

THE LATE CZAR'S PERIL.

So far as I know, no outsider had ever been privileged to peep into the private note book of Strophon Demitritoff, the "doyen" of the St. Petersburg secret police bureau, an institution dedicated to the service of the Czar of All the Russias. It was, therefore, with a feeling of intense satisfaction, not unmingled with awe, that I hang upon the utterances of my old friend, as he (the occasion being a cosy dinner at my house in St. Petersburg) caressingly turned over the closely written pages of a little volume.

A remarkable man was Demitritoff, tall, thin, but tough and wiry, possessed of a determined mouth, partially concealed by a stiff, almost white military moustache—he might have passed any day for a retired colonel of the Guards. His early training in the army was responsible for his upright carriage, while his varied experiences as the foil of his sovereign had endowed him with a quick and masterful eye and unflinching nerve. For many years his efforts had been almost entirely directed towards the preservation of the life of the head of the state, and needless to say, the discoveries made while so occupied were sufficiently numerous and startling.

As a trusted agent of the Czar, his life teemed with incidents made so significant to be committed to any diary, so that the date carefully tabulated within the covers of the little volume he held in his hand, while of enthralling interest to a mystery and plot-loving public, were as nothing compared to the astounding facts stored up in his retentive memory.

I took it as a great compliment to my countryman that he should confide in me, an alien. "Ah," he said, "you are an Englishman"—I was Scotch, but that is a detail—and are to be trusted. I should not dare to unobscure myself to a Russian."

Now that the brave Demitritoff is no more, having all too soon followed his royal master to the grave, and being myself well out of the reach of the "double eagle," I have no compunction in recounting here, at the risk of the columns being obliterated by the Russian press censor, a few of the experiences as related by my friend.

A feature of his character was the grim humor he wound into the reminiscences with which he from time to time favored me. I well remember the first of these, which, under the above heading and with assumed names, will compromise nobody.

Yes, he mused, Petrus Tritoff: a quite, deep young man that was, now: one of the most dangerous kind, mark you! Did he belong to any Nihilist society or associate himself with the advanced Socialist party? Not he. He was too clever for that. His grudge against Alexander III. was a private one. A medical student, his bosom friend and colleague, Janos Smirsky, had been condemned to Siberia on a trumped-up charge (for such cases do happen even in civilized Russia) of conspiring against the life and well-being of the Czar. It was only too apparent at the trial that pressure had been brought to bear on headquarters, and for some reason Tritoff got it into his head that his friend, who was well connected, was being mercilessly persecuted at the instance of the palace autocrats, if not of the Emperor himself.

So, when Petrus heard Janos condemned for life to the mines, and in due time saw him start, one of that wretched gang, on his long journey, he swore to avenge him. Now, Petrus was a youth of parts; he had ideas, and it would not be his fault if some of the residents at the Winter Palace, preferably the Czar himself, did not realize that even on this planet vengeance was sure.

Accordingly, Petrus said not a word to anyone; avoided those clubs and supposed secret societies which sought to compass collectively the fall of the monarchy, and duly completed his studies. Mingled with these studies was the ever prevailing thought of how best to effect his purpose. At length he made up his mind. Learning, in quite a casual way, a fact not generally known, that the Czar had a great weakness for a special kind of chocolate-bon-bon, he determined that through this apparently harmless medium should his friend be avenged.

A little patient inquiry elicited the fact that a box of these special chocolates found its way regularly every week to that part of the empire which the Czar happened to honor with his presence; and also that the makers of the precious sweets were a well known house in St. Petersburg famed for its confections. The death of his father at this juncture furnished him with an excuse for learning his own livelihood, and on the pretence that he was left penniless, and consequently unable, without capital, to benefit by his medical studies, he made it his business to get recommended by a few friends to this highly respectable confectioner as an inexperienced but very willing volunteer. To such lengths will the feeling of revenge bring a man.

After careful inquiry—and you may be quite sure the investigations by the police, who are always interested in such changes, were most minute—the services of Petrus were accepted, and he set to with a will to master his new trade.

The privilege of making the Czar's sweets was accorded to a man who had been in the firm's employ for many years, and who was considered above suspicion. It was to this post that Petrus aimed to be appointed. Not till then could he put in practice the pretty little plan he had matured for changing the course of events at the Winter Palace.

To the ordinary mind bent on destruction, accessibility to the manufacture of the royal comfits under such circumstances would suggest a strong dose of poison concealed under the chocolate enamel. Not so did Petrus view the matter. The useful arsenic, the strong and serviceable strychnine, did not commend themselves to the young man's fancy. Besides the chance of a promptly administered antidote or emetic saving the sufferer and destroying the would-be assassin's hopes, there was a lack of sensationalism in the attempt by such means.

There must be no confusing the issue with that of a temporary indisposition with which the public might be misled. No, the result must be something deadly, yet electrifying; appalling, yet far removed from the commonplace; and in this spirit did the genial Petrus strive to improve the shining hour. The bomb was Tritoff's will; not the ordinary article with the fuse attached, or the clumsy mechanism which requires to be thrown at the subject sig-

nalled out for destruction. No, something much more dainty and original. Not even the most up-to-date Nihilist had so far aspired to fame by contriving a bomb which could be "eaten," and which in the act would destroy for ever the partaker's taste for the sweets of life. It was to be left to Petrus Tritoff to inaugurate the chocolate bomb by means of which the head of Alexander III. would be blown off his shoulders, in the midst of his courtiers and guards, ere a hand could be raised to save him.

Two years had passed in his employer's service before Petrus considered that his opportunity had come. In those two years his expertness and assiduity had gained him his master's favor, and suspicion, if any existed (and where does it not exist in Russia?), had been lulled. Petrus was now competent to take the place of the master workman who continued to make weekly a fresh supply of the royal sweetmeats, should he by any accident be unable to attend to the important duty.

Needless to say, there came a day when the faithful workman was absent from his post. Found ill in bed after an evening's harmless enjoyment in the company of Petrus, it may have been that the latter's knowledge of drugs had something to do with his friend's indisposition; anyhow bereft of the man's services at the last moment, it fell that Petrus, with many admonitions and supervisions, was ordered to prepare the box of sweets. He had been allowed previously to try his hand at the important preparation, and had succeeded so well that the worthy proprietor had no fear of a complaint from his royal master.

With ill-concealed triumph Petrus buckled to his task, and, in the presence of tasters from the palace, prepared his sweets to everyone's satisfaction. Packed in a delicately-lined box, the oblong blocks of chocolate (about an inch long by half an inch broad) looked most tempting to the eye. Little did the supervisors realize that in one of the top rows of the box lurked a sweet that had been carefully prepared beforehand, and skilfully substituted by Petrus for the real article.

In his chemical reveries he had discovered an explosive of terrible power, capable of extreme concentration, and which could be stirred into instant and deadly activity by fusion with a particular acid. To this end, the interior of the chocolate had been carefully divided longitudinally by a thin wall of soft but impervious composition. On the one side of this wall was placed the explosive and on the other the acid, the union of which would produce such disastrous results. With crafty and far-seeing deliberation, Petrus placed the division lengthwise in and out of the sweet, and so insured the fracture of the partition and consequent explosion should the partaker elect to make two bites of the confection. Covered over with its coating of real chocolate, the deadly engine, as it lay snugly in the box, died detection, and the moment that its victim discovered its unusual flavor, that moment would he cease to feel any other sensation on this earth.

It was quite in keeping with Tritoff's ingenuity that this promiscuous placing of the fatal sweet in the box should entail a fair amount of uncertainty as to when its mission would be accomplished. It afforded him all the joys of anticipation, and as he found it convenient to take a little holiday as soon as the box was dispatched he hugged himself all the way to the German frontier with the thought that a big sensation was in store for Russia in particular and the world in general.

But as he sat consuming numerous books in the hotel of a flourishing city over the border, waiting, somewhat impatiently, for the denouement, and eagerly scanning the papers and telegrams, nothing happened. What could it mean? But something had happened, and this is what it meant. The box had duly arrived at the palace, and after passing the customary inspection had found its way to the Czar's table.

On the third day after its receipt, seated on the terrace with a favorite bloodhound rolling in lazy enjoyment on the ground near by, Alexander, immersed in the perusal of private correspondence, and yet with his favorite sweets handy, mechanically stretched out his hand towards the box and slowly conveyed the chocolate to his lips. A sudden movement of the dog attracted his attention, and finding the animal gazing expectantly at him, he, acting on an unaccountable impulse, arrested his hand and threw the sweet to the dog to catch. The snap of the animal's jaws over the tit-bit was followed instantaneously by a sickening report, and the Czar of All the Russias shivered as he gazed on the mangled remains of his saviour, and faintly realized his own wonderful escape. Of course, some of us were soon on the spot and the mysterious nature of the explosion investigated.

Though pretty well accustomed to the various artifices of our bloodthirsty compatriots, this incident opened up a new field. The strictest secrecy was observed, and no report of the occurrence got abroad. Meantime inquires at the confectioner's elicited the fact of Tritoff's absence, and though above suspicion in the proprietor's eyes, we of the police waited developments. I felt sure Petrus had a hand in the business, especially after a talk with the man whose place he filled, and who could never fathom the cause of his serious, though brief, illness. I felt equally certain that ere long the wily Petrus would return to find out the reason of the apparent miscarriage of his little scheme.

So we were ready for him when he appeared one day in disguise. He was so upset, poor man, at the failure of his plot, that in order to share at least in the merit accruing to such a daring attempt, he confessed all to me. Much to his disgust, his confession was never made public (nothing encourages crime so much as publicity in these little matters), and he was sent to keep his friend Janos company for life on a totally different charge. And the Emperor, well, somehow, after that little experience, he lost his taste for sweets; and until the day of his death the responsible officials dare not allow a chocolate to be seen in the palace.

The Queen and the Old Sea-Dog.

"Nigh on Sixty Years at Sea," by Captain Woolward, contains some excellent stories. One of the richest stories in the book relates to a friend of the author's, who had the Queen as a passenger on board a Leith steamer early in her reign. Captain Sharp said to the Queen: "How do you, marm? Glad to see you aboard,

marm." The equerries and ladies-in-waiting were horrified, and one of the former told him he had insulted the Queen, who, however, had shaken him by the hand. Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence had told Captain Sharp that he must not put in at Lowestoft. The Queen asked Captain Sharp what he proposed to do. "Well, Your Majesty, I thought of putting in to Lowestoft, but that there Naval Lord of yours says no." "Never you mind him," says the Queen: "I came on board for you to take care of me, and you had better do it." "We got comfortably into Lowestoft, and it did blow, by Jingo. The Queen sent to me, and said, 'You did right, you did, Captain Sharp, and I am much obliged to you.' To cut the story short, when she left the ship, the Queen asked what she could do for the captain, and the gallant captain asked for the purple velvet dress the Queen had worn on board, so that he might always have a cap made of a piece of it. The dress was already packed up, however, but she said she would have it sent; and she sent it.

THE SOLDIER'S LAST WORDS.

"Brethren, let us dwell together in harmony and peace."

These are good words, always fit to be spoken, and they are especially fragrant as coming from lips which Death is about to seal for ever.

We quote the following from an American newspaper: "Henry D. Lees, a prominent politician, while addressing a meeting at South Norfolk, on October 31st, dropped dead from heart disease. His last words were, 'Brethren, let us dwell together in harmony and peace.' He was a well-known Grand Army man."

Had this old soldier fallen from a rifle-bullet through the brain his end could not have been more sudden. The paper says he died of heart disease. Is it likely he did? Not at all likely, inasmuch as real heart disease is a very rare malady. More people are killed by lightning than by heart disease. True heart disease is a shrinking of the lining membrane of the heart caused by previous inflammation; the inflammation being produced by rheumatism and gout, and the latter by the poisons generated in the stomach by indigestion and dyspepsia. As we have said, this malady is very rare; a person may have it and live to be a hundred years old. His heart has simply lost power to pump as much blood as it did once; that's all. He must take life easier.

But the ailment that goes by the name of "heart disease" is quite another thing. Women can explain the difference even better than men. Read this for example: "When I was 17 years old, I seemed to lose my health all at once. It was in the summer of 1880 that I began to have spells of feeling faint and giddy. My tongue was furred, my appetite poor, and after eating I had pain in the stomach, and was all the time belching up wind. I was always tired and weak, and none the less so for eating; food didn't strengthen me as it used to do."

"One day, in the latter part of the following October, whilst in service at Mrs. Firth's Park Farm, Thornhill, I made a visit home. When I got there I had such pain and fluttering at the heart, I could scarcely stand. This frightened my mother, so she got some of the neighbours to help me to the doctor's. He said, 'Your heart is in an alarming condition; you will have to be careful. On no account must you hurry or make any violent effort.'"

The doctor's medicine did me no good; I got worse, and gave up my situation. Soon afterwards I had a nasty cough, and wouldn't let me sleep. I would sit up in bed till nearly daybreak, coughing and spitting, and was worse tired than when I went to bed. My legs trembled so with weakness I couldn't stand or walk much, and had to have help to wash and dress myself. Well, this is the way I got on, month after month. One day mother thought I was dying, and ran and fetched Mrs. Senior, a neighbor.

"The next January (1890) Mr. Kilner, of Messrs. Kilner Bros., Glass Bottle Manufacturers, Thornhill, Leeds, recommended me to the Dewsbury Infirmary, where I stayed six weeks; but the doctor's physic did no real good. I kept wasting away, and people said there was no chance for me to get well."

"It was then I first heard of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I read of its curative case like mine—read of it in a little book. My Mother sent for the Syrup. She bought it of M. J. Day, the chemist, at Thornhill, Leeds. The first few doses made me feel better. The pain at my heart was easier, and my food agreed with me. So I kept on taking the Syrup and getting better. Presently I was strong enough to go to work. My colour came back too, and I have been well and all right ever since. If we could have afforded it we should have put the particulars of my case in the newspapers. (Signed) Hannah Milnes, 18, Walker's Building, Brewery Lane, Thornhill, Leeds, October 12th, 1892."

Now what is the commonsense of Miss Milnes' experience? What was her ailment? It was indigestion and dyspepsia. The heart trouble was one of the symptoms of the stomach trouble. Virtually, this is the foundation fact about "heart disease," "heart failure," and all other organic disturbances. Cure the cause with Seigel's Curative Syrup and the results will pass away with it.

A Tax Upon Beards.

An Italian journal, in view of the financial difficulties against which the Government is struggling, proposes a tax which, despite its seeming novelty, has precedents. It is a question of the tax upon beards that was in operation for a long time and under various forms in Russia. Peter the Great, knowing the attachment that his subjects had for the hirsute adornment of the face, introduced a tax upon the beard in his empire. The beard is a superfluous and useless ornament, said he, and, starting from his principle, he imposed a tax upon it as an article of luxury. This tax was proportional and progressive, not in proportion to the length of the beard, but to the social position of those who wore it. Each person when paying a tax received a token which he had to carry upon his person, for the guards were inexorable, and always provided with scissors, ruthlessly cut off the beard of those who could not show their badge.

Catherine I. confirmed this tax. In 1728 Peter II. allowed the peasants to wear a beard, but kept up the tax for the other

classes under the penalty of work on the galleys in case of non-payment. Czarina Anne rendered life still harder to bearded men, for not only were they obliged to pay the special contribution imposed upon them, but also had to pay a double tax upon everything else for which they were assessed. This tax was not abolished until the reign of Catherine III.

THE NEW CZAR.

Some Interesting Facts Concerning Nicholas II.

Nicholas Alexandrovitch is by no means a robust young man. He is short and rather delicate-looking, with anything but the imperial bearing which has come to be associated with the Romanoff family. The Czar is a veritable Ajax of enormous size and strength. His heart would probably have gone out in sympathy to an heir who inherited the bodily qualities of his race, or would have forgiven his weakness of frame had it contained an imperious mind. But the Czarwitsch had neither, and it is said to be only through the influence of the Czarina that the eldest son has not been set aside from the succession in favor of his younger brother, Michael.

However much the Czar may have loved his eldest son, he had no great respect or adoration for him as a Russian emperor. He is a student, and Alexander III. thought that students are of small account in the world as compared to men who can bend iron poker in their fingers. Nicholas Alexandrovitch has studied all his life, because studying was his only pleasure. Fear of Nihilists kept him for years almost a prisoner in the imperial palace and country place, where he grew up an innocent-faced boy with no knowledge of life except what he gained through books and papers that had been carefully inspected before he saw them. The darker side of Russian history was to him a sealed volume.

Some five years ago the young prince started out upon his travels. He went to Denmark, to England and to Germany; and the amount of modern information that he managed to imbibe and carry back to Russia set the teeth of the Czar on edge. The young man had brought back with him well defined and radical opinions and theories upon the questions and literature of the day. He had decided that the Jews were human beings, and that it was inhuman and ridiculous to persecute them. Worst of all, in the father's eyes, he had become the devoted friend and admirer of the German Emperor.

Look upon Russia as she is to-day, and imagine a mild, very intelligent modern young man coming in to take the reigns of an almost absolute monarchy, a young man who has chosen as his wife a vivacious German girl with a keen sense of humor, and the daughter of an English mother.

The new Czar is twenty-six years old. Ever since his boyhood Europe has been busy selecting a wife for him. He is so English in his tastes, so fond of his cousin the Prince of Wales that it was supposed he would select one of the daughters of that house, but even had inclination pointed that way the Greek church absolutely forbids the marriage of first cousins.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S DOGS.

She Has Some of the Finest in the World in Her Kennels.

Some of the finest dogs in the world are owned by Victoria, Queen of England. Her Majesty is particularly fond of animals, and she loves every species of dog, from the largest St. Bernard to the tiny King Charles spaniel, which can be put into a coat pocket. There is a man at Windsor Castle who does nothing else but take care of the dogs, and the royal kennels there are of stone, and the yards are paved with red and blue tiles, and the compartments in which the little dogs sleep are warmed with hot water, and they have the freshest and cleanest straw in which to lie. There are fifty-five dogs in these kennels, and all most of them are acquainted with the Queen. She visits them often while she is at the castle, and she looks carefully after their health and comforts. The dogs of Windsor Castle keep regular hours. They are turned out at a certain time each day for their exercise and sports, and they have a number of courts connected with the kennels upon which they scamper to and fro over green lawns. There are umbrella-like affairs on these lawns, where they can lie in the shade if they wish to, and in some of them there are pools of water where the dogs can take a bath, and in which they swim and come out and shake themselves just as though they were ordinary yellow dogs rather than royal puppies.

The Queen has her favorites among the dogs, and some of them become jealous of the attention she pays to others. Among those she likes best is one named "Marco." This is said to be the finest Spitz dog in England. It has taken a number of prizes. "Marco" is an auburn dog. His hair is of tawny red. He weighs just about twelve pounds, and he has brighter eyes, quicker motion, and sharper bark than any other dog in the kennel. He is just three years old, and he carries his tail over his back as though he owned the whole establishment.

The Queen's collies are very fine, and a number of them are white. Another little dog, an especial favorite with the Queen, weighs just seven and one-half pounds, or no more than the smallest baby. This is the Queen's toy Pomeranian "Gina," who is one of the most famous dogs of the world. Gina came from Italy, and has won a number of prizes at the dog-shows of England. Gina is a very good dog, and sat as quiet as a mouse while her photograph was taken not long ago.

Among the other dogs of the kennel are a number of pugs, and one knock-kneed little Japanese pug which the late Lady Brassey, the distinguished traveller, presented to the Queen. There are big German dachshunds and little Skye terriers, and, in short, every kind of beautiful dog you can imagine in these famous kennels. The Queen names all the dogs herself; and near the kennels is a little graveyard where these pets are buried when they die.

Slightly Absent-Minded.

A well-known professor had taken his watch from his pocket to mark the time he intended to boil an egg for his breakfast, when a friend entering the room found him with the egg in his hand, upon which he was intently looking, and the watch supplying its place in the saucerpan of boiling water.



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