

*Rudin*

Ivan Turgenev

Translated by Dora O'Brien



ALMA CLASSICS

ALMA CLASSICS LTD  
London House  
243–253 Lower Mortlake Road  
Richmond  
Surrey TW9 2LL  
United Kingdom  
[www.almaclassics.com](http://www.almaclassics.com)

*Rudin* first published in Russian in 1856  
This edition first published by Alma Classics Ltd in 2012  
English translation © Dora O'Brien, 2012

Cover image © Georges Noblet

Background material © Alma Classics Ltd

Printed in Great Britain by CPI Antony Rowe Ltd

Typeset by Tetragon

ISBN: 978-1-84749-226-5

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*Rudin*

## I

IT WAS A QUIET SUMMER MORNING. Although the sun was already quite high in the clear sky, the fields still sparkled with dew; sweet-scented fresh air drifted up from the newly awakened valleys, and in the woods, still damp and not yet filled with noise, the first little birds sang joyfully. On top of a gently sloping hill, covered entirely with rye in its first bloom, you could see a small village. A young woman in a white muslin dress was walking towards this village along a narrow country lane, a round straw hat on her head and a parasol in her hand. A servant boy followed her from a distance.

She walked unhurriedly and seemed to be enjoying her outing. Around her the tall shifting rye moved in long waves with a soft rustling sound, a play of silvery-green ripples one moment and reddish ones the next; the song of skylarks rang high above. The young woman was walking from her own village, which was no more than two thirds of a mile from the small village towards which she was heading. Her name was Alexandra Pavlovna Lipina. She was a widow, childless and quite wealthy. She lived with her brother, Sergei Pavlych Volyntsev, a retired cavalry staff captain. He was unmarried and looked after her estate.

Alexandra Pavlovna reached the village and stopped at the last small log hut, a very ramshackle and low-built one, and, having

summoned her servant boy, she told him to go in and ask after the health of the mistress of the house. He soon came back accompanied by a frail peasant with a white beard.

“Well?” Alexandra Pavlovna asked.

“She’s still alive...” said the old man.

“May I go in?”

“Why, of course you can.”

Alexandra Pavlovna entered the cottage. It was cramped, stuffy and smoky inside... Someone began to stir and moan on the stove bench.\* Alexandra Pavlovna looked round and in the semi-darkness caught sight of an old woman’s wrinkled yellow head wrapped in a checked headscarf. Covered right up to her chin by a heavy peasant coat, she was breathing with difficulty, making helpless gestures with her emaciated hands.

Alexandra Pavlovna came close to the old woman and put her fingers to her forehead... it was burning hot.

“How are you feeling, Matryona?” she asked, leaning over the stove bench.

“Oh, oh!” moaned the old woman, peering at Alexandra Pavlovna. “Very bad, dear one! The final hour has come, my dearest!”

“God is merciful, Matryona: perhaps you’ll get better. Have you taken the medicine I sent you?”

The old woman groaned miserably and gave no reply. She had not heard the question.

“She took it,” said the old man, still standing in the doorway.

Alexandra Pavlovna turned to him.

“Does she have anyone else with her besides you?” she asked.

“There’s a girl, her granddaughter, but she goes off all the time. She won’t sit still, she’s so fidgety. Even giving a drink of water to the old woman seems too much. And I’m old myself: what can I do?”

“Could we not transfer her to my hospital?”

“No! Why to hospital? She’ll die anyway. She’s lived her life and this is evidently God’s will. She won’t move from the bench.

What's the point of her going to hospital? As soon as they start to lift her, she'll die."

"Oh," the invalid began to moan, "my lovely lady, don't abandon my little orphan; our own masters are far away, but you..."

The old woman fell silent. Talking was too much of an effort for her.

"Don't worry," said Alexandra Pavlovna. "Everything will be done. Look, I brought you some tea and sugar. Drink some if you want... You do have a samovar, don't you?" she added, glancing at the old man.

"A samovar? We've got no samovar here, but we could get hold of one."

"Then get it or else I'll send over mine. And tell her granddaughter not to keep away. Tell her it's shameful behaviour."

The old man gave no reply, but he took the bundle with the tea and sugar in both his hands.

"Well, goodbye Matryona!" said Alexandra Pavlovna. "I'll be back again, so don't lose heart and do take your medicine as required..."

The old woman raised her head and reached out for Alexandra Pavlovna.

"Give me your hand, my lady," she murmured.

Alexandra did not give her hand, but bent down and kissed her forehead.

"Be sure to give her the medicine just as prescribed," she said to the old man as she went out. "And do give her some tea."

Again the old man gave no reply and only bowed.

Alexandra Pavlovna breathed a sigh of relief as she found herself out in the fresh air. She opened her parasol and was about to make her way home when suddenly a man of about thirty, wearing an old overcoat made of grey calamanco\* and a cap of the same material, came round the corner of the small cottage driving a low-slung racing droshky. When he caught sight of Alexandra Pavlovna, he immediately stopped his horse and turned to her.

His face, broad and colourless, with small pale-grey eyes and a whitish moustache, matched the colour of his clothes.

“Greetings,” he said with a lazy smile, “and what might you be doing here, if I may ask?”

“I’ve been visiting a sick woman... And where have you come from, Mikhailo Mikhailych?”

The man named Mikhailo Mikhailych looked her in the eyes and smiled again.

“You do well,” he went on, “to visit a sick woman; only wouldn’t it be better if she were transferred to hospital?”

“She’s too weak; she shouldn’t be moved.”

“And aren’t you intending to close down your hospital?”

“Close it down? Why?”

“Just a thought.”

“What a strange idea! How did that enter your head?”

“Well, you’re always keeping company with Lasunskaya and seem to be influenced by her. According to her, hospitals and schools are all nonsense, unnecessary inventions. Charity ought to be a personal thing, as should education: it’s all a matter of the soul... at least that’s how she seems to express it. Whose tune is she singing, I’d like to know?”

Alexandra Pavlovna burst out laughing.

“Darya Mikhailovna is a clever woman and I like and respect her a lot, but even she can be mistaken and I don’t believe every word she says.”

“And you do very well not to,” replied Mikhailo Mikhailych, still not getting out of the droshky, “because she herself has little belief in her own words. And I’m really happy to have run into you.”

“Why so?”

“What a question! As if it isn’t always a pleasure to run into you! Today you’re as fresh and sweet as the morning.”

Alexandra Pavlovna laughed again.

“Why are you laughing?”



“What do you mean, why? If only you could have seen the disinterested, cold look on your face when you delivered your compliment! I’m surprised that you didn’t end it with a yawn.”

“A cold look... You’re always in need of fire, but fire is no use at all. It blazes, gives off smoke and goes out.”

“And gives out warmth,” Alexandra Pavlovna added.

“Yes... and it will burn you.”

“And what if it does burn! That’s not a disaster. It’s always better than—”

“And I’ll be watching to see if you’ll say that once you’ve been well and truly burnt,” Mikhailo Mikhailych interrupted her crossly and flicked his horse with the reins. “Farewell!”

“Mikhailo Mikhailych, wait!” Alexandra Pavlovna called out. “When are you coming over to see us?”

“Tomorrow. Give my regards to your brother.”

And the droshky drove off.

Alexandra Pavlovna watched Mikhailo Mikhailych go.

“What a sack!” she thought. All hunched up, covered in dust, with his cap shoved to the back of his head and yellow strands of straggly hair sticking out from under it, he did indeed look like a big sack of flour.

Alexandra Pavlovna quietly made her way home. She walked with her eyes cast down. The clatter of a horse’s hooves close by made her stop and raise her head... Her brother was coming towards her on horseback. Alongside him walked a short young man in an unbuttoned, flimsy little jacket, a flimsy little necktie and a flimsy grey hat, carrying a small walking stick. He had already been smiling at Alexandra Pavlovna for a while, even though he could see that she was lost in thought and oblivious to everything, but as soon as she stopped, he walked over to her and said joyfully, almost fondly:

“Good day, Alexandra Pavlovna, good day!”

“Ah, Kostantin Diomidych! Good day!” she replied. “Have you come from Darya Mikhailovna’s?”

“Yes, indeed so, ma’am, indeed so,” responded the young man with a beaming face. “From Darya Mikhailovna’s. Darya Mikhailovna sent me over to you, ma’am; I chose to come on foot... The morning is so wonderful and it’s only three miles away. I arrive at your house: you’re not there, ma’am. Your dear brother tells me that you’ve gone to Semyonovka, and that he himself is on his way to the fields; so I’ve come over with him, ma’am, to meet you. Yes indeed, ma’am. How pleasant this is!”

The young man spoke Russian clearly and correctly but with a foreign accent, although it was hard to determine precisely which accent. There was something Asiatic about his features. A long hooked nose, big bulging eyes with a fixed stare, thick red lips, a sloping forehead, jet-black hair – everything about him suggested oriental roots. But the young man’s surname was Pandalevsky, and he called Odessa his birthplace, although he had been brought up somewhere in Belorussia at the expense of a benevolent wealthy widow. Another widow helped him to a government post. On the whole, middle-aged ladies were happy to support Konstantin Diomidych: he knew how to exploit them. He was even now living in the home of Darya Mikhailovna Lasunskaya, a wealthy landowner, as an adopted son or a hanger-on. He was very affectionate, obliging, sensitive and secretly sensual; he had a pleasant voice, played the piano reasonably well and when speaking to anyone had a habit of staring fixedly at that person. He dressed very neatly, wore his clothes for an unusually long time, carefully shaved his broad chin and meticulously combed each strand of his hair.

Alexandra Pavlovna listened to his speech to the end and turned to her brother.

“Today is a day for meeting people: I’ve just been talking to Lezhnev.”

“Oh, him! Was he on his way somewhere?”

“Yes – and just imagine, in a racing droshky, wearing a kind of linen sack all covered in dust... what an oddball he is!”

“That may be so, but he’s a good man.”

“Who’s that? Mr Lezhnev?” Pandalevsky asked, as though surprised.

“Yes, Mikhailo Mikhailovich Lezhnev,” Volyntsev replied. “However, goodbye, sister, it’s time for me to go to the fields; they’re sowing buckwheat on your land. Mr Pandalevsky will escort you home...”

And Volyntsev drove his horse to a trot.

“With the greatest pleasure!” exclaimed Konstantin Diomidych, and offered Alexandra Pavlovna his arm.

She gave him hers and they set off on the path to her estate.

Walking with Alexandra Pavlovna on his arm evidently gave Konstantin Diomidych great pleasure. He tripped along smiling, and his oriental eyes even grew moist, something that, incidentally, happened not infrequently: it cost Konstantin Diomidych nothing at all to feel touched and to shed a tear. And who would not have been pleased to have a pretty, young and slender woman on his arm? The whole of — province was in complete agreement that Alexandra Pavlovna was charming, and — province was not mistaken. Her straight yet ever so slightly turned-up little nose alone could drive any mortal to distraction, not to mention her small velvety-brown eyes, her golden-brown hair, the dimples in her round little cheeks and other beautiful attributes. But best of all was the expression on her pretty face: trusting, kind and gentle, it was both touching and attractive. Alexandra Pavlovna looked and laughed like a child; the landowners’ wives found her unpretentious... Could one wish for anything more?

“Did you say that Darya Mikhailovna sent you over to me?” she asked Pandalevsky.

“Yeth, ma’am, she did,” he replied, pronouncing the letter “s” as “th”. “They very much wish and ordered me to persuade you to come to dinner today... They” – Pandalevsky, when speaking about a third person, particularly when referring to a lady, kept

strictly to the third person plural – “they are expecting a new guest, with whom they absolutely wish to acquaint you.”

“Who is it?”

“A certain Muffel, a baron, a *kammerjunker*\* from St Petersburg. Darya Mikhailovna recently made his acquaintance at Prince Garin’s, and they speak of him with great praise as a gracious and educated young man. Baron Muffel is also involved in literature, or, should I say... Oh, what a delightful butterfly! Be so kind as to turn your attention to it... or, should I say, involved in political economy. He has written an article on some very interesting issue – and wishes to submit it to Darya Mikhailovna’s judgement.”

“An article on political economy?”

“From the perspective of language, Alexandra Pavlovna, from the perspective of language, ma’am. I imagine you are aware that in that field, too, Darya Mikhailovna is an expert, ma’am. Zhukovsky\* sought their advice, as did my benefactor, that invaluable elderly gentleman Roxolan Mediarovich Ksandyka, who lives in Odessa... The name is surely familiar to you?”

“Not in the least; I’ve never heard of him.”

“You’ve never heard of that man? Amazing! I wanted to say that Roxolan Mediarovich, too, had a very high opinion of Darya Mikhailovna’s knowledge of the Russian language.”

“And is this baron not a pedant?” asked Alexandra Pavlovna.

“No, not at all, ma’am; Darya Mikhailovna says that, on the contrary, you can immediately discern that he belongs to high society. He spoke so eloquently about Beethoven that even the old prince was in ecstasy... I have to admit that I wish I had heard him myself: it’s my field, after all. Allow me to present you with this beautiful wild flower.”

Alexandra Pavlovna took the flower and dropped it on the path a few steps farther. There were no more than about two hundred steps left to her house. Recently built and whitewashed, with its bright wide windows, it emerged welcomingly from the dense green foliage of ancient limes and maples.

“So what would you wish me to report to Darya Mikhailovna?” Pandalevsky began, slightly offended by the plight of the flower he had offered her. “Will you come to dinner? They are also inviting your brother.”

“Yes, we’ll certainly come. And how’s Natasha?”

“Natalya Alexeyevna is well, ma’am, thank God... But we’ve already gone past the turning to Darya Mikhailovna’s estate. Allow me to take my leave.”

Alexandra Pavlovna stopped.

“But won’t you come in?” she asked hesitantly.

“I would sincerely wish to, ma’am, but I’m afraid of running late. Darya Mikhailovna wishes to hear Thalberg’s\* new *étude*: therefore I need to prepare myself and learn it. Moreover I have to admit that I doubt my conversation would afford you any pleasure.”

“But no... why ever...”

Pandalevsky sighed and lowered his eyes meaningfully.

“Goodbye, Alexandra Pavlovna!” he said, and after a short silence he bowed and took a step backwards.

Alexandra Pavlovna turned and went home.

Konstantin Diomidych also went home. All sweetness instantly vanished from his face: a self-assured, almost steely expression replaced it. Even Kostantin Diomidych’s walk altered; he took broader steps and trod more heavily. He had covered about a mile, casually swinging his walking stick when he suddenly grinned again: by the side of the road he caught sight of quite a pretty young peasant girl who was driving some calves away from the oats. Konstantin Diomidych moved cautiously, like a tomcat, towards the young girl and began to talk to her. At first she remained silent, only blushing and giggling, but in the end she covered her lips with her sleeve, turned away and said:

“Do go away, sir...”

Konstantin Diomidych shook his finger at her and ordered her to bring him some cornflowers.

"What do you want with cornflowers? To make a garland, is it?" retorted the young girl. "Do go away, do..."

"Listen to me, my sweet little beauty," Konstantin Diomidych began to say...

"Do go away," the young girl interrupted him. "The young masters are just coming."

Konstantin Diomidych turned round to look. Vanya and Petya, Darya Mikhailovna's sons, were indeed running along the road. They were followed by their tutor, Basistov, a young man of twenty-two who had just finished his studies. Basistov was a burly young man with a simple face, a large nose, thick lips and little piggy eyes; he was unattractive and awkward, but kind, honest and forthright. He dressed carelessly and let his hair grow, which was not due to vanity but rather to laziness. He liked eating and he liked sleeping, but he also liked a good book and a heated conversation, and he hated Pandalevsky wholeheartedly.

Darya Mikhailovna's children adored Basistov and were not afraid of him at all. He got on well with everyone else in the household, which did not entirely please the lady of the house, however much she declared that she herself was without prejudice.

"Good day, my dear little ones!" said Konstantin Diomidych. "How early you've come out for a walk today! But I," he added, turning to Basistov, "have already been out quite a while; delighting in nature is my passion."

"We saw how you were delighting in nature," muttered Basistov.

"You're a materialist: God knows what you're thinking this very instant. I know you!"

When speaking to Basistov or people of that ilk, Pandalevsky would become mildly irritated and enunciate the letter "s" clearly, even with a slight hissing sound.

"And so, you were asking that young girl the way, were you?" said Basistov, moving his eyes right and left.

He felt Pandalevsky looking at him straight in the face and it was a most unpleasant sensation.

“I repeat: you’re a materialist and nothing more. You manifestly wish to see only the commonplace in everything...”

“Children!” Basistov suddenly commanded. “See the willow in the meadow: let’s see who runs to it quickest... One! Two! Three!”

And the children rushed off towards the willow as fast as they could go. Basistov dashed after them...

“Peasant!” thought Pandalevsky. “He’ll spoil those little boys... An absolute peasant!”

And, casting a smug glance over his own neat and elegant little figure, Pandalevsky tapped his jacket sleeve a couple of times with outstretched fingers, tweaked his collar and walked on. Back in his room he put on an old dressing gown and sat down at the piano with a preoccupied air.

DARYA MIKHAILOVNA LASUNSKAYA'S HOUSE was considered more or less the best in the whole of — province. Huge, built of stone, constructed from drawings by Rastrelli,\* in line with the taste of the previous century, it rose majestically on the crest of a hill, at the foot of which flowed one of central Russia's major rivers. Darya Mikhailovna was herself a prominent and wealthy lady, widow of a privy councillor. Despite Pandalevsky's declarations that she knew the whole of Europe and that Europe knew her too! Europe, however, knew her little, and she did not even play a significant role in St Petersburg. In Moscow, on the other hand, everyone knew her and went to see her. She belonged to high society and had the reputation of being a rather peculiar woman, not all kindness but extremely clever. She had been a beauty in her youth. Poets had written verses to her, young men had fallen in love with her, important gentlemen had trailed after her. But about twenty-five or thirty years had gone by since then and not a trace remained of those former charms. "Can this skinny, sallow, sharp-nosed and still not old woman really have been a beauty once upon a time?" anyone who saw her for the first time would instinctively ask. "Is she that same one who inspired lyres to be plucked?" And each would be amazed inwardly at the transience of all earthly things. Pandalevsky, it is true to say,



found that Darya Mikhailovna's magnificent eyes were amazingly undimmed, but, then again, this was the same Pandalevsky who alleged that the whole of Europe knew her.

Each summer Darya Mikhailovna came to her home in the country with her children (she had three of them: a seventeen-year-old daughter, Natalya, and two sons, ten and nine years old) and lived openly; in other words she received men, particularly bachelors, as visitors in her home; she could not bear provincial ladies! But then those ladies did give her a hard time! According to them, Darya Mikhailovna was proud and immoral and a terrible tyrant, and above all she was so free in her conversation that it was quite dreadful! Darya Mikhailovna did indeed not like to restrain herself in the country, and in the carefree simplicity of her manner you could notice a slight touch of contempt felt by a lioness from the capital city for those rather ignorant and shallow creatures surrounding her... She treated her city acquaintances equally casually and even mockingly, but the touch of contempt was not there.

Incidentally, reader, have you noticed that a person who is unusually inattentive in the company of his inferiors is never so with his superiors? Why should that be? Then again, such questions lead nowhere.

When Konstantin Diomidych, after having finally memorized Thalberg's *étude*, left his neat and pretty room to go down to the drawing room, he found the whole household already assembled there. The salon had already begun. The lady of the house had made herself comfortable on a wide couch with her legs tucked beneath her, holding a new French pamphlet in her hands for all to see. Darya Mikhailovna's daughter sat by the window working on her embroidery, as did Mademoiselle Boncourt, the governess, a thin old maid of about sixty, with a black wig beneath a colourful bonnet and with cotton wool in her ears. In the corner by the door sat Basistov reading a newspaper, and Petya and Vanya were playing draughts beside him; while leaning against the stove with

his hands behind his back was a short gentleman with dishevelled grey hair, a dark complexion and small darting black eyes – a certain Afrikan Semyonich Pigasov.

He was a strange man this Mr Pigasov. Resentful of everything and everyone – particularly women – he poured out abuse from morning till night, at times very much to the point, at others quite randomly, but always with delight. His irascibility reached the point of childishness; his laugh, the sound of his voice, his whole being, seemed to be permeated with bile. Darya Mikhailovna received Pigasov gladly: his outbursts entertained her. They were indeed quite funny. He just loved to exaggerate everything. For example, no matter what misfortune was mentioned in his presence – whether he was told that a village had been set ablaze by lightning or water had burst through a mill or that a peasant had chopped off his arm with an axe – he would invariably ask with concentrated malice: “And what’s her name?” In other words, what was the name of the woman who had caused that misfortune, because according to him a woman was the cause of any misfortune, if only the matter were looked into thoroughly. He once threw himself on his knees before a lady he barely knew, who was plying him with food, and began tearfully but with rage written all over his face to entreat her to spare him, saying that he had never wronged her and that he would never come near her again. Once a horse whisked one of Darya Mikhailovna’s laundry maids down a hill, toppled her into a ditch and almost killed her. From then on, Pigasov never called that horse anything but a dear, dear little horse and he found the hill itself and the ditch particularly picturesque places. Things in life had not worked out well for Pigasov – and it was as a result of this that he had assumed such a ridiculous role. He came from poor parents. His father had occupied various trivial posts, was barely literate and took no interest in his son’s upbringing; he fed him and clothed him, nothing more. His mother spoilt him but soon died. Pigasov took charge of his own education. He

put himself through a district school followed by a gymnasium, learnt languages – French, German and even Latin – and having graduated from the gymnasium with an excellent certificate, went to Derpt,\* where he constantly struggled with deprivation, but held out to the end of the three-year course. Pigasov's talents were not out of the ordinary; he was notable for his patience and persistence, but he had a particularly strong ambition: a desire to wind up in good society, not to lag behind, to spite fate. He had studied diligently and it was ambition that drove him on to Derpt University. Poverty angered him and cultivated in him strong powers of observation and guile. He expressed himself singularly; from his youth onwards he had developed his own particular peevish and tetchy way with words. His ideas did not rise above the ordinary, but he spoke in such a way that he could appear to be not only an intelligent but even a very intelligent man. Having obtained his bachelor's degree, Pigasov decided to dedicate himself to an academic profession. He understood that in every other field he would not be able to keep pace with his friends (he attempted to choose them from the higher circles and knew how to ingratiate himself with them, flattering them even, although he still kept on spouting abuse). But at this point, bluntly speaking, he was made of the wrong material. Self-taught, though not through a love of learning, Pigasov essentially possessed too little knowledge. He caved in bitterly during a public debate, whereas another student, with whom he shared a room and whom he continually made fun of, a person of limited intellect who had, however, received a proper and solid education, triumphed convincingly. This failure infuriated Pigasov: he threw all his textbooks and exercise books into the fire and joined the civil service. Things went rather well at first. He was a first-class official, not a very efficient one, but extremely sure of himself and alert. But he was too eager for recognition – he got into a muddle, slipped up and had to retire. He spent about three years at home on a small country estate that he had acquired through his own