

Alexander
Pushkin



Illustrated
EUGENE
ONEGIN

Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin

Eugene Oneguine

A Romance of Russian Life in Verse

Pretty illustrations by Vladislav Trotsenko provide you with new impressions from reading this legendary story.

"Eugene Onegin" is a novel in the poems of Alexander Pushkin, one of the most significant works of Russian literature. In the novel Pushkin shows the dramatic fate of the aristocratic intelligentsia on a wide background of Russian life.

The plot of the novel is simple and well-known, a love story is in the center of it. In general, novel "Eugene Onegin" reflected the events of the first quarter of the XIX century. Pushkin has been working on this novel for more than seven years.

Translated from the Russian by Lieut.-Col. Henry Spalding.

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Petri de vanite, il avait encore plus de cette espece d'orgueil, qui fait avouer avec la meme indifference les bonnes comme les mauvaises actions, suite d'un sentiment de superiorite, peut-etre imaginaire.

Tire d'une lettre particuliere.

Canto the First

'THE SPLEEN'

'He rushes at life and exhausts the passions.'

Prince Viazemski

/

“My uncle's goodness is extreme,
If seriously he hath disease;
He hath acquired the world's esteem
And nothing more important sees;
A paragon of virtue he!
But what a nuisance it will be,
Chained to his bedside night and day
Without a chance to slip away.
Ye need dissimulation base
A dying man with art to soothe,
Beneath his head the pillow smooth,
And physic bring with mournful face,
To sigh and meditate alone:
When will the devil take his own!”



Thus mused a madcap young, who drove
Through clouds of dust at postal pace,
By the decree of Mighty Jove,
Inheritor of all his race.

Friends of Liudmila and Ruslan,^[1]
Let me present ye to the man,
Who without more prevarication
The hero is of my narration!
Oneguine, O my gentle readers,
Was born beside the Neva, where
It may be ye were born, or there
Have shone as one of fashion's leaders.
I also wandered there of old,
But cannot stand the northern cold.^[2]

///

Having performed his service truly,
Deep into debt his father ran;
Three balls a year he gave ye duly,
At last became a ruined man.
But Eugene was by fate preserved,
For first "madame" his wants observed,
And then "monsieur" supplied her place;^[3]
The boy was wild but full of grace.
"Monsieur l'Abbe," a starving Gaul,
Fearing his pupil to annoy,
Instructed jestingly the boy,
Morality taught scarce at all;
Gently for pranks he would reprove
And in the Summer Garden rove.

IV

When youth's rebellious hour drew near
And my Eugene the path must trace —
The path of hope and tender fear —
Monsieur clean out of doors they chase.
Lo! my Oneguine free as air,
Cropped in the latest style his hair,
Dressed like a London dandy he
The giddy world at last shall see.
He wrote and spoke, so all allowed,
In the French language perfectly,
Danced the mazurka gracefully,
Without the least constraint he bowed.
What more's required? The world replies,
He is a charming youth and wise.

V

We all of us of education
A something somehow have obtained,
Thus, praised be God! a reputation
With us is easily attained.
Oneguine was-so many deemed
[Unerring critics self-esteem'd],
Pedantic although scholar like,
In truth he had the happy trick
Without constraint in conversation
Of touching lightly every theme.
Silent, oracular ye'd see him
Amid a serious disputation,
Then suddenly discharge a joke
The ladies' laughter to provoke.

VI

Latin is just now not in vogue,
But if the truth I must relate,
Oneguine knew enough, the rogue
A mild quotation to translate,
A little Juvenal to spout,
With "vale" finish off a note;
Two verses he could recollect
Of the Aeneid, but incorrect.
In history he took no pleasure,
The dusty chronicles of earth
For him were but of little worth,
Yet still of anecdotes a treasure
Within his memory there lay,
From Romulus unto our day.

VII

For empty sound the rascal swore he
Existence would not make a curse,
Knew not an iamb from a choree,
Although we read him heaps of verse.
Homer, Theocritus, he jeered,
But Adam Smith to read appeared,
And at economy was great;
That is, he could elucidate
How empires store of wealth unfold,
How flourish, why and wherefore less
If the raw product they possess
The medium is required of gold.
The father scarcely understands
His son and mortgages his lands.

VIII

But upon all that Eugene knew
I have no leisure here to dwell,
But say he was a genius who
In one thing really did excel.
It occupied him from a boy,
A labour, torment, yet a joy,
It whiled his idle hours away
And wholly occupied his day —
The amatory science warm,
Which Ovid once immortalized,
For which the poet agonized
Laid down his life of sun and storm
On the steppes of Moldavia lone,
Far from his Italy-his own.^[4]

IX

How soon he learnt deception's art,
Hope to conceal and jealousy,
False confidence or doubt to impart,
Sombre or glad in turn to be,
Haughty appear, subservient,
Obsequious or indifferent!
What languor would his silence show,
How full of fire his speech would glow!
How artless was the note which spoke
Of love again, and yet again;
How deftly could he transport feign!
How bright and tender was his look,
Modest yet daring! And a tear
Would at the proper time appear.

X

How well he played the greenhorn's part
To cheat the inexperienced fair,
Sometimes by pleasing flattery's art,
Sometimes by ready-made despair;
The feeble moment would espy
Of tender years the modesty
Conquer by passion and address,
Await the long-delayed caress.
Avowal then 'twas time to pray,
Attentive to the heart's first beating,
Follow up love — a secret meeting
Arrange without the least delay —
Then, then-well, in some solitude
Lessons to give he understood!

XI

How soon he learnt to titillate
The heart of the inveterate flirt!
Desirous to annihilate
His own antagonists expert,
How bitterly he would malign,
With many a snare their pathway line!
But ye, O happy husbands, ye
With him were friends eternally:
The crafty spouse caressed him, who
By Faublas in his youth was schooled,^[5]
And the suspicious veteran old,
The pompous, swaggering cuckold too,
Who floats contentedly through life,
Proud of his dinners and his wife!

XII

One morn whilst yet in bed he lay,
His valet brings him letters three.
What, invitations? The same day
As many entertainments be!
A ball here, there a children's treat,
Whither shall my rascalion flit?
Whither shall he go first? He'll see,
Perchance he will to all the three.
Meantime in matutinal dress
And hat surnamed a "Bolivar"^[6]
He hies unto the "Boulevard,"
To loiter there in idleness
Until the sleepless Breguet chime^[7]
Announcing to him dinner-time.

XIII

'Tis dark. He seats him in a sleigh,
"Drive on!" the cheerful cry goes forth,
His furs are powdered on the way
By the fine silver of the north.
He bends his course to Talon's, where^[8]
He knows Kaverine will repair.^[9]
He enters. High the cork arose
And Comet champagne foaming flows.
Before him red roast beef is seen
And truffles, dear to youthful eyes,
Flanked by immortal Strasbourg pies,
The choicest flowers of French cuisine,
And Limburg cheese alive and old
Is seen next pine-apples of gold.

XIV

Still thirst fresh draughts of wine compels
To cool the cutlets' seething grease,
When the sonorous Breguet tells
Of the commencement of the piece.
A critic of the stage malicious,
A slave of actresses capricious,
Oneguine was a citizen
Of the domains of the side-scene.
To the theatre he repairs
Where each young critic ready stands,
Capers applauds with clap of hands,
With hisses Cleopatra scares,
Moina recalls for this alone
That all may hear his voice's tone.

XV

Thou fairy-land! Where formerly
Shone pungent Satire's dauntless king,
Von Wisine, friend of liberty,
And Kniajnine, apt at copying.
The young Simeonova too there
With Ozeroff was wont to share
Applause, the people's donative.
There our Katenine did revive
Corneille's majestic genius,
Sarcastic Shakhovskoi brought out
His comedies, a noisy rout,
There Didelot became glorious,
There, there, beneath the side-scene's shade
The drama of my youth was played. [\[10\]](#)

XVI

My goddesses, where are your shades?
Do ye not hear my mournful sighs?
Are ye replaced by other maids
Who cannot conjure former joys?
Shall I your chorus hear anew,
Russia's Terpsichore review
Again in her ethereal dance?
Or will my melancholy glance
On the dull stage find all things changed,
The disenchanted glass direct
Where I can no more recollect? —
A careless looker-on estranged
In silence shall I sit and yawn
And dream of life's delightful dawn?

XVII

The house is crammed. A thousand lamps
On pit, stalls, boxes, brightly blaze,
Impatiently the gallery stamps,
The curtain now they slowly raise.
Obedient to the magic strings,
Brilliant, ethereal, there springs
Forth from the crowd of nymphs surrounding
Istomina^[11] the nimbly-bounding;
With one foot resting on its tip
Slow circling round its fellow swings
And now she skips and now she springs
Like down from Aeolus's lip,
Now her lithe form she arches o'er
And beats with rapid foot the floor.

XVIII

Shouts of applause! Oneguine passes
Between the stalls, along the toes;
Seated, a curious look with glasses
On unknown female forms he throws.
Free scope he yields unto his glance,
Reviews both dress and countenance,
With all dissatisfaction shows.
To male acquaintances he bows,
And finally he deigns let fall
Upon the stage his weary glance.
He yawns, averts his countenance,
Exclaiming, "We must change 'em all!
I long by ballets have been bored,
Now Didelot scarce can be endured!"

XIX

Snakes, satyrs, loves with many a shout
Across the stage still madly sweep,
Whilst the tired serving-men without
Wrapped in their sheepskins soundly sleep.
Still the loud stamping doth not cease,
Still they blow noses, cough, and sneeze,
Still everywhere, without, within,
The lamps illuminating shine;
The steed benumbed still pawing stands
And of the irksome harness tires,
And still the coachmen round the fires^[12]
Abuse their masters, rub their hands:
But Eugene long hath left the press
To array himself in evening dress.

XX

Faithfully shall I now depict,
Portray the solitary den
Wherein the child of fashion strict
Dressed him, undressed, and dressed again?
All that industrial London brings
For tallow, wood and other things
Across the Baltic's salt sea waves,
All which caprice and affluence craves,
All which in Paris eager taste,
Choosing a profitable trade,
For our amusement ever made
And ease and fashionable waste, —
Adorned the apartment of Eugene,
Philosopher just turned eighteen.

XXI

China and bronze the tables weight,
Amber on pipes from Stamboul glows,
And, joy of souls effeminate,
Phials of crystal scents enclose.
Combs of all sizes, files of steel,
Scissors both straight and curved as well,
Of thirty different sorts, lo! brushes
Both for the nails and for the tushes.
Rousseau, I would remark in passing, [\[13\]](#)
Could not conceive how serious Grimm
Dared calmly cleanse his nails 'fore him,
Eloquent raver all-surpassing, —
The friend of liberty and laws
In this case quite mistaken was.



XXII

The most industrious man alive
May yet be studious of his nails;
What boots it with the age to strive?
Custom the despot soon prevails.
A new Kaverine Eugene mine,
Dreading the world's remarks malign,
Was that which we are wont to call
A fop, in dress pedantical.
Three mortal hours per diem he
Would loiter by the looking-glass,
And from his dressing-room would pass
Like Venus when, capriciously,
The goddess would a masquerade
Attend in male attire arrayed.

XXIII

On this artistic retreat
Having once fixed your interest,
I might to connoisseurs repeat
The style in which my hero dressed;
Though I confess I hardly dare
Describe in detail the affair,
Since words like pantaloons, vest, coat,
To Russ indigenous are not;
And also that my feeble verse —
Pardon I ask for such a sin —
With words of foreign origin
Too much I'm given to intersperse,
Though to the Academy I come
And oft its Dictionary thumb. [\[14\]](#)

XXIV

But such is not my project now,
So let us to the ball-room haste,
Whither at headlong speed doth go
Eugene in hackney carriage placed.
Past darkened windows and long streets
Of slumbering citizens he fleets,
Till carriage lamps, a double row,
Cast a gay lustre on the snow,
Which shines with iridescent hues.
He nears a spacious mansion's gate,
By many a lamp illuminate,
And through the lofty windows views
Profiles of lovely dames he knows
And also fashionable beaux.

XXV

Our hero stops and doth alight,
Flies past the porter to the stair,
But, ere he mounts the marble flight,
With hurried hand smooths down his hair.
He enters: in the hall a crowd,
No more the music thunders loud,
Some a mazurka occupies,
Crushing and a confusing noise;
Spurs of the Cavalier Guard clash,
The feet of graceful ladies fly,
And following them ye might espy
Full many a glance like lightning flash,
And by the fiddle's rushing sound
The voice of jealousy is drowned.



XXVI

In my young days of wild delight
On balls I madly used to dote,
Fond declarations they invite
Or the delivery of a note.
So hearken, every worthy spouse,
I would your vigilance arouse,
Attentive be unto my rhymes
And due precautions take betimes.
Ye mothers also, caution use,
Upon your daughters keep an eye,
Employ your glasses constantly,
For otherwise — God only knows!
I lift a warning voice because
I long have ceased to offend the laws.

XXVII

Alas! life's hours which swiftly fly
I've wasted in amusements vain,
But were it not immoral I
Should dearly like a dance again.
I love its furious delight,
The crowd and merriment and light,
The ladies, their fantastic dress,
Also their feet — yet ne'ertheless
Scarcely in Russia can ye find
Three pairs of handsome female feet;
Ah! I still struggle to forget
A pair; though desolate my mind,
Their memory lingers still and seems
To agitate me in my dreams.

XXVIII

When, where, and in what desert land,
Madman, wilt thou from memory raze
Those feet? Alas! on what far strand
Do ye of spring the blossoms graze?
Lapped in your Eastern luxury,
No trace ye left in passing by
Upon the dreary northern snows,
But better loved the soft repose
Of splendid carpets richly wrought.
I once forgot for your sweet cause
The thirst for fame and man's applause,
My country and an exile's lot;
My joy in youth was fleeting e'en
As your light footprints on the green.

XXIX

Diana's bosom, Flora's cheeks,
Are admirable, my dear friend,
But yet Terpsichore bespeaks
Charms more enduring in the end.
For promises her feet reveal
Of untold gain she must conceal,
Their privileged allurements fire
A hidden train of wild desire.
I love them, O my dear Elvine, [\[15\]](#)
Beneath the table-cloth of white,
In winter on the fender bright,
In springtime on the meadows green,
Upon the ball-room's glassy floor
Or by the ocean's rocky shore.

XXX

Beside the stormy sea one day
I envied sore the billows tall,
Which rushed in eager dense array
Enamoured at her feet to fall.
How like the billow I desired
To kiss the feet which I admired!
No, never in the early blaze
Of fiery youth's untutored days
So ardently did I desire
A young Armida's lips to press,
Her cheek of rosy loveliness
Or bosom full of languid fire, —
A gust of passion never tore
My spirit with such pangs before.

XXXI

Another time, so willed it Fate,
Immersed in secret thought I stand
And grasp a stirrup fortunate —
Her foot was in my other hand.
Again imagination blazed,
The contact of the foot I raised
Rekindled in my withered heart
The fires of passion and its smart —
Away! and cease to ring their praise
For ever with thy tattling lyre,
The proud ones are not worth the fire
Of passion they so often raise.
The words and looks of charmers sweet
Are oft deceptive-like their feet.

XXXII

Where is Oneguine? Half asleep,
Straight from the ball to bed he goes,
Whilst Petersburg from slumber deep
The drum already doth arouse.
The shopman and the pedlar rise
And to the Bourse the cabman plies;
The Okhtenka with pitcher speeds, [\[16\]](#)
Crunching the morning snow she treads;
Morning awakes with joyous sound;
The shutters open; to the skies
In column blue the smoke doth rise;
The German baker looks around
His shop, a night-cap on his head,
And pauses oft to serve out bread.

XXXIII

But turning morning into night,
Tired by the ball's incessant noise,
The votary of vain delight
Sleep in the shadowy couch enjoys,
Late in the afternoon to rise,
When the same life before him lies
Till morn-life uniform but gay,
To-morrow just like yesterday.
But was our friend Eugene content,
Free, in the blossom of his spring,
Amidst successes flattering
And pleasure's daily blandishment,
Or vainly 'mid luxurious fare
Was he in health and void of care? —

XXXIV

Even so! His passions soon abated,
Hateful the hollow world became,
Nor long his mind was agitated
By love's inevitable flame.
For treachery had done its worst;
Friendship and friends he likewise curst,
Because he could not gourmandise
Daily beefsteaks and Strasbourg pies
And irrigate them with champagne;
Nor slander viciously could spread
Whene'er he had an aching head;
And, though a plucky scatterbrain,
He finally lost all delight
In bullets, sabres, and in fight.

XXXV

His malady, whose cause I ween
It now to investigate is time,
Was nothing but the British spleen
Transported to our Russian clime.
It gradually possessed his mind;
Though, God be praised! he ne'er designed
To slay himself with blade or ball,
Indifferent he became to all,
And like Childe Harold gloomily
He to the festival repairs,
Nor boston nor the world's affairs
Nor tender glance nor amorous sigh
Impressed him in the least degree, —
Callous to all he seemed to be.

XXXVI

Ye miracles of courtly grace,
He left *you* first, and I must own
The manners of the highest class
Have latterly vexatious grown;
And though perchance a lady may
Discourse of Bentham or of Say,
Yet as a rule their talk I call
Harmless, but quite nonsensical.
Then they're so innocent of vice,
So full of piety, correct,
So prudent, and so circumspect
Stately, devoid of prejudice,
So inaccessible to men,
Their looks alone produce the spleen. [\[17\]](#)

XXXVII

And you, my youthful damsels fair,
Whom latterly one often meets
Urging your droshkies swift as air
Along Saint Petersburg's paved streets,
From you too Eugene took to flight,
Abandoning insane delight,
And isolated from all men,
Yawning betook him to a pen.
He thought to write, but labour long
Inspired him with disgust and so
Nought from his pen did ever flow,
And thus he never fell among
That vicious set whom I don't blame —
Because a member I became.

XXXVIII

Once more to idleness consigned,
He felt the laudable desire
From mere vacuity of mind
The wit of others to acquire.
A case of books he doth obtain —
He reads at random, reads in vain.
This nonsense, that dishonest seems,
This wicked, that absurd he deems,
All are constrained and fetters bear,
Antiquity no pleasure gave,
The moderns of the ancients rave —
Books he abandoned like the fair,
His book-shelf instantly doth drape
With taffety instead of crape.

XXXIX

Having abjured the haunts of men,
Like him renouncing vanity,
His friendship I acquired just then;
His character attracted me.
An innate love of meditation,
Original imagination,
And cool sagacious mind he had:
I was incensed and he was sad.
Both were of passion satiate
And both of dull existence tired,
Extinct the flame which once had fired;
Both were expectant of the hate
With which blind Fortune oft betrays
The very morning of our days.

XL

He who hath lived and living, thinks,
Must e'en despise his kind at last;
He who hath suffered oftentimes shrinks
From shades of the relentless past.
No fond illusions live to soothe,
But memory like a serpent's tooth
With late repentance gnaws and stings.
All this in many cases brings
A charm with it in conversation.
Oneguine's speeches I abhorred
At first, but soon became inured
To the sarcastic observation,
To witticisms and taunts half-vicious
And gloomy epigrams malicious.

XLI

How oft, when on a summer night
Transparent o'er the Neva beamed
The firmament in mellow light,
And when the watery mirror gleamed
No more with pale Diana's rays, [\[18\]](#)
We called to mind our youthful days —
The days of love and of romance!
Then would we muse as in a trance,
Impressionable for an hour,
And breathe the balmy breath of night;
And like the prisoner's our delight
Who for the greenwood quits his tower,
As on the rapid wings of thought
The early days of life we sought.

XLII

Absorbed in melancholy mood
And o'er the granite coping bent,
Onegune meditative stood,
E'en as the poet says he leant.^[19]
'Tis silent all! Alone the cries
Of the night sentinels arise
And from the Millionaya afar^[20]
The sudden rattling of a car.
Lo! on the sleeping river borne,
A boat with splashing oar floats by,
And now we hear delightedly
A jolly song and distant horn;
But sweeter in a midnight dream
Torquato Tasso's strains I deem.

XLIII

Ye billows of blue Hadria's sea,
O Brenta, once more we shall meet
And, inspiration firing me,
Your magic voices I shall greet,
Whose tones Apollo's sons inspire,
And after Albion's proud lyre^[21]
Possess my love and sympathy.
The nights of golden Italy
I'll pass beneath the firmament,
Hid in the gondola's dark shade,
Alone with my Venetian maid,
Now talkative, now reticent;
From her my lips shall learn the tongue
Of love which whilom Petrarch sung.

XLIV