



Faust: A Story in Nine Letters

Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev

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I ARRIVED here three days ago, my dear friend, and, in accordance with my promise, I take up my pen to write to thee. A fine rain has been drizzling down ever since morning; it is impossible to go out; and besides, I want to have a chat with thee. Here I am again, in my old nest, in which I have not been—dreadful to say—for nine whole years. Really, when one comes to think of it, I have become altogether another man. Yes, actually, another man. Dost thou remember in the drawing-room the small, dark mirror of my greatgrandmother, with those queer scrolls at the corners? Thou wert always meditating on what it had beheld a hundred years ago. As soon as I arrived, I went to it, and was involuntarily disconcerted. I suddenly perceived how I had aged and changed of late. However, I am not the only one who has grown old. My tiny house, which was in a state of decrepitude long since, hardly holds itself upright now, and has sagged down, and sunk into the ground. My good Vas lievna, the housekeeper (thou hast not forgotten her, I am sure: she used to regale thee with such splendid preserves), has quite dried up and bent together. At sight of me, she could not cry out, and she did not fall to weeping, but merely grunted and coughed, sat down exhausted on a chair, and waved her hand in despair. Old Ter nty is still alert, holds himself erect as of old, and as he walks turns out his feet clad in the same yellow nankeen trousers, and shod with the same squeaking goat's-leather shoes, with high instep and knots of ribbon, which evoked your emotions more than once.... But great heavens!—how loose those trousers now hang on his thin legs! how white his hair has grown! And his face has all shrivelled up to the size of your fist; and when he talked with me, when he began to make arrangements and issue orders in the adjoining room, I found him ridiculous, and yet I was sorry for him. All his teeth are gone, and he mumbles with a whistling and hissing sound.

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