

THE LITERATURE OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIA

An Anthology of Russian Literary Materials of the Age of
Classicism and the Enlightenment From the Reign of
Peter the Great (1689-1725) to the Reign of Alexander I
(1801-1825)

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4. *Poor Liza*

NIKOLAI M. KARAMZIN

Karamzin's best known fictional work and a classic of Russian sentimentalism appeared for the first time in the *Moscow Journal* in 1792. So successful was the story that pilgrimages were made to the pond near the Simonov Monastery outside Moscow in which the unfortunate Liza drowns herself in the story. Not only that, but young lovers carved their initials and various tender sentiments in the trees surrounding the pond (it has been pointed out, however, that from about 1799 the inscriptions become somewhat less reverent), and there were even instances of suicides.

The plot of *Poor Liza* (*Bednaia Liza*)—the seduction by a young nobleman of a girl of lower social origins—was among the most conventional in European sentimentalism. What is characteristic of Karamzin's treatment of it is the subordination of the element of social conflict to the ethical problem and the avoidance of a completely negative character in the young man, Erast.

Although Liza herself can hardly be accepted as a realistic portrait of a peasant (particularly if she is compared with Aniuta, for example, in Radishchev's *Journey*), Karamzin has introduced an element of psychological analysis, which was virtually unknown before in Russian literature. The emotions experienced by a young girl in love for the first time are handled faithfully and with some delicacy, Erast and his milieu, which were of course more familiar to Karamzin, appear more convincing, without any of the pastoral aura that still clings to Liza herself. In a certain sense, Erast may be regarded a precursor of the soul-weary romantic heroes of Russian literature, of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin or Lermontov's Pechorin. The impact of Liza's pure emotions on her jaded young lover in the early part of the story, which is traced with no little skill, easily brings to mind the early relationship between Tatiana and Onegin in Pushkin's classic.

Following the pattern of most of Karamzin's narrative



A portrait of Nikolai Karamzin.

prose, *Poor Liza* is presented as a first-person narration strongly emotional in coloration. The author frequently addresses his readers directly and expresses his own subjective opinions about the principals. However, unlike a great deal of sentimentalist fiction dealing with this or similar themes, Karamzin avoids a concluding moral and the eventual (conventional) triumph of good over evil.

The popularity of *Poor Liza* created a fashion for this type of fiction, and numerous imitations appeared, among them *Poor Masha* (Bednaia Masha) by A. Izmailov, *Unfortunate Liza* (Neschastnaia Liza) by P. Dolgorukov, *Poor Lilla* (Bednaia Lilla) by A. Popov, the *Story of Poor Maria* (Istoria bednoi Marii) by N. Brusilov, and others. Pushkin also wrote a version of the story, in a parodic vein, under the title "The Lady Rustic" (Baryshnia-krest'ianka). It was included in his *Tales of Belkin* (1830) cycle. The present translation¹ follows the text in N. M. Karamzin, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, ed. P. Berkov and G. Makogonenko, 2 vols., Moscow-Leningrad, 1964.

Perhaps no inhabitant of Moscow knows as well as I the environs of this city. For no one is out as often in the fields; no one has wandered more on foot, aimlessly and without plan — wherever my nose led — through meadows and glades, over hill and dale. Each summer I find new, pleasant locales, or find new beauties in the old.

But the most pleasant place for me is there by the gloomy, Gothic towers of the Simonov Monastery.¹ Standing on the hill, to the right, you can see almost all Moscow, that frightful

Liza was translated into English as early as 1803. It was included, together with several other stories, in a book of translations from Karamzin entitled *Russian Tales by Nicolai Karamsin*, translated by a John Battersby Elringtort and published in London in 1803. The following year, 1804, brought another book of Karamzin's stories in English. The translations are identical to those in the publication of 1803. The translator signs himself only as "a Dane," and dedicates the work to Mr. A. de Gyldenpalm, the Danish *charge d'affaires* in London.¹ The Simonov monastery, founded c. 1370.

mass of houses and churches that strikes the eye as a mighty amphitheatre: a magnificent picture, especially when lit by the sun, when its evening rays ignite the innumerable gilded cupolas and the innumerable crosses rising up to the sky! Misty, dark-green, flowering meadows spread out below. And beyond them, over yellow sand flows the clear river, ruffled by the light oars of fishing skiffs or gurgling under the rudder of freight barges, which sail from the most bountiful parts of the Russian Empire and supply hungry Moscow with grain. On the far side of the river you can see an oak grove, along which numerous herds graze. There young shepherds, sitting in the shade of the trees, sing simple, doleful songs and thus hasten along the summer days, so monotonous for them. Farther out, the gold-capped Danilov Monastery² shines in the thick green of ancient elms. Still farther, almost on the horizon's edge, the Sparrow Hills³ turn blue. To the left appear vast, grain-laden fields, woods, and three or four small villages, and in the distance, the village of Kolomensk⁴ with its tall castle.

I visit the place often and almost always greet spring there. And I go there in the sullen fall days to grieve along with Nature. The winds moan frightfully in the walls of the deserted monastery,⁵ among the graves grown over with tall grass, and in the dark passageways of the cells. There, leaning against the rubble of gravestones, I hear the dead moaning of times devoured in the abyss of the past—moaning from which my heart shrinks and trembles. Sometimes I enter the cells and imagine those who lived in them—sad pictures! Here I see a gray elder on his knees before a crucifix, praying for speedy release from his earthly bondage; for all his pleasures

² Founded in the second half of the thirteenth century by Prince Daniil, the son of Aleksandr Nevskii.

³ Vorob'evy gory, in Russian; the high ground southwest of Moscow. It is now called Lenin Hills.

⁴ A village to the south of Moscow. The castle referred to was probably the four-story one built on Catherine's orders in 1767 on the site of an older wooden castle erected in the time of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, in the 1660's.

⁵ In 1771 the Simonov monastery was placed under quarantine and vacated because of an outbreak of plague in the Moscow area. It remained uninhabited until the mid-1790's. During Napoleon's invasion of Russia it was sacked in 1812.

in life have disappeared, all his feelings have died, save those of illness and feebleness. Over there a young monk—with a pale face and languishing gaze—looks out at the field through the grating of his window and sees the joyous birds sailing freely in the sea of air—he sees, and bitter tears stream from his eyes. He pines, fades, and wastes away—and the cheerless tolling of the bell heralds for me his untimely death. From time to time I examine on the portals of the temple the representations of the miracles that took place in the monastery: there fish fall from the sky to sate the inhabitants of the monastery, besieged by numerous enemies; here an icon of the Blessed Mother turns the enemy to flight. All this refreshes in my memory the history of our Fatherland—the sad history of those times when the rapacious Tatars and Lithuanians plundered with fire and sword the environs of the Russian capital, when hapless Moscow, like a defenseless widow, looked to God alone for aid in her bitter misfortunes.

But most often I am attracted to the walls of the Si... nov Monastery by the memory of the deplorable fate of Liza, poor Liza. Ah! I love those objects that touch my heart and force me to shed tears of tender grief!

About a hundred and fifty yards from the monastery wall, by a birch grove, in the middle of a green meadow stands an empty cabin with no doors, no windows, and no floor. The roof has long since rotted and caved in. In this cabin thirty years or so ago lived the beautiful, dear Liza with her old mother.

• Liza's father was a rather well-to-do settler, for he loved work, tilled the land well, and always led a sober life. But soon after his death, his wife and daughter grew poor, the lazy hand of a hired man worked the land poorly, and the grain ceased to thrive. They were forced to rent out their land, and for a pittance of a sum. And what is more; the poor widow, almost constantly shedding tears over the death of her husband—for indeed peasant women know how to love!—from day to day became weaker and weaker and finally could not work at all. Liza alone—who was fifteen years old at her father's death—only Liza, sparing neither her tender youth nor her rare beauty, worked day and night; she wove flax, knitted stockings, gathered flowers in the spring and picked berries in the summer and sold them in Moscow. Observing her untiring daughter, the sensitive and good mother often

pressed her to her weakly beating heart, called her the grace of God, her provider, a joy in her old age, and prayed to God that He reward her for all she was doing for her mother. "God gave me hands in order to work," Liza would say, "you fed me at your breast and watched after me when I was a child: now my turn has come to watch after you. Only do stop grieving, stop weeping; our tears will not bring dear father back to life." But often the tender Liza could not hold back her own tears. Oh! She would remember that she once had a father and that he was no more; but to soothe her mother she tried to hide the grief in her heart and appear at ease and gay. "In the next world, dear Liza," the bereaved old woman would answer, "in the next world I will stop weeping. There, so they say, everyone will be happy; I am sure I'll be happy when I see your father. Only, I don't want to die now—what will become of you without me? Whom can I leave you to? No, God grant you will get settled somewhere first! Perhaps a good man will turn up soon. Then, having given you my blessing, dear children, I shall cross myself and peacefully lie down in the damp earth."

About two years had passed since the death of Liza's father. The meadows were covered with flowers, and Liza had come to Moscow with lilies of the valley. A young, well-dressed man with a pleasant appearance greeted her on the street. She showed him the flowers—and blushed. "Are you selling these, Miss?" he asked with a smile. "I am," she answered. "How much are you asking?"—"Five kopecks."—"That's too little. Here's a ruble for you." Liza was amazed, then dared glance at the young man. She blushed even more, and casting her eyes to the ground, she told him she would not take the ruble, "Why not?"—"I do not need any extra."—"I think that beautiful lilies of the valley, plucked by the hand of a beautiful girl, are worth a ruble. But since you will not take it, here is five kopecks, I would like to buy flowers from you all the time; I would like you to gather them only for me." Liza gave him the flowers, took the five kopecks, bowed and wanted to go; but the stranger held her by the arm. "But where are you going, Miss? Home."—"And where is your home?" Liza told him where she lived; she told him, and left. The young man did not want to hold her back, perhaps because the passers-by were beginning to stop and stare and snigger at them.

When she arrived home, Liza told her mother what had happened to her. "You did well by not taking the ruble. Perhaps this was some sort of bad man. . . ."—"Oh, no, Mother! I don't think so. He had such a good face and his voice. . . ."—"Nonetheless, Liza, it is better to live by your own labors and to take nothing as a gift. You have yet to learn, my dear, how evil people can harm a poor girl! My heart is always in my throat when you go into the city; I always place a candle before the icon and pray to God to protect you from all evil and harm." Tears came to Liza's eyes; she kissed her mother.

The next day Liza gathered the very best lilies of the valley and again went with them to the city. Her eyes were searching quietly for something. Many people wanted to buy flowers from her; but she answered that they were not for sale, and she kept looking first to one side and then to the other. Evening came on; she had to return home, and the flowers were cast into the Moscow River. "No one shall have you!" said Liza, feeling a certain sadness in her heart. The following evening she was sitting near the window, spinning and singing sad songs in a quiet voice, when suddenly she sprang up and cried, "Oh! . . ." The young stranger was standing under the window.

"What's the matter?" asked her frightened mother, who was sitting beside her. "Nothing, Mother dear," answered Liza in a timid voice, "I just caught sight of him."—"Of whom?"—"That gentleman who bought flowers from me." The old woman looked out the window. The young man bowed to her so respectfully, with such a pleasant appearance, that she was unable to think anything but good of him. "How do you do, my good woman!" he said. "I am Very tired. Would you have any fresh milk?" The obliging Liza, not waiting for an answer from her mother—perhaps because she knew it already—ran to the cellar, brought back a clean earthenware pot covered with a clean wooden plate, snatched up a glass, washed it and dried it with a white towel, poured and handed the glass through the window, but she herself kept looking to the ground. The stranger drank—and nectar from the hands of Hebe could not have seemed to him more delicious! Anyone can guess that afterward he thanked Liza, and thanked her not so much with words as with his glance. Meanwhile the good-hearted old woman had managed to tell him of her grief

and her comfort—of the death of her husband and of the fine qualities of her daughter, of her love for work, tenderness, and so forth and so on. He listened to her attentively, but his eyes were—is it necessary to say where? And Liza, timid Liza, glanced at the young man from time to time; but lightning does not flash and disappear in a cloud so quickly as her blue eyes, having met his glance, turned to the ground. "I would like your daughter to sell her work to no one but me," he said to her mother. "Thus she will not have reason to go into the city often, and you will not have to part with her. I myself can stop by from time to time." At this point, a joy that she tried in vain to hide sparkled in Liza's eyes; her cheeks flamed up like the sunset on a clear summer evening; she stared at her left sleeve and plucked at it with her right hand. The old woman eagerly accepted this offer, suspecting no evil intentions in it, and assured the stranger that the cloth that Liza wove and the stockings she knitted were exceptionally fine, and wore better than any others. It grew dark, and the young man now wanted to leave. "But how shall we address you, good and kind sir?" the old woman asked. "My name is Erast," he answered. "Erast," Liza said softly, "Erast!" She repeated this name five or six times, as if trying to learn it by heart. Erast said goodbye to them until the next time, and left. Liza followed him with her eyes, while her mother sat lost in thought, and then, taking her daughter by the hand, she said: "Oh, Liza! How good and kind he is! If only your betrothed would be like him!" Liza's heart skipped a beat. "Mother, dear mother! How could that ever be? He is, a landowner, and among peasants . . ." Liza did not finish her sentence.

It is time the reader should know that this young man, this Erast, was a rather wealthy nobleman with a decent mind and a good heart, good by nature, but weak and frivolous. He led a dissipated life, thought only of his own pleasure, sought it in worldly amusements, but often could not find it: he was bored and would complain of his fate. At their first meeting Liza's beauty made an impression on his heart. He read novels and idylls; he had a rather lively imagination, and often transported himself in thought back to those times (real or unreal), when, if one is to believe the poets, everyone wandered carefree through the meadows, bathed in clear springs, kissed like turtledoves, rested under the roses and the myrtle, and spent all their days in happy idleness. He felt

that he had found in Liza that which his heart had long sought. Nature is calling me into its embrace, to its pure joys, he thought, and he decided—at least for a while—to abandon high society.

Let us return to Liza. Night had fallen—the mother blessed her daughter and wished her sweet dreams; but this time her wish was not fulfilled: Liza did not sleep well at all. The new guest in her soul, Erast's image, was so vividly before her that she awoke almost every minute, awoke and sighed. Even before the rising of the sun Liza got up, went down to the banks of the Moscow River, sat on the grass and, lapsing into a despondent mood, gazed at the white mists that churned in the air and, rising upward, left behind sparkling drops on the green cloak of Nature. Silence reigned all about. But soon the rising luminary of the day awakened all creations: groves and hedges came to life; birds fluttered about and began to sing; and the flowers raised their heads to drink in the life-giving rays of light. But Liza kept sitting despondently. Ah, Liza, Liza! What has happened to you? Up to this time, awaking with the birds, you were gay along with them in the morning, and your pure, joyous soul shone in your eyes, just as the sun shines in the drops of heavenly dew; but now you are lost in thought, and the universal joy of nature is foreign to your heart. Meanwhile a young shepherd, playing his pipes, was driving his flock along the banks of the river. Liza stared at him and thought: If only the one who now occupies my thoughts had been born a simple peasant, a shepherd, and if only he were now driving his flock past me: oh! I would bow to him with a smile and I would say to him pleasantly: "Hello, my dear shepherd boy! Where are you driving your flock? Here, too, the green grass grows for your sheep; and here the crimson flowers blossom, from which one can plait a garland for your hat." He would glance at me with a tender look—perhaps he would take my hand. . . . A dream! The shepherd, playing his pipes, passed by and with his variegated flock vanished behind a near hill.

Suddenly Liza heard the sound of oars; she looked toward the river and saw a boat, and in the boat—Erast.

Her heart began to beat faster, and not from fear, of course. She stood up and wanted to go, but she could not. Erast jumped out onto the bank, approached Liza, and—her dream was partially fulfilled; for he *looked at her tenderly and took*

her hand. . . . But Liza, Liza stood with her eyes cast down, with flaming cheeks, and with a fluttering heart—she could not take her hand away from him—she could not turn away when he came close to her with his rosy lips. . . . Oh! he kissed her, kissed her with such ardor that the whole universe seemed to her to be blazing on fire! "Dear Liza!" said Erast. "Dear Liza! I love you!" And these words resounded in the depths of her soul, like heavenly, exquisite music; she scarcely dared believe her ears and . . . But I must put down my brush. I will say only that at this moment of ecstasy Liza's shyness disappeared—Erast learned that he was loved, loved passionately by a new, pure, and open heart.

They sat on the grass, and in such a way that not much space remained between them—they looked into each other's eyes, said to each other: Love me! and two hours seemed to them only an instant. Finally Liza remembered that her mother might worry about her. They had to part, 'Oh, Erast!' she said, "will you love me always?"—"Always, dear Liza, always!" he answered. "And can you swear to this for me?"—"I can, dearest Liza, I can!"—"No! I don't need an oath. I believe you, Erast, I do. Could you ever deceive poor Liza? Would this not be impossible?"—"Impossible, impossible, dear Liza!"—"How happy I am! And how Mother will be overjoyed when she learns that you love me!"—"Oh, no, Liza! There's no need to tell her anything."—"But why?"—"Old people are often suspicious. She would imagine something bad."—"That could never happen."—"Nonetheless, I ask you not to say a word to her about this."—"All right; I must obey you, although I would rather not keep anything from her." They took leave of each other, kissed for the last time, and promised to meet every evening, either on the bank of the river or in the birch grove, or somewhere near Liza's cabin; only, they had to see each other without fail. Liza left, but her eyes turned back a hundred times to Erast, who remained standing on the bank, watching after her.

Liza returned to the cabin in a completely different mood from that in which she had left. A heartfelt joy manifested itself on her face and in all her movements. He loves me! she thought, and was carried away by the idea. "Oh, Mother dear!" Liza said to her mother who had just awakened. "Oh, Mother! What a beautiful morning! Everything is so gay in the fields! The skylarks have never sung so well; the sun has

never shone so brightly; and the flowers have never smelted so pleasant!" The old woman, leaning on her crutch, went out into the meadow to enjoy the morning Liza had described in such delightful colors. Indeed, it did seem to her exceptionally pleasant; her dear daughter with her joyousness had brightened all Nature for her. "Oh, Liza!" she said, "everything of the Lord God's is so good! I have lived to threescore years on this earth and I still cannot look upon the Lord's works enough. I cannot see enough of the clear sky that seems like a high tent, nor of the earth that every year is covered with new grass and new flowers. The Heavenly King must have loved man very much when He furnished this world so well for him. Oh, Liza! Who would ever want to die, if only there were a few times when we would have no grief? . . . Obviously it has to be this way. Perhaps we would forget our soul if tears were never to fall from our eyes." But Liza thought, Oh! I would sooner forget my soul than ever forget my dear friend!

After this, Erast and Liza, fearing lest they break their word, saw each other every evening (after Liza's mother had gone to bed) either on the bank of the river or in the birch grove, but most often in the shade of the century-old oaks (about a hundred and seventy yards from the cabin), oaks that overshadowed the deep, clear pond that had been dug in ancient times. There, through the green branches, the beams of the silent moon oftentimes silvered Liza's light hair, which was ruffled by the zephyrs and the hand of her dear friend; often these beams caught in tender Liza's eyes a sparkling tear of love, which a kiss from Erast never failed to dry. They embraced—but chaste, shy Cynthia did not hide from them behind a cloud; their embraces were pure and sinless. "When you," Liza said to Erast, "when you tell me, 'I love you, my friend,' when you clasp me to your heart and gaze at me with your tender eyes, oh! then I feel so good, so good, that I forget myself, forget everything, everything except—Erast. It's a wonder, a wonder, my friend, that I could have lived quietly and happily before I knew you! Right now I can't understand it; now I think that without you life is not life, but sorrow and boredom. Without your eyes the bright moon is dark; without your voice the singing nightingale is tedious; without your breath the breeze seems unpleasant." Erast was carried away with his shepherdess—as he called Liza—and,

seeing how much she loved him, he seemed more amiable to himself. All the sparkling amusements of high society appeared worthless in comparison to those pleasures with which the *passionate friendship* of a pure soul nourished his heart. With revulsion he thought back to the despicable sensuousness with which he had sated his feelings before. I shall live with Liza as brother with sister, he thought; I shall never misuse her love and I will always be happy! Foolish young man! Do you know your own heart? Can you always answer for your actions? Does reason always rule your emotions?

Liza demanded that Erast visit her mother often. "I love her," she would say, "and I want what is good for her; it seems to me that seeing you is a great blessing for anyone." And in fact the old woman was always happy when she saw him. She loved to talk with him about her late husband and tell of the days of her youth: how she met her sweet Ivan for the first time, how he fell in love with her, and how he lived with her in such love and harmony. "Oh! We could never gaze at each other enough—right up to the hour when cruel death cut him down. He died in my arms!" Erast listened to her with unfeigned pleasure. He bought Liza's work from her and always wanted to pay ten times the price she asked. But the old woman never took any extra.

Several weeks passed in this manner. One evening Erast waited a long time for his Liza. Finally she arrived, but she was so sad that he became frightened; her eyes were red from tears. "Liza, Liza! What has happened to you?"—"Oh, Erast! I have been weeping!"—"Over what? What is it?"—"I must tell you everything. They have found a husband for me, the son of a rich peasant from the neighboring village; Mother wants me to marry him."—"Are you willing?"—"You cruel thing! Need you even ask? And I am sorry for Mother; she weeps and says that I don't desire her peace of mind, that death will torment her if I do not marry while she is still alive. Oh! My mother doesn't know that I have such a dear friend." Erast kissed Liza and said that her happiness was dearer to him than anything in the world; that after her mother's death he would take her into his home and he would live with her never to part, in the country and in the thick forests, as in paradise. "But you can never be my husband!" said Liza with a quiet sigh. "Why not?"—"I am a peasant girl."—"You insult me! Most important of all for your friend

is the soul, a sensitive, pure soul—and Liza will always be nearest my heart."

She threw herself into his arms—and this was to be the fatal hour for her purity! Erast felt an unusual excitement in his blood—Liza had never seemed so delightful—her caresses had never touched him so strongly—her kisses had never been so inflamed—she knew nothing, suspected nothing, feared nothing—the blackness of the night fed desire—not a single star showed in the sky—no ray of light could illumine the error. Erast felt himself trembling—Liza did too, not knowing the cause—not knowing what was happening to her. . . . Oh, Liza, Liza! Where is your Guardian Angel? Where is—your innocence!

The error took only a moment. Liza did not understand her emotions; she was astonished and kept asking questions. Erast was silent—he searched for words and did not find them. "Oh! I am afraid," said Liza, "I am afraid of what has happened to us! I feel as if I were dying, that my soul . . . No, I cannot say that! . . . You are silent, Erast? Are you sighing? . . . My God! What is this?" Meanwhile lightning flashed and thunder rolled. Liza began to tremble all over. "Erast, Erast!" she said, "I am frightened! I am afraid that the thunder will kill me like a criminal!" The storm raged menacingly; rain poured from the black clouds—it seemed that Nature was lamenting the loss of Liza's purity. Erast tried to calm Liza, and he took her to the cabin. Tears rolled from her eyes as she parted with him. "Oh, Erast! Assure me that we shall be just as happy as always!"—"We shall, Liza, we shall!" he answered. "God grant it so! I can do nothing but believe your words: after all, I love you! Only, in my heart. . . . But enough of this! Farewell! Tomorrow, tomorrow we'll see each other,"

Their meetings continued—but how everything had changed! Erast was no longer able to be satisfied only by the innocent caresses of his Liza—only by her gazes filled with love—only by the touch of a hand, by kisses, by pure embraces. He wanted more, more, and finally he was unable to desire anything—and whoever knows his own heart, whoever has pondered the nature of its tender pleasures, will certainly agree with me that the fulfillment of *all* desires is the most dangerous temptation of love. Liza was no longer for Erast

that angel of purity who previously had inflamed his imagination and delighted his soul. Platonic love had given way to those feelings of which he could not be *proud*, and which were no longer new to him. As concerns Liza, having given herself to him completely, she lived and breathed for him alone, and like a lamb she submitted to his will in everything and found her happiness in his pleasure. She saw a change in him and often said: "You were gayer before; we were more at ease and happier before; and I was never before so afraid of losing your love!" Sometimes in parting he would say to her: "Tomorrow, Liza, I cannot meet you; some important business has come up." And each time Liza sighed at these words.

Finally she did not see him for five days in a row, and was greatly disturbed; on the sixth day he came with a downcast expression and said to her: "My dear Liza! I must say farewell to you for a while. You know that we are at war; I am in the service; my regiment is going on a campaign." Liza grew pale and almost fainted.

Erast caressed her; he said that he would always love his dear Liza and that upon his return he hoped never to part with her again. For a long while she was silent; then she burst into bitter tears, grasped his arm and, gazing at him with all the tenderness of love, asked, "You cannot stay?"—"I can," he answered, "but only with the greatest ignominy, with the greatest blemish on my honor. Everyone would despise me and shun me as a coward, as an unworthy son of my fatherland."—"Oh! Since that's the case," said Liza, "then go, go wherever God wills! But they might kill you."—"Death for the Fatherland is not terrible, dear Liza."—"I shall die just as soon as you leave this earth."—"But why think like this? I hope to stay alive, I hope to return to you, to my friend."—"God grant, God grant it so! Each day, each hour I shall pray for it. Oh! Why do I not know how to read or Write! You would inform me of everything that happens to you; and I would write to you—of my tears."—"No, spare yourself, Liza; spare yourself for your friend. I don't want you to weep without me."—"You cruel man! You would think to deprive me of even this comfort! No! I shall cease weeping after we part only when my heart dries up."—"Think of that pleasant moment when we shall again see each other."—"I shall, I shall

think of it! Oh! If only it would come soon! My dear, kind Erast! Remember, remember your poor Liza, who loves you even more than herself!"

But I am unable to describe all that they said on this occasion. The next day was to be their last meeting.

Erast wanted to bid farewell to Liza's mother, who could not hold back her tears when she heard that her *kind, handsome gentleman* had to go to war. He forced her to take some money from him, saying: "During my absence I do not want Liza to sell her work, which we agreed belongs to me." The old woman showered him with blessings. "God grant that you return safely to us," she said, "and that I shall see you once more in this life! Perhaps my Liza will find herself a desirable bridegroom by that time. How I would thank God if you could come to our wedding! And when Liza has children, you know, sir, that you must be their godfather! Oh, how I want to live until then!" Liza stood alongside her mother and did not dare to glance at her. The reader can easily imagine what she was feeling at this moment.

But what feelings she had then, when Erast, embracing her for the last time, for the last time clasping her to his heart, said: "Farewell, Liza! . . ." What a touching picture! The sunrise, like a crimson sea, inundated the eastern sky. Erast stood under the branches of the tall oak, holding in his arms his pale, despondent, bereaved friend, who, bidding him farewell, said farewell to her own soul. All Nature attended in silence.

Liza sobbed—Erast wept—he left her—she fell—she got up on her knees, lifted her hands to the sky and watched Erast, who was moving away—farther—farther—and finally disappeared—the sun rose, and Liza, abandoned, pitiful, lost all her feelings and consciousness.

She came to—and the world seemed to her doleful and sad. All the pleasures of Nature had disappeared for her together with the one dear to her heart. Oh! she thought, Why have I been abandoned in this wasteland? What keeps me from flying after dear Erast? I am not afraid of war; I am only afraid without my friend. I want to live with him, to die with him, or to save his precious life by my own death. Wait, wait, my dear! I am flying to you! She was ready to run after Erast; but the thought: I have mother! stopped her. Liza heaved a sigh, and with bowed head set off quietly for her

cabin. From this hour hence her days were days of grief and sorrow, which had to be hidden from her tender mother: thus her heart suffered even more! Her heart found relief only in those moments when Liza, alone in the depths of the forest, could freely pour forth her tears and moan over the absence of her dear one. The sad turtledove would often join its plaintive voice to her moaning. But sometimes—though they were very rare—a golden ray of hope, a ray of solace brightened the gloom of her sorrow. When he returns to me, how happy I will be! How everything will change! Her gaze brightened at the thought and her cheeks became rosy, and Liza smiled like a May morning after a stormy night. About two months passed in this way.

One day Liza had to go into Moscow in order to buy some rosewater with which her mother treated her eyes. On one of the big streets she met a magnificent coach, and in the coach she caught sight of Erast. "Oh!" Liza cried out, and she raced toward it; but the coach passed by and turned into a courtyard, Erast stepped out and was about to go into the entrance of a huge house, when suddenly he found himself—in Liza's embrace. He turned pale—then, answering not a word to her exclamation, took her by the arm, led her into his study, shut the door, and said to her: "Liza! Things have changed: I am engaged to marry; you must leave me alone now, and for your own peace of mind forget me. I loved you, and I love you now; that is, I wish all the best for you. Here are a hundred rubles—take them"—he put the money in her pocket—"allow me to kiss you for the last time—and go on home." Before Liza was even able to come to her senses, he led her out of his study and said to the servant, "See this girl to the street."

At this moment my heart, is surging with blood. I forget the man in Erast—I am ready to damn him—but my tongue will not move. I look up to the sky, and a tear trickles down my face. Oh! Why am I not writing a novel, instead of this sorrowful story of something that really happened?

And did Erast betray Liza, when he told her that he was entering the army? No, he was in fact in the army; but instead of battling the enemy, he played cards and gambled away nearly all his estate. Soon peace was concluded, and Erast returned to Moscow burdened with debts. There remained only one way by which he could repair his circumstances—marry an elderly, rich widow who had long been in love with

him. He decided on this, and moved into her house, after having cast a sincere sigh for his Liza. But is this any justification?

Liza found herself on the street and in such a state no pen could describe. He, he has driven me out? He loves another? I am lost!—These were her thoughts, her feelings! A cruel fainting spell interrupted them for a while. A kindly woman who was coming along the street stopped over Liza, who was lying on the ground, and tried to revive her. The poor thing opened her eyes, stood up with the help of this kind woman, thanked her and set off, whither she did not know. I can live no more, thought Liza, no more! . . . Oh, if only the sky would fall on me! If only the earth would swallow up a poor girl! . . . No! The sky will not fall, the earth will not tremble! Woe is me! She walked out of the city and suddenly found herself on the bank of a deep pond, under the shade of the ancient oaks, which several weeks before were the dumb witnesses to her raptures. The recollection rent her soul; a most terrible, heartfelt torment showed on her face. But within a few minutes she was lost deep in thought. She looked about herself, caught sight of her neighbor's daughter (a fifteen-year-old girl) coming along the road. She called to her, took the hundred rubles from her pocket and, giving them to her, said: "Dearest Aniuta, my dear little friend! Take this money to my mother—it isn't stolen—tell her that Liza is guilty before her; that I have hidden from her my love for a certain cruel man—for E. . . . Why know his name? Say that he has deceived me—ask her to forgive me—God will be her help—kiss her hand just as I am now kissing yours—tell her that poor Liza told you to kiss her—say that I . . ." At this point Liza threw herself into the water. Aniuta screamed, began to sob, but could not save her. She ran to the village—people gathered and they pulled Liza out; but she was already dead.

Thus she ended her life, she who was so beautiful in soul and body. When we are *there*, in the new life, we will see each other, and I will recognize you, tender Liza!

They buried her next to the pond, under the somber oak, and placed a wooden cross on her grave. I often sit here, lost in thought, resting against the receptacle of Liza's dust; the pond stirs before my eyes, and the leaves rustle over my head.

Liza's mother heard of the terrible death of her daughter,

and her blood froze from horror—her eyes closed forever. The cabin became deserted. The wind moans in it, and superstitious villagers, hearing this noise at night, say: "There the dead girl is groaning; there poor Liza is moaning!"

Erast was miserable to the end of his life. Having learned of Liza's fate, he could not find any solace, and he considered himself to be her murderer. I made his acquaintance a year before his death. He told me this story himself and led me to Liza's grave.—Perhaps now they have become reconciled!

5. *The Island of Bornholm*

NIKOLAI M. KARAMZIN

Published in 1793, *The Island of Bornholm* (Ostrov Bornhol'm) is one of Karamzin's more effective works of fiction. The awesome but majestic Scandinavian landscape, the medieval Gothic castle with its drawbridge, vaults, and subterranean dungeon, the nocturnal setting, the intrusion of dreams, "forbidden love," and the terrible vengeance visited upon the two young lovers, and finally the all-pervading gloom and mystery (which the author cannot bring himself to reveal even at the end of the work) combine to evoke a thoroughly romantic atmosphere. By hints and allusions, by delicate shades and halftones, Karamzin skillfully creates a sense of deepening mystery, of growing suspense. The "truth" of the tragedy is only suggested, never boldly stated, and when he reaches the conclusion of his tale Karamzin tauntingly leaves the reader to resolve the mystery for himself.

Friends! The fair summer is over, golden autumn has turned pale, the foliage has withered. The trees are without fruits or leaves; the misty sky is agitated, like a gloomy sea; the winter down falls on the cold earth. We take leave of Nature until the joyous meeting of spring; we shut ourselves away from snowstorms and blizzards; we shut ourselves up in a quiet study! Time shall not burden us, for we know a remedy against boredom. Friends! The oak and the birch flame in our fireplace; let the wind rage and strew the windows with white snow! Let us sit by the red fire and tell each other tales and legends and accounts of what lies in the past.

You know that I have traveled abroad, far, far from my homeland, far from you, who are so dear to my heart. I have seen many wonders, I have heard many amazing tales; much have I told you, but I could not tell you all that has happened

to me. Listen; I *will recount*—I *will recount the truth*, and no invention.

England was the farthest point of my travels. "Out there," I told myself, "homeland and friends await you; it is time to calm yourself in their embraces, time to dedicate your pilgrim's staff to the son of Maia,* time to hang it on the heaviest bough of the tree beneath which you played in your childhood years." And so I took passage in London on the ship *Britannia*, to sail home to my beloved land of Russia.

On white sails we scudded along the blossoming banks of the majestic Thames. Already the boundless ocean lay green ahead of us, already we could hear the sound of its agitation; but suddenly the wind shifted, and our ship, in expectation of a more propitious time, was forced to put in opposite the town of Gravesend.

Together with the captain I descended onto the shore, and strolled with a peaceful heart over green fields adorned by nature and industry, places exotic and picturesque; finally, fatigued by the heat of the sun, I lay down on the grass, under a century-old elm, close to the seashore, and gazed at the moist expanse, at the foamy billows that with a dull roar were carried in countless rows toward the isle from the gloomy distance. The dejected sound and sight of the endless waters were beginning to incline me to drowsiness, to that sweet idleness of soul in which all ideas and feelings stand still and become fixed, like a suddenly frozen stream, and which is the most expressive and the most poetic image of death. But all at once the branches rustled over my head. . . . I looked up and beheld a young man, pale, languid—more an apparition than a human being. In one hand he held a guitar; with the other he was tearing leaves off the tree, while he gazed out at the blue sea with motionless dark eyes in which there shone the last ray of dying life. My glance did not meet his, for his senses were dead to external objects; he stood two paces from me, but saw nothing and heard nothing. Unhappy youth! I thought, you are destroyed by fate. I do not know your name or your family, but I know that you are unfortunate!

He sighed, raised his eyes to heaven, and lowered them

* In ancient times travelers returning from abroad dedicated their staves to Mercury.—'Author's note.

again to the ocean waves; he left the tree, sat down on the grass, and strummed a melancholy prelude on his guitar, gazing unceasingly out to sea, while he sang softly the following song (in Danish, a language which my friend Dr. N.N. taught me in Geneva):

The laws do all condemn The
object of my love; But who, my
heart, could e'er Refuse your
sacred need?

What law is there more pure
Than that of heart's desire?
What call is there more strong
Than beauty's or than love's?

I love—I'll love fore'er; Curse
then my heart's desire, You
souls who know not pain, You
hearts who know not woe!

O Nature's realm most pure!
Your tender friend and son Is
innocent in all. 'Twas you that
gave me soul;

Benevolent your gifts That
her did so adorn; O
Nature! You desired That
Lila be my love!

Your lightnings struck close by,
But did not shatter us, When
we embraced and kissed And
our desire did slake.

O Bornholm, Bornholm fair!
To you my heart would e'er
Return and dwell again,
But vainly do I weep;

I languish and I sigh!
Fore'er am I exiled
From shores of you, fair isle,
By the paternal curse!

And you, beloved mine! Yearn
you and live you still? Or have
you ended all In roaring
ocean's depths?

Oh, come to me, oh, come,
Beloved shade so dear! And I
will join you now In roaring
ocean's depths.

At that moment, impelled by an involuntary inner force, I was on the point of rushing toward the stranger and embracing him, but at that very instant the captain took me by the hand and said that a favorable wind had filled our sail and that we must lose no time. . . . We sailed. The youth, flinging down his guitar and folding his arms, gazed out to the blue sea in our wake.

The waves foamed under our ship's helm; the shore of Gravesend concealed itself in the distance; the northern provinces of England lay dark on the other end of the horizon; at last all disappeared, and even the birds that for a long time had soared over our heads now turned back toward shore, as if terrified at that endless expanse of the sea. The agitation of the murmuring waters and the foggy sky were the only objects left in view, majestic and terrible. My friends! To experience all the daring of the human spirit, one must be on the open ocean where nothing but a thin plank, as Wieland says, separates us from a watery grave, but where the skilled seaman, unfurling the sails, rushes on and in thought already sees the luster of the gold that, in some other part of the world, will reward his bold enterprise. *Nil mortalibus arduum est*; nothing is impossible for mortals, I thought with Horace, my gaze lost in the endlessness of Neptune's realm.

But soon a severe attack of seasickness made me lose consciousness. For six days my eyes did not open, and my tired heart, washed by the foam of the storm waves,* hardly beat in my breast. On the seventh day I revived, and with a joyous if pallid aspect mounted to the deck. The sun was already sinking in the clear azure skies toward the West; the ocean,

* In truth, the foam of the waves often did wash over me, who was lying unconscious on the deck of the ship.—Author's note.

illuminated by its golden rays, murmured; the ship flew with full sail over the breast of the cleaving billows, which in vain sought to outstrip it. All around us, at varying distances, white, blue, and pink flags were unfurled, and on the right hand lay something dark that resembled land,

"Where are we?" I asked the captain.

"Our trip has been propitious," he said, "we have passed The Sound; the shores of Sweden have disappeared from our sight. To starboard you can see the Danish island of Bornholm, a place dangerous for shipping; there shoals and rocks lie hidden on the sea bottom. When night approaches, we shall anchor there."

The isle of Bornholm, the isle of Bornholm, I repeated in my thoughts, and the image of the young stranger at Gravesend arose in my mind. The mournful tones and words of his song resounded in my ears.

They hold the secret of his heart, I thought, but who is he? What laws condemn the love of an unhappy man? What curse has exiled him from the shores of Bornholm, so dear to him? Will I ever learn his history?

Meanwhile a strong wind carried us straight toward the island. Its fierce cliffs already came into view, with boiling streams that hurled themselves, roaring and foaming, down from their heights into the ocean depths. It seemed inaccessible from all sides, from all sides walled by the hand of majestic Nature; nothing but terror appeared on its gray crags. With horror I saw the image of cold, silent eternity, the image of implacable death and of that indescribable creative power in the face of which all that is mortal must tremble.

The sun had sunk in the waves, and we cast anchor. The wind had calmed down, and the sea scarcely rocked. I gazed at the island, which with inexplicable force lured me to its banks; a dark presentment spoke to me: Then you can satisfy your curiosity, and Bornholm will remain forever in your memory! Finally, learning that there were fishing huts not far from the shore, I determined to ask the captain for a boat and go to the island with two or three sailors. He told me of the danger, of the rocks beneath the waters surface, but seeing his passenger's resolution, he agreed to fulfill my demand, on condition that early the next morning I return to the ship.

We set out and safely reached the shore of a small calm

inlet. Here we were met by fishermen, a folk crude and rough, raised on the cold element under the roar of ocean billows, and unacquainted with a smile of friendly greeting. Hearing that we desired to look over the island and spend the night in one of their huts, they tied up our boat and led us through a mountain of flintstone that was falling to pieces, up to their dwellings. In half an hour we came out onto a broad green plain on which, as in the Alpine valleys, low wooden cottages were scattered, along with thickets and boulders. Here I left my sailors, and myself went on farther to enjoy for yet a while the pleasant sensations of evening; a boy of thirteen served as my guide.

The scarlet glow had not yet died in the bright heaven; its rosy light was strewn on the white granite boulders, and in the distance, beyond a high hill, it lit up the sharp towers of an old castle. The boy could not tell me to whom the castle belonged.

"We do not go there," he said, "and God knows what goes on there!"

I redoubled my steps and soon approached the great Gothic edifice, surrounded by a deep moat and a high wall. Everywhere silence reigned; in the distance the sea sighed, and the last ray of evening light died on the copper-sheathed tips of the towers.

I walked around the castle—the gates were closed and the drawbridges raised. My guide was fearful, of what he himself did not know, and begged me to go back to the huts, but could a man impelled by curiosity heed such a request?

Night came on, and suddenly a voice resounded; the echo repeated it, and again all was silent. From fright the boy seized me with both hands, and trembled like a criminal at execution. In a minute the voice resounded again and asked, "Who is there?"

"A foreigner," I said, "brought to this island by curiosity. If the law of hospitality is honored as a virtue in the walls of your castle, then you will shelter a traveler in the dark time of night."

There was no reply, but in a few minutes the drawbridge thundered and dropped down from the tower; with a noise the gate opened—a tall man clad in a long black garment came to meet me, took me by the hand, and led me into the castle. I turned around; the boy, my guide, had hidden.

The gate banged after us; the drawbridge thundered up again. Crossing a spacious courtyard, grown over with bushes, nettles, and feathergrass, we came to a huge house from which light was shining. A tall peristyle in antique fashion led to an iron porch, the steps of which resounded under our feet. On every side it was gloomy and deserted. In the first hall, surrounded inside by a Gothic colonnade, there hung a lamp that scarcely cast its light on the rows of gilded columns, which were beginning to fall down from age; in one spot lay fragments of a cornice, in another, bits of pilasters; in a third, whole columns that had tumbled down. My guide looked around at me several times with piercing eyes, but did not say a word.

All this made a terrifying impression on me, composed partly of dread, partly of a mysterious, inexplicable satisfaction, or, to put it better, the pleasant anticipation of something extraordinary.

We crossed two or three more halls like the first one and illuminated with the same lamps. Then a door opened to the right, and in the corner of a small room there sat a venerable gray-haired old man, his elbow propped on a table on which two white wax candles were burning. He raised his head, looked at me with a kind of mournful tenderness, gave me his weak hand, and said in a pleasant voice:

"Though eternal grief inhabits the walls of this castle, still a traveler who seeks hospitality shall always find a peaceful refuge here. Foreigner! I do not know you, but you are a man, and in my dying heart there still dwells a love for men. My house and my embrace are open to you."

He embraced me and seated me and, trying to impart to his gloomy face an aspect of liveliness, he looked like a bright but cold autumnal day that resembles mournful winter more than joyous summer. He sought to appear hospitable, to impart with his smile confidence and a pleasant sensation of intimacy, but the signs of grief of heart that were planted so deeply on his countenance could not disappear in a moment.

"You, young man," he said, "must inform me concerning the happenings of the world, which I have renounced but still not yet quite forgotten. For a long time I have lived in solitude; for a long time I have heard nothing of mankind's fate. Tell me, does love still reign on earth? Does incense

still smoke on the altars of virtue? Are the peoples happy that dwell in the lands you have seen?"

"The domain of science," I answered, "is spreading more and more, but human blood still flows on the earth; the tears of the unfortunate still flow; men praise the name of virtue and dispute concerning her existence."

The old man sighed and shrugged his shoulders. Learning that I was a Russian, he said: "We come from the same people as you. The ancient inhabitants of the islands of Riigen and Bornholm were Slavs. But you long before us came to the light of Christianity. Magnificent cathedrals, dedicated to the one God, rose up to the clouds in your lands, while we, in the darkness of idolatry, still brought bloody sacrifices to unfeeling idols. In triumphant hymns you celebrated the great Creator of the universe, while we, blinded by paganism, praised the idols of mythology in discordant songs."

The old man spoke to me of the history of the northern peoples, of the happenings of antiquity and modern times, spoke so that I was forced to marvel at his intelligence, his knowledge, and even his eloquence.

In half an hour he arose and wished me good night. The servant in the black garb took a candle from the table and led me through long narrow corridors. We came to a large room, hung with ancient weapons, swords, lances, suits of armor and helmets. In a corner underneath a canopy stood a high bed, adorned with "carvings and old bas-reliefs.

I wished to ask this servant a multitude of questions, but he, not waiting for them, bowed and left; the iron door banged shut—the noise resounded frightfully in the empty walls—and all was silent. I lay down on the bed, looked at the ancient weapons, lit up through the little window by a weak ray of moonlight, thought of my host and of his first words, "Eternal grief inhabits the walls of this castle," and mused of times past, of the events of which this castle might have been a witness; mused, like a man who wanders between graves and coffins, gazes at the dust of the dead, and makes it live again in his imagination. Finally, the image of the mournful stranger at Gravesend came to my soul, and I fell asleep.

But my sleep was troubled. I dreamed that the suits of armor hanging on the wall turned into knights and that these knights came toward me with naked swords and with angry

looks and said: "Unhappy man! How dare you come to our island? Do not sailors pale at the sight of its granite shores? How dare you enter the terrible sanctuary of this castle? Does not its terror resound over all the surroundings? Does not the traveler turn back on seeing its frightening towers? Impudent man! Die for your pernicious curiosity!" Their swords clanged over me, the blows fell on my breast—but suddenly all vanished, and I awoke and in another minute fell asleep again. Now a new dream disturbed my spirit. I dreamed that terrible thunder resounded in the castle, the iron doors banged, the windows shook, the floor rocked, and a frightful winged monster that I cannot describe flew toward my bed, hissing and roaring. The nightmare vanished, but I could no longer fall asleep; I felt a need for fresh air, went to the window, and found to one side a small door, opened it, and descended a steep staircase into the garden.

The night was clear, and the full moon shed a silvery light on the dark foliage of the old oaks and elms that formed a long dense alley. The murmur of the waves blended with the murmur of the leaves, stirred by the wind. In the distance the rocky mountains lay white, resembling a wall of teeth that encircled the whole island of Bornholm; between them and the walls of the castle a large wood was visible on one side, and on the other, an open plain with small thickets.

My heart beat even more strongly with the impression of the terrible nightmares, and my blood had not yet subsided. I entered the dark alley, under the shelter of the rustling oaks, and with a feeling almost like veneration I submerged myself in its gloom. Thoughts of the druids stirred in my mind, and I felt as if I were approaching that very sanctuary where all the mysteries and horrors of their religion were preserved. Finally the long alley brought me to some clumps of rosemary, behind which there rose a sandy hillock. I wanted to climb to its top, from there to behold in the bright moonlight the landscape of the sea and the island, but suddenly I noticed an opening leading inside the hill: with some effort a man could enter it. An irrepressible feeling of curiosity impelled me to enter this cavern, more like the work of human hands than like a creation of wild Nature. I entered, and felt the damp and cold, but resolved to go on and, going forward some ten paces, made out several steps that led up to a wide iron door; this, to my amazement, was not locked. As if involuntarily

my hand opened it—there, behind an iron grating that held a large padlock, a lamp was burning, fastened to the vaulting; in the corner on a bed of straw lay a pale young woman in a black dress. She was asleep, and her reddish locks, intertwined with the yellow blades of straw, covered her high breast, which scarcely stirred with her breathing. One of her hands, white but withered, lay on the ground, while her head was cradled on the other. If a painter had sought to depict exhausted, endless, and eternal misery, lulled to sleep by the poppies of Morpheus, then this woman could well have served as a subject for his brush.

My friends! Who is not touched at the sight of an unfortunate? But the sight of a young woman, suffering in a subterranean dungeon, the Sight of the weakest and dearest of all creatures, persecuted by fate, could endow a stone itself with feeling. I looked at her with commiseration and thought to myself: What barbarian's hand has shut you away from the light of day? Can it be for a heavy transgression? But the gentleness of your face, the tranquil motion of your breast, and my own heart reassure me that you are innocent!

At that very moment she awoke, looked at the grating, caught sight of me, gave a startled sigh, and raised her head, arose and came up to me and lowered her eyes to the ground, as if trying to collect her thoughts, again fixed her gaze on me, and was on the point of speaking, but did not speak.

"If the sympathy of a wayfarer," I said after several minutes of silence, "brought by the hand of fate to this castle and to this cave, can lighten your fate, if his real commiseration can deserve your trust, then demand his services!"

She looked at me with motionless eyes, in which I could see amazement, something of curiosity, irresolution, and doubt. Finally, after a strong inner movement that stirred my breast as if with an electric shock, she answered firmly:

"Whoever you may be, whatever chance has brought you here, foreigner, I cannot ask anything from you but pity. It is not in your power to alter my fate. I kiss the hand that punishes me."

"But your heart is innocent," I said, "and it, of course, cannot deserve such a cruel punishment?"

"My heart," she replied, "may well have been in error. God will forgive my weakness. I trust that soon my life will come to an end. Leave me, stranger!"

She came up to the grating, looked at me tenderly, and repeated in a low voice:

"For God's sake, leave me! . . . if he sent you here, he whose terrible curse still rings eternally in my ears, tell him that I suffer, that I suffer day and night, that my heart is withered with grief, that no tears can ever lighten my sorrow. Tell him that I bear my imprisonment without a murmur, without complaining, that I die his tender, unhappy . . ."

Suddenly she fell silent, thought for a moment, and withdrew from the grating, fell to her knees and covered her face with her hands; a minute later she looked at me again, again lowered her eyes to the ground, and said tenderly and timidly:

"Perhaps you know my story, but if you do not know it, then do not ask me, for God's sake, do not ask! Foreigner, farewell!"

Before going I was about to say a few words to her that came directly from my heart, but my glance still met hers, and it seemed to me that she was on the point of asking me something very important for her heart's peace. I stopped, awaiting her question, but after a long sigh it died on her pale lips. We parted.

Coming out of the cavern, I refrained from closing the iron door, so that the fresh pure air would penetrate into the dungeon through the grating and lighten the unfortunate woman's breathing. The glow of dawn was red in the sky; the birds had awakened; a breeze was blowing the dew from the bushes and flowers that grew around the hillock.

My God! I thought. My God! How miserable to be shut off from the company of living, free, joyful beings with which the endless expanses of Nature are everywhere populated! Even in the far north, among high, lichen-covered rocks, terrifying to the gaze, the work of Your hand is fair, the work of Your hand enraptures the spirit and the heart. And here, where the foamy waves have battled granite crags from the beginning of time, here too Your hand has imprinted the living signs of a creator's love and well-being; here too at morn roses bloom in an azure heaven, here too tender breezes are scented with their aroma, here too green carpets are laid out like soft velvet under man's feet, here too birds sing, sing merrily for the merry man, and sadly for the sad man, pleasing all; here too the grieving heart can relieve itself of its burden of misfortunes in the embrace of a sympathetic Na-

ture! But that poor woman, locked up in a dungeon, is shut away from this consolation; the dew of morning no longer moistens her tired heart; the breeze does not refresh her wasted breast; the sun's rays do not illumine her gloomy eyes; the silent balsamic effusions of the moon do not nourish her spirit with gentle dreams and pleasant reveries. Creator! Why have You given man the destructive power to make one another and himself unfortunate?" My strength gave way, and my eyes closed, under the branches of the tall oak tree, on the soft greensward. My sleep lasted about two hours.

"The door was open, and the foreigner entered the cavern," I heard as I awakened, and opening my eyes I saw the old man, my host: he was sitting in deep thought on a bench of turf, about five paces away from me; beside him stood the man who had brought me into the castle. I went up to them. The old man looked at me with some severity, arose, pressed my hand, and his look became more gentle. We entered the thick alley together without saying a word. It seemed that he was hesitating in his mind and was uncertain, but suddenly he stopped short and, fixing on me a penetrating, fiery gaze, asked firmly, ,

"You have seen her?"

"Yes," I answered, "I have seen her, but I do not know who she is and why she suffers there."

"You will learn," he said, "you will learn, young man, and your heart will bleed with pity. Then you will ask yourself why Heaven has poured out the full cup of its wrath on this weak, gray-haired old man, a man who loved virtue, who honored its holy laws."

We sat down under the tree, and the old man told me a frightful tale, a tale that you will not hear now, my friends; it will remain for another time. But now I will tell you one thing only, that I penetrated the mystery of the stranger at Gravesend, a terrible mystery!

The sailors were waiting for me at the gate of the castle. We returned to the ship, they raised sail, and Bornholm vanished from our sight.

The sea murmured. In mournful meditation I stood on the deck, my hand on the mast. Deep sighs constrained my breast, and finally, I looked up at the heavens, and the wind blew a tear on my face into the sea.