

# A THRILLING STORY BY THE EMPRESS OF RUSSIA.

WRITTEN BY THE CZARINA IN GERMAN AND TRANSLATED INTO RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH FOR CIRCULATION AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY ONLY.

## PRINCESS TELLA'S MODEL.



PRINCESS TELLA left St. Petersburg yesterday on Special No. 17, and will dine in the Imperial Pavilion at four o'clock to-morrow at noon.

Princess Tella's betrothal to the Czar, which had just been decided upon by the family council, and although the press had been gossiping about the probability of such a happening for some time, the world did not know that the matter had been settled. For once, however, the Government was convinced of the truth of popular rumor, with the result that Her Highness was already treated by the officials as a full-blooded Russian Grand Duchess.

Such was the situation when, on September 3, of the year 1894, the station master at Kornoff received the above telegraphic dispatch.

Half an hour later the adjutant of the Governor-General rushed into the railway official's bedroom to announce that His Excellency Prince Werpoloff and his entire staff would receive her Highness with royal honors. The station master nearly fainted when he heard the message. To dance attendance upon a princess was bad enough, but to satisfy the Government's plenipotentiary at the same time was almost equal to attempting the impossible. Still it had to be done.

A hundred hands were at once engaged to clear the station and its surroundings of the result of years of slovenliness. The floors of the building were scraped and scoured, metal work and windows highly polished. The gardeners of the town were next laid under contribution; so was everybody else in the neighborhood who owned a green plant or a pot of flowers, a gorgeous rug or a striking piece of furniture, all being needed to decorate either the depot or the pavilion. In the kitchen of the latter a caterer was busy with a large staff of assistants preparing delicacies, all other work being abandoned for that of the moment. The station house looked extraordinary, if not elegant, when, shortly before the expected arrival of Special No. 17, the Governor appeared.

"Everything in perfect order," reported the station master. "We will see," replied Prince Werpoloff, unceremoniously. Presently his suppressed wrath—his always descended upon the head of the chief of police. The cabmen and drivers halting in a neighborhood where the Princess might see them, were in their working garb; they were dirty and must be ordered away. The railway laborers had to don their best uniforms at once. There were not enough police present; the entire force should be drawn up.

These criticisms and orders were given in a few peremptory sentences and gurgles, as was the Governor's habit. His Excellency would have considered it too much honor to address an underling in such a way as to make himself thoroughly understood. His officials and servants most of the time had to guess at the Prince's intentions, and woe to him who translated the abrupt instructions wrongly. His bread and butter—even his liberty—were at stake.

Not until Special No. 17 actually rolled into the station, and the music of the Helesian infantry garrison at Kornoff struck up the royal welcome hymn did Werpoloff's face brighten. Giving a last look to the Master of Police at his side—a look that said "If there be an accident to-day, consider yourself discharged"—the stern Governor changed into a smiling, happy courtier. He rushed to open the door of the saloon carriage with his own gloved hand, and bowed low as Her Highness, followed by two elderly ladies and a number of army officers, walked down the steps.

"General," said Princess Tella, "for the last few hours I have admired the province you govern. I am told you have done much to improve it. You like to live here?"

"To live and die here," replied Werpoloff. "I understand. And if I had any influence in St. Petersburg I would surely exercise it in your favor. But why should you fear to lose your post. You are not a Liberal?"

"Grand Ducal Highness, I have many enemies, and a dream I had weighs heavily upon my mind."

The Princess, who wanted to humor the Governor, said: "But how about your dream? Out with it, Excellency."

"It is quickly told," said Werpoloff. "I dreamt that a lowly peasant was the cause of my dismissal and disgrace."

"And when did that happen—the dream I mean?" queried Her Highness.

"Three months ago," Princess Tella inquired.

"I must compliment you," she said, "on your forbearance. I have seen any number of rustics while travelling through this province. If Your Excellency were vindictive you would have transported at least one-half of the population to Siberia."

Saying this, Princess Tella walked to the window and looked out into the court yard below, where a number of railway laborers were drawn up in line at attention in their best.

"Fine specimens of manhood you have hereabout," she continued. "Look at that fellow on the left wing. I never saw a better model for a head of the Saviour. By the way, General, is there any objection to sending the man to St. Petersburg, where I intend to return in a few weeks? He could sit for the altar piece with which I hope to present His Majesty the Czar for Christmas. It is to be placed in the house chapel."

The Governor fairly beamed with devotion. "Your Grand Ducal Highness's wish is a command to me," he replied without hesitation. At that moment the Chief of Police entered with two dispatches, one addressed to Princess Tella, the other to Werpoloff. Her Highness attempted to

This story was written by the Empress of Russia for a book intended for private circulation among the members of the imperial family and their friends. She is a German and does not write Russian. Her German story was translated by M. Fischel, one of the best-known translators in Moscow, and by him furnished to a Journal staff correspondent at the time of the Czar's coronation. The Russian translation has been incorporated in a book similar to that recently published by Emperor William of Germany. In this book he told two stories—one of them describing how he surprised a group of officers during the Kiel celebration, and the other detailing certain interesting experiences in a Berlin restaurant. Alexander III. also wrote a book of campfire stories. Indeed, it is a fact for the members of this particular royal line to write books. The reader of the story here given will not need to be told that "Princess Tella" stands for the Czarina herself.

turn the General's telegram over to him, but Werpoloff explained that etiquette forbade him to open it in her presence. So Princess Tella read her message, which was one of greetings and good wishes from the Czar and the Empress, and then the other.

"I'm sorry," she said, "the dispatch calls you to report at once to the Minister of the Interior. I trust it's nothing serious."

Presently the announcement was made that the train had to proceed, and Princess Tella took leave hastily amid the hurrahs of all assembled. Her Highness, however, did not appear at the window to wave her adieu and thanks, as was customary. Werpoloff, never thinking that as a foreigner the Princess might be unacquainted with Russian usages, noticed the omission with alarm. Perhaps somebody or something had offended the great lady. If that were the case, he, the Governor, would be the sufferer in the end. The General turned savagely to the Master of Police.

"Your men looked and acted like drunken loafers in the presence of Her Highness," he cried, "and on the outer side of the rails were no

"He goes to St. Petersburg to the Peter-Paul fortress, of course," snapped the Colonel. That done you will keep to your room for three days, and the next three days do day and night service, to remind you of your neglect of duty on this august occasion."

The station master, who had overheard the Colonel, approached Schelinsky when the police mogul had withdrawn. "I'm sorry for you," he said good naturedly. "You were punished for no reason whatever."

"Pshaw," laughed the lieutenant, "that's the way of the world. Big fish will always eat the little ones. There is only one way out of it—grow and become an oppressor on your own hook. I am a terror in my own little way, and can visit my displeasure, if I feel any, on quite a goodly number of people. There

cha, for instance, cause of all this trouble. Perhaps you think I won't take it out

"I've seen a real princess!"

"That's a moth-eaten excuse, which may be reversed under pressure of the knout. Meanwhile you, Duschkin, try and rout out the stuff. If there be any suspicious articles we must find them. Search well and spare not their rags."

"God save me, master, I can neither read nor write."

"That's a moth-eaten excuse, which may be reversed under pressure of the knout. Meanwhile you, Duschkin, try and rout out the stuff. If there be any suspicious articles we must find them. Search well and spare not their rags."

"God will assist her, for He is gracious," whispered men and women among themselves. Then, making the sign of the cross, they went about their business. In the cabin all was quiet as death. From time to time a drop of blood oozed from Maschinka's wound to join the big pool that was soaking into the boards. One of the neighbors asserts that only once, toward night, a vague noise broke the awful stillness that hovered over the station roof. The listener thought she heard the name "Mischa, Mischa" pronounced once or twice.

III.

When the police came next morning to inspect the premises and search for hidden evidence of lawlessness they found only a dead body holding in the right hand a small, much worn crucifix.

Had any of the folks living near dared after all to proffer assistance, and, finding all earthly hopes vanished, had they fixed the symbol of the promised land between the fingers of the dying woman?

Duschkin might perhaps have enlightened his brother officers. It will be remembered that during his first visit he had discovered a bottle containing wodka, which he placed aside. That bottle was gone, and Duschkin did not search for it.

Maschinka's body was carted to the station, and from there to the cemetery. The master of police swore great, big oaths when he found he had to bury her. There was no appropriation for such purposes, and it required a lot of writing and reporting.

Michael Alexandroff's commitment was made out the same night. It read as follows:

"By order of His Excellency the Governor General:

"Send to the Peter-Paul fortress. "Guard carefully; treat severely.

"Special reason: Murderously assaulted the officer commanding his arrest."

"Well," said the sub-lieutenant in whose custody Mischa was to make the journey. "In conformity with regulations, I ought to chain you to the car, but I will not act meanly. Just put your hand in your pocket and see what there is in it."

"They have cleaned me out at the station," replied Mischa with a sad smile. "Even my boots they took away, claiming they were, in all probability, lined with revolutionary literature. The sergeant gave me these sandals."

"All that emphasizes the seriousness of your case," said the sub-lieutenant sternly. "If those fellows in Kornoff were not sure that you will never have occasion to testify against them they would not have treated you so badly."

Then, turning to the guards, the official shouted: "Chain this scoundrel to the bench, and keep the chain short, and whoever talks to him one single word will renew acquaintance with my corporal's cane!"

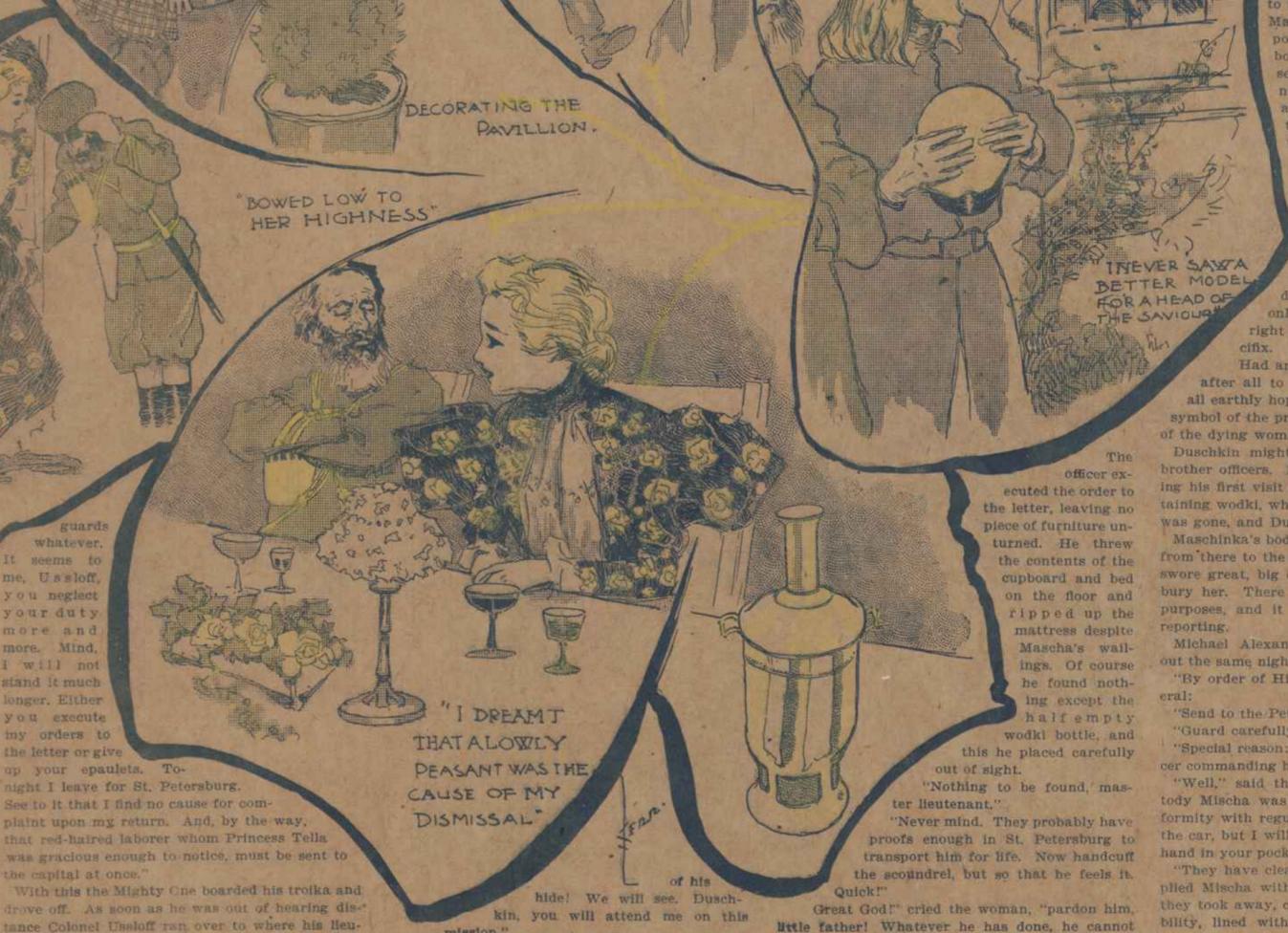
This hard usage was far from galling to Mischa. Since he had been torn from the bosom of his beloved wife a feeling of unutterable distress had overcome him. It penetrated his soul and numbed his senses. Absolute quiet was all he craved.

IV.

Nearly three months had passed. A great empire had lost its spiritual and mundane head; a hundred millions of people their father. Princess Tella was, perhaps, the most envied woman in the wide world, for the influence which General Werpoloff had once imparted to her was now a reality, a factor that all the Governments of the world had to reckon with.

At a reception held in the Winter Palace toward the end of the month she espied Prince Werpoloff among thousands of guests, and of a sudden the memory of her short stay in Kornoff flashed across her mind. An adjutant brought the smiling Governor quickly into her presence.

"I want to thank Your Excellency for the splendor," (Continued on next page.)



DECORATING THE PAVILLION.

BOWED LOW TO HER HIGHNESS

I DREAMT THAT A LOWLY PEASANT WAS THE CAUSE OF MY DISMISSAL

of his hide! We will see. Duschkin, you will attend me on this mission.

### II.

Michael Alexandroff, called Mischa for short, was one of the regular train hands employed at Kornoff. This had been a red letter day with him. Suspension of work since noon, double pay, and the unique experience of seeing a real, live princess. Ah, that was worth celebrating. So, before going to his cabin he purchased a quarter of a liter of wodka and a bagful of gingerbread for Maschinka—poor little Maschinka, who doted on gingerbread, and got her fill of it only once or twice a year!

They had been married seven months, and already owned the little cabin where they lived—the cabin, a table, a cupboard, and a bed. More still. The gilded shrine that occupied the place of honor on the principal wall of the hut was all paid for. And how did this come about? Mischa had given up wodka as a steady diet when he took unto himself a wife, and if the little stranger whom they expected was a boy he would give it up entirely. Yes, indeed, he would.

When Mischa got home he was a little the worse for liquor and full of talk and nonsense. "I've seen a real princess," he said, "and what is more she has seen me. She came to the window to do it, and pointed me out to the Governor."

"You are a liar, Mischa," cried the young woman, with good-natured bluntness. "Why should such great people want to look at you?"

"I don't know, I am sure, but perhaps they were attracted by my new boots. I had polished them until I could see my face in them."

"And what is to be done with the fellow?"

"Pshaw! you just want to make me laugh. But inasmuch as you brought me gingerbread allow me to eat it in peace."

They sat down together, she munching with every evidence of relish, he watching her white teeth work while he sipped from his bottle. It was a picture of contentment. Suddenly the door was opened with a crash. The police lieutenant and Duschkin entered noisily.

"We are looking for you, Michael Alexandroff." Husband and wife jumped up.

"It must be a mistake, gracious master!" cried both, and Mischa added: "My passport is in order, master. I have paid my taxes, though they were extremely heavy. Still I paid them."

"No need of telling me that you find no pleasure in giving to the Emperor what is the Emperor's. We know all about you, rascal. Have you any printed or written matter in your cabin? Better confess, for we will surely find everything."

"God save me, master, I can neither read nor write."

"That's a moth-eaten excuse, which may be reversed under pressure of the knout. Meanwhile you, Duschkin, try and rout out the stuff. If there be any suspicious articles we must find them. Search well and spare not their rags."

"God will assist her, for He is gracious," whispered men and women among themselves. Then, making the sign of the cross, they went about their business. In the cabin all was quiet as death. From time to time a drop of blood oozed from Maschinka's wound to join the big pool that was soaking into the boards. One of the neighbors asserts that only once, toward night, a vague noise broke the awful stillness that hovered over the station roof. The listener thought she heard the name "Mischa, Mischa" pronounced once or twice.

III.

When the police came next morning to inspect the premises and search for hidden evidence of lawlessness they found only a dead body holding in the right hand a small, much worn crucifix.

Had any of the folks living near dared after all to proffer assistance, and, finding all earthly hopes vanished, had they fixed the symbol of the promised land between the fingers of the dying woman?

Duschkin might perhaps have enlightened his brother officers. It will be remembered that during his first visit he had discovered a bottle containing wodka, which he placed aside. That bottle was gone, and Duschkin did not search for it.

Maschinka's body was carted to the station, and from there to the cemetery. The master of police swore great, big oaths when he found he had to bury her. There was no appropriation for such purposes, and it required a lot of writing and reporting.

Michael Alexandroff's commitment was made out the same night. It read as follows:

"By order of His Excellency the Governor General:

"Send to the Peter-Paul fortress. "Guard carefully; treat severely.

"Special reason: Murderously assaulted the officer commanding his arrest."

"Well," said the sub-lieutenant in whose custody Mischa was to make the journey. "In conformity with regulations, I ought to chain you to the car, but I will not act meanly. Just put your hand in your pocket and see what there is in it."

"They have cleaned me out at the station," replied Mischa with a sad smile. "Even my boots they took away, claiming they were, in all probability, lined with revolutionary literature. The sergeant gave me these sandals."

"All that emphasizes the seriousness of your case," said the sub-lieutenant sternly. "If those fellows in Kornoff were not sure that you will never have occasion to testify against them they would not have treated you so badly."

Then, turning to the guards, the official shouted: "Chain this scoundrel to the bench, and keep the chain short, and whoever talks to him one single word will renew acquaintance with my corporal's cane!"

This hard usage was far from galling to Mischa. Since he had been torn from the bosom of his beloved wife a feeling of unutterable distress had overcome him. It penetrated his soul and numbed his senses. Absolute quiet was all he craved.

IV.

Nearly three months had passed. A great empire had lost its spiritual and mundane head; a hundred millions of people their father. Princess Tella was, perhaps, the most envied woman in the wide world, for the influence which General Werpoloff had once imparted to her was now a reality, a factor that all the Governments of the world had to reckon with.

At a reception held in the Winter Palace toward the end of the month she espied Prince Werpoloff among thousands of guests, and of a sudden the memory of her short stay in Kornoff flashed across her mind. An adjutant brought the smiling Governor quickly into her presence.

"I want to thank Your Excellency for the splendor," (Continued on next page.)