

THE WOMEN'S PAGE

RUSSIA'S PIONEER WOMEN WORKERS



A Family Group, Showing Miss Martha Wenski (left) and her sister (right) who conduct a training school at Lodz.

The Intrepid Educators Who Have Striven Nobly to Infuse New Life Into the Feminine Slavs

OVER their samovars of tea, when Russia was in the throes of war and virtual revolution, the feminine students of the land of the czar gave encouragement to the young men who were planning the overthrow of the old order of things. Nothing came of it but talk.

Only a few years later more practical evidences of the new thought came into being. This time it was not in the form of firebrand speeches, but in plain, simple work among the poor.

Cultivated Russia is one thing; the vast land of the common people is another. They are separate and apart, though of the same nation. But this latest awakening is destined to bring them closer together. For the social worker has made her appearance. The woman who goes into the dwellings of the poor and nurses their sick, teaching them, at the same time, how to avoid ill health by sanitary living—this is the new woman of Russia, and she is one of the greatest of innovations the czar's people have known for many, many years.

THE czar of Russia is up against it again. Accustomed he has been to nihilists. But now he's the storm center of a horde of aroused women.

If it was the "votes for women" movement, some Americans might even sympathize with him. But that's not it by a long shot. A request has actually been made for a college for higher feminine education, and Americans are willing to foot the bill.

Vocational and professional work for the skirted sex has heretofore been altogether out of the question in Russia. A trained nurse even is considered an unpardonable innovation.

In a nutshell, this is the real reason that bars a million dollar university and seminary at St. Petersburg. One of the buildings was to be carved for girls and young women. They were to be taught the classics and everything else they wanted to know. The seminary would even be open to them. To make matters worse, the professors and teachers were to be of their own sex. From a Russian point of view, it was no wonder that the czar put a strong veto on the plans of the Baptists when he heard that women were to be admitted to the seat of learning.

TO ARGUE WITH THE CZAR

But there is still hope. Three prominent clergymen are on their way to St. Petersburg to have a private audience with the czar and present their views on the all-important subject. The ministers are the Rev. Dr. MacArthur, pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church and president of the American Baptist Alliance; the Rev. Russell H. Conwell, pastor of the Baptist Temple, Philadelphia, and the Rev. F. B. Meyer, of London.

These men are all strong champions of women's rights, in the sense that they should have the privileges of higher education and be allowed to teach the young, attend to the sick, work for the social betterment of humanity and enlighten their less fortunate sisters.

Doctor Conwell only recently opened his church for the exclusive use of women at stated times, and it has gained the name of the "Women's Church." He is also president of Temple University, which is a co-educational institution.

When these three able divines present their views to the czar and show him the mammoth work that has been done by women in this and other countries, it is possible that the czar will relent and give his permission for the erection of the St. Petersburg institution. The signing of such a decree would mean a great change in the conditions of Russia.

A small band of pioneers is already at work interesting girls in professional and business careers and laboring among the poor to better their social conditions. A woman's college would greatly benefit their efforts and spread the work to all the large cities in Russia. A strong foundation for the movement has already been laid in Lodz and Odessa, and it is being rapidly built upon.

GIRLS ARE HANDICAPPED

The situation in Russia is being keenly watched by the Rev. Gustav Alf, a Russian minister who is doing evangelistic work among his fellow-countrymen in America. His wife was one of the leaders in the "new woman" movement, and had gone to Germany to be educated for that purpose. She was married in Odessa, on the Black sea, two years ago, and returned with her husband to Philadelphia. She is looking forward to joining in the work again upon their return to Russia in a year or two.

"A young woman is handicapped in every way, as far as education is concerned, in our country," the Rev. Mr. Alf said recently. "Eight years' schooling is considered enough for any girl, and a great deal of that is spent in gymnastics. The Russian government considers that if a lass is strong physically and develops into a strong, healthy woman, it is sufficient. Her mentality isn't considered. She isn't supposed to have brains."

"The physical education is all very well, but our women are opening their eyes. They want something more. Those who have traveled in other countries



Russian Nurses Who Were Educated in Germany

have noticed the broader sphere of a woman's life and the professional and business opportunities that are open to the girls, such as being school teachers, trained nurses and stenographers.

"In Russia these duties are not considered a woman's. She can either work in a mill or stay at home. In the country districts the peasant maids and matrons labor on the farms."

"One of the greatest needs of the country is female school teachers. The mothers have recognized this for years, but until recently nothing had been done. Even the little tots, boys and girls, are taught by men, who naturally haven't the same tender influence over them that a woman would have."

Miss Martha Wenski, the daughter of Frederick Wenski, a wealthy brick manufacturer and builder of Lodz, was among the first to become interested in this work. She came to this country and took a three-years' course in the Chicago Training School, and visited all the large cities of the country, investigating the educational facilities and the work carried on by the women's settlement houses. She inspected tenement houses in particular, as there are a great number of them in the large cities of Russia, and noted the conditions of the model homes, in contrast to those where the comfort of the tenants is not taken into consideration.

Miss Wenski was particularly impressed by the work of the women's clubs in looking after the welfare of the poor, and one of her first steps was to organize a similar institution in Lodz, to which some of the most prominent of her countrywomen belong.

On her return to Russia she opened a school in Lodz with one hundred girl pupils. The curriculum resembles that of an American academy.

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Lodz was the best city in which to start a work of this kind, for it is a great manufacturing place, and is called the Manchester of Russia. Many of its women have literally lived in factories from girlhood.

Another woman has recognized the need of Christian work in Lodz. She is Miss Bertha Eden, of Warsaw, who opened the first training school in Russia for nurses. Female nurses have never been tolerated in Russia, and they are not to be found in any of the hospitals. But many Russian girls have had a desire to care for the sick, so they went to

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