Alexander Kuprin's YAMA is an overwhelming, truthful and staggering indictment of the immemorial evil of prostitution. And since he is the last and greatest of the giants, he treats a razor-edge theme without prejudice, without sounding-brass-and-tinkling-cymbal phrases, transmuting the monstrous, "downright crushing, terrible matter" into "simple, find and deathlessly caustic images." No sheepish morality is here, but sheer, stark truth. The Stalianic Kuprin, with incorruptible pitilessness, yet with unimpeachable sincerity and unsurpassed humanness and compassion, depicts the "everyday, accustomed trifles, these business-like, daily commercial reckonings, this thousand-year-old science of amatory practice, this prosaic usage, determined by the ages... There remains a dyad profession, a contrast, an agreement, a well-high honest petty trade, no better, no worse than, say, the trade in groceries. All the horror is in just this -- that there is no horror..." It is not without cause that YAMA has been called "the first and last honest work on the subject of prostitution." There is no more vivid illustration than YAMA of G. H. Lewes' thesis that sincerity is the basis of success.

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A novel about prostitution in Moscow. From the introduction: It must not be thought, despite its locale, that Kuprin's "Yama" is a picture of Russian prostitution solely; it is intrinsically universal. All that is necessary is to change the kopecks into cents, pennies, sous or pfennings; compute the versts into miles or metres; Jennka may be Eugenie or Jeannette; and for Yama, simply read Whitechapel, Montmartre, or the Barbary Coast. That is why "Yama" is a tremendous, staggering, and truthful book - a terrific book. It has been called notorious, lurid - even oleographic. So are, perhaps, the picaresques of Murillo, the pictorial satires of Hogarth, the bizarries of Goya...
Yama (The Pit) recounts the lives of a group of prostitutes living and working in Anna Markovna’s brothel in the town of K… The women, subject to effective slavery through the removal of their papers and onerous debts, act out a scene of everyday scoffing every evening for the part ignorant, part monstrous clients, while keeping secret their own pasts and wished-for futures. The book was Kuprin’s attempt to denormalize the cultural ambiguity of the legal brothels of the time. His dedication—“to mothers and youth”—expresses his desire that there should no longer be a silent acceptance of the actions of the “fathers, husbands, and brothers.” The novel was notable for portraying the inhabitants of the brothels as living breathing people with their own hopes and desires, not purely as a plot point or scenario. The critical response was mixed: many found the subject matter beyond the pale. Kuprin himself placed his hopes on a favourable review from Leo Tolstoy, which didn’t come; but there was praise for Yama as both social commentary and warning, and an appreciation for Kuprin’s attempt to depict the everyday lives of his subjects. The novel had a troubled genesis, with the first part taking nine years between initial proposal and first publication; the second and third parts followed five years later. It was a victim of the Russian censors who, tellingingly, disapproved more of scenes involving officials visiting the brothels, than the brothels themselves. It was only later during preparations for an anthology of his work that an uncensored version was allowed to be released. This edition is based on the translation to English by Bernard Gullibert Gueney of that uncensored version, and was first published in 1922. This book is part of the Standard Ebooks project, which produces free public domain ebooks.

We are delighted to publish this classic book as part of our extensive Classic Library collection. Many of the books in our collection have been out of print for decades, and therefore have not been accessible to the general public. The aim of our publishing program is to facilitate rapid access to this vast reservoir of literature, and our view is that this is a significant literary work, which deserves to be brought back into print after many decades in its original form. The contents of the vast majority of titles in the Classic Library have been scanned from the original works. To ensure a high quality product, each title has been meticulously hand curated by our staff. Our philosophy has been guided by a desire to provide the reader with a book that is as close as possible to ownership of the original work. We hope that you will enjoy this wonderful classic work, and that for you it becomes an enriching experience.

The Pit (Russian: Яма, romanized: Yama) is an novel by Alexander Kuprin published in installments between 1909 and 1915, in Zemlya almanacs (1909 - Vol.3, 1914 - Vol.15, 1915 - Vol.16). The book, centering on a brothel, owned by a woman named Anna Markovna, caused much controversy in its time. Alexander Kuprin started collecting the material for his work in Kiev in 1890s, and it is in this city that the novel's action takes place. Speaking in 1909 to a local newspaper correspondent about prototypes, he commented: “Characters I’ve made cannot be seen as copying real people. I picked up a lot of small details from the real life, but that was by no means copying the reality, which is something I detest doing.” He added that his observations were by no means restricted to Kiev. “The Pit is [about] Odesa, Petersburg and Kiev,” Kuprin said.

A novel about the love of King Solomon for a servant girl.