

IF ALEXANDER III. DIES

WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECT ON EUROPEAN POLITICS?

It May Be Far Reaching—Speculation As to What Will Follow An Emperor's Demise—Alexander's Home Life and His Devotion to the Greek Church.

The serious illness of the Emperor of Russia has alarmed the whole of Europe. It is extremely difficult to get any correct news of the true condition of his imperial majesty as only the most meagre daily bulletins are issued. However, there is no disguising the fact that the czar is very sick indeed. There is any amount of speculation on what effect the emperor's death will have on European politics, and the fluctuations of the money markets can be directly traced to this source. Estimates of the czarowitz express their belief that should he ascend the throne of Russia he would give France the cold shoulder. So

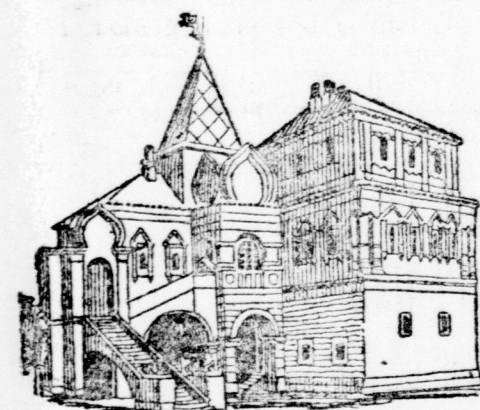


ALEXANDER III, CZAR OF RUSSIA.

serious have the French taken this rumor that the fluctuations of rates are attributed to the impression that the death of the czar will cause a tremendous fall in prices.

Few people know anything definitely about the character of Alexander III. of Russia. Most westerners picture him as a man from whom nobody need expect kindness or consideration. There is nothing so delightful as having a convenient and universal scapegoat on which can be saddled all the errors and real or imaginary wrongs that may occur, and for which nobody in particular wishes to be responsible. The Emperor and autocrat of all Russians, Alexander III., is a good illustration of such a condition. Whenever there is anything said about this country, and there has been a great deal of late, the autocrat is generally made the chief target for all uncomplimentary things said about Russia, its people, laws, politics, social conditions. It seems wonderful how firm a foothold a preconceived prejudice can obtain in the minds of people simply by almost the superficial impressions received from reading or hearing somewhat highly colored accounts of the "frightful despotism, the cruel persecution, the gross injustice," etc., to which the czar subjects his people. One would imagine this august person stalking around from morning till night with a body guard of fierce Cossacks, flogging dozens of innocent men to death, hanging some and sending the rest in exile to Siberia, this simply for the sport of the thing or the lack of having something else to do. There is an old Russian proverb that says: "If all spit on one stone it soon gets wet." And this is peculiarly applicable in this case. Being an autocrat, Alexander III. is made the one responsible for all and everything that happens in his empire.

But how often does one hear a kind expression, an appreciative recognition of anything commendable that occurs there? If things were in such a terrible state generally as they are represented to be; if the emperor were such an oppressor of all that is true and righteous, it would be a practical impossibility to prevent the empire's disintegration, even though it were attempted at the point of the bayonet. The press has never let an opportunity pass, even before his ascension to the throne, without casting slurs on the czar's character. It has been represented that he is a man of lowest instincts, with no conception of the moral obligations as husband or as emperor; that he is of a cold and jealous disposition, sometimes refusing to see the emperor and his children for weeks, and to crown it all he is accused of being a coward. To anybody who



PALACE OF THE ROMANOFFS.

knows his disposition this last assertion is resistibly comical.

Let any unprejudiced person look at Alexander III. more as a private individual than emperor and the chances are that he will be more than favorably impressed by the scrutiny. One instantly feels that there are few mysteries which he could not penetrate. His manner is marked by great reserve, even austerity, particularly when engaged in official business. On account of giving orders with great rapidity and brusqueness he has been called harsh, but this is more from his impetuous activity of mind than from any unkindness.

The one great distinguishing trait of the Russian emperor's character is his strong reformation for and his sincere faith in the Greek church. He never fails to be present and to participate in the ancient ceremony of the immersion of the cross in the water of the Neva, which takes place every year on the day of the Epiphany.

Long 'Uns.

The longest plants in the world are seaweeds. One tropical and sub-tropical variety is known which measures in length when it reached its full development, at least 500 feet. Seaweeds do not receive any nourishment from the sediment at the bottom or borders of the sea, but only from air and mineral matters held in solution in the sea water.

Animals, Too.

Darwin asserted that there is insanity among animals just as there is among people.

Quick Work.

Some of the largest ocean steamers can be converted into armed cruisers in thirty hours.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

The Last of the 1809 Group of Great, World-Famous Men.

The year 1809, which gave Gladstone to the world, gave also Oliver Wendell Holmes, Darwin, Lincoln and Edgar Allan Poe. Now Gladstone alone survives.

It was in 1857 that Dr. Holmes flashed upon the public. There are a great many who can remember the delightful surprise which greeted the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," that brilliant series of articles which brought the Atlantic Monthly into immediate vogue. Before that the Doctor had given his life both to law and to medicine, with occasional dips into poetry. With the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" he became the most popular writer in America. Those papers were unique; they embodied in a new way the authority of Dr. Johnson and the rollicking humor of Father Prout. They were as sweet as Goldsmith, as dainty as Leigh Hunt, and as tender as Washington Irving. There were no chunks of humor to be cut out and pasted away, but a pervasive sparkle and bloom covered the whole series. In those papers there shone out for the first time that perennial gaiety of heart and that vital exuberance which were still undimmed in the old age of the Autocrat. As he himself once said, health and longevity are not matters of diet, but of temperament.

Dr. Holmes celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday on Aug. 29 last. He said he was "eighty-five years young that day." Yet he said, too, that day:

"After threescore years and twenty the encroachments of time make themselves felt with rapidly increasing progress. When one can no longer recognize the faces he passes on the street, when he has to watch his steps, when it becomes more and more difficult for him to recall names, he is reminded at every movement that he must spare himself, or nature will not spare him the penalties she exacts for overtaxing his declining powers."

The twelfth septennial period has always seemed to me as one of the natural boundaries of life. One who has lived to complete his eighty-fourth year has had his full share, even of an old man's allowance. Whatever is granted over that is a prodigious indulgence on the part of nature. One who has reached this term of human life must not be called upon for active service as in the days of his vigor."

A Specimen of His Humor.

One might go on to any extent in giving examples of the genial humor that sparkled through those papers. One or two instances will suffice. Do you recall the delicious distinction he made in blondes?

"There are two kinds of blondes, just as there are two kinds of brunettes."

(Movement of curiosity among our ladies at table—'Please to tell us about those blondes,' said the schoolmistress.)

"Why, there are blondes who are such simply by deficiency of coloring matter—negative or washed blondes, arrested by nature on the way to become Albinoes. There are others who are shot through with golden light, with tawny or fulvous tinges in various degrees—positive or stained blondes, dipped in yellow sunbeams and as unlike in their mode of being to the others as the orange is unlike a snowball. The Albino style carries with it a wide pupil and a sensitive retina. The other, or the Leonine blonde, has an opaline fire in her clear eye, which the brunette can hardly match with her quick, glittering glances."

"Just so we have the great sun-kissed, constructive imaginations, and a far more numerous class of poets who have a certain kind of moonlight genius given them to compensate for their imperfections of nature."

A distinguished Frenchman said of Holmes that he had taught the Yankees how to laugh properly, and it was a new experience for these children of the Puritans, who had been howling at Artemus Ward and John Phoenix. Undoubtedly Dr. Holmes was a wit, and it was that kind of wit which brightens the dinner-table and puts everybody in the best of humor.

One specimen will suffice. Once, when he had been heavily lionized and mobbed by a deputation of rough men from the far West, and some one asked him if he did not enjoy it: "Enjoy it?" he exclaimed. "I felt like the small elephant at the Zoo with a cheap excursion party on his back."

A Departed Custom.

It used to be the custom in the Belgian parliament to supply not only the members but the reporters in the galleries with brandy and water ad libitum. Every member habitually spoke with a glass of brandy and water beside him, and when he had finished it an energetic attendant brought another.

Ps and Qs.

The expression, "Mind your Ps and Qs," arose from an old custom of innkeepers marking down the scores of their customers on the wall or door with a bit of charcoal. Q stands for quart, P for pint, and a hint to mind one's Ps and Qs was equivalent to a reminder that he was drinking too much.

A Jar of Little Fingers.

An explorer in Guatemala reported the discovery, in an ancient mound in that country, of many small jars, each containing the remains of a little finger from the human hand. It is supposed to have been the custom of mourners in some prehistoric race to make this sacrifice.

We're Advancing.

A patent has just been taken out for glasses and mugs with a quicksilver thermometer, in order to enable the drinker to determine which temperature of the liquid will be most agreeable to his taste and most beneficial for his health.

ALL ABOUT THE NUTMEG

HERE'S A COLUMN WORTH READING AND REMEMBERING.

Curious Story of the Dutch—How Nature Frustrated the Design of an Old-Time Monopolist—Tree, Flower and Nut—Methods of Harvesting.

In all historic ages men have dared the perils of the sea and desert in the search for three things—gold, gems and spices. If we desired to be extremely learned we could doubtless formulate an indisputable array of authorities, proving that Hamilecar, the Carthaginian, in his voyage of African circumnavigation, stored the holds of his galleys with all sorts of aromatic products. We might dig out of Herodotus quotations showing how the Lydians, Carians, Phoenicians and Egyptians bartered bags of spices for gold daries and staters. We might even read with the aid of Mariette and Champollion, in the hieroglyphics of the rock tombs of Thebes and Pylae, the receipts for the curing of the citizens of Heliopolis and Karnak in baths of natron, cinnamon, cloves and pepper. We are content, however, to point out the fact that spice and perfume have always divided honors with gold and jewels.

Leaving to the fanciful Spaniard the search for the Western El Dorado, the more practical Dutchman devoted himself to the accumulation of the riches to be gathered from the clove, cinnamon and nutmeg trees—mines whose treasures are renewed from season to season.

The thrifty Dutch speedily discovered the enormous value of the nutmeg. They found it growing plentifully on all of the Moluccan archipelago; but as they had especially established their power over the Banda Group, and as the nut had become instantly a most valuable commodity, they resolved to secure the monopoly of so profitable an article.

Your Dutchman does not think quickly; but once he has made up his mind, he is not to be diverted from his aim. The Dutch merchant of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a soldier and sailor, as well as a trader. In order to keep the nutmeg supply in his own hands, he headed armed expeditions, to all the adjacent islands, and, after conquering them, made a condition of his treaty of peace that all nutmeg trees should be destroyed, and no more grown. Jan Van Evertsen, a Dutch writer of the seventeenth century, records that on one of these forays the victorious leader compelled the natives, first, to chop down all their nutmeg trees, and next, to pile upon the fallen trunks all of the nuts in the possession of the people. "There were several piles," says Evertsen, "as large as good-sized houses, and they used ladders for to carry the baskets to be emptied atop. They were veritable small mountains; and I have seen many a church in Holland of less size than those accumulations of nuts, which were burned to ashes with a most odorous smell."

But Dutch arms and Dutch greed could not oppose the will of nature. In the Moluccan Archipelago there is a bird which feeds upon the fresh mace, or second envelope of the nutmeg. It is called the "nutmeg pigeon." In order to secure the mace, which clings firmly to the nut, this bird carries away both envelope and nut to its nest; which, as it is a creature of long flight, may be upon an adjacent island, or even upon the distant mainland.

Having stripped off the mace, the bird drops the nut, with its fructifying germ, upon the rich soil, where it immediately sprouts, takes root, and, in the course of time, becomes a fruitful tree. At the present time, though the Banda Group still produces a large proportion of the world's supply, many thousands of pounds are annually exported from the East Indies at large and from Hindostan.

The nutmeg-tree somewhat resembles our hardy pear, and seldom reaches more than thirty-five or forty feet in height. The flowers are pale yellow, and are very similar in size and shape to lilies of the valley. The leaves are large, averaging six inches in length, dark green, polished on the upper surface, and grayish beneath. As leaves, flowers and fruit are all richly odorous, the atmosphere in the neighborhood of a nutmeg-grove is constantly laden with a delightful and characteristic perfume. So persistent and penetrating is this perfume that it is readily perceived on ships passing twenty miles off the coast.

The fruit is round, and as about as large as a moderate-sized apple; or, to be more exact, nearly three inches in diameter. The outer portion is a thick, fleshy rind, very similar to that which surrounds the hickory nut. Inside of this is the husk, a sort of rough, thready substance, of a brilliant scarlet when first opened, but soon changing to a yellowish brown as it dries on exposure to the air. This husk is the mace of commerce. When this is stripped off, there is left a hard, thin, dark brown shell, covering the seed, or nutmeg proper.

The outer rind splits into two nearly equal parts when the nut is ripe and is thrown away as valueless; but in some



A RIPE NUTMEG.

parts of the Moluccas the rind is peeled off in its green and juicy state, and made into a species of sweetmeat with honey or sugar.

Though the flower and fruit are upon the tree together at all seasons, the nut is harvested in July, November and April; in the last-named month both mace and nut are in their utmost perfection. A healthy tree will produce, at a single harvest, about six pounds of nuts and two pounds of mace. The fruit is commonly gathered by hand, by means of small wicker baskets at the end of long bamboo poles; the outer rind is removed, and the mace carefully separated with a knife. The mace is dried in the sun, or, in the rainy season, by artificial heat; it is flattened between the hands, making what the housewives know as "blades of mace." After it has assumed the proper bronze, or ochre-yellow color, it is dipped in salt water to preserve it, dried again and finally packed in bales and bags for export.

The nuts themselves are placed upon small wire nets, or grates, over a mild fire, sufficient to dry, without roasting, them. This is a process requiring care and patience, taking about fifty or sixty days to complete. When the nut rattles in the thin, inner shell, the operation is supposed to be complete. The shell is then knocked off with a wooden mallet or mallet. A solution of lime and water, of the thickness of milk, is prepared, and the nuts are dipped into it, the object being to prevent the attacks of beetles and grubs, and also the sprouting of the nut, which spoils its usefulness. The feathery white coating which you observe upon the nutmegs of commerce is due to this lime solution. A nutmeg which lacks this coating may be suspected of being of inferior quality, perhaps the acrid South American variety.

A Lovely Rustic Fire-Screen.

One can see at a glance how the frame for this pretty rustic screen is fashioned from natural branches—two straight and two crooked ones—from which all smaller branches and twigs have been cut away, so as to leave but little more than protruding knots.

When they are well seasoned they must be rubbed, brushed and rebrushed, both with a soft brush and a stiff one, to remove from every crevice in the bark every loose particle of moss and dust. Then, with liquid gold, gild the bark all over; or, if preferred, gild only the bare wood where it is exposed at the ends and where the limbs are cut off, and give a touch of gold to every crack or protuberance; or, if a smoother finish is desired, remove all of the bark and smoothly gild or enamel the whole surface.

The screen, suspended from the upper cross-pole, is a fringed slip rug woven on a hand-loom—as old fashioned carpets are woven. It falls freely from the top, its own weight keeping it in place; but it might be tied to the standards—half way down and at the upper corners—with bows of broad, soft ribbon, or with heavy tasselled cords. Or a smaller rug, without fringe, might be suspended by gilt rings and furnished at the bottom with a row of tassels in mingled shades.

These screens are handsome, and are very useful where there are open fires, both in cold and warm weather, as a shield from the heat in the former, and as a screen for the open emptiness of the grate or fireplace in the latter. Painted, embroidered or appliqued banners of velvet, silk or cloth, or of painted or gilded matting, may be used instead of the rug if desired.

Whitewash.

The following recipe makes much better whitewash than that made of lime and water. For interior work, slake a peck of lime till it is thick and creamy. While it is hot mix with it a pint of linseed oil and 1/2 pound of glue, previously dissolved in water. Let the mixture stand several hours before applying it. A little lamp-black dissolved in vinegar and mixed with whitewash gives a grayish tint, which may be preferable to pure white, a little amber gives a fawn color, and yellow a cream tint. Very little coloring matter should be used, or the shade will be too dark.

For outside work the oil and glue may be too expensive; in their place use 1/2 pound of salt to a peck of lime. It is claimed that salt and glue are the best ingredients to prevent rubbing off.

A good whitewash is made of whitening and glue. Mix 8 pounds of whitening with hot water till the compound is like thick cream. Mix with this 1/2 pound of glue thoroughly dissolved in water. Before applying this every crack in the wall should be filled with a plaster made of one part of water to one part of silicate of potash, mixed with whitening.—Ohio Farmer.

A Made-Over Dish.

Made-over dishes sometimes have a spicy flavor which fresh ones miss. Stews are not to be despised, and even hash may be made delicious.

A stew which is really palatable may be made by cutting cold meat and potatoes into cubes about an inch square, adding a little cold tomato, and placing the whole on the back of the stove where it can heat slowly for an hour or so. About half an hour before it is to be served it should be moved forward on the stove and allowed to cook briskly. A little parsley or celery seed in addition to the pepper and salt gives a delicious flavor.



LEAF AND FLOWER OF THE NUTMEG TREE.

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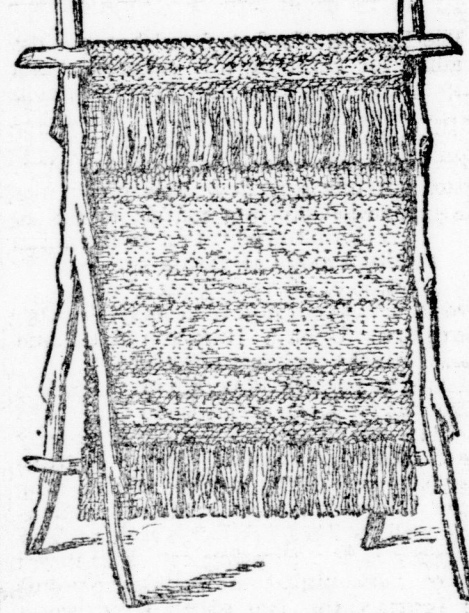
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ROAD MAKING MACHINE.

The most serious question which is troubling China to-day is her war with Japan that of transportation. She has a big population, but it is scattered over a country larger than the whole continent of North America. This vast extent of territory has only one railroad about 200 miles long. This runs through one of the most sparsely settled parts of it, extending from the city of Tien-Tsin to the point where the great Chinese wall juts down into the sea at the head of the Gulf of Pechili. All of the traffic of the rest of the country is carried on in boats, carts and wheelbarrows, and China has no means of transporting large masses of men or provisions to feed them. The roads are more like ditches cut through the fields than anything else. They are full of ruts, and in the rainy season they are turned into rivers. It is said that there are 4,000 roads in the Empire, but not one is macadamized, and the great highway over which the caravans pass in going to Mongolia is the bed of a rocky mountain torrent, and the brick tea which to the amount of thousands of tons is carried into Russia and Tibet is taken over mountain paths so rough that only mules can travel over them. All the information, dispatches and mails, which go to the capital of China have to be carried over dirt roads, and before the telegraph lines were put into Peking, important news was sent from all parts of the Empire by messengers with relays of horses.

Such a messenger service exists in some parts of China to-day, and it is said that Kubai Kahn had 300,000 horses which he used for this purpose and his relay stations for numbered 10,000. Some of the provisions which for the palace at Peking are brought by the relays from Tien-Tsin and to-day the courier service between China and Tibet is by mules. The couriers travel night and day. Their clothes are sealed on them when they start and these seals cannot be broken until they have delivered their message. It is said that they are lifted from one horse to another at the station and that they sometimes die on the way from fatigue.

Nearly all the money transactions in China are done in silver, and I saw boxes of bullion packed into carts and shipped from one town to another. The bullion was nailed up in boxes.

The two greatest cities of North China are Peking and Tien-Tsin. These are the most interesting points of the present struggle. If the Japanese could take them, the war would be practically settled, and the Chinese would be their rulers from Tartars to Japs.

Of these cities are not very far from sea. Tien-Tsin is about 50 miles to the Peking river, and Peking lies about 100 miles northward. Both cities are built during the winter, and from December till March there is no communication except by rude carts and ponies, which overland from Shanghai and Chifu.

Tien-Tsin is the home of Li Hung Chang, the great hero of the Boxer movement, and it is the port where are landed goods which supply these hundreds of thousands of the North and of those who are carried from it far beyond. It is the great wall into Manchuria, and the great province of Shantung. It is the port where are landed goods which supply these hundreds of thousands of the North and of those who are carried from it far beyond. It is the great wall into Manchuria, and the great province of Shantung. It is the port where are landed goods which supply these hundreds of thousands of the North and of those who are carried from it far beyond.

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The Chinese cart is the means of locomotion, but it is by no means the roads are full of dust and the wheels are raked with the jolting which doubt whether there is a more comfortable stand such roads.

FRANKLIN.

A Wonderful Cure.

No disease is more curing the people than scurvy. It is from generation to generation, and it may nearly every family. It may make its appearance in the form of sores, in swellings in the joints, in eruptions of various kinds, in mucous membrane, it may be, and often is, the symptom.

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