



# The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky (illustrated)

*Modest Ilyich Tchaikovsky*

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The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky by Modeste Tchaikovsky

IN offering to English and American readers this abridged edition of The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, my introduction must of necessity take the form of some justification of my curtailments and excisions.

The motives which led to this undertaking, and the reasons for my mode of procedure, may be stated in a few words.

In 1900 I published a volume dealing with Tchaikovsky, which was, I believe, the first attempt to embody in book form all the literature—scattered through the byways of Russian journalism—concerning the composer of the Pathetic Symphony.

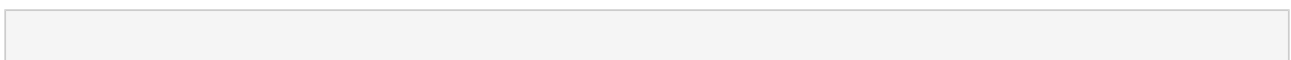
In the course of a year or two—the book having sold out in England and America—a proposal was made to me to prepare a new edition. Meanwhile, however, the authorised Life and Letters, compiled and edited by the composer's brother, Modeste Ilich Tchaikovsky, was being issued in twenty-five parts by P. I. Jurgenson, of Moscow. This original Russian edition was followed almost immediately by a German translation, published in Leipzig by the same firm.

In November, 1901, the late P. I. Jurgenson approached me on the subject of a translation, but his negotiations with an American firm eventually fell through. He then requested me to find, if possible, an English publisher willing to take up the book. Both in England and America the public interest in Tchaikovsky seemed to be steadily increasing. Frequent calls for copies of my small book—by this time out of print—testified that this was actually the case.

An alternative course now lay before me: to revise my own book, with the help of the material furnished by the authorised Life and Letters, or to take in hand an English translation of the latter. The first would have been the less arduous and exacting task; on the other hand, there was no doubt in my mind as to the greater value and importance of Modeste Tchaikovsky's work.

The simplest—and in many ways most satisfactory—course seemed at first to be the translation of the Russian edition in its entirety. Closer examination, however, revealed the fact that out of the 3,000 letters included in this book a large proportion were addressed to persons quite unknown to the English and American publics; while at the same time it contained a mass of minute and almost local particulars which could have very little significance for readers unversed in every detail of Russian musical life.

Another practical question confronted me. What publisher would venture upon launching this biographical three-decker, with its freight of 3,000 letters, amounting to nearly 2,000 pages of closely printed matter? Such colossal biographies, however valuable as sources of information to the specialist, are quite beyond all possibility of purchase or perusal by the general public. That the author himself realised this, seems evident from the fact that the German edition was lightened of about a third of the original contents.



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