



A RUSSIAN OFFICIAL CRIME.

Young, Beautiful and Innocent Marie Wjetrowa Dies Terribly.

BY an accident, one of those tragedies that are made possible by the secret and innermost machinery of Russian Government has just been revealed.

A young, innocent, beautiful and well-born girl has been done to death in prison under circumstances of the foulest brutality. The man through whom the crime came to public knowledge has gone to Siberia, and that is all the attention Russian justice pays to the matter.

The victim was Marie Wjetrowa, a student of pedagogics, aged twenty-two years, and the daughter of a Councillor of State, living in St. Petersburg. He is a man of wealth and education.

His daughter was a girl of uncommon intelligence. It was her taste for information concerning all sorts of things that led to her pitiable death. Russians have had innumerable lessons that ignorance is the only safe condition for a private person, but they do not seem to have learned it thoroughly.

In the first week of February Marie was seized without warning or explanation, by order of the chief of police. She was returning from college with a party of other students, when a detachment of mounted "Blues"—as the prison guards are called—appeared. They called a cab and ordered her in. For a moment she protested, and one of them dismounted, picked her up and threw her into the carriage. She was then driven to the fortress-cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. This building consists of a fortress to which political prisoners are committed, and a cathedral used as a museum by members of the imperial family, and occupies one of the larger islands in the Neva.

The news of the arrest reached the girl's parents only through the other students. Marie Wjetrowa used every influence in his power to secure a speedy hearing for his daughter, but the only favor he obtained was permission to visit her for five minutes every week under the closest supervision.

The charge against Marie Wjetrowa was that she had in her possession numerous specimens of Nihilistic literature. This charge could not be denied. The girl had been engaged in a study of this literature. At the time of her arrest she had with her some Nihilist pamphlets.

But M. Wjetrowa declared he could prove that his daughter had obtained the books and pamphlets merely out of curiosity. She had no association or even sympathy with the authors. She was a girl of very wide reading, especially in political science, but had no association with any political movement. She was merely preparing for her profession as a teacher.

In deference to these statements the Chief of Police had Marie removed to that part of the prison where suspects only are confined. There they are forbidden to speak to or communicate with any person or to engage counsel. They are kept in cells on small rations and await in ignorance the decision which will send them to Schliesselburg, the Russian bastille, or to Siberia.

On the first three Thursdays in February M. Wjetrowa was allowed to see his daughter. On these occasions two Blues with loaded rifles stood beside her, and the father was similarly guarded. Had he attempted to ask any questions concerning the charges against her he would immediately have been led out.

When Wjetrowa presented himself at the prison gate on February 23 he was told that his daughter was ill and that he could not see her. On Thursday, March 4, and on March 11 he received the same answer. He was of course in a state of cruel anxiety.

Then a rumor spread that Marie Wjetrowa had died in prison. Nothing certain could be learned, but the vague rumor persisted in the city of silence and mystery. Her father was told by the keeper every time he went to the gate of the prison that No. 60,714—Marie's number—could not be seen. Only that and nothing more could he learn at the prison.

At last, in the beginning of April, Councillor Wjetrowa was informed by the daughter of one of the tax commissioners, an official of the highest importance, that Marie had died on February 24. The tale-bearer had overheard this fact in a conversation between her parents.

It was not, however, until a month after this that the true and horrible story of the death of the poor girl came to the ears of the heartbroken parents. To understand how this tragedy could have happened it is necessary to know something of the system and discipline of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The prison guards are selected with great care from the army. On entering the prison service they are required to take the following oath:

"In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I, _____, gendarme in the Czar's body service, hereby swear to act solely under the orders of my superiors and to follow their commands implicitly in the treatment of prisoners or in the performance of executions. Neither religion, race, age nor sex shall ever deter me from my duties. In the performance of the said sacred duties I shall consider neither father, mother, wife, sister, brother, child nor any other relative. I will arrest, bring to justice and execute any or all of them, when commanded to do so, and will give information if I know that they are conspiring against the life of His Majesty the Czar.

"I swear that I will follow the instructions given me regarding the detection of plots against His Majesty the Czar, even though they be entered into by my superior officers or comrades.

"I swear that whatever I do or see in this fortress I will reveal to no person, not even to a priest, on pain of banishment," etc., etc.

Obviously the last paragraph quoted, binding the guard not to reveal anything he may do or see in the fortress, serves to conceal any atrocity that may be committed.

A rule of the prison provides that no guard shall speak to any prisoner except under orders. This applies even to the chief of the Troubetzkoi bastion, that part of the fortress where suspects like Marie are kept.

This it is that there is established in the heart of the Russian capital a fortress-prison to which any person in the empire may be taken at any moment and whose fate thereafter may be merely a blank.

In the case of Marie Wjetrowa the facts by an exception did become known. The shocking story was pencilled on the lining of the corset of another woman, Marie's fellow prisoner. This was sent home to her family with other articles of clothing after the girl had been sent to Schliesselburg.

"On the evening of February 22," said this record, "a friend of our cause visited me in my cell. He is an officer of the guards, and left the door half open, so that he would appear to be making one of the usual visits of inspection if interrupted. We heard somebody enter Marie Wjetrowa's cell next door, this person using the same precaution as my friend. The voice of a man spoke first entreatingly, then harshly to the girl. No doubt he was making love to her and, being repulsed, used threats. We heard stifled cries for assistance and the noise of a struggle. My friend ran out and closed the door behind him. He intended to run down the corridor and return, as if by accident, and thus to save her.

"When my door closed I could of course hear nothing further, but a week later my friend came back and told me what had happened.

"One of the Lieutenants of the Blues, attracted by Marie's beauty, had gone to her cell on an ostensible visit of inspection and made insulting proposals to her. When she told him to go he used violence.

"My friend was unable to carry out his plan because on reaching the end of the corridor he met a superior officer, who ordered him to another part of the building.

"After the lieutenant left Marie was rapped for the guards. She told them what had happened. They sent for the physician, who gave her some soothing mixture.

"Next day Marie was terribly sick and despairing. Her request to see the commander of the fortress was denied.

In the evening

she threw herself on the kerosene lamp, allowed her as a special favor, and was terribly burned.

"She died next day, and her father on making his usual visit on Thursday was told that she was ill."

The body, according to prison regulations, was buried in the grounds around the fortress in an unmarked grave.

Such a fate has overtaken other suspects. The alleged Nihilist, Ludmilla Terentjewa, is said to have died in a similar way three months ago.

The students are in a state of the wildest excitement, and will probably make a violent demonstration on the 121st anniversary of the murder of the Princess Tarakanova, imprisoned in the same fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, to appease the unfounded jealousy of Catherine II., and allowed to drown in her cell by the rising waters of the Neva.

The students are maddened by the murder of Marie Wjetrowa, not only because she was a student herself but because of the offence for which she was seized. In a civilized community containing a great class of highly intellectual people it seems inconceivable that it should be a crime to read any book. The Russian Government makes it not only a crime to be a Nihilist but a crime to know that such a thing exists. Nihilism is not a doctrine of wholesale murder, as many believe.

AN ENOCH ARDEN STORY WITH A VERY MODERN END

THIS is the story of a woman who has waited through many changing seasons for the return of a husband mysteriously absent and silent as to his whereabouts and fortunes. She worked as few women have had to work to support herself and children. She was faithful to him, and the passing years did not make her hollie, nor did the necessity of toil open her heart to the woeful who offered her ease and comfort. Loyal as the ladies of fiction, more loyal even than some of those, she lived and labored alone with her children. Now she is old and tired and worn. Her husband has come back to her with money to insure her prosperity and rest in her declining years. No more toil, many a comfort, many a luxury even, he offers as a tardy reparation for all that she has suffered. Has she accepted them? How has she received him? That is the story.

"Unless a woman is terrible loving," says Mrs. Crosby, of Highland Falls, N. Y. "I think she'd let him take his turn at wonderin' and waitin'."

It was one May morning in 1875 that James Crosby, of Highland Falls, N. Y., kissed his wife and disappeared.

"It was a way he had, kissin' me whenever he was goin' anywhere," reminisces Mrs. Crosby with a Winter-apple rosinness in her cheeks and a frosty little sparkle in her eyes. "The baby had been allin', an' he says to me: 'Grl, if the boy gets any worse you'll send me word, wont you? For he worked down in New York in the Custom House an' didn't get home but once or twice a week. An' from that day till last Saturday morning I never had eyes on him again or heard a word from him."

If the nineteen years were lacking in information concerning the absent Mr. Crosby, there were other things to fill them. Four children were to be fed, clothed and housed. That kept Mrs. Crosby pretty busy. Gossips were to be faced unflinchingly, and that took up a good deal of time. After a while woovers were to be discouraged. She had been a country belle in the days before the dashing James Crosby had won her. She was a pretty woman, slender, wiry and alert, with big, clear, gray eyes that could snap at scandal-mongers who bade her distrust her husband or could soften for the children he had left her to rear unaided. And some of the old suitors wished to help her

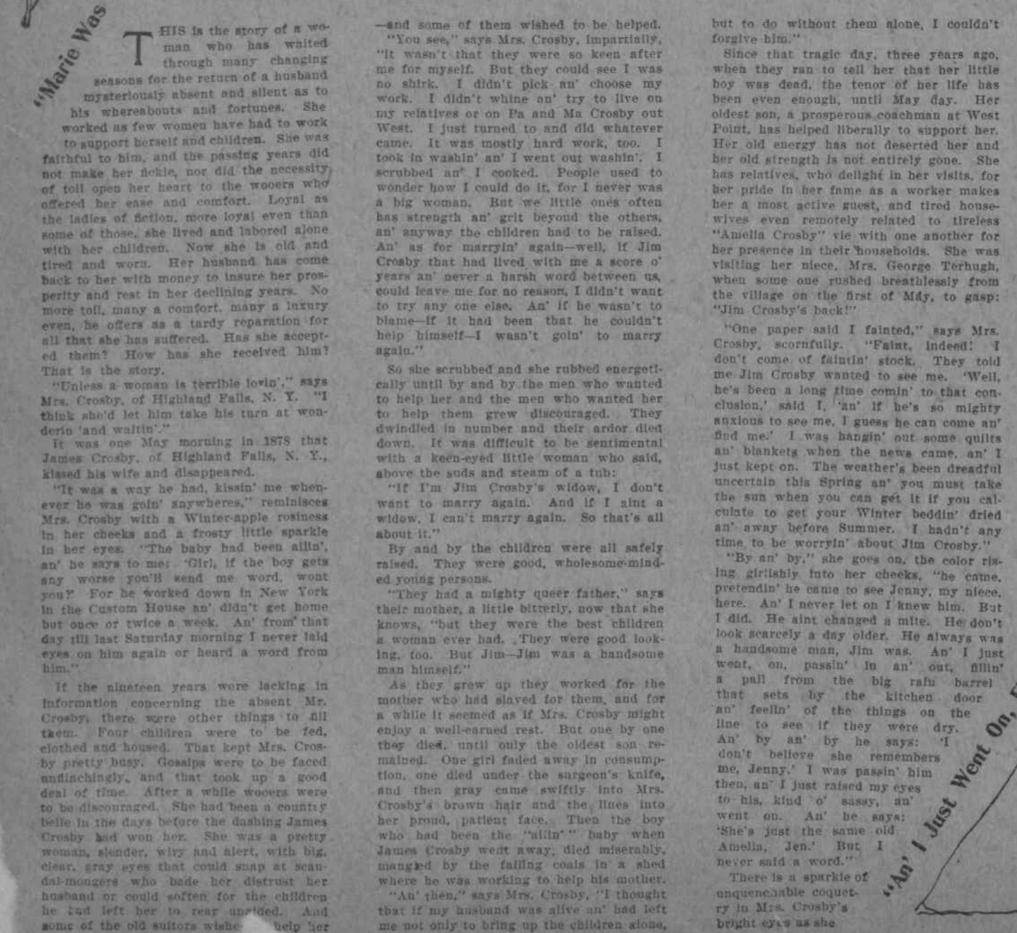
but to do without them alone, I couldn't forgive him."

Since that tragic day, three years ago, when they ran to tell her that her little boy was dead, the tenor of her life has been even enough, until May day. Her oldest son, a prosperous coachman at West Point, has helped liberally to support her. Her old energy has not deserted her and her old strength is not entirely gone. She has relatives, who delight in her visits, for her pride in her fame as a worker makes her a most active guest, and tired housewives even remotely related to tireless "Amelia Crosby" vie with one another for her presence in their households. She was visiting her niece, Mrs. George Terhugh, when some one rushed breathlessly from the village on the first of May, to gasp: "Jim Crosby's back!"

"One paper said I fainted," says Mrs. Crosby, scornfully. "Faint, indeed! I don't come of faintin' stock. They told me Jim Crosby wanted to see me. 'Well, he's been a long time comin' to that conclusion,' said I, 'an' if he's so mighty anxious to see me, I guess he can come an' find me.' I was hangin' out some quilts an' blankets when the news came, an' I just kept on. The weather's been dreadful uncertain this Spring an' you must take the sun when you can get it if you calculate to get your Winter beddin' dried an' away before Summer. I hadn't any time to be worryin' about Jim Crosby."

"By an' by," she goes on, the color rising gleefully into her cheeks, "he came, pretendin' he came to see Johnny, my niece, here. An' I never let on I knew him. But I did. He sint changed a mite. He don't look scarcely a day older. He always was a handsome man, Jim was. An' I just went, on, passin' in an' out, fillin' a pail from the big rafu barrel that sets by the kitchen door an' feelin' of the things on the line to see if they were dry. An' by an' by he says: 'I don't believe she remembers me, Jenny. I was passin' him then, an' I just raised my eyes to his, kind o' sassy, an' went on. An' he says: 'She's just the same old Amelia, Jen.' But I never said a word."

There is a sparkle of unquenchable coquetry in Mrs. Crosby's bright eyes as she



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