



Russian Secret Tales: Bawdy Folktales of Old Russia (#9388)

Alexander Afanasyev

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Alexander Nikolayevich Afanasyev (1826-1871) was the leading Russian folklorist of his time. Between 1855 and 1866, for example, Afanasyev, who is often referred to as the Russian equivalent of the brothers Grimm, combed the collections of the Russian Geographical Society for 640 folktales, which were published in eight installments between 1855 and 1866. For the volume under discussion, *Russian Secret Tales*, a remarkable compilation of erotic folktales and one of the pioneering classic nineteenth-century collection of folktales, Afanasyev assembled more than seventy traditional folk tales. Among the tales collected are "The Wonderful Whistle," a recognizable version of Aarne-Thompson tale type 570, "The Rabbit-herd." Similarly, "The Pope and His Man" includes A-T tale type 1563, "Both," as well s A-T tale type 1361, "The Flood," the latter being Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale." Students of Chaucer will also appreciate "The Blind Man's Wife," which is a version of A-T 1423, "The Enchanted Pear Tree," which is "The Merchant's Tale" in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Besides the stories, Clearfield Company's reprint edition of *Russian Secret Tales* boasts of a number of supporting features. For one, it contains valuable notes attributed to Giuseppe Pitre (1841-1916), perhaps the greatest collector of folklore who ever lived. This English translation of Afanasyev's *Russian Secret Tales* with comparative notes is also graced by an erudite introduction by G. Legman, whose expertise in the field of erotic folklore is unrivaled. Legman's Introduction follows the publishing history of *Russian Secret Tales* up through 1966, the date the English edition first appeared.

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