

Contents

Introduction	3
A Note on the Translations	13
The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich (N. Gogol)	15
<i>Chapter the First</i>	17
<i>Chapter the Second</i>	24
<i>Chapter the Third</i>	37
<i>Chapter the Fourth</i>	44
<i>Chapter the Fifth</i>	59
<i>Chapter the Sixth</i>	66
<i>Chapter the Seventh</i>	75
A Panegyric in Memory of My Grandfather (I. Krylov)	87
A Tale of How One Muzhik Looked after Two Generals (M. Saltykov)	103
The Eagle as Patron of the Arts (M. Saltykov)	117
The Tale of Ivan the Fool (L. Tolstoy)	133
Notes	171

The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich
Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich

Nikolai Gogol

Chapter the First

Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich

WHAT A FINE FITTED COAT Ivan Ivanovich has! Really splendid! And what astrakhan! Hell and damnation, what astrakhan! Dove-grey, with a touch of frost! I'll bet nobody else has that kind! For the love of Heaven, just look at it! Especially when he stops to talk to somebody. Just look at it from the side. How delicious! Indescribable! Velvet! Silver! Fire! Great God! Nikolai the Wonder-Worker, Holy Saint! Why don't I have such a coat? He had it tailored before Agafya Fedoseyevna went to Kiev. You know Agafya Fedoseyevna – the one who bit off the assessor's ear?

Ivan Ivanovich is an excellent man. What a house he has in Mirgorod! A slanting porch roof supported by tall oak posts runs all the way around it, and everywhere under this roof are benches. When it gets too hot, Ivan Ivanovich takes off both his coat and his underclothes, leaving on nothing but his shirt, relaxes on his porch, and watches what is going on in the yard and out in the street. What apple and pear trees he has under his very windows! Just open the window, and the branches push their way into the room. All this is in front of the house; but you should see what he has in the garden! What *doesn't* he have?

Plums, red cherries, sweet cherries, all kinds of vegetables, sunflowers, cucumbers, melons, sugar peas – even a granary and a forge.

Ivan Ivanovich is an excellent man. He is very fond of melons. They are his favourite food. As soon as he has dined and come out on the porch in nothing but his shirt, he tells Gapka to bring him two melons. He slices them himself, collects the seeds in a special piece of paper, and begins to eat. Then he orders Gapka to bring him the inkpot, and in his own hand he writes an inscription on the paper containing the seeds: “This melon was eaten on such-and-such a date”. If a guest was present, he adds: “So-and-so participated”.

The late judge of Mirgorod always admired Ivan Ivanovich’s house when he looked at it. Yes, it’s quite a nice little house. What I like is that sheds and outhouses have been added all around it, so that if you look at it from a distance you can see only roofs piled on top of one another, very much resembling a plateful of pancakes – or, better still, the kind of fungi that grow on trees. The roofs, moreover, are all thatched with reeds; and a willow, an oak and two apple trees lean on them with their spreading branches. Little windows with carved, whitewashed shutters can be glimpsed through the trees, and even reach out as far as the street.

Ivan Ivanovich is an excellent man. Even the commissioner from Poltava knows him. When Dorosh Tarasovich Pukhivochka comes from Khorol, he always goes to see him. And the archpriest, Father Pyotr, who lives in Koliberalda, whenever he has a few people at his home, always says he doesn’t know anyone who fulfils his Christian duty and knows how to live like Ivan Ivanovich does.

Lord, how time flies! Even then, more than ten years had gone by since he had become a widower. He didn't have any children. Gapka has children, and they often run about in the yard. Ivan Ivanovich always gives each of them a *bublik*,* or a slice of melon, or a pear. His Gapka carries the keys to the storerooms and the cellars. But Ivan Ivanovich himself keeps the key to the big trunk that stands in his bedroom, and the one to the middle storeroom; and he doesn't like to let anyone in there. Gapka, a healthy wench, goes about in a kind of slit skirt of woollen homespun. She has fine, robust calves and fresh cheeks.

And what a devout man is Ivan Ivanovich! Every Sunday he puts on his fitted coat and goes to church. When he has entered and bowed in all directions, he usually takes a place in the choir loft and joins in the singing with a good bass. When the service is over, Ivan Ivanovich absolutely cannot bear to bypass the beggars. Perhaps he would have preferred not to bother himself with this tiresome business, were he not impelled to do it by his natural goodness.

"Good day, poor woman," he would say, when he had sought out the most crippled old woman in a tattered dress all made up of patches. "Where do you come from, poor creature?"

"From the farm, my lord. It's going on three days now since I've had a bite to eat or a drop to drink. My own children turned me out."

"Poor thing! But why did you come here?"

"Why, to beg, sir. To see if somebody might give me enough for a crust of bread."

"Hm! Well then, I suppose you want bread?" Ivan Ivanovich would ask.

“Oh, yes! I do! I’m hungry as a dog!”

“Hm!” Ivan Ivanovich would answer. “And perhaps you would like some meat too?”

“Why, I’ll be glad for anything you’re kind enough to give me.”

“Hm! Would you be thinking that meat is better than bread?”

“It’s not for a hungry person to choose. Whatever you kindly give will be good.” So saying, the old woman would hold out her hand.

“Well, get along now – go with God,” Ivan Ivanovich would say. “Why are you still standing there? I’m not beating you, am I?” And having addressed similar questions to one or two more, he finally goes home – or else drops in on his neighbour, Ivan Nikiforovich, or the judge, or the mayor,* to have a glass of vodka.

Ivan Ivanovich likes it very much when someone gives him a present or gift of some kind. This pleases him very much.

Ivan Nikiforovich is also a very fine fellow. His yard is next to Ivan Ivanovich’s yard. They are such close friends as the world never produced. Anton Prokofyevich Pupopuz, who to this day goes around in his brown frock coat with the light-blue sleeves and dines at the judge’s on Sunday, used to say that the Devil himself had tied Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich together with a rope. Where one went, the other would drag himself along too. Ivan Nikiforovich was never married. It used to be blabbed about that he had got married, but this was an absolute lie. I know Ivan Nikiforovich very well, and I can affirm that he never had any intention of getting married. Where do all these slanders come from?

For instance, there was a rumour that Ivan Nikiforovich had been born with a tail in the rear. But this invention is so absurd – and at the same time so disgusting and indecent – that I don't even think it necessary to disprove it to enlightened readers, who undoubtedly know that tails in the rear are found only on witches (and on very few of them, at that) – who, moreover, belong rather to the female sex than to the male.

In spite of their great mutual affection, these two rare friends were not altogether alike. Their characters can best be gathered from a comparison. Ivan Ivanovich has the unusual gift of speaking in an extraordinarily pleasant manner. Lord, how he can talk! The sensation can only be compared with that produced when somebody is feeling your head for lice, or gently scratching your heel. You listen and listen until your head droops. Pleasant, surpassingly pleasant! Like a nap after taking a bath. Ivan Nikiforovich, on the contrary, mostly says nothing. But if he does drop a remark, just look out! It will cut better than any razor. Ivan Ivanovich is tall and skinny; Ivan Nikiforovich is somewhat shorter, but well spread out in breadth. Ivan Ivanovich's head is like a radish with the tail down; Ivan Nikiforovich's head is like a radish with the tail up. It is only after dinner that Ivan Ivanovich lolls on the porch in nothing but his shirt: in the evening he puts on his fitted coat and goes somewhere – either to the town store, which he supplies with flour, or to the countryside to catch quail. Ivan Nikiforovich lies on his porch all day (if it isn't too hot a day, he usually lies with his back to the sun) and never goes anywhere. If he happens to think of it, in the morning he will walk through the yard and look things over; then he'll go back to rest.

In the old days he used to drop in on Ivan Ivanovich. Ivan Ivanovich is a man of most unusual refinement: in polite conversation he never utters an improper word, and he is quick to take umbrage if he hears one. Ivan Nikiforovich sometimes isn't too careful with his language. When this happens, Ivan Ivanovich usually stands up and says, "Enough, enough, Ivan Nikiforovich! Better go on out into the sun than to utter such ungodly words!" Ivan Ivanovich gets very angry if there's a fly in his borscht: he goes into a rage, shoves the soup plate away from him, and gives his host a tongue-lashing. Ivan Nikiforovich is extremely fond of bathing, and when he is sitting in water up to the neck, he orders the tea table and samovar to be set in the water too; and he is very fond of drinking tea in such coolness. Ivan Ivanovich shaves his beard twice a week; Ivan Nikiforovich shaves his once. Ivan Ivanovich is extraordinarily inquisitive. God forbid you should start to tell him a story and not finish it! And if he is displeased with something, he lets you know right away. From Ivan Nikiforovich's countenance it is hard to tell whether he's pleased or angry; even if he is overjoyed at something, he won't show it. Ivan Ivanovich is of a rather timid character. Ivan Nikiforovich, on the contrary, wears big, baggy trousers with such broad folds that if they were inflated you could put the whole yard into them, along with the granaries and outhouses. Ivan Ivanovich has big, expressive eyes the colour of tobacco, and a mouth that looks something like the letter V. Ivan Nikiforovich has little, yellowish eyes, completely concealed by his thick brows and chubby cheeks, and a nose that resembles a ripe plum. When Ivan Ivanovich offers you a pinch of snuff, he always licks the lid of his snuffbox first, then taps it

with his finger and, having proffered it, says, if you are an acquaintance, “May I make so bold, sir, as to ask you to do me the favour?” Or if you are not an acquaintance: “May I make so bold, sir – not having the honour of knowing your rank, your name, or your patronymic – to ask you to do me the favour?” Ivan Nikiforovich, on the other hand, puts his snuff horn right in your hands, and merely adds: “Do me the favour.” Both Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich detest fleas. Therefore, neither Ivan Ivanovich nor Ivan Nikiforovich ever lets a Jewish pedlar pass by without purchasing from him various little jars of a remedy against those insects – having first abused him roundly for professing the Jewish faith.

Despite certain dissimilarities, however, both Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich are excellent men.

ALMA CLASSICS

ALMA CLASSICS aims to publish mainstream and lesser-known European classics in an innovative and striking way, while employing the highest editorial and production standards. By way of a unique approach the range offers much more, both visually and textually, than readers have come to expect from contemporary classics publishing.

LATEST TITLES PUBLISHED BY ALMA CLASSICS

- 286 Stefan Zweig, *A Game of Chess and Other Stories*
- 287 Antal Szerb, *Journey by Moonlight*
- 288 Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Books*
- 289 Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*
- 290 Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*
- 291 Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Night Flight*
- 292 Ivan Turgenev, *A Nest of the Gentry*
- 293 Cécile Aubry, *Belle and Sébastien: The Child of the Mountains*
- 294 Saki, *Gabriel-Ernest and Other Stories*
- 295 E. Nesbit, *The Railway Children*
- 296 Susan Coolidge, *What Katy Did*
- 297 William Shakespeare, *Sonnets*
- 298 Oscar Wilde, *The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories*
- 299 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*
- 300 Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Stories*
- 301 Jerome K. Jerome, *After-Supper Ghost Stories*
- 302 Thomas More, *Utopia*
- 303 H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*
- 304 Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*
- 305 H.G. Wells, *The Invisible Man*
- 306 Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*
- 307 Ivan Turgenev, *On the Eve*
- 308 Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*
- 309 E. Nesbit, *Five Children and It*
- 310 Rudyard Kipling, *Just So Stories*
- 311 Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*
- 312 L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*
- 313 Eleanor H. Porter, *Pollyanna*
- 314 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Devils*
- 315 John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*
- 316 H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
- 317 Dante Alighieri, *Paradise*