

**Dr. C. Gordon Hewitt, Dominion Entomologist**, says, referring to the infantile death rate from intestinal diseases and diarrhoea spread by the house fly, he believes that the so-called harmless fly is yearly causing the death of thousands of infants, as well as spreading the germs of typhoid fever.



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The N. B. Howden Est.

## A Nihilist Episode

It Occurred at a State Dinner at St. Petersburg

By PAUL MURIANIEF

I don't know any woman who has a better chance to see the upper world than the wife of a diplomat. She takes her social rank from the diplomatic service and often is admitted where nobles cannot go. Quite frequently there are functions wherein the number of invited guests is limited, but from which the representatives of other countries cannot be left out.

One of the posts where my husband was stationed was St. Petersburg, Russia. He was not the minister plenipotentiary, but secretary of legation. Even this subordinate position admitted us to the larger ceremonies, and there was a period when the minister was called away and we were advanced during his absence to his privileges.

On one occasion we attended a state dinner given at the Winter palace. I believe that my husband and myself were the only persons present except the representatives of the French republic who were not noble. I was taken in to dinner by the secretary of the German legation, and my husband took in the wife of the British ambassador. There was a large company assembled, and of course all were either nobles or high government officials or members of the diplomatic corps.

Never did outside appearances more belie the actual condition. The czar and zarina fulfilled their duties as hosts as well as their imperial position with that dignity which was required of them, while they were living on a mine that was liable to explode at any moment. There were also officials present whose lives were in danger. The only persons who had cause to feel perfectly safe were we of the diplomatic corps, and even we were liable through sympathy or deception to become mixed in some revolutionary plot involving assassination from the consequences of which the government we represented would not save us.

It was impossible in looking about among the brilliantly liveried attendants to know who were servants and who were spies, special guards, members of the secret police or persons otherwise connected with the felling of attempts to assassinate either the emperor, some of the royal family or important officials of the empire.

Opposite me sat a dignified man whom I noticed that all who came in contact with treated with great respect. I asked who he was and was told that he was the governor of Finland. I caught my breath, for at that time the province of Finland was undergoing a terrorism from the imperial government that had excited against it a very bitter feeling. But to look at this man conversing glibly with his dinner companion one would not dream that many a citizen of the province he governed would be delighted to plunge a knife into his heart. Possibly his composure was assumed, possibly he had become used to danger as a soldier who continually faces death, but the most probable solution was that the servant who waited on him was a trained protector, who was watching the slightest motion of every one near his chief.

There was a fascination for me about the young lady who sat next to the governor that I could not well account for. Never have I seen such a face, such eyes, such an expression. She was not beautiful, at least according to the Anglo-Saxon's conception of beauty. She was rather impressive. I asked also who she was and was told that she was the daughter of a prominent general in the Russian army.

The emperor and his consort leave the dining room at state dinners before their guests. Indeed, their presence there is but one of the many formalities to which they are slaves, though masters of millions of subjects. All the guests rise while the imperial couple pass out and remain standing till they have disappeared. During this passage all eyes were turned upon them. Mine, however, had found something that interested me more than they, and there was a little drama being enacted before me. I saw the girl I have mentioned turn and give a quick glance at a servant who stood behind her chair. I did not note her expression, but I did note the expression of the servant. His eyes were fixed upon her with a look I shall never forget. At no time in my life have I seen the human eye express so much. The only idea I can give of what it expressed is the feelings of a cat that is about to pounce upon a mouse.

When we were seated a change had come over the young lady. It was

evident that her mind was bent on extricating herself from some danger. Furthermore, she gave me a look which spoke as plainly as words an appeal for help. It was a woman's appeal to a woman, an appeal involving much to the one who made it. Knowing the conditions existing in St. Petersburg at that time and from what I had seen, I would have been very obtuse had I not made one of those quick inferences that come to us in moments of great importance as to the underlying cause. I knew that the girl was in danger from the waiter and had a vague idea that it was from some political complication. More than this I could form no opinion.

But what a position for me to occupy! Appealed to by one of my own sex, to refuse was repugnant to me, to mix myself up with some revolutionary incident would not only endanger my being sent to Siberia, but also involve my husband, who was a representative of the United States bound in honor to keep aloof from anything that did not concern his government. I made no decision as to how I should act, not knowing what would be required of me, but I kept my eyes open at what was going on both concerning the waiter and the young lady.

The latter was pale as death, but managed to appear composed to all save me, who was watching her. I alone saw the commotion going on within her in her restless eye, now darting hither or thither like some wild animal at bay, now moved by fear, now by desperation and now by a cold, calm purpose.

Presently I saw her, when something attracted the attention of those about her, take a pin, on the end of which was a sapphire, from her corsage. The hand that grasped it fell beneath the table. I glanced at the waiter behind her and was convinced that he had seen the move she had made. Neither he nor I could see what work her hands were engaged in, but from her position at a certain moment I saw that she had reached under the table almost if not quite to its middle.

There are born in us impulses that under certain circumstances are capable of working our ruin. I got an idea that the girl was fighting for her life, and an uncontrollable impulse dominated me to help her. I deliberately, in full view of the waiter, put my hand under the table and felt for something I believed the girl had placed there. I came upon a pin stuck in the under side of the table. I drew it out, and with it came a bit of folded paper. Between my fingers the latter felt gritty. Before withdrawing it from where it was hidden I endeavored to get rid of this gritty substance.

Looking at the waiter, I saw him watching me with a puzzled expression on his face. He doubtless knew me for one of the diplomatic corps and understood that I had rights entirely different from any one else. I glanced from him to the girl and saw a look of gratitude that repaid me for the frightful risk I ran. I held in my hand a jeweled pin and a bit of paper, to which still clung enough of some substance for any chemist to tell what it was.

There are fortunate or unfortunate incidents that determine our happy or adverse fate. One of these occurred at this important moment to me. Cigarettes were passed. In Europe the women as well as the men smoke cigarettes. We American women usually do not. I had never smoked a cigarette in my life. But now a device came to me for getting rid of the paper I held in my hand. I accepted a cigarette from the servant who offered it to me, but instead of lighting it from the wax taper he handed me I held it in my hand, as if deliberating whether or not I should smoke it. Watching for an opportunity, when my dinner companion lighted a cigarette from a match he took from a silver box he carried in his pocket, I waited till the match was nearly burned out; then, acting as if there was not sufficient fire left to light my own tobacco from it, I ignited the bit of paper I held in my hand and just before it was all consumed touched its flame to my cigarette.

There were three persons present, only one of whom positively knew what had been done by the destruction of this paper. The girl opposite looked radiant. The waiter seemed to consider that something had occurred to thwart his interests. I did not attempt to solve the problem. I only knew that the girl opposite me had desired to get rid of it or what it had contained.

This, so far as the state dinner was concerned, ended the episode. We continued at table for a short time longer. Then, the dinner being ended, the party broke up.

A long while passed before the matter was explained to me. Then on one of my at home days I was honored by a call from Mrs. General Katzkoff. On withdrawing she took my hand in hers and left in my palm a bit of folded paper. I had become accustomed to the chicanery common in Russia, and had presence of mind not

to appear to notice what she had given me. After all my callers had departed I took what she had left me to my bedroom, locked the door and, opening a little note, read it.

It was written by the daughter of the lady who had brought it to me and expressed, as I could not express it in my own words, heartfelt thanks for the service I had done her, stating that I had saved her from the dreaded Siberian mines. Many years later I met the writer in England, and she confessed to me that she was a Finlander and had purposed to slip a poison powder into the wine of the governor. Discovering that she was watched, she knew that if she did not get rid of the powder it would condemn her. I had taken a terrible risk, but had saved her from the consequences of a crime that had not been carried out.

I begged to return the jeweled pin with which she had fastened the paper to the table, but she insisted on my keeping it as a souvenir. We became fast friends, the girl declaring that, having saved her from what was far more to be dreaded than death, I virtually owned her. I naturally became much interested in her and begged her to refrain in future from such attempts as had miscarried under my observation and the possible consequences of which I had prevented. But I secured no promise.

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