy dreams were borne

To gates of manhood’s merry morn.

XLVIII.

Eugene would stand in pensive mood

His heart o’erburdened with regret,

As once they tell a poet stood,

Bowed o’er the granite parapet.

T’was silent all, save when the cry

Of watchman’s challenge passed us by,

Or sound of hurrying horses’ feet,

That thundered down the Million street;

Or wash of boat, by labouring oar,

Impelled that dreamy tide along:

Or distant bugle note or song

Heard faintly from the farther shore.

Ah, sweeter even than Tasso’s rhyme

Such nights as those in summer time.

XLIX.

Oh, Adriatic! Brenta! Nay,

I, too, shall see you, and rejoice

With soul fresh fired, as breaks the day

To the full music of thy voice;

Strong voice, to Albion’s poet dear;

Sweet voice, that to my native ear

Whispers of home: oh, nights of gold!

Italian nights, when, uncontrolled,

I’ll drain Life’s cup of pleasure dry,

Some fair Venetian by my side

Sweet chatterbox, or else tongue-tied

Because when boats in shadow lie,

True lovers’ lips should only seek

The language Petrarch’s verses speak.

L.

When will my hour of freedom come?

’Tis time! ’tis time! My beckoning hand

Implores each sail, when e’er I roam,

Waiting fair weather on the strand.

When shall I set my homing sail,

And though the waves before the gale

Their shattered crests about me toss,

Unstayed o’er troubled ocean cross,

Touch homeland and be free?

’Tis time this dreary land to flee,

To me ungenial, and my verse,

’Tis time to rest where south seas swell

’Neath native Afric’s skies, to dwell

In peace, and Russia’s cloud-land curse,

Where, wrecked by grief, to love a slave,

My heart has found itself a grave.

LI.

Onegin and myself had planned

To travel, but before we started

We were by Fate’s resistless hand

For many and many a long year parted.

’Twas thus. Onegin’s father died,

And round my friend on every side

Gathered the money-lending crew,

All with some private end in view.

Eugene loathed business, hated toil,

Was well contented with his lot,

Cared for his losses not a jot,

And left the pack to share the spoil,

Foreseeing, with prophetic eye,

His grandsire’s end was also nigh.

LII.

Even so it happened, one fine day

This message from his agent brought him

“His grandsire, who a-dying lay,

To come and bid farewell, besought him.”

Onegin skimmed the gloomy greeting,

And started straightway for the meeting.

Post haste along the roads he tore,

Yawning e’er half the course was o’er,

Prepared for money’s sake to meet

The weariness of sick men’s sighs

(’Twas thus Eugene first met our eyes).

But, having reached his grandsire’s seat,

He found him laid out in his room

A tribute ready for the tomb.

LIII.

The Court, with servants filled, he found,

Friends and detractors gathered all,

From far and near, the country round

Guests eager for the funeral.

The dead these duly buried.

The guests and priests got drunk and fed:

And then, the serious business done,

Sedately home went every one.

And lo! Onegin, in his village,

He who till now all order hated,

A genuine spendthrift, fresh translated,

To lordship over woods and tillage,

O’er mills and waters, and elate

At all that changed his former state!

LIV.

For two whole days the meadows made

A novel pleasure for his eyes,

Their loveliness, the oak grove’s shade,

The quiet brook’s soliloquies

All soothed and won him: after that

Woods, hills, and the far reaching flat

Staled on his fancy; nor could keep

Eyes open that were tired of sleep.

Even here, he learned, aye, even here,

Where there were neither cards nor balls,

Nor poet’s verse, nor princely halls,

The ill he fled from waited near

Ennui the shadow of his life,

More pertinacious than a wife.

LV.

Now I was born for peaceful things,

For rustic scenes, for country quiet,

My lyric muse most blithely sings

In deserts wild. On country diet

My fancy thrives. In sinless leisure

By lone waste lakes, I take my pleasure,

“Sans souci” for my motto taken;

Where every morning I awaken

To sweet indulgence, idle ease,

I read but little, much I sleep,

Nor strive the winds of fame to reap,

Yet was it not by means like these

That I came nighest happiness?

LVI.

Flowers, love, a village holiday,

The widespread fields are my delight.

Things Eugene loathed. I’m bound to say

I wish you’d keep this point in sight,

Lest fancying that you recognized

My features, he should be despised,

And deeming poets such poor creatures

That they can only paint the features

Of their own faces, should repeat

With ready malice that old stricture

Passed upon Bryon, that the picture

Which I have daubed in my conceit

Was my own portrait, and discredit

This tale I’ve taken such pains to edit.

LVII.

I note, in passing, poets seem

All friends to love’s illusive passion;

I, like the rest, have dreamed my dream

Of figures of so fair a fashion

That they have tenanted my brain

In secret till they lived again.

Touched by my muse, the ideal maid

Haunting the mountains, I’ve portrayed

And Salgir’s captive set in song.

Till now, my friends, I often hear

This question whispered in my ear

“Which of the pretty jealous throng

Has had the fortune to inspire

The tender love songs of your lyre?”

LVIII.

Whose sweet eyes wake the storm and stress

That fill your moody poesy?

Who crowns your work with her caress?

Who is it that you deify?

No one, by heaven, my friends, I swear

All unconsoled I’ve had to bear

Love’s foolish sorrow. Blessed, I think,

Those lovers who to passion link

The singer’s phrenzy: who can double

The poet’s madness, blessed of God,

And, treading paths that Petrarch trod,

Allay at once their bosom’s trouble

And snatch a laurel wreath from Cupid.

Alas! in love I’m dumb and stupid.

LIX.

But love once fled, the muse awoke,

My cloudy mind grew clear again,

Once more myself, I strove to yoke

Feeling and thought in my refrain.

I wrote my heart no longer fainted

For love. My pen no longer painted

This woman’s foot, that maiden’s head,

Nay, e’er the stanza’s course is sped

Love’s dying ashes will not glow

Though I still grieve, no tears I shed

Love’s storm is all but quieted;

’Ere long it may be mine to know

Heart’s ease, and yours a poem penned

In lines and verses without end.

LX.

I’ve named my hero, formed a plan to

Build up my story on; moreover,

Whatever happens, the first canto

Is finished, and that labour over.

I’ve scrutinized my work, and see

A lot of things which don’t agree;

But faith, I’m not inclined to mend ’em.

No! Let the critics tear and rend ’em,

(Fruits of my labour) I will pay

Whatever is the censor’s due;

But you, my new born, off with you

To where old Neva’s waters stray;

Go! earn the wages of the muse

Harsh critiques and loud-tongued abuse.

1. \* Pushkin was ordered to leave St. Petersburg for a literary indiscretion. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. + Equivalent of “The Park” in London. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. \* A watchmaker then in fashion. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)