

Within the brief space of two hundred and fifty pages, Miss Marie Sukloff, a Russian Jewess of twenty-nine years, has conveyed to English and American readers in "The Life Story of a Russian Exile" (Century) an astonishing wealth of vivid information concerning Russian despotism and the efforts that are being made toward its overthrow. Miss Sukloff was born in a two-roomed hut—one room devoted to the domestic animals—in a village of thirty such huts. Inured from infancy to hardship, grinding poverty, and tyrannical oppression, she was apprenticed at the age of eleven, first to a woman grocer and then to a tailor. Even at that age the sorrows of the peasants had entered into her soul. She had seen the fate of her aunt, outraged and then beaten brutally and buried while still alive by the son of the neighboring country gentleman, and she had witnessed the continual desperate struggle of her own parents. Imbued with the new aspirations of the period, she joined in a strike and lost both her position as a tailor's apprentice and nearly a year's earnings, whereupon she immediately began devoting herself with youthful ardor to the propaganda of the Social Democrats. She was sent by her parents to Odessa to a poor uncle to secure employment, but became increasingly active as a revolutionist, and was selected to set up a secret printing press in Kiev, where she was arrested and thrown in prison. After more than two years in close confinement, she was exiled for life to eastern Siberia. From this remote region, she escaped and brought back to Russia the baby of an exiled couple, thus avoiding recognition herself, and rendering the escape of the parents a future possibility. Embittered by her own sufferings and filled with pity for the oppressed people of her country,

she joined the headquarters of the Social Revolutionists at Geneva, and was appointed to assassinate several prominent and cruel officials, finally succeeding in killing with a bomb the terrible Governor Khvostoff. She was condemned to death, but was exiled instead to a distant region of Siberia. After suffering for some years physical and mental hardships which threatened to unsettle her reason, she finally escaped through a daring and brilliant strategem and with the faithful assistance of devoted fellow revolutionists outside the prison. This escape took place from the prison at Irkutsh, where Miss Sukloff had been taken for an operation, the long deferment of which by the heartless neglect of the officials had almost caused her death. It was almost by miracle that she escaped the permanent ruin of her health by the terrible experiences through which she had to pass after getting outside the prison walls. She was never safe from reimprisonment until she sailed from Shanghai. The vivid descriptions of prison interiors and prison life in the many prisons occupied by the writer, the thrilling narrative of experiences and emotions, the portrayal of numerous officials and revolutionists from intimate knowledge render the book a human document of the highest value. It illuminates dark and dreary Siberia with a lurid brilliance. Scarcely conceivable are the cruelties and abominations so realistically reported that the reader cannot doubt their actuality. The book may well make one hold one's breath in suspense, as the primitive and cruel government it exposes hurls its myriads across the frontiers of Germany. But there is also another and very moving revelation in the little book. So spontaneous seem the many instances related of kindness, generosity, self-abnegation, and lofty heroism that one's admiration of the Russian people rises in proportion to the indignation aroused against the tyranny of the Russian government. The world has surely much to anticipate from the long deferred liberation of the Russians, and among these people none will give a finer account of themselves than the Jews, if we may judge from the gifts and the spirit of such Jewish women writers as Marie Sukloff and Mary Antin.