



First Love

by Ivan Turgenev (1818-83)
translated by Constance Garnett

The title of the novella is almost an adequate summary in itself. The “boy-meets-girl-then-loses-her” story is universal but not, I think, banal – despite a surprise ending which notoriously turns out to be very little of a surprise. *First Love* is given its originality and poignancy by Turgenev’s mastery of the piercing turning-point (akin to Joyce’s “epiphanies”) that transforms the character’s whole being, making a tragic outcome inevitable. Even the nature symbolism is rescued from triteness by lovely poetic similes – e.g. *“but at that point my attention was arrested by the appearance of a speckled woodpecker who busily climbed up the slender stem of a birch-tree and peeped out uneasily from behind it, first to the right, then to the left, like a musician behind the bass-viol.”* (Summary by Martin Geeson)

Total running time: 3:03:20

Read by Martin Geeson

Cover design by Kathryn Delaney
Painting by John William Waterhouse, *Gather Ye Rosebuds*, (1908)



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