

Anna Karenina



“The truth is we are not to take *Anna Karenina* as a work of art: we are to take it as a piece of life.”

Matthew Arnold

“*Anna Karenina* is a perfect work of art. This novel contains a humane message that has not yet been heeded in Europe and that is much needed by the people of the western world.”

Fyodor Dostoevsky

“What I confidently named the greatest social novel of world literature is in fact a novel *against* society.”

Thomas Mann

“Tolstoy’s greatness lies in not turning the story into sentimental tragedy... His world is huge and vast, filled with complex family lives and great social events. His characters are well-rounded presences. They have complete passions: a desire for love, but also an inner moral depth.”

Malcolm Bradbury

“It’s so fantastic that it can be read over and over again... I don’t know any other writer who is so adept at peopling their pages.”

Maggie O’Farrell

“Tolstoy is the greatest Russian writer of prose fiction.”

Vladimir Nabokov

ONEWORLD CLASSICS

Anna Karenina

Leo Tolstoy

Translated by Kyril Zinovieff
and Jenny Hughes



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CLASSICS

ONEWORLD CLASSICS LTD
London House
243-253 Lower Mortlake Road
Richmond
Surrey TW9 2LL
United Kingdom
www.oneworldclassics.com

Anna Karenina first published in 1878
This translation first published by Oneworld Classics Limited in 2008
Translation, Preface, Translators' Note and Notes © Kyril Zinovieff and Jenny Hughes, 2008

Typeset by Alma Books Ltd

Printed in Sweden by ScandBook AG

ISBN: 978-1-84749-059-9

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Preface

LEO TOLSTOY ONCE REMARKED that he was not a writer but a landowner (or, maybe, a farmer) who wrote. He is not always easy to interpret. He probably meant that, when his farming duties permitted, he wrote down his opinions on more or less anything which he felt could be useful to mankind.

By the end of *Anna Karenina*, however, one is left with the feeling not so much that one has just read something that Tolstoy has written as that the author has just concluded a long, discursive, conversation with the reader. The author of *Anna Karenina* seems to talk rather than write. Of course, he has a story to tell. But he also wants to have a discussion: about spiritualism, about raspberry jam and amateur painters and whether children should be taught French and women should go to university, about Wagner and wet nurses and the Balkan War and the absurdities of medical science. Above all, he wants to exchange views about the so-called Great Reforms of Alexander II which were being introduced during the 1860s and 1870s and which effectively realized the main demands of the Decembrists whom Alexander's father, Nicolas I, had crushed and punished nearly fifty years before.

The odd thing about Tolstoy's views on the Great Reforms, which were perhaps Russia's first and last hope of peacefully becoming a modern state and of avoiding a violent revolution, is that they were almost entirely reactionary. Emancipate the serfs (1861)? Russian agriculture would never prosper again. Expand secondary education? People would be worrying their heads about the partition of Poland in the eighteenth century when they ought to be getting in the hay. Make the judiciary independent, with juries and non-stipendiary magistrates (1864)? A waste of everyone's time. Abolish corporal punishment (1874)? Soldiers would be drunk all the time instead of only half of it. Transfer a measure of autocratic power from the centre to elected local councils (1864 and 1870)? What a farce!

Unfortunately, the Reforms were followed by successive attempts on the Emperor's life by revolutionary societies, causing the government

to pause and introduce restrictive measures which in turn increased political discontent. The final attempt at assassination (1881) killed Alexander II, who died with the draft of his last reform (it would have taken a first step towards introducing a limited constitution) in his pocket and all progress came to an end in the repressive regime of Alexander III. But why was Tolstoy so scathing, so dismissive about it all? And why did he choose to devote so many pages of *Anna Karenina* to mocking these attempts to improve the governance of Russia?

Because he no longer believed, if he ever had, in the efficacy of reform. Evolutionary changes in laws or institutions were distractions from the true path of improvement which lay only through the human soul; which was personal, spiritual and revelatory. His consuming preoccupation, at this time and until he died, was to discover a meaning for life which was consistent with the inescapable fact that all lives end in death. (This is probably the explanation of the fact that the only chapter in *Anna Karenina* to be given a heading, Chapter 20, Part V, is given the heading of *Death*.) Before he had completed *Anna Karenina*, in 1877, Tolstoy the farmer, the writer and the conversationalist was in the process of discovering Tolstoy the prophet.

Less than two years later, in 1879, he had published his painful solution to his problem in *A Confession*:

“Man’s purpose in life is to save his soul; in order to save his soul he must live according to God. In order to live according to God one must renounce all the comforts of life; work, be humble, suffer and be merciful.”

So it would be necessary to walk away from the familiar, comfortable, complacent life of “the minority of those of us who are parasites” and renounce “the life of our class, having recognized that it is not life but only a semblance of life, and that the conditions of luxury in which we live deprive us of the possibility of understanding life.”

The first flash of this revelation appears in Chapter 11, Part VIII of *Anna Karenina*. Levin is talking to a peasant about why one peasant can make a farm profitable while another cannot, and the answer comes:

“Fokanych is a just old man... he lives for his soul’s sake, he does, bears God in mind, too’... ‘Yes, yes, I see what you mean, goodbye,’

said Levin, breathless with excitement. Turning away, he took his stick and walked off quickly in the direction of his house. At the peasant's words that Fokanych lived for his soul's sake, righteously, the way God willed, vague but significant thoughts seemed to rush out in a crowd from where they had been confined and, making for a single goal, whirled round in his head, blinding him with their light."

It is to tell us about this critical moment in his own life, as well perhaps as to tie up a few loose ends, that Tolstoy adds Part VIII to his love story, after his heroine has suffered the terrible penalty for her transgression and that story itself is over. The period during which Tolstoy was writing *Anna Karenina* overlaps (by about two years) what he describes as "the religious struggles" which brought him to write *A Confession*. So there is a sense in which *A Confession* should be regarded as Part IX of *Anna Karenina*.

Meanwhile, before he leaves it for ever, there is pleasure still to be had from describing the luxurious life of the parasitic minority, not in a literary style but in the colloquial vocabulary and idiomatic phrases of upper class Russians of his time. (In *War and Peace*, written five years before, much of the conversation is conducted in French. In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy puts most of it directly into Russian, though occasionally it reads like a translation from the French.) There is pleasure, too, in talking about everything these people would talk about; pleasure in describing, with consummate brilliance, their mannerisms, their affectations, their hypocrisies and their genuine emotions; pleasure in using the names of his friends and relations: so Oblonsky is a slightly amended form of Obolensky, Shcherbatsky of Shcherbatov, Levin of his own Christian name, Lev. (In the third draft, later changed, Levin even acquires Tolstoy's patronymic Nikolayevich.)

Indeed, Tolstoy himself appears in *Anna Karenina* more distinctly and in thinner disguise than anywhere else in his fictional writing. And *Yasnaya Polyana* appears too, room by room and copse by copse, in the descriptions of Levin's estate at Pokrovskoe. Levin goes haymaking; Levin's brother Nikolai dies of tuberculosis; Levin proposes to the girl he wants to marry with chalk marks on the green baize card-table; Levin gives her his bachelor diaries to read, loses his dress shirt and is late for his own wedding; Levin hides the rope in case he should

hang himself – all these things happen to Levin but not before they had happened to Tolstoy. Even Levin’s attempts to introduce his peasants to improved agricultural methods were prefigured by Tolstoy in *A Landowner’s Morning* (1856).

And yet, familiar though all this territory is and absorbing the conversation, Tolstoy took from early 1873 until April 1877 to write *Anna Karenina*. He starts off gaily enough in March 1873: “I have today finished in rough a very lively, ardent, finished novel which will be ready... in two weeks” (letter not sent). But by March 1874 “I don’t like it at all at present...it’s terribly repulsive and disgusting”; and in the summer of 1875 he is talking about “boring, commonplace *Anna Karenina*...if only someone would finish it for me.” Slowly, one feels, as Anna and Vronsky’s love affair darkens and as society turns its back on the doomed lovers, Tolstoy is trying to distance himself from the comfortable world of his class and has gone in search of salvation.

None of this detracts from the power and perception of the love story that he originally set out to tell. He had finished *War and Peace* in 1869. By 1870, he is trying to write about Peter the Great but is so repelled by him that he cannot go on. So he abandons Peter in favour of a primer for elementary school children, full of folk lore and fairy stories, which was published in 1872 to a disappointing response.

But already images in the story of *Anna Karenina* are flickering across his field of vision: in February 1870, he wrote to his wife that he had imagined “a type of married upper-class woman who had lost herself” and that one of his problems was “to make this woman only pitiful and not guilty”. (In the end, perhaps, he seems to think her guilty *as well as* pitiful, as she takes over his story. Years later, he quotes Pushkin: “Imagine what my Tatiana* has done – she’s got married. I should never have expected that of her”, and adds: “I could say just the same about my Anna Karenina. My characters sometimes do things that I would not wish”. Elsewhere he explains that he had reworked a certain episode four times and “it still seemed to me that it was noticeable on whose side I was. And I have noticed that everything, every story, makes an impression only when one cannot make out with whom the author’s sympathy lies.” (Perhaps this explains why Tolstoy chose the pitiless quotation from Romans 12:19 – “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” – as the epigraph to a novel that otherwise brims over with pity.)

At the end of 1870 he actually begins a story, which peters out, about a landowner who kills his unfaithful wife. Early in 1872, he goes off to view the corpse of Anna Pirogova, the mistress of a country neighbour who had thrown herself under a train when her lover married somebody else. At the beginning of March 1873 he writes to his sister, impressed by a strange pamphlet by Alexandre Dumas *fils* entitled *L'Homme-femme*, in which Dumas argues uncharacteristically that a husband, as the moral mentor of a marriage, might be justified in killing an unfaithful wife who refused to repent. At about the same time, he picks up Pushkin's *Tales of Belkin*, thinking they might interest his son, and finds a fragment which begins: "The guests were gathering at the dacha..." And he was off: "involuntarily, unexpectedly, without knowing myself why or what would come of it, I thought up characters and events, began to continue it, then of course altered it, and suddenly it came together..." (The first draft of the novel, following the stimulus of the Pushkin fragment, actually began with the guests arriving at Princess Betsy's *soirée* in Part II, Chapter 6.) It didn't, of course, come finally together for another four years. "I wanted to have a bit of fun with this novel," he writes dejectedly in August 1873, "and now I can't finish it and am afraid that it will come out bad".

But Parts I, II and the first twelve chapters of Part III appeared in Katkov's *Russian Herald* between January and April 1875. The rest of Part III and Part IV appeared in the first four issues of 1876, Part V in December and, by April 1877, he had "finished everything" except corrections to the final proofs. Then there was a *contretemps* with Katkov, a highly political publisher whose views on the Balkan War did not coincide with Tolstoy's and who refused to publish Part VIII without major amendment. So Tolstoy and the editor of the book version of the novel, Nikolai Strakhov, published Part VIII on its own.

Anna Karenina was finished and appeared in book form in 1878. Tolstoy had been so sure it was going to be a novel that he wrote to Strakhov in May 1873: "This novel – precisely a novel, the first in my life – has gripped me..." which was a strange thing to say only four years after finishing what was arguably the greatest and certainly one of the longest novels in the world; another Tolstoyan conundrum that is difficult to interpret. He probably said it because he disliked people referring to *War and Peace* as a novel. But it turned out to be an even less adequate description of *Anna Karenina*. The "lively, ardent novel"

was in the event combined in a seamless whole with an *apologia* for his spiritual life, and wrapped around with entrancing conversation from a disappearing world. It marks the fulcrum of Tolstoy's life. It also contains, unforgettably, a heart-breaking passage of what is now called "stream of consciousness", as Anna makes her way to the station through the summer streets of Moscow under the influence of opium and utter despair.

Translators' Note

We have tried to keep to Tolstoy's own stylistic rules: in particular that meaning is what matters and simplicity is the key to it. If repetition makes the meaning clearer, even repetition that may appear clumsy, then repeat. Above all avoid what Tolstoy called *pisat krasivo* (fine writing).

Simplicity, for Tolstoy, did not preclude long – sometimes very long – sentences and we haven't always followed him to the end of that road. To English ears, some sentences lose clarity with excessive length. For the most part, we have let Tolstoy's sentences run but, on rare occasions when we have found ourselves seriously out of breath, we have introduced a pause – usually by means of a non-Tolstoyan semi-colon.

If we have tried to keep as near to the original as possible, there have been times when a literal translation seemed to obscure, rather than reveal, the meaning. An example is the end of Vronsky's steeplechase in Part II, Chapter 25. In the Russian, Frou-Frou increases her speed (*pribavlyayet khodu*) several times between the last three fences before she flies over the last small ditch and Vronsky, coming down on the saddle as she lands, breaks her back. It was a traumatic accident, not just for poor Frou-Frou but for Vronsky for whom "the memory remained in his heart for a long time as the bitterest and most agonising memory of his life". We had both read this passage several times but only recently confessed that we had always failed to understand why Vronsky blamed himself so bitterly; it was only a ditch, after all, so why did an awkward landing break her back? And why did Vronsky find himself so shamefully at fault? But in English, you don't say that a horse increases its speed; you say what actually happens, which is that it lengthens its stride. Frou-Frou lengthened her stride finally – and disastrously – as she approached this last small ditch in response to Vronsky unnecessarily working the reins on her neck – something that a wise jockey does after, and not before,

he clears the last fence and comes into the straight. It was unnecessary because Vronsky already knew he had the race in the bag; he just wanted to finish with a flourish. But the result was that Frou-Frou's stride was so long and therefore her back so extended (Tolstoy tells us that Vronsky could feel how near the ground he was) that the slightest pressure on the wrong part of her spine would be liable to crack it. And it did.

Sometimes, too, it has seemed almost perverse to translate literally certain Russian sayings, phrases, proverbs, when there was an English equivalent lying close to hand. Thus Oblonsky, quoting Pushkin (Boris Godunov) on how heavy "the cap of Monomakh" (the cap of State which in early Russia took the place of a crown) "sits on the Tsar's head" converts effortlessly into Shakespeare's "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (Henry IV).

And then there are the occasions when Tolstoy himself seems deliberately to tease the Russian reader with results that are bound to confuse the English one. In *Anna Karenina*, he twice describes rich and elegant women going about town in dog fur. On the first occasion, Princess Betsy, paying a visit to the convalescent Anna in Petersburg, hands her cloak of white American dog (*rotunda iz beloy amerikanskoy sobaki*) to the footman, himself resplendent in a bear-skin cape (Part IV, Chapter 19); on the second, Kitty's older sister Natalya waits in her white canine cloak (*v svoey beloy sobachey rotunde*) for Levin to take her to a concert in Moscow (Part VII, Chapter 4). Both women, we already know, move in high society. What can they be thinking of? Some translators have balked at dog fur and offered more or less likely alternatives: white sheepskin (unlikely in the circumstances), white mink, etc; some have stuck to the literal translation with a faintly absurd result. But what the women are wearing is *pesets* – the fur of the white arctic fox which at one time was considered by Russians to be the smartest and most expensive of all furs. Tolstoy is employing a literary device, one he uses on other occasions when he wants to send something up to ridicule: he fragments, or deconstructs, the normal image and "makes it strange" (*ostranneniye*, as it was subsequently labelled by the critic Victor Shklovsky), describing its components in unfamiliar and unflattering terms. On this occasion the device is etymological: *pesets* is derived from the Slavonic *pes*, meaning dog; a fox is a kind of dog (a male fox is, after all, a dog fox); the common Russian word for dog is *sobaka*; so Tolstoy, to indicate his distaste for such conspicuous

consumption, “makes” the fashionable cloaks “strange” and dresses his grand ladies in white dog (at least one of them from Hudson Bay rather than Siberia), thus inviting us to view them from a sardonic distance.

A small point of protocol: we have translated *general-adyoutant* and *polkovnik c axelbantami* as equerry having the rank of, in the first case, general and in the second, colonel. An equerry is an officer in attendance on the Sovereign and wears *aiguillettes* (*axelbantami*, a braided knot of sharp pencils for writing down the royal orders). *Adyoutant* is more usually translated as *aide de camp*, but an A.D.C. is strictly speaking an officer in attendance merely on a more senior officer, and is not entitled to wear *aiguillettes*.

Finally, there is the question of names. Russians address people, almost everybody except children and intimates, by their Christian name combined with their patronymic (derived from their father’s name). To do this in English every time it is done in Russian tends to weigh down sentences and, sometimes, to confuse identities. In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy often uses just the surnames of his chief male characters (Levin, Karenin, Vronsky, Oblonsky) and the nicknames of his leading ladies (Dolly, Kitty, Betsy). But not, of course, when they are being referred to by other characters. Thus one suddenly encounters Konstatin Dmitrich or Darya Alexandrovna and takes time to recognize Levin and Dolly in unfamiliar guise. We have adopted a kind of solution, less than perfect but the best we thought could be done, as follows: at least once in the text, we give the character their full Christian name and patronymic (where available) and elsewhere, if the meaning or the rhythm or common sense seems to require, we drop off the patronymic (Agafya, for instance, and Countess Lidia). In the case of some minor players, whose roles are so brief that there is scarcely time to register their patronymics, e.g. the various doctors, we have replaced the name and patronymic simply by their title.

As an aid to English readers, we have appended a list of the main characters with their Christian names, patronymics and surnames (where available), nicknames and titles (where appropriate), in the alphabetical order of their Christian names. For simplicity, surnames are with one exception given in the masculine form. The exception is Anna herself since the novel is universally known by the feminine form of her surname, *Anna Karenina*.

Acknowledgements

Like all translators of *Anna Karenina* into English, we owe a debt of gratitude to Constance Garnett whose original and delightful translation introduced the novel to English readers in 1901.

But our special thanks are due to C.J.G. Turner of Vancouver whose *A Karenina Companion* was published by the Wilfred Laurier University Press in Ontario, 1993. We recommend this small Companion (220 pages) most highly to anyone who wants to arrive at a full understanding of how the novel came to be written and of some things to look out for when reading it.

Finally, we would like to dedicate this book to K.Z.'s late wife, April Fitzlyon. Many years ago, she and K.Z. were commissioned to undertake a translation which, for a variety of reasons, remained unpublished. The present version is the result of a thorough reworking of that original commission. But April's contribution remains substantial.

– K.Z. and J.H., April 2008

Main Characters
with their
patronymics, nicknames and surnames

Agafya Mikhailovna – *Agafya* – Levin’s housekeeper
Alexei Alexandrovich – *Karenin* – Anna’s husband
Alexei Kirillych – Count *Vronsky*
Anna Arkadyevna – *Anna Karenina* – Karenin’s wife, Oblonsky’s sister
Anna Pavlovna – Madame Petrov, wife of a dying painter at a German spa
Darya Alexandrovna – *Dolly* – Princess Oblonsky, Kitty’s sister, Oblonsky’s wife
Yekaterina Alexandrovna Shcherbatsky – *Kitty* – Dolly’s sister, marries Levin
Yelizaveta Fyodorevna – *Betsy* – Princess Tverskoy, Vronsky’s first cousin
Ivan Petrovich – Vorkuyev, a publisher
Konstantin Dmitrich – *Kostya* – *Levin*, marries Kitty
Lidia Ivanovna – *Countess Lidia* – Karenin’s friend
Marya Nikolayevna – *Masha* – Nikolai Levin’s mistress
Matryona Filimonovna – nurse to the Oblonsky children
Mikhail Vasilyevich – *Slyudin*, Karenin’s private secretary
Nikolai Dmitrich – *Nikolai Levin* – Konstantin’s brother, Koznyshev’s half-brother
Nikolai Ivanovich – *Sviyazhsky* – Levin’s country neighbour and Marshal of Nobility
Sergei Alexeyevich – *Seryozha* – son of Anna and Karenin
Sergei Ivanovich – *Koznyshev* – half-brother of Konstantin and Nikolai Levin
Sergei Arkadyevich – *Stiva* – Prince *Oblonsky*, Anna’s brother, Dolly’s husband
Varvara Andreyevna – *Varenka* – Kitty’s friend
Vasily Lukich – house tutor to Seryozha

Anna Karenina

*Vengeance is mine, and I will repay.**

Part One

1

ALL HAPPY FAMILIES ARE ALIKE; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

There was total confusion in the Oblonsky home. The wife had found that the husband was having an adulterous affair with their former French governess and had announced to her husband that she could no longer live under the same roof with him. This state of affairs had been going on for three days, and was acutely distressing to both husband and wife as well as to all the members of the family and to the servants. All the members of the family and the servants felt there was no point in their living together under the same roof and that people happening to meet at the same inn would have closer ties between them than they – the members of the Oblonsky family and their servants – had. The wife would not leave her own rooms and the husband had not been home for three days. The children were wandering about the house like lost souls; the English governess had quarrelled with the housekeeper and had written a note to a friend asking her to find a new job for her; the chef had left the day before while dinner was in progress; the under-cook and the coachman had given notice.

On the third day after the quarrel, Prince Stepan Oblonsky – Stiva, as he was called by his friends – awoke at the usual time, that is at eight o'clock in the morning, not in his wife's bedroom but on the morocco-leather sofa in his study. He turned his ample, well-groomed body on the springs of the sofa as if getting ready for another long sleep, clasped the pillow tightly from the other side, and pressed his cheek into it; but then he suddenly jumped up, sat down on the sofa, and opened his eyes.

“Well, now, how did it go?” he reflected, trying to recall his dream. “How was it now? Oh yes! Alabin was giving a dinner in Darmstadt; no, not in Darmstadt, there was something American about it. That's right, Darmstadt was in America in that dream. Oh yes, and Alabin

was giving a dinner on glass tables, yes – and the tables were singing *Il mio tesoro*, and yet it wasn't *Il mio tesoro* but something better, and then there were some sort of little decanters, and the decanters were women," he mused.

A mischievous twinkle lit up Oblonsky's eyes and he smiled as he mused. "Oh, it was nice, very nice. There was a lot more in it too, splendid stuff, but you can't put it into words, nor even express it in thoughts when it's not in a dream." And, noticing a shaft of light streaming in at the side of one of the cloth curtains, he gaily swung his feet off the sofa, feeling for his gold morocco slippers, which his wife had embroidered for his birthday the year before; then, from a habit of nine years' standing, he did not bother to get up but stretched out his hand to the place where in his bedroom his dressing gown hung. And it was then that he suddenly remembered how and why he came to be sleeping not in his wife's bedroom but in his study; the smile vanished from his face and was replaced by a frown.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! O-o-o-oh!" he groaned, as he remembered everything that had happened. And in his imagination he once more visualized his quarrel with his wife in all its details, all the hopelessness of his position and, most agonizing of all, his own guilt.

"No, she won't and can't forgive me. And the worse of it is that I'm to blame for it all – I'm to blame, and yet it's not my fault. Indeed, that's the whole tragedy," he thought. "Oh! Oh! Oh!" he repeated in despair, recalling what, for him, had been the most painful impressions of the quarrel.

Most unpleasant of all had been that first moment when, returning from the theatre gay and pleased with life, with a huge pear in his hand for his wife, he had not found her in the drawing room; to his astonishment he had not found her in the study either, and finally saw her in the bedroom, holding in her hand the wretched note which revealed everything.

Dolly, the perpetually busy and preoccupied and not, he thought, very bright Dolly, was sitting motionless with the note in her hand and looking at him with an expression of horror, despair and fury.

"What is this? What is it?" she had asked, pointing to the note.

And as is often the case, it was not so much what he had actually done that tormented Oblonsky when he remembered the incident as the way in which he had responded to his wife's words.

What happened to him at that moment was what happens to people when they are unexpectedly caught out at something all too shameful. He had not been able to compose his face suitably for the situation in which his wife's discovery of his guilt placed him. Instead of taking offence, denying the whole thing, justifying himself, asking forgiveness, or even remaining unconcerned – anything would have been better than what he in fact did! – his face quite automatically and suddenly (“a reflex of the brain”, thought Oblonsky, who was addicted to physiology) broke into its usual, amiable, and therefore silly, smile.

He could not forgive himself for that silly smile. Dolly had winced on seeing it, as if from physical pain, and bursting out with her usual vehemence into a stream of savage words, had run out of the room. Since then she refused to see her husband.

“That silly smile was to blame for everything,” thought Oblonsky.

“But what is to be done? What can I do?” he asked himself in despair, and found no answer.

2

OBLONSKY WAS A MAN who was honest with himself. He could not deceive himself by convincing himself that he was sorry for what he had done. He could not now be sorry that he, a handsome, amorous man of thirty-four, was not in love with his wife, who was only a year younger than he was and the mother of five living children and two who had died.* He was sorry only that he had not been able to hide things better from his wife. But he felt all the gravity of his situation, and pitied his wife, his children and himself. Perhaps he would have contrived to hide his sins better from his wife had he expected this news to have such an effect on her. He had never thought over this question clearly, but he hazily imagined that his wife had guessed long ago that he was unfaithful to her and turned a blind eye to it. It even seemed to him that a woman like her, worn out, ageing, by then plain and in no way remarkable, unassuming, just the good-natured mother of a family, should, out of a sense of fairness, have been forbearing. It had turned out quite otherwise.

“Oh, it's terrible! Oh dear! It's terrible!” Oblonsky repeated to himself, and could think of no solution. “And how splendid everything

was before it happened, how well we got on! She was contented, happy with the children, I did not interfere with her at all, let her deal with the children, with the household, just as she wished. True, it wasn't a good thing that *she* was a governess in our house. It wasn't a good thing. There's something trite, something vulgar, about making love to one's children's governess. But what a governess!" (He vividly recalled Mlle Roland's mischievous black eyes and her smile.) "But after all I did not take any liberties while she was living under our roof. And the worst of it all is that she is already... It's just as if it were all on purpose! Oh! Oh! But what, what's to be done?"

There was no answer, apart from that general answer which life gives to the most complicated and insoluble questions, which is that one must live from day to day, that is, "forget oneself". To forget oneself in sleep was no longer possible, at any rate until night time; it was no longer possible to go back to that music which the little decanter-women had sung; he had therefore to forget himself in the dream of life.

"Well, we'll see," said Oblonsky. He got up, put on a grey dressing gown lined with blue silk, knotted the cord, took a deep breath, filling his broad chest to capacity and, going to the window with the usual sprightly step of his turned out feet which so easily carried his ample body, raised the blind and rang loudly. The bell was immediately answered by his old friend and valet, Matvei, who was carrying his clothes, his boots and a telegram. Matvei was followed by a barber with shaving tackle.

"Are there any papers from the office?" asked Oblonsky, taking the telegram and sitting down at the looking glass.

"They are on the table," answered Matvei, giving his master a questioning and sympathetic look, and added with a sly smile after a moment's pause: "Someone came from the livery stables."

Oblonsky did not reply and merely glanced at Matvei in the looking glass; but the glance they thus exchanged revealed how well they understood one another. Oblonsky's look seemed to say: "Why do you say that? Don't you know what's happened?"

Matvei put his hands in the pockets of his jacket, moved his foot, and looked at his master in silence with a good-natured, hardly perceptible smile.

“I told him to come back on Sunday and, till then, not to trouble you or himself for nothing,” he said, in an obviously prepared phrase.

Oblonsky saw that Matvei wanted to have a little joke, in order to attract attention to himself. Tearing open the telegram, he read it, guessing some of the words, garbled as usual, and his face brightened.

“Matvei, my sister Anna Arkadyevna* is coming tomorrow,” he said, momentarily staying the barber’s shiny, plump hand which was clearing a pink pathway through his long, curly whiskers.

“Thank God!” said Matvei, indicating by this answer that, like his master, he understood the significance of this arrival, that is that Oblonsky’s favourite sister Anna might effect a reconciliation between husband and wife.

“Alone, or with her husband?” asked Matvei.

Oblonsky could not speak, as the barber was busy with his upper lip, and so he raised one finger. Matvei nodded his head in the looking glass.

“Alone. Shall I have a room prepared upstairs?”

“Ask Princess Oblonsky. Let her decide.”

“Princess Oblonsky?” repeated Matvei, as if in doubt.

“Yes, ask her. And here, take the telegram to her and see what she says.”

“Want to play it that way, do you?” Matvei thought to himself, but he only said:

“Very good, sir.”

Oblonsky was already washed and brushed and was about to dress when Matvei, treading slowly in his squeaky boots, re-entered the room, telegram in hand. The barber had left.

“Princess Oblonsky told me to say she was going away. Let him – you, that is – do what he likes, she said.” And he stood staring at his master, head on one side and hands in pockets, with only his eyes laughing.

Oblonsky was silent for a moment. Then a kind and rather pathetic smile appeared on his handsome face.

“Well? Well, Matvei?” he said, shaking his head.

“Don’t worry, sir, it’ll sort itself out.”

“Sort itself out?”

“That’s right, sir.”

“You think so? Who’s that there?” asked Oblonsky, hearing the rustle of a woman’s dress outside the door.

“It’s me, sir,” said a firm and pleasant female voice, and the stern, pock-marked face of the nurse Matryona Filimonovna was thrust round the door.

“Well, what is it, Matryona?” asked Oblonsky, going up to her at the door.

Though Oblonsky was entirely in the wrong in regard to his wife and was himself aware of it, almost everyone in the house, even the nurse, Princess Oblonsky’s principal friend, was on his side.

“Well, what is it?” he said, dejected.

“You go to her, sir, and own up again you’re in the wrong. God will help, perhaps. She’s suffering ever so, it’s a shame to see, and the whole house is upset. You must take pity on the children, sir. Confess you’re in the wrong, sir. It can’t be helped! If you have your fun...”

“But she won’t see me...”

“But you do your bit. God is merciful, pray to God, sir, pray to God.”

“All right, you can go now,” said Oblonsky, suddenly blushing. “Well, now let’s get dressed,” he added, turning to Matvei and he threw off his dressing gown with an air of resolution.

Matvei was already holding out, like a horse’s collar, the shirt he had prepared; he blew at an invisible speck and, with obvious relish, enveloped his master’s well-groomed body in it.

3

WHEN HE HAD FINISHED DRESSING, Oblonsky sprayed himself with toilet water, adjusted his cuffs and automatically distributed cigarettes, pocket book, matches and watch with its double chain and bunch of charms in various pockets, shook out his handkerchief, and, feeling clean, fragrant, healthy, and in good spirits in spite of his misfortune, went, with a slight bounce at each step, into the dining room where, waiting for him, was his coffee and, beside the coffee, letters and papers from the office.

He read the letters. One was very unpleasant – from a merchant who was buying timber on his wife’s estate. It was essential to sell that timber; but now, until he had made peace with his wife, it was quite out of the question. What made this all the more unpleasant was that

a financial consideration was thereby involved in his reconciliation with his wife. And the thought that he might be influenced by this consideration – seeking a reconciliation with his wife in order to sell the timber – wounded his susceptibilities.

When he had finished with the letters, Oblonsky drew towards him the papers from the office, quickly went through two of them, made a few notes with a large pencil and, pushing them aside, turned to the coffee; while he was drinking he opened the morning paper, which was still damp, and started to read it.

Oblonsky subscribed to, and read, a liberal paper, not one which was extreme but one which expressed the majority viewpoint. And though, strictly speaking, neither science, nor art, nor politics interested him, he firmly held the same views on all these subjects as those held by the majority and by his newspaper, and changed them only when the majority changed its ideas or, rather, did not change them; it was they that imperceptibly changed in his mind.

Oblonsky did not choose either trends or points of view; but trends and points of view came to him of their own accord, just as he did not choose the shape of his hats or coats but took those which everyone was wearing. And as he moved in a certain set and had a need for some intellectual activity such as usually develops with mature years, it was as essential to have points of view as it was to have a hat. If there was any reason why he preferred liberal to conservative ideas, which were also held by many of his set, it was not because he thought liberal ideas more sound but because they fitted in better with the pattern of his life. The liberals said that everything in Russia was bad, and indeed Oblonsky had many debts and quite definitely not enough money. The liberals said that marriage was a dying institution and that it was essential to reform it, and indeed family life gave Oblonsky little satisfaction, and forced him to lie and to dissemble, which was quite abhorrent to his nature. The liberals said, or rather, implied, that religion was only a bridle to restrain the barbarous section of the population, and indeed Oblonsky could not endure standing through even a short service in church without getting pains in his legs, and could not understand why there should be so much terrifying and high-flown talk about the next world when it could be great fun living in this one. At the same time Oblonsky, who was fond of a joke, sometimes enjoyed embarrassing a conventional man by telling him that indulgence in pride of ancestry

should not make one stop at Rurik* and repudiate one's first ancestor – the ape. Thus, liberal ideas became a habit with Oblonsky, and he loved his newspaper, like his post-prandial cigar, for the slight haze which it produced in his head. He read the leading article, which pointed out that there was no reason nowadays for the cry that radicalism was threatening to swallow up all conservative elements and that it was the government's duty to adopt measures to crush the hydra of revolution; on the contrary, "in our opinion, the danger lies not in the imaginary hydra of revolution, but in the tenacity of traditionalism, holding back progress", and so on. He read another article, too, on finance, which mentioned Bentham and Mill* and which made digs at the Ministry. With his naturally quick perception he realized the significance of each dig; where it originated, for whom it was intended and what had occasioned it, and this, as usual, gave him a certain pleasure. But today that pleasure was poisoned by memories of Matryona's advice and of the unsatisfactory situation at home. He also read that Count Beist,* according to rumours, had gone to Wiesbaden, that one need no longer have grey hair, that a light carriage was for sale, and that a young person was offering her services; but this information did not give him the mild ironical pleasure that it usually did.

Having finished the newspaper, a second cup of coffee, and a roll and butter, he got up, brushed the crumbs from his waistcoat and, expanding his broad chest, smiled happily – not because he had anything particularly pleasant on his conscience; his happy smile was occasioned by a good digestion.

But that happy smile immediately reminded him of everything, and he sank into thought.

Two childish voices (Oblonsky recognized the voice of Grisha, who was his youngest boy, and Tanya, his eldest girl) could be heard outside the door. They were pulling something along and had overturned it.

"I told you you can't put passengers on the roof," shouted the little girl in English. "Now pick them up!"

"Everything is topsy-turvy," thought Oblonsky. "There are the children, running about by themselves." He went up to the door and called them. They abandoned the box which they were pretending was a train, and came to their father.

The girl, her father's favourite, rushed confidently in, threw her arms round his neck and clung on, laughing, delighted as always by

the familiar smell of scent exuded by his whiskers. Then at last she kissed his face, flushed from stooping and beaming with tenderness, unclasped her arms and was about to run away; but her father held her back.

“How is Mama?” he asked, stroking his daughter’s smooth, soft little neck. “Hullo,” he said, smiling at the boy who had come to greet him. He was conscious that he was less fond of the boy than of the girl, and always tried to treat them equally; but the boy felt this, and did not reciprocate his father’s chilly smile.

“Mama? She’s up,” the little girl replied.

Oblonsky sighed. “That means she’s spent another sleepless night,” he thought.

“Well, is she in a good mood?”

The little girl knew that there had been a quarrel between her father and mother, and that her mother could not be in a good mood, and that her father must have known this, and that by asking her about it so lightly he was being hypocritical. And she blushed for her father. He realized this immediately, and blushed too.

“I don’t know,” she said. “She didn’t say we were to have lessons, but said we were to go for a walk with Miss Hull to Grandmama’s.”

“Well, go along then, Tanya darling. Oh yes, wait a minute,” he said, still holding her and stroking her soft little hand.

He took a box of sweets from the mantelpiece, where he had placed it the day before, and chose two of her favourites, a chocolate and a fondant.

“For Grisha?” she asked, pointing to the chocolate.

“Yes, yes.” He gave her little shoulder another pat, kissed the nape of her neck, and let her go.

“The carriage is ready,” said Matvei. “And there’s a woman come to ask you something,” he added.

“Has she been here long?” asked Oblonsky.

“Half an hour or so.”

“How many times have I told you to come and tell me at once!”

“Well, you have to have time at least to finish your coffee,” said Matvei in that semi-gruff, semi-friendly tone at which it was impossible to take offence.

“Well, show her in at once, then,” said Oblonsky, frowning in vexation.

The woman, the widow of a captain called Kalinin, had come with an impossible and muddle-headed request; but Oblonsky, as was his wont, asked her to sit down, listened to her attentively, without interrupting, and gave her detailed advice about whom she should apply to, and how, and even wrote in his large, sprawling, handsome and easily legible handwriting, a brisk and businesslike note for her to a person who might help her. When he had dismissed her, Oblonsky took his hat and paused to think if he had forgotten anything. It appeared that he had forgotten nothing except what he wanted to forget – his wife.

“Oh yes!” He hung his head, and an expression of dejection came over his handsome face. “Shall I go to see her, or not?” he asked himself. And an inner voice told him that he should not go, that apart from hypocrisy nothing would come of it, that nothing could come of it, that it was not possible to mend or patch up their relationship, because it was not possible to make her attractive and capable of exciting love again, or to make him into an old man, incapable of loving. Apart from hypocrisy and lies nothing could come of it now; and hypocrisy and lies were abhorrent to his nature.

“But still, it will have to be done sooner or later; after all it can’t be left like this,” he said, trying to give himself courage. He straightened himself, took out a cigarette, lit it, puffed at it twice, threw it into a mother-of-pearl shell which served as an ashtray, and with quick steps went through the gloomy drawing room and opened another door into his wife’s bedroom.

4

DOLLY, wearing a dressing jacket, her now thin, but formerly thick and beautiful, hair plaited and pinned at the nape of her neck, her face lean and haggard, thus adding prominence to her big, frightened eyes, stood, surrounded by articles strewn all over the room, in front of a chest of drawers from which she was taking something out. Hearing her husband’s step, she paused in what she was doing and looked at the door, trying vainly to assume a stern and contemptuous expression. She felt that she was afraid of him, and afraid of the forthcoming encounter. She had just been trying to do what she had tried to do at least a dozen times already in the last three days: sort out those of her own and the

children's things which she would take to her mother's – and once again she could not bring herself to do it; but now, as at the previous attempts, she told herself that the present situation could not continue, that she must take some sort of action, punish him, shame him, pay him back if only for a small part of the pain he had inflicted on her. She was still saying she would leave him, but felt this to be impossible; it was impossible because she could not get out of the habit of considering him as her husband, and of loving him. Moreover, she felt that if here, in her own home, she had scarcely been able to cope with her five children, they would be worse off in the place she intended to take them to. As it was, during the last three days, the youngest had fallen ill because he had been given some bad broth and the others had almost gone without their dinner the day before. She felt that it was impossible to leave; but, deceiving herself, she continued all the same to sift through the things and to pretend that she would leave.

When she saw her husband, she put her hand into a drawer, as if searching for something, and only looked round at him when he had come right up to her. But instead of having looked stern and resolute as she had intended, her face expressed perplexity and suffering.

“Dolly!” he said, in a low, timid voice. He bowed his head, hunched his shoulders, and tried to look pathetic and submissive, but nevertheless radiated freshness and health.

With a quick glance she took in his radiantly fresh and healthy figure. “Oh certainly, he's happy and content!” she thought. “And what about me? And that repulsive good nature of his, which everyone loves and praises him for – I loathe his good nature,” she thought. Her mouth contracted, a muscle twitched on the right-hand side of her pale, nervous face.

“What do you want?” she asked quickly, in a hoarse, unnatural voice.

“Dolly!” he repeated, with a tremor in his voice. “Anna is coming today.”

“What's that got to do with me? I can't receive her!” she cried.

“But really, Dolly, you must...”

“Go away! Go away! Go away!” she cried, without looking at him, as if her cry was provoked by physical pain.

Oblonsky could remain calm when he thought about his wife, could hope that, to use Matvei's expression, it would all *sort itself out*, and

could calmly read his paper and drink his coffee; but when he saw her haggard, suffering face, when he heard that sound in her resigned, despairing voice, he caught his breath, felt a lump in his throat, and his eyes shone with tears.

“My God! What have I done! Dolly! For God’s sake!... After all...” He could not go on – for he was choking with sobs.

She shut the drawer with a bang and looked at him.

“Dolly, what can I say?... Only one thing: forgive me, forgive me... Think back, can’t nine years of life atone for moments, moments...”

She lowered her eyes and listened, waiting to see what he would say, as if begging him somehow to convince her.

“Moments of infatuation...” he managed to utter, and would have continued, but at that word, as if from physical pain, again her mouth contracted, and again a muscle twitched on the right-hand side of her face.

“Go away, get out of here!” she shrieked even more shrilly. “And don’t talk to me about your infatuations and your abominations!”

She turned to go, but reeled and clutched the back of a chair for support. His face dilated, his lips swelled, and his eyes filled with tears.

“Dolly!” he said, sobbing by now. “For God’s sake, think of the children; they are not to blame. I am to blame, so you punish me, tell me to atone for my guilt. I am ready to do everything I can! I am to blame, there are no words to express my guilt! But Dolly, forgive me!”

She sat down. He could hear her painful, loud breathing and felt unutterably sorry for her. She made several attempts to speak, but failed. He waited.

“You think of the children when you want to play with them, Stiva, but I always think of them and know that now their life is ruined,” she said, obviously using one of the phrases which she had repeated to herself many times during the last three days.

She had called him “Stiva”, and he looked at her with gratitude and made a move to take her hand; but she moved away from him with repugnance.

“I am thinking of the children and therefore would do anything in the world to save them; but I don’t know myself how to save them: whether by taking them away from their father, or by leaving them with a dissolute father – yes, a dissolute father... Now tell me, after...”

what has happened, how could we possibly go on living together? How could we possibly? Well tell me, how could we possibly?” she repeated, raising her voice. “After my husband, the father of my children, has embarked on a liaison with his children’s governess...”

“But what’s to be done then? What’s to be done?” he said in a piteous voice, not knowing himself what he was saying, his head drooping lower and lower.

“I think you’re vile, loathsome!” she shrieked, getting more and more worked up. “Your tears are just so much – water! You never loved me; you have no heart, no sense of honour! You are vile, loathsome, a stranger to me, yes, a complete stranger!” She pronounced the word *stranger*, which horrified her, with pain and hatred.

He looked at her, and the hatred expressed on her face frightened and surprised him. He did not realize that his pity for her exasperated her. She saw that he felt pity for her, but not love. “She hates me,” he thought. “She will not forgive me.”

“This is terrible, terrible!” he said.

At that moment in another room a child, which had probably fallen down, cried out; Dolly listened, and her face suddenly softened.

For a few seconds she was obviously trying to collect herself, as if she did not know where she was or what she was doing; then she got up quickly and went towards the door.

“Well, anyway she loves my child,” he thought, noticing how her face had changed at the child’s cry, “*my* child; so how can she hate me?”

“Dolly, just one more word,” he said, going after her.

“If you follow me, I shall call the servants, the children! Let them all know that you are a scoundrel! I am going away today and you can live here with your mistress!”

And she left the room, banging the door behind her.

Oblonsky sighed, wiped his face, and walked slowly out of the room. “Matvei says it’ll sort itself out; but how? I can’t see even a possibility. Oh dear! How awful! And she shouted in such a vulgar way,” he said to himself, recalling her scream and the words “scoundrel” and “mistress”. “And perhaps the maids overheard! It was terribly vulgar, terribly.” Oblonsky stood there alone for a few seconds, wiped his eyes, sighed and, squaring his chest, left the room.

It was Friday, and in the dining room the German clock-maker was winding the clock. Oblonsky remembered the joke he had made about