

**SELECTED WORKS
of
Alexander Pushkin**

EUGENE ONEGIN

**CANTO THE FIRST
'The Spleen'**

*'He rushes at life and
exhausts the passions.'*

Prince Viazemski

I

*"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!"*

II

*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.*

¹ *Ruslan and Liudmila* , the title of Pushkin's first important work, written 1817-20. It is a tale relating the adventures of the knight-errant Ruslan in search of his fair lady Liudmila, who has been carried off by a *kaldoon* , or magician.

*I also wandered there of old,
But cannot stand the northern cold.²*

III

*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

² Written in Bessarabia.

³ In Russia foreign tutors and governesses are commonly styled "monsieur" or "madame."

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-esteemed],
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*

⁴ Referring to Tomi, the reputed place of exile of Ovid.

Pushkin, then residing in Bessarabia, was in the same predicament as his predecessor in song, though he certainly did not plead guilty to the fact, since he remarks in his ode to Ovid:

*To exile self-consigned ,
With self, society, existence, discontent,
I visit in these days, with melancholy mind,
The country whereunto a mournful age thee sent.*

Ovid thus enumerates the causes which brought about his banishment:

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.*

error, "Perdiderint quum me *duo* crimina, carmen et

Alterius facti culpa silenda mihi est."

Ovidii Nasonis Tristium , lib. ii. 207.

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,

⁵ *Les Aventures du Chevalier de Faublas*, a romance of a loose character by Jean Baptiste Louvet de Couvray, b. 1760, d. 1797, famous for his bold oration denouncing Robespierre, Marat and Danton.

*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 chime⁷
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, where⁸

⁶ A la "Bolivar," from the founder of Bolivian independence.

⁷ M. Breguet, a celebrated Parisian watchmaker—hence a slang term for a watch.

⁸ Talon, a famous St. Petersburg restaurateur.

*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,*

⁹ Paul Petrovitch Kaverine, a friend for whom Pushkin in his youth appears to have entertained great respect and admiration. He was an officer in the Hussars of the Guard, and a noted "dandy" and man about town. The poet on one occasion addressed the following impromptu to his friend's portrait:

war,
"Within him daily see the the fires of punch and
Upon the fields of Mars a gallant warrior,
A faithful friend to friends, of ladies torturer,
But ever the Hussar."

*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*

¹⁰ *Denis Von Wisine* (1741-92), a favourite Russian dramatist. His first comedy "The Brigadier," procured him the favour of the second Catherine. His best, however, is the "Minor" (Niedorosl). Prince Potemkin, after witnessing it, summoned the author, and greeted him with the exclamation, "Die now, Denis!" In fact, his subsequent performances were not of equal merit.

Jacob Borissovitch Kniajnine (1742-91), a clever adapter of French tragedy.

Simeonova, a celebrated tragic actress, who retired from the stage in early life and married a Prince Gagarine.

Ozeroff, one of the best-known Russian dramatists of the period; he possessed more originality than Kniajnine. "Oedipus in Athens," "Fingal," "Demetrius Donskoi," and "Polyxena," are the best known of his tragedies.

Katenine translated Corneille's tragedies into Russian.

Didelot, sometime Director of the ballet at the Opera at St. Petersburg.

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
Istomina¹¹ the nimbly-bounding;*

¹¹ Istomina—A celebrated Circassian dancer of the day, with whom the poet in his extreme youth imagined himself in love.

*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 fires¹²
Abuse their masters, rub their hands:
But Eugene long hath left the press
To array himself in evening dress.*

XX

¹² In Russia large fires are lighted in winter time in front of the theatres for the benefit of the menials, who, considering the state of the thermometer, cannot be said to have a jovial time of it. But in this, as in other cases, "habit" alleviates their lot, and they bear the cold with a wonderful equanimity.

*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,*

¹³ "Tout le monde sut qu'il (Grimm) mettait du blanc; et moi, qui n'en croyait rien, je commencai de le croire, non seulement par l'embellissement de son teint, et pour avoir trouve des tasses de blanc sur la toilette, mais sur ce qu'entrant un matin dans sa chambre, je le trouvais brossant ses ongles avec une petite vergette faite expres, ouvrage qu'il continua fierement devant moi. Je jugeai qu'un homme qui passe deux heures tous les matins a brosser ses ongles peut bien passer quelques instants a remplir de blanc les creux de sa peau." *Confessions de J. J. Rousseau*

*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 artistical 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

¹⁴ Refers to Dictionary of the Academy, compiled during the reign of Catherine II under the supervision of Lomonossoff.

*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*

¹⁵ Note 14: *Elvine* , or *Elvina* , was not improbably the owner of the seductive feet apostrophized by the poet, since, in 1816, he wrote an ode, "To Her," which commences thus:

"Elvina, my dear, come, give me thine hand," and so forth.

*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

¹⁶ i.e. the milkmaid from the Okhta villages, a suburb of St. Petersburg on the right bank of the Neva chiefly inhabited by the labouring classes.

*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*

¹⁷ Apropos of this somewhat ungallant sentiment, a Russian scholiast remarks:—"The whole of this ironical stanza is but a refined eulogy of the excellent qualities of our countrywomen. Thus Boileau, in the guise of invective, eulogizes Louis XIV. Russian ladies unite in their persons great acquirements, combined with amiability and strict morality; also a species of Oriental charm which so much captivated Madame de Stael." It will occur to most that the apologist of the Russian fair "doth protest too much." The poet in all probability wrote the offending stanza in a fit of Byronic "spleen," as he would most likely himself have called it. Indeed, since Byron, poets of his school seem to assume this virtue if they have it not, and we take their utterances under its influence for what they are worth.

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,
Onegvine meditative stood,
E'en as the poet says he leant.¹⁹*

¹⁸ The midsummer nights in the latitude of St. Petersburg are a prolonged twilight.

¹⁹ Refers to Mouravieff's "Goddess of the Neva." At St. Petersburg the banks of the Neva are lined throughout with splendid granite quays.

*'Tis silent all! Alone the cries
Of the night sentinels arise
And from the Millionaya afar²⁰
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*

²⁰ A street running parallel to the Neva, and leading from the Winter Palace to the Summer Palace and Garden.

²¹ The strong influence exercised by Byron's genius on the imagination of Pushkin is well known. Shakespeare and other

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

*When will my hour of freedom come!
Time, I invoke thee! favouring gales
Awaiting on the shore I roam
And beckon to the passing sails.*

*Upon the highway of the sea
When shall I wing my passage free
On waves by tempests curdled o'er!*

'Tis time to quit this weary shore

English dramatists had also their share in influencing his mind, which, at all events in its earlier developments, was of an essentially imitative type. As an example of his Shakespearian tastes, see his poem of "Angelo," founded upon "Measure for Measure."

*So uncongenial to my mind,
To dream upon the sunny strand
Of Africa, ancestral land,²²
Of dreary Russia left behind,
Wherein I felt love's fatal dart,
Wherein I buried left my heart.*

XLV

*Eugene designed with me to start
And visit many a foreign clime,
But Fortune cast our lots apart
For a protracted space of time.*

*Just at that time his father died,
And soon Oneguine's door beside*

²² The poet was, on his mother's side, of African extraction, a circumstance which perhaps accounts for the southern fervour of his imagination. His great-grandfather, Abraham Petrovitch Hannibal, was seized on the coast of Africa when eight years of age by a corsair, and carried a slave to Constantinople. The Russian Ambassador bought and presented him to Peter the Great who caused him to be baptized at Vilnius. Subsequently one of Hannibal's brothers made his way to Constantinople and thence to St. Petersburg for the purpose of ransoming him; but Peter would not surrender his godson who died at the age of ninety-two, having attained the rank of general in the Russian service.

*Of creditors a hungry rout
Their claims and explanations shout.*

*But Eugene, hating litigation
And with his lot in life content,
To a surrender gave consent,
Seeing in this no deprivation,
Or counting on his uncle's death
And what the old man might bequeath.*

XLVI

*And in reality one day
The steward sent a note to tell
How sick to death his uncle lay
And wished to say to him farewell.*

*Having this mournful document
Perused, Eugene in postchaise went
And hastened to his uncle's side,
But in his heart dissatisfied,
Having for money's sake alone
Sorrow to counterfeit and wail—
Thus we began our little tale—
But, to his uncle's mansion flown,
He found him on the table laid,
A due which must to earth be paid.*

XLVII

*The courtyard full of serfs he sees,
And from the country all around
Had come both friends and enemies—
Funeral amateurs abound!*

*The body they consigned to rest,
And then made merry pope and guest,
With serious air then went away
As men who much had done that day.*

*Lo! my Oneguine rural lord!
Of mines and meadows, woods and lakes,
He now a full possession takes,
He who economy abhorred,
Delighted much his former ways
To vary for a few brief days.*

XLVIII

*For two whole days it seemed a change
To wander through the meadows still,
The cool dark oaken grove to range,
To listen to the rippling rill.*

*But on the third of grove and mead
He took no more the slightest heed;
They made him feel inclined to doze;
And the conviction soon arose,
Ennui can in the country dwell
Though without palaces and streets,
Cards, balls, routs, poetry or fetes;
On him spleen mounted sentinel
And like his shadow dogged his life,
Or better,—like a faithful wife.*

XLIX

*I was for calm existence made,
For rural solitude and dreams,
My lyre sings sweeter in the shade
And more imagination teems.*

*On innocent delights I dote,
Upon my lake I love to float,
For law I far niente take
And every morning I awake
The child of sloth and liberty.*

*I slumber much, a little read,
Of fleeting glory take no heed.
In former years thus did not I
In idleness and tranquil joy*

The happiest days of life employ?

L

*Love, flowers, the country, idleness
And fields my joys have ever been;
I like the difference to express
Between myself and my Eugene,
Lest the malicious reader or
Some one or other editor
Of keen sarcastic intellect
Herein my portrait should detect,
And impiously should declare,
To sketch myself that I have tried
Like Byron, bard of scorn and pride,
As if impossible it were
To write of any other elf
Than one's own fascinating self.*

LI

*Here I remark all poets are
Love to idealize inclined;
I have dreamed many a vision fair
And the recesses of my mind
Retained the image, though short-lived,*

Which afterwards the muse revived.

*Thus carelessly I once portrayed
Mine own ideal, the mountain maid,
The captives of the Salguir's shore.²³
But now a question in this wise
Oft upon friendly lips doth rise:
Whom doth thy plaintive Muse adore?*

*To whom amongst the jealous throng
Of maids dost thou inscribe thy song?*

LII

*Whose glance reflecting inspiration
With tenderness hath recognized
Thy meditative incantation—
Whom hath thy strain immortalized?*

*None, be my witness Heaven above!
The malady of hopeless love
I have endured without respite.*

²³ Refers to two of the most interesting productions of the poet. The former line indicates the *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, the latter, *The Fountain of Baktchiserai*. The Salguir is a river of the Crimea.

*Happy who thereto can unite
Poetic transport. They impart
A double force unto their song
Who following Petrarch move along
And ease the tortures of the heart—
Perchance they laurels also cull—
But I, in love, was mute and dull.*

LIII

*The Muse appeared, when love passed by
And my dark soul to light was brought;
Free, I renewed the idolatry
Of harmony enshrining thought.*

*I write, and anguish flies away,
Nor doth my absent pen portray
Around my stanzas incomplete
Young ladies' faces and their feet.*

*Extinguished ashes do not blaze—
I mourn, but tears I cannot shed—
Soon, of the tempest which hath fled
Time will the ravages efface—
When that time comes, a poem I'll strive
To write in cantos twenty-five.*

LIV

*I've thought well o'er the general plan,
The hero's name too in advance,
Meantime I'll finish whilst I can
Canto the First of this romance.*

*I've scanned it with a jealous eye,
Discovered much absurdity,
But will not modify a tittle—
I owe the censorship a little.*

*For journalistic deglutition
I yield the fruit of work severe.
Go, on the Neva's bank appear,
My very latest composition!
Enjoy the meed which Fame bestows—
Misunderstanding, words and blows.*

END OF CANTO THE FIRST

CANTO THE SECOND **The Poet**

"O Rus!"
Horace

I

*The village wherein yawned Eugene
Was a delightful little spot,
There friends of pure delight had been
Grateful to Heaven for their lot.*

*The lonely mansion-house to screen
From gales a hill behind was seen;
Before it ran a stream. Behold!
Afar, where clothed in green and gold
Meadows and cornfields are displayed,
Villages in the distance show
And herds of oxen wandering low;
Whilst nearer, sunk in deeper shade,
A thick immense neglected grove
Extended—haunt which Dryads love.*

II

*'Twas built, the venerable pile,
As lordly mansions ought to be,
In solid, unpretentious style,
The style of wise antiquity.*

*Lofty the chambers one and all,
Silk tapestry upon the wall,*

*Imperial portraits hang around
And stoves of various shapes abound.*

*All this I know is out of date,
I cannot tell the reason why,
But Eugene, incontestably,
The matter did not agitate,
Because he yawned at the bare view
Of drawing-rooms or old or new.*

III

*He took the room wherein the old
Man—forty years long in this wise—
His housekeeper was wont to scold,
Look through the window and kill flies.*

*'Twas plain—an oaken floor ye scan,
Two cupboards, table, soft divan,
And not a speck of dirt descried.
Oneguine oped the cupboards wide.*

*In one he doth accounts behold,
Here bottles stand in close array,
There jars of cider block the way,
An almanac but eight years old.*

His uncle, busy man indeed,

No other book had time to read.

IV

*Alone amid possessions great,
Eugene at first began to dream,
If but to lighten Time's dull rate,
Of many an economic scheme;*

*This anchorite amid his waste
The ancient barshtchina replaced
By an obrok's indulgent rate:²⁴
The peasant blessed his happy fate.*

*But this a heinous crime appeared
Unto his neighbour, man of thrift,*

²⁴ The *barshtchina* was the corvee, or forced labour of three days per week rendered previous to the emancipation of 1861 by the serfs to their lord.

The *obrok* was a species of poll-tax paid by a serf, either in lieu of the forced labour or in consideration of being permitted to exercise a trade or profession elsewhere. Very heavy obroks have at times been levied on serfs possessed of skill or accomplishments, or who had amassed wealth; and circumstances may be easily imagined which, under such a system, might lead to great abuses.

*Who secretly denounced the gift,
And many another sily sneered;
And all with one accord agreed,
He was a dangerous fool indeed.*

V

*All visited him at first, of course;
But since to the backdoor they led
Most usually a Cossack horse
Upon the Don's broad pastures bred
If they but heard domestic loads
Come rumbling up the neighbouring roads,
Most by this circumstance offended
All overtures of friendship ended.*

*"Oh! what a fool our neighbour is!
He's a freemason, so we think.
Alone he doth his claret drink,
A lady's hand doth never kiss.
'Tis yes! no! never madam! sir! "²⁵
This was his social character.*

²⁵ The neighbours complained of Oneguine's want of courtesy. He always replied "da" or "nyet," yes or no, instead of "das" or "nyets"—the final s being a contraction of "sudar" or "sudarinia," i.e. sir or madam.

VI

*Into the district then to boot
A new proprietor arrived,
From whose analysis minute
The neighbourhood fresh sport derived.*

*Vladimir Lenski was his name,
From Gottingen inspired he came,
A worshipper of Kant, a bard,
A young and handsome galliard.*

*He brought from mystic Germany
The fruits of learning and combined
A fiery and eccentric mind,
Idolatry of liberty,
A wild enthusiastic tongue,
Black curls which to his shoulders hung.*

VII

*The pervert world with icy chill
Had not yet withered his young breast.
His heart reciprocated still
When Friendship smiled or Love caressed.*

*He was a dear delightful fool—
A nursling yet for Hope to school.
The riot of the world and glare
Still sovereigns of his spirit were,
And by a sweet delusion he
Would soothe the doubtings of his soul,
He deemed of human life the goal
To be a charming mystery:
He racked his brains to find its clue
And marvels deemed he thus should view.*

VIII

*This he believed: a kindred spirit
Impelled to union with his own
Lay languishing both day and night—
Waiting his coming—his alone!*

*He deemed his friends but longed to make
Great sacrifices for his sake!
That a friend's arm in every case
Felled a calumniator base!*

*That chosen heroes consecrate,
Friends of the sons of every land,
Exist—that their immortal band
Shall surely, be it soon or late,*