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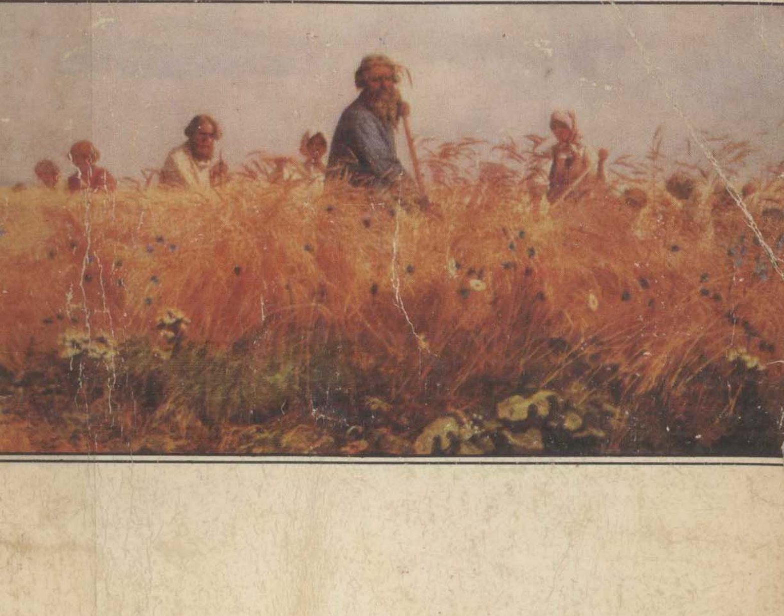
Fathers and Sons
by Ivan Turgenev



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Fathers and Sons by Ivan Turgenev

Translated by Barbara Makanowitzky

With an Introduction by
Alexandra Tolstoy

BANTAM BOOKS
TORONTO · NEW YORK · LONDON · SYDNEY

FATHERS AND SONS

A Bantam Book

PRINTING HISTORY

Fathers and Sons was first published in 1862.
First Bantam edition / August 1959
Bantam Classic edition / March 1981

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 59–8619

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For information address: Bantam Books, Inc.

ISBN 0-553-21036-X

Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

IVAN TURGENEV,

the first of the great Russian novelists to be widely read in Europe, displayed in his works a passionate concern for his country's condition and destiny. He was born in 1818 and spent much of his youth at his mother's estate, Spasskoye, where his maternal grandmother had once, in a fit of rage, smothered a young boy serf with a pillow. Later, Spasskoye became a symbol in Turgenev's writings for the oppression of an unjust social system. From 1838 to 1841, Turgenev studied at the University of Berlin, made friends with Russian liberal and radical political thinkers, and became convinced of the need for the westernization of Russia. In 1843 he became infatuated with the singer Pauline Viardot and unhappily pursued her around Europe for several years. In 1850 his story, "The Diary of a Superfluous Man," popularized the designation "superfluous man" for the idealistic but inactive hero prevalent in Russian literature. In 1852 his sympathetic depiction of the Russian peasants in *Sportsman's Sketches* helped to influence the future emperor Alexander II to free the serfs. Another story, "Mumu," further exposed the cruelties of serfdom. As a result of his views, Turgenev was arrested by the Tsar's political police in 1852 and confined at Spasskoye for eighteen months. In 1855 his most successful dramatic work, *A Month in the Country*, became a forerunner of the plays of Anton Chekhov. His first novel, *Rudin*, appeared in 1856; "First Love," one of his finest tales, in 1860; and his masterpiece *Fathers and Sons* in 1862. This brilliant novel, which applied the term "nihilist" to the radical youth of the 1860s, incensed all factions in Russia and drove Turgenev abroad for most of his remaining years. He died quietly in Paris in 1883 and was later buried in St. Petersburg, where both conservatives and radicals alike mourned the passing of one of the great masters of Russian literature.

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INTRODUCTION

by Alexandra Tolstoy

It is well known that the Russian language is a difficult one and I think I am not mistaken in saying that even very experienced writers have difficulty in translating Russian books, especially those that contain folk expressions. Therefore, it is my sincere opinion that this translation by Barbara Makanowitzky of *Fathers and Sons* is extremely good.

Fathers and Sons was first published in August 1861 in the magazine *Russian Herald*. At once, it created an enormous sensation and aroused a storm among the critics. Many of them admired the character of Bazarov, a man of the new generation, a man of steel, a scientist, an ascetic, a man who would lead the way to progress; others tried to prove that Turgenev was paying a tribute to the old generation, describing the sons as negative types, despisers of the greatest values of life: religion, love, art, family.

A report of the secret police for 1862 refers to *Fathers and Sons*: "It must be in all justice admitted that the work of the well-known writer, Ivan Turgenev, had a favorable influence. Considered as one of the leaders of Russian contemporary talents, and enjoying the sympathies of Russian cultured society, Turgenev, with this novel of his and to the surprise of the young generation who not so long ago applauded him, branded our half-educated revolutionaries with the bitter name 'nihilist' and shook the doctrine of materialism and its followers."

The young intellectuals, the contributors and the readers of the liberal magazine *Contemporary* broke with Turgenev and branded him as a conservative. On the other hand, there were rumors in St. Petersburg that Turgenev was to be summoned to the Senate to explain his relationship with exiles such as the revolutionist Michael Bakunin and others.

"I am sure," Turgenev said, "that those rumors are not true. It would have been absurd to summon me for an investigation by the Senate right now, after the publication of my *Fathers and Sons*, and after all the criticizing and unfavorable articles of the young generation." But Turgenev did appear before the Senate, and after the hearing the whole matter was dropped. As a result of this incident, Turgenev's relationships with the liberal writer Hertzen and the leaders of the *Contemporary* group were never the same.

Even now, nearly one hundred years after the novel was written, critics differ in their understanding of *Fathers and Sons*.

As a great artist, Turgenev gave a true picture of the life of his time. The characters in the novel are described so vividly that you live with them.

You feel as if you had always known the brothers Kirsanov—those typical representatives of the aristocratic class, who spoke perfect French, were well-versed in Western literature, but had no idea of sociology, political economy or science; who were liberals in theory, but who loved their way of life, their estates, and who were afraid of the new, strong, self-confident, clever man who was ready to destroy their old traditions, their religion, art, poetry—everything. You have met Arkady before—he is an average type—a youth who has no strong principles, a blind follower of Bazarov, who finally falls in love with Katya, marries her and forgets his idol and teacher; you admire the simple-hearted pretty Fenechka, who is so devoted to her benefactor, Nikolai Kirsanov, the father of her child; you suffer together with Bazarov's kind, loving old parents, who cannot understand their son, but consider him a genius. Great is their sorrow, when Bazarov dies of bloodpoisoning.

Yevgeny Bazarov is the main figure in the novel. In him Turgenev embodied all the characteristics, the ideas and moods of the young generation. A contemporary writer said, "Our generation with its aims and ideas, can recognize itself in the heroes of the novel. What is characteristic of Bazarov is scattered throughout the masses."

Bazarov was a nihilist, a man whose aims were the destruction of philosophical ideas, of spiritual values, of religion, of traditions. He was a person with neither roots nor purpose, except destruction.

"Nihilism is a struggle against landowners," the young men declared. "Art, love of nature, love for a woman—all of this romantic stuff must give way to physiology, chemistry and other useful sciences."

But even the good-natured Arkady Kirsanov, who was entirely under the influence of Bazarov, could not stand his friend's cynical attitude towards his own father and uncle and defended them. "That's all spinelessness, emptiness," Bazarov declared, after listening to Arkady's retelling of Pavel's tragic love story. "And what about the mystic relationship between a man and a woman? We physiologists know what constitutes that relationship. Study the anatomy of the eye: where does that—what you call—enigmatic look come from? That's all romanticism, humbug, rot, art."

Nikolai Kirsanov, Arkady's father, was a kind, good-natured man, but even he became bitter when he overheard a conversation between Bazarov and his son.

"Your father's a good fellow," said Bazarov, "but he's an outdated man, his day is over."

Eventually, a deep hatred arose between Pavel Kirsanov and Bazarov.

"On what basis can you act then?" Pavel asks Bazarov as the latter was renouncing everything—aristocracy, liberalism, progress, principles.

"We act on the strength of what we recognize to be useful," answers Bazarov. "At present the most useful thing of all is renunciation—we renounce!"

"Everything?"

"Everything."

How could the "little old gentlemen," as Bazarov called them, the brothers Kirsanov, understand such an extreme point of view?

"It will be necessary to build, too," Nikolai remarks.

"That's not our concern. First we have to clear the ground."

At the end of the discussion, Pavel asks, "Just curse everything?"

"Just curse."

"And that's called nihilism?"

"And that's called nihilism," Bazarov repeated.

"You think you're progressive people . . . Force! Just remember one last thing, forceful gentlemen: that you are only four and a half men, and they—millions, who won't let you trample their sacred beliefs under foot, who will squash you!" Pavel Kirsanov says.

"If they squash us, it will serve us right," says Bazarov. "But that remains to be seen. We're not so few as you think."

And while reading this scene involuntarily your sympathies are drawn towards the "Fathers," the Kirsanovs, and not to Turgenev's "pet child," as he called Bazarov, the negligently dressed, coarse, self-confident nihilist.

The philosopher Strakhov said, "Nihilism was not a spiritual development, it was a useless jostling of ideas which cannot be formulated. And these negative ideas found their way to trodden paths—revolutionism and anarchy—which means they've gone in the wrong direction."

Once, when a group of friends were discussing *Fathers and Sons* Turgenev said: "We, the people of the forties, based our philosophy of life on moral principles but we lacked will power—these others have the will power but lack the moral principles."

Turgenev was always inspired by people he met.

"I could never invent my characters," Turgenev told his friend N. A. Ostrovsky, "I could not create an imaginary type. I had to choose a living person and combine in this person many characteristics in conformity with the type of my hero."

Turgenev would meet people, notice them, forget about them and then suddenly they would revive in his mind and he would describe them in his novels.

"I would start making sketches of those people, as I would make sketches of mushrooms, leaves and trees. I would start my drawings until I got sick and tired of them," he wrote.

A man with whom Turgenev once happened to travel gave him the first impulse for creating Bazarov's character. They met in a train which was stopped by a snow storm. They had to spend the night in a room with only one bed, which the stranger offered to Turgenev. He could sleep anywhere, he said, it was a question of will power. And no sooner did he close his eyes—than he was asleep.

"When I created Bazarov," Turgenev wrote to Hertzen, "I did not dislike him; on the contrary, I was attracted to him."

"The character of Bazarov," he told N. A. Ostrovsky, "tormented me to such an extent, that sometimes when I sat at the dinner table, there he was sticking out in front of me. I was speaking to someone and at the same time I was asking myself: what would my Bazarov say to that?"

Turgenev even kept notes of imaginary conversations with Bazarov.

But strong as he was, with his enormous will power, Bazarov could not control the natural human feelings that were in him. Bazarov denied love, he approached women only from the point of view of physical satisfaction and yet he fell hopelessly in love with Odintsova. "This feeling tortured and maddened him, a feeling which he would have denied with contemptuous laughter and cynical abuse if anyone had even remotely hinted to him of the possibility of what was happening inside of him."

Bazarov made fun of chivalry and yet he accepted a challenge with Pavel Kirsanov and fought a duel with him. Bazarov tried to show his friend Arkady that he had no sentimental feelings towards his old parents and yet under cynical and hard words you could still feel his warmth and his love for them, which he was afraid to confess even to himself.

In his nature, Turgenev was a poet, a romantic inspired by Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare, Byron, Lermontov, Pushkin. He worshipped Gogol, whom he called the "great" writer. He lived in the Golden Age of literature in Russia, a contemporary of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Turgenev was considered a Westerner in opposition to the so-called Slavophiles who stood for Russian tradition and culture, yet Turgenev once said, "Russia can live without us, but no one of us can live without Russia."

And, later still, when he was getting old, Turgenev wrote, "In days of doubt, in days of sorrowful thoughts about my mother country, you, the great, powerful and liberal Russian tongue—you are my only support and help. One cannot believe that such a language was not granted to a great country."

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"Well, Piotr? Still nothing in sight?" asked a gentleman on the 20th of May, 1859, as he came out on the porch of the stage-coach inn on the road to ——. Hatless, in a dusty overcoat and checked trousers, he looked a little over forty. He was addressing his servant, a chubby fellow with small, dim eyes and whitish fuzz on his chin.

Everything about the servant—his ingratiating suavity, his pomaded, varicolored hair, even his single turquoise earring—in short, everything distinguished him as belonging to the new, emancipated generation of servants.

He looked down the road indulgently before answering, "No, sir, still nothing in sight."

"Nothing in sight?" repeated the gentleman.

"Nothing in sight," his servant answered again.

The gentleman sighed and sat down on a bench. Let us introduce the reader to him while he sits, his legs gathered up under him, pensively waiting.

His name is Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov. He has a comfortable estate ten miles from the inn with two hundred souls—or two thousand fields (as he has put it since establishing a farm by subdividing and leasing land to the peasants).

His father, a front-line general in 1812, semiliterate, coarse, but a true Russian soul, kept his shoulder to the wheel all his life. He first commanded a brigade and then a division, always staying in the provinces, where his rank enabled him to play a fairly important role.

Like his brother Pavel—of whom more later—Nikolai was born in southern Russia and was brought up at home until the age of fourteen by underpaid tutors and free-living but punctilious aides-de-camp and other regimental and staff officers.

His mother, née Kolyazin, was called Agathe as a girl, but after her marriage to the general was always addressed by her full name: Agafokleya Kuzminishna Kirsanova. She dictated to the whole regiment, talked a great deal in a loud voice, and wore sumptuous mobcaps and rustling taffeta dresses. On Sundays she preceded everyone to bow to the priest's cross after mass; in the mornings she let the children come kiss her hand; in the evenings she gave them her blessing—in short, she lived exactly as she pleased.

As the son of a general, Nikolai—although he not only failed to distinguish himself by his courage, but even earned the nickname "Little Coward"—was supposed to go into military service as his brother Pavel had. However, he broke his leg the very day his appointment was confirmed, spent two months in bed, and was left with a slight limp the rest of his life. His father then abandoned the idea of a military career for Nikolai and took him to St. Petersburg to enroll him in the university as soon as he reached eighteen.

At about the same time, his brother became an officer in a guards regiment. The two young men moved into an apartment under the casual supervision of their mother's cousin, Ilya Kolyazin, an important official. Once they were settled, their father went back to his division and his wife. On rare occasions, the sons received large gray sheets of stationery covered with the bold handwriting of a public clerk and signed in flourishing script, painstakingly encircled by curlicues: "Piotr Kirsanov, Major-General."

Nikolai graduated in 1835. In the same year, General Kirsanov, reprimanded for failing an inspection, was retired and went to St. Petersburg with his wife to live. He was about to rent a house near the fashionable Tavrichesky Gardens and had joined the English Club, when he unexpectedly died of a stroke. Agafokleya Kuzminishna Kirsanova soon followed him. She was unable to get used to a life of obscurity in the capital; the existence of a retired general's wife literally bored her to death.

In the meantime, while his parents were still alive, and to their not inconsiderable mortification, Nikolai managed to fall in love with the daughter of his former landlord, a bureaucrat named Prepolovensky. She was a pretty girl and, as they say, well-versed: she read serious articles in the science section of newspapers. He married her the moment his mourning period was over, and having resigned from the civil service—where he had been placed through his father's influence—he lived in bliss with his Masha. They moved first to a *dacha* near the School of Forestry, then to an attractive little apartment in town with a spotless stairway and a rather poorly heated parlor, and finally settled in the country where a son, Arkady, was soon born.

The couple lived quietly and well. They were almost never apart; they read together, played four-hands on the piano and sang duets; she grew flowers and watched over the chicken yard; he hunted from time to time and took care of the estate—and Arkady grew and grew, also quietly and well. Ten years passed like a dream.

In 1847 Kirsanov's wife died. He barely survived the shock and turned gray in a few weeks. He was on his way abroad to try to distract himself a little when the events of 1848 forced him to abandon his plans. He returned to the estate and, after a long period of inactivity, began to busy himself with its reorganization.

He entered his son in the University of St. Petersburg in 1855 and spent three winters there, trying to make friends with Arkady's young classmates and seldom going out. He was unable to accompany Arkady the last winter, and thus we see him in May, 1859, already completely gray, somewhat heavy and stooped, waiting for his son, who had just been granted the degree he once received himself.

The servant, prompted by a consideration for his master's privacy, or a desire to be out of his sight, moved off under the gateway and lit his pipe. Nikolai stared down at the worn steps of the porch. A sturdy, speckled hen strutted gravely up and down the steps, its big yellow feet extended stiffly. A mud-spattered cat, primly curled up on the porch railing, watched the fowl malevolently.

The sun was baking. From the half-darkened interior of the inn came the smell of warm rye bread. Our Nikolai became lost in daydreams. "Son . . . graduated . . . Arkady . . . Arkasha . . ." whirled aimlessly in his head. He was reminded of his dead wife . . . "She didn't live to see . . ." he whispered sadly. A plump pigeon flew into sight and hurriedly started drinking in a small puddle near the well. As Nikolai watched the bird, his ears caught the rumble of approaching carriage wheels.

"They're coming, sir," reported the servant, bobbing out of the gateway.

Nikolai jumped up and strained his eyes down the road. A coach appeared, harnessed with three post horses. Inside the coach he saw the flash of a student's cap, then the profile of a beloved face.

"Arkasha! Arkasha!" Kirsanov cried, running and waving his arms. A few moments later, his lips were clinging to the sunburned, unbearded, dusty cheek of the young graduate.

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"Let me shake myself off, Papasha," Arkady protested several times, his voice hoarse from the dusty road, but resonant and youthful, as he merrily returned his father's embraces. "I'll get you all dirty."

"It doesn't matter, doesn't matter," Nikolai said over and over, smiling fondly and occasionally brushing the collar of the boy's greatcoat and his own overcoat. "Let me look at you, let me look," he continued, standing back; then abruptly starting towards the inn, he called, "Over here! Fresh horses! Right away!"

Nikolai seemed much more excited than his son; he was nervous and quite beside himself. As he started scurrying towards the inn, Arkady, stopping him, said, "Papasha, let me introduce my good friend, Bazarov, whom I wrote you about so often. He was kind enough to consent to visit us."

Nikolai whirled about, hurried up to the tall man dressed in a long shaggy peasant's overcoat who had just then gotten out of the coach, and grasped the rough red hand, which the man was slow to offer.

"I am very glad and grateful for your kindness in visiting us," Nikolai began. "I hope . . . . Will you allow me to ask your name?"

"Yevgeny Vassiliev," Bazarov answered in a deep drawl and, opening the collar of his coat, unmuffled his face. Long and thin, with a high forehead, wide-bridged pointed nose, large greenish eyes and drooping sand-colored sideburns, his face was enlivened by a peaceful smile and reflected self-confidence and intelligence.

"I hope, dear Yevgeny Vassilich, that you won't get bored with us," Nikolai continued.

Bazarov's thin lips moved slightly, but he said nothing, merely raising his cap. His long, thick, dark-blond hair did not entirely hide the prominent contours of his massive head.

"So, Arkady," Nikolai said turning to his son, "shall we have the horses harnessed now? Or do you want to rest first?"

"We can rest at home, Papasha; tell them to go ahead."

"Right away, right away!" exclaimed his father. "Holla, Piotr, did you hear? Step lively there, young fellow."

Piotr, true to his role of a modern, emancipated servant, did not kiss his master's hand, but merely bowed to him from a distance and ducked back under the gateway.

"I came here in the open buggy, but there's a three-horse team for your coach," Nikolai fussed, while Arkady drank water from an iron ladle brought by the inn-keeper, and Bazarov, smoking a pipe, went over to the coachman who was unhitching the horses. "But the buggy has only two seats, so I don't know how your friend—"

"He'll go in the coach," Arkady interrupted softly. "Please don't stand on ceremony with him. He's a wonderful person—so simple. You'll see."

Nikolai's coachman led out the horses.

"Come on, hurry up, Bushy Beard!" Bazarov said to him.

"Did you hear what the master called you, Mityukha?" said another coachman, standing by with his hands thrust in his torn sheepskin coat. "Bushy Beard it is."

Mityukha just pulled at his cap and dragged the sweaty horses by the reins.

"Hurry up, hurry up, children; everyone lend a hand!" Nikolai exclaimed. "There's a tip waiting for you."

In a few minutes the horses were harnessed. Father and son got into the buggy; Piotr clambered up on the coach box; Bazarov, jumping in the coach, buried his head in the leather pillow—and both carriages rolled off.

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"Well, there we are. At last you've graduated and come home," Nikolai said, patting Arkady's shoulder and knee from time to time. "At last!"

"And how is Uncle Pavel? Is he well?" asked Arkady who, though filled with a sincere, almost childlike joy, wanted to switch the conversation from an emotional to a prosaic level as quickly as possible.

"He's fine. He wanted to come with me to meet you, but changed his mind for some reason."

"Did you wait for me long?" asked Arkady.

"Yes, about five hours."

"Dear Papasha!" Arkady turned vivaciously towards his father and kissed him noisily on the cheek. Nikolai laughed gently.

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