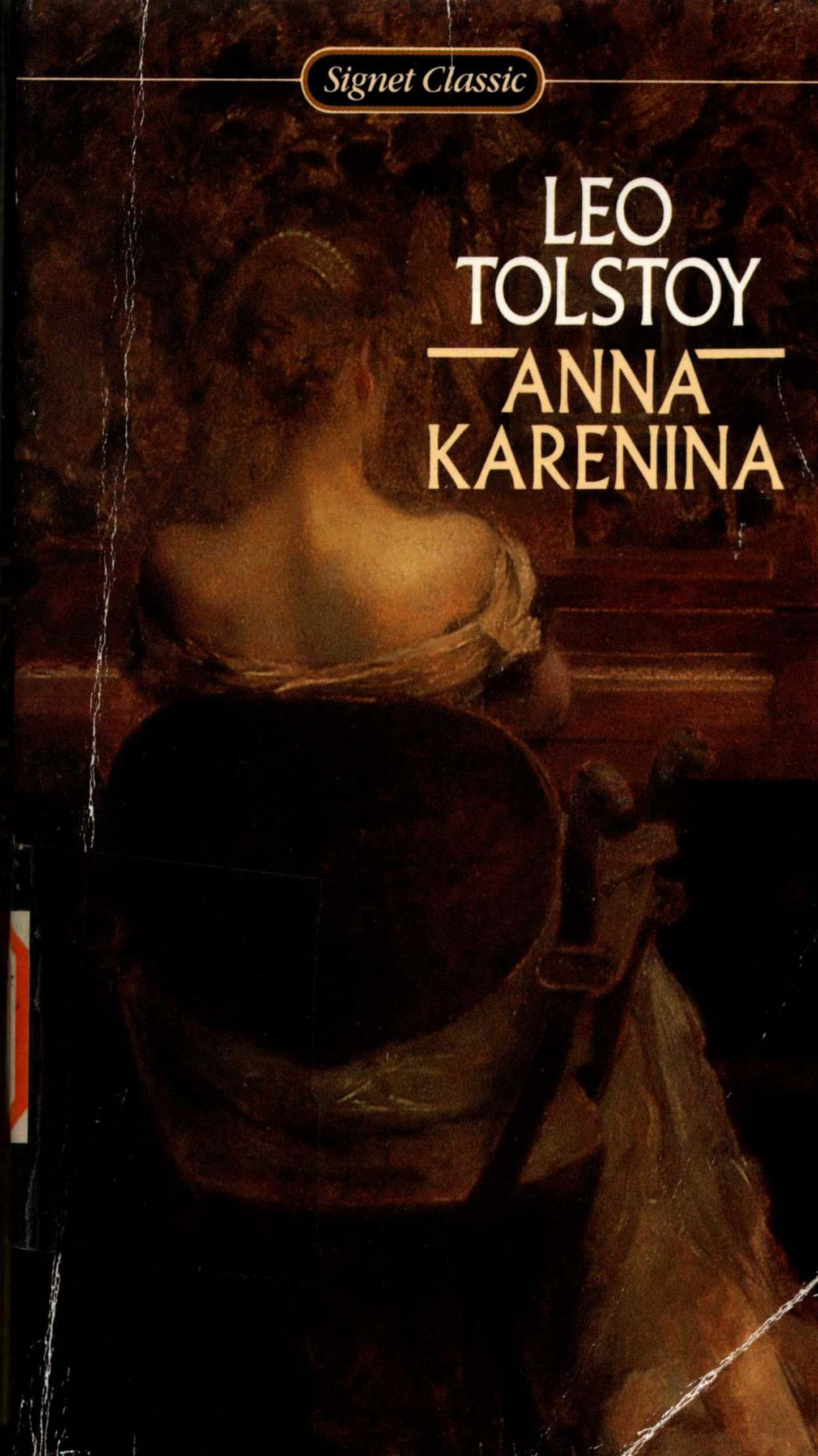
Signet Classic

LEO TOLSTOY

ANNA KARENINA



LEO TOLSTOY

ANNA KARENINA

Newly translated, and with a Foreword by
DAVID MAGARSHACK

Revised and Updated Bibliography

A SIGNET CLASSIC

SIGNET CLASSIC
Published by New American Library, a division of
Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street,
New York, New York 10014, U.S.A.
Penguin Books Ltd, 27 Wrights Lane,
London W8 5TZ, England
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood,
Victoria, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2
Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd, 182–190 Wairau Road,
Auckland 10, New Zealand

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices:
Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

Published by Signet Classic, an imprint of New American Library,
a division of Penguin Putnam Inc.

First Printing, April 1961
40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32

Cover painting, "The Spinet" (detail), by Thomas Wilmer
Dewing, National Museum of American Art,
Courtesy Art Resource.

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Leo Tolstoy

COUNT LEO TOLSTOY was born on September 9, 1828, in Yasnaya Polyana, Russia. Orphaned at nine, he was brought up by an elderly aunt and educated by French tutors until he matriculated at Kazan University in 1844. In 1847 he gave up his studies, and after several aimless years, volunteered for military duty in the Army, serving as a junior officer in the Crimean War before retiring in 1857. In 1862 Tolstoy married Sophie Behrs, a marriage that was to become, for him, bitterly unhappy. His diary, started in 1847, was used for self-study and self-criticism, and it served as the source from which he drew much of the material that appeared not only in his great novels *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877), but also in his shorter works. Seeking religious justification for his life, Tolstoy evolved a new Christianity based upon his own interpretation of the Gospels. Yasnaya Polyana became a Mecca for his many converts. At the age of eighty-two, while away from home, the writer's health broke down in Astapovo, Riazan, and he died there on November 20, 1910.

LEO TOLSTOY

ANNA KARENINA

Newly translated, and with a Foreword by
DAVID MAGARSHACK

Revised and Updated Bibliography

A SIGNET CLASSIC

SIGNET CLASSIC
Published by New American Library, a division of
Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street,
New York, New York 10014, U.S.A.
Penguin Books Ltd, 27 Wrights Lane,
London W8 5TZ, England
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood,
Victoria, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2
Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd, 182–190 Wairau Road,
Auckland 10, New Zealand

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices:
Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

Published by Signet Classic, an imprint of New American Library,
a division of Penguin Putnam Inc.

First Printing, April 1961
40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

IT TOOK Tolstoy four years, from March, 1873, to June, 1877, to write *Anna Karenina*, his greatest masterpiece after *War and Peace*. The first idea of the subject of the novel occurred to Tolstoy three years before he began writing it. "Yesterday evening," his wife, Sonia, noted in her diary on February 24, 1870, "he [Tolstoy] told me that he had imagined a type of woman in high society who had committed adultery. He said that his problem was to present this woman not as guilty but as pitiful, and that as soon as he had imagined this type, the characters, including the men's types, which he had thought of before, found their proper places and grouped themselves around this woman. 'Now,' he declared, 'everything has become clear to me.' "

But it seems that Tolstoy required another powerful stimulus to set his creative imagination working with sufficient force to make him actually sit down and write the novel.

This stimulus came from quite an unexpected source. Tolstoy had been working for some time on an historical novel dealing with the period of Peter the Great, a novel that was never to emerge from its initial stage. "Almost all my working time this winter," he wrote to his friend, the critic Nikolai Strakhov, on March 25, 1873, "I have been working on my novel about Peter, i.e., calling up the ghosts of that time, when suddenly, about a week ago, my wife brought from downstairs [Pushkin's] *Belkin's Tales*. I picked up the volume almost unconsciously after my work and, as always (for the seventh time, I believe), reread the whole of it, unable to tear myself away, as though reading it for the first time. But, what is more important, it seemed to have resolved all my doubts. I don't think I have ever enjoyed not only Pushkin, but anything else, so much before. . . . There is a fragment there beginning with the sentence: 'The guests arrived at the country house.' Involuntarily, and quite by chance, without knowing myself what would come of it, I

began to conjure up in my mind characters and events and went on with it, altering it now and then, of course, and all of a sudden it grew into something so wonderful and palpable that it turned into a novel, the rough draft of which I finished today. I am very satisfied with it and it will be ready, if God grants me health, in two weeks. This novel has nothing whatever to do with the one I have been trying to write for a whole year."

Tolstoy did not send off this letter to Strakhov because, as he informed him on April 7, he could not help feeling that the news of the novel was "premature." He had, in fact, written ten different versions of it and scrapped them all.

There was more than the initial sentence in Pushkin's unfinished story that attracted Tolstoy's attention, although the first versions of *Anna Karenina* did open with "the arrival of guests," that is to say, with the description of the reception at Princess Betsy Tverskoy's, which in the final version is relegated to the seventh and eighth chapters of Part Two. What must have struck Tolstoy very forcibly in Pushkin's story was that its heroine, Zinaida Volsky, was, like Anna, a high-society woman who had challenged the conventions of her set and been ostracized by it. Zinaida, like Anna as Tolstoy imagined her, was a strikingly beautiful young woman, with regular features, large black eyes, and vivacious movements. Indeed, in the first versions of Tolstoy's novel, Anna, who first appeared under the names of Tatyana Stavrovich, Nana, and (most significant of all) Anastasia Pushkin, bore a striking resemblance to Zinaida. Tolstoy, though, overemphasized her sensuality and made her a heartless flirt with a crudely developed mind and a sanctimonious hypocrite. Karenin, on the other hand, was a much more sympathetic character in the first versions of the novel. Though of unprepossessing appearance and conventional in his tastes and ideas, his innate kindness (of which traces remain in the final version) atoned for many of his shortcomings. Vronsky, too, was first conceived by Tolstoy as a man of great charm and intelligence, a poet and a person of true artistic propensities and not the dilettante of the final version. In one of the first versions of the novel, entitled *Two Marriages*, Vronsky marries Anna, who obtains her divorce from Karenin.

Levin does not appear in the first versions of the novel at all. In subsequent versions he first appears under the names of Ordyntsev and Neradov. It was only when Tolstoy gave him his final autobiographical features that he called him Levin, which, of course, closely resembles Tolstoy's own first name Leo (Lev in Russian).

A good illustration of what Tolstoy called (in a letter to

Strakhov in April, 1873) "the torment" of creative work is perhaps best provided by his second attempt to write the novel, an attempt which also ended disastrously.

Tolstoy resumed his work on *Anna Karenina* on August 22, 1873, on his return to Yasnaya Polyana from his small estate in the famine-stricken province of Samara (referred to in the first chapter of the eighth part of the final version). Two days later he wrote to Strakhov that his original intention was "to amuse" himself with the novel, but that he found that he could not finish it and that even if Strakhov had been in Yasnaya Polyana or he, that is, Tolstoy, in Petersburg, he would not have read it to him, as he considered it so bad. A month later he was still "finishing" the novel, though he was almost certain that he would not be able to finish it by the end of the year. "Just as a painter needs light in order to put the finishing touches to his picture," he wrote to Strakhov on September 23, "so I need an inner light, which I feel I never have enough of in the autumn." At the beginning of October, Sonia noted in her diary that her husband was "polishing, revising, and continuing his work on the novel." But at the end of the month she wrote to her sister, Tatyana Kuzminsky, that Tolstoy had "definitely" abandoned his work on the novel. However, in November Tolstoy was writing it again and on December 7 he informed Strakhov that his work was "progressing well."

During January and February, 1874, Tolstoy was still revising his novel, or, as Sonia expressed it, "continually crossing out and scribbling over" it. His work, in fact, had progressed so far that he was already negotiating with a Moscow firm of printers for its publication at his own expense. "It has never happened to me before," he wrote to Strakhov on February 13, "that I should have written so much without telling anyone anything about it and I want terribly to read some of it to someone." On March 2 he left Yasnaya Polyana for Moscow with the first part of the novel ready for the printers. On March 6 he wrote to his favorite great-aunt, Alexandra Tolstoy, that he was already printing his novel, which he liked very much but which he feared would scarcely be to the taste of the public because it was "so simple," adding that in his view simplicity in a work of art was an enormous merit, but was very difficult of attainment. He repeated the same assertion in a letter to Strakhov, adding that his novel was not only simple but also "low," by which he meant that it dealt with the ordinary events of everyday life. To test the public reaction to his novel, he read some chapters of it to two friends he had carefully selected for their "cold and subtle intelligence" and he did not think that they had been particularly impressed.

On his return to Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy was busy reading and correcting the proofs of his novel, but by then his attitude toward it had undergone a complete change. He did not like it at all any more, he informed Strakhov, and on May 25 he ordered the printers to stop the printing of what was left of it. Strakhov, tantalized by the news of the novel, paid a visit to Yasnaya Polyana specially in July, but not even his enthusiasm made Tolstoy change his opinion that in its present form the novel was "horrible and disgusting." On July 27, 1874, he wrote to Strakhov that he disliked so much of what had been printed and set up of *Anna Karenina* that he finally decided to destroy all the printed pages and alter everything in the beginning that related to Levin and Vronsky. "They will be the same, but much better," he wrote. At the end of July, Tolstoy settled the printers' bill for the thirty printed chapters of the first part and once more started afresh.

It was in March of that year, incidentally, that Tolstoy introduced the incident of the two army officers and the young married woman (Part Two, Chapter 5), based on an actual occurrence. "Dear Tanya," he wrote to his sister-in-law Tatyana Kuzminsky, "please ask your brother-in-law if he would give me his permission to include the story he told me of the two army officers who were pursuing a married woman they had mistaken for a French light-o'-love, and of how they were thrown out by the woman's husband. In my novel the officers are of a guards' regiment and their names, of course, are different. I don't, anyway, know the real names of the officers, but otherwise the story is exactly the same. It's a delightful story and I simply must have it."

The third attempt to write *Anna Karenina* began unpropitiously. On August 30 Tolstoy informed Strakhov that his work on the novel was still "hanging fire," but that he believed it was worth finishing it. In September he made an effort to write something, but "made such a hash of it" that he had to give it up. He was, in fact, entirely preoccupied with organizing elementary schools for peasant children and had no time for the novel. That, at least, was his excuse, though on November 4 he had a different story to tell to his solicitous friend Strakhov. "I am afraid," he wrote to the critic, "I have no control over my work. I know that if I have done anything decent it is only because I am made in such a way that whatever work I am doing, it always gets hold of me and carries me off somewhere. Sometimes, as now, I cannot help thinking that it is carrying me off where it shouldn't, but I know by experience that this is merely the bend of the river and that I am only imagining that I am going back from where I started, but that in the end it will carry me to my destination." So convinced was Tolstoy of

this that in the same month he began negotiating with Mikhail Katkov, editor of the Moscow monthly the *Russian Messenger*, for the serialization of his novel and he eventually sold its serial rights to Katkov for 200,000 rubles.

Tolstoy sent the first installment of *Anna Karenina* to the *Russian Messenger* in December, 1874, and the second in January, 1875. Now, as Sonia wrote to Tatyana Kuzminsky (not, one must presume, without a certain note of malicious triumph), Tolstoy had "willy-nilly" to keep up with his work on the novel, and indeed in February he already sent off the end of the first part and ten chapters of the second. The instantaneous success of the published installments was a real surprise to Tolstoy, for, as he wrote to Strakhov on February 16, 1875, he "not only did not expect any success," but was afraid that his reputation might suffer "a complete eclipse" as a result of his novel.

After reading the first fourteen chapters of *Anna Karenina*, one of Tolstoy's closest friends, the poet Afanasy Fet, wrote to him on February 20 that he immediately realized that "the hero Levin is Lev Nikolayevich [i.e., Tolstoy himself], the man and not the creative artist," and that the prototype of Oblonsky was Vasily Perfilyev, a distant relative of Tolstoy's at whose Moscow house he had stayed in 1848, and that the prototype of Karenin was "the sober-minded" Sergey Sukhotin, a common acquaintance of theirs. Tolstoy did not deny Fet's surmises, but merely expressed himself to be completely indifferent to the public acclaim with which the first installments of his novel had been met. In fact, his inspiration failed him again and after the publication of the first four installments, containing the first two parts and ten chapters of the third part, no further installment appeared till January, 1876.

In June, 1875, Tolstoy and his family left again for his Samara estate. There Tolstoy bought race horses and organized race meetings among the Bashkirs, to whom he gave prizes. He resumed his work on *Anna Karenina* on his return to Yasnaya Polyana in August, "anxious," as he wrote to Strakhov on August 24, "to get it off my hands as soon as possible," so as to be free for other "more exciting" work, that is to say, his far from successful educational activities. But, as Sonia noted in her diary in October, Tolstoy was all the time "in a dull and apathetic mood." He spent the mornings, he wrote to Strakhov, "tinkering at my novel to no purpose." To Fet he wrote: "Our work is a terrible thing. No one but ourselves has any idea of it. To be able to work, it is necessary that some kind of scaffolding should grow under our feet. But this does not depend on us. If you start working without it, you will merely waste your material and put

up such walls that you would not be able to carry on with your building. This you feel particularly after you have begun your work. It always seems to you that there is no reason why you should not be able to carry on with it. But the moment you start you realize that it is beyond your powers to do anything and you just sit waiting. So, too, I have been sitting. Now, however, it seems that the scaffolding has grown up and I am about to roll up my sleeves."

But, as always, Tolstoy's optimism was short-lived. In the meantime he was reading *The Soul of Man and Animals* by Wilhelm Wundt, the German physiologist, and, he wrote to Strakhov on November 9, "grasped for the first time the full meaning of the materialistic outlook on life and became a perfect materialist for two days, but that was for the first and the last time. . . . However," he went on, "if only someone would finish *Anna Karenina* for me!" A month later, though, inspiration seemed to have been coming back again and, Sonia wrote to her sister, Tolstoy "was beginning to work diligently at his novel." On January 25, 1876, Tolstoy informed Strakhov that his work on *Anna Karenina* was progressing and on February 15 he confirmed to Strakhov that he was devoting all his time to the writing of the novel. The end of winter and the beginning of spring, as Tolstoy repeatedly averred, was the best time for his work, but this year he was going through a particularly "obstinately uncreative" period, as he expressed it. On March 12 he wrote to Alexandra Tolstoy: "I am sick and tired of my *Anna*. She is giving me a great deal of trouble just as if she were an adopted daughter of mine who turned out to be a bad lot. But don't say anything bad to me about her or, if you must, with *ménagement*, for she has been legally adopted after all." He was still "hoping," he wrote to Fet, to finish the novel before summer, but he was beginning to doubt it. In mid-April he wrote to Count Bobrinsky, the Russian Minister of Transport, who had paid him a visit a few weeks earlier, that, like Levin in his novel, he felt that to live as he had hitherto been living without faith seemed "a terrible torment" to him, but that he could not bring himself to believe. That summer, he added, he intended to devote to the writing of "religious and philosophic" works which he had begun "not for publication but for myself." Anything, in fact, but the bothersome business of creative work.

On April 23 Tolstoy tried, in a letter to Strakhov, to clarify his aim in writing *Anna Karenina*. "If I wanted to put into words what I wished to express in my novel," he wrote, "I ought to have written the sort of novel I had written at first. And if the shortsighted critics think that I merely wanted to describe what appealed to me, such as the sort of

dinner Oblonsky has or what Anna's shoulders are like, then they are mistaken. In everything, almost in everything, I wrote I was guided by the need of collecting ideas which, linked together, would be the expression of myself, though each individual idea, expressed separately in words, loses its meaning, is horribly debased when only one of the links, of which it forms a part, is taken by itself. But the interlinking of these ideas is not, I think, an intellectual process, but something else, and it is impossible to express the source of this interlinking directly in words; it can only be done indirectly by describing images, actions, and situations in words. One of the most convincing proofs of this for me," Tolstoy concludes, "is Vronsky's attempted suicide, which you liked so much. The chapter describing what Vronsky thought of his role after his interview with Karenin had been written long ago. I began correcting it and, to my own amazement, Vronsky tried to shoot himself. But now it appears that this attempted suicide is organically necessary for the further development of the novel."

To Fet, Tolstoy wrote three days later that he was feeling well, but that he did not stop thinking of death and preparing himself for it. "A great deal of what I thought about it," he declared, "I tried to express in the last chapter of the April number of the *Russian Messenger* [i.e., Chapter 19 of Part Five, in which is described the death of Nikolai Levin]." On May 18 he asked Strakhov to send him two books on education, "the latest and the least stupid," which Karenin "would have studied before embarking on the education of his son." An insight into the way ideas came to him during this difficult period of his work on the novel is provided by a note in Sonia's diary. "I am sitting downstairs in my study," Sonia records him as saying, "and examining the white silk piping on the sleeve of my dressing gown, which is very beautiful. And I begin to wonder how people come to invent all those intricate designs and patterns of embroidery and it occurs to me that there exists a whole world of fashion that occupies the minds of women to the exclusion of everything else and that it must provide them with a great deal of enjoyment. Women, I realize, must love this sort of thing and take a keen interest in it. And, of course, my thoughts immediately turn to Anna, and all of a sudden this silk piping gives me an idea for a whole chapter [Chapter 28 of Part Five]. Anna is deprived of these joys. She cannot take part in this exclusively woman's side of life because she is alone by herself, because all the women of her own social set have turned away from her and there is no one with whom she could talk about the things that form the ordinary round of a woman's occupations."