

**THE ORLOFF
COUPLE,
AND MALVA**

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The Orloff Couple, and Malva by Maksim Gorki & Alexei Maximovitch Peshkoff

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MAKSIM GORKI & ALEXEI MAXIMOVITCH PESHKOFF

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COUPLE,
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and
Malva

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The Orloff Couple and Malva

By
Alexei Maximovitch Peahkoff
Maxim Görki

Authorized Translation from the Russian by
Emily Jakowleff and Dora B. Montefiore

With a Portrait



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1901

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ALEXEI MAXIMOVITCH PESHKOFF was born March 14, 1869, at Nijni Novgorod. On both his father's and mother's side he belonged to the people; his father followed the trade of a jobbing upholsterer, and his mother was the daughter of a dyer. He was left an orphan when quite young, and he passed then under the care of his grandfather, a cruel and tyrannical old man, who had already so ill-treated young Alexei's father when a lad, that he ran away from home.

Peshkoff attended school for about five months, but having caught smallpox, his grandfather took him away from school, and sent him at the age of nine as errand-boy to a shoemaker. Here the child scalded his hand badly and was sent back to his home. His grandfather next apprenticed him to a draughtsman, from whom young Peshkoff ran away. In order to keep himself he went as galley-boy on a Volga steamer, where he helped the ship's cook. This cook was a reader, and something of a character; he possessed a small library which he

allowed his galley-boy to read, and it was here that the lad felt the first awakening of literary instinct, though he had always, from the time he left school at nine years old, read everything that fell into his hands. The cook's library contained amongst other authors Nekrassoff; translations of the works of Ann Radcliff; a volume of *Sovrememick*, whose editor was Tchernishewsky, the translator and commentator of John Stuart Mill; *Iskra*, and several works in Little Russian; the lives of the saints, and works by some mystical writers; some odd volumes of Dumas, and some Freemasons' literature. This curious collection of miscellaneous writings gave young Peshkoff, now fifteen, a burning desire to obtain some degree of culture, and awoke in him the wish to write. He left the steamer, and wandered to Kazan, where he was told free instruction could be obtained. Here, in order to keep himself, he had to enter a bakery at three roubles, or six shillings, a month; and he speaks of this work as being the hardest that he ever did, with the exception of work in the salt mines, which he describes in one of his essays. A story written later in life, called 'The Outcasts,' is a truthful reflection of the people amongst whom he lived and worked at this period of his life, and it contains much that is autobiographical. He lived amongst these outcasts of society, chopping wood and carrying burdens, earning a living as best he could, and in the intervals