

ANNA KARENINE

BY COUNT LYOFF TOLSTOI

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A CLASSIC
IN A PAGE

"Anna Karenine" is generally admitted to be Tolstoy's greatest work. His admirers see in it deep thought and profound philosophy. Those who do not believe in Tolstoy see that his story might have been written by Marie Corelli. On its appearance it created a great stir in St. Petersburg society. The gay set denounced Tolstoy and all his works. The element which still had respect to the sanctity of the marriage relation looked at it with approval. As a philosopher Tolstoy placed his message to the world and our kindly he said to deliver an old message in a new form. Yet as a philosopher his admirers and followers are a multitude. As a literary man what his place will be a hundred or even fifty years hence is open to argument. Just now he holds a commanding position.

THERE was trouble in the Oblowsky household. That gay youth Prince Stepan, 36 years old and many years married, had been entirely too attentive to his children's French governess, the Princess Daria, commonly called Dolly, had discovered it, sent the governess packing and declared she would go home to her mother. Stepan was extremely annoyed. He had told Dolly that he was sorry. But women, as he told himself, are so unreasonable in such matters. He sent for his sister Anna, the wife of that rising statesman Alexis Karenine, to come from St. Petersburg to Moscow and try to straighten things out.

Everybody said that Anna Oblowsky had made a brilliant match when she married Karenine. Anna thought so herself. Karenine was a model husband, wealthy, the pink of propriety, possessed power and influence and his name was already known throughout Europe. He was somewhat cold, it is true, but perfectly just, and never allowed himself to be moved by transient emotions. Anna had the greatest respect for him. The Karenines moved in two of the three circles of St. Petersburg society, the official and diplomatic and that presided over by the Countess Lydia Ivanovna, composed of men distinguished in the arts, sciences, literature or statesmanship and middle-aged and old women of unimpeachable character and charitable tendencies, which was sometimes alluded to as "the conscience of St. Petersburg."

Anna's cousin, the Princess Betsy Tverskoy, was the pivot around which revolved the third set, the set that lived for "society" and themselves only, feasted and enjoyed, had "salons" and worshipped "art"; people who went dancing to the grave and left behind them the memory of a few scandals and many good dinners. "When I am old and ugly," said the Princess Betsy in speaking of the Countess Lydia's set, "I shall apply to that asylum for aged females, but not before." Naturally the Karenines were not interested in the Princess Betsy's set.

Anna Karenine came to Moscow and straightened out the crooked affairs of the Oblowsky household; Dolly and Stepan were reconciled through her and she went back to her husband and her little son, Serge, as a good wife should. But Anna took back with her to St. Petersburg something that she should not— a love newly born for a man other than her husband. It was all a new and strange sensation, the feeling which Anna experienced for the young Count Wronsky whom she had chanced to meet while in Moscow. He was an officer of the army, an imperial adjutant, had wealth and ambition and a position and the woman who adored her son and pushed his fortunes. He was easily the leader of the gilded youth of the capital.

Anna felt with a sort of surprised terror that there was danger in her being much in the company of Wronsky and told herself that she must see him no more—at the same time wondering when she would meet him next. Wronsky had been so much smitten with Anna as she with him. Poor Kitty Cherbinskaya, whom Constantine Levin had come from his country estate to woo, was broken hearted when she saw in a Moscow-drawing-room the infatuation of Wronsky for Anna Karenine. For she had given poor faithful Constantine the smitten and fallen head over heels in love— if such an expression may be allowed of a princess— with Alexis Wronsky.

Levine lives alone upon his vast ancestral estates, where he busied himself in improved methods of farming, and all his servants and peasants called him "little father." Kitty's rejection hurt him badly, but he aroused himself with the thought that he had duties in this world to perform and resumed his old life, chastened and saddened, but more energetic than before. The Princess Kitty was the sister of the Princess Dolly Oblowsky, and that good woman was also grieved over the rejection of Levine's suit.

When Mme. Karenine arrived at the station in St. Petersburg Wronsky was there to meet her, having traveled north by the same train. Karenine was there to meet his wife and the sight of him irritated Wronsky. He watched her face closely as the husband and wife exchanged greetings. "No, she does not love him," said the Count to himself. "Count Wronsky," said Anna introducing them. "Ah, I think we have met before," replied Karenine. "I suppose you are on leave, Count," and without waiting for an answer turned to his wife with some trivial question. Accepting the evident hint, Wronsky took his leave, saying to Anna, "I hope to have the honor of calling." It was Karenine who replied: "We shall be most happy to receive on Mondays." "My husband is a good man and an honest and loyal one," said Anna to herself as she entered her boudoir that night. But on her face was no such smile as she had worn when she first met Wronsky and the glad light was absent from her eyes.

Anna began to frequent the set of the Princess Betsy—that was the set in which Wronsky moved. They met frequently as a matter of course and the young soldier found many opportunities of expressing his love. She on her part made no actual response or advance, but in her heart was over the same feeling she had experienced when she first met him. Her joy in his presence was visible in her eyes, her smile, her glance. Do what she would she could not conceal it. The two would sit apart in crowded assemblies. People

began to nod their heads and talk. The Princess Betsy's set accepted the situation as an "affair" and were highly delighted—as was natural. "Why were you not at my dinner last night?" Betsy asked her one day. "Ah, I know; a certain person was not there. How I envy you lovers your second night!"

One evening Karenine entered a crowded drawing room and saw his wife sitting apart as usual with Wronsky, and engaged with him in deep and earnest conversation. Karenine knew that the count was a frequent caller at his house, and that he met Anna often at social functions. But jealousy of the diplomat was one of the meanest of passions. It was, besides, an insult to his wife to harbor such a feeling. But that night the look on Anna's face as Wronsky murmured in her ear, the significant looks on the faces of the other guests, caused him to take a resolution. There was nothing wrong, of course, but she must avoid the appearance of evil. So he made up in his mind a nice little lecture for Anna, and going to her boudoir that night started to deliver it. But Anna interrupted him and spoiled his speech. "What is it you are talking about?" she asked. "That is just like you. Sometimes you complain because I am dull, and now to-night, because I enjoyed myself, you are angry. But go on; I am interested. What is it you are drawing at?" Karenine felt alarmed at her manner and her words. "Anna, Anna, I do not seek to inquire into your feelings; it would be useless, perhaps dangerous. But our lives have been joined together not by man, but by Him, and only death or sin can break the tie, a sin which brings its own punishment. "I do not understand in the least what you are talking about," said she, yawning. "I only know that I am very tired and sleepy." "Anna, for heaven's sake, do not talk so. I speak as much for your own sake as mine. I am your husband and I love you." The word "love" irritated Anna.

"If he had never heard the word," said she, "he would have ignored it." "What does he know of love?" "If not for yourself or for me, then think of your son, and give me your confidence," said Karenine. "Alexis," replied Anna, with a half-repressed smile, "I have no confidence to make and it is really time to think of sleep. Good night." "Too late, too late," she sighed, as Karenine left the apartment.

From that night the relations between Karenine and his wife were entirely changed. Outwardly they lived as usual, but a wall had arisen between them. That she loved Wronsky was certain, but he believed that pride alone would prevent her forgetting her wifely duty. As for Anna and Wronsky, they now frankly told each other and themselves that they loved and that there was nothing else besides in the wide world that mattered. The young soldier was offered the governorship of a distant province, but declined it in order to be near Anna. He was ordered to join his regiment and resigned for the same reason. Thus he sacrificed the imperial favor and his ambition in his chosen profession at the false shrine of his ill-fated love. Anna felt at times terrified, at others supremely happy. Her brother Stepan came to see her and reasoned with her, but she baffled him, as she had her husband. "And how is Kitty?" she asked of her brother. The

prince informed her that his sister-in-law had been made very ill by grieving over her unrequited love for Wronsky, and that her parents had taken her abroad. Anna said: "Poor Kitty, I am really sorry for her. And Levine?" "He was on his estates." "Poor Kostia; Kitty should have married him," she said; "he would have made a model husband," and there was a touch of irony in her tone. Anna had developed a strange wariness, obstinacy, willfulness of character which made her incomprehensible.

A year and more passed. It was summer. Anna was living with her boy in a villa some leagues from St. Petersburg. Karenine had plunged more deeply than ever into affairs of state. Sometimes he would not visit the villa for days. Secretly Anna was receiving almost constant visits from Wronsky. One day, as she and the count sat alone upon the terrace, she leaned over and, blushing, whispered in his ear. Wronsky started and turned pale. Finally he spoke. "Neither you nor I have looked upon our liaison as a transient happiness. The time has come to end all this lying and deceit. You must confess all and leave your husband." "But he does not know," said Anna. This was not the first time that Wronsky had been struck with the impossibility of making Anna comprehend her own position, in the place of the real Anna had grown up a being capricious, incomprehensible, almost repulsive to him.

"This cannot go on," said Wronsky. "Our lives must be united." "Are they now united?" replied Anna. "We should have to fly to give up everything." "Anna," said Wronsky solemnly, "I am sincerely sorry to make you unhappy, but— there is my happiness," cried Anna, and she ran to meet her little boy, Serge, who came dancing in from the garden.

Shortly after this interview there was a day's racing at the fashionable track near St. Petersburg. The Emperor was there in person, so, of course, Karenine, the rising minister, went along, also and took his wife. There was a splendid race for gentlemen riders and Wronsky rode in it on his English mare. The count rode with more fury than judgment. At the last jump the mare took it all right, but when she landed on the other side sank to the earth with a broken back. Wronsky was unhurt, but the mare had to be shot. All that Anna from her seat in the grand stand could see was the count's mount had come down and he with it. She lost all control of herself in her terror and anxiety. "Let us go, let us go," she cried, starting up. "I am offering you my arm to go if you wish it," said Karenine. Anna sank back in her seat, put her fan before her face and burst into tears. Karenine placed himself in front of her to shield her from the curiosity of the crowd.

When she was calmer he escorted her to her carriage. As they drove away he said: "I wish to call your attention to the fact that your conduct to-day was hardly proper. There was a time when I should have used the relations between us as an argument. It is now merely a question of outward facts. You have behaved with impropriety, and it must not happen again. Perhaps I have been deceived. If so, I ask your pardon." "No," burst out Anna, "you have not been deceived. I love him. I am his mistress. I hate you and fear you. Do

with me what you will." Then she sank back into her seat and burst into tears. Karenine did not speak, did not alter the direction of his look, but the grave expression on his countenance became fixed as in the rigidity of death. As they approached the house he turned to his wife and said: "Until the necessary measures have been taken to protect my honor— measures of which you shall be informed—I insist that decency and appearance be preserved." He left the carriage, assisted Anna to alight, re-entered the vehicle and was driven to St. Petersburg. Anna found a note from Betsy saying "I have seen him. He is unhurt." "Then he will come," thought Anna, looking at her watch. "My God, how I love him. As for my husband—well, so much the better. It is all over now between us."

Naturally Karenine's first idea was a challenge. But from his youth up he had always had a horror of that mode of avenging a wrong. Again, would he not look like an impostor in sending a challenge when he knew that his friends would not permit him to risk a life so valuable to the country? There remained divorce. Against that he had religious scruples. Also, he thought, divorce severs completely the relations between husband and wife and leaves her to her lover. There would be a scandal and his political enemies would make the most of it. He would suffer and not Anna. Finally, after many weary hours of thought, he wrote his wife a letter in which he said: "My decision is this: Whatever your conduct may have been I cannot recognize my own right to break a tie consecrated by the Supreme Power. The family name must not be exposed. Outwardly our social life must remain as heretofore. I am convinced that you are repentant and will continue to repent. I desire that you return to town by Tuesday at latest."

"He is right," she thought, "always right, always Christianlike and magnanimous. Oh, what a mean and contemptible man it is." She sent a note to Wronsky to come to her. When he arrived she showed him her husband's letter and told him of what she had done. "It is a thousand times better," said Wronsky. "You must leave him. Whatever he may think, things can no longer go on as they have been going." "And the child, Serge?" "Take him and come to me. I must provide for our future lives." "No," said Anna slowly, "it must be as he says. Things must go on as they have been going."

Anna was right—things went on as heretofore. Karenine had a serious talk with his wife when she reached St. Petersburg. Wronsky was forbidden the house and Anna was ordered to avoid him when they met by chance in society. But secretly Anna and her lover disobeyed these commands.

Karenine learned this. He went to Anna's room and said: "I come to tell you that I shall never again enter this house. I am going to Moscow for a time. You will hear from my lawyer the steps I shall take for a divorce. My son will be taken care of by some of my relatives." "Alexis," cried Anna, "leave me Serge— save me leave me Serge." But he shook off the hand that was stretched to stay him and left the room without another word. Karenine drove to the office of a prominent lawyer and succinctly stated his case. "You will please let me know," said he in conclusion, "within eight days whether you will take the case and upon

per terms." Then he made application for permission to go abroad. Having to pass through Moscow, he determined to stop there for a few days. His brother-in-law, the gay Stepan, called upon him, of course, and invited him to dinner. "I cannot come," said Karenine. "Why?" asked Stepan. "Because I am about to get a divorce from your sister." "Oh, don't," said Oblowsky, "Dolly and I had a deuce of a row once, you remember, and see how happy we are now. And Kitty, you know, well, she has returned as well as ever and Levine and she are to be married. She found out after all it was Levine she really loved. So, you see, if you only wait, how things come out all right." But when Karenine had explained all to Stepan, Oblowsky sighed and acknowledged that it was a "hard case." Dolly, on being informed of the condition of affairs, appealed to Karenine, saying: "Think what she will become if you abandon her." But he could only answer, "Alas! there is no other way."

The next day a telegram was handed to him. It read: "I am dying. Come to me. I shall die easier if I have your forgiveness," and it was signed "Anna." Was it some new trick of hers, he thought. But he took the next train for St. Petersburg. All the way he could not get out of his head the thought that if Anna should die it would solve all his present perplexities. "How is your mistress?" said he to the servant who opened the door. "Madam was safely confined last night," was the answer. Karenine turned pale. He realized how much he had desired this death. "Who is here?" he asked. "The doctor, the nurse and Count Wronsky," answered the servant. Anna lay in her bed moaning and raving incoherently. Near by lay a newly born girl baby. At the head of the bed sat Wronsky, his face buried in his hands. She turned her head toward her husband and said:

"Alexis—is it not cruel that they both should be called Alexis?—Alexis, you are a good man, you do not know how good you are yourself. Give me the child. No, he has not seen her yet. Take her away. Alexis, come near me. The time is short. Now I understand everything— Give me your hand. Forgive me. Make Wronsky uncover his face. There, there, forgive him." With tears streaming down his cheeks Karenine extended his hand in silence to Wronsky. They left the room together, and Wronsky said: "Alexis Karenine, I am incapable of speaking or of understanding. Believe me, my sufferings are great. Have pity upon me, and, if you can, forgive." "You are aware," replied Karenine, "that I have intended getting a divorce. I will go even further, and say that I have wished for her death. But now I see clearly my duty. It is to remain with her. I only ask one thing—the joy of forgiving."

Wronsky went away feeling humiliated and confused, as if he had just lost the path along which he had been walking proudly and contentedly. The betrayed husband had raised himself to a height which compelled his respect, and appeared to him honest, high minded and generous, while he himself seemed a mean and spiritless creature. All that night Wronsky walked his room thinking, thinking, and toward dawn tried to put a bullet through his heart. But his aim was bad, and he only succeeded in wounding himself severely.

Anna, in spite of the prognostications of the doctors, began to mend. While she was recovering the Princess Betsy came bustling in to see her. She told her of Wronsky's attempt at suicide and begged her to see him. Anna said, "No, I can never see him again." "If he were not going away," urged Betsy, "I could understand your refusal. But not to see the man who has tried to kill himself for your sake and is now going to exile himself for love of you—why that is absurd. Let him say good-by to me at least."

In a moment of weakness Anna consented to an interview with the Count. Wronsky did not go away. Gradually the old relations were re-established. Karenine realized that matters were drifting back to their former state and Anna's oft-repeated exclamation, "Oh, why did I not die!" found an echo in his heart. A month later Karenine was alone with his son. Anna had gone abroad with Wronsky. They settled down in Italy in an ancient palace with spacious grounds. Wronsky took up painting as a diversion. Their daughter they had with them and as she grew it became a source of grief to them that she could bear no other name than Karenine. Now and then Wronsky brought traveling Russians to the house, men of the world whom he knew would "understand." Of woman's society Anna had none. The little paradise she had planned where love should be everything did not, somehow, seem to be a wholly satisfactory place after all.

Wronsky became bored with his painting and gave up art in disgust at his own lack of ability. He would often visit the neighboring city alone to mingle with the world once more. Anna became jealous, suspicious and would break out into fits of furious reproach against Wronsky, charging that he no longer loved her and ending her outbursts with tears and caresses. Wronsky had letters from his sister-in-law, Dolly, telling him how Kitty and Levine were living upon their estates busy, happy and contented in each other and the work they found to their hands. "There was an isolated life, as was the one he and Anna were leading—but what a great gift between them."

Anna suddenly demanded to be taken back to St. Petersburg. The count, knowing what she would be exposed to in that city, tried to reason with her, but she was insistent and the next winter saw them in the Russian capital. Karenine was leading a lonely life. He dined abroad and was at home only for his sleep and his early breakfast. The Countess Lydia visited the house daily, taking charge of the upbringing of Serge and of the ordering of the domestics. He knew that people expected him to press for a divorce, but his religious scruples against divorce became active and he hesitated. Anna learned that Lydia had taken the place she should have filled with respect to "Serge" and wrote to her a letter begging to be allowed to see the boy. Lydia, after consulting with Karenine, wrote back that no good could come of the interview and that it would incite the boy to ask questions concerning matters of which it were better that he be kept in ignorance.

Anna ordered a carriage and drove to the house once her home, bribed the servant at the door and forced her way into the sleeping room of Serge. "Oh!" cried Serge, "do not go away again. They told me you were dead—but I knew better." The boy's tutor entered the room. Anna drew the veil over her face and fled to her

carriage. Brooding in her room at the hotel she thought, "I am quite alone. I am a burden on Wronsky. My son is mine no more." Wronsky had sounded his family upon the question of receiving Anna, but had been rebuffed and had accepted the situation. Generally Anna was ignored by her former friends, but the Princess Betsy called. "I know they will blame me," said Betsy, "but I would come and see you. How about the divorce? Of course I am not foolishly prejudiced. But I warn you that others are not so liberal. You leave on Thursday, you say. I am sorry I shall not see more of you." That night at dinner Anna suddenly announced that she wanted to go to the opera. It was a subscription night, when the society of the capital would be there. Wronsky was aghast, but Anna insisted, and the Prince Toubekewitch, who was dining with the couple, politely said he had a box at Anna's disposal. Wronsky said he had an engagement for the evening. Anna said the Prince would escort her and she would take along her aunt—an elderly spinster with a sad reputation—a chaperon. Warning was useless; Anna would go.

Wronsky entered the theatre late and, seeing his mother in her box, went to her. "I see little of you of late," said she, smiling. "But why are you not in attendance upon Mme. Karenine? There she is, over there. But what is taking place?" Wronsky looked and turned pale. In the next box to Anna were the Kartasofs. Mme. Kartasof was standing up, talking hurriedly and angrily, while her husband was adjusting a cloak for her and looking now and then at Anna, who was biting her lips and staring straight before her. All eyes were turned from the stage to the little drama. Kartasof had bowed to Anna, and his wife had made a scene, uttering offensive words about Anna in a loud tone of voice. In a minute the Kartasof box was empty. The count hastened to Anna's box. "It seems to me," said Anna, "that you have come very late. You have missed the best place." "I am a poor judge," replied he, looking at her seriously.

When they reached the hotel Anna burst out with, "It is you who are the cause of everything. It was horrible. She said she was disgraced by sitting near me. If I live to be a hundred I cannot forget it." "I begged you not to go," said Wronsky. "And why should I not have gone?" replied Anna. "If you had any love for me—you have driven me to this. In short, Anna was utterly unreasonable. All night Wronsky felt angry and bitter toward her. Two days later they left St. Petersburg and went to live at a small place of the count's in the country.

Here for a time they were happy again, but Anna soon began to be haunted with the fear that Wronsky had ceased to love her. While he, in spite of himself, welcomed any excuse to absent himself from home, and felt that things were getting into an impossible state. A divorce and his marriage to Anna he thought might make matters smoother. Anna herself now gladly welcomed the idea, and wrote to Karenine—but received no reply.

Wronsky had to go to Moscow on business. Anna insisted upon going with him. There their quarrels broke out afresh. Wronsky's mother was in Moscow, and staying with her from the countess wished her son to marry. Anna somehow knew of it, and her fears and capriciousness increased. After a violent scene with Wronsky he left the room, saying to himself: "I have tried everything. I will now see what a little indifference will do." From one of the servants Anna, suddenly repentant, learned that he had gone to the stables. She dispatched a note after him asking him to come back. He had left the stables and gone to the station, taking a train for Nijni. Anna wrote another note and said to the servant: "Here, take this to your master at his mother's country home at Nijni." "I am afraid," she had written; "come back. All will be explained." The last words she had said to him were: "You will be sorry for this." Now the idea occurred to her that Wronsky was on his way to Nijni. She could not get the idea out of her head. She hurried to the station and took the next train for Nijni. The man at the station told her that Wronsky was not at his mother's, but at the house of the Princess Sorokine, near by.

Just then the man whom she had dispatched with her note appeared and delivered a message from the Count. It read: "Moscow. My return at 10 o'clock." She walked down the platform. "My God," she thought, "where shall I fly to? I will not permit him to make me suffer like this again." A heavy train was approaching. Suddenly she thought of a man she had once seen run over. In an instant her resolve was made. She threw herself beneath the wheels of the train and life was crushed out of her. Wronsky, coming to the station, saw her body, all mangled except the face, lying in the freight shed where they had carried it.

Two months later the terminus of the Koursk Railway was crowded with troops going off to the Turkish war. The old Countess Wronsky was there, come to see the domestics. He knew that people expected him to press for a divorce, but his religious scruples against divorce became active and he hesitated. Anna learned that Lydia had taken the place she should have filled with respect to "Serge" and wrote to her a letter begging to be allowed to see the boy. Lydia, after consulting with Karenine, wrote back that no good could come of the interview and that it would incite the boy to ask questions concerning matters of which it were better that he be kept in ignorance.

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