

A REVOLUTIONARY in RUSSIA

THE LIFE-STORY OF AUGUST MAREN

Diabolical Cruelty of the Germans Baron in Lettland—The Identity of "Peter the Painter"—Was He an Agent-Frovoicateur ?

Last week we promised to publish some particulars of the history of August Maren, whose troubles since his arrival in Western Australia have excited much sympathy, and the state of Russia, the principal product of which appears to be revolutionaries of every denomination. From Maren's narrative such a terrible state of affairs appears to exist under the Czar's rule that the only wonder is that the whole of the people in Russia are not revolutionaries. We are perfectly certain we would be if we were compelled to exist in such a benighted country.

August Maren was born in Goldinger-Courland, situated in the Baltic Province, to the south-east of the Baltic Sea, on March 18, 1885. He was educated at the Government school at Goldinger-Courland, and afterwards at a seminary for teachers, where he had charge of the library and meteorological department. Early in life he became mixed up with the Social-Democratic Party and the movement for freedom which eventually led to his arrest. Maren was a speaker, and while in the seminary he used to address his fellow students and explain to them the necessity for new reforms and the spread of democratic principles. Outside the seminary he delivered addresses on the impossible economic and political position of the people, and the necessity of change in the system of government and all things in Russia for the benefit of the masses.

Maren's democratic speechifying got to the ears of the Government, and he was arrested in 1906, and charged with agitating against the Government. As a political prisoner he was kept awaiting his trial until 1908, when he was brought before the Military Court at Riga. Twenty-

three witnesses were called for the prosecution, but they could bring nothing forward against the prisoner that constituted an offence, while for the defence witnesses were called to prove that he bore an exemplary character and had never been convicted of any offence. He was acquitted after having been in gaol two years, and after his release he wrote to the Russian Government and fully explained what the German barons were doing in the Baltic Province.

The barons then tried to have him arrested again, and he was forced to leave Russia. This did not cause him any regret, he being an only son, and his parents both dead. Maren states that while in Russia he heard much good of Western Australia, and determined to make his home here. He is in possession of a rather interesting little certificate which he showed us. This certifies that he is a member of the Lettish Social Democratic Party, and that the persecution of the Russian Government has forced him to emigrate. Maren states that if the Russian officials had found that certificate on him he would have been sentenced to eight years in Siberia, of which three years would have been in chains.

Maren thus tells of what led up to the revolution in 1905, which can only be attributed to the despotism of the German barons and the Czar. The German barons took possession of the Baltic Province about 1201, when they introduced a religion the meaning of which was that all Lettish and Este people were to become their slaves. They built huge and strong castles on the mountains, and introduced the same feudal system which was in force in Europe. The most terrible and inhuman things were done in those Baltic Province castles. Amongst the mass of the people these terrible stories were

castles. Amongst the mass of the people these terrible stories were handed down from generation to generation until the blood of the people boiled. There were revolts of the Lettish people both in the 16th and 17th centuries, but for many reasons they always ended unhappily for the downtrodden people.

In 1775 Poland came under Russian rule, and the Baltic Province a little before that, but there was no change for the better as far as the people were concerned. The best land was all held by the German barons, and the Letts were compelled to work for them from 4 a.m. till 10 p.m. for a very small wage. The people were not allowed to fish in the lakes, to get wood from the forests, or to gather wild cherries without a special license from the barons, while the cows and sheep of the people were not allowed in the forests. In the towns the position of the factory hands was terribly bad. They were compelled to work very long hours in unhealthy surroundings, and the young girls in the factories were subjected to inhuman

treatment. If any of the factory hands complained they were at once discharged, and many times cast into prison like political prisoners.

Another serious cause of discontent was the fact that the taxes were only put on the poorer classes—there was no tax on the rich. These taxes were both direct and indirect. There was a tax on everything the poor ate and wore, not a single necessary of life escaping, and that was the reason the poor existed under such terrible circumstances. All political and judicial power was in the hands of the Russian Government, but the economic power was vested in the German barons. Both the Government and the barons tried to bring down the Baltic Province to the level of the rest of darkest Russia by keeping the people in darkness and uneducated. In the schools the lessons were given in the Russian lan-

guage—which is not understood by the Letts—and Lettish, the native language, was forbidden.

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If any of the people were caught reading Tolstoi and other great Russian progressive writers they were cast into prison like the worst political and church prisoners, for the Russian Government fears education more than fire. All literature before going to the people had to pass two censors, the second of which was a committee appointed for the special purpose of dividing the books into two classes—one for the educated and the other for the working classes. "It is thus," said Maren, "that 150 millions of people are kept in ignorance."

The Russian Czar, with his family, continued Maren, is the greatest landlord in Russia. In European Russia he owns 40 millions of acres, and in Siberia 20 millions, all of the best land, while he is the third capitalist in Europe. The Baltic Province, however, when the revolution occurred in 1905-6, was all under German barons, who were a bloodthirsty and inhuman class, who killed men with the greatest pleasure. All the military powers, the police, spies and other officials were all under them, and there was more money spent on that sort of thing than on the people's education. In addition to this, all the churches in Russia, mostly of the Greek persuasion, combined to keep the people in mental darkness. The churches taught the people that they must unhesitatingly obey officialdom—they must obey anyone cloaked with authority, be he head of the Government or a constable—and tried to ram down the throats of the people that all these powers came from God, threatening them with increased torments in hell if they did not and reward in the hereafter if they did.

The Russian Government had given all the best billets to the German barons, and the result was that all the governors were German barons and all the police Germans, and they did exactly as they liked. People were shot and hanged on the merest suspicion that they might have a grievance against the Government and without the formality of

have a grievance against the Government, and without the formality of a trial. If a governor had any suspicion of people he would get his police and soldiers and have them shot at once. The Government sent

out a special expedition under General Contratenko, whose duty it was to go to any suspected village, make no arrests, shoot all suspects without trial, and burn the village.

Contratenko would go to a house, bring the father out, and shoot him in front of all his family. In some of the villages half the inhabitants were killed in this manner. In others, notably Wahlodgehu, Oschu, Lapuku, and several more, the inhabitants were completely wiped out and the villages burnt. When the revolution broke out the German barons got the assistance of several regiments of Cossacks, and went from village to village, and without any suspicion shot down the inhabitants merely because they were Lettish. Maren had two of his schoolmates shot down in this way, two others were sent to Siberia, and a lot of his friends banished from the





WHY RUSSIANS BECOME REVOLUTIONARIES.

In the above illustration is seen, lying in his coffin, a young man who has been shot without trial on the merest suspicion of being a revolutionary. Standing at the side of the coffin are the deceased's mother and father, wife and three children.

country. From an Australian point of view we should say that the latter were born under a lucky star.

The revolution occurred in 1905, when all working Russia declared war against the Russian Government. It was not only the manual labor class who went on strike, but the intellectual and educated class too—all labor, manual and mental, was on strike. Then the Russian Government got frightened, and resorted to trickery to quell the insurrection. After a few weeks—on the 17th October, 1905, to be precise—the Government issued a manifesto of freedom to the people. That manifesto promised that Russia should become a free country, be governed by its own Parliament, have freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and every other species of freedom. All these promises were made because the Government were afraid that the people would demand to be governed by a republic. But it was a traitor's manifesto, though the people did not know it. They believed it, and that saved the Government, and put a stop to the revolution. The Government then killed the leaders, and promptly revoked their promises, so that the condition of the people was soon as bad as it was before they struck for freedom.

Maren states that the Lettish revolutionaries are not bloodthirsty, but a most peaceful people. The Russian Terrorists, who kill with the bomb, belong to the more educated class, and the Czar, Alexander II, who was killed by a bomb in 1881, was one of their victims. The Nihilists are against the Government, the

ists are against the Government, the Church, and all forms of despotism. They look upon a "removal" of a Czar in the light that he kills hundreds and thousands, and that they may put a stop to this wholesale slaughter of the people by killing him. The Russian revolutionaries are not bloodthirsty, but they are fighting against the political and economic state of affairs in Russia. They do not kill men; they kill systems.

Such was Maren's story, and we venture the opinion that it will not be found uninteresting, while it serves to show up the Russian revolutionary in rather a new light. We asked Maren his opinion of "Peter the Painter," and he said that he had never seen or spoken to that much-discussed individual, but his

opinion of him was that he is an international criminal and an agent provocateur for the Czar's Government. His idea is that "Peter the Painter" was specially sent to England by the Russian Government to engineer that Houndsditch affair, so as to cause ill-feeling in Great Britain against the Russian revolutionaries, so that they would be forced out of England and into the clutches of the Russian Government. It will be remembered that there was a great outcry against the Russians after the Houndsditch tragedy, and it looked as if all Russian refugees would be driven out of England, but thanks to the wisdom of Mr. Winston Churchill, the Home Secretary, and his Liberal Government, this deeply-laid scheme failed and the refugees were not interfered with.

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