

A FEMALE NIHILIST:

**The True Story of the Nihilist
Olga Liubatovitch**



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**WITH OTHER WRITINGS CONCERNING WOMEN
IN THE RUSSIAN NIHILIST MOVEMENT**

A FEMALE NIHILIST

I.

On the 27th of July, in the year 1878, the little town of Talutorovsk, in Western Siberia, was profoundly excited by a painful event. A political prisoner, named Olga Liubatovitch, miserably put an end to her days. She was universally loved and esteemed, and her violent death therefore produced a most mournful impression throughout the town, and the *Ispravnik*, or chief of the police, was secretly accused of having driven the poor young girl, by his unjust persecutions, to take away her life.

Olga was sent to Talutorovsk some months after the trial known as that of the 'fifty' of Moscow, in which she was condemned to nine years' hard labor for Socialist propagandism, a punishment afterwards commuted into banishment for life. Unprovided with any means whatever of existence, for her father, a poor engineer with a large family, could send her nothing, Olga succeeded, by indefatigable industry, in establishing her self in a certain position. Although but little skilled in female labor, she endeavored to live by her needle, and became the milliner of the semi-civilized ladies of the town, who went into raptures over her work. These fair dames were firmly convinced — it is impossible to know why — that the elegance of a dress depends above all things upon the number of its pockets. The more pockets there were, the more fashionable the dress. Olga never displayed the slightest disinclination to satisfy this singular taste. She put pockets upon pockets, upon the body, upon the skirts, upon the underskirts; before, behind, everywhere. The married ladies and the young girls were as proud as peacocks, and were convinced that they were dressed like the most fashionable Parisian, and, though they were less profuse with their money than with their praises, yet in that country, where living costs so little, it was easy to make two ends meet. Later on, Olga had an occupation more congenial to her habits. Before entering the manufactories and workshops as a seamstress in order to carry on the Socialist propaganda, she had studied medicine for some years at Zurich, and she could not now do less than lend her assistance in certain cases of illness. This soon gave her a reputation, and, at the request of the citizens, the police accorded to her the permission to fill the post of apothecary and phlebotomist, as the former occupant of that post, owing to habitual drunkenness, was fit for nothing. Not unfrequently she even took the place of the district doctor, a worthy man who, owing to old age and a partiality for brandy, was in such a state that he could not venture upon delicate operations, because his hands shook. She acted for him also in many serious cases baffling his antediluvian knowledge. Some of her cures were considered miraculous; among others, that of the district judge, whom, by determined

treatment, she had saved after a violent attack of *delirium tremens*, a vice common to almost all men in that wild country.

In a word, Olga was in great favour with the peaceful citizens of Talutorovsk. The hatred of the police towards her was all the greater for that reason. Her proud and independent disposition would not permit her to submit to the stupid and humiliating exigencies of the representatives of the Government. Those representatives, barbarous and overbearing as they were, considered every attempt to defend personal dignity a want of respect towards themselves — nay, a provocation; and neglected no occasion of taking their revenge. There was always a latent war between Olga and her guardians, a war of the weak, bound hand and foot, against the strong, armed at all points; for the police have almost arbitrary power over the political prisoners who are under their surveillance. In this very unequal struggle, however, Olga did not always come off the worst, as often happens in the case of those who, proud, daring, and fearing nothing, are always ready to risk everything for the merest trifle. One of these conflicts, which lasted four days and kept the whole of the little town in a state of excitement by its dramatic incidents, was so singular that it deserves to be related.

Olga had had sent from her parents a parcel of books, which, in her position, was a gift indeed. She went to the *Ispravnik* to get them, but met with an unforeseen obstacle. Among the books sent to her was a translation of the 'Sociology,' of Herbert Spencer, and the *Ispravnik* mistook it for a work on *Socialism*, and would not on any account give it up to her. In vain Olga pointed out to him that the incriminated book had been published at St. Petersburg with the license of the Censorship; that sociology and socialism were very different things, etc. The *Ispravnik* was stubborn. The discussion grew warm. Olga could not restrain some sharp remarks upon the gross ignorance of her opponent, and ended by telling him that his precautions were utterly useless, as she had at home a dozen books like that of Herbert Spencer.

'Oh! You have books like this at home, have you?' exclaimed the *Ispravnik*. 'Very well; we'll come and search the house this very day.'

'No,' exclaimed Olga, in a fury; 'you will do nothing of the kind; you have no right, and if you dare to come I will defend myself.'

With these words she left the place, thoroughly enraged.

War was declared, and the rumour spread throughout the town, and everywhere excited a kind of timorous curiosity.

Directly Olga reached her home she shut herself up and barricaded the door. The *Ispravnik*, on his side, prepared for the attack. He mustered a band of policemen, with some *poniatye*, or citizen-witnesses, and sent them to the enemy's house.

Finding the entrance closed, and the door barricaded, the valorous army began to knock energetically and ordered the inmate to open.

'I will not open the door,' replied the voice of Olga within.

'Open, in the name of the law.'

'I will not open the door. Break it in. I will defend myself.'

At this explicit declaration the band became perplexed. A council of war was held. 'We must break open the door,' they all said. But as all these valiant folks had families, wives, and children whom they did not wish to leave orphans, no one cared to face the bullets of this mad woman, whom they knew to be capable of anything. Each urged his neighbour onward, but no one cared to go forward himself.

Recourse was had to diplomacy.

'Open the door, Miss.'

No reply.

'Please to open the door, or you will repent it.'

'I will not open the door,' replied the firm voice of the besieged.

What was to be done. A messenger was sent to the *Ispravnik* to inform him that Olga Liubatovitch had shut herself up in her house, had pointed a pistol at them, and had threatened to blow out the brains of the first who entered.

The *Ispravnik*, considering that the task of leadership would fall to him as supreme chief (and he also had a family), did not care to undertake the perilous enterprise. His army, seeing itself thus abandoned by its leader, was in dismay; it lost courage; demoralisation set in, and after a few more diplomatic attempts, which led to nothing, it beat a disgraceful retreat. A select corps of observation remained, however, near the enemy's citadel, entrenched behind the hedges of the adjoining kitchen-gardens. It was hoped that the enemy, elated by the victory in this first encounter, would make a sortie, and then would be easily taken, in rank and rear, surrounded, and defeated.

But the enemy displayed as much prudence as firmness. Perceiving the maneuvers of her adversaries, Olga divined their object, and did not issue from the house all that day, or the day after, or even on the third day. The house was provided with provisions and water, and Olga was evidently prepared to sustain a long siege.

It was clear that if no one would risk his life, which naturally no one was disposed to risk, nothing could be done save to reduce her by hunger. But who, in that case, could tell how long the scandal of this flagrant rebellion would last? And then, who could guarantee that this Fury would not commit suicide instead of surrendering? And then, what complaints, what reprimands from superiors.

In this perplexity, the *Ispravnik* resolved to select the least among many evils, and on the fourth day he raised the siege.

Thus ended the little drama of July, 1878, known in Siberia as the 'Siege of Olga Liubatovitch.' The best of the joke was, however, that she had no arms of a more warlike character than a penknife and some kitchen utensils. She herself had not the slightest idea what would have happened had they stormed the house, but that she would have defended herself in some way or other is quite certain.

The *Ispravnik* might have made her pay for her rebellion by several years of confinement, but how could he confess to his superiors the cowardice of

himself and his subordinates. He preferred, therefore, to leave her in peace. But he chafed in secret, for he saw that the partisans of the young socialist — and they were far from few — ridiculed himself and his men behind their backs. He determined to vindicate his offended dignity at all cost, and, being of a stubborn disposition, he carried out his resolve in the following manner:

A fortnight after the famous siege, he sent a message to Olga to come to his office at eight o'clock in the morning. She went. She waited an hour; two hours but no one came to explain what she was wanted for. She began to lose patience, and declared that she would go away. But the official in attendance told her that she must not go; that she must wait, such were the orders of the *Ispravnik*. She waited until eleven o'clock. No one came. At last a subaltern appeared, and Olga addressed herself to him and asked what she was wanted for. The man replied that he did not know, that the *Ispravnik* would tell her when he came in. He could not say, however, when the *Ispravnik* would arrive.

'In that case,' said Olga, 'I should prefer to return some other time.'

But the police officer declared that she must continue to wait in the antechamber of the office, for such were the orders of the *Ispravnik*. There could be no doubt that all this was a disgraceful attempt to provoke her, and Olga, who was of a very irascible disposition, replied with some observations not of the most respectful character, and not particularly flattering to the *Ispravnik* or his deputy.

'Oh! That's how you treat the representatives of the Government in the exercise of their functions, is it,' exclaimed the deputy, as though prepared for this. And he immediately called in another policeman as a witness, and drew up a statement of the charge against her.

Olga went away. But proceedings were taken against her before the district judge, the very man whom she had cured of the *delirium tremens*, who sentenced her to three days' solitary confinement. It was confinement in a dark, fetid hole, full of filth and vermin.

Merely in entering it, she was overcome with disgust. When she was released, she seemed to have passed through a serious illness. It was not, however, the physical sufferings she had undergone so much as the humiliation she had endured, which chafed her proud disposition.

From that time she became gloomy, taciturn, abrupt. She spent whole days shut up in her room, without seeing anybody, or wandered away from the town into the neighbouring wood, and avoided people. She was evidently planning something. Among the worthy citizens of Talutorovsk, who had a compassionate feeling towards her, some said one thing, some another, but no one foresaw such a tragic ending as that of which rumours ran on July 27.

In the morning the landlady entered her room and found it empty. The bed, undisturbed, clearly showed that she had not slept in it. She had disappeared. The first idea which flashed through the mind of the old dame was that Olga had escaped, and she ran in all haste to inform the *Ispravnik*, fearing that any delay would be considered as a proof of complicity.

The *Ispravnik* did not lose a moment. Olga Liubatovitch being one of the most seriously compromised women, he feared the severest censure, perhaps even dismissal, for his want of vigilance. He immediately hastened to the spot in order to discover if possible the direction the fugitive had taken. But directly he entered the room he found upon the table two letters signed and sealed, one addressed to the authorities, the other to the sister of Olga, Vera Liubatovitch, who had also been banished to another Siberian town. Those letters were immediately opened by the *Ispravnik*, and they revealed the mournful fact that the young girl had not taken to flight, but had committed suicide. In the letter addressed to the authorities she said, in a few lines, that she died by her own hand, and begged that nobody might be blamed. To her sister she wrote more fully, explaining that her life of continuous annoyance, of inactivity, and of gradual wasting away, which is the life of a political prisoner in Siberia, had become hateful to her, that she could no longer endure it, and preferred to drown herself in the Tobol. She finished by affectionately begging her sister to forgive her for the grief she might cause her and her friends and companions in misfortune.

Without wasting a moment, the *Ispravnik* hastened to the Tobol, and there he found the confirmation of the revelation of Olga. Parts of her dress dangled upon the bushes, under which lay her bonnet, lapped by the rippling water. Some peasants said that on the previous day they had seen the young girl wandering on the bank with a gloomy and melancholy aspect, looking fixedly at the turbid waters of the river. The *Ispravnik*, through whose bands all the correspondence passed of the political prisoners banished to his district, recalled certain expressions and remarks that had struck him in the last letters of Olga Liubatovitch, the meaning of which now became clear.

There could no longer be any doubt. The *Ispravnik* sent for all the fishermen near, and began to drag the river with poles, casting in nets to recover the body. This, however, led to nothing, nor was it surprising. The broad river was so rapid that in a single night it must have carried a body away who knows how many leagues? For three days the *Ispravnik* continued his efforts, and stubbornly endeavoured to make the river surrender its prey. But at last, after having worn out ill his people and broken several nets against the stones and old trunks which the river mocked him with, he had to give up the attempt as unavailing.

II.

The body of Olga, her heart within it throbbing with joy and uncertainty, had meanwhile been hurried away, not by the yellow waters of the Tobol, but by a vehicle drawn by two horses galloping at full speed.

Having made arrangements with a young rustic whom, in her visits to the neighbouring cottages in a medical capacity, she had succeeded in converting to Socialism, Olga disposed everything so as to make it be believed that she had

drowned herself, and on the night fixed secretly left her house and proceeded to the neighbouring forest, where at a place agreed upon, her young disciple was awaiting her. The night was dark. Beneath the thick foliage of that virgin forest nothing could be seen, nothing could be heard but the hootings of the owls, and sometimes, brought from afar, the howling of the wolves, which infest the whole of Siberia.

As an indispensable precaution, the meeting-place was fixed at a distance of about three miles, in the interior of the forest. Olga had to traverse this distance in utter darkness, guided only by the stars, which occasionally pierced through the dense foliage. She was not afraid, however, of the wild beasts, or of the highwaymen and vagrants who are always prowling round the towns in Siberia. It was the cemetery-keeper's dog she was afraid of. The cemeteries are always well looked after in that country, for among the horrible crimes committed by the scum of the convicts one of the most common is that of disinterring and robbing the newly-buried dead. Now the keeper of the cemetery of Talutorovsk was not to be trifled with; his dog still less so. It was a mastiff, as big as a calf, ferocious and vigilant, and could bear the approach of anyone, a quarter of a mile off. Meanwhile the road passed close to the cottage of the solitary keeper. It was precisely for the purpose of avoiding it that Olga, instead of following the road, had plunged into the forest, notwithstanding the great danger of losing her way.

Stumbling at every step against the roots and old fallen trunks, pricked by the thorny bushes, her face lashed by boughs elastic as though moved by springs, she kept on for two hours with extreme fatigue, sustained only by the hope that she would shortly reach the place of meeting, which could not be far. At last, indeed, the darkness began to diminish somewhat and the trees to become thinner, and a moment afterwards she entered upon open ground. She suddenly stopped, looked around her blood freezing with terror, and recognised the keeper's cottage. She had lost her way in the forest, and, after so many windings, had gone straight to the point she wished to avoid.

Her first impulse was to run away as fast as her remaining strength would enable her, but a moment afterwards a thought flashed through her mind which restrained her. No sound came from the cottage; all was silent. What could this indicate but the absence of the occupant? She stood still and listened, holding her breath. In the cottage not a sound could be heard, but in another direction she heard, in the silence of the night, the distant barking of a dog, which seemed, however to be approaching nearer. Evidently the keeper had gone out, but at any moment might return, and his terrible dog was perhaps running in front of him, as though in search of prey. Fortunately from the keeper's house to the place of appointment there was a path which the fugitive had no need to avoid, and she set off and ran as fast as the fear of being seized and bitten by the ferocious animal would allow her. The barking, indeed, drew nearer, but so dense was the forest that not even a dog could penetrate it. Olga soon succeeded in reaching the open ground, breathless, harassed by the fear of being followed

and the doubt that she might not find anyone at the place of appointment. Great was her delight when she saw in the darkness the expected vehicle, and recognised the young peasant.

To leap into the vehicle and to hurry away was the work of an instant. In rather more than five hours of hard driving they reached Tumen, a town of about 18,000 inhabitants, fifty miles distant from Talutorovsk. A few hundred yards from the outskirts the vehicle turned into a dark lane and very quietly approached a house where it was evidently expected. In a window on the first floor a light was lit, and the figure of a man appeared. Then the window was opened, and the man, having recognised the young girl, exchanged a few words in a low tone with the peasant who was acting as driver. The latter, without a word, rose from his seat, took the young girl in his arms, for she was small and light, and passed her on like a baby into the robust hands of the man, who introduced her into his room. It was the simplest and safest means of entering unobserved. To have opened the door at such an unusual hour would have awakened people, and caused gossip.

The peasant went his way, wishing the young girl all success, and Olga was at last able to take a few hours' rest. Her first step had succeeded. All difficulties were far, indeed, from being overcome; for in Siberia it is not so much walls and keepers as immeasurable distance which is the real gaoler.

In this area, twice as large as all Europe, and with a total population only twice that of the English capital, towns and villages are only imperceptible points, separated by immense deserts absolutely uninhabitable, in which if anyone ventured he would die of hunger, or be devoured by wolves. The fugitive thus has no choice, and must take one of the few routes which connect the towns with the rest of the world. Pursuit is therefore extremely easy, and thus, while the number of the fugitives from the best-guarded prisons and mines amounts to hundreds among the political prisoners, and to thousands among the common offenders, those who succeed in overcoming all difficulties and in escaping from Siberia itself may be counted on the fingers.

There are two means of effecting an escape. The first, which is very hazardous, is that of profiting, in order to get a good start by the first few days, when the police furiously scour their own district only, without giving information of the escape to the great centres, in the hope, which is often realized, of informing their superiors of the escape and capture of the prisoner at the same time. In the most favourable cases, however, the fugitive gains only three or four days of time, while the entire journey lasts many weeks, and sometimes many months. With the telegraph established along all the principal lines of communication, and even with more horse patrols, the police have no difficulty whatever in making for lost time, and exceptional cleverness or good fortune is necessary in order to keep out of their clutches. But this method, as being the simplest and comparatively easy, as it requires few preparations and but little external assistance, is adopted by the immense majority of the fugitives, and it is precisely for this reason that ninety-nine per cent of them

only succeed in reaching a distance of one or two hundred miles from the place of their confinement.

Travelling being so dangerous, the second mode is much more safe—that of remaining hidden in some place of concealment, carefully prepared beforehand, in the province itself, for one, two, three, six months, until the police, after having carried on the chase so long in vain, come to the conclusion that the fugitive must be beyond the frontiers of Siberia, and slacken or entirely cease their vigilance. This was the plan followed in the famous escape of Lopatin, who remained more than a month at Irkutsk, and of Debagorio Mokrievitch, who spent more than a year in various hideouts in Siberia before undertaking his journey to Russia.

Olga Liubatovitch did not wish, however, to have recourse to the latter expedient, and selected the former. It was a leap in the dark. But she built her hopes upon the success of the little stratagem of her supposed suicide, and the very day after her arrival at Tumen, she set out towards Europe by the postal and caravan road to Moscow.

To journey by post in Russia, a travelling passport (*podorojna*) must be obtained, signed by the governor. Olga certainly had none, and could not lose time in procuring one. She had, therefore, to find somebody in possession of this indispensable document whom she could accompany. As luck would have it, a certain Soluzeff, who had rendered himself famous a few years before by certain forgeries and malversations on a grand scale, had been pardoned by the Emperor and was returning to Russia. He willingly accepted the company of a pretty country woman, as Olga represented herself to him to be, who was desirous of going to Kazan, where her husband was lying seriously ill, and consented to pay her share of the travelling expenses. But here another trouble arose. This Soluzeff, being on very good terms with the gendarmes and the police, a whole army of them accompanied him to the post-station. Now Olga had begun her revolutionary career at sixteen, she was arrested for the first time at seventeen, and during the seven years of that career had been in eleven prisons, and had passed some few months in that of Tumen itself. It was little short of a miracle that no one recognised the celebrated Liubatovitch in the humble travelling companion of their common friend.

At last, however, the vehicle set out amid the shouts and cheers of the company. Olga breathed more freely. Her tribulations were not, however, at an end.

I need not relate the various incidents of her long journey. Her companion worried her. He was a man whom long indulgence in luxury had rendered effeminate, and at every station said he was utterly worn out, and stopped to rest himself and take some tea with biscuits, preserves, and sweets, an abundance of which he carried with him. Olga, who was in agonies, as her deception might be found out at any moment, and telegrams describing her be sent to all the post-stations of the line, had to display much cunning and firmness to keep this poltroon moving on without arousing suspicions respecting

herself. When, however, near the frontier of European Russia, she was within an ace of betraying herself. Soluzeff declared that he was incapable of going any further, that he was thoroughly knocked up by this feverish hurry-scurry, and must stop a few days to recover himself. Olga had some thought of disclosing everything, hoping to obtain from his generosity what she could not obtain from his sluggish selfishness. There is no telling what might have happened if a certain instinct, which never left Olga even when she was most excited, had not preserved her from this very dangerous step.

A greater danger awaited her at Kazan. No sooner had she arrived than she hastened away to take her ticket by the first steamboat going up the Volga towards Nijni-Novgorod. Soluzeff, who said he was going south, would take the opposite direction. Great, therefore, her surprise and bewilderment when she saw her travelling companion upon the same steamer. She did everything she could to avoid him, but in vain. Soluzeff recognised her, and advancing towards her, exclaimed in a loud voice

'What! You here? Why, you told me your husband was lying ill in the Kazan Hospital.'

Some of the passengers turned round and looked, and among them the gendarme who was upon the boat.

The danger was serious. But Olga, without losing her self-possession, at once invented a complete explanation of the unexpected change in her itinerary. Soluzeff took it all in, as did the gendarme who was listening.

At Moscow she was well known, having spent several months in its various prisons. Not caring to go to the central station, which is always full of gendarmes on duty, she was compelled to walk several leagues, to economise her small stock of money and take the train at a small station, passing the night in the open air.

Many were the perils from which, thanks to her cleverness, she escaped. But her greatest troubles awaited her in the city she so ardently desired to reach, St. Petersburg.

When a Nihilist, after a rather long absence, suddenly reaches some city without previously conferring with those who have been there recently, his position is a very singular one. Although he may know he is in the midst of friends and old companions in arms, he is absolutely incapable of finding any of them. Being 'illegal' people, or outlaws, they live with false passports, and are frequently compelled to change their names and their places of abode. To inquire for them under their old names is not to be thought of, for these continuous changes are not made for mere amusement, but from the necessity, constantly recurring, of escaping from some imminent danger, more or less grave. To go to the old residence of a Nihilist and ask for him under his old name would be voluntarily putting one's head into the lion's mouth.

Under such circumstances, a Nihilist is put to no end of trouble, and has to wander hither and thither in order to find his friends. He applies to old acquaintances among people who are 'legal' and peaceful, that is to say, officials,

businessmen, barristers, doctors, etc., who form an intermediate class, unconsciously connecting the most active Nihilists with those who take the least interest in public affairs. In this class there are people of all ranks. Some secretly aid the Nihilists more or less energetically. Others receive them into their houses simply as friends, without having any 'serious' business with them. Others, again, see them only casually, but know from whom more or less accurate information is to be obtained; and so on. All these people being unconnected with the movement, or almost so, run little risk of being arrested, and living as they do 'legally' that is to say under their own names, they are easy to be found, and supply the Ariadne's thread which enable anyone to penetrate into the Nihilist labyrinth, who has not had time, or who has been unable to obtain the addresses of the affiliated.

Having reached St. Petersburg, Olga Liubatovitch was precisely in this position. But to find the clue in such cases is easy only to those who, having long resided in the city, have many connections in society. Olga had never stayed more than a few days in the capital. Her acquaintances among 'legal' people were very few in number, and then she had reached St. Petersburg in the month of August, when everyone of position is out of town. With only sixty kopecks in her pocket, for in her great haste she had been unable to obtain a sufficient sum of money, she dragged her limbs from one extremity of the capital to the other. She might have dropped in the street from sheer exhaustion, and been taken up by the police as a mere vagabond, had not the idea occurred to her to call upon a distant relative whom she knew to be in St. Petersburg. She was an old maid, who affectionately welcomed her to the house, although, at the mere sight of Olga, her hair stood on end. She remained there two days; but the fear of the poor lady was so extreme that Olga did not care to stay longer. Supplied with a couple of roubles, she recommenced her pilgrimage, and at last met a barrister who, as luck would have it, had come up that day from the country on business.

From that moment all her tribulations ended. The barrister, who had known her previously, placed his house at her disposal and immediately communicated the news of her arrival to some friends of his among the affiliated. The next day, the good news spread throughout all St. Petersburg of the safe arrival of Olga Liubatovitch.

She was immediately supplied with money and a passport, and taken to a safe place of concealment, secure against police scrutiny.

III

It was at St. Petersburg that I first met her.

It was not at a 'business' gathering, but one of mere pleasure, in a family. With the 'legal' and the 'illegal' there must have been fifteen persons. Among those present were some literary men. One of them was a singular example of an 'illegal' man, much sought for at one time, who, living for six or seven years

with false passports, almost succeeded in legalising himself, as a valuable and well-known contributor to various newspapers. There was a barrister who, after having defended others in several political trials, at last found himself in the prisoner's dock. There was a young man of eighteen in gold lace and military epaulettes, who was the son of one of the most furious persecutors of the Revolutionary party. There was an official of about fifty, the head of a department in one of the ministries, who, for five years running, was our Keeper of the Seals — who kept, that is to say, a large chest full to the brim of seals, false marks, stamps, etc., manufactured by his niece, a charming young lady, very clever in draughtsmanship and engraving. It was a very mixed company and strange for anyone not accustomed to the singular habits of the Palmyra of the North.

With the freedom characteristic of all Russian gatherings, especially those of the Nihilists, everyone did as he liked and talked with those who pleased him. The company was split up into various groups, and the murmur of voices filled the room and frequently rose above the exclamations and laughter.

Having saluted the hosts and shaken hands with some friends, I joined one of these little groups. I had no difficulty in recognising Olga Liubatovitch, for the portraits of the principal prisoners in the trial of the 'fifty,' of whom she was one of the most distinguished figures, circulated by thousands, and was in every hand.

She was seated at the end of the sofa, and, with her head bent, was slowly sipping a cup of tea. Her thick black hair, of which she had an abundance, hung over her shoulders, the ends touching the bottom of the sofa. When she rose it almost reached to her knees. The colour of her face, a golden brown, like that of the Spaniards, proclaimed her Southern origin, her father and grandfather having been political refugees from Montenegro who had settled in Russia. There was nothing Russian, in fact, in any feature of her face. With her large and black eyebrows, shaped like a sickle as though she kept them always raised, there was something haughty and daring about her, which struck one at first sight, and gave her the appearance of the women belonging to her native land. From her new country she had derived, however, a pair of blue eyes, which always appeared half-closed by their long lashes, and cast flitting shadows upon her soft cheeks when she moved her eyelids, and a lithe, delicate, and rather slim figure, which somewhat relieved the severe and rigid expression of her face. She had, too, a certain unconscious charm, slightly statuesque, which is often met with among women from the South.

Gazing at this stately face, to which a regular nose with wide nostrils gave a somewhat aquiline shape, I thought that this was precisely what Olga Liubatovitch ought to be as I had pictured her from the account of her adventures. But on a sudden she smiled, and I no longer recognised her. She smiled, not only with the full vermilion lips of a brunette, but also with her blue eyes, with her rounded cheeks, with every muscle of her face, which was suddenly lit up and irradiated like that of a child.

When she laughed heartily she closed her eyes, bashfully bent her head, and covered her mouth with her hand or her arm, exactly as our shy country lasses do. On a sudden, however, she composed herself, and her face darkened and became gloomy, serious, almost stern, as before.

I had a great desire to hear her voice, in order to learn whether it corresponded with either of the two natures revealed by these sudden changes. But I had no opportunity of gratifying this desire. Olga did not open her mouth the whole evening. Her taciturnity did not proceed from indifference, for she listened attentively to the conversation, and her veiled eyes were turned from side to side. It did not seem, either, to arise from restraint. It was due rather to the absence of any motive for speaking. She seemed to be quite content to listen and reflect, and her serious mouth appeared to defy all attempts to open it.

It was not until some days afterwards, when I met her alone on certain 'business,' that I heard her voice, veiled like her eyes, and it was only after many months' acquaintance that I was able to understand her disposition, the originality of which consisted in its union of two opposite characteristics. She was a child in her candour, bordering on simplicity, in the purity of her mind, and in the modesty which displayed itself even in familiar intercourse and gave to her sentiments a peculiar and charming delicacy. But at the same time this child astounded the toughest veterans by her determination, her ability and coolness in the face of danger, and especially by her ardent and steadfast strength of will, which, recognising no obstacles, made her sometimes attempt impossibilities.

To see this young girl, so simple, so quiet, and so modest, who became burning red, bashfully covered her face with both hands, and hurried away upon hearing some poetry dedicated to her by some former disciple; to see this young girl, I say, it was difficult to believe that she was an escaped convict, familiar with condemnations, prisons, trials, escapes, and adventures of every kind. It was only necessary, however, to see her for once at work to believe instantly in everything. She was transformed, displaying a certain natural and spontaneous instinct which was something between the cunning of a fox and the skill of a warrior. This outward simplicity and candour served her then like the shield of Mambrino, and enabled her to issue unscathed from perils in which many men, considered able, would unquestionably have lost their lives.

One day the police, while making a search, really had her in their grasp. A friend, distancing the gendarmes by a few moments, had merely the time to rush breathless up the stairs, dash into the room where she was, and exclaim 'Save yourself! The police!' when the police were already surrounding the house. Olga did not even have time to put on her bonnet. Just as she was, she rushed to the back stairs, and hurried down at full speed. Fortunately the street door was not yet guarded by the gendarmes, and she was able to enter a little shop on the ground floor. She had only twenty kopecks in her pocket, having been unable, in her haste, to get any money. But this did not trouble her. For fifteen kopecks she bought a cotton handkerchief, and fastened it round her head in the style

adopted by coquettish servant-girls. With the five kopecks remaining, she bought some nuts, and left the shop eating them in such a quiet and innocent manner that the detachment of police, which meanwhile had advanced and surrounded the house on that side, let her pass without even asking her who she was, although the description of her was well known, her photograph had been distributed to all the agents, and the police have always strict orders to let no one who may arouse the slightest suspicion, leave a house which they have surrounded. This was not the only time that she slipped like an eel through the fingers of the police. She was inexhaustible in expedients, in stratagems, and in cunning, which she always had at her command at such times; and with all this she maintained her serious and severe aspect, so that she seemed utterly incapable of lending herself to deceit or simulation. Perhaps she did not think but acted upon instinct rather than reflection, and that was why she could meet every danger with the lightning-like rapidity of a fencer who parries a thrust.

IV.

The romance of her life commenced during her stay in St. Petersburg after her escape. She was one of the so-called 'Amazons,' and was one of the most fanatical. She ardently preached against love and advocated celibacy holding that with so many young men and young girls of the present day, love was a clog upon revolutionary activity. She kept her vow for several years, but was vanquished by the invincible. There was at that time in St. Petersburg a certain Nicholas Morosoff, a young poet and brave fellow, handsome, and fascinating as his poetic dreams. He was of a graceful figure, tall as a young pine tree, with a fine head, an abundance of curly hair, and a pair of chestnut eyes, which soothed, like a whisper of love, and sent forth glances that shone like diamonds in the dark whenever a touch of enthusiasm moved him.

The bold 'Amazon' and the young poet met, and their fate was decided. I will not tell of the delirium and transports through which they passed. Their love was like some delicate and sensitive plant, which must not be rudely touched. It was a spontaneous and irresistible feeling. They did not perceive it until they were madly enamoured of each other. They became husband and wife. It was said of them that when they were together, inexorable Fate had no heart to touch them, and that its cruel hand became a paternal one, which warded off the blows that threatened them. And, indeed, all their misfortunes happened to them when they were apart.

This was the incident which did much to give rise to the saying.

In November, 1879, Olga fell into the hands of the police. It should be explained that when these succeed in arresting a Nihilist they always leave in the apartments of the captured person a few men to take into custody anyone who may come to see that person. In our language, this is called a trap. Owing to the Russian habit of arranging everything at home and not in the cafes, as in Europe, the Nihilists are often compelled to go to each other's houses, and thus

these traps become fatal. In order to diminish the risk, safety signals are generally placed in the windows, and are taken away at the first sound of the police. But, owing to the negligence of the Nihilists themselves, accustomed as they are to danger, and so occupied that they sometimes have not time to eat a mouthful all day long, the absence of these signals is often disregarded, or attributed to some combination of circumstances — the difficulty, or perhaps the topographical impossibility, of placing signals in many apartments in such a manner that they can be seen from a distance. This measure of public security frequently, therefore, does not answer its purpose, and a good half of all the Nihilists who have fallen into the bands of the Government have been caught in these very traps.

A precisely similar misfortune happened to Olga, and the worst of it was, that it was in the house of Alexander Kviatkovsky, one of the Terrorist leaders where the police found a perfect magazine of dynamite, bombs, and similar things, together with a plan of the Winter Palace, which, after the explosion there, led to his capital conviction. As may readily be believed, the police would regard with anything but favourable eyes everyone who came to the house of such a man.

Directly she entered, Olga was immediately seized by two policemen, in order to prevent her from defending herself. She, however, displayed not the slightest desire to do so. She feigned surprise, astonishment, and invented there and then the story that she had come to see some dressmakers (who had, in fact, their names on the doorplate below, and occupied the upper floor) for the purpose of ordering something, but had mistaken the door; that she did not know what they wanted with her, and wished to return to her husband, etc.; the usual subterfuges to which the police are accustomed to turn a deaf ear. But Olga played her part so well that the *pristav*, or head of the police of the district, was really inclined to believe her. He told her that anyhow, if she did not wish to be immediately taken to prison, she must give her name and conduct him to her own house. Olga gave the first name which came into her mind, which naturally enough was not that under which she was residing in the capital, but as to her place of residence she declared, with every demonstration of profound despair, that she could not, and would not, take him there or say where it was. The *pristav* insisted, and, upon her reiterated refusal, observed to the poor simple thing that her obstinacy was not only prejudicial to her, but even useless, as, knowing her name, he would have no difficulty in sending some one to the *Adressni Stol*, and obtaining her address. Struck by this unanswerable argument, Olga said she would take him to her house.

No sooner had she descended into the street, accompanied by the *pristav* and some of his subalterns, than Olga met a friend, Madame Maria A., who was going to Kviatkovsky's, where a meeting of Terrorists had actually been fixed for that very day. It was to this chance meeting that the Terrorists owed their escape from the very grave danger which threatened them; for the windows of

Kviatkovsky's rooms were so placed that it was impossible to see the signals there from the street.

Naturally enough the two friends made no sign to indicate that they were acquainted with each other, but Madame Maria A., on seeing Olga with the police, ran in all haste to inform her friends of the arrest of their companion, about which there could be no doubt.

The first to be warned was Nicholas Morosoff as the police in a short time would undoubtedly go to his house and make the customary search. Olga felt certain that this was precisely what her friend would do, and therefore her sole object now was to delay her custodians so as to give Morosoff time to clear his rooms (that is to say, destroy or take away papers and everything compromising), and to get away himself. It was this that she was anxious about, for he had been accused by the traitor Goldenberg, of having taken part in the mining work connected with the Moscow attempt, and by the Russian law was liable to the penalty of death.

Greatly emboldened by this lucky meeting with her friend, Olga, without saying a word, conducted the police to the Ismailovsky Polk, one of the quarters of the town most remote from the place of her arrest, which was in the Novsky district. They found the street and the house indicated to them. They entered and summoned the *dvornik* (doorkeeper), who has to be present at every search made. Then came the inevitable explanation. The *dvornik* said that he did not know the lady, and that she did not lodge in that house.

Upon hearing this statement, Olga covered her face with her hands, and again gave way to despair. She sobbingly admitted that she had deceived them from fear of her husband, who was very harsh, that she had not given her real name and address, and wound up by begging them to let her go home.

'What's the use of all this, madame?' exclaimed the *pristav*. 'Don't you see that you are doing yourself harm by these tricks? I'll forgive you this time, because of your inexperience, but take care you don't do it again, and lead us at once to your house, or otherwise you will repent it.'

After much hesitation, Olga resolved to obey the injunctions of the *pristav*. She gave her name, and said she lived in one of the lines of the Vasili Ostrov.

It took an hour to reach the place. At last they arrived at the house indicated. Here precisely the same scene with the *dvornik* was repeated. Then the *pristav* lost all patience, and wanted to take her away to prison at once, without making a search in her house. 'Upon hearing the *pristav's* harsh announcement, Olga flung herself into an armchair, and had a violent attack of hysterics. They fetched some water and sprinkled her face with it to revive her. When she had somewhat recovered, the *pristav* ordered her to rise and go at once to the prison of the district. Her hysterical attack recommenced. But the *pristav* would stand no more nonsense, and told her to get up, or otherwise he would have her taken away in a cab by main force.

The despair of the poor lady was now at its height.

'Listen,' she exclaimed, 'I will tell you everything now.'

And she began the story of her life and marriage. She was the daughter of a rustic, and she named the province and the village. Up to the age of sixteen she remained with her father and looked after the sheep. But one day an engineer, her future husband, who was at work upon a branch line of railway, came to stop in the house. He fell in love with her, took her to town, placed her with his aunt, and had teachers to educate her, as she was illiterate and knew nothing. Then he married her, and they lived very happily together for four years; but he had since become discontented, rough, irritable, and she feared that he loved her no longer; but she loved him as much as ever, as she owed everything, to him, and could not be ungrateful. Then she said that he would be dreadfully angry with her, and would perhaps drive her away if she went to the house in charge of the police; that it would be a scandal; that he would think she had stolen something; and so on.

All this and much more of the same kind, with endless details and repetitions, did Olga narrate; interrupting her story from time to time by sighs, exclamations, and tears. She wept in very truth, and her tears fell copiously, as she assured me when she laughingly described this scene to me afterwards. I thought at the time that she would have made a very good actress.

The *pristav*, though impatient, continued to listen. He was vexed at the idea of returning with empty hands, and he hoped this time at all events her story would lead to something. Then, too, he had not the slightest suspicion, and would have taken his oath that the woman he had arrested was a poor, simple creature, who had fallen into his hands without having done anything whatever, as so frequently happens in Russia, where houses are searched on the slightest suspicion. When Olga had finished her story the *pristav* began to console her. He said that her husband would certainly pardon her when he heard her explanation; that the same thing might happen to anyone; and so on. Olga resisted for a while, and asked the *pristav* to promise that he would assure her husband that she had done nothing wrong; and more to the same effect. The promised everything, in order to bring the matter to an end, and this time Olga proceeded towards her real residence. She had gained three hours and a half; for her arrest took place at about two o'clock, and she did not reach her own home until about half-past five. She had no doubt that Morosoff had got away, after having 'cleared' the rooms, having had twice as much time as he required for the operation.

Having ascended the stairs, accompanied by the *dvorniks* and the police, she rang the bell. The door opened and the party entered, first the antechamber, then the sitting-room. There a terrible surprise awaited her. Morosoff in person was seated at a table, in his dressing-gown, with a pencil in his hand and a pen in his ear. Olga fell into hysterics. This time they were real, not simulated.

How was it that he had remained in the house?

The lady previously mentioned had not failed to hasten at once, and inform Morosoff, whom she found at home with three or four friends. At the announcement of the arrest of Olga they all had but one idea—that of remaining

where they were, of arming themselves, and of awaiting her arrival, in order to rescue her by main force. But Morosoff energetically opposed this proposal. He said, and rightly said, that it presented more dangers than advantages, for the police being in numbers and reinforced by the *dvorniks* of the house, who are all a species of police agents of inferior grade, the attempt at the best would result in the liberation of one person at the cost of several others. His view prevailed, and the plan, which was more generous than prudent, was abandoned. The rooms were at once cleared with the utmost rapidity, so that the fate of the person arrested, which was sure to be a hard one, and was now inevitable, should not be rendered more grievous. When all was ready and they were about to leave, Morosoff staggered his friends by acquainting them with the plan he had thought of. He would remain in the house alone and await the arrival of the police. They thought he had lost his senses; for everybody knew, and no one better than himself, that with the terrible accusation hanging over his head, if once arrested it would be all over with him. But he said he hoped it would not come to that — nay, he expected to get clear off with Olga, and in any case would share her fate. They would escape or perish together. His friends heard him announce this determination with mingled feelings of grief, astonishment, and admiration. Neither entreaties nor remonstrances could shake his determination. He was firm, and remained at home after saying farewell to his friends, who took leave of him as of a man on the point of death.

He had drawn up his plan, which by the suggestion of some mysterious instinct perfectly harmonised with that of Olga, although they had never in any way arranged the matter. He also had determined to feign innocence, and had arraigned everything in such a manner as to make it seem as they were the most peaceful of citizens. As he lived with a false passport of an engineer, he covered his table with a heap of plans of various dimensions, and, having put on his dressing gown and slippers, set diligently to work to copy one while waiting the arrival of his unwelcome guests.

It was in this guise, and engaged in this innocent occupation, that he was surprised by the police. The scene which followed may easily be imagined. Olga flung her arms round his neck, and poured fourth a stream of broken words exclamations, complaints of these men who had arrested her because she wished to call upon her milliner. In the midst, however, of these exclamations, she whispered in his ear, 'Have you not been warned?'

'Yes,' he replied in the same manner, 'everything is in order. Don't be alarmed.'

Meanwhile he played the part of an affectionate husband mortified by this scandal. After a little scolding and then a little consolation, he turned to the *pristav* and asked him for an explanation, as he could not quite understand what had happened from the disconnected words of his wife. The *pristav* politely told the whole story. The engineer appeared greatly surprised and grieved, and could not refrain from somewhat bitterly censuring his wife for her unpardonable imprudence. The *pristav*, who was evidently reassured by the aspect of the

husband and of the whole household, declared nevertheless that he must make a search.

'I hope you will excuse me, sir,' he added, but I am obliged to do it; it is my duty.'

'I willingly submit to the law,' nobly replied the engineer.

Thereupon he pointed to the room, so as to indicate that the *pristav* was free to search it thoroughly, and having lit a candle with his own hand, for at that hour in St. Petersburg it was already dark, he quietly opened door of the adjoining room, which was his own little place.

The search was made. Certainly not a single scrap of paper was found, written or printed, which smelt of Nihilism.

'By rights I ought to take the lady to prison,' said the *pristav*, when he had finished his search 'especially as her previous behaviour was anything but what it ought to have been, but I won't do that. I will simply keep you under arrest here until year passports have been verified. You see, sir,' he added, 'we police officers are not quite so bad as the Nihilists make us out.'

'There are always honest men in every occupation,' replied the engineer with a gracious bow.

More compliments of the same kind, which I need not repeat, were exchanged between them, and the *pristav* went away with most of his men, well impressed with such a polite and pleasant reception. He left, however, a guard in the kitchen with strict injunction, not to lose sight of the host and hostess, until further orders.

Morosoff and Olga were alone. The first act of the comedy they had improvised had met with complete success. But the story was far from having blown over. The verification of their passports would show that they were false. The inevitable consequence would be a warrant for their arrest, which might be issued at any moment if the verification were made by means of the telegraph. The sentinel, rigid, motionless, with his sword by his side and his revolver in his belt, was seated in the kitchen, which was at the back, exactly opposite the outer door, so that it was impossible to approach the door without being seen by him. For several hours they racked their brains and discussed, in a low voice, various plans of escape. To free themselves by main force was not to be thought of. No arms had been left in the place, for they had been purposely taken away. Yet without weapons, how could they grapple with this big, sturdy fellow, armed as he was? They hoped that as the hours passed on, he would fall asleep. But this hope was not realised. When, at about half-past ten, Morosoff, under the pretext of going into his little room, which was used for various domestic purposes, passed near the kitchen, he saw the man still at his post, with his eyes wide open, attentive and vigilant as at first. Yet when Morosoff returned, Olga would have declared that the way was quite clear and that they had nothing to do but to leave, so beaming were his eyes. He had, in fact, found what he wanted, a plan simple and safe. The little room opened into the small corridor which served as sort of antechamber, and its door flanked that of the kitchen. In

returning to the sitting-room, Morosoff observed that when the door of the little room was wide open, it completely shut out the view of the kitchen, and consequently hid from the policeman the outer door, and also that of the sitting-room. It would be possible, therefore, at a given moment, to pass through the antechamber without being seen by the sentinel. But this could not be done unless some one came and opened the door of the little room. Neither Olga nor Morosoff could do this, for if, under some pretext, they opened it, they would of course have to leave it open. This would immediately arouse suspicion, and the policeman would run after them and catch them perhaps before they had descended the staircase. Could they trust the landlady? The temptation to do so was great. If she consented to assist them, success might be considered certain. But if she refused! Who could guarantee that, from fear of being punished as an accomplice, she would not go and reveal everything to the police? Of course she did not suspect in the least what kind of people her lodgers were.

Nothing, therefore, was said to her, but they hoped nevertheless to have her unconscious assistance, and it was upon that Morosoff had based his plan. About eleven o'clock, she went into the little room, where the pump was placed, to get the water to fill the kitchen cistern for next day's consumption. As the room was very small, she generally left one of the two pails in the corridor, while she filled the other with water, and, of course, was thus obliged to leave the door open. Everything thus depended upon the position in which she placed her pail. An inch or two on one side or the other would decide their fate; for it was only when the door of the little room was wide open that it shut out the view of the kitchen and concealed the end of the antechamber. If not wide open, part of the outer door could be seen. There remained half-an-hour before the decisive moment, which both employed in preparing for flight. Their wraps were hanging up in the wardrobe in the antechamber. They had, therefore, to put on what they had with them in the sitting-room. Morosoff put on a light summer overcoat. Olga threw over her shoulders a woollen scarf, to protect her somewhat from the cold. In order to deaden as much as possible the sounds of their hasty footsteps, which might arouse the attention of the sentinel in the profound silence of the night, both of them put on their galoshes, which, being elastic, made but little noise. They had to put them on next to their stockings, although it was not particularly agreeable, at that season, for they were in their slippers, their shoes having been purposely sent into the kitchen to be cleaned for the following day, in order to remove all suspicion respecting their intentions.

Everything being prepared, they remained in readiness, listening to every sound made by the landlady. At last came the clanging of the empty pails. She went to the little room, threw open the door, and began her work. The moment had arrived. Morosoff cast a hasty glance. Oh, horror! The empty pail scarcely projected beyond the threshold, and the door was at a very acute angle, so that even from the door of the sitting-room where they were, part of the interior of the kitchen could be seen. He turned towards Olga, who was standing behind him

holding her breath, and made an energetic sign in the negative. A few minutes passed, which seemed like hours. The pumping ceased; the pail was full. She was about to place it on the floor. Both stretched their necks and advanced a step, being unable to control the anxiety of their suspense. This time the heavy pail banged against the door and forced it back on its hinges, a stream of water being spilt. The view of the kitchen was completely shut out, but another disaster had occurred. Overbalanced by the heavy weight, the landlady had come half out into the corridor. 'She has seen us,' whispered Morosoff, falling back pale as death. 'No,' replied Olga, excitedly; and she was right. The landlady disappeared into the little room, and a moment afterwards recommenced her clattering work.

Without losing a moment, without even turning round, Morosoff gave the signal to his companion by a firm grip of the hand, and both issued forth, hastily passed through the corridor, softly opened the door, and found themselves upon the landing of the staircase. With cautious steps they descended, and were in the street, ill-clad but very light of heart. A quarter of an hour afterwards they were in a house where they were being anxiously awaited by their friends, who welcomed them with a joy more easy to imagine than to describe.

In their own abode their flight was not discovered until late into the morning, when the landlady came to do the room.

Such was the adventure, narrated exactly as it happened, which contributed, as I have said, to give rise to the saying that these two were invulnerable when together. When the police became aware of the escape of the supposed engineer and his wife, they saw at once that they had been outwitted. The *pristav*, who had been so thoroughly taken in, had a terrible time of it, and proceeded with the utmost eagerness to make investigations somewhat behind band. The verification of the passports of course showed that they were false. The two fugitives were therefore 'illegal' people, but the police wished to know, at all events, who they were, and to discover this was not very difficult, for both had already been in the hands of the police, who, therefore, were in possession of their photographs. The landlady and the *dvornik* recognised them among a hundred shown to them by the gendarmes. A comparison with the description of them, also preserved in the archives of the gendarmerie, left no doubt of their identity. It was in this manner the police found out what big fish they had stupidly allowed to escape from their net, as may be seen by reading the report of the trial of Sciriaeff and his companions. With extreme but somewhat tardy zeal, the gendarmes ransacked every place in search of them. They had their trouble for nothing. A Nihilist who thoroughly determines to conceal himself can never be found. He falls into the hands of the police only when he returns to active life.

When the search for them began to relax, Olga and Morosoff quitted their place of concealment and resumed their positions in the ranks. Some months afterwards they went abroad in order to legitimatise their union, so that if some day they were arrested, it might be recognised by the police. They crossed the frontier of Romania unmolested, stopped there some time, and having arranged

their private affairs, went to reside for awhile at Geneva, where Morosoff wished to finish a work of some length upon the Russian revolutionary movement. Here Olga gave birth to a daughter, and for awhile it seemed that all the strength of her ardent and exceptional disposition would concentrate itself in maternal love. She did not appear to care for anything. She seemed even to forget her husband in her exclusive devotion to the little one. There was something almost wild in the intensity of her love.

Four months passed, and Morosoff, obeying the call of duty, chafing at inactivity, and eager for the struggle, returned to Russia. Olga could not follow him with her baby at the breast, and, oppressed by a mournful presentiment, allowed him to depart alone.

A fortnight afterwards he was arrested.

On hearing this terrible news, Olga did not swoon, she did not wring her hands, she did not even shed a single tear. She stifled her grief. A single, irresistible, and supreme idea pervaded her — to fly to him; to save him at all costs; by money, by craft, by the dagger, by poison, even at the risk of her own life, so that she could but save him.

And the child? That poor little weak and delicate creature, who needed all her maternal care to support its feeble life? What could she do with the poor innocent baby, already almost an orphan?

She could not take it with her. She must leave it behind.

Terrible was the night which the poor mother passed with her child before setting out. Who can depict the indescribable anguish of her heart, with the horrible alternative placed before her of forsaking her child to save the man she loved, or of forsaking him to save the little one? On the one side was maternal feeling; on the other her ideal, her convictions, her devotion to the cause which he steadfastly served.

She did not hesitate for a moment. She must go.

On the morning of the day fixed she took leave of all her friends, shut herself up alone with her child, and remained with it for some minutes to bid it farewell. When she issued forth, her face was pale as death and wet with tears.

She set out. She moved heaven and earth to save her husband. Twenty times she was within an ace of being arrested. But it was impossible for her efforts to avail. As implicated in the attempt against the life of the Emperor, he was confined in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul; and there is no escape from there. She did not relax her efforts, but stubbornly and doggedly continued them, and all this while was in agony if she did not constantly hear about her child. If the letters were delayed a day or two, her anguish could not be restrained. The child was ever present in her mind. One day she took compassion on a little puppy, still blind, which she found upon a heap of rubbish, where it had been thrown. 'My friends laugh at me,' she wrote, 'but I love it because its little feeble cries remind me of those of my child.'

Meanwhile the child died. For a whole month no one had the courage to tell the sad news. But at last the silence had to be broken.

Olga herself was arrested a few weeks afterwards.

Such is the story, the true story, of Olga Liubatovitch. Of Olga Liubatovitch do I say? No — of hundreds and hundreds of others. I should not have related it had it not been so.

WOMAN'S SHARE IN RUSSIAN NIHILISM

Ella Norraikow¹

THE propagation of Nihilistic ideas in Russia received its first great impulse from the novel by Tourgenieff entitled *Fathers and Children*, which appeared in 1861. Since that time, while much has been written about the men who figured prominently in Nihilism, writers have failed to show the same interest in the women who participated in the movement. It was not until 1862 that women began to take an active part in Nihilism, and the movement is indebted for not a little of its success to the tact and shrewdness of the many brave and cultured ones who have made such noble sacrifices in freedom's cause. The liberation of the serfs in the same year, by proclamation of Czar Alexander II., gave hope of still greater reforms, especially of a higher education for the gentler sex, when their intellectual pioneers applied for admission to the universities. This being refused them many of the more ambitious visited foreign lands in search of the educational opportunities denied them in Russia. In Switzerland, where the prejudice against women was less bitter, the doors of the colleges were most readily thrown open to the seekers after knowledge; and many women became devoted students, carried off the honors, and returned to their native land to take foremost rank in the professions for which they had studied. The opposition against them was intense, but with characteristic determination they overcame all obstacles. It is from such brave spirits as these that the ranks of the woman Nihilists have been recruited, and many have stepped down from high social positions to take part in a movement which they believed would give to the Russian people something of that freedom enjoyed by the nations of western Europe where civilization had made greater strides.

That the propagation of liberal ideas has not been more successful throughout the empire is owing to the fact that the rural or peasant population refused to participate in any uprising of the Nihilist party; and as they number

¹ The Countess Ella Norrnikow is not a Russian by birth, although she has long been interested in the cause of popular government in Russia.

She was born in Toronto, Canada, and her first literary work, a story, was published while she was in her teens. She married young and spent many years in travel, living successively in most of the European capitals. She returned to America a widow, and in 1837 took up her residence in New York, where she has since married the exiled Russian nobleman whose name she hears. She is considered to be well posted upon matters pertaining to Russia, though she is a persistent foe of the czar's government. She has been a contributor to a number of the best periodicals, and her articles have been quoted by the friends of democracy throughout the world. To her interest in their cause many Polish and Russian exiles in America are deeply indebted. She has written a book on Nihilism which will soon be published. and which will be a comprehensive description of the Russian revolutionary movement.

more than half of the czar's subjects, this proved a serious obstacle in the path of reform. Their refusal was the means of stimulating the Nihilists to more heroic efforts for the cause, and many high-born ladies donned peasant garb and mingled freely with the people, hoping thereby to secure their confidence and at the same time obtain an opportunity to disseminate liberal ideas.

Among the most noted of the heroines of Nihilism was Sophia Perovskaya, who sacrificed her life to her zeal in the cause of freedom. Nobly born and highly educated, her life's story was a truly pathetic one. Deprived under very sad circumstances of a mother's loving care while little more than a babe, she was brought up under the strict supervision of an almost brutal father. Sophia Perovskaya traced her descent from a long line of noble ancestry. Her grandfather was Minister of the Interior during the reign of Nicholas, her father was the Governor-general of St. Petersburg, and one of her great-great-uncles was themorganatic husband of the Empress Elizabeth. Her own rank was that of a countess. When eighteen years old she was acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful girls in Russia and was offered the post of maid of honor to the empress. An aide-de-camp to the late Czar Alexander II. was her accepted lover. Sophia was separated from her mother when only five years old, and believed her dead until she had reached the age of maturity, when by some means she became acquainted with the family history.

The knowledge then gained seems to have changed the whole current of her after life, and she determined to be revenged on the father who had so cruelly treated and driven from their home the countess, her mother. She also had experienced considerable of her father's tyrannical treatment and as a consequence only too readily espoused her absent mother's cause. She not only became embittered against her father, but displayed the same enmity towards the government of which he was an official. About this time a woman from Switzerland appeared on the scene, whom she took into her service as a maid. It afterwards transpired that this woman had been sent by her mother to enlighten Sophia as to her whereabouts. She entered into correspondence with her mother and satisfied herself of the truth of all she had heard of the family history. Soon after she was introduced into a Nihilist circle, in which, with her beauty and high social standing, she soon took a prominent position. Her associations becoming known to her father, she was obliged to flee from home to escape his wrath, and took refuge with her mother in Switzerland. For some unknown reason she returned to St. Petersburg in disguise, and joined a group of conspirators. She had not been long at her old home when she was arrested, but through her father's influence was released upon promising to leave the country. The motive which prompted the father's interference was a selfish rather than a paternal one. He feared the disgrace which the disclosure of his daughter's complicity with the Nihilists would bring. But Sophia refused to remain inactive in the cause which she had so much at heart, and once more returned to St. Petersburg. To her was assigned the task of displaying the signal for the throwing of the bomb when the assassination of Alexander n. occurred.

She was again arrested, and for the second time her father's high official influence prevented her complicity in the plot from becoming known. But a woman who had displayed such remarkable qualities of heroism was not likely to let her companions in crime suffer while she went free. Some assert that it was her determination to see her father disgraced and punished that governed her actions on this occasion, for she had never forgiven his treatment of her mother. She therefore, on the day of the trial of the other conspirators, coolly walked into court, made known her identity, and declared her intention of sharing the same fate as the prisoners who were being arraigned. Knowing her indomitable will this action did not at all surprise her associates. Her request for a trial was granted, and she confessed her guilt and was hanged with the others who were condemned.

Another daring attempt on the emperor's life in which Sophia Perovskaya participated was that of the railway explosion between Kursk and Moscow, in which a number of carriages were destroyed; but the czar had passed safely over the road half an hour before, having changed cars at a way-station. Leo Hartmann, now in New York, and one of the participants on that occasion, has frequently described to me the parting of the conspirators previous to the firing of the mine. He says of Sophia Perovskaya that she was a woman utterly devoid of sentiment, with her mind filled with but one great purpose—the rights and freedom of her people. The world well knows how heroically she met death on the scaffold, and that while strong men fainted in anticipation of the horrible death in store for them, not a muscle of her face was seen to move. She died as she had lived—nobly.

For heroism and patient endurance I think we should give Vera Zassulitch the second place in the long list of martyrs to the cause of Nihilism. True, it may be a lost cause; but we must acknowledge that the women who have espoused it have the honesty of their convictions to sustain them, and that they stand out before the world among the best and the bravest of their sex. Vera Zassulitch, whom many of the Russian people would like to adjudge insane, was moved to the committal of a fearful crime on learning of the horrible cruelty practised upon a political prisoner, one of a group of Nihilists to which she belonged. Bogoluboff was the political's name, and his offence was a refusal to remove his hat during a visit of General Trepoff (then chief of police at St. Petersburg) to the Petropavlovski fortress. Bogoluboff had his hat knocked off by the irate general, who, in addition, ordered that the prisoner be given 100 lashes with the knout. A Nihilist who was one of the guards at the prison carried the news of the punishment to those outside. Vera and live others formed an executive committee. They met to discuss the outrage and decided on the death of Trepoff, as they held him responsible for the punishment. They drew lots to learn who should be the executioner, and the commission of the deed fell to the lot of Vera Zassulitch, who, armed with a revolver, went the next day to visit Trepoff. Securing admission under some pretext, she shot him while he sat in his chair. The case aroused the greatest excitement and being such an unusual one it was

decided to try it by jury. The girl was acquitted on the ground of insanity, for it was not deemed possible that so young a woman could commit such a deed while in her rational mind. During the trial the streets adjoining the courthouse were thronged with people anxious to learn the result. When the verdict of acquittal was made known the people with one voice sent up a prolonged shout of approval. The police charged into the mob and several lives were lost. Vera Zassulitch was hurried into a carriage, where she changed her dress for the garb of a man and made her escape across the frontier, finally reaching Switzerland, where she still resides. She is not a beautiful woman, like Sophia Perovskaya, but she possesses a remarkable mind and wonderful nerve. The women of America recently collected quite a sum of money and forwarded it to her to assist in making her pathway to the grave as smooth as possible, for she is a victim of consumption and cannot live much longer.

Sophia Bardina was another shining light in Nihilism. She wrote some verses of remarkable beauty and pathos, which were universally sung by the members of her party. They were regarded as gems of Russian literature, but of a treasonable nature; and the singing of them was looked upon as a state crime, and punished as such. This gift of the muse proved the bane of Sophia Bardina's existence, for through its exercise she was arrested, and after spending many weary months in prison she was exiled to Siberia, where she probably still remains, unless death has put an end to her sufferings.

The Lubotovitch sisters, Olga and Vera, were young ladies of charming personality and many accomplishments. They were also noted for their beauty and purity, and yet they incited their male coworkers to many deeds of lawlessness and cunning by their example of reckless daring. They travelled through all the large cities of the empire, disseminating liberal ideas and distributing incendiary literature. Moscow and St. Petersburg afforded them the largest fields of labor, and in those cities they succeeded in penetrating into the very offices of the police authorities, where by their winning manners and remarkable beauty they made many converts to the cause of Nihilism. But they could not long expect to escape the fate which surely follows in the wake of such daring. They were arrested and imprisoned, and after undergoing two years of solitary confinement in the Petropavlovski fortress they were sentenced to hard labor in Siberia, one sister for a period of nine years, and the other for six years.

Alexandra Khorjevskaya, another woman who suffered for the cause of freedom, was arrested for distributing Nihilistic literature, and after being imprisoned for many months was sentenced to Siberia for five years. It is believed that she died in exile, as her friends have not been able to learn anything of her since her term of exile expired. Her fate has been that of thousands—exile, obscurity, death.

Mademoiselle Toporkova, another young woman belonging to one of the best families of the empire, was arrested while distributing incendiary literature. She, like the Lubotovitch sisters, travelled all over Russia disseminating liberal

ideas, and succeeded in ingratiating herself into the favor of the poorer classes. She was also connected with the printing of forbidden books, and when arrested several of these were found on her person. At the expiration of two years confinement in prison she was sentenced to hard labor in Siberia for a period of six years. Mademoiselle Toporkova was one of the foremost women Nihilists who sprang into existence soon after the assassination of Alexander II.

The sisters Soobotin, Eugenie and Maria, in daring recklessness very much resembled the Lubotovitch sisters. The Soobotins were also noted for their beauty and accomplishments. They masqueraded in the role of spies for their party, and succeeded in obtaining much valuable information which many times saved Nihilists from arrest. They managed to secure the confidence of a high official, and obtained from him all the immediate plans of General Ignatieff for the suppression of Nihilism. In addition to this piece of daring they learned through another source nearly all the names of the Nihilists whom General Ignatieff considered to be implicated in the movement and whom he intended to arrest. By their cunning the whole plan was frustrated, and for the time being the Nihilists rested in their fancied security. But the real spies of the Third Section were set to work and succeeded in securing sufficient evidence to arrest the sisters. By this time they had grown reckless, and little dreamed that any suspicion attached to them. They were arrested at midnight and conveyed to the fortress. When they were missed members of their circle of Nihilists instituted a search for them, but months elapsed ere they discovered where they were imprisoned. The Soobotins, like the Lubotovitch sisters, endured solitary confinement for many months before they were finally sent to Siberia. Each sister received a sentence of six years, which in Maria's case was afterwards increased to eight years.

Mademoiselle Ivanova, in conjunction with Mademoiselle Griaznova, played a very prominent part in Nihilism. The former was a daughter of a major in the army and became known through her connection with the secret printing office of the Terrorist organ, Narodnaya Volia (People's Will). When the office was discovered these two ladies, revolvers in hand, kept the soldiers at bay for more than two hours. The gendarmes sought to overcome the party by firing through the doors and windows. But for lack of ammunition those inside were finally conquered and obliged to surrender. One of the gendarmes tied the hands and feet of Mademoiselle Ivanova and threw her on the ground. While in this humiliating position she reproached her comrades for their cowardice in so readily yielding up the situation. A gendarme who guarded her struck her in the face and kicked her brutally, inflicting serious injuries upon her. This man appeared against her as a witness at the trial, and when she complained of his brutality her words were disregarded, and she was condemned to fifteen years' penal servitude. Mademoiselle Griaznova was transported to Siberia for life, and I believe the sentence of her companion was afterwards commuted to four years, through the influence of the heir-apparent, to whom the court-martial appealed.

Vera Figner, who was accused of complicity in the plot to destroy the Winter palace in 1880, but was afterwards acquitted, was twenty-two years old and the daughter of a high Russian official. She was subsequently condemned, however, to fifteen years' penal servitude for her connection with the Terrorist party. It was Mademoiselle Figner who planned the assassination of General Strelnikoff at Odessa, which proved successful, and for which she was sentenced to death, but the penalty was afterwards commuted to imprisonment for life in the fortress of Schlussemburg. Of her ultimate fate we know nothing definite, but reports have reached the outside world that she died there in 1885.

Eugenie Figner, like her sister Vera, was a woman of ability and education. She was the associate of Kviatskovsky, a devoted fellow-worker in what she esteemed the cause of freedom. Something more than the bonds of mere friendship seems to have united them, however, as for years they labored together under assumed names. Kviatskovsky had the management of the secret press through which liberalism was propagated. Some articles written by him, discovered during a search of his apartments by the police, were deemed conclusive evidence of his complicity in the Winter palace explosion. The fact of Eugenie's constant association with Kviatskovsky was the cause of suspicion being directed also towards her, and a search of her lodgings was made in the hope of discovering incriminating evidence. A glass vessel containing dynamite was found, and also a bundle of white paper corresponding in size to that used for the printing of Narodnaya Volia. In addition forty-five copies of a proclamation issued in connection with the railway explosion near Moscow were found, and these discoveries led to her arrest, after which she was exiled to Siberia for fifteen years.

But the brave women I have mentioned thus far are not the only members of their sex who have become martyrs to Nihilism. The case of Madame Sighidi, for example, is still fresh in the minds of American readers. It was she who suffered death at the Kara mines by being stripped and brutally flogged in the presence of the prison officials, for the reason that she had resented an insult offered to her womanhood by the governor of the mines. The rest of the women politicals, fearing like treatment, inaugurated a hunger strike, which lasted many days and was only broken by a promise to have the governor of the prison removed. This was not fulfilled, however, and Madame Kovalskaya, with several others, took poison and succumbed to its effects before the officials learned of their act.

The island of Saghalien was during the past year the scene of brutal treatment to a woman whose name has not reached us, but the occurrence has been vividly described by an eye-witness.

Perhaps the most popular of recent sufferers for this cause was Madame Tschebrikova, who, while not a Nihilist, had sufficient courage to forward a letter to the czar expressive of her ideas of the administration of justice in Russia. It was a clear, logical and impassioned appeal to the ruler of more than one hundred millions of people for the reorganization of the *tehinovnik* (official)

system throughout the empire. With what result the letter was received the world already knows. The noble-minded woman, who, having the courage of her convictions did not hesitate to speak, now languishes in an obscure village in the westernmost part of the province of Archangelsk. The latest accounts received describe her condition as truly pitiable.

The present attitude of Russia toward her people is not such as to inspire confidence in the Nihilistic movement in the future. Russian possessions must be Russianized at all hazards, and centralization appears to be the sole aim of the government. Suppression and not expansion seems to be the motto of the ruler of Russia. In a country where the rights of the people receive little or no recognition it is but natural to look for discontent, and to find in constant motion a movement toward the amelioration of the condition of the masses. That it will ever reach greater proportions than at present is doubtful, for the chief of the dreaded Third Section has such means at his disposal in the form of spies as to make a successful uprising well-nigh impossible.

The agitators fail to understand that education alone can achieve the end they are trying to gain by force. A broader education is now permitted to certain classes which before were restricted in this matter; but the fact still remains that the peasant or rural population at the present day is as densely ignorant as it was at the time of its emancipation more than a quarter of a century ago. Until this state of things is changed the leaders of the liberal movement, who comprise the educated people of the empire, can hope for little success from any scheme tending to better their condition. True, thousands of lives have been sacrificed on the altar of freedom, and it is also true that many thousands more will share the same fate, for the rising generation is imbued with ideas of freedom amounting almost to fanaticism. No persecution, no suppression or oppression, will eradicate these ideas, and men and women will continue to suffer and yield up their lives for what, I fear, will in the end prove a lost cause.

The social and political conditions of the empire have developed a peculiar class of women whose one aim in life is the liberation of their people from the thralldom of oppression, and who, to attain that end, are willing to sacrifice home, friends, and even life if necessary. Tourgenieff, in the following quotation from his *Verses and Prose*, portrays the character of these women more forcibly than could any words of mine:

"I see a huge building with a narrow door in its front wall. The door is open and a dismal darkness stretches beyond. Before the high threshold stands a girl—a Russian girl. Frost breathes out of the impenetrable darkness, and with the icy draught from the depths of the building there comes forth a slow and hollow voice:

"'Oh! thou who art wanting to cross this threshold; dost thou know what awaits thee?'

"'I know it,' answers the girl.

"'Cold, hunger, hatred, derision, contempt, insults, a fearful death even?'

"'I know it.'

“Complete isolation and separation from all?’
“I know it. I am ready. I will bear all sorrows and miseries.’
“Not only if inflicted by enemies, but when done by kindred and friends?’
“Yes, even when done by them.’
“Well, are you ready for self-sacrifice?’
“Yes.’
“For anonymous self-sacrifice? You shall die, and nobody shall know even whose memory is to be honored.’
“I want neither gratitude nor pity. I want no name.’
“Are you ready for a crime?’
“The girl bent her head. ‘I am ready even for a crime.’
“The voice paused awhile before renewing its interrogatories.
“Then again, ‘Dost thou know,’ it said at last, ‘that thou mayest lose thy faith in what thou now believest, that thou mayest feel that thou hast been mistaken, and hast lost thy young life in vain?’
“I know that also, and nevertheless I will enter.’
“Enter, then.’
“The girl crossed the threshold and a heavy curtain fell behind her.
“A fool,’ gnashed someone outside.
“A saint,’ answered a voice from somewhere.”

Ella Norraikow, “Woman’s Share in Russian Nihilism,” *Cosmopolitan* 11 (September 1891): 619-627.

Vera Figner.²



I.

Vera Figner, when the breezes blow,
Do you awaken to the hostile morn?
Or do you live so numbed you do not know,
Like a toad in a granite tempest-worn?
Vera Figner, are the eyes bedewed
That men had died for in the far-away?
Is your face like a wounded soul—subdued
To grief that never heals for any day?

II.

Does the clock in the turret tell you now
The morn is vanishing, the day declines?
Or is all thought beneath the drooping brow
Vacant and gloomy as the winter pines?
Have men betrampled through the many years
Your soul submitting till its very deep
Has oozed away to dust: till you lack tears,
Denied the unhappy ones who cannot weep?

² Vera Figner, Russian Revolutionary; a woman of great charm and radiant beauty. She was condemned to imprisonment for life, and for twenty years was immured in the living rave of the Schlüsselburg Fortress. When these lines were composed the writer thought that Vera Figner was still in prison. By a strange chance, on three days after the lines were written, he read that Vera Figner had been released.)

III.

Oh marvel of misfortune that a soul
So full of liberty and love should be
Tired, ever tired, to creep like any mole
From wall to wall in darkling vacancy.
To wrap the rich thought of the brain in death,
For never any sound may let it forth.
Oh God, that givest consecrated breath
To holy truth, why tarryeth Thy wrath?

IV.

Beloved of all spirits that achieve
Through agony—Oh, miserable, thou,
Who hast all suffering, but cannot leave
Thy burden ever! What is breathing now
But a poor disinheritance of days?
And even that poor remnant is defiled;
For thee that shouldst have trod delicious ways
No morn, no eve, no love, no roof, no child.

V.

Thou canst not be endungeoned evermore:
Thy soul is where the breezes blow with pain
Past Ladoga: there is not any shore
That hath not felt thy yearning. If again
Thou hast all agony, thou hast the crown,
The heaven within the spirit that shall save,
Though earth be cruel. Death hath his renown,
But cannot pass our conquerable grave.

Hubert Church, "Vera Figner," *Egmont* (Melbourne: Thomas C. Lothian, 1908): 52-53.

IMPRISONED TWENTY YEARS

Czar Banishes Desperate Woman Nihilist to Archangel

By Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Nov. 8.—Mary Figner,³ who has been confined to the Schlüsselburg fortress for twenty years, has been released and banished to Archangel, northern Russia. The woman was condemned to life imprisonment for participating in Nihilist conspiracies.

She waved her handkerchief as a signal indicating the approach of Alexander II when he was assassinated here in 1881.

As the woman still shows desperate nihilistic sentiments she has now been banished.

“Imprisoned Twenty Years,” *Los Angeles Herald* 32 no. 39 (November 9, 1904): 11.

³ Vera Figner.

Sophie Perovskaya,



LIBERTY'S MARTYRED HEROINE.
HANGED APRIL 15, 1881,
For Helping to Rid the World of a Tyrant.

Down from her high estate she stept,
 A maiden, gently born
And by the icy Volga kept
 Sad watch, and waited morn;
And peasants say that where she slept
 The new moon dipped her horn.
 Yet on and on, through shoreless snows
 Stretched tow'rd the great north pole,
 The foulest wrong the good God known
 Rolls as dark rivers roll.
 While never once for all these woes
 Upspeaks one human soul.

She toiled, she taught the peasant, taught
 The dark-eyed Tartar. He,
Inspired with her lofty thought,
 Rose up and sought to be,
What God at the creation wrought,
 A man! God-like and free.
 Yet e'er before him yawn the black
 Siberian mines! And oh,
 The knout upon the bare white back!
 The blood upon the snow !
 The gaunt wolves, close upon the track,
 Fight o'er the fallen so!

And this that one might wear a crown
 Snatched from a strangled sire!
And this that two might mock or frown,
 From high thrones climbing higher,
To where the parricide looks down
 With harlot in desire!
 Yet on, beneath the great north star,
 Like some lost, living thing,
 That long line stretches black and far
 Till buried by death's wing!
 And great men praise the goodly czar —
 But God sits pitying.

The storm burst forth! From out that storm
 The clean, red lightning leapt!
And lo, a prostrate royal form!
 Like any blood, his crept
Down through the snow, all smoking warm,
 And Alexander slept!
 Yea, one lies dead, for millions dead!
 One red spot in the snow
 For one long damning line of red;
 While exiles endless go —
 The babe at breast, the mother's head
 Bowed down, and dying so!

And did a woman do this deed?
 Then build her scaffold high,
That all may on her forehead read
 Her martyr's right to die!
Ring Cossack round on royal steed!
 Now lift her to the sky!
 But see! From out the black hood shines
 A light few look upon!
 Poor exile, see! from dark deep mines,
 Your star at burst of dawn !
 A thud! a creak of hangman's lines —
 A frail shape jerked and drawn !

The czar is dead; the woman dead.
 About her neck a cord.
In God's house rests his royal head —
 Here in a place abhorred;
Yet I would rather have her bed

Than thine, most royal lord!
Yea, rather be that woman dead,
Than this new living czar,
To hide in dread, with both hands red,
Behind great bolt and bar —
While like the dead, still endless tread
Sad exiles tow'rd their star.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

Joaquin Miller, "Sophie Perovskaya, Liberty's Martyred Heroine," *Liberty* 1, no. 1 (August 6, 1881): 1.

THE BEAUTIFUL NIHILIST

"She was beautiful." Those are the three words with which a Russian writer, who was intimately acquainted with her, commences his personal description of Sophie Perovsky. "Hers was not," he continues, "the beauty which dazzles at first sight, but that which fascinates the more it is regarded. A blonde, with a pair of blue eyes, serious and penetrating, under a broad and spacious forehead. A delicate little nose, a charming mouth, which showed, when she smiled, two rows of very fine white teeth. It was, however, her countenance as a whole which was the attraction. There was something brisk, vivacious, and at the same time ingenuous, in her rounded face. She was girlhood personified. Notwithstanding her twenty-six years, she seemed scarcely eighteen. A small, slender, and very graceful figure, and a voice as charming, silvery, and sympathetic as could be, heightened this illusion. It became almost a certainty when she began to laugh, which very often happened. She had the ready laugh of a girl, and laughed with so much heartiness, and so unaffectedly, that she really seemed a young lass of sixteen."

Who, it is likely to be asked, was this fascinating Russian girl? Surely, it will be thought, she could not be a very terrible revolutionist. We shall see.

Sophie Perovsky was a member of the highest aristocracy of Russia, her ancestors having been connected by marriage with the imperial family of Romanoff. Her father was Governor-General of St. Petersburg, in which city she was born in 1854. Count Perovsky was a domestic tyrant, before whom his wife and daughters were taught to quail; and to this circumstance may be ascribed Sophie's early development of a hatred of oppression and sympathy with the downtrodden which she retained throughout her brief and stormy life. Always tender and affectionate in her disposition, she possessed a strong mind, an iron will, and a temperament full of enthusiasm.

She had just entered her fifteenth year when she caught the contagion of the desire for higher education which was then passing like a wave over the

young womanhood of Russia. Many ladies of the highest families, finding no colleges open to them in their own country, proceeded to Zurich to study there, in free Switzerland. Sophie wished to join them, but her father refused his consent. Following the example of many others, she left her home, and repaired secretly to the house of a friend, from which she negotiated with her father, who, after vain endeavours during several weeks to discover her retreat by means of the police, gave a reluctant; consent to the course she wished to pursue, and sent her a passport. Her mother provided her with a small sum of money, and she found herself free to study.

There were other things to be learned in Zurich besides medicine, to which most of the girl student's from Russia at first devoted themselves. That little Swiss town was at that time one of the chief centres of the Socialist refugees of Germany. Gradually Sophie Perovsky and her young friends forsook the study of medicine for that of political economy, which they read in the works of Marx and Proudhon. These studies were interrupted, however, by the imperial decree of 1871, ordering all subjects of the Czar to leave Zurich and return home, under the penalty of outlawry. The result, was the return of some scores of young persons of both sexes, with their heads full of Socialism and Democracy, to disseminate among all with whom they came in contact the ideas they had imbibed in the free West.

Unfortunately, everything which is done in Russia, if at variance with the absolute system of the Czar, has to be done in secret. Sophie Perovsky, with some other students of both sexes, formed the nucleus of a propagandist circle, which was gradually enlarged by the adhesion of others until it became strong enough to send out lecturers to spread their principles among the working classes of St. Petersburg. This movement was mainly due to the initiative of Sophie Perovsky, who was always endeavouring to find new means of activity and to open new channels for the diffusion of the political and social opinions which she had embraced so ardently.

In the autumn of 1873, while engaged in the work of propagandism in the great industrial quarter of the Alexander Nevsky, in conjunction with Prince Peter Krapotkine, our young lady was arrested and lodged in prison, where, though there was no evidence upon which she could be convicted of treason, or even sedition, and though she was not placed on trial, she was detained for a year. She was then released on her father becoming bail for her, but was obliged to leave the capital and reside in the Crimea, where the family possessed an estate. There she remained for three years, under strict surveillance, and was then ordered to go up for trial with 192 other members of the propagandist circle which she had assisted to form on her return from Zurich. She was acquitted, but not released, the Czar's method of dealing with political offenders being, when they cannot be convicted, to have them removed by the police to some distant town, which they are not allowed to leave without permission.

From this time, however, Sophie Perovsky resolved to set the will of the Czar at defiance. In 1878, after four years' enforced sojourn in a northern town,

she succeeded in evading the (surveillance of the police, without any assistance, or even communication with her friends, and returned to St. Petersburg. The Terrorist phase of the Nihilist movement had then commenced, consequent upon the severities of the Government. General Trepoff had a political prisoner severely flogged, and he was shot by Vera Zassulitch, whom the Czar strove to arrest a second time, after she had been tried and acquitted. This startling event was followed, a few months afterwards, by another—General Mezentsoff was shot dead in the street. Sophie Perovsky threw herself, with all her energy, her iron will, and her fertility in resources, into this new and terrible phase of the movement to which she had devoted herself. She again took up the work of propagandism among the working classes of the capital, and was one of the founders of the society to which Professor Michailoff belonged, implicated in the plot for the assassination of Alexander II.

Once embarked on this dangerous course, all who knew Sophie Perovsky knew that she was not one who would turn back from it. Henceforth she played a prominent part in all the most desperate undertakings of the revolutionists. The first of these in which she participated was the attempt to rescue Voinarsky, which failed. In the plot to blow up the imperial train at Moscow the duty was assigned to her by the Revolutionary Committee of exploding the deposit of nitro-glycerine, so as to destroy the house and everyone in it in the event of the police coming to arrest the conspirators. This will be remembered as the plot with which Hartmann was connected. Plots against the life of the Czar followed each other rapidly about this time. The blowing up of the stone bridge over the Neva was not accomplished, owing to one of the conspirators failing to keep his appointment, and the plot to blow up the imperial steamer was discovered by the police, the only Nihilist plot they ever succeeded in discovering.

Then came the fearful tragedy of the 13th March, 1881, when a grenade charged with nitro-glycerine was thrown at the Czar, and, exploding at his feet, inflicted such dreadful injuries that he died shortly afterwards. On this dreadful occasion it was Sophie Perovsky who directed the arrangements and had charge of the signals. Geliaboff, who had been concerned in the Moscow attempt, with Michailoff and others, were under her direction. No arrests were made on the spot. The authorities seemed paralysed by mingled fear and horror.

Four days after the tragedy a lady waited upon the Russian writer whose *nom de plume* is "Stepniak," with a request that he would go to Sophie Perovsky. He was unaware that she had participated in the crime of the 13th, but he knew the part she had played in the Moscow conspiracy, and concluded that she wished for his assistance in getting out of the country. He found her pale and excited, but without any intention of leaving the city. Full of hope and enthusiasm, she said it was impossible to leave at such a crisis; there was so much to do, so many persons to be seen. She wanted information of "the enemy." Several arrests had been made, and one of the suspected had committed

suicide. The man she loved, too, was compromised, though he had not directly participated in the Killing of Alexander.

There was a police official of high rank with whom "Stepniak" had been acquainted for some years previously, and upon whom he waited at once, after making an appointment with Sophie for the evening. From him he learned that the fate of all the accused was sealed; there would be a trial, but it would only be a form. On meeting Sophie in the evening, he again entreated her to escape from the country; but, she was on that point immovable. She appears, however, to have been much less hopeful of the future than she had been in the morning. They parted a little before midnight, with the intention of meeting again on the following afternoon; but Sophie arrived first at the appointed place, and hurried away again without waiting for her friend's arrival. Two days afterwards she was arrested. The Countess Perovsky, who travelled in haste from the Crimea on hearing of her arrest, was not allowed to see her until the day on which the trial terminated with a sentence of death upon all the accused. Six days elapsed between the sentence and the execution, and on each day the Countess Perovsky presented herself at the portals of her daughter's prison, begging to be permitted to see her again, and on the fifth day was told she should see her on the morrow. The unhappy lady went, but only to see Sophie in the fatal cart on the way to execution.

"Sophie Perovsky," said the St. Petersburg correspondent of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, in narrating the execution of the conspirators, "displayed extraordinary moral strength. Her cheeks oven preserved their rose colour, while her face, always serious, without the slightest trace of parade, was full of true courage and endless abnegation. Her look was calm and peaceful; not the slightest sign of ostentation could be discerned in it."

"The Beautiful Nihilist," *New Zealand Herald* 30 no. 9416 (July 13, 1889): 2.

"She was beautiful. It was not the beauty which dazzles at first sight, but that which fascinates the more, the more it is regarded.

"A blonde, with a pair of blue eyes, serious and penetrating, under a broad and spacious forehead. A delicate little nose; a charming mouth, which showed, when she smiled, two rows of very fine white teeth.

"It was, however, her countenance as a whole which was the attraction. There was something brisk, vivacious, and at the same time, ingenuous in her rounded face. She was girlhood personified. Notwithstanding her twenty-six years, she seemed scarcely eighteen. A small, slender, and very graceful figure, and a voice as charming, silvery, and sympathetic as could be, heightened the illusion. It became almost a certainty when she began to laugh, which very often happened. She had the ready laugh of a girl, and laughed with so much heartiness, and so unaffectedly, that she really seemed a young lass of sixteen.

"She gave little thought to her appearance. She dressed in the most modest manner, and perhaps did not even know what dress or ornament was becoming or unbecoming. But she had a passion for neatness, and in this was as punctilious as a Swiss girl.

"She was very fond of children, and was an excellent schoolmistress. There was, however, another office which she filled even better, that of nurse. When any of her friends fell ill, Sophia was the first to offer herself for this difficult duty, and she performed that duty with such gentleness, cheerfulness, and patience that she won the hearts of her patients for all time.

"Yet this woman, with such an innocent appearance and with such a sweet and affectionate disposition, was one of the most dreaded members of the Terrorist party.

"Sophia Perovskaia belonged, like Krapotkine, to the highest aristocracy of Russia. The Perovski are the younger branch of the family of the famous Rasumovsky, themorganatic husband of the Empress Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great, who occupied the throne of Russia in the middle of last century (1741-1762).

"Such was the family to which this woman belonged, who gave such a tremendous blow to Czarism."— Underground Russia

The Beauteous Terrorist

Sir Henry Parkes

Soft as the morning's pearly light,
Where yet may rise the thunder-cloud,
Her gentle face was ever bright
With noble thought and purpose proud.

Dreamt ye that those divine blue eyes,
That beauty free from pride or blame,
Were fashion'd but to terrorize
O'er Despot's power of sword and flame?

Beware! Those beauteous lineaments
Of girlhood shrine a force sublime,
Which moulds to fearful use events,
And dares arraign Imperial crime.

A fear was in the peasants' eyes,
A palsy smote both tongue and hand;
A network of police and spies
O'erspread the tyrant-tortured land.

The dungeons swallowed all our best—

Who next should perish none could say;
A thousand victims of arrest
Were torn from us one summer day.

The judges, sworn to guard the right,
Interpreted the tyrant's bent;
Though cleared by witnesses of light,
'Twas hard to save the innocent.

The Senate, in its ordered state,
Might free — its voice inspired no awe
Acquittal did not liberate —
The Autocrat annulled the law.

The tender, sweet Enthusiast,
The bright-eyed maid with hero's soul,
Had watched the thickening shadow cast
O'er all the land, in death and dole.

Her girlhood's secret studies, late
And early, in her princely home;
Her converse with the good and great,
The lessons taught by Greece and Rome,

Had nerved her heart to action strong ;
She joined the few who dared the worst,
Resolved to strike the monster Wrong —
To wrestle with the Thing accurst!

Pale Freedom's devotees, whose creed
Was vengeance, who in silent trust
Prepared themselves to bear and bleed,
And bravely die — if die they must.

What matter'd, so the Despot's doom
And Freedom's advent, nearer drew ?
Their chosen path was through the gloom —
The perils of their choice they knew.

To give their all, even life, were sweet —
Not half, as Ananias gave —
So they might see the work complete,
Or feel it finished in the grave.

The early rose of womanhood
Had scarce illumed her angel face,
When 'mongst conspirators she stood —
The bravest in the darkest place.

In danger, failure, suffering, she
Cheer'd on with her unchanging smile,
Still looking forth to victory,
As free from doubt as far from guile.

Stern men pursued the work of death —
No war-cry raised, no flag, unfurled —
They laid the mine whose nitric breath
Should blow the tyrant from the world.

Dark warfare! — oh, how pitiless!
What else for them? — no right of speech,
No right of meeting for redress,
No right the rights of man to teach:

How plead their cause in burning words?
How arm'd in just rebellion rise? —
Where gleam a million servile swords,
Where Drown for prey a million spies.

To counsel, organize, sustain,
To plan escape, to lead attack,
Her steady hand and luminous brain
Were ever Onward — never Back!

Her voice was like a holy bell,
Calling to highest sacrifice;
When black disaster heaviest fell,
She stood all smiles to pay the price!

Baffled surprise and bold escape,
Endurance long, at last are o'er;
The Monster's jaws insatiate gape,
Whose cry for blood is ever "More!"

The hunters close around her path,
Her forfeit life is in their hands;
She neither bends before their wrath,
Nor braves her captor's hireling bands.

She meets her fate serene and still,
Above all earthly hopes and fears;
If once her eyes the teardrops fill,
Her mother's grief unlocks the tears.

The mockery of trial came,
And follow'd swift the words of doom;
But ignominy, woe, and shame
Were far from her — her dungeon-tomb

Held spiritual companions; there
A light, which others could not see,
Shone in her heart, and everywhere —
To die was only to be free!

Six days no friendly face came near,
No sister's clinging arm, no word
From all the loved ones reach'd her ear —
Her mother's voice no more was heard.

Six days the weeping mother sought
To see her sentenced child in vain;
Their eyes ne'er met till she was brought
Forth in the daylight — to be slain!

She stood beneath the felon rope —
Her beauty felt the hangman's hand;
But, steadfast in her life-long hope,
She only saw "the promised land!"

The promised land of Truth and Right —
The holy cause of Freedom won!
She only saw the far-off Light,
And heard the People marching on!

She stood — her cheek rose-lighted still —
A moment, calm and iron-willed;
Then all of her which Power could kill
Was mercilessly crushed and killed.

The scaffold had its radiant prey,
The Despot's minions breathed secure —
The proud and haughty went their way,

Spurning the dead so young and pure.

But souls like her's survive the fate
Which tyrants in their might decree,
And ever live to animate
The nations struggling to be free.

Purged of the dross of earth, the fire
Of one great spirit's holocaust
Will thousands wake to patriot ire —
Will raise to life a patriot host!

Sir Henry Parkes, "The Beauteous Terrorist," *The Beauteous Terrorist and Other Poems*, (Melbourne: George Robertson: 1885): 1.

The Stuff of which Nihilist Martyrs are Made.

Sophie Perowski, recently executed for complicity in the murder of the Czar, was, according to the *Intransigent*, a woman of the highest endowments and accomplishments, who at the age of 16 devoted herself to the propaganda of socialist doctrines. For twelve years she never shrank from any sacrifice and never showed lack of courage or want of presence of mind. She cast aside honors, wealth, ease, and submitted to the coarsest drudgery. She walked alone the whole course of the Volga, her energy triumphing over old cold, tempests, hunger and malady. She felt that her mission was to rouse the peasant from torpor, and to this end worked as a harvest woman in hay and wheat fields, sometimes dressed as a man. She lived in miserable lodging-houses, and entered into work-shops seeking for employment. She was forced into violence by persecution. Three years ago, after twenty-four months' detention, she was condemned to transportation to the extreme north, and her sentence was executed in mid-winter. She contrived to drug the tea of her guards, and escaped. She worked her way back to St. Petersburg in a peasant's dress, and then to Moscow, where she joined in the railway mine conspiracy. The people with whom she lodged never suspected her of being a lady, she went so bravely through the most toilsome drudgery. She had also lived so much with poor people as to be able to enter into all their ideas.

"The Stuff of which Nihilist Martyrs are Made," *Los Angeles Herald* 15 no. 91 (May 18, 1881): 1.

ITEMS FROM THE PRESS

BEAUTIFUL NIHILIST SLAYS; WEDS; TRACKED, IS CAUGHT

Woman Who Killed Governor General of Warsaw Pleads She Has Become Austrian
by Marriage

By Associated Press.

VIENNA, Nov. 23.—Wanda Dobroczieka, the woman who threw a bomb at Gen. Skalon of Warsaw and, aided by confederates, disappeared has been brought from Cracow to Vienna, where her trial on the demand of the Russian government for her extradition will take place.

The prisoner is a strikingly pretty woman of the Polish type and is as intelligent as she is pretty.

After her crime she fled to Cracow. There her beauty attracted many admirers, one of whom, an Austrian, she married. The secret police tracked her, and her arrest followed, in spite of a plea that by marriage she had become an Austrian subject.

“Beautiful Nihilist Slays; Weds; Tracked, Is Caught,” *Los Angeles Herald* 35 no. 53 (November 24, 1907): 2.

REVIVAL OF NIHILISM.

STORY FROM ST. PETERSBURG IN RELATION THERETO.

The Wife of a General Elopes With a Nihilist, and is Afterward Captured and Killed by Her Husband.

Special to the RECORD-UNION.

NEW YORK, Jan. 22.—A Berlin cable says: The forerunner of his imperial Highness, the Czarewitch, arrived some twenty-four hours before the great event materialized, which sets all Berlin talking. The stories going the rounds with reference to the Czarewitch is that the Czar's desire is to make a dicker with the Kaiser to fight Nihilism and Socialism. In connection with this the following story is related, which points toward a revival of Nihilism.

The St. Petersburg Central Committee of Nihilists, it is said, ordered some three months ago one of their members, a young aristocrat, noted for his manly beauty and refinement of manners, to engage in intrigue with the wife of General Frowdeinki, a shining light of the political house of the Czar, whose duty it is to watch the International League of Nihilists and Socialists. The comrade did honor to the confidence which his friends extended him, and in November he eloped with the General's wife from St. Petersburg, the woman having first provided herself with 15,000 roubles from her husband's safe. They traveled through various parts of Europe, stopping finally at Fiume. They no sooner put up at the hotel when a cipher dispatch ordered them to return at once to Kief. This was on January 5th. The nihilist, though thinking it very strange his comrades recalled him so quickly and demanded him to put himself into immediate danger of capture, followed the summons, and with the General's wife re-entered Russia.

They no sooner crossed the frontier when a number of police officers in citizens' dress entered the carriages and informed them that they were prisoners of state. Arrived in Kief, they were at once confronted by General Frowdeinki and subjected to a rigid cross-examination. The General's wife, upon seeing her husband, assumed a determined attitude and boldly said: "I am a nihilist, and will not reveal one single word that I know." The General tried his best to move her. On receiving only defiant answers, he finally got enraged, drew a sword and plunged it into his wife's heart, killing her instantly. The nihilist was carried off to St. Petersburg, where he is now imprisoned.

"Revival of Nihilism," *Sacramento Daily Union* 84 no. 133, (January 23, 1893): 1.

A Female Nihilist.

Some farther particulars have been gleaned regarding the young girl who is being tried at the present time, with four other persons, at St. Petersburg for being concerned in revolutionary schemes. Her name is Olga Ivanovsky, and since leaving school she has been studying medicine. According to the *Galgnani Messenger* it has also been ascertained that one of her intimate friends was Sophie Gunsburg, who was tried among the first batch of prisoners and sentenced to death. Mlle. Ivanovsky's arrest occurred under the following circumstances: About a month ago the police authorities received an anonymous communication which directed their attention to the house belonging to the Holy Synod, situated on the Liteinaia Prospect. Acting on this information a party of police and gendarmes visited the house and searched it thoroughly. In the apartments occupied by Privy Councilor Illinsky, director of a department in the Holy Synod, they discovered a quantity of proclamations, manuscripts in cipher, some dynamite, and a great number of letters belonging to M. Illinsky's niece, who was no other than Mlle. Ivanovsky. The letters showed that she carried on a very extensive correspondence with Nihilists living abroad or in the provinces of Russia and the young lady was arrested forthwith. M. Pobedonotseff, Procurator-General of the Holy Synod, who was staying in the Crimea at the "time, was immediately called back to St. Petersburg, and his assistant, M. Saber, received a similar summons. The correspondence found in M. Illinsky's rooms furnished the police with the names and residence of Nihilists for whom they had long been searching, and they began making a series of arrests which are even now still going on in different towns of the empire. As the names of high ecclesiastical functionaries are concerned in the affair, all the arrests and the judicial investigations in connection with the case have been conducted with the utmost secrecy. In the course of the trial it has been established so far that daily meetings of Nihilists, at which Olga Ivanovsky presided, were held at the house in the Liteinaia Prospect, at hours when M. Illinsky himself was taken from home by the affairs of his office.

Daily Alta California, Volume 84, Number 39, 8 February 1891 10.

A YOUNG NIHILIST WOMAN.

She Kills a Government Officer and Then Commits Suicide.

NEW YORK, February 3d.— A letter to the *Tribune* from St. Petersburg gives the following details of the recent murder of Colonel Solotouchine, Chief of the Secret Police Department of Moscow:

Having received notification that a number of Nihilists were in the habit of holding meetings at the house of M. Audrieff, the Colonel determined to ascertain whether the information was correct. Accordingly, toward 8 o'clock in the evening, he concealed himself in the neighborhood and carefully scanned the faces of all who either entered or left M. Andrieff's residence.

Several of them he recognized as individuals already under surveillance as dissatisfied characters, and at length he determined to arrest the next person who rang the door-bell. This proved to be a young woman.

He touched her on the arm and she instantly recognized him. Quick as lightning she drew from her pocket a small revolver and fired. The bullet entered his right eye, and, penetrating the brain, killed him on the spot. Then the murderess shot herself through the head. Her dead body was found lying across that of Colonel Solotouchine.

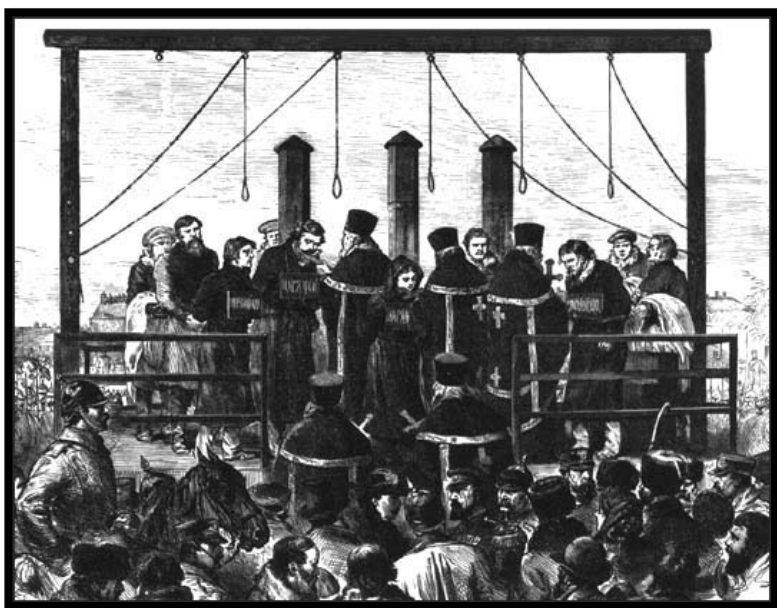
An examination of the papers found on the young girl proved that she was Olga Gontcharenko, 19 years of age, and the only daughter of the Director of the Government telegraphs at Moscow.

Within a couple of hours afterward M. Andrieff's house was raided by the authorities, but no one was found there.

"A Young Nihilist Woman," *Sacramento Daily Union* 62 no. 142 (February 4, 1890): 5.



Sophia and Maria Perovskaya



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