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A New Letter of Turgenev

A LETTER by Turgenev to Juliette Adam was presented to the Harvard College Library in September 1957 by Mrs Katherine Benedict in memory of Samuel Hazzard Cross, late Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures. Written in the last year of Turgenev's life, when his fatal illness was already far advanced, and displaying once again his deep concern for the destiny of his works, the letter is an interesting addition to those of Turgenev already held by the Library.¹ It is here published for the first time.

Paris.
50, Rue de Douai
Mardi, 2 Janv. 83.

Chère Madame Adam,

Ayant appris qu'on avait l'intention de couper ma nouvelle: "Après la Mort" en deux — (pour les deux Nos de la Revue) je viens vous prier de revenir sur cette décision. — Ce n'est pas là un caprice d'auteur — croyez le bien; — mais cette nouvelle doit être lue d'un trait — ou bien elle n'a plus aucun sens. — Ce n'est d'ailleurs que sous cette condition que je l'ai remise à Chamerot. — Je ne crois pas que sa longueur (environ 60 pages) soit un obstacle: dans le dernier No de la Revue des Deux Mondes il y a un fragment du roman de Cherbuliez — qui compte 55 pages — ce qui équivaut aux 60 pages de la Nouvelle Revue. — Je consens d'avance à toute autre condition: qu'on insère ma nouvelle 15 jours, un mois plus tard, qu'on ne la paye pas — si l'on veut; mais je ne puis admettre qu'on la scinde. J'espère encore que vous voudrez bien m'accorder ma demande; car, plutôt que de consentir à ce que je regarde comme une mutilation, je me déciderais, à mon grand regret, à la reprendre. — Votre bonne amitié, à laquelle je tiens infiniment, m'autorise à vous parler avec cette franchise. —

Mille vœux de bonne année — (quoiqu'elle commence bien tristement) ²

¹ See Walter A. Strauss, "Turgenev in the Role of Publicity Agent for Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*," *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, II (1948), 405-410; Jean Seznec, "Lettres de Tourguéneff à Henry James," *Comparative Literature*, I (1949), 193-209; Dmitry Cizevsky, "Manuscripts of Dostoevsky and Turgenev at Harvard," *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, IX (1955), 410-415.

² Less than two weeks after the writing of this letter, Turgenev was operated on for the removal of a neuroma; his death, from cancer of the spinal cord, did not occur until September 3rd, following great suffering.

et recevez l'assurance de mes sentiments bien affectueux.

Votre tout dévoué
Iv. Tourguéneff.

Mme Adam, the distinguished author of a score of novels, biographies, and political and philosophical tracts, who died in 1936 at the age of one hundred, founded the *Nouvelle revue* in 1879, after the death of her second husband. Turgenev contributed to it almost from its inception, publishing 'Monsieur François — (Souvenir de 1848)' in the issue of 15 December 1879.³ He had come to know Mme Adam sufficiently well to act as intermediary in a misunderstanding about conditions for the posthumous publication of Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.⁴

'Après la mort,' one of Turgenev's last works, was finished in September 1882. For publication in Russian the title was changed to 'Klara Milich,' in order to reduce spiritualistic overtones, following the advice of M. M. Stasiulevich, editor of *Vestnik Evropy*, in which the story was to appear. Turgenev derived the idea for the tale from Leonid Polonsky's account of a friend's love for a young actress after her suicide, but the character of the heroine incorporates certain features of Pauline Viardot. It was Pauline's son-in-law, Georges Chamerot, who transmitted the manuscript to the *Nouvelle revue*. Turgenev's threat to withdraw the story was the more effective, if the less sincere, since by the date of the present letter it had gone through two proofs. On December 8th Turgenev had sent Ludwig Pietsch a carefully corrected French galley proof for translation into German, and gave him *carte blanche* to translate and entitle the story as he saw fit, but specified that it could not appear in German before 15 January 1883, the stipulated publication date of the French and Russian versions.⁵

Turgenev's chagrin at the prospect of serialization in the *Nouvelle revue* was wholly justified. Unlike the work he mentions to Mme Adam, Victor Cherbuliez's 'La ferme du Choquard,' which appeared

³ Later known in Russian as 'Chelovek v serykh ochkakh' (The Man with Gray Glasses).

⁴ Ely Halpérine-Kaminsky, *Ivan Tourguéneff d'après sa correspondance avec ses amis français* (Paris, 1901), pp. 143-144.

⁵ For a summary of references in Turgenev's correspondence to the composition and publication of 'Après la mort,' see M. K. Kleman, *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva I. S. Turgeneva*, ed. N. K. Piskunov (Moscow, 1934), pp. 308-309, 315-317, 319-323.

in five installments from 1 December 1882 to 1 February 1883, 'Après la mort' must be read at a single sitting: the effect of the story depends upon continuity between the realistic psychology at the beginning and the combination of fantasy, madness, and mediumistic psychology at the end.

How Turgenev discovered that his story was to be serialized and whether that was really Mme Adam's intention, is not known. The present letter, however, produced the desired effect: 'Après la mort' appeared entire in the *Nouvelle revue* for 15 January 1883, occupying pages 255-314.

RALPH E. MATLAW

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