

*Why the hollow men  
prize their vice and live by it*



Short excerpt from Alexei Maximovich Peshkov's<sup>1</sup> "Twenty-six Men and a Girl" (1889). A translation from the Russian by J.K.M. Shirazi was included in *Creatures That Once Were Men, and other Stories*, New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1906. The same translation was subsequently republished in the *World's Great Romances*. New York: Black's Readers Service Co., 1929; pp. 242-52. Many other publications elsewhere.

**T**HERE ARE MEN TO WHOM THE MOST PRECIOUS AND BEST THING in their lives appears to be some disease of their soul or body. They spend their whole life in relation to it, and only living by it, suffering from it, they sustain themselves on it, they complain of it to others, and so draw the attention of their fellows to themselves.

For that they extract sympathy from people, and apart from it they have nothing at all. Take from them that disease, cure them, and they will be miserable, because they have lost their one resource in life — they are left empty then. Sometimes a man's life is so poor, that he is driven instinctively to prize his vice and to live by it; one may say for a fact that often men are vicious from boredom.



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<sup>1</sup> Primarily know as Maxim Gorky.