

Tolstoy's Personal Library

The Tolstoy library was founded by his grandfather Prince Nikolai Volkonsky, by his parents who enlarged the library with numerous editions, but certainly the major part of the library was collected under Leo Tolstoy. In 1910, the last year of Tolstoy's life, the library numbered 22 000 volumes of books and periodicals, there are about 5 000 books in foreign languages, among them there are 250 books of the XVII-XVIII centuries and there are several tens of books of the first third of the XIX century. The oldest book in the library was published 1613 in Köln with the parallel texts in Greek and Latin, come penciled notes by Tolstoy's hand have been preserved on the pages of the book. The Yasnaya Polyana library contains books in Russian, French, German, English, Italian, Swedish, Japanese, Chinese, Greek, Serbian, Hebrew, Spanish, Danish, Dutch and other languages, in all – in 40 languages!

When Tolstoy's wife, Sophia Tolstaya, arrived at Yasnaya Polyana in 1862, after their marriage, she found only two bookcases there. Now, as it was in 1910, there are 25 bookcases and one big coffer. So most of the books came to the library in the last 50 years of Tolstoy's life.

Tolstoy's personal doctor once remarked that Tolstoy's library at Yasnaya Polyana had been collected by the whole world. It is true as in the last decades of Tolstoy's life so many books, journals, magazines were sent by Tolstoy's admirers, friends, followers from different countries. There are many books signed by famous writers, composers, scientists, political and religious figures, they bear the autographs of well-known Russian and foreign contemporaries of Tolstoy, such as Turgenev, Gorky, Bunin, Andreev, Marcel Prevost, John Galsworthy, Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw and many others.

In the so-called *old library* among the books belonged to Prince Volkonsky, Tolstoy's parents, and even to his great-grandfather Prince Sergei Volkonsky, there are books which were typical for the library of any enlightened nobleman.

In Tolstoy's library there are various editions of books of Old and New Testaments in ancient Greek, Hebrew, French, English, German, Polish and other languages. Some books definitely appeared in the library under Tolstoy, some were brought from his trips in Europe, for instance the books on pedagogical subjects acquired in London in 1861, at that time he was working in his school at Yasnaya Polyana and later on was writing his *Primer* and *Russian Readers*. Some books were issued in literary series, the most popular one is *Collection of British Authors by Tauchnitz* published in Leipzig (about 220 vols).

In Tolstoy's library there are many books which were used as original sources or his numerous works. There are many books on the history of Napoleonic wars, as well as various memoirs and historical studies about that war of 1812 written by the Russian, French, German historians; there are many books on the Caucasus which he used for his novella *Hadji-Murad*, books on the history and philosophy of art which provided material for his treatise *What is Art?*, there are also books on Russian folklore which contained the epic poems, proverbs and sayings that Tolstoy valued so much and used in many novels and stories, for example *Power of Darkness*, *War and Peace*, *Fruits of Enlightenment*, for his books of wisdom *Circle of Reading*, *For Every Day*, *Path of Life*, for the so-called folk stories.

In the foreign part of Tolstoy's library there are about 400 books with Tolstoy's marginal inscriptions – his penciled notes. He began reading books with a pencil in his hand in the late 1850s. First those notes or folded corners did not express his impressions or thoughts. Later his penciled notes became a real marginalia and expressed his assessment and impressions, his admiration or rejection; he used to write the whole sentences on the margins, to put question marks or favorite expression in Latin "NB", sometimes it followed by an exclamatory mark. Books and periodicals with Tolstoy's marginalia, his penciled notes, are of special significance as they may be treated like Tolstoy's manuscripts.

He had a wide range of reading interests – from the books of Old and New Testaments, antic philosophers, sages of the East, representatives of French and British Enlightenment to the contemporary writers. Tolstoy was one of the greatest intellectuals of his time as demonstrated through the books of his library. All his life he was a dedicated reader and used to keep the contents of the books in his memory for a long time.

Galina Alexeeva