Title: Oblomov

Author: Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov

Translator: C. J. Hogarth

Release date: May 10, 2017 [eBook #54700]
Most recently updated: October 23, 2024

Language: English

Credits: David Widger

OBLOMOV

By Ivan Goncharov

Translated From The Russian By C. J. Hogarth

London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

1915

OBLOMOV

IVAN GONCHAROV

OBLOMOV

BY

IVAN GONCHAROV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

C. J. HOGARTH

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN, LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C.

CONTENTS

OBLOMOV

PART I

I

II

III

IV

V

PART II

I

II

III

PART III

I

II

III

IV

PART IV

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

OBLOMOV

PART I

I

One morning, in a flat in one of the great buildings in Gorokliovaia Street, * the population of which was sufficient to constitute that of a provincial town, there was lying in bed a gentleman named Ilya Ilyitch Oblomov. He was a fellow of a little over thirty, of medium height, and of pleasant exterior. Unfortunately, in his dark-grey eyes there was an absence of any definite idea, and in his other features a total lack of concentration. Suddenly a thought would wander across his face with the freedom of a bird, flutter for a moment in his eyes, settle on his half-opened lips, and remain momentarily lurking in the lines of his forehead. Then it would disappear, and once more his face would glow with a radiant *insouciance* which extended even to his attitude and the folds of his night-robe. At other times his glance would darken as with weariness or *ennui*. Yet neither the one nor the other expression could altogether banish from his countenance that gentleness which was the ruling, the fundamental, characteristic, not only of his features, but also of the spirit which lay beneath them. That spirit shone in his eyes, in his smile, and in his every movement of hand and head. On glancing casually at Oblomov a cold, a superficially observant person would have said, "Evidently he is good-natured, but a simpleton;" whereas a person of greater penetration and sympathy than the first would have prolonged his glance, and then gone on his way thoughtfully, and with a smile as though he were pleased with something.

* *One of the principal streets of Petrograd.*

Oblomov's face was neither reddy nor dull nor pale, but of an indefinite hue. At all events, that was the impression which it gave—possibly because, through insufficiency of exercise, or through want of fresh air, or through a lack of both, he was wrinkled beyond his years. In general, to judge from the extreme whiteness of his bare neck, his small, puffy hands, and his soft shoulders, one would conclude that he possessed an effeminate body. Even when excited, his actions were governed by an unvarying gentleness, added to a lassitude that was not devoid of a certain peculiar grace. On the other hand, should depression of spirits show itself in his face, His glance would grow dull, and his brow furrowed, as doubt, despondency, and apprehension fell to contending with one another. Yet this crisis of emotion seldom crystallized into the form of a definite idea—still less into that of a fixed resolve. Almost always such emotion evaporated in a sigh, and shaded off into a sort of apathetic lethargy.

Oblomov's indoor costume corresponded exactly with the quiet outlines of his face and the effeminacy of his form. The costume in question consisted of a dressing-gown of some Persian material—a real Eastern dressing-gown—a garment that was devoid both of tassels and velvet facings and a waist, yet so roomy that Oblomov might have wrapped himself in it once or twice over. Also, in accordance with the immutable custom of Asia, its sleeves widened steadily from knuckles to shoulder. True, it was a dressing-gown which had lost its pristine freshness, and had, in places, exchanged its natural, original sheen for one acquired by hard wear; yet still it retained both the clarity of its Oriental colouring and the soundness of its texture. In Oblomov's eyes It was a garment possessed of a myriad invaluable qualities, for it was so soft and pliable that, when wearing it, the body was unaware of its presence, and, like an obedient slave, it answered even to the slightest movement. Neither waistcoat nor cravat did Oblomov wear when indoors, since he loved freedom and space. For the same reason his slippers were long, soft, and broad, to the end that, whenever he lowered his legs from the bed to the floor without looking at what he was doing, his feet might fit into the slippers at once.

With Oblomov, lying in bed was neither a necessity (as in the case of an invalid or of a man who stands badly in need of sleep) nor an accident (as in the case of a man who is feeling worn out) nor a gratification (as in the case of a man who is purely lazy). Rather, it represented his normal condition. Whenever he was at home—and almost always he was at home—he would spend his time in lying on his back. Likewise he used but the one room—which was combined to serve both as bedroom, as study, and as reception-room—in which we have just discovered him. True, two other rooms lay at his disposal, but seldom did he look into them save on mornings (which did not comprise by any means every morning) when his old valet happened to be sweeping out the study. The furniture in them stood perennially covered over, and never were the blinds drawn up.

At first sight the room in which Oblomov was lying was a well-fitted one. In it there stood a writing-table of redwood, a couple of sofas, upholstered in some silken material, and a handsome screen that was embroidered with birds and fruits unknown to Nature.

Also the room contained silken curtains, a few mats, some pictures, bronzes, and pieces of china, and a multitude of other pretty trifles. Yet even the most cursory glance from the experienced eye of a man of taste would have detected no more than a tendency to observe *les convenances* while escaping their actual