

RUSSIAN CLASSIC LITERATURE

IVAN TURGENEV

ACIA

Translated by *Constance Garnett*

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Вашему вниманию предлагается перевод двух известнейших лирических повестей знаменитого писателя И. С. Тургенева — «Ася» и «Первая любовь», объединенных темой воспоминаний о юношеской любви. Тургенев — непревзойденный мастер трагичных и поэтических историй о стремлении к счастью и невозможности его достижения.

Английский перевод повестей, выполненный Констанс Гарнетт, снабжен постраничными, в большей степени культурологическими, комментариями. Книга адресована студентам языковых вузов, носителям языка и всем любителям русской классической литературы.

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ACIA
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This edition contains two best-known lyrical stories by the famous Russian writer Ivan Turgenev — “Acia” and “First Love,” connected by a common subject — the memoirs of young love. Turgenev is an inimitable master of tragic and poetical stories about pursuit of happiness in love and inability to achieve it.

The English translation of the stories made by Constance Garnett is complemented with footnotes. The book may be of interest to the University or College students who study English, the native English speakers and everyone who admires Russian Classic Literature.

The Life and Works of Ivan Turgenev



Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev is a famous Russian writer. Called “the novelist’s novelist” by Henry James, Ivan Turgenev was actually the first Russian author to achieve widespread international fame. Although he was originally linked with Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy as a member of the triumvirate of the greatest Russian novelists of the nineteenth century, Turgenev’s reputation began to diminish during the course of the twentieth century.

Turgenev was born in 1818 in a city called Orel in a noble family. Turgenev spent most of his childhood in the family estate and was taught by private tutors. The future writer learned not only the usual school subjects, he learned also to feel the nature — and to despise serfdom. These two themes later became the main ones in his works.

Turgenev enrolled at the Moscow University in 1833. Before a year had passed he transferred to the

St. Petersburg University, from which he graduated in 1837.

Turgenev travelled for some time in Europe, especially in Germany, and studied chiefly philosophy. Turgenev was impressed by German society and returned home believing that Russia could best improve itself by incorporating ideas from the Age of Enlightenment. In 1843, he accepted a minor post at the Ministry of Interior and also made the acquaintance of Pauline Viardot, a sophisticated French singer whom he would remain devoted to for the rest of his life and for whose sake he would often stay abroad for long periods of time. By the mid-1850's, he had been spending as much time in Europe as in Russia, and in 1857 Pauline Viardot gave birth to a child, allegedly Turgenev's.

Turgenev had hinted at the theme of emancipating the serfs early in his career with "A Sportsman's Sketches", collected and first published as a complete set of peasant sketches in 1852. It is impossible to imagine Turgenev's books neither without his attitude to serfdom, nor without his descriptions of nature. By these descriptions, Turgenev makes his readers feel connected to the heroes of his works. Such a psychologically rich writing is always interesting to read — it gives more chances to understand not only the strange Russian soul but also to look inside ourselves with a question: "How am I different from these characters?"

During the period of 1853–1862 Turgenev wrote some of his finest stories and novellas and the first four of his six novels: “Rudin” (1856), “A Nest of Gentlefolk” (1859), “On the Eve” (1860) and “Fathers and Sons” (1862). The central themes of these works were (except social problems) the beauty of early love, failure to reach one’s dreams, and frustrated love, which partly reflected the author’s lifelong passion for Pauline Viardot. Love was a secondary theme in “Fathers and Sons”, Turgenev’s most famous novel revealing the “generation gap.”

In 1863, Turgenev was summoned to answer charges of having aided a London group of expatriates, but was soon exonerated, bought land in Baden near the Viardots’ estate and settled there. In 1869, he ran into financial difficulties and had to sell his newly built villa, but remained there as a tenant while he prepared an edition of his collected works. During the next ten years, Turgenev worked on his novel, “Virgin Soil,” and several plays, spending time in Baden, Paris, Great Britain, and Russia. In 1879, his brother Nikolai had died, and upon Turgenev’s arrival in Moscow he discovered that he was celebrated by the liberals. This same year he received an honorary degree from Oxford University and began to prepare another collection of his works.

At the end of 1870s — beginning of 1880s the popularity of Turgenev’s books grew really fast, partly because of his so-called “mystic stories.”

After a long illness the writer died in France on September 3, 1883. The year before his death, he published a book of what he called "an old man's jottings" under the title of "Poems in Prose."

The theme of love was not alien to Turgenev. But love in his books is always unrequited, it always has too much barriers on its way — and even his love stories are affected by the theme of serfdom.

Turgenev has been working on "Acia" from July till November of 1857. Such a slow rate can be explained by writer's illness. As Turgenev himself said, he devised a story after seeing a following scene in a German town: an old woman, looking from the window on the ground floor, and a head of a young girl in the window above. Turgenev tried to imagine the life of these people, and that's how "Acia" was born.

The prototypes of the heroes of "Acia" are probably Turgenev and his illegitimate daughter Polina Bruer, who was exactly in the same situation as Acia: daughter of a nobleman and a serf, she entered the world of the nobility unexpectedly and felt like a stranger in it. Another prototype of Acia could be Turgenev's illegitimate sister.

The novel had been translated into different languages during the lifetime of Turgenev but he wasn't satisfied with these translations, so he made his own translation into French.

Lots of Turgenev's works are reflections of his childhood's thoughts, feelings, and ideas. One of the most impressing memories was his father's relationship with princess Shakhovskaya, with whom young Ivan fell in love himself, and this affection was reflected in his story called "First love" (1860). Turgenev wrote about this story: "I depicted a real event without any embroidery, I delineated my father. Lots of people blamed me for that, especially for the fact that I never kept it back. But I think there's nothing wrong with that. I have nothing to conceal."

Serfdom doesn't exist anymore in Russia, but differences between social classes still take place, and love bumps into different barriers. That is why Turgenev's stories are still essential.

ACIA



I

At that time I was five-and-twenty, began N. N., — the deeds of ages long gone by¹, as you perceive. I had only just gained my freedom and gone abroad, not to “finish my education,” as the phrase was in those days; I simply wanted to have a look at God’s world. I was young, and in good health and spirits, and had plenty of money. Troubles had not yet had time to gather about me. I existed without thought, did as I liked, lived like the lilies of the field, in fact. It never occurred to me in those days that man is not a plant, and cannot go on living like one for long. Youth will

¹ **The deeds of ages long gone by** — a quotation from the epic fairy tale poem by Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) “*Ruslan and Ludmila*” (1818–1820), the beginning of the first canto.

eat gilt gingerbread and fancy its daily bread too; but the time comes when you're in want of dry bread even. There's no need to go into that, though.

I travelled without any sort of aim, without a plan; I stopped wherever I liked the place, and went on again directly I felt a desire to see new faces — faces, nothing else. I was interested in people exclusively; I hated famous monuments and museums of curiosities, the very sight of a guide produced in me a sense of weariness and anger; I was almost driven crazy in the Dresden “Grüne-Gewölbe.”¹ Nature affected me extremely, but I did not care for the so-called beauties of nature, extraordinary mountains, precipices, and waterfalls; I did not like nature to obtrude, to force itself upon me. But faces, living human faces — people's talk, and gesture, and laughter — that was what was absolutely necessary to me. In a crowd I always had a special feeling of ease and comfort. I enjoyed going where others went, shouting when others shouted, and at the same

¹ **Grüne-Gewölbe** — (*German Green Vault*) a museum in Dresden, Germany. One of the richest treasure chambers in Europe.

time I liked to look at the others shouting. It amused me to watch people... though I didn't even watch them — I simply stared at them with a sort of delighted, ever-eager curiosity. But I am diverging again.

And so twenty years ago I was staying in the little German town Z., on the left bank of the Rhine. I was seeking solitude; I had just been stabbed to the heart by a young widow, with whom I had made acquaintance at a watering-place. She was very pretty and clever, and flirted with every one — with me, too, poor sinner. At first she had positively encouraged me, but later on she cruelly wounded my feelings, sacrificing me for a red-faced Bavarian lieutenant. It must be owned, the wound to my heart was not a very deep one; but I thought it my duty to give myself up for a time to gloom and solitude — youth will find amusement in anything! — and so I settled at Z.

I liked the little town for its situation on the slope of two high hills, its ruined walls and towers, its ancient lime-trees, its steep bridge over the little clear stream that falls into the Rhine, and, most of all, for its excellent wine. In the evening, directly after sunset (it was June), very pretty

flaxen-haired German girls used to walk about its narrow streets and articulate “*guten Abend*”¹ in agreeable voices on meeting a stranger, — some of them did not go home even when the moon had risen behind the pointed roofs of the old houses, and the tiny stones that paved the street could be distinctly seen in its still beams. I liked wandering about the town at that time; the moon seemed to keep a steady watch on it from the clear sky; and the town was aware of this steady gaze, and stood quiet and attentive, bathed in the moonlight, that peaceful light which is yet softly exciting to the soul. The cock on the tall Gothic bell-tower gleamed a pale gold, the same gold sheen glimmered in waves over the black surface of the stream; slender candles (the German is a thrifty soul!) twinkled modestly in the narrow windows under the slate roofs; branches of vine thrust out their twining tendrils mysteriously from behind stone walls; something flitted into the shade by the old-fashioned well in the three-cornered market place; the drowsy whistle of the night watchman broke suddenly on the silence, a good-natured dog gave a subdued growl, while

¹ *guten Abend* — (German) good evening

the air simply caressed the face, and the lime-trees smelt so sweet that unconsciously the lungs drew in deeper and deeper breaths of it, and the name "Gretchen" hung, half exclamation, half question, on the lips.

The little town of Z. lies a mile and a half from the Rhine. I used often to walk to look at the majestic river, and would spend long hours on a stone-seat under a huge solitary ash-tree, musing, not without some mental effort, on the faithless widow. A little statue of a Madonna, with an almost childish face and a red heart, pierced with swords, on her bosom, peeped mournfully out of the branches of the ash-tree. On the opposite bank of the river was the little town L., somewhat larger than that in which I had taken up my quarters. One evening I was sitting on my favourite seat, gazing at the sky, the river, and the vineyards. In front of me flaxen-headed boys were scrambling up the sides of a boat that had been pulled ashore, and turned with its tarred bottom upwards. Sailing-boats moved slowly by with slightly dimpling sails; the greenish waters glided by, swelling and faintly rumbling. All of a sudden sounds of music drifted across to me; I listened. A waltz was being played in the town of L. The

double bass boomed spasmodically, the sound of the fiddle floated across indistinctly now and then, the flute was tootling briskly.

"What's that?" I inquired of an old man who came up to me, in a plush waistcoat, blue stockings, and shoes with buckles.

"That," he replied, after first shifting his pipe from one corner of his mouth to the other, "is the students come over from B. to a *Kommersch*."

"I'll have a look at this *Kommersch*," I thought. "I've never been over to L. either." I sought out a ferryman, and went over to the other side.

II

Every one, perhaps, may not know what such a *Kommersch* is. It is a solemn festival of a special sort, at which students meet together who are of one district or brotherhood (*Landsmannschaft*). Almost all who take part in the *Kommersch* wear the time-honoured costume of German students: Hungarian jackets, big boots, and little caps, with bands round them of certain colours. The students generally assemble to a dinner, presided over by their senior member, and they keep up

the festivities till morning — drinking, singing songs, “*Landesvater*,” “*Gaudeamus*,” etc., smoking, and reviling the Philistines. Sometimes they hire an orchestra.

Just such a *Kommersch* was going on in L., in front of a little inn, with the sign of the Sun, in the garden looking on to the street. Flags were flying over the inn and over the garden; the students were sitting at tables under the pollard lime-trees; a huge bull-dog was lying under one of the tables; on one side, in an ivy-covered arbour, were the musicians, playing away zealously, and continually invigorating themselves with beer. A good many people had collected in the street, before the low garden wall; the worthy citizens of L. could not let slip a chance of staring at visitors. I too mingled in the crowd of spectators. I enjoyed watching the students’ faces; their embraces, exclamations, the innocent affectations of youth, the fiery glances, the laughter without cause — the sweetest laughter in the world — all this joyous effervescence of young, fresh life, this eager pushing forward — anywhere, so long as it’s forward — the simple-hearted freedom moved me and stirred me.

“Couldn’t I join them?” I was wondering...

"Acia, have you had enough of it?" I heard a man's voice say suddenly, in Russian, just behind me.

"Let's stay a little longer," answered another voice, a woman's, in the same language.

I turned quickly round... My eyes fell on a handsome young man in a peaked cap and a loose short jacket. He had on his arm a young girl, not very tall, wearing a straw hat, which concealed all the upper part of her face.

"You are Russians," fell involuntarily from my lips.

The young man smiled and answered:

"Yes, we are Russians."

"I never expected... in such an out of the way place," I was beginning...

"Nor did we," he interrupted me. "Well, so much the better. Let me introduce myself. My name's Gagin, and this is my —" he hesitated for an instant, "my sister. What is your name, may I ask?"

I told him my name, and we got into conversation. I found out that Gagin was travelling, like me, for his amusement; that he had arrived a week before at L., and was staying on there. To tell the truth, I was not eager to make friends with

Russians abroad. I used to recognize them a long way off by their walk, the cut of their clothes, and, most of all, by the expression of their faces which was self-complacent and supercilious, often imperious, but would all of a sudden change, and give place to an expression of shyness and cautiousness... The whole man would suddenly be on his guard, his eyes would shift uneasily...

“Mercy upon us! Haven’t I said something silly; aren’t they laughing at me?” those restless eyes seem to ask... An instant later — and haughtiness has regained its sway over the physiognomy, varied at times by a look of dull blankness. Yes, I avoided Russians; but I liked Gagin at once. There are faces in the world of that happy sort; every one is glad to look at them, as though they warmed or soothed one in some way. Gagin had just such a face — sweet and kind, with large soft eyes and soft curly hair. He spoke in such a way that even if you did not see his face, you could tell by the mere sound of his voice that he was smiling!

The girl, whom he had called his sister, struck me at the first glance as very charming. There was something individual, characteristic in the lines

of her dark, round face, with its small, fine nose, almost childish cheeks, and clear black eyes. She was gracefully built, but hardly seemed to have reached her full development yet. She was not in the least like her brother.

"Will you come home with us?" Gagin said to me; "I think we've stared enough at the Germans. Our fellows, to be sure, would have broken the windows, and smashed up the chairs, but these chaps are very sedate. What do you say, Acia, shall we go home?"

The girl nodded her head in assent.

"We live outside the town," Gagin continued, "in a vineyard, in a lonely little house, high up. It's delightful there, you'll see. Our landlady promised to make us some junket. It will soon be dark now, and you had much better cross the Rhine by moonlight."

We set off. Through the low gates of the town (it was enclosed on all sides by an ancient wall of cobble-stones, even the barbicans had not all fallen into ruins at that time), we came out into the open country, and after walking a hundred paces beside a stone wall, we came to a standstill before a little narrow gate. Gagin opened it, and led us along a steep path up the mountain-side.

On the slopes on both sides was the vineyard; the sun had just set, and a delicate rosy flush lay on the green vines, on the tall poles, on the dry earth, which was dotted with big and little stones, and on the white wall of the little cottage, with sloping black beams, and four bright little windows, which stood at the very top of the mountain we had climbed up.

“Here is our house!” cried Gagin, directly we began to approach the cottage, “and here’s the landlady bringing in the junket. *Guten Abend, Madame...!* We’ll come in to supper directly; but first,” he added, “look round... isn’t it a view?”

The view certainly was marvellous. The Rhine lay at our feet, all silvery between its green banks; in one place it glowed with the purple and gold of the sunset. The little town, nestling close to the river-bank, displayed all its streets and houses; sloping hills and meadows ran in wide stretches in all directions. Below it was fine, but above was finer still; I was specially impressed by the depth and purity of the sky, the radiant transparency of the atmosphere. The fresh, light air seemed softly quivering and undulating, as though it too were more free and at ease on the heights.

"You have chosen delightful lodgings," I observed.

"It was Acia found it," answered Gagin; "come, Acia," he went on, "see after the supper. Let everything be brought out here. We will have supper in the open air. We can hear the music better here. Have you ever noticed," he added, turning to me, "a waltz is often poor stuff close by — vulgar, coarse music — but in the distance, it's exquisite! it fairly stirs every romantic chord within one."

Acia (her real name was Anna, but Gagin called her Acia, and you must let me do the same), went into the house, and soon came back with the landlady. They were carrying together a big tray, with a bowl of junkets plates, spoons, sugar, fruit, and bread. We sat down and began supper. Acia took off her hat; her black hair cropped short and combed, like a boy's, fell in thick curls on her neck and ears. At first she was shy of me; but Gagin said to her:

"Come, Acia, come out of your shell! he won't bite."

She smiled, and a little while after she began talking to me of her own accord. I had never seen such a restless creature. She did not sit still for a single instant; she got up, ran off into the house,

and ran back again, hummed in an undertone, often laughed, and in a very strange way; she seemed to laugh, not at what she heard, but at the different ideas that crossed her mind. Her big eyes looked out boldly, brightly, directly, but sometimes her eyelids faintly drooped, and then their expression instantaneously became deep and tender.

We chatted away for a couple of hours. The daylight had long died away, and the evening glow, at first fiery, then clear and red, then pale and dim, had slowly melted away and passed into night, but our conversation still went on, as quiet and peaceful as the air around us. Gagin ordered a bottle of Rhine wine; we drank it between us, slowly and deliberately. The music floated across to us as before, its strains seemed sweeter and tenderer; lights were burning in the town and on the river. Acia suddenly let her head fall, so that her curls dropped into her eyes, ceased speaking, and sighed. Then she said she was sleepy, and went indoors. I saw, though, that she stood a long while at the unopened window without lighting a candle. At last the moon rose and began shining upon the Rhine; everything turned to light and darkness, everything was transformed, even the

wine in our cut-glass tumblers gleamed with a mysterious light. The wind drooped, as it were, folded its wings and sank to rest; the fragrant warmth of night rose in whiffs from the earth.

"It's time I was going!" I cried, "or else perhaps, there'll be no getting a ferryman."

"Yes, it's time to start," Gagin assented.

We went down the path. Suddenly we heard the rolling of the stones behind us; it was Acia coming after us.

"Aren't you asleep?" asked her brother; but, without answering a word, she ran by us. The last, smouldering lamps, lighted by the students in the garden of the inn, threw a light on the leaves of the trees from below, giving them a fantastic and festive look. We found Acia at the river's edge; she was talking to a ferryman. I jumped into the boat, and said good-bye to my new friends. Gagin promised to pay me a visit next day; I pressed his hand, and held out my hand to Acia; but she only looked at me and shook her head. The boat pushed off and floated on the rapid river. The ferryman, a sturdy old man, buried his oars in the dark water, and pulled with great effort.

"You are in the streak of moonlight, you have broken it up," Acia shouted to me.