



# **Our Friend Ethel Lilian Boole/Voynich**

by

**Evgeniya Taratuta**

**Translated from the Russian by Séamus Ó Coighligh  
with additional notes**

This document is available as a PDF through the library CATALOGUE at

[www.corkcitylibraries.ie](http://www.corkcitylibraries.ie)

2008



Ethel Lilian Boole/Voynich

Наш Друг Этель Лилиан Войнич  
(Nash Drug Ethel Lilian Voynich)

by

Евгения Таратута  
(Evgeniya Taratuta)

was originally published as a special supplement to

*Библиотека "Огонёк"*

*(Biblioteka Ogonyĕk)*

No. 42, 1957

Издательство, Правда, Москва

*(Izdatel'stvo, Pravda, Mosckva)*

## Preface

I began to study Russian in the late 1940s. Soon I was purchasing books, journals, magazines, and newspapers in Russian. In 1957, I received a copy of *Ogonyëk* from Moscow with a special supplement on E. L. Voynich by E. Taratuta. Due to commitments, however, I had to put it aside, after which it was mislaid for decades. More recently I found the supplement and decided to translate it.

I would like to thank University Librarian John Fitzgerald, Boole Library, University College Cork (UCC) and Cork City Librarian Liam Ronayne for making this translation available through their online library catalogues. My very special gratitude goes to Dr John Mullins, Senior Executive Librarian at Cork City Libraries, for his painstaking editorial work on this document.

11 November 2007, S. Ó Coigligh

## Translator



Séamus Ó Coigligh, polymath, and an expert in European languages and literature, retired as Curator of Cork Public Museum in 1981. He is author of a study in the Irish language on Vladimir Mayakovsky who committed suicide in 1930 as a result of pressure from Communist dogmatists. That study won an Oireachtas prize in 1956. In 1974, he received a second Oireachtas prize for his study of the Hungarian poet, Sándor Petöfi, which was later published as *Sándor Petöfi: File Náisiúnta na hUngáire* (Dublin: Coiscéim, 1991). During the Cold War, he wrote a column in the *Irish Times*: 'An Eye on Russia' and 'An Eye on Eastern Europe', from 1959 until 1972. He was a frequent book reviewer on Russian affairs in the *Irish Times*, and also contributed articles to various European journals.

John Mullins (editor)



Evgeniya Aleksandrovna Taratuta

Image source: [http://vgershov.lib.ru/ARCHIVES/T/TARATUTA\\_Evgeniya\\_Aleksandrovna/\\_Taratuta\\_E.\\_A..html](http://vgershov.lib.ru/ARCHIVES/T/TARATUTA_Evgeniya_Aleksandrovna/_Taratuta_E._A..html)  
[accessed 19 Dec. 2007]

The translator and the editor of this document have made every effort to contact any copyright holders of Ms Taratuta's original article and of the images include in this web publication.

Sources for the images include the following:

*Geschichte der klassischen russischen Literatur* [History of classical Russian literature]. Herausgegeben von Wolf Düwel & others. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1965.  
— (p. 613, image of younger Shevchenko; p. 639, Sassulitsch image; p. 689, Saltykov-Shchedrin image; p. 769 Stepnyak-Kravchinsky image; p. 784 Garshin image; p. 821 Tolstoy image)

Shevchenko, Taras, *Tvory* [Works]. Kiev: Dnipro, 1978-1979.  
— Sketch of older Shevchenko from vol. 4 (Povisti [Stories]) frontispiece.

*Kratkaya literaturnaya entsiklopediya* [Short literary encyclopaedia] ed.  
A. A. **Surkov**. Moskva: Sovetskaiya entsiklopediya [9 vols.], 1962-1978,  
— for image of M. I. Pavlik.

Other images found through Google Images.

## Who's Who?

In the December 1897 issue of the literary and popular science periodical *Mir Bozhii* readers were informed of the forthcoming features for the coming year. Works of prose and poetry by various writers were listed. Among them was the novel *Ovod*, a translation by Z.A. Vengerova of Ethel Voynich's *The Gadfly*.

The novel duly appeared in the six issues from January to June 1898. Within a year it was published in book form, and before the revolution of 1917 it had gone into ten editions, some of them exceeding 25,000 copies – a very large circulation for those days.

In 1905, a reviewer in the liberal periodical *Russkaya Mysl* (*Russian Thought*) mentioned that the novel had reached a wide circle of readers and had become the favourite book of the working class: "At the present time *Ovod* (*The Gadfly*) is no rarity in the homes of the peasants". The majority of documents speak of the extraordinary popularity of the novel. In the 1900s, *Ovod* was widely used for propaganda purposes among progressive workers. G.M. Krzhizhanovsky, E.D. Stasov, I.B. Babushky, Y.A. M. Sverdlov, I.T. Fioletok busily circulated *Ovod*. It played a great role in the life of G.I. Kotovsky, N.A. Ostrovsky, Zoya Kosmodemyanska and many others.

With the coming of Soviet Power, *Ovod* appeared 83 times, in 19 languages in more than 2.5 million copies. A dramatized version is constantly being staged in many theatres throughout our country. Three operas have been written on *Ovod*. Two films have been based on it, in 1928 and 1955.

At the present time *Ovod* is one of the favourite books of Soviet youth.

Authors of various prefaces to the novel commonly consider it simply as a historical novel and, by way of commentary, sketch the history of the liberation in the Italy of the 1830s-40s.

However, the attentive reader may find in *Ovod* (*The Gadfly*) features already familiar to him in the works of Russian writers. The very image of *Ovod* calls to mind images of the Russian revolutionary – Narodavoltsi – heroes of Stepnyak-Kravchinsky's *Podpol'naya Rossiya* (*Underground Russia*) and especially the image of the main hero of the autobiographical novel of the same writer, *Andrei Kozhukhov*. A fanatical

dedication to the task in hand, immense personal bravery, strict subjugation of personal feelings to duty, the richness of their spiritual world, their moral superiority to their enemies, the shade of sacrifice in the presence of a great love of life, an unshakeable conviction of final success in the task in hand and even the conversion of passionate adolescent religiosity to sober atheism, characterises them both.

Can all this be mere coincidence?

In order to answer this question we need to study both the creative and everyday life of the writer who has been able to create the enchanting image in *Ovod* so powerfully.

And straight away we come up against an incomprehensible riddle: there are no books about Voynich and no essays. In the huge Encyclopaedia Britannica, there is not a single line about E.L. Voynich in works on the history of English literature, her name is never referred to; her books are not reprinted.

Even here in our own country, despite all the popularity of *Ovod*, even up to recently, the most fantastic things have been printed about her in reference books. For example, in one of them we are told that she was a Russian, born in Petersburg, who had emigrated to England. In another, we are told that she was an Englishwoman but that her mother was Polish. In a third, that she took her pseudonym Voynich from the name of a small town in Galicia where her husband came from. Even the niggardly few lines about her in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* are not entirely trustworthy.



One could say that they read the novel *Ovod* (*The Gadfly*) the same way that they sing a love song, not knowing who wrote it and not bothering to ask.

The most accurate information is provided by the English reference book, *Who's Who?*

From this reference book we learn that Ethel Lilian Voynich was born in 1864 and that she was a novelist and a composer. Her father was George Boole. Her husband was Wilfrid M. Voynich (who died in 1930). She completed musical studies at the Conservatoire, Berlin, in 1885. She published books: *The Humour of Russia* (1895), *Stories of Garshin* (1893), *The Gadfly* (1897), *Jack Raymond* (1901), *Olivia Latham* (1904), *An Interrupted Friendship* (1910), *Six Poems of Shevchenko* (1911), *Chopin*



Taras Shevchenko

*Letters*, translated from the Polish and the French (1931), *Put Off Thy Shoes* (1945), and a lot of songs. In the *Who's Who?* reference book her address is given as New York.

These details are too few and the questions they raise are too many. What sort of a book was *Russian Humour* or *Stories of Garshin* or *Six Poems of Shevchenko*? Are these titles of works of her own or are they translations made by her? These and many other questions need investigation.

Her father, George Boole (1815-1864), was an outstanding scholar – philosopher and mathematician. He laid the basis of mathematical symbolic logic. In his biography we are afforded some small items of information about his wife, Mary Everest, mother of E.L. Voynich. Mary was an educated cultured woman. Mary's father was a college warden and her uncle was head of the geodesic service in India and he was the first to undertake work in the examination and measurement of the Himalayan Mountains, the highest peak of which is named after him. Besides Ethel Lilian there were four other daughters.

Despite careful research, we have found only a single reference to Voynich in the memoir literature. In his book *Minuvshee i Perezhitoe (Past and Experienced)*, the former Narodovolets [i.e. member of the secret political organisation known as Narodna Volya, The People's Will, in the 1880s], I.I. Popov, recalls meetings with Lily Boole in Petersburg in 1881. He describes her vividly and tells of her meetings with the poet P.F. Yakubovich and he says that she returned to England at the end of the Eighties.

On the basis of I.I. Popov's data, an essay about E.L. Voynich was included in the bibliographical dictionary of "Agents of the Revolutionary Movement in Russia", repeating the same bits of information.

I.I. Popov's memoirs raise many doubts. How could she have been in Petersburg and Berlin at the same time? She had completed her studies in Berlin in 1885.

I.I. Popov has something to say about her later history. Praskov'ya, the wife of a Narodovolets (he later became a renegade) in whose house I.I. Popov was supposed to have met Lily Boole, followed her husband into exile. On her way to her husband, relates I.I. Popov, "she spent some time

in Irkutsk where she mixed with exiles". Here she became acquainted with an administrative exile, a pharmaceutical chemist, Voynich, who decided to escape abroad. P.V. Karaulova gave him the address of an Englishwoman who had already returned to London. Voynich got to London safely and became acquainted with E. Boole and later married her.

Of Mikhail Wilfred Voynich we again know very little. From police records we know that he was born on 21 October 1865 near Kovno (now Kaunas) into the family of a titular counsellor, a Pole. In 1885 he graduated in Moscow University and became an apothecary's assistant. He took an active part in the revolutionary movement. He was a member of the Polish Social Revolutionary Party, "Proletariat". He devoted himself to propaganda work, disseminating illegal literature. He got hold of a typewriter and a false passport and collected money for revolutionary work.

On 10 October 1885, the twenty-year-old M. Voynich was arrested and charged with proletariat activities. After six months confinement in the 10th Pavilion of the Alexander citadel in Warsaw, M. Voynich was, on imperial orders, sent to Eastern Siberia for a term of five years. He tried to continue his revolutionary activities in exile but to no effect. In the summer of 1890 M. Voynich escaped across the border and in the autumn of the same year was already in London. In 1891 M. Voynich was one of the organisers of the "Political Prisoners' Aid Fund" and of the "Fund of the Free Russian Press". This fund was set up for the printing of revolutionary literature and its illegal dissemination in Russia. M. Voynich was chief custodian of the bookstore and, in addition to this, he managed the organisational affairs of the Fund. His letters to G.V. Plekhanov and V.I. Zasulich regarding the activities of the Fund are still extant.

The chief organiser of the "Fund of the Great Russian Press" was the well-known Russian Revolutionary S.M. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky, who had been forced to emigrate from Russia in 1878. But, in exile, Stepnyak (he was known under this pseudonym in Europe) continued to serve his country. His book of sketches of Russian revolutionaries, *Underground Russia*, was written in 1881 in Italian and translated into almost every European language and enjoyed great popular success. He translated into Russian a novel, *Spartak*, by a Garibaldist writer P. Giovanioli. Settling in London in 1884, Stepnyak worked hard to attract public opinion in Europe in favour of the Russian people's fight for freedom. He wrote books on the contemporary situation in Russia, addressed meetings and lectures; and he translated works of Russian writers into English. His novel about Russian revolutionaries, *The Career of a Nihilist*, was published in 1889. Stepnyak

wrote it in English, knowing that there was no possibility of having such a book published in Russia. Friends of his – Marx's daughter Eleonora and her husband Edward Eveling, a well-known English socialist – looked through the manuscript to remove errors of style before it went to press. [In the Russian edition, the novel was titled *Andre Kozhukov*.]

In 1889 Stepnyak organised the “Friends of Russian Freedom” which was joined by prominent English liberals. From mid-1885, *Society*, the monthly magazine of “Free Russia”, edited by Stepnyak, began to appear. It printed articles about the political and economic situation in Russia and published translations of the works of progressive Russian writers.

Political emigrants, progressive writers, artists, and musicians of various countries met in Stepnyak's house. Sometimes, Engels, who approved and supported Stepnyak's activity, was there.

This was to be the milieu in which E.L. Voynich was to be formed.

But how come? How did she find herself in Russia and when exactly?

It is necessary to point out that Praskov'ya Karaulova was a sister of Stepnyak's wife – Fanny Markovna Lichkus. Was she with the Stepnyaks in London or with the Karaulovs in Petersburg? Stepnyak settled in London in 1884 and, if we are to believe Popov, Lily was already in Petersburg in 1882. How could this be? So we begin to search again.

## ***His Little English Lady***

Analysing the works of E.L. Voynich, we presume the closeness of her writing to that of S.M. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky. Furthermore, knowing that her husband M. Voynich worked with Stepnyak, one could surmise also their personal acquaintance.

A highly interesting fact was that two of the books mentioned in the British *Who's Who?* — *Stories of Garshin* (1893) and *Russian Humour* — carried a foreword by Stepnyak. These two books proved to be collections of translations of works of Russian writers, translated into English by E.L. Voynich. And among the works of Gogol, Shchedrin, Dostoevsky, N. and G. Uspensky and others included in the collection *Russian Humour*, a translation of a propagandist tale by Stepnyak was inserted, "The Story of a Copeck".

Furthermore, in the collection *Nihilism As It Is*, issued in 1894 by the "Society of Friends of Russian Freedom" by way of a statement of its aims and mission, two political articles of Stepnyak's were translated into English by E.L. Voynich.

Surely, all of this could not have been fortuitous. But the real facts of E.L. Voynich's connections with Stepnyak were not yet known to us.

No Stepnyak memoirs have come down to us. He died suddenly, having fallen under a train at a time when he was in his prime and engrossed in activity, when he had neither the time nor the wish to occupy himself with memoirs.

It is necessary to turn to the archive documents. Numerous manuscripts and Stepnyak's wide correspondence were acquired in due course from his widow by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and are now preserved in the Central State Archive of Literature and Art.

We were convinced that we would find in this archive E.L. Voynich letters and other documents which would clarify much in her life and throw light on the details of her participation in the Russian revolutionary movement.

Unfortunately, not a single letter of E.L. Voynich's could be found. But many documents confirm their close friendship and testify to her close connections with Russian revolutionaries.

Among the addresses of various English writers and social workers found in old notebooks belonging to Stepnyak there appears the address of Miss E. Boole.

Also preserved are letters from E.L. Voynich's mother, Mary Boole, to Stepnyak.

The first of these is dated 25 March 1886. Mary Boole expresses a wish to meet Stepnyak. She addresses him unceremoniously, without any introductions, and invites him to her house. The two next letters were dated 12 and 18 April 1892. The formal "Sir" is changed to the familiar "Dear Stepnyak". These were short notes. In one of them she agrees to meet him in the next few days and in the other there is mention of some article relating to Russian political emigrants. "I am glad to help your work with my modest efforts", writes Mary Boole to Stepnyak.

In a letter of 20 January 1893, we find a reference to the writer: "Dear Stepnyak, Ethel has told me that you want to know the botanic name of ramsons. I tried to find out from the workers in the Botanical Gardens but, though they were very courteous and good, they could not find it." Later she expresses her interest with regard to the medicinal property of the plant and she promises to continue her enquiries. Evidently, Stepnyak somewhere felt obliged to mention this plant – a kind of wild garlic growing in Siberia, which the local and exile population used against scurvy.

On the basis of this letter, we can now assert that Stepnyak was closely acquainted with Ethel Lilian Voynich and her mother.

The last of the Mary Boole letters is addressed to Stepnyak's wife. It expresses her deepest sympathy on the sudden death of Stepnyak [who died on 23 December 1895]: "I have just learned of your loss – our loss, the loss of all who knew him."

There are two letters in the archive from M. Voynich to Stepnyak, but they contain no information about E.L. Voynich.

Fortunately, in the archive – a rare occurrence – there are many of Stepnyak's own letters. His wife collected them after his death.

An unusually large number of these letters are addressed to Anna Mikhailovna Epstein. They knew each other from early youth. A.M. Epstein joined the circle of the Chaikovtsy. She was often obliged to leave Russia,

but from 1887 she was forced to become an emigrant. Not long before Stepnyak's death, A.M. Epstein died of cancer in Vienna.

Stepnyak wrote to her often. Understandably, by no means all her letters were present. It could be considered a miracle that in so nomadic a life even these letters survive.

And there, among them, we find a long letter, enumerating disasters of all sorts, especially financial ones: already, in the autumn, *The Career of a Nihilist* will be coming from the press and, in the meantime, there is not a copeck left. It was written in London, in June, no year indicated, but as far as we know *The Career of a Nihilist* appeared in the autumn of 1889.

Further on in the letter we read:

*We await from day to day the arrival of Sasha (Fanin sister) whom a sweet little Englishwoman, who has become very friendly with the two Fanin sisters, is bringing to us, by all accounts. We taught her Russian here and directed her to Petersburg to Lichkuses of all generations. She is a musician and she gave us lessons. Pashetka is going with the Karaulovs to Siberia. He has been released from the Schlüsselburg Fortress. But where they will settle in Siberia is not known. We hope to hear a lot of news, social and family, from our Englishwoman when she arrives. We will write soon again.*

In this letter everything is clear. Sasha is Aleksandra Markovna Lichkus – sister of Fanny Markovna Stepnyak whose maiden name is Lichkus. Pashetka is her other sister, Praskov'ya Vasil'yevna Karaulova. [On marrying a Russian, she was obliged by the law of that time to be baptised and to change her patronymic].



“The sweet little Englishwoman” is, of course, Lily Boole. All that we know about her accords with Stepnyak's account of her: both the fact that she was a musician and that she was friendly with Stepnyak's wife's sisters.

It shows that she gave music lessons in Russia. But was that the sole purpose of her journey? And why does Stepnyak not mention her by name? Obviously there were serious reasons for this. The fact was that the letters of Russian political emigrants were constantly intercepted and Stepnyak did not want to put the police on her trail. It is probable that Voynich was his assistant. Not without reason does he write: “We hope to hear a lot of news, social and family, from our Englishwoman when she arrives”. It would only be natural that he would

be hoping to hear news of his near relations – his sister Fanny Markovna, Sasha. And maybe Lily Boole, returning to England, brought not only news but letters too, illegal manuscripts.

Although we were convinced that his little “Englishwoman” was Lily Boole, we had no precise proof. But here, quite out of the blue, we surely had it.

Again and again we went through Stepnyak's letters.

We look through his notebooks – the diary for 1885. In the column for 3 June there is an entry: “Posted a letter to Anka”. Anka was the name by which Stepnyak referred to Anna Mikhailovna Epstein. In other words, he wrote a letter to her on 2 June and posted it on 3 June.

On the same page, column 4, he writes: “Sasha has arrived with Bulochka”. And he adds that Sasha has arrived with the Englishwoman.

“Bulochka” – what sort of a name was this? Well, of course, it was she! Her surname, Boole, is pronounced “Bul”, so it was natural to name his dear Englishwoman, the young girl, in a friendly and affectionate manner: “Bulochka”.

So we now know precisely how Lily Boole found herself in Russia and we know precisely the date of her return to England, 4 June 1889. But we do not know when and in what circumstances she became acquainted with Stepnyak when she went to Russia.

I.I. Popov, in his memoirs, describes meetings with Lily Boole in Petersburg at the Karaulov apartments in 1882. But Stepnyak moved to London only in the summer of 1884, which means that he could not have become acquainted with Lily Boole before then. Besides, it was not until 1885 that she left the Berlin Conservatoire where she had been studying for some years.

But I.I. Popov was arrested in February 1885 and sent to Siberia; consequently he could not have seen Lily Boole after that date, not to mention Karaulov, who was arrested in March 1884.

These questions remained unanswered. Only E.L. Voynich herself could answer them.

But let us return to the Stepnyak archive. If she is Bulochka (and, of course, she is) we have met this nickname more than once. It is necessary to go over everything anew.

In Stepnyak's notebook for 1890 her name is not mentioned even once. In the notebook for 1890 there are few entries. There is a note for 5 January 1890: "Was at Engel's place with F." In the column for 3 May "U Bulochki". This means that he had been at her place, with her.

We do not find any further references to her in the notebooks. But there are the letters. . .

At the end of 1890, Stepnyak and his wife went to the USA to publicise the idea of the Russian revolutionary movement, to collect funds for its needs, and for the publication in America of the journal *Free Russia (Svobodnaya Rossiya)*. There was a lively correspondence between London friends and Stepnyak. The London edition of *Svobodnaya Rossiya* was edited by his friend and co-editor, Felix Vadimovich Volkovsky (1846-1914), publicist and poet, who was also a political emigrant.

F. Volkovsky wrote often from London to Stepnyak, telling of difficulties he was encountering and of events in his personal life. In a letter dated 27 March 1891 he tells Stepnyak: "I had a most interesting conversation with Peter yesterday (Peter – Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin – E.T.) He made a strong attack on me and on the F.R. (*Free Russia – Svobodnaya Rossiya – E.T.*) accusing us of forgetting the people in the interests of a privileged handful, that the F.R. lacks certain kinds of articles – about the land question, for example (solved in an absolutely democratic sense) and that, judging by the inability of the government and the governing class to understand the task of history, the restoration of Russia would be impossible without a revolution and so on – all of which I know myself. But to suggest that it (*Svobodnaya Rossiya – E.T.*) sold the people in the interest of the liberal minority is nonsense. And I told him so and explained attacks on me and you (more active recently but not more intensive). The idea that the Russian revolutionaries, intentionally or unintentionally, show themselves in the F.R. to be at variance with reality – which they have already abandoned to Pizam\* and even to the editorial office. Bulochka passionately developed this idea in the presence of Roberts\*, Reynolds\*, and Rodgers\* when we were all together in my house.

"It was not part of our task immediately to sort out the political disagreements among the emigrants of that time; for us, the important thing was to establish that the future writer played a passionate role in those disputes and, obviously, held very radical views." Not without

---

\* English social activists, members of the Friends of Russian Freedom

reason did Volkhovsky write of Bulochka's "vehemence". The pupil was already disputing with her teacher.

In another letter, undated but clearly relating to the same period, Volkhovsky again writes to Stepnyak about it. He tells of a letter received from an elderly Narodnik [Russian populist, SÓC] P. Lavrov, containing similar reproaches and clear evidence of differing voices within the editorial staff. He continues, ". . . and Bulochka repeats over and over again that you and I are to blame". Volkhovsky asks Stepnyak to return sooner as he himself was unable to cope with so energetic an attack.

Extremely important for us is the indication in the letter of 27 March 1891 that Bulochka worked in the actual editorial office of *Free Russia*. This is confirmed by other reminiscences in the Stepnyak correspondence. It is possible that some articles or sketches published in that journal were written or translated by her. (Was she not by then a busy translator of works by Russian writers?). But the most thorough examinations produced no results. Most of the material was published anonymously. Just around this time a translation of Saltykov-Shchedrin's "Tale of How One Peasant Fed Two Generals" ("Povest' o tom, kak odin muzhik dvukh generalov prokormil") was published in *Free Russia* (*Svobodnaya Rossiya*) among other works of his (No. 5, 1890; Nos. 1 & 4, 1891; No. 1, 1892). In No. 4, 1892, V. Korolenko's story "Chudnaya" was published in translation, without the author's name, with the note: "Story by a young Russian writer; banned in Russia; circulated in manuscript. We received it from friends from Russia". It was published in the Russian language for the first time by Stepnyak in an issue of the "Fund of the Great Russian Press".

Preserved in the Stepnyak archive is yet another letter of Volkhovsky's, dated 23 November 1891, in which Lily Boole is mentioned. E. Volkhovsky writes to Stepnyak:

*Dear Friend, the poems sent to me by Lily were not quite what I had expected from what Ivan Mikhailovich had said about them [Ivan Mikhailovich was the name given to Mikhail Voynich by his friends]. These are Ukrainian folksongs. However, I think that "Chaika" could be of use to you, as something touching on a new theme completely unknown to the English – anyway I am sending it on to you. If you do not consider it possible to use "Chaika", ask Lily, she may have translated something from the prison songs.*

This means that already in 1891 Lily Boole had translated Ukrainian folksongs. "Chaika" is a well-known folksong often met with in eighteenth-

century songbooks and in a revamped form included in the repertoire of the so-called “Chumatsky songs”.

An examination of the complete set of the *Svobodnaya Rossiya* (*Free Russia*) journals again gives us information of no small importance about E.L. Voynich. In almost every number of the journal a list of the members of the committee of the “Obshchestvo Druzei Russkoi Svobody” (Society of the Friends of Free Russia) is given – starting from August 1892, the name of “Mistress Wilfrid Voynich” appears in these lists (in England a married woman is often called not by her own surname but by her husband's name). So we may take it that she took an active part in the articles of the Society. In accounts of sessions of the Executive Committee, her attendance and speeches are often recorded.

All of this is yet another proof of the active participation of E.L. Voynich in the Russian revolutionary movement and her close collaboration with Stepnyak.

In a letter of F. Volkhovsky's, dated 27 March 1891, there is yet another curious reference to her. In the very end of his letter Volkhovsky writes to Stepnyak:

*... try to see Vasili Vereshchagin (artist). A delightful thought has occurred to Golden [L. Goldenburg – a comrade of Stepnyak's] of making use of the Chicago Exhibition in the interests of the Russian revolution by exhibiting corresponding paintings. Bulochka told me that Lulu [one of Lily's sisters' – E.T.] saw Vereshchagin's painting of the execution of Russian Revolutionaries in Petersburg side by side with the Crucifixion of Christ. Maybe he could do something for this exhibition.*

The reference here is to well-known paintings of Vereshchagin's: “Trilogy Kaznei” (“Trilogy of Executions”) which included “Roman Execution: The Crucifixion of Christ”, “Shooting from a cannon in India”, and “Execution of Conspirators in Russia”. The complete Trilogy, together with other paintings of Vereshchagin's, were shown in many European exhibitions of his work and enjoyed great success. In London these paintings were exhibited in the autumn of 1887. She probably did not see them but it is important to note that she knew of them.

The painting “Execution of Conspirators in Russia” depicted the retribution meted out to five Narodovoltsy [members of the People's Will movement — SÓC] in connection with 1 March 1881 [the assassination of Aleksandr II], and which, even in reproductions of it, made a strong impression. In

the background are the five hanged men, seen through a mantle of snow. In the foreground only the murderous looking figure of a mounted gendarme, the personification of autocracy, and a priest blessing the execution, which was plainly the reason that it was never exhibited in Tsarist Russia, but was confiscated from its owner and after the October Revolution was found and exhibited in the Lenin Museum of the Revolution.

Thus Lily Boole knew about one of the most remarkable paintings of the Russian artist in which the reactionary role of the church and its servants was exposed, and, of course, this idea is personified in the novel *The Gadfly*.

Thus, the study of the Stepnyak archive gave us many valuable pieces of information about E.L. Voynich, but the hope of finding her letters was not fulfilled.

But there is another mention of E.L. Voynich. In a letter dated 19 April 1894, Stepnyak wrote to his wife:

*"I was with the Flerovskys yesterday. I still go there to discuss the autobiography, to find out how it is going. I am afraid that if he is depending on Lily, he will have to abandon hope. She is now writing a novel about Italian life. He, Voynich, told me this today".*  
(Underlined by Stepnyak. In this same letter he tells his wife that, among other things, he had received a ticket to the theatre from George Bernard Shaw, and from Oscar Wilde an invitation to dinner – E.T.)

Stepnyak was very friendly with Vasilii Vasil'evich Bervi (1829-1918), who wrote under the pseudonym of Flerovsky, author of a well known book, *The Position of the Working Class in Russia* (1869). Marx and Engels valued his works highly. Stepnyak, in 1893, issued in a "Fund of the Great Russian Press" edition the third and fourth parts of his popular book, *Alphabet of the Social Sciences*.

It seems that what is being referred to here is that Flerovsky had written his autobiography and it was supposed that E.L. Voynich had participated in the work. But she was very busy with something else: she was already writing the novel, *The Gadfly*.

Here, the atmosphere in which *The Gadfly* was created and the role of the Russian revolutionary and writer S.M. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky in the life of E.L. Voynich becomes clearer to us.

## ***How The Gadfly appeared in Russia***

As the reader already knows, the first mention of the novel *The Gadfly* appears in the December number of the journal *Mir Bozhii* for 1897, and in the first six months of 1898 the novel itself was printed in Z.H. Vengerova's translation.

We already knew that the first edition of *The Gadfly* in the English language came out in June 1897 in America and September 1897 in Britain. The novel mentioned in *Mir Bozhii* was printed in book form in November 1897. This means that almost within two months of its appearance in England it had been mentioned in Russia, and its translation into Russian had begun. So short an interval invites the supposition that the translator had received the novel direct from its author and that there was some sort of a link between them, maybe that they knew each other.

Zinaida Afanas'evna Vergerova (1867-1941), sister of the well-known historian of literature, S.A. Vergerov, was at that time a popular critic and translator of foreign literature. She was often abroad and could have become acquainted with E.L. Voynich, who translated works of Russian writers into English.

Some indirect data supported our conjecture.

The very short note about Voynich in the eleventh volume of the Brochhaus-Efron *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary* caught our attention by the fact that it was in a way not normally associated with a dictionary article. First of all, the name Voynich was given not in the normal formal way, Ethel Lilian, but in an intimate familiar way, 'Lily'. Secondly, with regard to *The Gadfly* we read: "In this novel (from the period of the Italian Revolution) readers spotted the well-known analogy with the sentiments of the Russian revolutionary movement. This is made clear by the close acquaintance of the author with the Russian revolutionary environment".

Only someone who knew Voynich or her friends personally could have written in this way. Under the note were the initials "Z.V." If we take into consideration that S.A. Vengerov was in charge of the literature section in this dictionary and that the head of the foreign literature section was Z.A. Vengerova, there seems little doubt but that the letters "Z.V." designated "Zinaida Vengerova".

We turned to the Vengerovs' nephew, Aleksandr Leonidovich Slonimsky: "Yes, to be sure! [His] Aunt was well acquainted with Lily Voynich. They were friends. [His] Aunt always spoke of her with admiration. The poet Nikolai Maksimovich Minsky, Zinaida Afanas'evna's husband, knew Voynich."

On A.L. Slonimsky's advice we made our way to Pushkin House, to the Institute of Russian Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. An official of the Institute, L.M. Dobrovolsky, produced a folder. And there they were – her letters! On thick, slightly yellowish, paper, in clear, firm, beautiful writing, the letters were written in Russian, with only the address in English:

92 Edith Grove  
Chelsea  
S.W. London,

27/6/97

Dear Minsky,

*I haven't heard from you, so I assume that you have stayed in Rouen.*

*The American edition of my novel has already come out in New York because Holt [publisher] considered that for America this was a good season. Here measures have been taken to protect copyright and the English edition will, as I wrote to you the other day, come out in September. Heinemann asks me not to mention to anyone that the American edition has already appeared because this could have an adverse effect on the sale of the English edition in the autumn. So, while sending you a copy of the American edition, I am asking you not to show it to anyone. Having read it, you can, of course, decide whether it should go to that journal or not. I know nothing about that at all, any more than I know which journal. So I am relying on you. If you find that it is not suitable for this journal, then please don't be shy about saying so.*

*In the final corrections, the workers have managed to leave some very serious misprints uncorrected despite the fact that I went through the corrections extremely carefully. I deleted the most important ones with a pencil in the copy that was sent to you.*

*I very much regret that I cannot delete that horrible book cover from all the copies but such is the taste of the great American public, but it is the taste of the public that the publisher considers and not the taste of any authors.*

*As for the rest, it makes no matter.*

*The English edition will, it seems, be better in human terms.*

*So, all the best.  
Yours, Lilian Voynich*

*I am sending the book by registered post.*

92 Edith Grove  
Chelsea  
S.W. London

25/07/97

Dear Minsky,

Thank you for your letter which interested me very much. Your criticism was all the more interesting in that it differs sharply from all the opinions that I have heard so far. Here in England, I have heard thus far only private criticism, since the English and colonial editions will, as you know, come out only in the autumn; but from America, where the book came out last month and where apparently it is already having success, I have received reviews. Some of them, though they praise the book highly from the literary point of view, raise an outcry about its "scandalous" and "horrifying" character. One large magazine warned readers that its pages were full of "profanity" and "blasphemy".

On you, a continental man, it makes a diametrically opposite impression. I would like to hear Zinaida Afanas'evna's opinion. Ask her to be so kind as to read the novel and express her opinion on this point.

As regards Mir Bozhii, it is difficult to express an opinion as I know very little about it. Can you not give me some idea of it — who the editor is, who contributes to it, what sort of public reads it? Is it a large journal? As you know yourself, I would not contribute *The Gadfly* to a second-class publication; also I would not have it appear in a clerical one even if such a one would agree to publish it.

I have noticed that in the bibliographical section of a number of *Russkaya Mysl* [Russian Thought], a critic reviewing some supplement or other to Mir Bozhii uses the expression "young readers". Is this by any chance a publication for juveniles? I think that they would not grow strong on food such as *The Gadfly*. It is not, you know, "virginibus puerisque". What I wrote to you about silence until September does not apply, of course, to Zinaida Afanas'evna. Give her my kind regards; and forgive me for causing you so much trouble about my little book.

All the best!  
Yours Lilian Voynich

P.S. If possible, I would like to arrange translation rights, because the book (so they tell me) is attracting much attention to itself in America, so it could easily fall into the hands of "pirates".

92 Edith Grove  
Chelsea  
S.W. London

07/10/97

Dear Minsky,

*I await, with impatience, an answer from you. Please let me know without delay what has come of your efforts about the Russian translation of my book. If nothing has come of it, I will have to search around to find some place where this can be organised, because now I really fear pirate translations. The book came out here in London three weeks ago and is already making some noise. A long critique from the editor of the Fortnightly Review and, in general, a good deal of attention has been given to it, but not as much as in America. There, they argued hotly about it in the press and, as a result, sale was very brisk. So I have good reason to fear that the piracy gentlemen will spoil matters for me. Please let me know what has to be done. I am in a hurry. Kindest regards to yourself and Vengerova.*

Yours, L. Voynich

So now we know that already, before the issue of *The Gadfly* in Britain, E.L. Voynich was seeking to publish it in Russian and spoke to N.M. Minsky about it. It is evident from the letters that they were fairly closely acquainted and wrote to each other often. N.M. Minsky (1855-1937) was, in his time, a well known poet. He began with revolutionary verses, then became a symbolist, before lapsing into religious mysticism. Some time in the year 1905 Minsky was connected with the Bolshevist newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* (New-Life). It is significant that Minsky did not understand the anti-religious spirit of the novel — something that the American bourgeois press understood so well, so quickly. This is all the more curious in view of the fact that in his youth Minsky produced work expressing the same attitude of mind as that in *The Gadfly*.

We have in mind the dramatic extract in the poems ("Last Confession") printed in No. 1 of *Narodnaya Volya* (The People's Will) and published in 1879. This passage, picturing a brave revolutionary who rejects the hypocrisy of religion, had a shocking effect on his contemporaries. It was under the influence of the "Last Confession", that I. Repin created his painting *Rejection of Confession before Execution*. And yet the author of the poem did not understand *The Gadfly*! And not having understood the novel, Minsky was unaware of its power and promoted the translation of *The Gadfly* into Russian. It is interesting to note that E.L. Voynich

suspected from its name that the journal was of a clerical, i.e. church, character, and refused publication in it if this proved to be the case. But *Mir Bozhii* was not at all a clerical journal. In fact representatives of Legal Marxism were active in it. Its editor was the well-known scholar, V.P. Ostrogorsky. His work was used in the widest progressive circles of the time. Lenin collaborated with him. In fact, during the period in which the journal was publishing the book, it also carried a review by Lenin of a book by A. Bogdanov.

Indeed, in the early years of its publication, it was intended for young people but from 1896 it broadened its programme and became a journal for self-education.

It is interesting to note that at no time did E.L. Voynich visualize the great interest that *The Gadfly* evoked among young people.

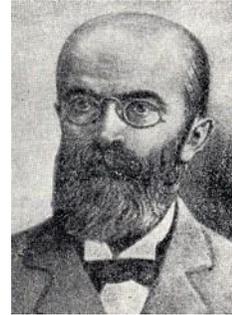
But she was convinced that *The Gadfly* would have success in Russia. She was not mistaken. From the moment of its appearance, *The Gadfly* conquered the hearts of its readers. One of the oldest activists of the Communist Party, E.D. Spasova, speaks of *The Gadfly* in a letter to the author in these lines: "The novel first appeared in a journal, *Mir Bozhii*, and we, Sunday-school teachers, cut it out of the journal, bound it and gave it to our pupils to read". The teachers in these schools were Petersburg workers.

Thus was it possible to read yet another interesting page of the history of *The Gadfly*.

## Why E.L. Voynich came to L'vov

Among the multitude of documents found in the branch office of the Central State Historical Archive of the U.S.S.R., in the city of L'vov, two letters of E.L. Voynich to M.I. Pavlik are carefully preserved.

The writer and publicist Mikhail Ivanovich Pavlik (1853-1915), over a long period of years, took an active part in the freedom movement of Western Ukraine which was suffering under the oppression of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Together with the well-known writer Ivan Franko, M. Pavlik fought against reactionaries of all colours and was the founder of the democratic press of Galicia.



M. I. Pavlik

From the very beginning of his activity, M. Pavlik was subjected to brutal police repression. His stories and tales were banned, publications which he edited were confiscated, and he himself was repeatedly subjected to arrest. Escaping from police terror he went to Switzerland in 1879 where he became close to the Ukrainian liberal social activist, Professor M.P. Dragomanov and got to know the Russian revolutionaries G.V. Plekhanov, V.I. Zasulich, S.M. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky and others.

Returning home after three years M. Pavlik continued his activity. In 1890, I. Franko and M. Pavlik organised a radical party and published newspapers, *Narod* (The People) and *Khleborob* (The Grain-grower). These publications approved of and supported the founders of the first Russian Marxist organisation and of the group "Osvobozhdenie Truda" (The Emancipation of Labour) — G. Plekhanov and V. Zasulich.

M. Pavlik valued Russian literature very highly. He translated works of L. Tolstoi, M. Saltykov-Shchedrin, G. Uspensky, and A. Ostrovsky into Ukrainian.

M. Pavlik's world-view (Weltanschauung) was shaped under the influence of the Russian Revolutionary Democrats. He knew and studied Marx and Engels but did not become a Marxist — remaining a Ukrainian Socialist.

The fate of Pavlik's literary heritage turned out to be tragic. His stories and tales, realistically portraying the hard life of the Ukrainians under the yoke

of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, were banned time and time again. Only once – in 1909 – did Pavlik succeed in publishing some of his works. Now, in 1955, in L'vov the “selected works” of M. Pavlik have been published in Ukrainian.

E.L. Voynich's two letters to M. I. Pavlik relate to the year 1895. They are written in a clear, beautiful hand in Russian; only the address at the beginning of the second letter is given in English.

Here is what E.L. Voynich wrote to Mikhail Ivanovich Pavlik from London to L'vov on 25 March 1895:

London 25/03/95

Dear Comrade,

I have failed to keep my word. I promised to write to you from Vienna and up till now I have not written as much as a word. What to do! I was very ill there. No sooner had I arrived than I was down with influenza. The whole city has been knocked out with it. I feel better now and in two weeks time I'll be going to Italy to finish the little book.

Now, how are you getting on? Completely bored? You must come to us without fail in the summer when I return from Italy. We are counting on you completely.

Have you read Garshin's Zapiski Ryadovogo (Sketches of a Common Man). I have recently translated it into English and it has had a fairly big success. Now, unfortunately, I haven't the time to devote myself to translations – there are so many things to be done!

I am sending a leaflet from the series to which the brochure that you sent to my husband after my departure belongs. Please read it carefully and write me your opinion.

You know that I am impatiently awaiting an answer from you about the present you promised to get for me. Is it really not possible to get? Try, my dear fellow. I am very anxious to get it quickly. If you only knew how important it is for me; I simply wait – I'll not keep waiting. I am convinced that you will get it. I am relying on you as on a stone wall. But hurry, the waiting is painful. Please give my regards to the Bubers and to Mrs Lilien and to the two ladies, the teachers. If you see Mrs Lilien with her friend to whom she introduced me, ask her to let him know that, because of my illness, I have not been able to enquire about the English Universities but that I'll do so without fail.

Haven't forgotten about your gold pen, will send it on to you as soon as possible. Have seen the note in Kurjer Lwowsky – this was inserted probably through your good reviews? If so, thank you!

I must hurry now. My husband is writing to you, too.

Kind regards to Franko and Mrs Visloukhova.

How is your mother? Take care of yourself, come in the summer and, in the meantime don't get sick and, above all, don't be sad!

I'll write soon again.

Yours,  
Lilian Voynich

The second letter was written after a fairly long interval.

149 The Grove  
Hammersmith  
W. London

3 September 1895

Dear Friend,

*It is true, I have been silent for a long time. Well, for this there was a special reason. I was sitting the whole four months in Italy completely taken up with literary work which is now drawing to a close. I have been so preoccupied and engrossed in my work (this is the novel that I have been telling you about) that I read absolutely no newspaper and knew nothing of what was happening in the world. Only after my return home did I learn of the death of Dragomanov. I understand too well what a grief this has been for you even to express my sympathy – but you have no doubt about it.*

*How I wish that you could spend some time here with us. I think that it would make it easier even after a month to break out of this "hellhole" and to look on God's world again. As far as we are concerned, there are so few real comrades in the world and so much enmity and envy that it seems to us that we would perhaps forego a year of our lives in order to see the face of a real friend now and again. Ah! Life is not always sweet in the wide world.*

*I don't know whether you have heard of the great crash that has befallen us. Financially, things are very very bad with us; so much so that not only are we unable to share our earnings with others but have to look to it that we ourselves do not die of hunger.*

*To be sure, all this is a temporary difficulty from which we will soon emerge. Thank God, it is not the first time we have been hungry and have not died of it – it is not terrible. I am much more worried about my husband's poor health. He is so anaemic and suffers such nervous disorders that I am very worried about him. All the same, I think that this illness is due to a whole series of very unpleasant experiences that we have had during the past year and that he will make a complete recovery when these experiences lose their vividness with the passing of time.*

*As for business affairs I am not all that worried, very soon things will come right without any doubt; it is just necessary to wait a bit and we'll come out of the crisis. And then everything will be fine.*

*Maybe you will visit us next year. It would be so nice. You would be refreshed in spirit and so would we.*

*In Italy I have been able to see absolutely nothing. The whole blessed day I have been sitting in Archives and Libraries or in my own writing room. The monotony is broken only by the earthquakes which drive the population into such a condition of panicky terror that is really strange to behold.*

*I have been pretty tired but meanwhile I have improved considerably and the book, it seems, is going fairly well. It is about the Italian movement in the forties.*

*Take care of yourself, and many many thanks for all that you have done. Please give my regards to the two Barryshnya teachers [Barryshnya = daughter of a man belonging to the upper class in pre-Revolutionary Russia — SÓC] and all my dear L'vov acquaintances. Write to me when you have time.*

*Regards to your mother; and to yourself the most friendly greetings from us both and especially from myself.*

*Yours,  
Lilian*

These letters undoubtedly bear witness to the friendly feelings of the English writer towards the Ukrainian writer. E.L. Voynich speaks about her work (this was *The Gadfly*; she invites him to her place and thanks him for some service or other).

One can deduce that not long before writing her first letter, 25 March 1895, E.L. Voynich had met M. Pavlik. We know that at that time M. Pavlik went nowhere outside of L'vov where he always lived, going nowhere apart from the little town of Koloma, situated not far away. This suggests that E.L. herself came from London to L'vov, and is confirmed by the text of these two letters.

Why and with what in mind, immersed in work on her first novel and obliged through lack of time to refuse translation work, did E.L.V. undertake such a long and tiring journey from London to Galicia?

The texts of the letters do not give us the answer to the question. On the contrary, there is a lot that is not clear in them. Of what "gift" is E.L.V. talking with such persistence? Hardly some female knick-knack that she wanted to have. Of what gold pen is she talking? It is impossible to know. And why does she write in such general terms about some list, some brochure?

We tried to find the answers to these questions in the M. Pavlik archive. In the manuscript in the T.G. Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R., in Kiev, there are twelve letters from M. Voynich to M. Pavlik.

These letters from Mikhail Wilfrid Voynich (in emigration he was known under the name of Ivan Kel'chevsky) explain a little about the relationship between E.L.V. and M.I. Pavlik, and they permit us to read an interesting page about the international relations of Russian revolutionaries at the end of the nineteenth century. Evidently, far from all of M. Voynich's letters to M. Pavlik remained intact but the preserved letter of 27 July 1891 was the first. In it M. Voynich wrote to M. Pavlik about the organisation in London of the "Russian Literary Fund" and informs him of its aims:

*. . . to publish brochures and books, to reprint articles and valuable pieces of writing, to print the works of outstanding Russian writers which due to censorship conditions could not appear in Russia. And, in conclusion, when the inflow of the literary and material means becomes stronger, to proceed to the publication of a serious journal. It goes without saying that the transport of publications into Russia will have priority. There are grounds for supposing that in Galicia Ukrainians and Russian newcomers will buy it if it is well-produced. We have agents and bookshops everywhere except the Czech and Galician areas. Would you not be able to help in this matter? Stepnyak relies on you a lot.*

Further on, Voynich informs him of the forthcoming first issue of a Fund publication, proposes various business arrangements and reveals that people in London receive Pavlik's publications regularly. Evidently, M. Pavlik agreed to the propositions; business relations were established, and a regular correspondence was to begin between L'vov and London.

The next of the M. Voynich letters was dated 7 February 1892. M. Voynich reports that the first issue of the Fund in which Stepnyak's article, "What do we need?", already sold out, enjoyed great success, and he thanks M. Pavlik for his co-operation in distributing it. He writes, "We are very glad that you liked the programme of Fund." The bond between the London emigrants and M. Pavlik becomes closer. They begin to exchange not only already used material but also new material for these publications. As is evident from the letters of M. Voynich, I. Franko promised to insert an article about Stepnyak's brochure in the *L'vov Courier (Kurjer Lwowski*, published in the Polish language, with which I. Franko and M. Pavlik were closely connected at the time).

In February 1892, M. Voynich asks M. Pavlik how many copies of the second issue of the Fund – brochure – of Stepnyak's *Agitation Abroad* were sent to L'vov for sale.

It must be remembered that both of these articles of Stepnyak's in 1892 appeared in London in E.L.V. translation.

On 10 March 1892, M. Voynich sends a postcard to M. Pavlik (as we see, the correspondence was very intensive). However, it was written in a completely different hand, quite unlike that of M. Voynich. On the archive folder it says: "in the handwriting of an unknown person". But we recognised the writing straightaway, the lovely characteristic handwriting of E.L. Voynich.

Under M. Voynich's dictation, she writes to M. Pavlik:

10.3.92

*Dear Comrade,*

*An operation on my hand prevented me from writing to you before now, and now I must ask the comrade for 5 fr. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March I sent you the first issue: 30 copies. Today 50 copies 2<sup>nd</sup> issue. 15<sup>th</sup> February more sent. Material for the journal will be sent as soon as I recover.*

*A firm handshake,  
I. Kel'chevsky*

*The price of the second issue likewise 25 cents.*

Here we have further witness of E.L.V.'s direct participation in the work of the Russian political emigrants in London.

In the following letters of 1892, 1893, and 1894, M. Voynich continued to inform M. Pavlik of new publications of Fund and their distribution, and about the dispatch of various books to M. Pavlik, including Marx's *The Civil War in France*. The form of address is everywhere altered from "much respected compatriot" to "dear comrade".

Unfortunately, from the letter of M. Voynich to M. Pavlik, dated 13 March 1895, only a single sheet is preserved (maybe the other parts will be found in other archive repositories?), but all the same is of much help towards answering our questions.

M. Voynich writes:

*London 13.3.95*

*Dear Comrade,*

*Lily promised to write you a line from Vienna, but on her arrival fell ill at the hotel. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> she returned to London and lo and behold was knocked out for ten days with influenza. Today she has got up for the first time but is still too weak to write. So it will be in the beginning of April before she goes to Italy. Thank you very kindly for all that you have done for her and are doing for us. I am very glad that Lily has become so friendly with you. Don't say after this that it takes a long time to become good friends. No, sensitive people can become friends quickly if they get through to each other. I am very glad that Lily has persuaded you to come to visit us in the summer. And remember that she is holding you to your word. There will be no need to make excuses on the grounds of financial outlay since living in London cannot cost you anything and we will send you the ticket to London and return. So then, in the summer we will become acquainted – I will not allow even the slightest possibility that we will not meet each other in the summer. Now to business. It is a great pity all the same that Lily did not write to you and that, on that account, it is necessary to trouble you again. Give, my dear friend, an answer as soon as possible: how much will it cost to print?*

Here the manuscript comes abruptly to an end. To it a piece of a letter is added but whether it is a piece of the same letter or a piece of another one is in any case impossible to determine from its content.

If we recall that the first of the letters from E.L. Voynich to M. Pavlik known to us was dated 25 March 1895 and, after that, M. Voynich's letter of 13 March 1895, events can be put into perspective. It is clear that in the beginning of 1895 E.L. Voynich went on some important business from London to L'vov. There she became acquainted personally with Mikail Ivanovich Pavlik, with whom she had hitherto been acquainted only through letters. M. Pavlik rendered her (that is, seemingly, to the London emigrants) some sort of important services. Leaving L'vov she promised M. Pavlik that she would write to him after her journey from Vienna, but, because of her illness, she did not keep her promise. On 3 March she returned to London very ill. Wishing to explain to M. Pavlik the cause of her silence, she asked her husband to write to L'vov. When she recovered her health, she herself wrote to her friend on 25 March.

Five days later, 30 March 1895, M. Voynich again writes to M. Pavlik complaining that letters are arriving irregularly and asking him to print 100 copies of some sort of form (probably for the collection of donations) and he concludes:

*Thanks for all that you have done for us. Could not Franko translate this form into Polish? Lily sends regards. Details later. I am in a hurry. Warm regards.*

On 3 September 1895, M. Voynich writes a short note to M. Pavlik in pencil and encloses it with his wife's letter. He reports:

*As I already wrote to you in the past month [we could not find this letter – E.T.] we have had total financial bankruptcy, we have lost a lot of money which had been intended for the book distribution and now we can carry on business only on a small scale like all the other groups. Thanks. Fraternal thanks to you for all that you have done for us. Poor you, yet another friend lost. Strongly, strongly, I embrace you.  
Yours,  
Voynich*

The Union of Booksellers to which M. Voynich refers was organised by him for the dissemination of illegal literature. As regards the financial bankruptcy of which they both speak, we have not been able to ascertain what they are talking about.

Voynich's last letter, among those found in the T.G. Shevchenko Institute of Literature, was dated 2 December 1895. In it M. Voynich sympathizes with M. Pavlik on the cessation of publication of *Narod* (the publication of *Narod* was brought to an end by lack of funds). He relates its difficulties:

*We had to strain all our powers not to die of hunger and to ensure the book distributors stopped their work only temporarily and did not cease completely.*

He goes on to say:

*The position is difficult, difficult everywhere, because there is reaction everywhere, reaction even in England. But most important of all is health and cheerfulness. If we live, we live to better times. Reaction cannot continue forever. It is already dying of its own accord. And there will be better days; we will use our resources to better effect and with better results. Comradely thanks for all that you have done for us.*

By now, M. Voynich is not summoning M. Pavlik to himself but, on the contrary, promises to go to L'vov in the spring or early in the summer.

It is highly interesting to note that he again refers to E.L.V's friendly feelings towards M. Pavlik:

*Lily sends you her best regards. How have you so enchanted her, old chap, that she has quickly fallen in love with you? Rarely have I known anyone with whom she relates with such friendliness. I am very glad that you will meet each other. I am always glad when good and intelligent people become friends, which occurs so rarely. She has finished her book and awaits its publication. She is so tired and so exhausted that she is absolutely unable to do anything. In a week she will write a long letter to you. Today she is restricted to a greeting.*

It seems unlikely that correspondence on this was destroyed but so far it has not been possible to find any further material of its kind.

Thus far, we can consider as established the close and friendly relationship between the author of *The Gadfly* and the eminent social activist of Southern Ukraine, M. Pavlik. It is interesting to emphasise that E.L. Voynich and M. Voynich constantly warmly thanked M. Pavlik for some important service. We do not know for what. We still do not know why the writer went to L'vov.



V.M. Garshin (1884)

Carefully, again and again, we read letters to M. Pavlik. She tells him about her translation into English of Garshin's *Zapisok Ryadogo* (*Sketch of an Ordinary Fellow*). It should be said that besides the story "Iz Vospominanii Ryadogo Ivanov" ("From the Memories of an ordinary Ivanov"), E.L. Voynich translated three other stories of V.M. Garshin's: "Trus" (The Coward), "Proisshestvie" (The Incident), and "Krasny Tsvetok" (Red Blossom). All of these four stories were published in London in 1893 with a foreword by Stepnyak.

She sends greetings to her L'vov acquaintances. These are all friends and collaborators of M. Pavlik. Besides the well-known I. Franko; we meet the name of Raphael Buber (1866-1931). He was a progressive lawyer (he managed M. Pavlik's business affairs) and a socialist activist; Mrs Lilien, an employee and sometime editor of the *L'vov Courier*; Boleslav Visloukh (1855-1937), a personal friend of I. Franko, one of the outstanding progressive social activists of Galicia; His wife, Maria

Visloukhova (1858-1905), well-known social activist and Polish writer, author of booklets about Mickiewicz [Poland's "national bard" and one time friend of Pushkin's — SÓC] and of stories from the period of the Polish uprising of the 1860s.

When E.L. Voynich spoke about a note in the *L'vov Courier* what she obviously had in mind was a very short communication in that paper on 5 March 1895 to the effect that under the editorship of a well-known Russian revolutionary a collection of material about the Russian revolutionary movement was being prepared. The organisers of the collection appealed to all who had information about the importance of the political process in Russia and in the lives of the revolutionaries to communicate such information to London in 1892 under the title "For a Hundred Years".

These letters are important for us in that they picture the situation in which *The Gadfly* was created. The life of its creator was full of want and deprivation; not infrequently, as she herself writes, she had to go hungry. The time of the creation of the novel, *The Gadfly*, was a time when its author took an active part in the Russian revolutionary movement. At this same time, E.L. Voynich was working intensively on translations of works of Russian writers into the English language. Besides the Garshin stories, E.L. Voynich translated during this time works of Gogol, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Dostoevsky, G. Uspensky, and other Russian writers who were included in the collections, *Russian Humour*, which appeared under the editorship of and with a foreword by Stepnyak.

According to her own testimony, she was absorbed in work on her novel. In her letters, we find the first assessment of her own work.

From these letters we know that at the end of 1895 *The Gadfly* was already completed. However, the novel was not published until the summer of 1897 in New York and in the autumn of 1897 in London. Thus, these letters present themselves as important historic-literary documents revealing the creative history of the novel *The Gadfly*.

But still, why did E. L. Voynich go to L'vov? A research worker of the T.G. Shevchenko Institute of Literature, Maria Demyonova Dergach advised us to take a look at the *Correspondence of M. Dragomanov with M. Pavlik*, published by M. Pavlik. Seven volumes (Nos. 2 to 8) of this correspondence were published in 1910-11. M. Pavlik provided the publisher with detailed commentaries. In his comments he reveals many names and events which in his time had been encoded by him in correspondence for conspiratorial reasons.

In volume 8, covering the years 1894-5, we found a letter from M. Pavlik to M. Dragomanov dated 23 February 1895 from L'vov. In this letter (which is in the Ukrainian language) M. Pavlik speaks of the endless disasters and difficulties which he has had to overcome:

*. . . I am suffering very great distress just now and my only joy has been memory of you and of an Englishwoman from London, who has been with me on business (she speaks Russian and takes part in the Russian revolutionary movement, a remarkably well-educated and human person). About the business on which she has come, I'll talk to Lesya (it cannot be put on paper) about this and other matters when she returns to Russia.*

*Hence, I would like to have a chat with you as soon as you wish and again I am particularly glad for you and for Lesya that she should be in Sofia for as long as possible, if not forever.*

*Take care of yourself.*

*I certainly need a rest. The Englishwoman summons me to her place, but this cannot be. I could not live with her husband yonder.*

Doubtless the Englishwoman of whom M. Pavlik speaks is E.L. Voynich, even the detail about the invitation to come in the summer. But what exactly was going on, if M. Pavlik was willing to speak about it personally to Lesya Ukrainka even if it was not possible to write about it?

In a footnote to his letter written while the letter was being prepared, M. Pavlik writes:

*I did not speak about this business with Kosach [Larisa Kosach, real name of the celebrated Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka, a niece of M. Dragomanov — E.T.] whom I saw only after the death of Dragomanov in Sofia — because she was unfit for such business. This was the transportation of all sorts of suppressed literature launched on a wide basis which collapsed with the withdrawal of Fund from this plan in London itself.*

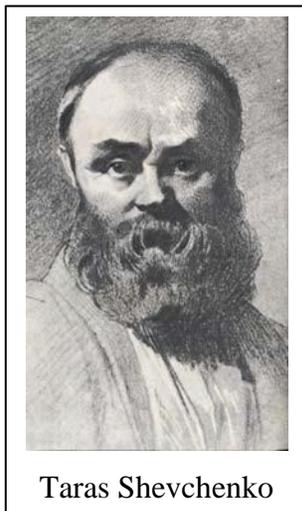
So it was for this that E.L. Voynich came to L'vov, dragging herself away from work on *The Gadfly*.

This was so hushed up that even in 1911 when he was publishing his correspondence in annotations he revealed a lot of other names but did not consider it possible to reveal the name of E.L. Voynich. Only in a handwritten index of names which M. Pavlik himself put together for this correspondence did he give her name: "Madam Voynich – volume 8, pages 204, 205". These were precisely the pages in which, in a letter dated 23 February 1895, she is remembered as "the Englishwoman".

Thus, while writing *The Gadfly*, E.L. Voynich played a direct part in the revolutionary activity in Galicia, using the nearness of the Russian border to take illegal literature across. M. Pavlik's footnote reveals to us the authentic situation in which *The Gadfly* was created; it is extremely important for the understanding of the creative history of that remarkable production.

Work in the Italian archives and libraries helped E.L. Voynich to create the historical background of the Italian freedom movement in the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century, but active participation in a revolutionary movement, personal interest in the fortunes of the Russian revolution, the risk and dangers connected with underground activity – all this helped in the creation of the beautiful image of the hero-revolutionary which still a half century later stirs the heart of the reader of *The Gadfly*.

It is important to mention that E.L. Voynich was deeply interested in the literature of the Ukrainian people and knew the Ukrainian language. However this side of her activity is still little known. It will be remembered that already in 1891 E.L. Voynich translated Ukrainian folksongs into English.



In 1911, for the fiftieth anniversary of the death of T. Shevchenko, E.L. Voynich published in London *Six Poems from the Ukrainian Taras Shevchenko* in which, besides the translation of the six Shevchenko poems, she also inserted a biographical sketch of the great Ukrainian poet. She regarded the work of Shevchenko highly. She considered the lyric poet to be immortal, and, analysing the special characteristics of his work, compares him to the Scottish poet, Robert Burns.

## **A parcel from New York**

In the autumn of 1955 we all knew that Soviet journalists, during a stay in the USA, visited E. L. Voynich. Before their departure we gave them the address of E. L. Voynich in New York and we asked them to visit her.

For her part, E.L. Voynich, having received Ogonëk with this first essay about her through a Soviet official in the United Nations Organisations, Petr Pavlovich Borisov, invited the Soviet journalists to her house.

Only then, from the Soviet newspapers, did the writer learn of the huge popularity of the novel *The Gadfly* in Russia and of the fact that *The Gadfly* was one of the best loved books among Soviet youth.

A. Adzhubei and N. Gribachev and B. Polovoi and Poltoratsky and A. Sofronov related the details of this momentous meeting to us.

***“I am very happy.”***

After a long and impatient wait we received a letter from E.L. Voynich. It was written on 11 May 1956. The New York postal stamp was dated 12 May and on 20 May the letter was now in Moscow. Thin compact sheets of paper, the beginning was written in Russian: “Please excuse my long delay in replying to your letters”. The rest was in English:

*Today is my birthday, I am 92 years old. I am very happy because I have received your letter of congratulations and the telegrams from the Ogonëk collection and also from the Committee of the Komsomol. Thus, you see, it was a real Russian birthday.*

Yes, that year was momentous for the writer; she learned of her popularity in the USSR, of the millions of copies in which her book had appeared, and of the grateful love of millions of readers.

In the same envelope was a very worn and amiable letter from her friend Mrs Anna Mill informing us that she was sending us various materials.

## **The Precious Parcel**

And precious the parcel certainly was.

First, there was the book – her latest novel, *Put Off Thy Shoes*, published in New York in 1945, with the author's signature. Then, a beautiful photograph of the writer, the work of Gabor Edera. On the reverse side in Anna Mill's hand: "E.L. Voynich, photographed 3 November 1944, shortly after the completion of the novel *Put Off Thy Shoes*", and in E.L. Voynich's own hand in Russian: "In Memory", and the date "25 April 1956".

Then, the reel of a smallish film taken in the spring of 1956. We saw the house in which she lived, a gloomy seventeen-storey building. We see her room. On the wall, a portrait of an Italian youth from whom the writer took the appearance of Arthur. And there, herself, animated E.L. Voynich walked round the room, turning over sheets of her own compositions. She read *Ogonëk* and looked at us with a wise, intent expression. In the semi-darkness there appeared on the screen before her shots from a Soviet film of *The Gadfly*.

Then, on a photo film, copies of letters of S.M. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky, a copy of a letter of E.L. Voynich's own, title leaves of her book; it was impossible to make them out with the naked eye but with a magnifying glass they were quite legible.

A whole bundle of thin compact paper: 20 typed pages of answers to our questions, short accounts of her life. After months of searching for a single line of even indirect memories of her in sources that were not always reliable – to receive at once twenty pages from herself! To obviate any sort of doubt, she herself certified each of the twenty leaves: at the foot of each page the initials "E.L.V." and the date "25.4.56" were inserted in her familiar handwriting. Three impressive folders, fastened at the back – her notes, her musical compositions.

### **"To see with our own eyes"**

Of course, documents about E.L. Voynich's relations with Russia interested us above all else.

Here is a translation of some pages written at our request and entitled: "E.L. Voynich in Russia (1887-1889)":

*The assassination of Alexander II in March 1881, when I was not yet 17 years old, made a huge impression on me. Of course, this event provoked great agitation in the English press. In the following year, 1882, I went to Berlin, where I spent three years (1882-1885). I was a student at the Royal Conservatoire in the piano class. When I received my diploma, I left Berlin for a holiday in the Black Forest and Lucerne, and from there I went to Paris where I spent some months (about a year?).*

*At that time I began to think more and more seriously about a journey to Russia but finally decided on it only after my return to England. I remember to this day how I sat a whole night without sleep trying to evade the necessity of going to Russia and at the same time feeling the need to go. I should mention that before my journey to Berlin I had received a legacy which covered the expenses of my musical education, of my holiday, and my stay in Paris, and I still had enough left for a journey to Russia. For my living in Russia I intended to earn money by giving lessons.*

*At long last I decided to go to Russia but first of all I had to get an introduction to some Russian. Through the Kheddanovs (distant relations of E.L. Voynich – E.T.) who ran a ladies school, I received a letter recommending me as a teacher of English and music, and addressed to Mrs Venevitinova (Petersburg) – a rich widow and the mother of a few children.*

*I turned to Mrs Charlotte Wilson, editor of Svoboda (Freedom), a friend and comrade of Prince Petr Kropotkin, with a request to introduce me to someone of the Russian emigrants in London who would be able to give me a reference to Russian comrades.*

*I explained to her that I wanted to go to Russia in order to see with my own eyes whether things were really as bad as they were reported by emigrants. She offered to introduce me to the Kropotkins and Stepnyak.*

*“If you know Stepnyak”, I said, “I would like to ask him some questions about his work.” Besides this, it would be more convenient for me to have a recommendation to Stepnyak because at that time he was living not far from me while Kropotkin was living in the suburbs of London. (I became acquainted with Kropotkin only after my return from Russia.)*

*Stepnyak and I immediately became friends; he and his wife gave me lessons in the Russian language. From his first letter to me (22.XII.1886) it was, obviously, some days after this that I first met him”*

We will interrupt E.L. Voynich's story here and look at old letters.

## Old Letters

Here is a letter of Stepnyak's. It was written in English (what we are given here is a Russian translation):

*Dear Miss Boole,*

*I am very glad to have made your acquaintance and to be of use to you. Next Thursday will suit me fine. Mrs Wilson suggests that the second half of the day will be the more convenient and I shall be expecting you about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.*

*Sincerely yours,  
Stepnyak*

*P.S. The nearest station – St John's Wood Road – 5 minutes from Bakers Street.*

Thus, we learned, began the remarkable friendship of the young Englishwoman with the Russian revolutionary. And the book about which she wished to ask him was *Underground Russia*. This book, in E.L. Voynich's words, made a very strong impression on her.

Of Lily Boole's state of mind at this time we know from a letter of hers addressed to her friend Irene Gale. It was written on 23 February 1887, a month and a half before Lily Boole's departure to Russia. In 1945 Irene Gale, while reading through old letters, found it and sent it to E.L. Voynich. Thus, after fifty-eight years it returned to its author. E.L. Voynich writes that this letter is the oldest document bearing witness to her frame of mind in those years:

*London 23 April 1887*

*Dear Irene,*

*If I am not mistaken, in a couple of days you will be leaving Paris. When you come to America let me know your address – I want to write to you from Petersburg. I hope that there, in your new life, all will go well with you, if you get straight down to business.*

*As for myself, my new life will really begin in a few weeks time. At Easter, probably, I'll leave the London fogs, physical and moral, and I'll push to sea, a sea greater than the Atlantic, and "full of deaf mumbings", as Victor Hugo says. But what if there is a storm?*

Well, what about it. Up to now, my sister's life is developing as follows: on the 13<sup>th</sup> she had a child, she already has a son. Already her husband has accepted an appointment in Japan and he will be going there probably next week, and in the autumn Mary and their children will join him.

It is in some such way that people set off somewhere. Of course, that is how it should be – our real duty – to go each his or her own way, to build or, as in my case, fulfil our own lives, but this was very difficult for Lulu who alone stayed at home with her mother, especially taking into consideration her mother's condition at that time. I wished very much that Lulu would go with me to Russia but that, of course, was out of the question.

I have just been reading a Russian poem in which, I think, you would be interested. It is called "The Demon" and it was on this that Rubinstein based his opera, The Demon. This is really a startling and deeply Russian poem.

I cannot convey to you the kindness shown to me by the Russians. After three years of contact with the Berliners, it was like a ray of sunshine after a fog.

I am very distressed by your sad accounts of your domestic affairs. A rift with relatives is a horrible thing. Nevertheless, it is sometimes the only way out.

I hope that your mother is now better. Do you remember the hopelessness and the pessimism you experienced in times past?

But now it seems to me that to a large extent all this was an over-sensitive perception of events. Latterly, I experience far more unpleasantnesses than I did in those days, but they do not seem so hopeless, because I feel myself stronger and am not afraid.

Goodbye, my child, and do not forget one who ever remains your true friend.  
Ethel.

Do you remember that book of Walt Whitman's which Mr Gale gave me as a present in Stuttgart? I often reread some of the poems and I like them more and more, especially this one:

"Is the door shut? Is the master away?  
Nevertheless, be ready, be not weary of watching,  
He will soon return, his messengers come anon"

I believe in this.

E.L. Voynich recites the end of a poem by W. Whitman, "Europe", in which he speaks of the coming freedom and her words, "I believe in this", echo another line of the same poem:

*"Liberty let others despair of you – I never despair of you."*

It was in this frame of mind that she decided to go to Russia.

In footnotes to this letter E.L. Voynich tells that she got to know Irene in 1883 and Philip Gale, Irene's future husband, in 1885 when she was studying music in Russia; later he became a well-known music critic.

Mary and Lulu (Lucy) were sisters of E.L. Voynich.

E.L. Voynich writes that in remembering the goodness of the Russians she had Stepnyak in mind. We will continue her letter:

### **E.L. Voynich in Russia**

*Stepnyak or his wife gave me a recommendation to her sister Pasha (Praskova) Karaulova in Petersburg; her husband was at that time serving a sentence of solitary confinement in the Shlüsselburg fortress for publishing illegal literature.*

*On 10 April 1887 I was in Paris on my way to Petersburg. I stopped for some days in Warsaw (see remarks about my husband) and arrived in Petersburg as far as I remember at the time of the Russian Easter Week. In any case it was in April.*

*I do not remember who met me at the station in Petersburg where I arrived feeling very frightened and abandoned and pining for home. However, soon after this I was fixed up in the holiday period in a Don estate of the Venevitinov's in Voronesh province, not far from Voronesh. Among my duties was to give the children lessons in English and to play the piano on evenings when there were guests. The main memory that I have of the Venevitinov children was that the Tsar was godfather of one of them and that we could not stand each other. I became friendly with an old woman, a servant in the house, with whom I could converse since she spoke a little German; my knowledge of the conversational Russian language was still not great at that time.*

*On my return journey to Petersburg, I remember I travelled in a cart-wagon. I stayed in a manor house, situated not far from Kostroma, about fifty miles from the Volga. I was invited to see the eclipse of the sun which occurred on 19 August 1887. Alas the rain came that day.*

*So I then completed my journey in a steamboat in the Volga from Tver (I think) to Nizhniy Novgorod. In Nizhniy Novgorod somebody (whose name I do not remember) rented a room for me in an inn and took me to a celebrated fair. My lifelong interest in Slavonic folk-song began with this journey along the Volga. On my way to Petersburg I spent nearly two weeks in Moscow but I saw little of the city; I was sick practically all the time.*

*On my return to Petersburg I lodged with Pasha Karaulova and her little son, Serezha, in the Peskov area. In the following summer, Pasha and the child and I spent some time in the house of Vasily Karaulov's parents in Pskov province, not far from Velikiye Luki which in those days was a sleepy, back-of-beyond small town, a hundred miles from the nearest railway. (The Karaulov family is portrayed in my novel, Olive Latham.)*

*(After my marriage I went to Lemberg [now L'vov], Warsaw, and Cracow to visit my husband's mother [his father had died early] and Voynich village, in the spurs of the Carpathian Mountains, which [village] belonged to my husband's forebears; he himself was born in Kovno.) [E.L. Voynich footnote]*

*When Karaulova's husband was sent to Siberia (I really never saw him; he was in jail all the time that I was in Russia) I accompanied Karaulova and her son to Siberia. After the train with the convict wagon departed, I quickly left Petersburg for England. This was in June or July 1889.*

*As regards my life in Russia, much of what I had seen, heard or experienced there is described in Olive Latham. It remains to be said that, nevertheless, I succeeded in earning a living. For example, I vaguely recollect that I gave lessons in colloquial English to an American, lessons in music to a doctor's little daughter, and lessons in English literature to a renegade.*

## **Serezha, his grandmother and other comments**

*I have still preserved a photograph of little Serezha (son of Vasily and Pasha Karaulov) and his grandmother. This was Vasily's mother of Swedish extraction. To a certain degree she served as the prototype of Aunt Sonya in Olive Latham and Kostya was drawn firstly from Serezha.*

*In the sixth chapter of the second part of this novel, Vladimir tells his children about the green caterpillar and the Land of Tomorrow. Nikolai Karaulov once told this story, in my presence, to Serezha and his own children.*

*Serezha called me in his own way "Lyalya". Sometimes I brought him with me to the prison at Shpalerna, to which his father had been transported after four years in the Shlüsselburg fortress. Vasily's health had been seriously undermined and he could not eat the prison food. At that time I was giving lessons in English literature to a general's wife. I told her of Vasily's plight (possibly she was secretly sympathetic) and she suggested that her cook would prepare suitable food and I would each day carry it to the prison. Sometimes I had to wait an hour or two before a supervisor was free to take my parcel. (I never saw the prisoner.)*

*Serezha was a very attractive boy with a shock of curly blonde hair. Strangers gladly spoke to him and he always spoke to them without embarrassment. One day when we went together to the prison in a horse wagon, a woman asked him if I was his mother. "No", he answered, "this is Lyalya and mamma is ill". Then he was asked about his father and he answered that his father was in a prison cell. Opposite us sat two police officers. I did not feel at all comfortable.*

*That was how I received permission to bring Vasily Karaulov parcels every day, and I was the only person allowed in on the so-called "criminal" days, and so got to hear and see a lot of things.*

*I particularly remember an old woman, a keeper of a brothel, who was anxious to recruit my services, but a nice old supervisor warned me immediately.*

*Much of what I saw and heard in the jail reception rooms is described in Olive Latham.*

*As for the general's wife, I have always felt grateful to her. I have preserved to this day the copy of Griboyedov's famous comedy,*

Woe from Wit, which she signed and presented to me and I am to this day thrilled by that justly renowned comedy.

From this story we have at last come to understand how and why E.L. Voynich travelled to Russia. The assassination of Alexander II carried out by members of "The People's Will" on 1 March 1881, really disturbed public opinion all over the world. However, the stories of Russian emigrants about the plight of the Russian people seemed to be exaggerated. At this time Lily Boole was not alone in doubting those stories.

The well-known American journalist, G. Kennedy, in the preface to his book, *Siberia and Exile*, in which he described his journey through Siberia in 1885-6, writes about the motives which made him go there: ". . . I thought that writers such as Stepnyak and Prince Kropotkin painted a very distorted picture and that Siberia was not at all as terrible as the Russian emigrants described it".

Lily Boole was not in Siberia but what she saw in Petersburg and other Russian towns and villages was enough.

The estate of the Karaulov parents where Lily spent the summer of 1888 was situated in the Uspenkiy village, Toropetsky district, Pskov province. Vasily Karaulov's brother, Nikolai Andreevich (1857-1889), a member of "The People's Will", after imprisonment in the Petropavlosky fortress was sent to Uspenskiy under police surveillance. He died in August 1889, three months after Lily Boole's departure from Russia.

Lily Boole went with Sasha to England on 12 May (24 May according to new reckonings) 1889. They arrived in London, as we know, on 4 June. (Thus, it is now clear that I.I. Popov never saw Lily Boole and that he simply concocted his "memories" of her.)

The rich widow in whose estate Lily taught in the summer of 1887 was Emilia Ivanovna Venevitinova. Her husband was a nephew of the poet D.V. Venevitinov. He died in 1885, leaving seven children, two sons and five daughters. Obviously, the young Englishwoman, interested in social problems, and the spoiled children of one of the Tsar's dignitaries could not find a common language. Not for nothing did E.L. Voynich so eloquently and pithily declare: "We could not stand each other."

V.G. Korolenko and A.T. Chekhov wrote about the eclipse of the sun on 7 (19) August 1887, recalled by E.L. Voynich.

## Shchedrin and his funeral

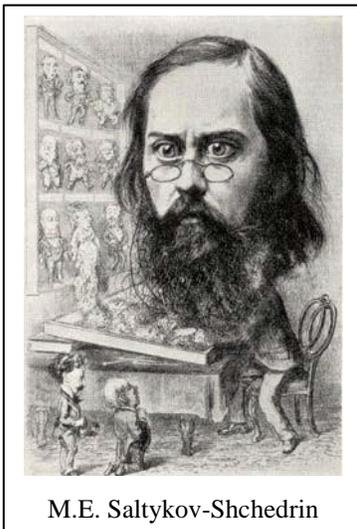
In a separate leaflet, E.L. Voynich tells of an episode in her stay in Russia:

*I was present at the funeral of Shchedrin, whose work always delighted me. This was the only political demonstration in Russia in which I took part.*

*The police tried to prevent a demonstration which students had organised to pay tribute to Shchedrin, by telling everyone who looked like a student or who carried flowers that the funeral was going another way. I was among those who went to Shchedrin's house and so found myself on the right road.*

*On the way into the cemetery, I was far back from the grave, and a person in front of me took my flowers, a bouquet of primroses, from me, whispering "Give them to me", and they were passed, with many other flowers, from hand to hand until they reached the grave.*

*When we reached the grave, a writer whose name I do not remember, read aloud "Propala Sovest" ("Conscience has Died"). He was immediately arrested. I was standing beside the grave and saw what was happening.*



M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin

*The burial of Shchedrin made an exceptional impression on me, thanks to the fact that the people who took part in it decided not to allow the demonstration to be broken up.*

*In Olive Latham I used the story about the triumphant swine from Shchedrin's "Za rubezhon" ("Abroad"). I always wanted to translate his remarkable "Istoriya odnoga goroda" ("History of a town") but somehow never found the time to do it."*

M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin died on 10 May (28 April) 1889. He was buried in the literary section in the Volkov cemetery, beside the grave of I.S. Turgenev. E.L. Voynich faithfully reflects the mood of the students of that time. Following S.A. Makashina, we can only make the slight correction that the man arrested at the burial was not a writer but the student S.A. Zakharin, who had read the poem in

memory of Shchedrin. And with regard to the story, "Conscience has Died", another name suggests itself: the publicist K.K. Arsenyev. We added that E.L. Voynich translated into English some of the writings of M.F. Saltykov-Shchedrin: *Orel-Metsenat (Eagle-Maecenas)*, *Samootverzhenny Zayats (The Selfless Hare)*, an excerpt from *Pompadury i Pompadurshi (Pompadours and Pompadouresses)*, and also the story loved by her from this time, *Propala Sovest (Conscience has Died)*. Vestiges of this tale may be discovered in *Olive Latham*. [Pompadur: a self-seeking administrator, in other words 'a petty-tyrant-administrator', and pompadursha: the wife or mistress of a "pompadur". The words appear in Russian for the first time in Saltykov-Shchedrin's story of that name, which derives from Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour. — SÓC]  
[See appended notes for further information on Saltykov-Shechedrin. SÓC]

## **We must test our strengths**

Returning from Russia, Lily Boole felt defeated and sick and, together with her sisters Alicia and Mary, she left the town. "Throughout my life in times of difficulty and misfortune I have always turned to nature for help and consolation" wrote E.L. Voynich.

The sisters settled in a simple country inn in Cumberland to which an old friend of the Boole family, the owner of salt factories in Cheshire, John Falk, invited them. He often gave Lily Boole money for Russian political emigrants who were experiencing material difficulties. Lily sent one of his cheques to Stepnyak who was in dire need at that time. She preserved one of Stepnyak's letters, received in those days. By now Stepnyak was writing to her in Russian, no longer to "Dear Miss Boole" but to "Dear Lily".

When the Soviet journalists were guests of E.L. Voynich, she showed them this letter and they jotted down some lines from it. Now we have received a photocopy of it and we can read it as a whole. It was written on 22 August 1889:

*13 Grove Gardens N.W.,  
22 August 1889.*

*Dear Lily,  
I received your cheque today for which I am extremely grateful. Give my thanks to Mr Falk, also.*

*Ah, Lily, if you knew how much I like your descriptions of nature. You should certainly test your power as a writer. Whoever is capable in two or three lines, sometimes with single words, of grasping and transmitting the character of nature, should know or at least be capable of knowing how to grasp clearly and intelligibly the character of man and of the phenomenon of life – if he but observes them sufficiently long and attentively (which is, of course, incomparably more difficult than just observing nature). We'll discuss this when you come.*

*With regard to the locality which you especially describe, this inspires me with the wish when I'll be writing my third novel (I am now writing the second, small one) to go there and live there for a week or two. The first scene of this novel opens in England and I am thinking of taking precisely your corner – if you will permit me to avail of your discovery.*

*I am hurrying to catch the mail today.*

*Yours, Sergei*

*Greetings to Lucy.*

*Sasha sends her greetings. Linov was here and also sends greetings. When you come, I'll tell you what he said about Lucy. Generally speaking, it seems to me that in order to get cured of her painful modesty she should spend more time among Russians – even with those in London. And if this does not help, prescribe a trip to Russia.*

*Goodbye once again, S.*

To Stepnyak's letter, E.L. Voynich makes a detailed reply. First of all, she considers that the praise of her descriptions of nature was exaggerated and was inspired simply by Stepnyak's wish to cheer her up in the period of severe nervous shock which she suffered on her return from Russia. Then she tells him about John Falk and how he helped Praskova Karaulova when she found herself with her child in Siberia, having followed her husband into exile. She was a doctor and, in order to maintain herself and her child and to help her husband, she needed to work but had no medical and surgical instruments and no way of obtaining them. John Falk sent her a complete set of the necessary instruments. Sasha (i.e. Praskova) is already known to us as a sister of Stepnyak's wife.

Both Stepnyak's letter and E.L. Voynich's comments thereon are of unusual interest. His words of praise were, certainly, not idle compliments. We know that he was not mistaken. E.L. Voynich was really able to grasp and transmit a person's character in two or three words.

In that letter we have one of the many known comments made by Stepnyak on her creative work and literary mastery: the words about the necessity of attentive and long observation as an essential condition of true expression of events and characters. The second, "small", novel to which he refers is *Domik na Volge* (the first is *Andre Kozhukhov*). As regards the third novel, the action of which begins in England, we have no knowledge of it. It seems that Stepnyak did not have time to write it.

Of particular interest among E.L. Voynich's comments is her story about the Linevs; she writes:

*Linev, a Russian emigrant, was at that time a bachelor with whom I became very friendly after my return from Russia. In England, he married a Russian folksinger. After their marriage they returned to Russia where she won great acclaim with her concerts and publication of folksongs. Once I sang in a choir with her when she performed in London. Though I always loved folksongs, I was especially interested in them at the time of my journey along the Volga and after becoming acquainted with Linev's wife.*

A friend of Stepnyak, Aleksandr Loginovich Linev, a Russian revolutionary-Narodnik, was personally acquainted with Marx. He was a prominent engineer and inventor. On returning home to his native land, after enforced emigration, A.L. Linev was one of the builders of the Tramway in Moscow.

Evgenia Edwardovna Papritz (1853-1919), who became his wife, was an outstanding person. A gifted singer, she made successful appearances in Vienna, Paris, and Budapest. But besides this, she took an active part (1882-4) in the illegal Moscow "Society of Translators and Publishers" issuing in the Russian language works of Marx and Engels. In the years of her husband's emigration (1890-96), she was with him abroad and used her time to propagate Russian music. She organised choirs and gave concerts in England and America where she enjoyed enormous success. On returning to Russia, E.E. Lineva devoted herself to the collection and teaching of Russian folksong. V.V. Stasov valued her work highly. Memoirs of contemporaries draw an extraordinarily attractive image of her.

## Meeting with Mikhail Voynich

Here is what a woman writer tells about a meeting with a person who became her husband:

*Having fled from Siberia in 1890, he finally reached Hamburg with no means of any sort. At that time there was a treaty between Germany and the Tsarist government about the extradition of criminals. So Voynich hid in the docks, concealing himself in the stables. He fed himself what bits and scraps he could get, until some small vessel loaded with fruit would sail to London. Having sold all that he had, including his waistcoat and spectacles, he had barely enough money to buy a third-class ticket, a herring, and some bread.*

*After a long and stormy voyage, during which the vessel was carried off to the Scandinavian coast and lost its cargo, he finally arrived in the London docks without a penny, crawling with lice, half dressed and hungry.*

*This was in the evening of 5 October 1890.*

*Not knowing English, he walked along Merchant (Torgov) Street holding out a scrap of paper to passers-by with a single London address – Stepnyak's address. Finally, a Jewish student who worked in a tobacco factory in a slum where foreigners huddled, not far from the docks, came to him and asked him, "You have the look of a political man, are you from Siberia?" This student led him to Stepnyak's house. That very evening, Stepnyak was expecting another emigrant, and his wife, his wife's sister and me and (it seems) Felix Volkovsky. We were all there when the unknown man from the docks arrived.*

*"Here is yet another", said Stepnyak, explaining to us that this was not the man that we expected.*

*Later in the evening, when Voynich had washed himself and changed into clean and ill-fitting clothes belonging to someone else, he turned to me and asked in Russian: "Could I have met you before? Were you in Warsaw at Easter in 1887?" "Yes", I answered, "I was on my way to Petersburg". "You were standing in the square and looking at the citadel?"*

*When I again said “Yes”, he told me that he was a prisoner in that same citadel and had seen me from there. Shortly afterwards, he was dispatched to Siberian exile.*

To this dramatic story it can be added that Voynich became very friendly with Lily Boole and in 1892 they married.

In London Mikhail Wilfrid Voynich became a very close collaborator with Stepnyak and, with him, was one of the organisers of the “Fund of the Great Russian Press”. We know very little about his later way of life; we know only that he engaged in the search for and trade in old books.

### **“. . . and Composer”**

In the English reference book *Who's Who?* we are told that Lily Boole was “a novelist and composer” and that she composed a lot of songs. So far, we had known nothing about them. At the request of Anna Mill, the writer sent us some of her compositions.

The first to attract attention is a cantata based on the words of the Russian poet, M.A. Dimitriev, “The Underwater City” (E.L. Voynich mistakenly attributed this poem to A.S. Komyakov). In the beginning of the poem, a groaning sea is described. To a question from a young lad why the sea was groaning, an old fisherman answers that here there was at one time a rich city but the sea submerged it:

*All because a rich brother,  
Turned his back on the other brothers.  
And heedless of their pleas and curses  
Continued to eat and to drink.*

E.L. Voynich translated this poem into English maintaining the metre of the original, so that it could be performed both in English and in Russian.  
[E.L.V's English version not given — SÓC]

E.L. Voynich says that she first read this poem a very long time ago and set it to music many years later. P.P. Borisov relates that she has the poem off by heart to the present day and very often recites it aloud in Russian.

The greatest of her compositions in scope seems to be the oratorio “Babylon”, written for mixed choir and orchestra, which E.L. Voynich dedicated to the overthrow of autocracy in Russia.

The third of the musical works of E.L. Voynich sent to us was a cantata on the work of the medieval French poet, François Villon, "Epitaph in the form of a ballad". The Epitaph was written by the poet awaiting the execution to which he and his five companions had been condemned. At the last moment, the poet was pardoned. ("Ballade des Pendus")

A note on the title sheet of a partitura caught our attention: "To the memory of Roger David Casement, Brixton Jail, London, 3 August, 1916."

R.D. Casement was one of the activists of the national freedom movement in Ireland. The Dublin Rising was put down by the English with unheard-of brutality. All of its leaders were executed. R.D. Casement was hanged on 3 August 1916. E.L. Voynich writes:

*The first draft of the cantata was made there and then, an immediate response to the executions. I returned to it time and again, reworking it, and finished it in 1948.*

What firmness of purpose, what unity of the whole creation! In the literary works, the portrayal of the struggle for freedom in Italy, Russia, Poland. In the musical works, the celebration of the fight for freedom in Ireland and Russia.

[End of Taratuta text]

## Translator's Notes

In his book, *Roger Casement in Death* (2002), Professor W.J. McCormack, a stern critic of 'Irish national myths', refers to the part played by women in the campaign against the execution of Casement in 1916:

*Women were, of course, prominent behind the scenes, especially the historian Alice Stopford (Mrs G.R. Green), Mrs Voynich of the Queens Road (later best-ever-selling author of *The Gadfly*) sent flowers. She was born Ethel Lilian Boole (1867-1947), daughter of the Irish mathematician whose algebra is used on the Internet.*

Here McCormack is guilty of some 'myths' of his own. Boole was English, not Irish. Ethel Boole was born some months before her father died in 1864 — not miraculously three years later. And she died on 28 July 1960 — not 1947!

## *George Boole*

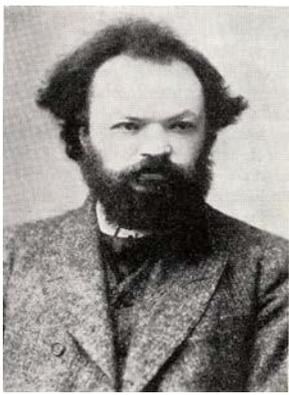


George Boole (1815-1864) was born in Lincoln, England. He was the son of a small shopkeeper and was, for the most part, self-educated. His work, *The Mathematical Analysis of Logic* (published the year that he came to Queen's University, Cork, 1847) and his *Laws of Thought* (1854), in which he employed mathematical symbolism to express logical processes, established him as an outstanding pioneer of modern symbolic logic, greatly influencing the subsequent work of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. His wife, Mary (niece of Sir George Everest, Surveyor-General of India, after whom Mount Everest is called), was also a mathematician and a psychologist. She was only thirty-four years old when her husband died, leaving her with five daughters with ages ranging from eight years to six months. She returned to England to face hard times.

She was a religious woman. She was concerned about the theory of Evolution and its possible implications for religion. She addressed a personal letter to Charles Darwin on the matter. It was irenic in tone. Her solution was simple: "Science must take her path and Theology hers, and they will meet when and where and how God pleases." However, she went on to tell Darwin that his books afforded her a clue which would guide her in applying her faith to psychological problems. She received, as one would have expected, a very gracious reply. Two years earlier, Darwin had told the naturalist, Asa Gray: "I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect." Mary died in 1916.

## ***Kravchinsky (pseudonym: Stepnyak)***

Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinsky (born 1 (13) August 1851 in Novy Starodub, Kherson province. Died 11 (23) December 1895, in London).



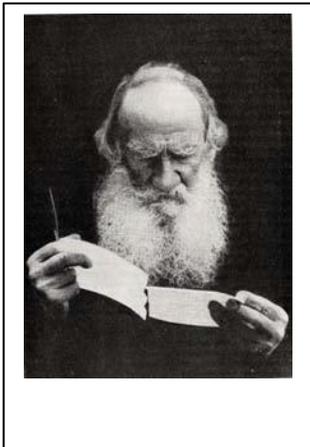
Stepnyak-Kravchinsky  
(1880)

Russian writer, revolutionary activist. His father was an army doctor. In 1870, was at the Mikhailovsky artillery school. In 1871-3, studied in the Lesnoy Institute. Became a member of the Narodnik movement. For a while, close to the ideas of Bakunin anarchism. In 1872, a member of the “Chaikovtsy” circle and its literary committee. In 1872, he translated from the French and significantly revised F. Lamennais’s *The Word of a Believer to the People*.

In the autumn of 1873 Stepnyak went “to the people”, spreading propaganda among the peasants of the Tver and Tulska provinces. Left Russia in 1874. Lived in Switzerland and Paris. In the summer of 1875, took part in an uprising in Hertsegovina. Began to write propagandist stories in simple folklore style: “The Tale of the Copeck” (Geneva 1874), “The Wise Woman of Naumovna” (London 1875), which won the approval of Turgenev and Uspensky. “Out of the Frying-pan into the Fire” (London 1876) was devoted to the popular idea of socialism. For his participation in a rising in the Italian province of Benevento, he was arrested, but given an amnesty in January 1878. From the beginning of 1878 in Geneva, he took part in the editing of the emigrant journal *The Commune*, inserting in it articles about the Russian and Italian revolutionary movements. From May 1878 he lived illegally in Petersburg, editing the magazine *Land and Liberty*. On 4 August 1878 he killed the chief of the police, N.V. Mezontsev.

Living abroad, Kravchinsky published in Russian (in the journal *Delo*) numerous translations: “Spartak” from the Italian of R. Giovagnoli (1880-81), “The Golden Fountain” from the Spanish of Perez Galdos (1882), and also original articles: “Irish Affairs” (1881), an essay on Giuseppe Garibaldi (1882), essays on recent Italian literature, etc. He also published, in an English periodical, articles and essays about the Russian revolutionary movement. In 1881-2, in the Milan newspaper *Pungolo*, his

book *Underground Russia*, written in Italian, was published under the pseudonym “Stepnyak” (a separate edition was published in Russian in 1882 with a preface by P.L. Lavrov; and in London in the author’s own translation). *Underground Russia* gives a short account of the Russian revolutionary movement in 1860-70 with portraits of S.L. Perovoka, Vera Zasulich and, among others, Prince Kropotkin. Kravchinsky’s book for the first time introduces west-European readers to the Russian revolution. Smuggled into Russia, it enjoyed widespread circulation.



Under the influence of this book L. Tolstoy wrote the story *Divine and Human* (published 1906). In Western Europe and in his travels in the USA, Kravchinsky propagated the idea of a Russian revolution. He organised “The Society of the Friends of Russian Freedom” (1890) and took part in the international workers’ movement. In order to spread revolutionary literature in Russia, he founded the “Fund of the Free Russian Press” (1891). He published banned works of V.G. Korolenko and V. Bervi Florovsky and his own *Agitation Abroad, What we need* and *The Beginning of the End* (1892), *Russia under the power of the Tsars* (1885), and *Russian Peasants* (1888). He lectured on

Tolstoy, wrote articles on Turgenev, Garshin and others. During his exile in London, he wrote a novel Andrei Kozhukov, published under the title *The Career of a Nihilist* (1889), the story *The Little House on the Volga* (1889) and a play *Novoobrashenny* (The Newly Converted / Neophyte; *The Government* was the title given to the English translation of the play) (1894), and an unfinished novel, *The Shtundist, Pavel Rudenko* (1894), tells the story of the conversion of a young member of a religious sect “The Shtundists” to the revolutionary movement. Kravchinsky was on friendly terms with F. Engels, E. Marx-Eveling (one of Marx’s daughters), G.V. Plekanov, W. Morris, G.B. Shaw, O. Wilde, G. Brandes, J. Kennan, E. Voynich. His outstanding and charming personality and his distinctive talent are reflected in numerous memoirs (N.A. Morozov, P.A. Kropotkin, V.I. Zasulich, B. Shaw, G. Brandes) and in the novels of Zola (*Germinal*), E.L. Voynich (*The Gadfly*) and in A.A. Blok’s *Vozmezdnie* (Retribution).

## **Minsky (Real name: Vilenkin Nikolai Maksimovich) (15 Jan.1855 – 2 July 1937)**

Minsky completed his law studies in Petersburg University in 1879. He began to write in the *Vestnik Evropy* (*European Bulletin*) in 1877. His poetry was largely imitative and prosaic. In politics, his sympathies were with the populist (Narodniki) movement.

In the first issue (September 1879) of the journal *Narodnaya Volya*, he published his poem “Poslednyaya Isповed” (“Last Confession”), which was later to be used with great effect by the Russian painter, Repin, for his famous painting “Otkaz ot ispovedi pered Kazn’yu” (Refusal of Confession before Execution) (1879-85). In 1883, the Censor shredded his small collection of poems, (*Stikhotvoreniya*). Minsky followed the fashionable Weltschmerz school of poetry. In politics, he distanced himself from the current hatred towards oppressors.

In 1884, he published an essay entitled “Starinny Spor” (“An Ancient Controversy”) which marked the first appearance of the “Decadents” in Russia. It enunciates an individualism amounting to the self- deification of the person in deeds and in creativity. Man’s aspiration to the ideal, to the impossible, to the non-existent, for man — such is the paradoxical theory of Minsky’s “meonizma” [from the Platonic *me on*, the “non-existent” or, more precisely, the “inexistent”]. His theory came in for sharp criticism from both the Marxist (G.V. Plekhanov) and the idealists (V.S. Soloviov and M.A. Berdiaev). The eclecticism of Minsky’s philosophy, his belief in naïve “social-humanism”, the “equal-rights union of the intelligentsia and the workers” explain both his organisation of the “Religious- Philosophical” union and the publication of *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*) (1905) which was actually being led by V.J. Lenin. Minsky now published *Gimn rabochikh* (“Proletarians of all the world, unite”) and makes a shortened translation of the *Internationale*. In *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*) were published Lenin’s article, “Party Organisation and Party Literature”, the programme of the social democrats, M. Gorky’s “Notes on the Petite Bourgeoisie”, etc. Soon Minsky (as editor) was arrested and charged with incitement to the subversion of the existing order; after this he emigrated. In Paris he wrote a drama trilogy: *Zhelezny prizrak* (The Iron Spectre) (1909), *Maly soblazn* (A Minor Temptation) (1910), and *Khaos* (Chaos) *Translator’s notes re Ethel Lilian [Boole] Voynich, Séamus Ó Coigligh*

(1912) — about the invincible power of things and the inexorable subjection of man to it, after it has killed his ideals. After the Revolution, Minsky lived in Berlin, in London (where he worked in the Soviet Embassy), and in Paris. He translated Homer's *Iliad* (1896), P. Verlaine, P.B. Shelley ("Queen Mab" and "Alastor"), G. Byron, G. Flaubert ("Salamambo") (1913). In 1922 he wrote the philosophical drama *Kogo Ishchesh?* (Whom do you seek?). [He also wrote, in 1922, a book of literary criticism, *Ot Dante k Blok* (From Dante to Blok), and thereafter, complete silence — SÓC.]

(From Vol. 4 of the *Kratkaya Literaturnaya Entsiklopediya*, Moscow, 1967, pp. 846/7)

**Pavlik, Mikhail Ivanovich**  
**(13 May 1853 – 2 July 1937)**

Ukrainian writer, publicist and social activist. Son of a poor peasant. From 1874 he studied in L'vov University. He was a member of the editorial staff of the journal *Drug* (*Friend*) in which, from 1874, he published poems and articles. In 1878 with I.Y. Franko he published the revolutionary democratic journal *Gramadsky Drug* (*Friend of Society*). He suffered persecution because of his revolutionary activity. In 1879-81 he lived in exile in Geneva. Pavlik's realistic stories, "Yurko Kulikiv" and "Rebenschukova Tetyana", and the narrative "Propashchy Cholovik" ("Fallen Man") shocked the reactionaries with their sharp criticism of the hypocritical bourgeois morality. The journals *Gramadsky Drug* and *Molot* (*The Hammer*), in which these works were published, were confiscated. Pavlik was sent to jail for six months for his "Rebenschukova Tetyana". In his essays in literary criticism, Pavlik stood for realism, and popularised Russian literature. In the eighties in the Polish workers' newspaper, *Praca* (*Work*), Pavlik, under the influence of K. Marx, proclaimed socialist ideas. In the nineties, as one of the leaders of a radical party, he worked in publications for the peasants. The fight against clericalism and chauvinism and for the class solidarity of the workers of the various nationalities, exposing the intrigues of the Moscoviti Narodniks and "New Agers", are the basic themes of Pavlik and his comrades-in-arms, I. Franko and M. Dragomanov.

(From Vol. 5 of the *Kratkaya Literaturnaya Entsiklopediya*, Moscow, 1968, pp. 526-7)

[It will be remembered that Ethel's warm friendship with Pavlik was causing her husband some unease — SÓC.]

## *Saltykov-Shchedrin*

In a review of Shchedrin's *Istoriya Odnogo Goroda* (History of a Town), Ivan Turgenev wrote:



*Its author who usually writes under the name of Shchedrin, but whose real name is Saltykov (a descendent, by the way, of an ancient family of Moscow Boyars of that name) after having, like many other writers suspected of propagating liberal opinions, undergone his time of persecution and of exile under the Emperor Nicholas, acquired a great deal of popularity by the publication. Some fifteen years ago, of a series of sketches called Scenes of Provincial Life (Gubernskie Ocherki), in which he lashed with indomitable vigour the numerous abuses then current under the name of Government and Justice.*

Turgenev could have added that Saltykov's mother was the daughter of a rich Moscow merchant — an untamed shrew who did not conceal her contempt for writers and their writings. Their son became their country's greatest satirist and most hated writer. He conceded that what he wrote was "hellish" but argued that this was not *his* fault: "I can put my hand on my heart and say 'I have been faithful to the original. I did not take up my pen just to engage in polemics but to bear testament to the truth'."

Turgenev compared him to the Latin Juvenal: "his laughter is bitter and strident, his raillery not infrequently offensive". Elsewhere he likened him to Jonathan Swift: "There is something of Swift in Saltykov: that serious and grim comedy, that realism — prosaic in its lucidity amidst the wildest play of fancy — and, above all, that constant good sense, the moderation, kept up despite so much violence and exaggeration of form. I have seen audiences thrown into convulsions of laughter by the recital of Saltykov sketches. There was something almost terrible in that laughter, the public, even while laughing, feeling itself under the lash".

Saltykov-Shchedrin paid dearly for his satire. The radical journal *Otechestvennyye Zapiski*, with which most of his life had been associated, was banned in 1884. It was a cruel blow. Though he continued to write, his health declined rapidly and he died in 1889

## *Lamennais* (1782-1854)



Félicité Robert de Lamennais lost his faith at an early age but under the influence of his brother, who had become a priest, he was converted and made his first communion at the age of 22. Having fallen foul of Napoleon, he fled to London during the Hundred Days in 1815. After his return home, he became (not without some hesitation) a priest in 1816. In 1818 and 1824, he wrote a brilliant denunciation of private judgement and religious toleration, which was well received in Rome. (A future Cardinal seemed to be in the offing.) But the idea of revolution, engendered in 1830, made him change his mind and, in 1831, with Montalembert and Lacordaire and others, he founded the magazine *L'Avenir*, which was suspended in 1831, and in 1832 officially condemned by the Pope in his encyclical *Mirari Vos* of 15 August. Lamennais retired to La Chénaie. In 1834 he produced *Paroles d'un Croyant* — the work that Stepnyak translated and ‘revised’ in 1872 — in which he accepted the authority of the Church in matters of faith but denied any such authority in the sphere of politics. The book aroused tremendous excitement throughout Europe and was promptly condemned in the encyclical *Singulari Nos* (25 June 1834). His followers left him and he left the Church. In his *Discussions Critiques* (1841) he denied the whole supernatural order together with the doctrinal beliefs of Catholicism. In 1846 he published a translation of the Gospels with a commentary, which was soon put on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of Forbidden Books). In the Revolution of 1848 he became a Member of Parliament, where he was quickly disillusioned. All efforts, even those of the new and (at that time) progressive Pope Pius IX, to reconcile him to the Church were in vain. Lamennais has been described as “one of the greatest inspirers of the new social and political ideas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as a forerunner of Modernism,” indeed, “the true begetter of Modernism”.

We have E.L. Boole’s own word for it that she modelled the character of Cardinal Montanelli (in *The Gadfly*) on Lamennais. The influence of her close friend, Stepnyak, on her choice is fairly obvious.

Pope Pius X considered Modernism “a synthesis of all the heresies” which, no doubt, explains why he hurried to outlaw it in his decree “*Lamentabili*” and his encyclical *Pascendi* in 1907. In 1910, priests were obliged to take an anti-Modernism oath before ordination.

## *Vera Zasluch*

On 23 January 1878, the Petersburg

Chief of Police had a prisoner flogged for failing to remove his cap in the presence of the General. The following morning a young woman of noble lineage, Vera Zasluch, walked into the General's office and shot him. She was arrested and charged with attempted murder. The jury's verdict was "Not guilty". Her friends immediately hurried her out of the court — and out of Russia.

Her release shocked Tolstoy: "It is open war. Everyone who supported her acquittal must know full well that for their own personal safety a murder must not be allowed to go unpunished. But in their eyes this question is not who is right but who in the long run will prove the strongest". Next day, he added: "I am inclined to think that this madness is the precursor of revolution".

The Tsar sought the advice of the brutal Chief of the notorious Third Division of the secret police, Mezentsiev. "Tougher repression" was the answer. Mezentsiev was assassinated on his way to his office a few months later. His killer was the poet Kravchinsky who assumed the name of Stepanyak after his escape to Switzerland, to Italy, and to London. He left a pamphlet, "A Death for a Death" behind him.

Vera Zasluch corresponded with Marx and Engels and met Lenin in 1899/1900. She voted for the Mensheviks against Lenin's "Bolsheviks" in the split of the Communist Party in 1905. She took no part in the October Revolution of 1917. She died in 1919. Lenin mourned "the death of the great revolutionary".

***Mikhail Wilfrid Voynich***  
(1865-1930)

Ethel Lilian Boole's husband, Mikhail Wilfrid Voynich, emigrated to the United States when World War broke out. He had deserted politics long since. He had turned his considerable abilities to the acquisition, discovery, collection, and sale of ancient documents, precious parchments, old books, and incunabula. He travelled far and wide, visiting the great libraries, including the famous Ambrosiana Library of Milan.



This Library was founded by Federico Borromeo early in the nineteenth century. It was one of the first free libraries, open to all without payment of any sort; but theft of books was severely dealt with. Only the Pope could absolve that sin. Borromeo sent agents all over the world in search of manuscripts. In 1803, the Ambrosiana received MSS from the (Irish) Bobbio Library. Achille Ratti (later Pius XI) was librarian at the Ambrosiana from 1888 to 1912 and from 1912 was vice-prefect of the Vatican Library. Voynich is reported to have made his acquaintance at some stage and to have been on friendly terms with him. Voynich died in 1930

## The Fate of E.L. Boole's Writings

Ethel Lilian Boole's first literary writings were translations from the Russian. Then, in 1897, came her own first novel, *The Gadfly*. It was based on the Risorgimento, a movement for the unification and independence of Italy, which was achieved in 1870. Her novel was well received in America and a few months later in Britain. It was translated into Russian a year later.

Its fame spread across Europe, particularly in socialist circles and most rapidly of all in Russia. According to figures published in the Soviet Union in 1962, it was translated into twenty-two Soviet languages. In Russia as a whole, there had been one hundred editions, each edition comprising three million copies. There was a great demand for it among young people. It was adapted for the cinema, the stage, the Opera house. There were three operatic versions, the most distinguished of them that of Shostakovich.

Then, in 1949, came the Chinese People's Republic under Mao Zedong where sales far exceeded sales of all the other countries put together.

However, the author of the book was completely unaware of all this. Socialist countries did not pay royalties. She was not even aware of the vast success of her book, until the Soviet Republic made an ex gratia payment to her of 45,000 roubles in 1955.

It need hardly be said that the extraordinary popularity of *The Gadfly* was not due to literary or artistic merit. It was due almost entirely to its ideological content. However, Bertrand Russell considered it to have been one of the most exciting novels he had ever read. D.H. Lawrence also praised it highly.

Ethel Lilian wrote four more novels, two of them crassly anti-clerical. The first of them was the story of a young man, pure in spirit, versus his vile sadistic priest father; a grim story through and through, dark, irrecoverably dark, beyond all hope of day. Its title was *Jack Raymond*. It was published in 1901. A Russian translation came in 1902.

The second novel (also anti-clerical) appeared in 1904, *Olive Latham*. This was partly autobiographical in character. It told the story of a young Englishwoman, wife of a Russian revolutionary who is “rotting” in a Tsarist dungeon. It was translated into Russian in 1906.

At this stage, Ethel Lilian was obviously becoming aware of the decline in her readership, so the redoubtable *Gadfly* was recalled to service in her third novel, *An Interrupted Friendship*. This was published in 1910. The Russian translation which was not published until 1926 bore the title *Ovod v Izgnanii (The Gadfly in Exile)*. It told the story of the Gadfly’s experiences in South America.

Her last novel, *Put Off Thy Shoes*, was published in 1945. It related the story of the Gadfly’s forebears in the eighteenth century. This appeared in Russian in 1958.

Ethel emigrated to the United States in 1920. She had become an atheist early in her career. However, in a newspaper tribute to her on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday (11 May 1954), it was reported that she was still playing the organ in a church in New York. She died of pneumonia on 27 July 1960 at Apartment 17, London Terrace, 450 West 24th Street, New York, where she had been living for many ye



[End]