

THE NOVELS OF IVAN TURGENEV

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649659470

The Novels of Ivan Turgenev by Ivan Turgenev & Constance Garnett

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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IVAN TURGENEV & CONSTANCE GARNETT

**THE NOVELS OF
IVAN TURGENEV**

THE NOVELS OF
IVAN TURGENEV
VOLUME XIV

THE NOVELS OF
IVAN TURGENEV

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NEW YORK
MACMILLAN AND CO.

A DESPERATE
CHARACTER

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

IVAN TURGENEV

Translated from the Russian

By CONSTANCE GARNETT

New York

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1899

TO
JOSEPH CONRAD
WHOSE ART IN ESSENCE
OFTEN RECALLS
THE ART AND ESSENCE OF
TURGENEV

INTRODUCTION

THE six tales now translated for the English reader were written by Turgenev at various dates between 1847 and 1881. Their chronological order is:—

<i>Pyetushkov</i> ,	1847
<i>The Brigadier</i> ,	1867
<i>A Strange Story</i> ,	1869
<i>Puin and Baburin</i> ,	1874
<i>Old Portraits</i> ,	1881
<i>A Desperate Character</i> ,	1881

Pyetushkov is the work of a young man of twenty-nine, and its lively, unstrained realism is so bold, intimate, and delicate as to contradict the flattering compliment that the French have paid to one another—that Turgenev had need to dress his art by the aid of French mirrors.

Although *Pyetushkov* shows us, by a certain open *naïveté* of style, that a youthful hand is at work, it is the hand of a young master,

INTRODUCTION

carrying out the realism of the 'forties'—that of Gogol, Balzac, and Dickens—straightway, with finer point, to find a perfect equilibrium free from any bias or caricature. The whole strength and essence of the realistic method has been developed in *Pyetushkov* to its just limits. The Russians are *instinctive* realists, and carry the warmth of life into their pages, which warmth the French seem to lose in clarifying their impressions and crystallising them in art. *Pyetushkov* is not exquisite: it is irresistible. Note how the reader is transported bodily into Pyetushkov's stuffy room, and how the major fairly boils out of the two pages he lives in! (pp. 301, 302). That is *realism* if you like. A woman will see the point of *Pyetushkov* very quickly. Onisim and Vassilissa and the aunt walk and chatter around the stupid Pyetushkov, and glance at him significantly in a manner that reveals everything about these people's world. All the servants who appear in the tales in this volume are hit off so marvellously that one sees the lower-class world, which is such a mystery to certain refined minds, has no secrets for Turgenev.

Of a different, and to our taste more fascinating, *genre* is *The Brigadier*. It is greater art