

## TURGENEV AND ENGLAND

*By the same author*

**TURGENEV AND GEORGE SAND**

# TURGENEV AND ENGLAND

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*For Marian, Emma and Claire*

Les Anglais sont a stupid people . . .

Turgenev to Pauline Viardot

. . . they are a truly great nation.

Turgenev to Annenkov

As for what the English think of us, we know they respect us because they take us to be worthy rivals. Recently I came across an extremely interesting article in the newspaper *The Times* in which a comparison was made between the English people and the Russians; the conclusion was that greatness of character could be manifest most often now in England . . . and in Russia. Although the whole article bears the stamp of narrow English self-esteem, it is none the less remarkable for us Russians.

Turgenev in 1842

But a beautiful name was required to write stories as shapely as Greek vases, and the writer of the most comely stories in the world bore the most comely name in the world – Ivan Tourguéneff.

George Moore, *Avowals*

And Shakespeare, if he had taken time to think upon these matters, would have been as great an artist as Tourgénéieff.

Ford Madox Ford, *The Critical Attitude*

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# Preface

It is necessary to define rather carefully the purpose and scope of this book. The reception of Turgenev's works in England, by reviewers and writers alike, has already been well treated by Royal Gettmann, while Gilbert Phelps and others have investigated his possible influence in English fiction. There have also been some partial studies of the impact of English literature upon himself. I have not sought to repeat all this, though a little of it does impinge upon my own design. What I have attempted to do is to present Turgenev's relations with England as part of his life and experience. The book is thus a partial biography – a record of his growing interest in things English; of his direct contacts with the British; of his standing in Britain and the effect this had on him. Most of all, it is a chronicle of his visits to England and of his reactions to these. Sometimes he benefited from them, sometimes he did not; always he observed, took in, and commented.

The question may be asked: why 'Turgenev and *England*'? As he never went to Wales or Ireland, and visited Scotland only once, the title seemed reasonable in itself; but in any case the Russians, like the French and others, tend to use the word 'English' metonymically. It is true that Turgenev knew Carlyle, scarcely an Englishman; but he thought of him as an English writer. In one place he even referred to Scott as an 'English' novelist. As he levelled all his prejudice against the English (as well as some of his praise), the Scots and others may consider themselves well out of it.

Turgenev came to Britain a dozen times in all, over a period of thirty-five years. He spent a total of about twelve months in its shores. This is both a significant and an insignificant share of his experience – significant, because no other great Russian writer had anything like a comparable acquaintance with the country; insignificant, because he lived ten times as long in Germany and twenty times longer in France. It is wise to keep this perspective in view lest the role of England in Turgenev's life be overestimated. At the same time it is certain that things English had an importance for him out of all proportion to his personal dealings with the land and its people. This is why my subject has deserved a full investigation.

The perennial problem of the historian, in literature as in any other field, is to avoid mere duplication of work already done. In my own case, Turgenev's visits to Ventnor, Edinburgh and Oxford have been difficult to treat without repeating what is said in the excellent and informative articles by Professor Richard Freeborn, Dr Nicholas Žekulin and Dr J. S.

G. Simmons. I am deeply indebted to these scholars, as also to other Turgenev authorities like Professor Henri Granjard, Alexandre Zviguilsky, April FitzLyon and Academician M. P. Alekseyev. As usual with a study of this kind, involving numerous approaches and requests to individuals and institutions, it is impossible to thank everyone who has helped, or to thank some informants enough. I must, however, single out M. and Mme André Le Cesne, Professor Gordon S. Haight, Miss Rosemary Graham, Mrs Madeline House and Dr Ian Campbell before consigning all others deserving special mention to an indiscriminating list: Lady Delamere; Professors W. E. Fredeman, Michael Millgate, Thomas Pinney and Richard L. Purdy; Associate Professor Paul F. Mattheisen; Drs Robert Becker, Paul Dukes and Reginald Tye; Mesdames or Milles S. M. Arnold, G. L. Atkinson, Michèle Beaulieu, Pat Bradford, Liz Delaney, Marion Fleisher, Jane Hilton, H. M. Langley and R. F. Vyse; and Messrs Patrick Collins, Laurence Elvin, Andrew Fekete, K. C. Harrison, T. L. Ingram, John Lehmann, Georges Lubin, David McKitterick, D. H. Merry, R. N. R. Peers, Gordon Phillips, Robert Porter, J. Seddon, Robert L. Simpson, Arthur Thomson, James Torry, Piers Tyrrell and Jacques-Paul Viardot. Any that I may have inadvertently omitted must forgive me. I should also point out that some of the material used in this book has already been published in the form of articles in the *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, the *Modern Language Review*, *AUMLA* and elsewhere. I am grateful to be able to use it again, in a revised or supplemented form. Finally I should say that this has been a complicated book to write. Although I have checked all its details, there are bound to be mistakes. No one but myself can be held responsible for these, for which I apologise in advance of finding them out.

All dates given are Western ('new style') unless otherwise specified; in the nineteenth century the Russian calendar was twelve days behind our own. Russian names and words have been transliterated according to one of the more common systems used today, but without any pretension to be scientific or even perfectly consistent: it seemed natural, for instance, to retain the illogical *Tchaikovsky* in the case of the composer, but to call his revolutionary namesake *Chaykovsky*. Similarly, some Russian Christian names have been given their English equivalents when this appeared less pedantic: thus *Alexander II*, *Nicholas I*. Furthermore, the many variations on *Turgenev* actually employed in cited texts have not been rationalised. It is all part of the atmosphere. As an obituary in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* explained, 'Turguéniéff, Tourgenef, Tourgeniew – one hardly knows how to write the name, for it has more spellings than Shakespeare'. That this is no longer true today does not indicate superior understanding of the men who bore these names.

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