A STRANGE TRIAL IN GERMANY.

The Beautiful Model of a Great Painter —An Extraordinary Criminal Case, Which Has Convulsed Berlin Society, High and Low.

From the London Times.

BERLIN, Oct. 8.—At the Central criminal court here this morning, shortly after midnight, there was concluded a trial which has riveted the attention of the capital for the last nine days. The man in whom centered all the interest attaching to the trial—Prof. Graf, member of the Royal Academy of Arts—is one of the most distinguished historical and portrait painters in the capital. Several of his masterpieces, among which may be mentioned the "Reconciliation of Wittekind and Charlemagne," and a series of Theseus themes, adorn the museums and picture galleries here, and it is understood that the style of his art procured him the special patronage of one of the highest ladies in the land. Prof. Graf is a venerable, handsome and noble-looking man of 65.

Public interest in the fate of Prof. Graf was intensified by the fact that, in accordance with a Prussian law, he has been languishing in prison for the last six months, pending the ferreting out of evidence against him by the public prosecutor; and this evidence was of such a nature as to make it likely that the public would have to be debarred from listening to its production; but at the last moment the court decided that, of two evils, privacy or publicity, the latter on the whole was the less.

The case had its origin in the fact that more than a year ago a woman of the name of Hammermann was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for attempting to extort money by threats from Prof. Graf, while a similar but less severe punishment was inflicted on a man—not her husband—who had abetted her in the effort. The pretext for this attempt at extortion was the charge that Prof. Graf had taken improper liberties with Frau Hammermann's daughter, a girl under 14, who had stood as model to the painter, and not only did he swear that this accusation was false, but he also denied on oath the assertion of the counsel for Hammerman that another girl, Bertha Rother by name, was related to him in the double capacity of model and mistress. Both Bertha Rother and her sister Anne emphatically gainsaid this accusation, but the public prosecutor held that there was evidence to show that all had sworn falsely. Therefore both sisters were bracketed with the professor on separate and double counts of perjury and instigation to perjury, while their mother sat beside them at the bar on the charge of having acted as a procuress to her own offspring.

The main issue of the trial hinged on the question whether in reality Prof. Graf had kept up what the Germans call a verhaltniss, or liaison, with Bertha Rother, a young woman whose singular grace and beauty seemed to mark her out for a better career than that which had repeatedly brought her into conflict with the police des mœurs.

Prof. Graf did not seek to deny that he had parted with very large sums of money to her and her family, and that he had also made other social sacrifices on her behalf; but contended that all this was done from purely platonic motives and from the desire to secure the artistic services of so suitable and inestimable a model. His professional honor, he argued, was concerned in the success of a picture called "The Marchen," showing a full-length nude female figure of exquisite and fairy-like beauty, on which he had been laboring for the last six years (and even during his late incarceration) without being wholly able to realize his ideal. And it was on this account, he said, that he had been obliged to bind Bertha Rother to him by methods of fascination which, though naturally calculated to excite the suspicion of the world, were altogether harmless and honorable.

Among his papers the police had found poems addressed to his model in the style of Mr. Swinburne's most sensuous effusions, though their author contended that these were nothing but the exaggerated expression of innocent attachment to the being who inspired his art; while in his testamentary address to his sons, which was likewise produced by the same merciless inquisitors, he solemnly avowed that he had made great sacrifices on behalf of his model for the sake of his beloved art, but that he had none the less been faithful to their mother. Such, in brief, was the trial.

The prosecution of Prof. Graf, it is generally admitted, was an entire mistake, due to a series of untoward incidents supporting the presumption of his guilt, and the sympathy of the public was all along on his side. Indeed, the press has now almost unanimously hailed his acquittal with joy and congratulation.

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