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Publisher's Foreword

This is one of a series of volumes, to be published by Alma Classics during the coming years, that will present the complete works of Alexander Pushkin in English. The series will be a successor to the fifteen-volume Complete Works of Alexander Pushkin published by Milner and Company between 1999 and 2003, the rights to which have been acquired by Alma Classics. Some of the translations contained in the new volumes will, as here, be reprints of those in the Milner edition (corrected as necessary); others will be reworkings of the earlier translations; others again will be entirely new. The aim of the series is to build on the Milner edition's work in giving readers in the English-speaking world access to the entire corpus of Pushkin's writings in readable modern versions that are faithful to Pushkin's meaning and spirit.

In publishing this series, Alma Classics wishes to pay a warm tribute to the initiative and drive of Iain Sproat, managing director and owner of Milner and Company and chairman of the original project's editorial board, in achieving the publication of Pushkin's complete works in English for the first time. Scholars, lovers of Pushkin and general readers wishing to gain knowledge of one of Europe's finest writers owe him the heartiest gratitude.

– Alessandro Gallenzi

OTHER WORKS OF ALEXANDER PUSHKIN AVAILABLE
FROM ALMA CLASSICS

Ruslan and Lyudmila, a dual-language text
trans. Roger Clarke

Boris Godunov and Little Tragedies
trans. Roger Clarke

Eugene Onegin, a dual-language text
trans. Roger Clarke

The Captain's Daughter and A History of Pugachov
trans. Paul Debreczeny and Roger Clarke

Love Poems
trans. Roger Clarke

Belkin's Stories
trans. Roger Clarke

Note by Series Editor

This volume, which corresponds to Volume Nine of the Milner Edition of Pushkin's Works in English, contains all of Pushkin's prose fiction, finished and unfinished, with the exception of: *The Captain's Daughter* and *Belkin's Stories* – which, as Pushkin's two most substantial completed works in the form, will be published separately – and those manuscript notes and brief fragments less than a page long that are of minimal literary interest. I have also excluded the story 'A Lonely Cottage on Vasilyev Island' as an inauthentic piece of Pushkin's writing.

The two works in this volume completed and published during Pushkin's lifetime – 'The Queen of Spades' and 'Kirdzhali' – come first; there follow in Part Two the unfinished works found among Pushkin's papers after his death, arranged in order (so far as can be ascertained) of composition, so as to give an impression of how Pushkin's projected use of this form developed over time. The unfinished works contain both those that are clearly interrupted or fragmentary and some more substantial and polished compositions – such as 'Roslavlev', 'Dubrovsky' and 'Egyptian Nights' – where arguably Pushkin had come to realize that he had achieved his main objectives and need say no more.

The late Paul Debreczeny's edition of these works was first published by Stanford University Press in 1983. For this edition I have made only sparing revisions and corrections to Professor Debreczeny's excellent translations; his notes I have revised and supplemented more extensively. His introduction is included in a slightly shortened form.

Professor Debreczeny incorporated translations of verse passages (notably in 'A Tale from Roman Life', 'We Were Spending the Evening at Princess D.'s Dacha...' and 'Egyptian Nights') by Walter Arndt. To my mind the somewhat antique and florid diction of these verse translations is alien to Pushkin, and the quest

for English rhymes has dragged the sense too far from that of Pushkin's words, so I have substituted my own versions, which replicate Pushkin's metres but not, in the interests of clarity and accuracy, his rhyme schemes.

Dates of events in Russian and Eastern Europe are given in the Old Style.

I should like to record my own and Alma Classics' gratitude to Stanford University Press for their permission to reprint Professor Debreczeny's material; and to Professor Michel Basker of Bristol University for his contribution of the translation of 'The Last of the Lineage of Joan of Arc', which was not included in the Stanford University Press volume.

Asterisks in the text of the translation indicate endnotes on pp. 307ff.

– Roger Clarke

The Queen of Spades
and Other Stories

Part One

Works Published during Pushkin's Lifetime

THE QUEEN OF SPADES*

(1833)

The queen of spades signifies secret malevolence.

— *from a recent fortune-telling book*

I

*But on days when it rained
they'd assemble for cards
often;
and from fifty (good God!)
they'd raise stakes to a sum
twice that.*

*When they won, then they'd chalk
the next stake on the baize
table.*

*So on days when it rained
they'd be needing to make
money.**

THERE WAS A CARD PARTY* at the house of Narumov, an officer of the Horse Guards. The long winter night passed imperceptibly; it was close to five in the morning when the company sat down to supper. Those who had won were eating with good appetite; the others sat lost in thought before their empty plates. But champagne appeared, and the conversation grew lively, with everyone joining in.

“How did you do, Surin?” asked the host.

“Lost, as usual. You must admit I have no luck: I play a *mirandole* game,* always keep cool, never let anything confuse me, and yet I lose all the time!”

“Have you never been tempted? Have you never risked *routé*? Your firmness amazes me.”

“And what about Hermann?” said one of the guests, pointing at a young engineer. “He’s never in his life had a card in his hand, never bent down a *paroli*, yet he will sit with us until five in the morning watching our game!”

“The game interests me very much,” said Hermann, “but I am not in a position to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of gaining the superfluous.”

“Hermann is a German: he’s thrifty, that’s all,” remarked Tomsky. “But if there’s anybody I don’t understand, it’s my grandmother, Countess Anna Fedotovna.”

“Why? How is that?” cried the guests.

“I cannot fathom,” continued Tomsky, “why my grandmother never punts.”

“Well, what’s so surprising about it,” said Narumov, “that an old lady of eighty doesn’t punt?”

“So you don’t know anything about her?”

“No, not a thing.”

“Well, in that case, listen. I should mention, to begin with, that about sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris, where she created quite a sensation. People ran after her, just to catch a glimpse of *la Vénus moscovite*; Richelieu* paid court to her, and grandmother asserts that he almost shot himself because of her cruelty.

“Ladies used to play faro in those days. On one occasion at the Court my grandmother lost a very large sum, on word of honour, to the Duke of Orleans. After she arrived home, as she was peeling off her beauty spots and untying her hooped petticoat, she informed my grandfather of her loss and ordered him to pay.

“My late grandfather, as I remember, played the part of a butler to my grandmother. He feared her like fire; but when he heard about such a terrible loss, he flew into a rage, brought in the ledgers, demonstrated to her that in half a year they had spent half a million, pointed out that around Paris they did not possess the kind of estates they had around Moscow and Saratov, and absolutely refused to pay. Grandmother slapped him on the face and went to bed by herself as an indication of her displeasure.

“The next day she sent for her husband, hoping that the domestic punishment had had its effect on him, but she found him unshaken. For the first time in her life she went as far as to argue with him and offer him explanations; she thought she could awaken his conscience if she condescended to demonstrate to him that not all debts were alike, and that there was a difference between a duke and a cartwright. But all in vain! Grandfather

had risen in rebellion. No, and no! Grandmother did not know what to do.

“She was on friendly terms with a very remarkable man. You have heard of Count Saint-Germain,* the hero of so many miraculous tales. You know he pretended to be the Wandering Jew,* the inventor of the elixir of life and of the philosopher’s stone, et cetera. He was ridiculed as a charlatan, and Casanova called him a spy in his *Memoirs*;* be that as it may, despite his mysteriousness, Saint-Germain was a man of highly respectable appearance and had excellent manners. To this day Grandmother loves him with a passion and gets cross if she hears disrespectful talk about him. She knew that Saint-Germain had a large fortune at his disposal. She decided to turn to him for help and sent him a note asking him to call on her without delay.

“The old eccentric came at once and found her terribly upset. Depicting her husband’s barbarity in the darkest colours, she concluded that she was placing all her hope in his friendship and kindness.

“Saint-Germain became thoughtful. ‘I could accommodate you with the required sum,’ he said, ‘but I know you would not rest until you had repaid me, and I wouldn’t want to inflict new worries upon you. There is another way out: you can win the money back.’

“‘But my dear Count,’ answered Grandmother, ‘I’m telling you we’ve run out of money altogether.’

“‘It requires no money,’ rejoined Saint-Germain. ‘Pray, hear me out.’ And he revealed to her a secret for which any of us would be willing to pay a high price...”

The young gamblers listened with redoubled attention. Tomsy lit his pipe, took a puff, and continued.

“That same evening Grandmother presented herself at Versailles, *au jeu de la Reine*.* The Duke of Orleans was holding the bank; Grandmother casually excused herself, spinning some little yarn, for not bringing what she owed, and set down to punt against the Duke. She chose three cards and bet on them in sequence: all three won *sonica*,* and grandmother regained everything she had lost.”

“Mere chance!” said one of the guests.

“A fairy tale!” remarked Hermann.

“Perhaps they were powdered cards,”* joined in a third.

“I don’t think so,” Tomsky replied in a serious tone.

“How now!” said Narumov. “You have a grandmother who can predict three winning cards in a row, and you have still not tried to extract her cabalistic power from her?”

“The Devil I haven’t!” answered Tomsky. “She has four sons, including my father: all four are desperate gamblers, but she has not revealed her secret to any one of them, even though it would be handy for each – or for me, for that matter. But I’ll tell you what my uncle, Count Ivan Ilyich, has told me, and what he swears on his honour is true. The late Chaplitsky – the one who died in poverty, having squandered millions – once in his youth lost 300,000 to Zorich* if I am not mistaken. He was in despair. Grandmother, though she usually viewed young people’s pranks with severity, somehow took pity on Chaplitsky. She named him three cards with the instruction to play them one after the other, and she made him give his word of honour that he would never again play afterwards. Chaplitsky went back to his vanquisher; they sat down to play. Chaplitsky staked 50,000 on the first card and won *sonica*; he bent down a *paroli*, then a *paroli-paix*;* he won back what he had lost, and even went away a winner...

“But it’s time to go to bed: it is already quarter to six.”

Indeed it was already getting light: the young men emptied their glasses and left.

II

“Il paraît que monsieur est décidément pour les suivantes.”
*“Que voulez-vous, madame? Elles sont plus fraîches.”**

– conversation at a social gathering

THE OLD COUNTESS N. sat in front of the mirror in her boudoir. Three maids surrounded her. One was holding a jar of rouge, the second a box of pins, and the third a tall bonnet with flame-coloured ribbons. The Countess did not have the slightest pretensions to beauty, which had long since faded from her face, but she adhered to all the habits of her youth, strictly following the fashions of the 1770s, spending just as much time and trouble on her *toilette* as she had sixty years before. A young lady, her ward, was seated over an embroidery frame by the window.

“Good morning, *grand-maman*,” said a young officer, entering. “*Bonjour, mademoiselle Lise. Grand-maman*, I have a favour to ask of you.”

“What is it, Paul?”

“Let me introduce one of my friends to you and bring him to your ball on Friday.”

“Bring him straight to the ball, and you can introduce him to me there. Were you at X’s last night?”

“How could I have missed it! It was very jolly – dancing till five o’clock in the morning. Wasn’t Yeletskaia lovely!”

“Oh my dear! What do you see in her? She couldn’t hold a candle to her grandmother, Princess Darya Petrovna... By the way, she must be getting on, Princess Darya Petrovna?”

“What do you mean, getting on?” Tomsy answered absent-mindedly. “She’s been dead these seven years.”

The young lady raised her head and signalled to him. He remembered that the old Countess was never informed of the death of any of her contemporaries, and he bit his lip.

But the Countess took the tidings, new to her, with perfect equanimity.

“Dead!” she said. “And I didn’t even know! We were appointed maids of honour together, and as we were being presented, the Empress...”

For the hundredth time, the Countess related the anecdote to her grandson.

“And now, Paul,” she said afterwards, “help me to get up. Lizanka, where is my snuffbox?”

She proceeded behind the screen with her chambermaids in order to complete her *toilette*. Tomsy remained alone with the young lady.

“Who is it you want to introduce?” asked Lizaveta Ivanovna softly.

“Narumov. Do you know him?”

“No, I don’t. Is he an officer or a civilian?”

“An officer.”

“An engineer?”

“No, a cavalryman. What made you think he was an engineer?”

The young lady laughed and did not answer a word.

“Paul!” called the Countess from behind the screen. “Send me a new novel, will you, but please not the kind they write nowadays.”

“What do you mean, *grand-maman*?”

“I mean a novel in which the hero does not strangle either his mother or his father, and which describes no drowned bodies. I am terribly scared of drowned bodies.”

“There are no such novels these days. Would you perhaps like some Russian ones?”

“You don’t mean to say there are Russian novels?... Send some to me, my dear, send some by all means!”

“I’m sorry, I must go now, *grand-maman*: I’m in a hurry... Goodbye, Lizaveta Ivanovna! I still want to know why you thought Narumov was an engineer.”

And Tomsy left the boudoir.

Lizaveta Ivanovna remained by herself; she laid aside her work and looked out of the window. Soon a young officer appeared

from behind a corner on the other side of the street. A blush spread over her cheeks; she took up her work again and bent her head right over the canvas. At that moment the Countess entered, fully dressed.

“Lizanka,” she said, “would you give orders to have the horses harnessed; we’ll go out for a ride.”

Lizanka rose from behind the embroidery frame and began putting her work away.

“What’s the matter with you, child? Are you deaf?” the Countess shouted. “Tell them to harness the horses at once.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the young lady answered softly and ran into the ante-room.

A servant came in and handed the Countess some books from Prince Pavel Alexandrovich.

“Very well. Give him my thanks,” said the Countess. “Lizanka! Lizanka! Where are you running now?”

“To get dressed.”

“You’ll have plenty of time for that. Sit down here. Open the first volume and read to me...”

The young lady took the book and read a few lines.

“Louder!” said the Countess. “What’s up with you, madam? Have you lost your voice or something?... Wait a minute: pull up that footstool for me, closer... Well now!”

Lizaveta Ivanovna read two pages. The Countess yawned.

“Put that book down,” she said. “What nonsense! Send it back to Prince Pavel with my thanks... But what’s happened to the carriage?”

“The carriage is ready,” said Lizaveta Ivanovna, looking out on the street.

“And why aren’t you dressed?” said the Countess. “One always has to wait for you! This, little madam, is unbearable.”

Liza ran to her room. Two minutes had not gone by when the Countess started ringing with all her might. Three maids ran in through one door, and a footman through the other.

“It’s totally impossible to get anyone’s attention around her,” the Countess said to them. “Go and tell Lizaveta Ivanovna that I am waiting for her.”

Lizaveta Ivanovna came in, wearing a cape and bonnet.

“At long last, madam!” said the Countess. “But what finery! What’s all this for? Whose head do you want to turn?... And what’s the weather like? – There is a wind, it seems to me.”

“No there isn’t, so please your ladyship. It’s entirely calm,” said the footman.

“You always say what comes into your head first! Open the little window. Just as I thought: there is a wind! Chilling to the bones! Have the horses unharnessed! Lizanka, we’re not going; you needn’t have decked yourself out so.”

“This is my life,” thought Lizaveta Ivanovna.

In truth, Lizaveta Ivanovna was the unluckiest of creatures. “Bitter is the bread of others,” says Dante, “and wearisome are the steps of another’s staircase.”* Who indeed would be more familiar with the bitter taste of dependence than the poor ward of an aristocratic old lady? The Countess N. was, of course, not an evil soul, but as the spoiled pet of society, she was capricious; she had grown mean and had sunk into a cold egoism, like all old people whose fondest memories lay in the past and to whom the present was alien. She participated in all the trivial events of high-society life, dragging herself to balls, where she would sit in a corner, all painted up and dressed according to an ancient fashion, like a misshapen but obligatory ornament of the ballroom; the guests, as they arrived, would go up to her bowing low, as if performing an established rite, but afterwards would pay no attention to her. She was scrupulous in receiving the whole city as etiquette decreed, but hardly recognized any of her guests. Her numerous domestics, grown fat and gray in her entrance hall and maids’ quarters, did what they pleased, robbing the moribund old woman left, right and centre. Lizaveta Ivanovna was the martyr of the household. She poured the tea and was scolded for using too much sugar, read novels aloud and was blamed for all the faults of the authors, accompanied the Countess on her outings and was held responsible for both the weather and the condition of the streets. She had a fixed salary, but it was never paid in full; at the same time she was expected to be dressed like everyone else, that is, like the very few. In society she played the most pitiable role. Everybody knew her,

but nobody took any notice of her; at the balls she danced only when an extra partner was needed for a *vis-à-vis*; and ladies took her by the arm every time they needed to go to the dressing room in order to adjust something in their costume. She was proud; she felt her position keenly, and looked around impatiently waiting for a deliverer; but the young men, calculating in their whimsical vanity, did not honour Lizaveta Ivanovna with their attention, though she was a hundred times more appealing than the brazen and cold-hearted debutantes on whom they danced attendance. How many times did she steal out of the tedious but sumptuous salon in order to weep in her own poor room, furnished with a paper screen, a chest of drawers, a small mirror, a painted bedstead and a tallow candle faintly burning in its brass holder!

On one occasion – this was two days after the party described at the beginning of our story and a week before the scene that we have just detailed – on one occasion Lizaveta Ivanovna, sitting over her embroidery frame by the window, happened to glance at the street and caught sight of a young engineering officer who was standing there motionless with his eyes fixed on her window. She lowered her head and resumed her work; five minutes later she looked again – the young officer was standing in the same place. Since it had never been her way to flirt with unknown officers, she stopped looking at the street and embroidered for about two hours without raising her head. Dinner was announced. She stood up, started putting away her embroidery frame and, inadvertently glancing at the street, caught sight of the officer once more. This seemed rather strange to her. After dinner she went to the window with a certain feeling of apprehension, but the officer was no longer there, and she soon forgot about him...

About two days later, as she and the Countess came out of the house to get into the carriage, she saw him again. He was standing right by the entrance, his face hidden in his beaver collar, his dark eyes sparkling from under his cap. Lizaveta Ivanovna was frightened, though she did not know why, and got into the carriage, shaking inexplicably.

After she returned home she ran up to the window: the officer was standing in his former place, gazing at her; she turned away,

tormented by curiosity and agitated by a feeling that was entirely new to her.

From that time on, not one day passed without the young man arriving, at a certain hour, under the windows of the house. A tacit relationship was established between him and her. Sitting in her place over her work, she could sense his approach; she raised her head and looked at him longer with each day. The young man seemed to be grateful for it: she could see with her keen young eyes that a sudden blush spread over his pale cheeks each time their glances met. By the end of the week she gave him a smile...

When Tomsky asked for the Countess's permission to introduce a friend, the poor girl's heart gave a thump. Having learnt, however, that Narumov was not an engineer but a cavalryman, she regretted the indiscreet question that had betrayed her secret to the flighty Tomsky.

Hermann was the son of a Russified German who had left him a little capital. Firmly resolved to ensure his independence, Hermann did not touch even the interest earned by these funds; he lived on his salary alone, denying himself even the slightest extravagance. Since he was also reserved and proud, his comrades rarely had occasion to laugh at his excessive thriftiness. He was fiercely passionate and had a fiery imagination, but his resoluteness saved him from the usual lapses of youth. He was, for example, a gambler at heart but never touched a card, reckoning that his circumstances did not allow him (as he was fond of saying) *to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of gaining the superfluous*. Yet at the same time he would sit by the card table nights on end and follow with feverish trembling the different turns of the game.

The anecdote about the three cards fired his imagination; he could not get it out of his head all night. "What if," he thought as he wandered about Petersburg the following evening, "what if the old Countess revealed her secret to me? If she named the three reliable cards for me? Why not try my luck?... I could be introduced to her, get into her good graces, become her lover if need be; but all this requires time, and she is eighty-seven: she may die in a week – in a couple of days!... And what about the anecdote itself? Can one put any faith in it? No! Calculation,

moderation, and industry; these are my three faithful cards. They will treble my capital, increase it sevenfold, and bring me ease and independence!”

Lost thus in thought, he found himself on one of the main streets of Petersburg, in front of an old-style house. The street was crowded with carriages; one equipage after another rolled up to the lighted entrance. Now a young beauty’s shapely leg, now a clinking riding boot, now a striped stocking and a diplomat’s shoe emerged from the carriages. Fur coats and cloaks flitted by the stately doorman. Hermann stopped.

“Whose house is this?” he asked the watchman on the corner.

“The Countess N.’s,” answered the watchman.

A shiver ran down Hermann’s spine. The amazing anecdote arose in his imagination once more. He began to pace up and down by the house, thinking about its owner and her miraculous talent. It was late when he returned to his humble lodging; he could not get to sleep for a long time, and when he finally dropped off, he dreamt of cards, a green table, heaps of bank notes and piles of gold coins. He played one card after another, bent the corners resolutely, and kept winning, raking in the gold and stuffing the bank notes into his pockets. Waking up late, he sighed over the loss of his illusory riches; once more he went wandering about the city and once more found himself in front of Countess N.’s house. A mysterious force, it seemed, had drawn him there. He stopped and began to look at the windows. Behind one of them he noticed a dark-haired young head, bent, evidently, over a book or some work. The head was raised. Hermann beheld a fresh young face and dark eyes. That moment decided his fate.

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