

ILLUSTRATED



IVAN BUNIN

ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT STORIES:
THE GRAMMAR OF LOVE
THE GENTELMAN FROM SAN FRANCISCO
GENTLE BREATHING
SON, AN UNKNOWN FRIEND

NOBEL PRIZE 1933

Ivan Bunin

**ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT
STORIES:**

**The Grammar of Love, The
Gentelman from San Fransico,
Gentle Breathing, Son, An
Unknown Friend. Nobel Prize
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Illustrated

Ivan Bunin received the 1933 Nobel Prize in Literature "for the strict artistry with which he has carried on the classical Russian traditions in prose writing." Aristocrat to the core, Bunin somehow remained connected to the land and people and keenly felt their pulse of life. His acute observations resulted in the accurate and unforgettable characters who populated his writing.

His love for punctuation and punctilious choice of words is legendary.

Reading Bunin's stories is one of the best ways to understand the mysterious Russian soul and begin to understand one of Russia's greatest periods of literature.

Table of Contents

[The Gentleman from San Francisco](#)

[The Grammar of Love](#)

[Gentle Breathing](#)

[Son](#)

[An Unknown Friend](#)

The Gentleman from San Francisco

“Woe to thee, Babylon, that mighty city!”

Apocalypse

The gentleman from San Francisco-nobody either in Capri or Naples ever remembered his name-was setting out with his wife and daughter for the Old World, to spend there two years of pleasure.

He was fully convinced of his right to rest, to enjoy long and comfortable travels, and so forth. Because, in the first place he was rich, and in the second place, notwithstanding his fifty-eight years, he was just starting to live. Up to the present he had not lived, but only existed; quite well, it is true, yet with all his hopes on the future. He had worked incessantly-and the Chinamen whom he employed by the thousand in his factories knew what that meant. Now at last he realized that a great deal had been accomplished, and that he had almost reached the level of those whom he had taken as his ideals, so he made up his mind to pause for a breathing space. Men of his class usually began their enjoyments with a trip to Europe, India, Egypt. He decided to do the same. He wished naturally to reward himself in the first place for all his years of toil, but he was quite glad that his wife and daughter should also share in his pleasures. True, his wife was not distinguished by any marked susceptibilities, but then elderly American women are all passionate travellers. As for his daughter, a girl no longer young and somewhat delicate, travel was really necessary for her: apart from the question of health, do not happy meetings often take place in the course of travel? One may

find one's self sitting next to a multimillionaire at table, or examining frescoes side by side with him.

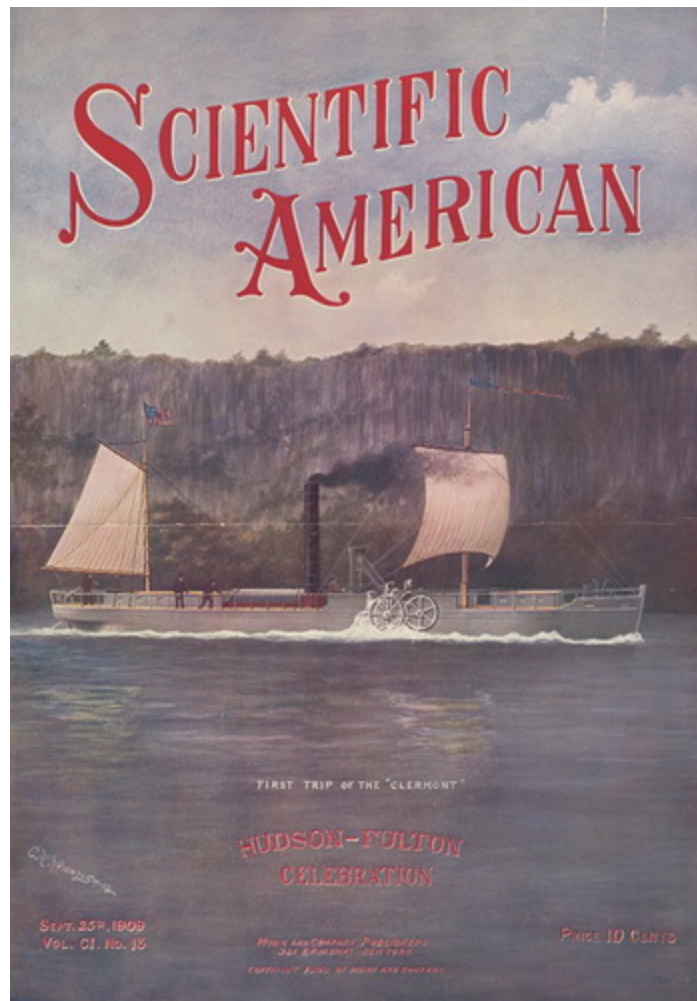


The itinerary planned by the Gentleman of San Francisco was extensive. In December and January he hoped to enjoy the sun of southern Italy, the monuments of antiquity, the tarantella, the serenades of vagrant minstrels, and, finally, that which men of his age are most susceptible to, the love of quite young Neapolitan girls, even when the love is not altogether disinterestedly given. Carnival he thought of spending in Nice, in Monte Carlo, where at that season gathers the most select society, the precise society on which depend all the blessings of civilization-the fashion in evening dress, the stability of thrones, the declaration of

wars, the prosperity of hotels; where some devote themselves passionately to automobile and boat races, others to roulette, others to what is called flirtation, and others to the shooting of pigeons which beautifully soar from their traps over emerald lawns, against a background of forget-me-not sea, instantly to fall, hitting the ground in little white heaps. The beginning of March he wished to devote to Florence, Passion Week in Rome, to hear the music of the Miserere; his plans also included Venice, Paris, bullfights in Seville, bathing in the British Isles; then Athens, Constantinople, Egypt, even Japan... certainly on his way home.... And everything at the outset went splendidly.

It was the end of November. Practically all the way to Gibraltar the voyage passed in icy darkness, varied by storms of wet snow. Yet the ship travelled well, even without much rolling. The passengers on board were many, and all people of some importance. The boat, the famous *Atlantis*, resembled a most expensive European hotel with all modern equipments: a night refreshment bar, Turkish baths, a newspaper printed on board; so that the days aboard the liner passed in the most select manner. The passengers rose early, to the sound of bugles sounding shrilly through the corridors in that grey twilit hour, when day was breaking slowly and sullenly over the grey-green, watery desert, which rolled heavily in the fog. Clad in their flannel pyjamas, the gentlemen took coffee, chocolate, or cocoa, then seated themselves in marble baths, did exercises, thereby whetting their appetite and their sense of well-being, made their toilet for the day, and proceeded to breakfast. Till eleven o'clock they were supposed to stroll cheerfully on deck, breathing the cold freshness of the ocean; or they played table-tennis or other games, that they might have an appetite for their eleven o'clock refreshment of sandwiches and bouillon; after which they read their newspaper with pleasure, and calmly awaited luncheon-which was a still more varied and nourishing meal than breakfast. The two

hours which followed luncheon were devoted to rest. All the decks were crowded with lounge chairs on which lay passengers wrapped in plaids, looking at the mist-heavy sky or the foamy hillocks which flashed behind the bows, and dozing sweetly. Till five o'clock, when, refreshed and lively, they were treated to strong, fragrant tea and sweet cakes. At seven bugle-calls announced a dinner of nine courses. And now the Gentleman from San Francisco, rubbing his hands in a rising flush of vital forces, hastened to his state cabin to dress.



In the evening, the tiers of the *Atlantis* yawned in the darkness as with innumerable fiery eyes, and a multitude of servants in the kitchens, sculleries, wine-cellars, worked