

**RUSSIAN
SKETCHES, CHIEFLY
OF PEASANT LIFE**

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Russian sketches, chiefly of peasant life by Beatrix L. Tollemache

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BEATRIX L. TOLLEMACHE

**RUSSIAN
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OF PEASANT LIFE**

RUSSIAN SKETCHES

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CHIEFLY OF PEASANT LIFE

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
BEATRIX L. TOLLEMACHE
(HON. MRS. LIONEL TOLLEMACHE)

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1913

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PREFACE

NO Russian who loves the literature of his country can hear that one or other of its masterpieces has been translated into German, or French, or English without mingled feelings of pleasure and anxiety—pleasure that the treasures of that literature should be opened to a foreign nation, anxiety lest they should be presented to it in a dress unworthy of their beauties; for how difficult it is to render into any language, whether of Latin or Teutonic origin, the power, the pathos, the striking illustrations, the quaint humour, above all the delicate lights and shades which give the Russian literature its unique charm.

I have lived ten years in England, and in those ten years have only come across two persons capable of feeling, grasping, and interpreting that charm. One of the two is the translator of this volume. Mrs. Tollemache's success is the more wonderful because the stories and poems she has chosen to translate deal chiefly with country life, and have the full

flavour of the peasants' thought and speech ; a flavour which cannot be given by the use of any English dialect—for the Russian peasant makes no mistakes in grammar and few in pronunciation ; what distinguishes his speech from that of the cultured classes is a more vivid picturesqueness, and a surprising variety of expression, both in his bold humour and in his touching feelings.

Thanks to Mrs. Tollemache's masterful command of her own language she has been able to convey the atmosphere of that little pearl among tales, "The Sealed Angel," and the tragedy, the poetry, the vivid realism of the other pieces which go to make up this volume. No Russian, even the most sensitive to the spirit of our literature, will find a single passage in it that would do injustice to our beloved mother tongue. We can only express our deepest thanks to Mrs. Tollemache for her perfect apprehension and refined interpretation of what is so dear to our hearts.

N. JARINTZOFF.

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