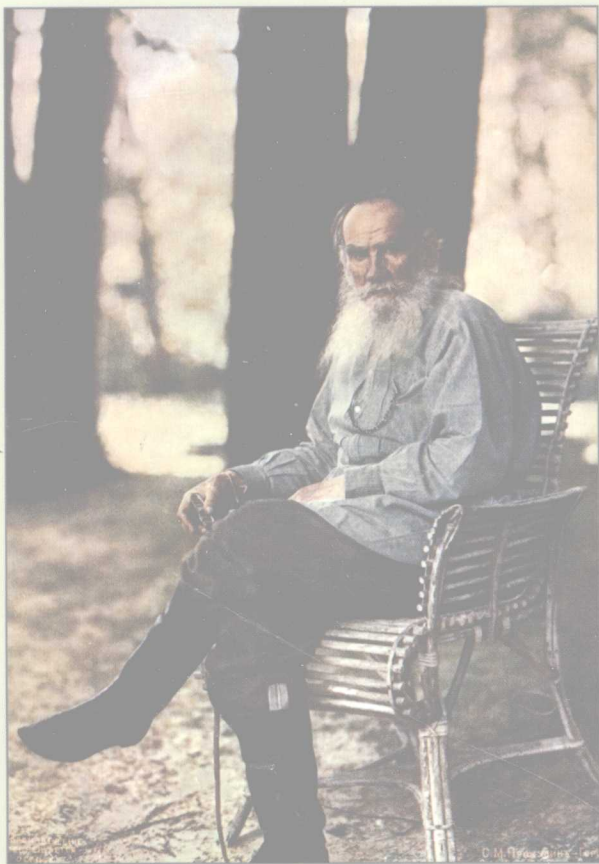


TOLSTOY'S SHORT FICTION



EDITED AND WITH
REVISED TRANSLATIONS BY
MICHAEL R. KATZ

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION
SECOND EDITION

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

TOLSTOY'S
SHORT FICTION



REVISED TRANSLATIONS
BACKGROUNDS AND SOURCES
CRITICISM

Second Edition

Edited and with revised translations by

MICHAEL R. KATZ
MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE



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Preface to the Second Edition

While both of Tolstoy's major novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, have recently been retranslated, no new anthology of his early and late prose fiction has appeared. In this second edition of *Tolstoy's Short Fiction* I have made further corrections and revisions to the Maudes' texts. I have excluded one long early story "Family Happiness" (1859), and instead included three shorter later works, "A Prisoner in the Caucasus" (1872), "Father Sergius" (1891), and "After the Ball" (1903); I have also replaced S. A. Carmack's rendition of the miniature masterpiece "Alyosha Gorshok" (1905) with my own new translation.

In the section entitled Backgrounds and Sources, I have supplemented R. F. Christian's selections from "Tolstoy's Diary for 1855" with my rendition of several important passages that were omitted.

The selection of Criticism has been thoroughly reviewed and revised. One outstanding essay, "Less Matter, More Art: Tolstoy, Briefly," by John M. Kopper, was commissioned expressly for inclusion in this volume. I am very grateful to its author, not only for his first-rate contribution but also for his advice and encouragement during work on this project.

Several other essays from the first edition have been omitted (Emerson, Green, and Poggioli), and six stimulating new selections have been added (Matich, Ram, Rischin, Specter, Zholkovsky, and Ziolkowski).

Both the Chronology of Tolstoy's Life and Work and the Selected Bibliography have been revised and expanded.

The splendid new cover reproduces the first color photograph taken of Leo Tolstoy in 1908 by the pioneer photographer Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944).

I appreciate the many suggestions made by colleagues through our Slavic Listserv SEELANGS, and took them into careful consideration as I made difficult decisions about what to include. I was particularly gratified by the comments from both colleagues and students on the first edition of this anthology; it is my hope that this revised edition will prove even more *dulce et utile* in their teaching, study, and research.

Michael R. Katz
Middlebury College

Preface to the First Edition

This volume of *Tolstoy's Short Fiction* is intended to supplement and amplify the existing Norton Critical Editions of Tolstoy's two masterpieces. I have selected what I consider to be the best prose works of early and late Tolstoy, that is, before *War and Peace* (from 1854 to 1859) and after *Anna Karenina* (from 1886 to 1905). Not everyone will agree with my selections: each reader is entitled to have his or her personal favorites.

A word about the translations: both Norton Critical Editions use the versions by Louise and Aylmer Maude. The Maudes lived in Russia, knew Tolstoy intimately, and shared a genuine appreciation of his ideas. And Tolstoy admired their work. Again, each reader is likely to have a preferred version of individual works. After considerable thought I came to share the view expressed by Henry Gifford in an essay included in this volume, namely that in general the Maudes' translations are the soundest we have. I have chosen to edit and annotate their versions to render them more readable and more accessible to an American audience.¹

Following the fictional texts, the section entitled Backgrounds and Sources contains Tolstoy's curious first literary endeavor, *A History of Yesterday* (1851), and his autobiographical fragment, *Memoirs of a Madman* (1884). These are accompanied by an excerpt from Tolstoy's diary for the year 1855 and a selection of his letters dating from 1858 to 1895.

The section of Criticism includes essays written from 1904 to 1989. It contains excerpts from Russian critics, as well as examples of the best Anglo-American scholarship on Tolstoy's work. The final item, "At the Tolstoy Museum," is a splendid short story by the late American author Donald Barthelme and is intended to provide a grain of salt (or a clean white handkerchief).

A Chronology of Tolstoy's Life and Work and a Selected Bibliography have been appended to acquaint the reader with basic facts and to provide suggestions for further study.

1. The single exception is "Alyosha the Pot," which was translated by S. A. Carmack.

I wish to express my gratitude to Stephen Baehr, Robert Belknap, Reginald Christian, George Gibian, Henry Gifford, Richard Gustafson, Robert Louis Jackson, Gary Jahn, Gary Saul Morson, and Kathleen Parthé for their suggestions of texts and essays to be included in this volume.

My work is dedicated to the memory of my former teacher, the Countess Darya Andreevna de Keyserlingk.

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The Texts of
TOLSTOY'S SHORT FICTION

Translations by Louise and Aylmer Maude
Revised by Michael R. Katz



Sevastopol in December†

Early dawn is just beginning to color the horizon above Sapun Hill. The dark blue surface of the sea has already thrown off the gloom of night and is only awaiting the first ray of the sun to begin sparkling merrily. A current of cold misty air blows from the bay; there is no snow on the hard black ground, but the sharp morning frost crunches under your feet and makes your face tingle. Only the distant, incessant murmur of the sea, occasionally interrupted by the reverberating boom of cannon from Sevastopol, infringes the stillness of the morning. All is quiet on the ships. It strikes eight bells.

On the north side the activity of day is gradually beginning to replace the quiet of night: some soldiers with clanking muskets pass to relieve the guard, a doctor is already hurrying to the hospital, and a soldier, having crept out of his dug-out, washes his weather-beaten face with icy water and then turning to the reddening horizon says his prayers, rapidly crossing himself; a creaking Tartar cart drawn by camels crawls past on its way to the cemetery to bury the blood-stained dead with which it is loaded almost to the top. As you approach the harbor you are struck by the peculiar smell of coal-smoke, manure, dampness, and meat. Thousands of different objects are lying in heaps by the harbor: firewood, meat, gabions,¹ sacks of flour, iron, and so on. Soldiers of various regiments, some carrying bags and muskets and others empty-handed, are crowded here together, smoking, quarrelling, and hauling heavy loads onto the steamer which lies close to the wharf, its funnel smoking. Private boats crowded with all sorts of people—soldiers, sailors, merchants, and women—keep arriving at the landing stage or leaving it.

"To the Grafskaya, your Honour? Please get in!" two or three old salts offer you their services, getting out of their boats.

You choose the one nearest to you, step across the half-decayed carcass of a bay horse that lies in the mud close to the boat, and pass on towards the rudder. You push off from the landing stage; around you is the sea, now glittering in the morning sunshine. In front of you the old sailor, in his camel-hair coat, and a flaxen-haired boy silently and steadily ply the oars. You gaze at the enormous striped ships scattered far and wide over the bay, at the ships' boats that move about over the sparkling azure like small black dots, at the opposite bank where the handsome light-colored buildings of the town are lit by the rosy rays of the morning sun, at the foaming white line by the break-water and around the sunken vessels, the black tops of whose masts here and there stand mournfully out of the water, at the enemy's fleet

† This piece was first published in 1855.

1. A wicker basket filled with earth used for fortification.

looming on the crystal horizon of the sea, and at the foaming and bubbling wash of the oars. You listen to the steady sound of voices that reaches you across the water and to the majestic sound of firing from Sevastopol, which seems to be growing more intense.

It is impossible for some feeling of heroism and pride not to penetrate your soul at the thought that you, too, are in Sevastopol, and for the blood not to run faster in your veins.

"Straight past the *Kistentin*,² your Honor!" the old sailor tells you, turning round to verify the direction towards the right in which you are steering.

"And she's still got all her guns!"³ says the flaxen-headed boy, examining the ship in passing.

"Well, of course. She's a new one. Kornilov lived on her," remarks the old seaman, also looking up at the ship.

"Look where it's burst!" the boy says after a long silence, watching a small white cloud of dispersing smoke that has suddenly appeared high above the South Bay accompanied by the sharp sound of a bursting bomb.

"That's *him* firing from the new battery today," adds the old seaman, calmly spitting on his hand. "Now then, pull away, Mishka! Let's get ahead of that long-boat." And your skiff travels faster over the broad swell of the road-stead, gets ahead of the heavy long-boat laden with sacks, unsteadily and clumsily rowed by soldiers, and making its way among all sorts of boats moored there is made fast to the Graftsky landing.

Crowds of grey-clad soldiers, sailors in black, and gaily dressed women throng noisily about the quay. There are women selling buns, Russian peasants with samovars shouting, "Hot *sbiten*!,"⁴ and on the very first steps lie rusty cannon-balls, bombs, grape-shot, and cannon of various sizes. A little farther on is a large open space where some enormous beams are lying, together with gun carriages and sleeping soldiers. Horses, carts, cannon, green ammunition wagons, and stacked muskets stand there. Soldiers, sailors, officers, women, children, and tradespeople are moving about; carts loaded with hay, sacks, and casks are passing, now and then a Cossack, a mounted officer, or a general in a vehicle. To the right is a street closed by a barricade on which some small guns are mounted in embrasures and beside which sits a sailor smoking a pipe. To the left is a handsome building with Roman figures engraved on its frontage and before which soldiers are standing with blood-stained stretchers. Every-

2. That is, the vessel *Constantine*.

3. Guns were removed from most of the ships for use on fortifications.

4. A hot drink made with treacle and lemon, or honey and spice.

where you will see the unpleasant indications of a war camp. Your first impressions will certainly be most disagreeable: the strange mixture of camp-life and town-life—of a fine town and a dirty bivouac—is not only ugly but looks like horrible disorder: it will even seem that every one is scared, in a commotion, at a loss as to what to do. But look more closely at the faces of these people moving around you and you will get a very different impression. Take for instance this convoy soldier muttering something to himself as he goes to water those three bay horses, and doing it all so quietly that evidently he will not get lost in this motley crowd, which does not even exist as far as he is concerned, but will do his job, be it what it may—watering horses or hauling guns—as calmly, self-confidently, and unconcernedly as if it were all happening in Tula or Saransk. You will read the same thing on the face of this officer passing by in immaculate white gloves, on the face of the sailor who sits smoking on the barricade, on the faces of the soldiers waiting in the portico of what used to be the Assembly Hall, and on the face of that girl who, afraid of getting her pink dress muddy, is jumping from stone to stone as she crosses the street.

Yes, disenchantment certainly awaits you on entering Sevastopol for the first time. You will look in vain in any of these faces for signs of disquiet, perplexity, or even enthusiasm, determination, or readiness for death—there is nothing of the kind. What you see are ordinary people quietly occupied with ordinary activities, so that perhaps you may reproach yourself for having felt undue enthusiasm and may doubt the justice of the ideas you had formed of the heroism of the defenders of Sevastopol, based on the tales and descriptions, sights and sounds, and heard from the North Side. But before yielding to such doubts, go to the bastions and see the defenders of Sevastopol at the very place of the defense, or better still, go straight into that building opposite which was once the Sevastopol Assembly Rooms and in the portico of which stand soldiers with stretchers. There you will see the defenders of Sevastopol and you will see terrible and lamentable, solemn and amusing, but astounding and soul-elevating sights.

You enter the large Assembly Hall. As soon as you open the door you are struck by the sight and smell of forty or fifty amputations and most seriously wounded cases, some in cots but most on the floor. Do not trust the feeling that checks you at the threshold; it is the wrong feeling. Go on, do not be ashamed of having come to *look* at the sufferers; do not hesitate to go up and speak to them. Sufferers like to see a sympathetic human face, like to speak of their sufferings and hear words of love and sympathy. You pass between the rows of beds and look for a face less stern and full of suffering, which you feel you can approach and speak to.

"Where are you wounded?" you inquire hesitatingly and timidly of an emaciated old soldier who is sitting up in his cot and following you with a kindly look as if inviting you to approach him. I say "inquire timidly" because, besides strong sympathy, sufferings seem to inspire dread of offending, as well as great respect for him who endures them.

"In the leg," the soldier replies, and at the same moment you yourself notice from the fold of his blanket that one leg is missing above the knee. "Now, thank God," he adds, "I am ready to leave the hospital."

"Is it long since you were wounded?"

"Well, it's over five weeks now, your Honor."

"And are you still in pain?"

"No, I'm not in any pain now; only when it's bad weather I seem to feel a pain in the calf. Otherwise, it's all right."

"How were you wounded?"

"It was on the Fifth Bastion, your Honor, at the first *"bondbardment."* I trained the gun and was stepping across to the next embrasure, when *he* hits me in the leg, just as if I had stumbled into a hole. I look—and the leg is gone."

"Do you mean to say you felt no pain the first moment?"

"Not much, only as if something hot was shoved against my leg."

"And afterwards?"

"Not much afterwards except when they began to draw the skin together, then it did seem to smart. The chief thing, your Honor, is *not to think*; if you don't think it's nothing much. It's most because a man thinks."

At this moment a woman in a grey striped dress with a black kerchief tied round her head comes up to you and joins your conversation with the sailor. She begins telling you about him, his sufferings, the desperate condition he was in for four weeks, and how when he was wounded he stopped his stretcher-bearers so that he could see a volley fired from our battery; and how the Grand Duke spoke to him and gave him twenty-five rubles, and how he had told them he wanted to go back to the bastion to teach the young ones, if he could not fight any longer. As she says all this in one breath, the woman keeps looking first at you, then at the sailor, who having turned away is picking lint on his pillow as if not listening; her eyes shine with a peculiar rapture.

"She's my missus, your Honor!" he remarks with a look that seems to say, "You must excuse her. It's a woman's way to talk nonsense."

Now you begin to understand the defenders of Sevastopol and for some reason begin to feel ashamed of yourself in the presence of this man. You want to say too much, to express your sympathy and admiration, but you can't find the right words and are dissatisfied with

those that occur to you, so you silently bow your head before this taciturn and unconscious grandeur and firmness of spirit—which is ashamed to have its worth revealed.

"Well, may God help you to get well soon," you say to him, and turn to another patient who is lying on the floor apparently awaiting death in unspeakable torment.

He is a fair-haired man with a puffy pale face. He is lying on his back with his left arm thrown back in a position that indicates cruel suffering. His hoarse breathing comes with difficulty through his parched, open mouth, his leaden blue eyes are rolled upwards, and what remains of his bandaged right arm is thrust out from under his tumbled blanket. The oppressive smell of mortified flesh assails you even more strongly, and the feverish inner heat in all the sufferer's limbs seems to penetrate you too.

"Is he unconscious?" you ask the woman who follows you and looks at you kindly as at someone akin to her.

"No, he can still hear, but not well." She adds in a whisper, "I gave him some tea to drink today—what if he is a stranger, one must have pity—but he hardly drank any of it."

"How do you feel?" you ask him.

The wounded man turns his eyes at the sound of your voice but neither sees nor understands you.

"My heart's on fire," he mumbles.

A little farther on you see an old soldier who is changing his shirt. His face and body are reddish brown and as gaunt as a skeleton. Nothing is left of one of his arms. It has been amputated at the shoulder. He sits up firmly; he is convalescent, but his dull, heavy look, his terrible emaciation, and the wrinkles on his face show that the best part of this man's life has been consumed by his suffering.

In a cot on the opposite side you see a woman's pale, delicate face, full of suffering, a hectic flush suffusing her cheek.

"That's the wife of one of our sailors: she was hit in the leg by a bomb on the 5th,"⁵ your guide will tell you. "She was taking her husband's dinner to him at the bastion."

"Amputated?"

"Yes, cut off above the knee."

Now, if your nerves are strong, go in at the door to the left; there they bandage and operate. You will see doctors with pale, gloomy faces, and arms red with blood up to the elbows, busy at a bed on which a wounded man lies under chloroform. His eyes are open and he utters, as if in delirium, incoherent but sometimes simple and pathetic words. The doctors are engaged on the horrible but beneficent work of amputation. You will see the sharp curved knife enter

5. The first bombardment of Sevastopol.

healthy white flesh; you will see the wounded man come back to life with terrible, heartrending screams and curses. You will see the doctor's assistant toss the amputated arm into a corner, and in the same room you will see another wounded man on a stretcher watching the operation, and writhing and groaning not so much from physical pain as from the mental torture of anticipation. You will see ghastly sights that will rend your soul; you will see war not with its orderly beautiful and brilliant ranks, its music and beating drums, its waving banners, its generals on prancing horses, but war in its real aspect of blood, suffering, and death. . . .

On coming out of this house of pain you will be sure to experience a sense of relief; you will draw deeper breaths of the fresh air and rejoice in the consciousness of your own health. Yet the contemplation of those sufferings will have made you realize your own insignificance, and you will go calmly and unhesitatingly to the bastions.

"What matters the death and suffering of so insignificant a worm as I, compared to so many deaths, so much suffering?" But the sight of the clear sky, brilliant sun, beautiful town, open church, and soldiers moving in all directions will soon bring your spirit back to its normal state of frivolity, its petty cares and absorption in the present. You may meet the funeral procession of an officer as it leaves the church, the pink coffin accompanied by waving banners and music, and the sound of firing from the bastions may reach your ears. But these things will not bring back your former thoughts. The funeral will seem a very impressive military pageant, the sounds very beautiful warlike sounds, and neither to these sights nor to these sounds will you attach the clear and personal sense of suffering and death that came to you in the hospital.

Passing the church and the barricade you enter that part of town where everyday life is most active. On both sides of the street hang signboards of shops and restaurants. Tradesmen, women with bonnets or kerchiefs on their heads, dandified officers—everything speaks of the firmness, self-confidence, and security of the inhabitants.

If you care to hear the conversation of army and navy officers, enter the restaurant on the right. There you are sure to hear them talk about last night, about Fanny, about the affair of the 24th,⁶ about how costly and badly served the cutlets are, and about which of their comrades have been killed.

"Things were awfully bad at our place to-day!" a fair, beardless little naval officer with a green knitted scarf round his neck says in a bass voice.

"Where was that?" asks another.

6. The Battle of Inkerman.

"Oh, in the Fourth Bastion," answers the young officer, and at the words "Fourth Bastion" you will certainly look more attentively, even with a certain respect at this fair-complexioned officer. The excessive freedom of his manner, his gesticulations, and his loud voice and laugh, which had appeared to you impudent before, now seem to indicate that peculiarly combative frame of mind noticeable in some young men after they have been in danger, but all the same you expect him to say how bad the bombs and bullets made things in the Fourth Bastion. Not at all! It was the mud that made things so bad. "One can scarcely get to the battery," he continues, pointing to his boots, which are muddy even above the calves. "And I have lost my best gunner," says another, "hit right in the forehead." "Who's that? Mitukhin?" "No . . . but am I ever to get my veal, you rascal?" he adds, addressing the waiter. "Not Mitukhin but Abramov—such a fine fellow. He was out in six sallies."

At another corner of the table sit two infantry officers with plates of cutlets and peas before them and a bottle of sour Crimean wine called "Bordeaux." One of them, a young man with a red collar and two little stars on his cloak, is talking to the other, who has a black collar and no stars, about the Alma affair. The former has already been drinking and the pauses he makes, the indecision in his face—expressive of his doubt of being believed—and especially the fact that his own part in the account he is giving is too important and the thing is too terrible, show that he is diverging considerably from the strict truth. But you do not care much for stories of this kind which will long be current all over Russia; you want to get to the bastions quickly, especially to that Fourth Bastion about which you have been told so many different tales. When anyone says: "I am going to the Fourth Bastion" he always betrays a slight agitation or too marked an indifference; if anyone wishes to chaff you, he says: "You should be sent to the Fourth Bastion." When you meet someone carried on a stretcher and ask, "Where from?" the answer usually is, "From the Fourth Bastion." Two quite different opinions are current concerning this terrible bastion: that of those who have never been there and who are convinced it is a certain grave for any one who goes, and that of those who, like the fair-complexioned midshipman, live there and who when speaking of the Fourth Bastion will tell you whether it is dry or muddy, cold or warm in the dug-outs, and so forth.

During the half-hour you have spent in the restaurant, the weather has changed. The mist that spread over the sea has gathered into dull grey moist clouds which hide the sun, and a kind of dismal sleet showers down and wets the roofs, pavements, and soldiers' overcoats.

Passing another barricade you go through some doors to the right and up a broad street. Beyond this barricade the houses on both sides of the street are unoccupied: there are no sign-boards, the doors are