The novels of Ivan Turgenev

Turgenev Ivan Sergeevich
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Author: Turgenev Ivan Sergeevich

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THE NOVELS OF
IVAN TURGENEV

i. Rudin.
ii. A House of Gentlefolk.
iii. On the Eve.
iv. Fathers and Children.
v. Smoke.
viii. & ix. A Sportsman's Sketches. 2 Vols.
  x. Dream Tales and Prose Poems.
  xi. The Torrents of Spring.

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THE TORRENTS OF SPRING

BY

IVAN TURGENEV

Translated from the Russian

By CONSTANCE GARNETT

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'Years of gladness,
Days of joy,
Like the torrents of spring
They hurried away.'
—From an Old Ballad.

... At two o'clock in the night he had gone back to his study. He had dismissed the servant after the candles were lighted, and throwing himself into a low chair by the hearth, he hid his face in both hands.

Never had he felt such weariness of body and of spirit. He had passed the whole evening in the company of charming ladies and cultivated men; some of the ladies were beautiful, almost all the men were distinguished by intellect or talent; he himself had talked with great success, even with brilliance ... and, for all that, never yet had the taedium vitae of which the Romans talked of old, the 'disgust for life,' taken hold of him with such irresistible, such suffocating force. Had he been a little younger,
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he would have cried with misery, weariness, and exasperation: a biting, burning bitterness, like the bitter of wormwood, filled his whole soul. A sort of clinging repugnance, a weight of loathing closed in upon him on all sides like a dark night of autumn; and he did not know how to get free from this darkness, this bitterness. Sleep it was useless to reckon upon; he knew he should not sleep.

He fell to thinking . . . slowly, listlessly, wrathfully. He thought of the vanity, the uselessness, the vulgar falsity of all things human. All the stages of man’s life passed in order before his mental gaze (he had himself lately reached his fifty-second year), and not one found grace in his eyes. Everywhere the same everlasting pouring of water into a sieve, the everlasting beating of the air, everywhere the same self-deception—half in good faith, half conscious—any toy to amuse the child, so long as it keeps him from crying. And then, all of a sudden, old age drops down like snow on the head, and with it the ever-growing, ever-gnawing, and devouring dread of death . . . and the plunge into the abyss! Lucky indeed if life works out so to the end! May be, before the end, like rust on iron, sufferings, infirmities come. . . . He did not picture life’s sea, as the poets depict it, covered with tempestuous waves; no,