

SMOKE



IVAN S. TURGENEV

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

INTRODUCTION

TURGENEV was born in a rich landowner's family in the province of Orel, in central Russia. His childhood was not a happy one, for his parents were harsh and selfish people, unkind both to their children and to their servants. From his earliest years Turgenev saw what serfdom meant at its worst, and his sympathies were always on the side of the suffering and the oppressed. When he was nine, his parents moved to Moscow and subsequently to St. Petersburg. Turgenev was sent to a boarding school, then had a year at the Moscow University, and graduated in St. Petersburg in 1837.

While attending St. Petersburg University he also studied privately and acquired a very thorough knowledge of the classics. At the same time he tried his hand at writing poetry and came into contact with some of the well-known writers of the day. After graduating he went on to the University of Berlin, which was then a great seat of learning. He spent almost four years abroad, studying the philosophy of Hegel, history, and classical philology, and reading extensively. He returned to Russia in 1841, a staunch admirer of European culture, and such he remained to the end, in spite of many disillusionments which closer acquaintance with Western Europe brought him in later years.

In 1843 a short play and in 1844 his first story appeared, followed by several other stories. Between 1847 and 1851 he published his *Sportsman's Sketches*

which were received with the greatest enthusiasm by the reading public; the Tsar Alexander II (then heir to the throne) was much impressed by them. Turgenev voiced the social conscience of the best people in Russia and his sympathetic presentation of the peasants' lot greatly contributed to the abolition of serfdom in 1861.

As early as 1845 Turgenev met the famous singer, Madame Pauline Viardot-Garcia, who was the one great love of his life. For her sake he made his home in Germany or France or wherever she happened to be; he lived in or near Paris, then for some years in Baden, then again in Paris, and paid long visits to Italy and England. Every year he spent several weeks in Russia, generally at his country place. The only long parting between him and Madame Viardot was from 1851 to 1855; he went to Russia in 1851 to settle his affairs after his mother's death, and in 1852 was put under arrest in Moscow for writing an obituary of Gogol in defiance of the censorship. After two months' detention he was sent to live on his estate in the province of Orel. As soon as the ban was lifted he rejoined the Viardot family for the rest of his life. Madame Viardot was a woman of great character and intelligence as well as a gifted musician, and she fully appreciated Turgenev's genius. She learned Russian in order to be able to read his works and translate them into French.

After the *Sportsman's Sketches* Turgenev wrote three novels (*Rudin*, published in 1856, *A House of Gentlefolk*, in 1859, *On the Eve*, in 1860) and many short stories which were eagerly read and warmly welcomed by the public; but one of his best works, the novel

Fathers and Children published in 1862, made him unpopular for many years. The young 'left-wingers' imagined that the chief character, the nihilist Bazarov, was a caricature and bitterly reviled Turgenev for going over to the reactionaries. The Conservatives on the other hand thought that he had idealized Bazarov for the sake of playing up to the nihilists. Few critics were discerning enough to see in the novel a perfect work of art. Turgenev was so much hurt by the way his motives were misunderstood that for a time he thought of giving up writing altogether. But his creative mind could not remain inactive, and many beautiful things were written by him after 1862—among them the novels *Smoke* and *Virgin Soil*, which had much the same reception as *Fathers and Children*.

Much as Turgenev was grieved by the readers' unfairness to him and by the hostility of the young generation, he remained true to his artistic conscience and never falsified his presentation of reality in order to please the public, and in the end his spiritual integrity brought him the reward of recognition. When in 1879 he came to Russia to take part in the Pushkin celebrations he was received with the utmost enthusiasm, and so again in 1881. By expressing at every opportunity their affection and admiration for the great writer, the public, and especially the young people, wanted as it were to make up for the years of estrangement.

Unfortunately Turgenev's visit to Russia in 1881 was his last. Soon after it he developed an illness which puzzled the doctors and caused him terrible agony. It proved to be cancer of the spinal cord. Turgenev bore his sufferings with the greatest courage;

to the last he interested himself in other people and tried to help them. Madame Viardot was with him to the end and left an account of his death, which took place at Bougival near Paris on 3rd September 1883. Turgenev was buried, according to his wish, in the Volkov cemetery in St. Petersburg near his friend the critic Belinsky. A crowd of 100,000 people accompanied the funeral procession, including 285 deputations from all parts of Russia. Both in his own country and abroad his death was felt as a bitter loss to the world's literature.

Turgenev was one of the kindest and most intelligent of men. People who knew him personally, and those who have made a close study of his life and work, have remarked on the wonderful balance between his keen, sane, objective judgment and his warm and generous heart. There was no trace of fanaticism or narrow sectarianism about him, and he was singularly free from meanness, spite, or envy. Extremely modest with regard to his own writings, he was always ready to admire other writers' work and to help them in every way he could; on his death-bed he wrote the famous letter to Tolstoy urging him to return to literature.

In this century it has been the fashion to disparage Turgenev; writers who praise him do so rather apologetically, hastening to add that of course he is not so great as Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, and it is often said that Turgenev is out of date. It is hard to make out the exact force of that remark. The social order depicted in Turgenev's works is certainly past and gone, but what has this to do with their aesthetic

value? One might as well argue that Euripides' *Medea* is no longer a great tragedy because the Greek city state has ceased to exist. Artistic perfection is not affected by the passage of time, and the truth that 'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever' applies to literature as much as to any other form of art. As to the practice of extolling one writer of genius at the expense of others, it is both ungracious and unprofitable—since, obviously, there are many kinds of excellence and they are not mutually exclusive. And yet some critics seem to think that the greatness of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky must necessarily dwarf Turgenev and are at pains to show that he is a lesser artist than they. A conclusive answer to their fault-finding is given in Edward Garnett's admirable book on Turgenev.¹ He points out in it, amongst other things, that the very perfection of Turgenev's work prevents the undiscerning from recognizing what a consummate artist he is. The ease and simplicity with which he handles his subject makes an insensitive reader imagine that 'there is nothing in it.' As Conrad puts it with delightful irony in his preface to Edward Garnett's book: 'Only think! Every gift has been heaped on Turgenev's cradle: absolute sanity and the deepest sensibility, the clearest vision and the quickest responsiveness, penetrating insight and unfailing generosity of judgment, an exquisite perception of the visible world and an unerring instinct for the significant, for the essential in the life of men and women . . . and all that in perfect measure. There's enough there to ruin the prospects of any writer.'

¹ *Turgenev*, by Edward Garnett, 1917.

Generally speaking, however, those who declare Turgenev to be inferior to Tolstoy and Dostoevsky have in mind not the artistic quality of his work, but its purport and message. They fail to find in him Dostoevsky's prophetic fire or Tolstoy's moral intensity, and dismiss his novels and tales as mere love stories which 'do not prompt us to deeper contemplation.'¹ It is certainly true that Turgenev was neither a prophet nor a teacher; but he belongs to the same spiritual tradition as the others and deals with the same perennial problems. It has justly been said that the great Russian writers see man against the background of eternity; they are concerned with man as such, they ask what is the meaning and purpose of his existence. Now the answer to this question obviously depends upon whether one does or does not believe in God and His providence. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were believers, and saw that the purpose and meaning of man's life depended upon his relation to God; Turgenev was not a believer, and for him man was the plaything of soulless, impersonal forces, and life was meaningless. The whole of Turgenev's work brings out the tragic conflict between 'the infinite aspiration, the eternal insignificance of the life of man.' The more sensitive a thinker is to the presence of eternal values in the world, the more painfully he feels that conflict. Turgenev could, perhaps more than any other writer, feel and express the beauty of the world, and his main theme was love, the very essence of which is to transfigure life and

¹ Brückner in *A Literary History of Russia*, Maurice Baring, and others.

shed a magic radiance upon it. Solovyov in his remarkable essay *The Meaning of Love* (written in 1894) says in the language of philosophy that love opens our eyes to the mystical value of personality, and Turgenev conveys the same truth in a succession of beautiful scenes and images. In the words of Solovyov, lovers see each other as God sees us in the celestial light of our immortal spirit—as infinitely precious, unique, and irreplaceable. But for that very reason love cannot reconcile itself to the earthly fate of man, to old age, disease, death, and corruption. The destruction of that which has been revealed to us as an absolute value is felt to be a revolting sacrilege, and this is why Turgenev was so keenly aware of the horror of death; his *Poems in Prose*, *Enough*, *Phantoms*, and the concluding pages of *First Love* are a poignant expression of it. Indeed, the note of bitter resignation before the blind forces of nature runs through all his writings. The Kingdom of God was for him not a reality, but only a vain longing of the human heart.

Smoke was written in 1866, while Turgenev was living at Baden, and was published in 1867. It attracted general attention and interest, but it also aroused passionate hostility. The revolutionary-minded youth accused Turgenev of caricaturing them; the reactionaries resented the brilliant satire on the ruling class; the Slavophiles were hurt by the critical remarks about the Russian people; idealistic young girls could not forgive Turgenev for making a heroine with a wrong sense of values so irresistible. But as years went by and the passions died down, the essential justice of Turgenev's picture of Russian

society of the time became more and more evident; and Potugin's bitter comments on the Russian national character have been justified by events to an extent that makes them almost uncannily prophetic. Perhaps in no other novel does Turgenev's deep and penetrating intelligence show itself more clearly.

But the main interest of the novel has nothing to do with politics. It is the story of an absorbing love that holds a promise of salvation to Irina, and all but wrecks Litvinov's life. All the characters in the novel are drawn with Turgenev's usual skill, and Irina is the most striking of them. Edward Garnett says: 'Irina will stand for ever in the long gallery of great creations. Turgenev has in her perfected her type till she reaches a destroying witchery of fascination and subtlety. She ardently desires to become nobler, to possess all that the ideal of love means for the heart of a woman; but she has only the power given her of enervating the man she loves. She is born to corrupt, yet never to be corrupted. Her wit, her scorn, her beauty, preserve her from all the influences of evil she does not deliberately employ. Such a woman is as old and as rare a type as Helen of Troy.'

Whether the reader agrees with this summary of Irina's character, or simply feels indignant with her for preferring 'the world' to love, the story holds one spellbound. To quote Edward Garnett again, 'it is one of the finest examples in literature of a subjective psychological study of passion rendered clearly and objectively in terms of art. *Smoke* in every sense of the word is a classic for all time.'

January 1949.

NATALIE DUDDINGTON.

A LIST OF TURGENEV'S NOVELS, TALES, AND PLAYS

(The years given are those of writing, not necessarily of publication, and are taken from Turgenev's list in the complete Russian edition.)

Carelessness (a comedy), 1843; *Andrey Kolosov*, 1844; *The Duellist*, 1846; *Three Portraits*, 1846; *The Jew*, 1846; *Where the Thread is Fine, it Breaks* (a comedy), 1847; *Petushkov*, 1847; *A Sportsman's Sketches*, 1847-52; *The Poor Gentleman* (a comedy), 1848; *The Bachelor* (a comedy), 1849; *The Diary of a Superfluous Man*, 1850; *A Month in the Country* (a comedy), 1850; *Three Meetings*, 1851; *A Provincial Lady* (a comedy), 1851; *Mumu*, 1852; *The Country Inn*, 1852; *An Evening at Sorrento* (a short play), 1852; *Two Friends*, 1853; *The Backwater*, 1854; *Rudin* (a novel), 1855; *A Correspondence*, 1855; *Yakov Pasyonkov*, 1855; *Faust*, 1855; *A Tour in the Forest*, 1857; *Acia*, 1857; *A House of Gentlefolk* (a novel), 1858; *On the Eve* (a novel), 1859; *First Love*, 1860; *Fathers and Children* (a novel), 1861; *Phantoms*, 1863; *Enough*, 1864; *The Dog*, 1866; *Smoke* (a novel), 1867; *Lieutenant Yergunov's Story*, 1867; *The Brigadier*, 1867; *An Unhappy Girl*, 1868; *A Strange Story*, 1869; *A Lear of the Steppes*, 1870; *Knock, Knock, Knock*, 1870; *The Torrents of Spring*, 1871; *Tchertopchanov's End* (addition to *A Sportsman's Sketches*), 1871; *Pnin and Baburin*, 1874; *A Living Relic* (addition to *A Sportsman's Sketches*), 1874; *The Watch*, 1875; *The Rumble of Wheels* (addition to *A Sportsman's Sketches*), 1875; *Virgin Soil* (a novel), 1876; *The Dream*, 1876; *Father Alexey's Story*, 1877; *The Song of Triumphant Love*, 1881; *Old Portraits*, 1881; *A Desperate Character*, 1881; *Poems in Prose*, 1882; *Clara Militch*, 1882; *Hamlet and Don Quixote* (an essay), 1860.

TRANSLATIONS INTO ENGLISH

COLLECTED EDITIONS:

The Novels and Tales of Ivan Turgenev, translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett, 17 vols., 1894-1906; *The Novels and Stories of Ivan Turgeneff*, translated from the Russian by Isabel Hapgood, 13 vols., 1903-5.

THE CHIEF SEPARATE WORKS:

Russian Life in the Interior, or The Experiences of a Sportsman, translated from the French version and edited by Meiklejohn, 1855; *Annals of a*

Sportsman, translated from the authorized French edition, by F. P. Abbott, 1885; *Tales from the Note-book of a Sportsman*, translated by E. Richter, 1895.

Liza, or A Nest of Nobles, translated by W. R. S. Ralston, 1869, other editions 1873, 1884, 1914 (Everyman's Library); *Dvoryanskoie Guezdo: a Nest of Hereditary Legislators*, translated by F. M. Davis, 1914; *A Nobleman's Nest*, translated by Richard Hare, 1947.

On the Eve, translated by C. G. Turner, 1871; *On the Eve* (anonymous), 1915.

Fathers and Sons, translated by E. Schuyler, 1867; *Fathers and Sons*, translated by C. J. Hogarth, 1921 (Everyman's Library); *Fathers and Children*, and *Rudin*, translated by Richard Hare, 1947.

Smoke, or Life at Baden, translated from the French version, 2 vols., 1868 (anonymous); *Smoke*, translated from the author's French version by W. F. West, 1872.

Virgin Soil, translated from the French version by T. S. Perry, 1877; *Virgin Soil*, translated by A. W. Dilke, 1878; by R. S. Townsend, 1906 (Everyman's Library).

PLAYS:

A Month in the Country, A Provincial Lady, A Poor Gentleman, translated by Constance Garnett, 1934. *The Plays of Ivan S. Turgenev*, translated by M. S. Mandell, 1924. *A Month in the Country*, translated by G. R. Noyes, 1933; by M. S. Mandell, 1937; adapted by Emlyn Williams, 1943.

WORKS ON TURGENEV

Tourguéneff and his French Circle, by M. Halperine-Kaminsky, 1893; *Two Russian Reformers: Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy*, by J. A. T. Lloyd, 1910; *Turgenev* (a study), by Edward Garnett, 1917; *Turgenev*, by A. Yarmolinsky, 1926; *Democratic Ideas in Turgenev's Works*, by H. Hershkowitz, 1932; *Turgenev in England and America*, by Royal A. Gettmann, 1941.

In French: *Souvenirs sur Tourguéneff*, Isaac Pavlovsky, 1887; *Tourguéneff inconnu*, par M. Delines, 1888; *Ivan Tourguénef: la vie et l'œuvre*, par E. Haumont, 1906; *Tourguéniev*, par André Maurois, 1931; *Tourguéneff, poète du rêve*, par A. M. Remizov, 1933.

SMOKE

THE NAMES OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK

Grigóry Miháilovitch (or Miháilitch) Litvínov
Irina Pávlovna Osínin
Victórinka
Cleopátrinka
Tatyána Petróvna (Tánya) Shestóv
Kapitolína Márkovna
Rostisláv Bambáev
Semyón Yákovlevitch Voroshílov
Stepán Nikoláevitch Gubaryóv
Dorimedónt Nikoláevitch Gubaryóv
Matryóna Semyónovna Suhánychikov
Tit Bindásov
Pishcháikin
Sozónt Ivánovitch (or Ivánitch) Potúgin
Valerián Vladímirovitch Ratmírov

In the above list, the accent indicates the stressed syllable in the name.

In transcribing Russian names into English

a has the sound of a in father

e " " " " a in blade

i " " " " ee

u " " " " oo

y is consonantal except when it is the last letter of the word.

g is always hard.

I

ON 10th August 1862, at four o'clock in the afternoon a number of people were crowding in front of the famous *Conversation* at Baden-Baden. The weather was lovely; everything around—the green trees, the light-coloured houses of the cosy town, the undulating hills—lay spread out in festive abundance in the rays of the gracious sunshine; everything smiled with a kind of blind and trustful charm, and the same vague but kind smile hovered on human faces, old and young, ugly and handsome. Even the painted and powdered Parisian *cocottes* did not disturb the general impression of rejoicing and serene content, and the many-coloured ribbons, feathers, gold, and tinsel, on hats and veils, suggested to the eye the lively brilliance of lightly swaying spring flowers and rainbow-coloured wings. Only the dry guttural crackle of French conversation heard an all sides could neither replace the twittering of birds nor be compared with it.

Everything, however, went on in its usual way. The orchestra in the pavilion played selections from *La Traviata*, a waltz of Strauss, and then *Tell her*, a Russian song, instrumented by an obliging conductor. In the gambling halls the same familiar figures crowded round the green-baized tables with the same dull and greedy look of something between amazement and exasperation—an essentially predatory look which the

gambling fever imparts to all, even the most aristocratic, features. The same stoutish and smartly dressed Russian landowner from Tambov, with the same incomprehensible, convulsive haste, leaned over the table, staring blankly in front of him, and, taking no notice of the cold smiles of the croupiers, scattered with a perspiring hand gold coins in all the four corners of the roulette at the very moment when '*Rien ne va plus!*' was declared, thus depriving himself of any chance of winning even in case of luck. This did not in the least prevent him that very evening from supporting with sympathetic indignation Prince Kokó, one of the well-known leaders of the aristocratic opposition—the Prince Kokó who in Paris, in Princess Mathilde's salon, in the presence of the emperor, remarked so happily: '*Madame, le prince de la propriété est profondément ébranlé en Russie.*'

In their usual way our amiable compatriots gathered round the Russian tree—*l'arbre russe*; they approached it haughtily and negligently, in fashionable style; they greeted one another majestically, with elegant ease, as befits beings who are at the very summit of modern culture. But once they had met and sat down, they had absolutely nothing to say to one another and fell back either upon pitiful tittle-tattle or the hackneyed, flat, and extremely impudent jokes of a hopelessly stale French ex-journalist, a babbler and buffoon, with wretched Jewish shoes on his puny little feet and a contemptible little beard on his ignoble little face. He served up *à ces princes russes* all kinds of insipid rubbish out of the old almanacs *Charivari* and *Tintamarre*, and the *princes russes* went off into peals of grateful laughter

as though involuntarily recognizing the overwhelming superiority of foreign wit and their own utter incapacity to invent anything amusing. And yet they numbered among them all the *fine fleur* of our society, all 'the best and most fashionable people.' Among them was Count X, our incomparable dilettante, a deep and musical nature, who 'recited' songs so divinely, though in truth he could not play two notes correctly without first prodding the piano keys at random with his forefinger, and sang like an inferior gipsy or a Parisian hairdresser. There was also our delightful Baron Z, a Jack of all trades—writer, administrator, orator, and card-sharper. There was Prince Y, a friend of the people and of the Church, who in the happy old days of state monopolies amassed an enormous fortune by selling vodka mixed with dope; and the brilliant general O. O., who had conquered somebody, restored order somewhere, but now did not know what to do with himself or what to say for himself; and R. R., an amusing stout man who imagined himself to be very ill and very intelligent, while in truth he was strong as an ox and dull as a post. This R. R. was almost the only man of his day to have kept the traditions of the 'society lions' of the forties, of the period of *A Hero of our Times* and Countess Vorotynsky: he preserved the gait with the swing on the heels, *le culte de la pose* (it cannot even be said in Russian), an unnaturally slow way of moving, a majestically sleepy expression on his immobile, as it were offended-looking, face, the habit of interrupting other people with a yawn, of scrutinizing his own finger-nails, of suddenly giving a

nasal laugh and shifting his hat from the back of his head on to his eyebrows, and so on, and so on.

There were important government officials among them, diplomats, great personages of European fame, men of wisdom and council who imagined that the Golden Bull was issued by the Pope and that the English 'poor rate' was levied on the poor. There were, too, some zealous but shy admirers of the *dames aux camélias*, young society lions dressed in the real London fashion, with fine partings down the back of their heads and splendid long whiskers—young lions whom one would have thought there was nothing to prevent being as vulgar as the notorious French babbler; but no! we evidently do not care for home-products, and Countess S, the famous lawgiver of fashion and *grand genre*, nicknamed maliciously 'Queen of the Wasps' and 'Medusa in a bonnet,' preferred, in the absence of the French wit, to address herself to the numerous Italians, Moldavians, American spiritualists, sprightly secretaries of foreign embassies, young Germans with effeminate but prematurely cautious faces, and so on. The example of the countess was followed by Princess Babette, the one in whose arms Chopin breathed his last (there are reckoned to be about a thousand ladies in Europe in whose arms he expired), and by Princess Annette, who had everything in her favour except that at times, like the smell of cabbage overpowering the finest perfume, a plain washerwoman suddenly came to the surface in her; and Princess Pachtette, who had had such a misfortune: her husband was given a prominent post, and all of a sudden, *Dieu sait pourquoi*, he thrashed the mayor of