



The New Zealand Graphic AND LADIES' JOURNAL.

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In our issue of the 18th of April last appeared, under the title of 'A Political Devotee,' an account of the trial of the last most prominent woman in the ranks of Russian Nihilism. Her name was Sophia Ginsberg. Early in last November she was condemned to be hanged. There was an agitation got up in New York on her behalf, and the Czar, wishing not to offend American susceptibilities, commuted her sentence to solitary imprisonment for life. A recent cable-gram states that she has committed suicide, presumably at Schlüsselberg, Lake Ladoga, near the Russian capital, where she was confined. In the matter of this report the world is, of course, at the mercy of the Russian Government. It is clearly to its interest that a woman round whom endless conspiracies might group themselves in the event of Russia going to war should be dead or supposed dead. The prisoners in the clutches of a mighty despotism sink from sight, and their fellow beings hearing that they are dead, know not whether it is true or whether it is not by foul or furtive methods that the welcome disembarassment has been procured.

The wonder is that the Russian Government should allow any knowledge of the fate of Sophia Ginsberg to leak out, unless it were for the purpose of crushing the hopes of those who may have been bent upon liberating her. 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church,' and of political conspiracy, which in the case of the Nihilists represents the revolt of a small educated class against the abuses of a tyrannical and obsolete Government, the same may be said. The spectacle of complete self-sacrifice even in a conspirator like Sophia Ginsberg, excites sympathy in the minds of all who breathe the air of popular freedom, and her tyrannical aims are condoned by the plea of extreme provocation. On all who consider the question of Russian despotism seriously, the example of these desperate Russian women, with their nerve of steel and their unflinching determination to shake off the incubus of mis-government at all costs, is most baneful for the Czar and his advisers. So conscious are the latter of it that they extend no mercy whatever to a female Nihilist. The influence of women like Sophia Perloffskaya and Sophia Ginsberg is such as cannot be counterbalanced by the possession of countless legions.

Nothing is gained in this world without agitation, even in a free country. The secret of reform everywhere is ceaseless publication and protest, the advertisement of the new principles and the public condemnation of the old ones. Now this is exactly what the Russian Government will not allow, and hence the Nihilists are driven to assassination as a means of keeping their cause before their fellows. It is a lurid sort of advertising—not brutal, malicious homicide. Why a Czar who collects and lets loose a million of his soldiers to cut the throats of his neighbours in the effort to rob Turkey of Constantinople should not be held as culpable as those who say to him, 'Grant us reform or die by secret assassination,' is not very intelligible. He is ready to slay countless thousands in the pursuit of his statecraft, while they only desire to slay him in the pursuit of theirs. It is a difference of might and a difference of opinion, that is all.

The Nihilists who declare war against the Czar's person, march to a more certain fate than do soldiers on their way to battle. Nihilists who can be tracked do not hope for mercy if the Russian Government can lay its hands upon them. To be suspected of doing acts and using words which in other lands are virtuous and patriotic is enough to entail a loss of liberty or of life in the enthusiasts who are strug-

gling to make themselves heard through the triple oppression of Russian rule. So very little constitutes conspiracy there, that a rash youth or girl, incensed by the Government's treatment of their beloved ones, slides into a position where some punishment becomes certain and the stronger natures, incensed, push on to battle rather than retire.

Sophia Ginsberg the Jewess, was of the latter. Accustomed from earliest youth to see the people of her race persecuted, and finding sympathetic allies in the discontented section of the educated Russians, she threw herself heart and soul into the torrent of agitation. There are only two courses open to liberal-minded persons in Russia, either to surreptitiously infect the masses with their ideas, or to try and blow up the Czar. Discovery in doing either is fatal. The Government keeps a strict watch over the school-teachers so as to prevent their creating freedom of thought among the children, and also a strict censorship over the press. Hence, energetic spirits can only give expression to their feelings by publicly protesting. This protest is to the Czar, and through him to the whole world. It runs shortly thus: 'Give some form of constitutional government and freedom to speak of abuses, or else be blown up.'

With very partial assistance Sophia Ginsberg is stated to have organized a formidable plot, which for two years past has caused great apprehension to the Czar and his counsellors. As she well knew, she went forward to a more certain fate than the soldier who advances towards the deadly imminent breach. There is a nobility about such hopeless self-sacrifice. There are infinite chances against succeeding, discovery means the loss of everything, and the success is not personal but for the cause.

For this Sophia Ginsberg toiled and now she has won the crown of martyrdom in the battle between ancient despotism and modern free-thought. She was young, she was supremely beautiful, and she had a nerve of steel which fascinated men into following her to destruction. It is women such as she who keep Nihilism alive, for they can drag on hesitating men to certain death with their eyes wide open. Hence the Russian Government would not extend to her any mercy. For ten months she endured, looking helplessly through the narrow windows of her prison, the prospect of a life-long confinement alone. The sensation of realizing that one is alone for ever and the coming prey of inevitable insanity, must be so awful as to speedily resign the mind to the idea of suicide. In such a case self-destruction is merely an indication of the sane desire to avoid madness, and not madness itself. We are now told that Sophia Ginsberg has committed suicide. But there is a darker aspect to the case. It is possible that the Russian Government may have dreaded her escaping and destroyed her. Such deeds have often been done before. Certain it is, however, that her blood will cry aloud from the cell, for deliberate self-renunciation such as hers has never lacked imitators in the chequered history of mankind.

There is a certain sort of individual everywhere who is the object of much misplaced sympathy on the part of the gentler sex. It is the 'rogue-bachelor.' The rogue-bachelor is a male who ought from his years to know better than remain unmarried after he has reached the mature age of thirty or thereabouts. If he is under sixty and well preserved, the rogue-bachelor is more of a rogue-lion than a rogue elephant, in the sense that he is less dangerous to others than others are to him. There is always a lurking feeling in the minds of the ladies that the rogue-bachelor who has anything to recommend him must be existing miserably because of some lamentable miscarriage in the great love affair of his early life.

Seeing that no satisfactory existence is conceivable without love, it is but natural to conclude that the rogue-bachelor pursues his solitary lot cheered only by the hope of re-union hereafter to her of whom he was in youth bereft, owing to the cruelty of circumstances beyond his own control. The thought that the combined charms of countless women are capable of being resisted is not to be entertained, and the survival of a rogue-bachelor is therefore attributed either to the fact that his own true love died, or that her father wouldn't let him have her, or that she wouldn't have him, or that he couldn't screw up his courage

to the popping-point for fear of a refusal. Just as a light-house is a standing stumbling-block and rock of offence to the mighty ocean which beats and lashes itself around the base, so is the surviving bachelor a sort of living protest against the charms of the sex, and one whose bad example, seeing he cannot be killed or caught, must be neutralized by some plausible explanation.

There are also other affecting fictions in connection with the rogue-bachelor, and which adhere to him with wonderful pertinacity. It is that he is ever at war with his landlady, and that he sews on his shirt-buttons himself after the return of each week's washing. Why the rogue-bachelor should necessarily quarrel with his landlady does not appear, unless the wish is father to the thought. The truth is, landladies who succeed in making the rogue-bachelor comfortable without any other ulterior motive of completing his happiness by taking him unto themselves, are regarded as traitors to the cause. Every self-respecting woman is supposed to form part of the universal combination, and to allow the unreclaimed rogue bachelor to exist peacefully in his den is regarded as in some sort treason unto the rest. 'Miauguided woman, would you actually make the wretch comfortable?'

Alas! yes, he is made too comfortable. When he drops in upon a married friend and holds the crying baby, while his friend mends a fracture in his braces to the whirring sound of a sewing machine in the next room, which his friend's wife is wielding in the construction of a new dress for herself, he thinks that the married lot resembles his own in being mixed. Unlike death, it is not absolutely inevitable, but it resembles death in that it conceals much that is unknown, and therefore formidable. Still as there are some women with whom a man will cheerfully tempt death, so there are some women with whom even the rogue-bachelor will cheerfully tempt matrimony. If he ultimately escapes it is owing to premature decease or inevitable age. Given time enough and opportunity, enough he goes the way of most men-folk.

CHORAL IDYLL.

'NEW ZEALANDIA.'

Men, I know a being fair.
CHORUS—Who is she? Who is she?
She's the pet of sun and air.
CHORUS—Can it be! Can it be!
None you've sung of Aphrodite rising glorious from the main
Tell how stately New Zealandia from the womb of ocean came,
CHORUS—New Zealandia! That's her name!
Ages passed, and no man sought her,
CHORUS—Not a lover, not one lover?
Yes, two constantly did court her,
CHORUS—New Zealandia-like all over.
Daily drew the sun his tribute of hot kisses and went roaming,
While the monster sea kept crawling round her feet with love-sick moaning,
CHORUS—New Zealandia! Woman-owning.
Now she boasts of lovers more,
CHORUS—We are some of those blest fellows.
But she should have countless score.
CHORUS—So she ought, for we're not jealous.
Come then, brothers, chant in cadence sweet and sounding as we go,
Of the health and wealth and beauty New Zealandia has to show.
CHORUS—Ready, brothers, on we go.
Northwards far to Mongonui,
CHORUS—Glow the orange, peach, and lime.
Auckland, o'er thy meadows dewy
CHORUS—Citrons gleam in winter time.
On the fields of Canterbury wheaten-seas wave in the sun,
Over wild Otagan pastures sheep and kine in thousands run.
CHORUS—New Zealandia, blessed one.
On the West her frosted mountains,
CHORUS—Smite the sky and foil the main.
Flowing from them tiny fountains
CHORUS—Swell to rivers in the plain.
Land of bold and placid beauty, land of all the temperate zone,
With its various fruits and breezes, set by Nature thus alone;
CHORUS—For us happy folk to own.
Sing then, brothers, sing in cadence.
CHORUS—Shout we rather 'tis her due.
There would run a world-wide fame hence,
CHORUS—If all but her merits knew.
Rugged pleasures of Helvetia, charms of Andalusian land,
Wait on those who seek the favours poured from New Zealandia's hand.
CHORUS—New Zealandia fair and grand.

MILLIGAN HOOD.

FLAG BRAND PICKLES.—Ask for them, the best in the market. HAWARD BROS., Christchurch.—(ADV.)
The New High Arm Davis Vertical Feed is acknowledged by experts to be the most perfect Sewing Machine the World has yet seen.—ADV.