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A CENTURY OF ROMANOFFS



ALEXANDER II

ALEXANDER III

STORIES OF THE MODERN CZARS.

In number the modern Czars of Russia have been five. There have been three Alexanders and two Nicholases, counting the Nicholases now in the midst of countless troubles. One hundred and five years have they ruled over all the Russians.

To the other Czar Nicholas, who was the autocrat for thirty long troublous years beginning in 1825, belongs the distinction of being the only man who ever determined the line of direction of an important railroad merely by employing a foot rule.

For a long time the engineers to whom had been assigned the task and the Czar's advisers had squabbled over the route of the proposed road between the empire's two capitals, St. Petersburg and Moscow. At last, the emperor, sick of the delay and the wordy war, ordered that a ruler be brought to him.

Seizing it, he laid it on a map of Russia, lying before him on the council table, and imperiously drew a straight line between the two cities.

"Let that be the route," he said, and brought the squabbling to an end.

Straight as the line he drew, the road was built; and to this day it remains the same, with many towns of commercial importance, that the road should have touched, several miles distant from it on either side.

This same Nicholas, as head of the Greek orthodox church, was petitioned by the holy synod, in a memorandum as long as one's arm to declare whether or not the existence of purgatory was orthodox doctrine. The question had long been puzzling the great churchmen.

But it was an easy one for Nicholas. He looked the memorandum over, took his pen in hand, and "No purgatory" was what he wrote on the margin of the memorial.

ALEXANDER I. AND THE SUCKLING PIG.

Alexander I, he who burned Moscow and thus contributed greatly to the ultimate downfall of Napoleon, one day went on a visit to a certain military colony, and undertook a personal inspection of each house.

At the first house he and his suite found a commissariat dinner, the chief dish of which was a roast suckling pig, spread temptingly on the table. At the



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second house, a similar sight met their eyes. At the third, also, and so on.

Finally, when the inspection was nearly over an attendant, Prince Volkonski by name, grew suspicious that everything was not as lovely as it seemed, and in one house managed slyly to cut off the pig's tail and to slip it into his pocket.

At the next house, what should he behold on the table but a roast suckling pig minus a tail!

"I think," said the prince to his emperor, "that we have an old friend here."

"What do you mean?" asked the Czar.

Up to the table stepped the prince, and, pulling the tail out of his pocket, deftly fitted it to its place. Critics agree that up to this moment Alexander I had endeavored to uplift Russia, and had succeeded wonderfully well for his time. But this evidence of petty graft was too much for him; it was the last straw. In disgust he turned the affairs of state over to Arakcheief, and, as one historical writer has put it, "the empire returned to its old routine."



NICHOLAS II CZAR OF ALL THE RUSSIAS

PUNISHMENT THAT FITTED THE CRIME.

When Alexander II, known to history as the Liberator, came to the throne he at first busied himself constantly altering the uniforms of his troops, and thus won for himself the sobriquet, "the military tailor." Concerning this part of the Liberator's career, a prominent Russian has told the following incident:

"One day a student of one of the great

crown colleges, in talking over with his comrades the reforms of Alexander II, declared that the emperor was nothing but a tailor, meaning to insinuate that he was too fond of altering military uniforms.

"These words came to the ears of the police, who carried them to the sovereign. The imprudent youth was summoned by imperial order to the palace.

His parents already saw him on the road to Siberia. And what punishment do you think was inflicted on him? The emperor ordered him to be presented with a complete uniform!"

Alexander's father, the other Nicholas, on his deathbed had pleaded with his son to free the serfs as soon as he ascended the throne—and this from a Czar who had been as autocratic, and,



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hand and, waving it impressively, he hotly exclaimed:

"Here is a description of the inhuman treatment that a proprietress has been inflicting on her domestic serfs. I shall never sleep calmly till I have put a stop to all that!"

A little later twenty-three million people were added to the world's free men.

ALEXANDER'S DEATH DUE TO A KINDNESS. All the world knows that this Alexander was blown to shreds by a bomb while out driving; it is not so generally understood that he brought on death by an act of kindness.

The explosion of the first bomb that was hurled tore off the back of the Czar's carriage, wounded one of his Cossack guards and a butcher's boy, but otherwise did no harm.

Even before the smoke had cleared away the Czar was seen to get out of his carriage.

"Are you hurt?" asked an officer. "No, thank God," was the reply. "I am untouched. Don't disturb yourself. Let us look after the wounded."

He was especially solicitous of the comfort of the Cossack, and to both victims he ordered all attention to be paid. He was on the point of returning to his carriage when he beheld the woul-

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