

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

THE BRONZE HORSEMAN

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■ RUSSIAN CLASSIC LITERATURE ■

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THE BRONZE HORSEMAN

Оренбургская область
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ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ ОТДЕЛ



КАРО

Санкт-Петербург

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FOREWORD

"The occurrence related in this tale is based on fact. The details of the flood are taken from the journals of the day. The curious may consult the information collected by V. I. Berkh'.

INTRODUCTION

There, by the billows desolate,
He stood, with mighty thoughts elate,
And gazed, but in the distance only
A sorry skiff on the broad spate
Of Neva drifted seaward, lonely.
The moss-grown miry bank with rare
Hovels were dotted here and there
Where wretched Finns for shelter crowded;
The murmuring woodlands had no share
Of sunshine, all in mist beshrouded.

And thus

He mused: "From here, indeed

Shall we strike terror in the Swede?

And here a city by our labor

Founded, shall gall our haughty neighbor;

"Here cut" — so Nature gives command —

"Your window* through on Europe; stand

Firm-footed by the sea, unchanging!

Ay, ships of every flag shall come

By waters they had never swum,

And we shall revel, freely ranging."

A century — and that city young,

Gem of the Northern world, amazing,

From gloomy wood and swamp upspring,

Had risen, in pride and splendor blazing.

Where once, by that low-lying shore,

In waters never known before

The Finnish fisherman, sole creature,

And left forlorn by stepdame Nature,

Cast ragged nets, — today, along

Those shores, astir with life and motion,

* Algarotti has somewhere said: "Petersburg est la fenê-
tre, par laquelle la Russie regarde en Europe" (*Pushkin's
note*).

Vast shapely palaces in throng
And towers are seen: from every ocean,
From the world's end, the ships come fast,
To reach the loaded quays at last.
The Neva now is clad in granite
With many a bridge to overspan it;
The islands lie beneath a screen
Of gardens deep in dusky green.
To that young capital is drooping
The crest of Moscow on the ground,
A dowager in purple, stooping
Before an empress newly crowned.
I love thee, city of Peter's making;
I love thy harmonies austere,
And Neva's sovran waters breaking
Along her banks of granite sheer;
Thy tracery iron gates; thy sparkling,
Yet moonless, meditative gloom
And thy transparent twilight darkling;
And when I write within my room
Or, lampless, read, — then, sunk in slumber,
The empty thoroughfares, past number,

Are piled, stand clear upon the night;
The Admiralty spire is bright;
Nor may the darkness mount, to smother
The golden cloudland of the light,
For soon one dawn succeeds another
With barely half-an-hour of night.
I love thy ruthless winter, lowering
With bitter frost and windless air;
The sledges along Neva scouring;
Girls' cheeks — no roses so bright and fair!
The flash and noise of balls, the chatter;
The bachelor's hour of feasting, too;
The cups that foam and hiss and spatter,
The punch that in the bowl burns blue.
I love the warlike animation
On playing-fields of Mars; to see
The troops of foot and horse in station,
And their superb monotony;
Their ordered, undulating muster;
Flags, tattered on the glorious day;
Those brazen helmets in their luster
Shot through and riddled in the fray.
I love thee, city of soldiers, blowing

Smoke from thy forts: thy booming gun;
— A Northern empress is bestowing
Upon the royal house a son!
Or when, another battle won,
Proud Russia holds her celebration;
Or when the Neva breaking free
Her dark blue ice bears out to sea
And scents the spring, in exultation.
Now, city of Peter, stand thou fast,
Foursquare, like Russia, vaunt thy splendor!
The very element shall surrender
And make her peace with thee at last.
Their ancient bondage and their rancorous
The Finnish waves shall bury deep
Now vex with idle spite that cankers
Our Peter's everlasting sleep!
There was a dreadful time, we keep
Still freshly on our memories painted;
And you, my friends, shall be acquainted
By me, with all that history:
A grievous record it will be.

I

O'er darkened Petrograd there rolled
November's breath of autumn cold,
And Neva with her boisterous billow
Splashed on her shapely bounding wall
And tossed in restless rise and fall
Like a sick man upon his pillow.
Twas late, and dark had fallen; the rain
Beat fiercely on the window-pane;
A wind that howled and wailed was blowing.
Twas then that young Evgeny came
Home from a party — I am going
To call our hero by that name,
For it sounds pleasing, and moreover
My pen once liked it; why discover
The needless surname? — True, it may
Have been illustrious in past ages,
— Rung, through tradition, in the pages
Of Karamzin; and yet, today
That name is never recollected,
By Rumour and the World rejected.
Our hero — somewhere — served the State;

He shunned the presence of the great;
Lived in Kolomna; for the fate
Cared not of forbears dead and rotten,
Or antique matters long forgotten.
So, home Evgeny came, and tossed
His cloak aside; undressed; and sinking
Sleepless upon his bed, was lost
In sundry meditations — thinking
Of what? — How poor he was; how pain
And toil might some day hope to gain
An honored, free, assured position;
How God, it might be, in addition
Would grant him better brains and pay.
Such idle folk there were, and they,
Lucky and lazy, not too brightly
Gifted, lived easily and lightly;
And he — was only in his second
Year at the desk.

He further reckoned
Those still the ugly weather held;
That still the river swelled and swelled;
That almost now from Neva's eddy
The bridges had been moved already;

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