

# **THE RUSSIANS AND THEIR LANGUAGE**

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The Russians and Their Language by N. Jarintzov & Nevill Forbes

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**N. JARINTZOV & NEVILL FORBES**

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THE  
RUSSIANS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

*In Preparation*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

**RUSSIAN POETS AND  
POEMS**

FROM THE START TO THE PRESENT DAY

# THE RUSSIANS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

BY

MADAME N. JARINTZOV

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
DISCUSSING THE PROBLEMS OF PRONUNCIATION  
AND TRANSLITERATION

AND A PREFACE

BY

NEVILL FORBES

*Reader in Russian in the University of Oxford*

NEW YORK  
MITCHELL KENNERLEY

1916

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TO MY FRIEND  
EDWARD STANHOPE KITCHIN, PH.D.  
TO WHOSE KEEN INTEREST IN  
THE PHILOSOPHY OF MY MOTHER-TONGUE  
THIS LITTLE WORK  
IS INDEBTED FOR ITS APPEARANCE



ALLEN  
© 1877

## PREFACE

THE appearance of this volume at the present moment is so apposite that any prefatory or explanatory remarks are really superfluous, all the more so that the authoress is already known in this country by her excellent writings on Russia which have appeared in the course of the last few years. It has, however, been suggested that something may be usefully said as to some purposes which, amongst others, this book may serve. In the first place, it is something really new, being an exposition of Russian psychology illustrated by examples of the Russian language. One often hears said by those who have read translations of Russian works, or books written in English about Russia, that they do not yet understand Russian psychology. To that it may be answered that it is very difficult to understand Russian psychology without knowing, at any rate, something of the Russian language. Translations of Russian books are sometimes inexact, and books about Russia are sometimes one-sided. The fact that this book on Russia, Russian, and Russians is written by a Russian in English endows it with the authority of an original, and saves it from the tedium and incorrections of a translation. The authoress has lived long enough in England to know what is both interesting and unintelligible to English readers, and has lived long enough out of Russia to be able to look at her country and countrymen objectively and to appreciate fully the value and beauty of her own language; at the same

time she is still able to write sufficiently subjectively to be inspiring, and sufficiently broad-mindedly to be convincing. In this way, with the aid of the numerous quotations from such authors as Gogol, Dostoyevski, and others more modern, the book will appeal to those who are interested in Russian literature and psychology, but have no time or inclination to study the language; written in an engaging and conversational style, it brings certain interesting and illuminating aspects of the Russian character and language to them in their armchairs, as it were.

In the second place, the book will be directly useful to the rapidly increasing number of people in this country who are actually studying the Russian language. The many aptly chosen linguistic examples and their explanations and interpretations which illustrate the book go a long way towards providing a Russian syntax very attractively disguised, and will help to impress certain remarkable characteristics of the Russian language on the minds of students more effectively and pleasantly than the arid pages of grammars and textbooks are wont to do.

Although differing somewhat radically from the authoress in certain points—amongst others, of pronunciation and the vexed problem of transliteration (and therefore it may be hoped not to be suspected of collusion)—the writer has no hesitation in saying that for serious students of the Russian language, literature, and psychology, the present work, being, as it is, a sort of concentrated essence of Russia, is equal in value to half a dozen of the large books on that country which have latterly been so plentifully showered upon us.

NEVILL FORBES.

## INTRODUCTION

### DISCUSSING THE PROBLEMS OF PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSLITERATION

EDUCATED English people seem to be interested nowadays in Russian literature. Happily, there exist some translations which convey the general meaning of the originals very well indeed—like those by Mrs. Edward Garnett and a few others. But even they could not possibly transfer the atmosphere of the Russian speech, its beautiful subtlety, or its extreme analytical power. These have no equivalents in modern English (nor in other modern languages, but my little study partly concerns the comparison between the Russian and the English speech only). Hence the gaps in the best of translations; and hence the appearance of these pages, the aim of which is to show that those who want to understand the *Russian national character* and to grasp the beauty of Russian literature, should try and learn the original Russian speech. Let not the difficulty of pronunciation stop anyone. Firstly, we are not so particular on a foreigner's pronunciation as a Cockney or an English labourer are on the 'exact' pronunciation of English! I hope those who have visited Russia have had the opportunity to notice that we are capable of 'catching a word on its flight,' as we say. Secondly, it is chiefly not the sounds themselves, but that logical flexibility of our