



The Shot

Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeyeovich

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About Pushkin:

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (June 6 [O.S. May 26] 1799 – February 10 [O.S. January 29] 1837) was a Russian Romantic author who is considered to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. Pushkin pioneered the use of vernacular speech in his poems and plays, creating a style of storytelling—mixing drama, romance, and satire—associated with Russian literature ever since and greatly influencing later Russian writers. Born in Moscow, Pushkin published his first poem at the age of fourteen, and was widely recognized by the literary establishment by the time of his graduation from the Imperial Lyceum in Tsarskoe Selo. Pushkin gradually became committed to social reform and emerged as a spokesman for literary radicals; in the early 1820s he clashed with the government, which sent him into exile in southern Russia. While under the strict surveillance of government censors and unable to travel or publish at will, he wrote his most famous play, the drama *Boris Godunov*, but could not publish it until years later. His novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, was published serially from 1823–1831. Pushkin and his wife Natalya Goncharova, whom he married in 1831, later became regulars of court society. In 1837, while falling into greater and greater debt amidst rumors that his wife had started conducting a scandalous affair, Pushkin challenged her alleged lover, Georges d'Anthès, to a duel. Pushkin was mortally wounded and died two days later. Because of his liberal political views and influence on generations of Russian rebels, Pushkin was portrayed by Bolsheviks as an opponent to bourgeois literature and culture and a predecessor of Soviet literature and poetry. They renamed Tsarskoe Selo after him. Source: Wikipedia

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"We fired at each other." — Baratynsky

"I vowed to kill him, according to the code of dueling, and I still have my shot to fire." — 'An Evening on Bivouac'

Chapter 1

WE were stationed in the little town of N——. The life of an officer in the army is well known. In the morning, drill and the riding-school; dinner with the Colonel or at a Jewish restaurant; in the evening, punch and cards. In N—— there was not one open house, not a single marriageable girl. We used to meet in each other's rooms, where, except our uniforms, we never saw anything.

One civilian only was admitted into our society. He was about thirty-five years of age, and therefore we looked upon him as an old fellow. His experience gave him great advantage over us, and his habitual taciturnity, stern disposition and caustic tongue produced a deep impression upon our young minds. Some mystery surrounded his existence; he had the appearance of a Russian, although his name was a foreign one. He had formerly served in the Hussars, and with distinction. Nobody knew the cause that had induced him to retire from the service and settle in a wretched little village, where he lived poorly and, at the same time, extravagantly. He always went on foot, and constantly wore a shabby black overcoat, but the officers of our regiment were ever welcome at his table. His dinners, it is true, never consisted of more than two or three dishes, prepared by a retired soldier, but the champagne flowed like water. Nobody knew what his circumstances were, or what his income was, and nobody dared to question him about them. He had a collection of books, consisting chiefly of works on military matters and a few novels. He willingly lent them to us to read, and never asked for them back; on the other hand, he never returned to the owner the books that were lent to him. His principal amusement was shooting with a pistol. The walls of his room were riddled with bullets, and were as full of holes as a honeycomb. A rich collection of pistols was the only luxury in the humble cottage where he lived. The skill which he had acquired with his favourite weapon was simply incredible; and if he had offered to shoot a pear off somebody's forage-cap, not a man in our regiment would have hesitated to place the object upon his head.

Our conversation often turned upon duels. Silvio — so I will call him — never joined in it. When asked if he had ever fought, he drily replied he had; but he entered into no particulars, and it was evident that such questions were not to his liking. We came to the conclusion that he had upon his conscience the memory of some unhappy victim of his terrible skill. Moreover, it never entered into the head of any of us to suspect him of anything like cowardice. There are persons whose mere look is sufficient to repel such a suspicion. But an unexpected incident occurred which astounded us all.

One day, about ten of our officers dined with Silvio. They drank as usual, that is to say, a great deal. After dinner we asked our host to hold the bank for a game at faro. For a long time he refused, for he hardly ever played, but at last he ordered cards to be brought, placed half a hundred ducats upon the table, and sat down to deal. We took our places round him, and the play began. It was Silvio's custom to preserve a complete silence when playing. He never disputed, and never entered into explanations. If the punter made a mistake in calculating, he immediately paid him the difference or noted down the surplus. We were acquainted with this habit of his, and we always allowed him to have his own way; but among us on this occasion was an officer who had only recently been transferred to our regiment. During the course of the game, this officer absently scored one point too many. Silvio took the chalk and noted down the correct account according to his usual custom. The officer, thinking that he had made a mistake, began to enter into explanations. Silvio continued dealing in silence. The officer, losing patience, took the brush and rubbed out what he considered was wrong. Silvio took the chalk and corrected the score again. The officer, heated with wine, play, and the laughter of his comrades, considered himself grossly insulted, and in his rage he seized a brass candlestick from the table, and hurled it at Silvio, who barely succeeded in avoiding the missile. We were filled with consternation. Silvio rose, white with rage, and with gleaming eyes, said:

"My dear sir, have the goodness to withdraw, and thank God that this has happened in my house."

None of us entertained the slightest doubt as to what the result would be, and we already looked upon our new comrade as a dead man. The officer withdrew, saying that he was ready to answer for his offence in whatever way the banker liked. The play went on for a few minutes longer, but feeling that our host was no longer interested in the game, we withdrew one after the other, and repaired to our respective quarters,

after having exchanged a few words upon the probability of there soon being a vacancy in the regiment.

The next day, at the riding-school, we were already asking each other if the poor lieutenant was still alive, when he himself appeared among us. We put the same question to him, and he replied that he had not yet heard from Silvio. This astonished us. We went to Silvio's house and found him in the courtyard shooting bullet after bullet into an ace pasted upon the gate. He received us as usual, but did not utter a word about the event of the previous evening. Three days passed, and the lieutenant was still alive. We asked each other in astonishment: "Can it be possible that Silvio is not going to fight?"

Silvio did not fight. He was satisfied with a very lame explanation, and became reconciled to his assailant.

This lowered him very much in the opinion of all our young fellows. Want of courage is the last thing to be pardoned by young men, who usually look upon bravery as the chief of all human virtues, and the excuse for every possible fault. But, by degrees, everything became forgotten, and Silvio regained his former influence.

I alone could not approach him on the old footing. Being endowed by nature with a romantic imagination, I had become attached more than all the others to the man whose life was an enigma, and who seemed to me the hero of some mysterious drama. He was fond of me; at least, with me alone did he drop his customary sarcastic tone, and converse on different subjects in a simple and unusually agreeable manner. But after this unlucky evening, the thought that his honour had been tarnished, and that the stain had been allowed to remain upon it in accordance with his own wish, was ever present in my mind, and prevented me treating him as before. I was ashamed to look at him. Silvio was too intelligent and experienced not to observe this and guess the cause of it. This seemed to vex him; at least I observed once or twice a desire on his part to enter into an explanation with me, but I avoided such opportunities, and Silvio gave up the attempt. From that time forward I saw him only in the presence of my comrades, and our confidential conversations came to an end.

The inhabitants of the capital, with minds occupied by so many matters of business and pleasure, have no idea of the many sensations so familiar to the inhabitants of villages and small towns, as, for instance, the awaiting the arrival of the post. On Tuesdays and Fridays our regimental bureau used to be filled with officers: some expecting money, some letters, and others newspapers. The packets were usually opened on the spot, items of news were communicated from one to another, and the

bureau used to present a very animated picture. Silvio used to have his letters addressed to our regiment, and he was generally there to receive them.

One day he received a letter, the seal of which he broke with a look of impatience. As he read the contents, his eyes sparkled. The officers, each occupied with his own letters, did not observe anything.

"Gentlemen," said Silvio, "circumstances demand my immediate departure; I leave to-night. I hope that you will not refuse to dine with me for the last time. I shall expect you, too," he added, turning towards me. "I shall expect you without fail."

With these words he hastily departed, and we, after agreeing to meet at Silvio's dispersed to our various quarters.

I arrived at Silvio's house at the appointed time, and found nearly the whole regiment there. All his things were already packed; nothing remained but the bare, bullet-riddled walls. We sat down to table. Our host was in an excellent humour, and his gaiety was quickly communicated to the rest. Corks popped every moment, glasses foamed incessantly, and, with the utmost warmth, we wished our departing friend a pleasant journey and every happiness. When we rose from the table it was already late in the evening. After having wished everybody good-bye, Silvio took me by the hand and detained me just at the moment when I was preparing to depart.

"I want to speak to you," he said in a low voice.

I stopped behind.

The guests had departed, and we two were left alone. Sitting down opposite each other, we silently lit our pipes. Silvio seemed greatly troubled; not a trace remained of his former convulsive gaiety. The intense pallor of his face, his sparkling eyes, and the thick smoke issuing from his mouth, gave him a truly diabolical appearance. Several minutes elapsed, and then Silvio broke the silence.

"Perhaps we shall never see each other again," said he; "before we part, I should like to have an explanation with you. You may have observed that I care very little for the opinion of other people, but I like you, and I feel that it would be painful to me to leave you with a wrong impression upon your mind."

He paused, and began to knock the ashes out of his pipe. I sat gazing silently at the ground.

"You thought it strange," he continued, "that I did not demand satisfaction from that drunken idiot R—. You will admit, however, that having the choice of weapons, his life was in my hands, while my own was

in no great danger. I could ascribe my forbearance to generosity alone, but I will not tell a lie. If I could have chastised R—— without the least risk to my own life, I should never have pardoned him."

I looked at Silvio with astonishment. Such a confession completely astounded me. Silvio continued:

"Exactly so: I have no right to expose myself to death. Six years ago I received a slap in the face, and my enemy still lives."

My curiosity was greatly excited.

"Did you not fight with him?" I asked. "Circumstances probably separated you."

"I did fight with him," replied Silvio: "and here is a souvenir of our duel."

Silvio rose and took from a cardboard box a red cap with a gold tassel and embroidery (what the French call a *bonnet de police*); he put it on — a bullet had passed through it about an inch above the forehead.

"You know," continued Silvio, "that I served in one of the Hussar regiments. My character is well-known to you: I am accustomed to taking the lead. From my youth this has been my passion. In our time dissoluteness was the fashion, and I was the most outrageous man in the army. We used to boast of our drunkenness: I beat in a drinking bout the famous Bourtsoff, of whom Denis Davidoff has sung. Duels in our regiment were constantly taking place, and in all of them I was either second or principal. My comrades adored me, while the regimental commanders, who were constantly being changed, looked upon me as a necessary evil.

"I was calmly enjoying my reputation, when a young man belonging to a wealthy and distinguished family — I will not mention his name — joined our regiment. Never in my life have I met with such a fortunate fellow! Imagine to yourself youth, wit, beauty, unbounded gaiety, the most reckless bravery, a famous name, untold wealth — imagine all these, and you can form some idea of the effect that he would be sure to produce among us. My supremacy was shaken. Dazzled by my reputation, he began to seek my friendship, but I received him coldly, and without the least regret he held aloof from me. I took a hatred to him. His success in the regiment and in the society of ladies brought me to the verge of despair. I began to seek a quarrel with him; to my epigrams he replied with epigrams which always seemed to me more spontaneous and more cutting than mine, and which were decidedly more amusing, for he joked while I fumed. At last, at a ball given by a Polish landed proprietor, seeing him the object of the attention of all the ladies, and especially of the mistress of the house, with whom I was upon very good

terms, I whispered some grossly insulting remark in his ear. He flamed up and gave me a slap in the face. We grasped our swords; the ladies fainted; we were separated; and that same night we set out to fight.

"The dawn was just breaking. I was standing at the appointed place with my three seconds. With inexplicable impatience I awaited my opponent. The spring sun rose, and it was already growing hot. I saw him coming in the distance. He was walking on foot, accompanied by one second. We advanced to meet him. He approached, holding his cap filled with black cherries. The seconds measured twelve paces for us. I had to fire first, but my agitation was so great, that I could not depend upon the steadiness of my hand; and in order to give myself time to become calm, I ceded to him the first shot. My adversary would not agree to this. It was decided that we should cast lots. The first number fell to him, the constant favourite of fortune. He took aim, and his bullet went through my cap. It was now my turn. His life at last was in my hands; I looked at him eagerly, endeavouring to detect if only the faintest shadow of uneasiness. But he stood in front of my pistol, picking out the ripest cherries from his cap and spitting out the stones, which flew almost as far as my feet. His indifference annoyed me beyond measure. 'What is the use,' thought I, 'of depriving him of life, when he attaches no value whatever to it?' A malicious thought flashed through my mind. I lowered my pistol.

"'You don't seem to be ready for death just at present,' I said to him: 'you wish to have your breakfast; I do not wish to hinder you.'

"'You are not hindering me in the least,' replied he. 'Have the goodness to fire, or just as you please — the shot remains yours; I shall always be ready at your service.'

"I turned to the seconds, informing them that I had no intention of firing that day, and with that the duel came to an end.

"I resigned my commission and retired to this little place. Since then, not a day has passed that I have not thought of revenge. And now my hour has arrived."

Silvio took from his pocket the letter that he had received that morning, and gave it to me to read. Someone (it seemed to be his business agent) wrote to him from Moscow, that a certain person was going to be married to a young and beautiful girl.

"You can guess," said Silvio, "who the certain person is. I am going to Moscow. We shall see if he will look death in the face with as much indifference now, when he is on the eve of being married, as he did once with his cherries!"

With these words, Silvio rose, threw his cap upon the floor, and began pacing up and down the room like a tiger in his cage. I had listened to him in silence; strange conflicting feelings agitated me.

The servant entered and announced that the horses were ready. Silvio grasped my hand tightly, and we embraced each other. He seated himself in his telega, in which lay two trunks, one containing his pistols, the other his effects. We said good-bye once more, and the horses galloped off.

Chapter 2

SEVERAL years passed, and family circumstances compelled me to settle in the poor little village of M—. Occupied with agricultural pursuits, I ceased not to sigh in secret for my former noisy and careless life. The most difficult thing of all was having to accustom myself to passing the spring and winter evenings in perfect solitude. Until the hour for dinner I managed to pass away the time somehow or other, talking with the bailiff, riding about to inspect the work, or going round to look at the new buildings; but as soon as it began to get dark, I positively did not know what to do with myself. The few books that I had found in the cupboards and store-rooms, I already knew by heart. All the stories that my housekeeper Kirilovna could remember, I had heard over and over again. The songs of the peasant women made me feel depressed. I tried drinking spirits, but it made my head ache; and moreover, I confess I was afraid of becoming a drunkard from mere chagrin, that is to say, the saddest kind of drunkard, of which I had seen many examples of in our district.

I had no near neighbours, except two or three toppers, whose conversation consisted for the most part of hiccups and sighs. Solitude was preferable to their society. At last I decided to go to bed as early as possible, and to dine as late as possible; in this way I shortened the evening and lengthened out the day, and I found that the plan answered very well.

Four versts from my house was a rich estate belonging to the Countess B—; but nobody lived there except the steward. The Countess had only visited her estate once, in the first year of her married life, and then she had remained there no longer than a month. But in the second spring of my hermitical life, a report was circulated that the Countess, with her husband, was coming to spend the summer on her estate. The report turned out to be true, for they arrived at the beginning of June.

The arrival of a rich neighbour is an important event in the lives of country people. The landed proprietors and the people of their household talk about it for two months beforehand, and for three years

afterwards. As for me, I must confess that the news of the arrival of a young and beautiful neighbour affected me strongly. I burned with impatience to see her, and the first Sunday after her arrival I set out after dinner for the village of A——, to pay my respects to the Countess and her husband, as their nearest neighbour and most humble servant.

A lackey conducted me into the Count's study, and then went to announce me. The spacious apartment was furnished with every possible luxury. Around the walls were cases filled with books and surmounted by bronze busts; over the marble mantelpiece was a large mirror; on the floor was a green cloth covered with carpets. Unaccustomed to luxury in my own poor corner, and not having seen the wealth of other people for a long time, I awaited the appearance of the Count with some little trepidation, as a suppliant from the provinces awaits the arrival of the minister. The door opened, and a handsome-looking man, of about thirty-two years of age, entered the room. The Count approached me with a frank and friendly air: I endeavoured to be self-possessed and began to introduce myself, but he anticipated me. We sat down. His conversation, which was easy and agreeable, soon dissipated my awkward bashfulness; and I was already beginning to recover my usual composure, when the Countess suddenly entered, and I became more confused than ever. She was indeed beautiful. The Count presented me. I wished to appear at ease, but the more I tried to assume an air of unconstraint, the more awkward I felt. They, in order to give me time to recover myself and to become accustomed to my new acquaintances, began to talk to each other, treating me as a good neighbour, and without ceremony. Meanwhile, I walked about the room, examining the books and pictures. I am no judge of pictures, but one of them attracted my attention. It represented some view in Switzerland, but it was not the painting that struck me, but the circumstance that the canvas was shot through by two bullets, one planted just above the other.

"A good shot, that!" said I, turning to the Count.

"Yes," replied he, "a very remarkable shot... . Do you shoot well?" he continued.

"Tolerably," replied I, rejoicing that the conversation had turned at last upon a subject that was familiar to me. "At thirty paces I can manage to hit a card without fail, — I mean, of course, with a pistol that I am used to."

"Really?" said the Countess, with a look of the greatest interest. "And you, my dear, could you hit a card at thirty paces?"

"Some day," replied the Count, "we will try. In my time I did not shoot badly, but it is now four years since I touched a pistol."

"Oh!" I observed, "in that case, I don't mind laying a wager that Your Excellency will not hit the card at twenty paces: the pistol demands practice every day. I know that from experience. In our regiment I was reckoned one of the best shots. It once happened that I did not touch a pistol for a whole month, as I had sent mine to be mended; and would you believe it, Your Excellency, the first time I began to shoot again, I missed a bottle four times in succession at twenty paces! Our captain, a witty and amusing fellow, happened to be standing by, and he said to me: 'It is evident, my friend, that your hand will not lift itself against the bottle.' No, Your Excellency, you must not neglect to practise, or your hand will soon lose its cunning. The best shot that I ever met used to shoot at least three times every day before dinner. It was as much his custom to do this, as it was to drink his daily glass of brandy."

The Count and Countess seemed pleased that I had begun to talk.

"And what sort of a shot was he?" asked the Count.

"Well, it was this way with him, Your Excellency: if he saw a fly settle on the wall — you smile, Countess, but, before Heaven, it is the truth. If he saw a fly, he would call out: 'Kouzka, my pistol!' Kouzka would bring him a loaded pistol — bang! and the fly would be crushed against the wall."

"Wonderful!" said the Count. "And what was his name?"

"Silvio, Your Excellency."

"Silvio!" exclaimed the Count, starting up. "Did you know Silvio?"

"How could I help knowing him, Your Excellency: we were intimate friends; he was received in our regiment like a brother officer, but it is now five years since I had any tidings of him. Then Your Excellency also knew him?"

"Oh, yes, I knew him very well. Did he ever tell you of one very strange incident in his life?"

"Does Your Excellency refer to the slap in the face that he received from some blackguard at a ball?"

"Did he tell you the name of this blackguard?"

"No, Your Excellency, he never mentioned his name... Ah! Your Excellency!" I continued, guessing the truth: "pardon me... I did not know... could it really have been you?"

"Yes, I myself," replied the Count, with a look of extraordinary agitation; "and that bullet-pierced picture is a memento of our last meeting."

"Ah, my dear," said the Countess, "for Heaven's sake, do not speak about that; it would be too terrible for me to listen to."

"No," replied the Count: "I will relate everything. He knows how I insulted his friend, and it is only right that he should know how Silvio revenged himself."

The Count pushed a chair towards me, and with the liveliest interest I listened to the following story:

"Five years ago I got married. The first month — the honeymoon — I spent here, in this village. To this house I am indebted for the happiest moments of my life, as well as for one of its most painful recollections.

"One evening we went out together for a ride on horseback. My wife's horse became restive; she grew frightened, gave the reins to me, and returned home on foot. I rode on before. In the courtyard I saw a travelling carriage, and I was told that in my study sat waiting for me a man, who would not give his name, but who merely said that he had business with me. I entered the room and saw in the darkness a man, covered with dust and wearing a beard of several days' growth. He was standing there, near the fireplace. I approached him, trying to remember his features.

"'You do not recognize me, Count?' said he, in a quivering voice.

"'Silvio!' I cried, and I confess that I felt as if my hair had suddenly stood on end.

"'Exactly,' continued he. 'There is a shot due to me, and I have come to discharge my pistol. Are you ready?'

"His pistol protruded from a side pocket. I measured twelve paces and took my stand there in that corner, begging him to fire quickly, before my wife arrived. He hesitated, and asked for a light. Candles were brought in. I closed the doors, gave orders that nobody was to enter, and again begged him to fire. He drew out his pistol and took aim... I counted the seconds... I thought of her... A terrible minute passed! Silvio lowered his hand.

"'I regret,' said he, 'that the pistol is not loaded with cherry-stones... the bullet is heavy. It seems to me that this is not a duel, but a murder. I am not accustomed to taking aim at unarmed men. Let us begin all over again; we will cast lots as to who shall fire first.'

"My head went round... I think I raised some objection... At last we loaded another pistol, and rolled up two pieces of paper. He placed these latter in his cap — the same through which I had once sent a bullet — and again I drew the first number.

"You are devilish lucky, Count," said he, with a smile that I shall never forget.

"I don't know what was the matter with me, or how it was that he managed to make me do it... but I fired and hit that picture."

The Count pointed with his finger to the perforated picture; his face glowed like fire; the Countess was whiter than her own handkerchief; and I could not restrain an exclamation.

"I fired," continued the Count, "and, thank Heaven, missed my aim. Then Silvio... at that moment he was really terrible... Silvio raised his hand to take aim at me. Suddenly the door opens, Masha rushes into the room, and with a loud shriek throws herself upon my neck. Her presence restored to me all my courage.

"My dear," said I to her, 'don't you see that we are joking? How frightened you are! Go and drink a glass of water and then come back to us; I will introduce you to an old friend and comrade.'

"Masha still doubted.

"Tell me, is my husband speaking the truth?" said she, turning to the terrible Silvio: 'is it true that you are only joking?'

"He is always joking, Countess," replied Silvio: 'once he gave me a slap in the face in a joke; on another occasion he sent a bullet through my cap in a joke; and just now, when he fired at me and missed me, it was all in a joke. And now I feel inclined for a joke.'

"With these words he raised his pistol to take aim at me — right before her! Masha threw herself at his feet.

"Rise, Masha; are you not ashamed!" I cried in a rage: 'and you, sir, will you not cease to make fun of a poor woman? Will you fire or not?'

"I will not," replied Silvio: 'I am satisfied. I have seen your confusion, your alarm. I forced you to fire at me. That is sufficient. You will remember me. I leave you to your conscience.'

"Then he turned to go, but pausing in the doorway, and looking at the picture that my shot had passed through, he fired at it almost without taking aim, and disappeared. My wife had fainted away; the servants did not venture to stop him, the mere look of him filled them with terror. He went out upon the steps, called his coachman, and drove off before I could recover myself."

The Count was silent. In this way I learned the end of the story, whose beginning had once made such a deep impression upon me. The hero of it I never saw again. It is said that Silvio commanded a detachment of Hetairists during the revolt under Alexander Ipsilanti, and that he was killed in the battle of Skoulana.

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Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky

Notes From The Underground

Notes from Underground (Russian: Записки из подполья, *Zapiski iz podpól'ja*, also translated in English as Notes from the Underground or Letters from the Underworld while Notes from Underground is the most literal translation) (1864) is a short novel by Fyodor Dostoevsky. It is considered by many to be the world's first existentialist novel. It presents itself as an excerpt from the rambling memoirs of a bitter, isolated, unnamed narrator (generally referred to by critics as the Underground Man) who is a retired civil servant living in St. Petersburg.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky

The Brothers Karamazov

The Brothers Karamazov is the final novel by the Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky, and is generally considered the culmination of his life's work. Dostoevsky spent nearly two years writing The Brothers Karamazov, which was published as a serial in The Russian Messenger and completed in November 1880. Dostoevsky intended it to be the first part in an epic story titled The Life of a Great Sinner, but he died less than four months after its publication.

The book portrays a parricide in which each of the murdered man's sons share a varying degree of complicity. On a deeper level, it is a spiritual drama of moral struggles concerning faith, doubt, reason, free will and modern Russia. Dostoevsky composed much of the novel in Staraya Russa, which is also the main setting of the novel.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky

The Gambler

The Gambler was written under the pressure of crushing debt. It is a stunning psychological portrait of a young man's exhilarating and destructive addiction, a compulsion that Dostoevsky—who once gambled away his young wife's wedding ring—knew intimately from his own experience. In the disastrous love affairs and gambling adventures of his character, Alexei Ivanovich, Dostoevsky explores the irresistible temptation to look into the abyss of

ultimate risk that he believed was an essential part of the Russian national character.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The Confessions

In his *Confessions* Jean-Jacques Rousseau tells the story of his life, from the formative experience of his humble childhood in Geneva, through the achievement of international fame as novelist and philosopher in Paris, to his wanderings as an exile, persecuted by governments and alienated from the world of modern civilization. In trying to explain who he was and how he came to be the object of others' admiration and abuse, Rousseau analyses with unique insight the relationship between an elusive but essential inner self and the variety of social identities he was led to adopt.

Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy

War and Peace

War and Peace is a novel by Leo Tolstoy, first published from 1865 to 1869 in *Russkii Vestnik*, which tells the story of Russian society during the Napoleonic Era. It is usually described as one of Tolstoy's two major masterpieces (the other being *Anna Karenina*) as well as one of the world's greatest novels.

War and Peace offered a new kind of fiction, with a great many characters caught up in a plot that covered nothing less than the grand subjects indicated by the title, combined with the equally large topics of youth, marriage, age, and death. Though it is often called a novel today, it broke so many conventions of the form that it was not considered a novel in its time. Indeed, Tolstoy himself considered *Anna Karenina* (1878) to be his first attempt at a novel in the European sense.

Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin

The Queen of Spades

Pushkin's story tells of the Russianized German card player, Hermann--an engineer in the army in Russia--who becomes obsessed with the secret of three consecutive winning cards after hearing a story about an old countess' winnings years prior. His obsession drives him to manipulate the countess' ward, Lizaveta Ivanovna, into letting him into their home.

Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin

The Daughter of the Commandant

Pyotr Andreyich Grinyov is the only surviving child of a retired army officer. When Pyotr turns 17, his father sends him into

military service in Orenburg. En route Pyotr gets lost in a blizzard, but is rescued by a mysterious man. As a token of his gratitude, Pyotr gives the guide his hareskin jacket.

Arriving in Orenburg, Pyotr reports to his commanding officer and is assigned to serve at Belogorsky fortress under captain Ivan Mironov. The fortress is nothing more than a fence around a village, and the captain's wife Vasilisa is really in charge.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Prussian Officer

Edgar Rice Burroughs

A Princess of Mars

A Princess of Mars is an Edgar Rice Burroughs science fiction novel, the first of his famous Barsoom series. It is also Burroughs' first novel, predating his Tarzan stories. He wrote it between July and September 28, 1911, going through four working titles; initially, he was going to call it *My First Adventure on Mars*, then *The Green Martians*, *Dejah Thoris*, *Martian Princess*, and finally *Under the Moons of Mars*.

The finished story was first published under the last of these titles in *All-Story* as a six-part serial in the issues for February-July 1912. For the serial publication, the author's name was given as "Norman Bean"; Burroughs had chosen the pseudonym of "Normal Bean" as a type of pun stressing that he was in his right mind, being concerned he might suffer ridicule for writing such a fantastic story. The effect was spoiled when a typesetter changed "Normal" to "Norman" on the assumption that the former was a typographical error. The story was later published as a complete novel under the present title by A. C. McClurg in October 1917. Full of swordplay and daring feats, the story is considered a classic example of 20th century pulp fiction.

Nikolai Gogol

Dead Souls

Since its publication in 1842, *Dead Souls* has been celebrated as a supremely realistic portrait of provincial Russian life and as a splendidly exaggerated tale; as a paean to the Russian spirit and as a remorseless satire of imperial Russian venality, vulgarity, and pomp. As Gogol's wily antihero, Chichikov, combs the back country wheeling and dealing for "dead souls"--deceased serfs who still represent money to anyone sharp enough to trade in them--we are introduced to a Dickensian cast of peasants, landowners, and

conniving petty officials, few of whom can resist the seductive illogic of Chichikov's proposition.



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