

The Assassin of the Empress.

BY BENJ. H. RIDGELY, U.S. CONSUL AT GENEVA.

IN the various newspaper accounts of the assassination of the Empress of Austria, which occurred in Geneva on the 10th day of last September, there were invariably some untruthful or misleading statements; and since the condemnation of the assassin, Lucheni, so many ridiculous reports have been published as to the nature of the punishment to which he is being subjected, that nobody seems to know the real facts. In my official capacity I have received numerous letters from persons in the United States asking for information as to Lucheni's prison life, and in one instance the wife of a distinguished New York lawyer, believing that the assassin is being tortured, proposes to institute a "humane movement," looking to an amelioration of his condition. In view of these facts and circumstances, it has occurred to me to write a brief and exact account of the assassination, and to give the true details of Lucheni's *régime* in the Geneva penitentiary.

There is also a most important and interesting bit of history in the episode of the Empress and the pastrycook which has heretofore been unpublished and unknown. But for this little circumstance, which comes to me directly from a friend of the Baroness de Rothschild, the assassination of the Empress would not have been possible in Geneva.

Certainly no gaol in the universe holds a more important criminal than Lucheni, and if the spirit of repentance, which appears to have recently taken hold of him, works as effectively upon his conscience as those who are watching him hope, it may result in

revelations which will not only bring about the exposure and capture of his accomplices, but may lay bare the secrets of the Anarchists for the past ten years to so full an extent that we shall probably even know when and where and under what circumstances the sullen and cynical Caserio was chosen to assassinate President Sadi Carnot of France, at Lyons, in 1894, and just how the plot was designed and developed. Thus, after all, perhaps it is fortunate that capital punishment is not inflicted in Geneva, otherwise Lucheni, with the bravado of his kind, would have gone under the guillotine in the conventional way, crying: "Vive l'Anarchie," and his brethren would have been spared the demoralizing spectacle of the most reckless and vicious and audacious of their lot turned into a trembling gaol-bird, singing Gospel hymns and weeping tears of repentance. Solitary confinement for life is a thousand times more trying than death. Ravachol, Emile Henry Vaillant, Caserio, were none of them more audacious or devilish than Lucheni, yet each of them died haughtily, with a sneer on his lips and heaping curses upon society. Seven months alone in his cell finds Lucheni demoralized and repentant. Perhaps it would be well to try all the Anarchists in Geneva.



From a

HÔTEL BEAU-RIVAGE AND BRUNSWICK MONUMENT.

[Photo.

(The tree in the foreground is close to the spot where the Empress was assassinated.)

But to return to the assassination. The sun never shone upon a fairer day in Geneva than the 10th day of September, 1898. The fine, broad Quay du Mont-Blanc, the most beautiful promenade in the city, upon which the Brunswick Monument seems to rise up out of the blue waters of the lake, was asleep in the noonday sun. It was not yet the hour for promenaders, and the quay was almost deserted except at the landing-stage near the Pont du Mont-Blanc, where the fine, fast steamer *Le Genève* lay at the pier with steam up ready to depart at 1.40 for the upper end of the lake.

At twenty minutes past one o'clock the Empress, unaccompanied except by her lady-in-waiting, the Countess Szarey, left the Hôtel Beau-Rivage on foot to walk to the landing-stage, a hundred and seventy-five yards down the quay, to take the *Genève* for Territet, which is the boat-station for Caux, where Her Majesty was spending the season. The two ladies crossed the street from the Beau-Rivage, and followed the side-walk close to the iron railing of the quay. They were unostentatiously attired, and none of the people they passed had any knowledge of their identity. At a point four-fifths of the way, between the Hôtel Beau-Rivage and the boat-landing, a man was leaning over the railing of the quay, ostensibly looking out upon the port in front of the Hôtel de la Paix. His back was turned to the side-walk. He was a young, rowdyish-looking little fellow of the day-labourer type—an unmistakable Italian. His clothes were ordinary cheap woollen garments. Under his slovenly sack-coat he wore a sort of jersey of blue and white; on his head a black felt hat. There was absolutely nothing in his appearance to arouse suspicion. In all the pathway of the Empress, he was the most commonplace figure; but he was about to make the world ring with the story of the most abominable crime of the century.

Just as the two ladies had approached within two steps of this man, he leapt quickly back from the railing and, whirling about, confronted them. Before they could even cry out, his right arm was raised and the fatal blow was struck. The blade of the shoemaker's awl, a sort of great, three-sided darning-needle, with a rough wooden handle,

had fallen swiftly and surely upon the bosom of the Empress. No quicker or truer blow was ever struck. The instrument penetrated to a distance of nearly eight inches and pierced the heart through and through. The wretch, quickly withdrawing his horrible stiletto, raised his arm as if to strike again; but as the poor Empress tottered and fell, he seemed to change his mind, and darting between two *fiacres* fled up the Rue des Alpes, only to be captured after a run of two minutes.

Meanwhile, the Empress having been helped to her feet by several of the *cochers* under whose very eyes the awful crime had been committed, had walked steadily on to the boat, and although feeling very faint and looking very pale, had apparently suffered no serious injury, and did not even dream she had been stabbed. She believed she had been assaulted by a robber, and that he had merely struck her a blow with his fist. This was also the idea of her companion, the Countess of Szarey, and of the several passengers who had witnessed the assault from the deck of the *Genève*. In any event, the Empress retired into the cabin of the boat and reclined upon a divan.

The *Genève* left her pier, proceeded out of the port, and was fully half a mile out in the lake when it was discovered that Her Majesty had lost consciousness. The boat put back to port, and the Empress was carried upon a stretcher to the Hôtel Beau-Rivage. She never regained consciousness, and expired before the two surgeons who had been hastily summoned were able to administer any remedy.



THE WEAPON WITH WHICH THE CRIME WAS COMMITTED.
From a Photograph in the hands of the police at Geneva.

It was thought she had died from shock until an examination disclosed the wound. One small drop of blood bubbling on the skin was the only external evidence of the stiletto's deadly work. The autopsy disclosed the fact that the terrible needle had passed directly through the heart. Internal bleeding caused the quick and almost painless death. Such is the exact story of the assassination.

Meanwhile Lucheni had been arrested and taken to the prison St. Antoine, garrulous, boastful, enthusiastic—a poor, misled fool,

who in perpetrating the most abominable of crimes believed himself a hero. His responses to the questions that were put to him at the moment showed that he was well trained in his part.

"What led you to commit so outrageous a crime?" he was asked.

"I am an Anarchist," he replied, glibly; "we are the agents of those who eat not, drink not, and have not; we kill to call attention to ourselves."

"Who were your accomplices?"

"My accomplices are all those who suffer," he answered, dramatically.

"And why did you select an Empress for your victim, instead of a President or a King?"

"It was the good God who placed her in my path," answered the assassin, devoutly. And so on with all the glib and senseless arguments of this awful Brotherhood.

It is unnecessary to follow Lucheni through the two months of judicial investigation and examination that preceded his final trial and condemnation. His conduct was marked by the usual cynicism and bravado. He liked above all things to boast. His lawyer appointed by the Court to defend him made an eloquent plea for mercy. It was the only plea possible. Lucheni had been abandoned even by his mother, and had been brought up in vice and poverty.

How could society expect such a being to have the least moral perception? How could the law hold him responsible?

The jury promptly found the assassin guilty without extenuating circumstances, and the

Court immediately sentenced him to imprisonment for life at hard labour in the Geneva penitentiary. Lucheni did not disappoint the crowd. He heard his sentence passed with the accustomed cynical smile, and shouted the conventional cry of the Anarchists: "Death to Society — Long live Anarchy."

Thus he was led out of court and back to his prison. That was the last the public ever saw of him, and perhaps will ever see.

Almost before daybreak, one black November morning in 1898, the prison guards of St. Antoine, accompanied by a small squad of gendarmes, sent by the Préfet of Police, escorted Lucheni from St. Antoine Gaol to the prison of the Évêché — the cantonal penitentiary of Geneva. The transfer was made when the streets were absolutely empty, and nobody saw or knew anything of it.

Hence there was no demonstration, as there might otherwise have been.

The Évêché is a grim, old stone building, standing in a dark, narrow street hard by the famous old Church of St. Pierre — Calvin's church — of which famous institution it was formerly the bishopry. At six o'clock in the morning Lucheni heard its great iron doors close upon his heels; he saw the streets and houses, the life and bustle of the world, shut out from him for ever, and passed in to his living death. But the spirit of repentance

had not yet touched him, and as the prison doors closed him in he shouted once more down the vacant street, "Vive l'Anarchie."

Within six weeks he had admitted to his



LUCHENI BEING TAKEN BACK TO PRISON AFTER HIS CONDEMNATION. THE SCENE OF THE PICTURE IS THE COURT OF ST. ANTOINE PRISON, WHICH ADJOINS THE PALACE OF JUSTICE.

From a Photo. by d'Illin and Jacom, Geneva.

priest that his cynicism was all bravado ; that within three hours after committing his awful crime he repented of it. He has also declared at last that he had accomplices, and it is believed he will tell who they were and all about them. Thus does the hardship of solitary confinement demoralize even the most dramatic and audacious of Anarchists.

The question now turns upon Lucheni's *régime* in the cantonal penitentiary. All sorts of stories have been circulated as to the nature of the punishment to which he is being subjected. It has been published broadcast that he is confined in an underground cell into which no ray of light ever penetrates ; that his food, which is rough and barely sufficient to sustain life, is passed to him through a hole as if to a beast in a cage, and that he is never allowed to speak a word to any living being ; in short, that he is being tortured.

In this connection, I publish the following extracts from a letter recently addressed to me in my official capacity by the wife of a distinguished New York lawyer :—

New York City, March 13th, 1899.

To Benj. H. Ridgely, United States Consul, Geneva.

SIR,—It is with no little reluctance that I bring to your notice some recent facts that are painful and distressing in the extreme. Let me briefly say I was shocked and horrified, with the whole Christian world, by the assassination of the late Empress of Austria. A crime so unprovoked and cold-blooded calls for the deepest indignation, the severest punishment. But does the just severity of law exact such modes of punishment as involve the unnecessary infliction of pain and suffering that amount to the torture of the "Dark Ages"?

If the end of punishment is not only to prevent further crime, but in the light of Christianity to open the eyes of the criminal to the enormity of his crime with the hope of final reformation, then is not the treatment of the assassin of the lamented Empress a

dark blot on the boasted civilization of the nineteenth century? If the public journals are correct in their statements, this poor, deluded, wretched murderer is confined in a dark dungeon *twenty feet below ground, without a ray of light and only sufficient air to enable him to live for the daily torture, while his food is passed to him through a hole in his prison door, etc.*

Now, the facts are that Lucheni is *not* being tortured ; nor is he being pampered or heroized. Primarily, it is true that he is for the time being kept in solitary confinement,



THE GENEVA CANTONAL PENITENTIARY, WHERE LUCHENI IS NOW UNDERGOING HIS SENTENCE.

From a Photo. by d'Ilhin and Jacom, Geneva.

ment, but not in an underground cell. On the other hand, his cell is on the *rez-de-chaussée* of the prison, and well lighted by a window that looks out into the prison court. It is a neat and clean cell, much larger and better ventilated than any cell I ever remember to have seen in an American penitentiary. The convict has a good, clean bed, with a straw mattress ; he has a small table and a chair. He is comfortably clad, not in convict stripes, but in good woollen garments, and is, in short, living under better conditions of cleanliness and wholesomeness than he ever knew before in his life.

Here is the daily routine of his *régime* : At six o'clock every morning he is aroused by the prison bell, and compelled to get out of bed and clean up his cell. He then works at paper-box making, a trade he has just begun to learn, until eight o'clock, when he is served a litre of *café au lait* without sugar. At noon he has a dinner of soup and vegetables, and if he behaves himself well, a goblet of light red wine. For supper, at six o'clock, he has only soup. He is allowed a kilogram—2 1-5th lb.—of coarse dark bread a day. This he may eat at his three repasts in such proportion as pleases him, but he is not allowed to eat between meals.

Twice a week—that is to say, on every Thursday and Sunday—all the prisoners of the Évêché, Lucheni included, are given a generous portion of some sort of boiled meat at the noonday repast. Thus it will be seen that the Anarchist, though his daily bill of fare is by no means luxurious, is very well fed, better, doubtless, than he ever was before in his life, and much better than the great majority of the lower classes of his country-people.

Twice every day Lucheni leaves his cell and goes to walk in the prison court for thirty minutes with all the other convicts. It is a mournful procession. The convicts are compelled to walk in single file one mètre apart, and are not allowed to speak. The courtyard is small, and as the silent procession moves round and round in a narrow circle, it presents a very sad and pitiful spectacle. On Sunday there is a service in the prison-chapel, which all the convicts may attend if they desire; and in spite of the fact that Anarchists pretend to scorn all religions, I am informed that Lucheni has become a regular attendant at the prison service.

There is also a prison library, from which the prisoners may each take a book every Sunday. They are permitted to spend the whole of Sunday in reading, and may also find a few moments for the same pastime every day at the dinner-hour. When I went through the Évêché the other day, and when Lucheni's cell door was opened, I saw on his table a picturesque history of Switzerland, which he had evidently been reading as he worked.

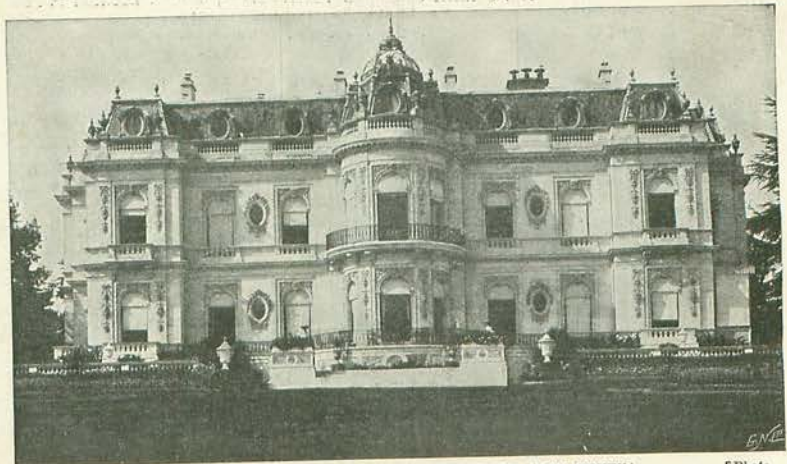
I found that Lucheni had changed considerably since the day of his condemnation. His moustache was gone, and his face looked sleek and white and fat. The lithe figure had also grown much stouter; he still wore the gum-elastic smile, but the air of bravado was missing. His eyes were down-cast; his mien humble. It was easy to see that the spirit of the Anarchist was broken.

The only terrible feature of Lucheni's

punishment is the continued silence and solitude. This is harder to support than death, and it is particularly hard to the verbose Lucheni. He sees before him a life absolutely without hope; the ceaseless babbler is reduced to everlasting silence; the preacher of the bad cause is without a public. The idle and noisy Anarchist must work industriously every day of his life from six in the morning until six at night, and cannot even expend the fruit of his labour, which must, on the other hand, go to support the institutions of the very society which he has so scorned and spat upon. No wonder his spirit is broken; no wonder he repents. Certainly, if the Anarchists have any wit, they must see a dreadful satire in the fate of Luigi Lucheni.

The question as to how long Lucheni will remain in solitary confinement remains to be seen. Solitary confinement is a mere question of prison discipline, and if Lucheni conducts himself well, it is not likely that he will be long denied the privilege which is accorded the other convicts of working in the prison shops. True, this is not much of a distraction, as a guard is constantly kept mounted over the prisoners as they work, and the exchange of a single word is forbidden and punished. However, they prefer it infinitely to solitary confinement, as it at least brings them together and enables them to see each other, and Lucheni will always be a hero to the lesser knaves, even though he may not speak to them.

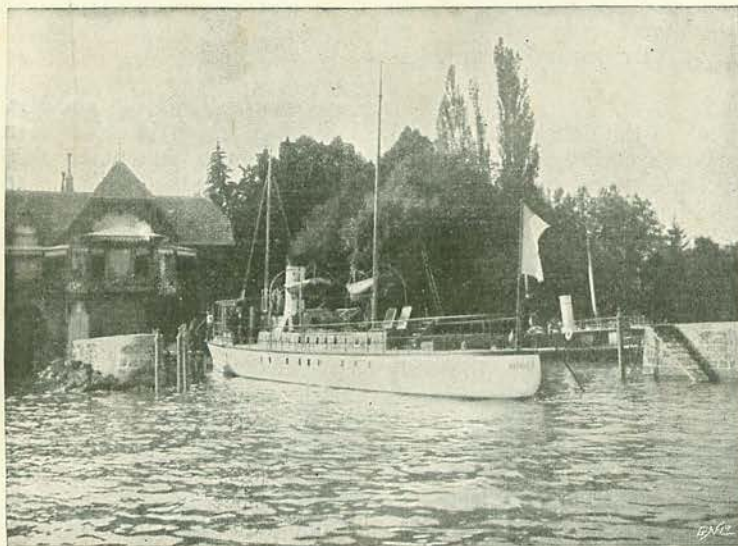
In concluding this sketch, let me add a little bit of history—now published for the first time—to the story of the assassination of the Empress: a bit of history which will show what a trifling circumstance it was that



From a]

THE CHÂTEAU OF THE BARONESS ROTHSCHILD NEAR GENEVA.

[Photo.



"GITANA," THE STEAM YACHT OF THE BARONESS ROTHSCHILD.
From a Photo. by Lacombe and Arlaud, Geneva.

made it possible for Lucheni to perpetrate his abominable crime in Geneva.

It will be remembered that the 10th day of September, 1898, was Saturday. On the day before, Her Majesty had come down from Caux to lunch with the Baroness Rothschild, whose great white château on the heights, just outside of Geneva, is the finest show-palace on Lake Léman.

The Baroness Rothschild also has the finest and fastest yacht on the lake. As a matter of fact, it is said to be one of the fastest crafts afloat, and can do the forty-five miles from the Baroness's boat-house at Bellevue to Territet, the station for Caux at the other end of the lake, in a little less than two hours.

After the luncheon on Friday, the Baroness insisted upon sending the Empress back to Territet in her yacht, and Her

ladies had a famous little spree with their chocolate and cakes, and gladdened the heart of the little pastrycook beyond all expression by their compliments and purchases.

But it cost the poor Queen her life. For instead of going directly from the Château de Rothschild in the yacht of the Baroness, as she would otherwise have done, she spent the night in Geneva, and found death in her pathway the next day.



From a] THE CONFECTIONER'S SHOP IN THE BOULEVARD DU THÉÂTRE, GENEVA. [Photo.

Majesty was about to accept the invitation when she remembered that she had sent word to a little confectioner in the Boulevard du Théâtre, of whose chocolate she was very fond, that she would visit his shop that afternoon to take a cup of chocolate and to get some chocolat bonbons and other sweets. And in spite of the insistence of the Baroness, she kept to this engagement and went with her companion, the Countess Szarey, to the bright little *pâtisserie*, where the two great