

# Aborigines

Anton Chekhov

BETWEEN nine and ten in the morning. Ivan Lyashkevsky, a lieutenant of Polish origin, who has at some time or other been wounded in the head, and now lives on his pension in a town in one of the southern provinces, is sitting in his lodgings at the open window talking to Franz Stepanitch Finks, the town architect, who has come in to see him for a minute. Both have thrust their heads out of the window, and are looking in the direction of the gate near which Lyashkevsky's landlord, a plump little native with pendulous perspiring cheeks, in full, blue trousers, is sitting on a bench with his waistcoat unbuttoned. The native is plunged in deep thought, and is absent-mindedly prodding the toe of his boot with a stick.

"Extraordinary people, I tell you," grumbled Lyashkevsky, looking angrily at the native, "here he has sat down on the bench, and so he will sit, damn the fellow, with his hands folded till evening. They do absolutely nothing. The wastrels and loafers! It would be all right, you scoundrel, if you had money lying in the bank, or had a farm of your own where others would be working for you, but here you have not a penny to your name, you eat the bread of others, you are in debt all round, and you starve your family -- devil take you! You wouldn't believe me, Franz Stepanitch, sometimes it makes me so cross that I could jump out of the window and give the low fellow a good horse-whipping. Come, why don't you work? What are you sitting there for?"

The native looks indifferently at Lyashkevsky, tries to say something but cannot; sloth and the sultry heat have paralysed his conversational faculties. . . . Yawning lazily, he makes the sign of the cross over his mouth, and turns his eyes up towards the sky where pigeons fly, bathing in the hot air.

"You must not be too severe in your judgments, honoured friend," sighs Finks, mopping his big bald head with his handkerchief. "Put yourself in their place: business is slack now, there's unemployment all round, a bad harvest, stagnation in trade."

"Good gracious, how you talk!" cries Lyashkevsky in indignation, angrily wrapping his dressing gown round him. "Supposing he has no job and no trade, why doesn't he work in his own home, the devil flay him! I say! Is there no work for you at home? Just look, you brute! Your steps have come to pieces, the plankway is falling into the ditch, the fence is rotten; you had better set to and mend it all, or if you don't know how, go into the kitchen and help your wife. Your wife is running out every minute to fetch water or carry out the slops. Why shouldn't you run instead, you rascal? And then you must remember, Franz Stepanitch, that he has six acres of garden, that he has pigsties and poultry houses, but it is all wasted and no use. The flower garden is overgrown with weeds and almost baked dry, while the boys play ball in the kitchen garden. Isn't he a lazy brute? I assure you, though I have only the use of an acre and a half with my lodgings, you will always find radishes, and salad, and fennel, and onions, while that blackguard buys everything at the market."

"He is a Russian, there is no doing anything with him," said Finks with a condescending smile; "it's in the Russian blood. . . . They are a very lazy people! If all property were given to Germans or Poles, in a year's time you would not recognise the town."

# **Livros Grátis**

<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>

Milhares de livros grátis para download.

The native in the blue trousers beckons a girl with a sieve, buys a kopeck's worth of sunflower seeds from her and begins cracking them.

"A race of curs!" says Lyashkevsky angrily. "That's their only occupation, they crack sunflower seeds and they talk politics! The devil take them!"

Staring wrathfully at the blue trousers, Lyashkevsky is gradually roused to fury, and gets so excited that he actually foams at the mouth. He speaks with a Polish accent, rapping out each syllable venomously, till at last the little bags under his eyes swell, and he abandons the Russian "scoundrels, blackguards, and rascals," and rolling his eyes, begins pouring out a shower of Polish oaths, coughing from his efforts. "Lazy dogs, race of curs. May the devil take them!"

The native hears this abuse distinctly, but, judging from the appearance of his crumpled little figure, it does not affect him. Apparently he has long ago grown as used to it as to the buzzing of the flies, and feels it superfluous to protest. At every visit Finks has to listen to a tirade on the subject of the lazy good-for-nothing aborigines, and every time exactly the same one.

"But . . . I must be going," he says, remembering that he has no time to spare. "Good-bye!"

"Where are you off to?"

"I only looked in on you for a minute. The wall of the cellar has cracked in the girls' high school, so they asked me to go round at once to look at it. I must go."

"H'm. . . . I have told Varvara to get the samovar," says Lyashkevsky, surprised. "Stay a little, we will have some tea; then you shall go."

Finks obediently puts down his hat on the table and remains to drink tea. Over their tea Lyashkevsky maintains that the natives are hopelessly ruined, that there is only one thing to do, to take them all indiscriminately and send them under strict escort to hard labour.

"Why, upon my word," he says, getting hot, "you may ask what does that goose sitting there live upon! He lets me lodgings in his house for seven roubles a month, and he goes to name-day parties, that's all that he has to live on, the knave, may the devil take him! He has neither earnings nor an income. They are not merely sluggards and wastrels, they are swindlers too, they are continually borrowing money from the town bank, and what do they do with it? They plunge into some scheme such as sending bulls to Moscow, or building oil presses on a new system; but to send bulls to Moscow or to press oil you want to have a head on your shoulders, and these rascals have pumpkins on theirs! Of course all their schemes end in smoke. . . . They waste their money, get into a mess, and then snap their fingers at the bank. What can you get out of them? Their houses are mortgaged over and over again, they have no other property -- it's all been drunk and eaten up long ago. Nine-tenths of them are swindlers, the scoundrels! To borrow money and not return it is their rule. Thanks to them the town bank is going smash!"

"I was at Yegorov's yesterday," Finks interrupts the Pole, anxious to change the

conversation, "and only fancy, I won six roubles and a half from him at picquet."

"I believe I still owe you something at picquet," Lyashkevsky recollects, "I ought to win it back. Wouldn't you like one game?"

"Perhaps just one," Finks assents. "I must make haste to the high school, you know."

Lyashkevsky and Finks sit down at the open window and begin a game of picquet. The native in the blue trousers stretches with relish, and husks of sunflower seeds fall in showers from all over him on to the ground. At that moment from the gate opposite appears another native with a long beard, wearing a crumpled yellowish-grey cotton coat. He screws up his eyes affectionately at the blue trousers and shouts:

"Good-morning, Semyon Nikolaitch, I have the honour to congratulate you on the Thursday."

"And the same to you, Kapiton Petrovitch!"

"Come to my seat! It's cool here!"

The blue trousers, with much sighing and groaning and waddling from side to side like a duck, cross the street.

"Tierce major . . ." mutters Lyashkevsky, "from the queen. . . . Five and fifteen. . . . The rascals are talking of politics. . . . Do you hear? They have begun about England. I have six hearts."

"I have the seven spades. My point."

"Yes, it's yours. Do you hear? They are abusing Beaconsfield. They don't know, the swine, that Beaconsfield has been dead for ever so long. So I have twenty-nine. . . . Your lead."

"Eight . . . nine . . . ten . . . Yes, amazing people, these Russians! Eleven . . . twelve. . . . The Russian inertia is unique on the terrestrial globe."

"Thirty . . . Thirty-one. . . . One ought to take a good whip, you know. Go out and give them Beaconsfield. I say, how their tongues are wagging! It's easier to babble than to work. I suppose you threw away the queen of clubs and I didn't realise it."

"Thirteen . . . Fourteen. . . . It's unbearably hot! One must be made of iron to sit in such heat on a seat in the full sun! Fifteen."

The first game is followed by a second, the second by a third. . . . Finks loses, and by degrees works himself up into a gambling fever and forgets all about the cracking walls of the high school cellar. As Lyashkevsky plays he keeps looking at the aborigines. He sees them, entertaining each other with conversation, go to the open gate, cross the filthy yard and sit down on a scanty patch of shade under an aspen tree. Between twelve and one o'clock the fat cook with brown legs spreads before them something like a baby's sheet with brown stains upon it, and gives them their dinner. They eat with wooden spoons, keep

brushing away the flies, and go on talking.

"The devil, it is beyond everything," cries Lyashkevsky, revolted. "I am very glad I have not a gun or a revolver or I should have a shot at those cattle. I have four knaves -- fourteen. . . . Your point. . . . It really gives me a twitching in my legs. I can't see those ruffians without being upset."

"Don't excite yourself, it is bad for you."

"But upon my word, it is enough to try the patience of a stone!"

When he has finished dinner the native in blue trousers, worn out and exhausted, staggering with laziness and repletion, crosses the street to his own house and sinks feebly on to his bench. He is struggling with drowsiness and the gnats, and is looking about him as dejectedly as though he were every minute expecting his end. His helpless air drives Lyashkevsky out of all patience. The Pole pokes his head out of the window and shouts at him, spluttering:

"Been gorging? Ah, the old woman! The sweet darling. He has been stuffing himself, and now he doesn't know what to do with his tummy! Get out of my sight, you confounded fellow! Plague take you!"

The native looks sourly at him, and merely twiddles his fingers instead of answering. A school-boy of his acquaintance passes by him with his satchel on his back. Stopping him the native ponders a long time what to say to him, and asks:

"Well, what now?"

"Nothing."

"How, nothing?"

"Why, just nothing."

"H'm. . . . And which subject is the hardest?"

"That's according." The school-boy shrugs his shoulders.

"I see -- er . . . What is the Latin for tree?"

"Arbor."

"Aha. . . . And so one has to know all that," sighs the blue trousers. "You have to go into it all. . . . It's hard work, hard work. . . . Is your dear Mamma well?"

"She is all right, thank you."

"Ah. . . . Well, run along."

After losing two roubles Finks remembers the high school and is horrified.

"Holy Saints, why it's three o'clock already. How I have been staying on. Good-bye, I must run. . . ."

"Have dinner with me, and then go," says Lyashkevsky. "You have plenty of time."

Finks stays, but only on condition that dinner shall last no more than ten minutes. After dining he sits for some five minutes on the sofa and thinks of the cracked wall, then resolutely lays his head on the cushion and fills the room with a shrill whistling through his nose. While he is asleep, Lyashkevsky, who does not approve of an afternoon nap, sits at the window, stares at the dozing native, and grumbles:

"Race of curs! I wonder you don't choke with laziness. No work, no intellectual or moral interests, nothing but vegetating . . . . disgusting. Tfoo!"

At six o'clock Finks wakes up.

"It's too late to go to the high school now," he says, stretching. "I shall have to go to-morrow, and now. . . . How about my revenge? Let's have one more game. . . ."

After seeing his visitor off, between nine and ten, Lyashkevsky looks after him for some time, and says:

"Damn the fellow, staying here the whole day and doing absolutely nothing. . . . Simply get their salary and do no work; the devil take them! . . . The German pig. . . ."

He looks out of the window, but the native is no longer there. He has gone to bed. There is no one to grumble at, and for the first time in the day he keeps his mouth shut, but ten minutes passes and he cannot restrain the depression that overpowers him, and begins to grumble, shoving the old shabby armchair:

"You only take up room, rubbishly old thing! You ought to have been burnt long ago, but I keep forgetting to tell them to chop you up. It's a disgrace!"

And as he gets into bed he presses his hand on a spring of the mattress, frowns and says peevishly:

"The con--found--ed spring! It will cut my side all night. I will tell them to rip up the mattress to-morrow and get you out, you useless thing."

He falls asleep at midnight, and dreams that he is pouring boiling water over the natives, Finks, and the old armchair.

# Livros Grátis

( <http://www.livrosgratis.com.br> )

Milhares de Livros para Download:

[Baixar livros de Administração](#)

[Baixar livros de Agronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Arquitetura](#)

[Baixar livros de Artes](#)

[Baixar livros de Astronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Biologia Geral](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Computação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Informação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência Política](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciências da Saúde](#)

[Baixar livros de Comunicação](#)

[Baixar livros do Conselho Nacional de Educação - CNE](#)

[Baixar livros de Defesa civil](#)

[Baixar livros de Direito](#)

[Baixar livros de Direitos humanos](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia Doméstica](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação - Trânsito](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Engenharia Aeroespacial](#)

[Baixar livros de Farmácia](#)

[Baixar livros de Filosofia](#)

[Baixar livros de Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Geociências](#)

[Baixar livros de Geografia](#)

[Baixar livros de História](#)

[Baixar livros de Línguas](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil](#)

[Baixar livros de Matemática](#)

[Baixar livros de Medicina](#)

[Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária](#)

[Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente](#)

[Baixar livros de Meteorologia](#)

[Baixar Monografias e TCC](#)

[Baixar livros Multidisciplinar](#)

[Baixar livros de Música](#)

[Baixar livros de Psicologia](#)

[Baixar livros de Química](#)

[Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva](#)

[Baixar livros de Serviço Social](#)

[Baixar livros de Sociologia](#)

[Baixar livros de Teologia](#)

[Baixar livros de Trabalho](#)

[Baixar livros de Turismo](#)