



JULIUS CÆSAR

# Famous Assassinations of History

From Philip of Macedon, 336 B.C., to  
Alexander of Servia, A.D. 1903

BY FRANCIS JOHNSON

*WITH TWENTY-NINE PORTRAITS*



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## Preface

THE thirty-one assassinations, famous in history, which are narrated in this volume, have never before had their stories told in a collected form in any language. The accounts of them were scattered through the historical works of all nations, and through many volumes of private memoirs, which had to be scanned for proper and trustworthy material. It is hoped that their presentation in this form will make an interesting volume, not only for the student of history, but also for the general reader, on account of the historical and psychological interest which attaches to them.

These assassinations embrace a period of nearly twenty-five centuries,—that of Philip of Macedon, in 336 B.C., being the first, and that of Alexander and Draga, in the present year, being the last. Only those assassinations have been included which either had an important and political bearing on the world, or on the nation immediately affected, or which left a profound, and, it would seem, indelible impression on the imagination of contemporaries and posterity. All those which were not distinguished by one of these features were excluded from this series.

## PREFACE

It will undoubtedly occur to some who read this volume that it should have included the assassination of President Garfield. It was omitted, not from any want of respect or sympathy for the memory of our illustrious martyr-President, but simply for the reason that his assassination rather grew out of the morbid aberration of one diseased mind than out of the general spirit of the epoch in which he lived.

Others may think that the assassinations of Henry the Third of France, of Henry of Guise, and of Marshal Coligny, which are certainly famous in history, should have found a place here. But they all grew out of the same spirit of religious hatred and conflict in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and Henry the Fourth was selected as its most illustrious victim.

It has been the object of the writer to make each of these "famous assassinations" the central scene of a picture in which the political, religious, or national features of the epoch in which the assassination occurred are portrayed with historical fidelity and strict impartiality.

F. J.

LAFAYETTE, IND., August 1, 1903.

# Contents

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
ASSASSINATION OF PHILIP OF MACEDON (336 B.C.) . . .	3

## CHAPTER II

ASSASSINATION OF TIBERIUS GRACCHUS (133 B.C.) . . .	11
---	----

## CHAPTER III

ASSASSINATION OF JULIUS CÆSAR (44 B.C.) . . . . .	25
---	----

## CHAPTER IV

ASSASSINATIONS OF TIBERIUS, CALIGULA, CLAUDIUS, NERO (A.D. 37-68) . . . . .	35
--	----

## CHAPTER V

ASSASSINATION OF HYPATIA (A.D. 415) . . . . .	41
---	----

## CHAPTER VI

ASSASSINATION OF THOMAS A BECKET (December 29, 1170)	53
--	----

## CHAPTER VII

ASSASSINATION OF GESSLER (A.D. 1307) . . . . .	67
--	----

## CHAPTER VIII

ASSASSINATION OF IÑEZ DE CASTRO (A.D. 1355) . . .	77
---	----

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER IX

	PAGE
ASSASSINATIONS OF RIZZIO AND DARNLEY (March 9, 1566; February 9, 1567) . . . . .	89

## CHAPTER X

ASSASSINATION OF WILLIAM OF ORANGE (July 10, 1584)	III
--	-----

## CHAPTER XI

ASSASSINATIONS BY IVAN THE TERRIBLE (1560-1584) . .	131
---	-----

## CHAPTER XII

ASSASSINATION OF HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE (May 14, 1610) . . . . .	147
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIII

ASSASSINATION OF WALLENSTEIN (February 24, 1634) . .	165
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIV

ASSASSINATION OF THE BROTHERS JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT (August 20, 1672) . . . . .	191
---	-----

## CHAPTER XV

ASSASSINATION OF ALEXIS, SON OF PETER THE GREAT (June 26, 1718) . . . . .	211
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVI

ASSASSINATION OF PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA (July 17, 1762) . . . . .	221
---	-----

## CHAPTER XVII

ASSASSINATION OF GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN (March 17, 1792) . . . . .	249
---	-----

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER XVIII

	PAGE
ASSASSINATION OF JEAN PAUL MARAT (July 13, 1793) . . .	283

## CHAPTER XIX

ASSASSINATION OF PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA (March 24, 1801). . . . .	301
---	-----

## CHAPTER XX

ASSASSINATION OF AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE (March 23, 1819). . . . .	315
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXI

ASSASSINATION OF THE DUC DE BERRY (February 13, 1820)	327
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXII

ASSASSINATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN (April 14, 1865)	343
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXIII

ASSASSINATION OF ALEXANDER THE SECOND OF RUSSIA (March 13, 1881). . . . .	359
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXIV

ASSASSINATION OF WILLIAM MCKINLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (September 6, 1901) . . . . .	381
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXV

ASSASSINATIONS OF ALEXANDER I. AND DRAGA, KING AND QUEEN OF SERVIA (June 10-11, 1903) . . . . .	399
---	-----

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER II

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER III

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER IV

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER V

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER VI

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER VII

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER VIII

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES

CHAPTER IX

THEORY OF THE LARVAE AND PUPAE OF MOSQUITOES



# Illustrations

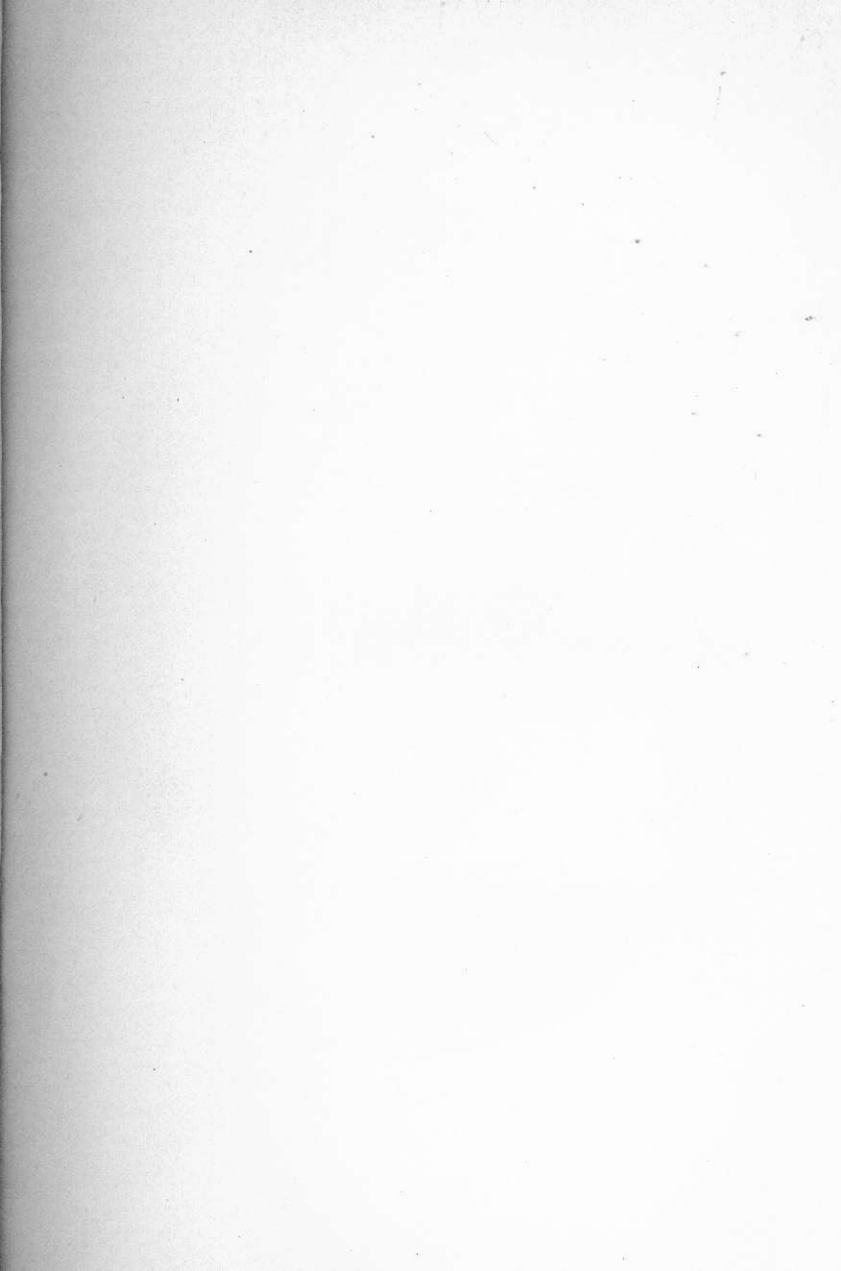
Julius Cæsar . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Philip of Macedon . . . . .	<i>To face page</i> 3
Tiberius Gracchus . . . . .	11
Caligula . . . . .	35
Claudius . . . . .	37
Thomas à Becket . . . . .	53
Gessler . . . . .	67
Iñez de Castro . . . . .	77
David Rizzio . . . . .	89
Lord Darnley . . . . .	94
William of Orange . . . . .	111
Ivan the Terrible . . . . .	131
Henry IV. . . . .	147
Wallenstein . . . . .	165
John de Witt . . . . .	191
Cornelius de Witt . . . . .	205
Alexis . . . . .	211
Peter III. . . . .	221
Gustavus III. . . . .	249
Jean Paul Marat . . . . .	283
Paul I. . . . .	301

# ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>To face page</i>
August von Kotzebue . . . . .	315
Duc de Berry . . . . .	327
Abraham Lincoln . . . . .	343
Alexander II. of Russia . . . . .	359
William McKinley . . . . .	381
Alexander I. of Servia . . . . .	399
Queen Draga . . . . .	409

CHAPTER I  
PHILIP OF MACEDON

CHAPTER I  
THE HISTORY OF THE





PHILIP OF MACEDON

# Famous Assassinations

## CHAPTER I

### ASSASSINATION OF PHILIP OF MACEDON

(336 B. C.)

**T**HE assassination of Philip of Macedon, which occurred in the year 336 B. C., was one of the most important in ancient history, not only because it terminated the glorious career of one of the most remarkable men of his times, but also because it led immediately to the accession of Alexander, one of the supremely great men of history, — an event which would very likely not have taken place at all if Philip had continued to live for a number of years and had himself selected the successor to his throne. Philip of Macedon was then at the height of his power. The battle of Chæronea, in 338 B. C., had made him the master of Greece; and by his tactful and generous treatment of the vanquished he had even been appointed by the Amphictyon League commander-in-chief of all the Greek forces, which he intended to lead, at the head of his Macedonian army, against the Persians, and to conquer their mighty empire. This stupendous plan, by whose accomplishment Philip would have anticipated the glorious achievements of Alexander, his son, was frustrated by his assassination.



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

While Philip had arranged everything for his descent upon Persia, and had been frequently absent from home, his domestic affairs in his own capital, which had never been of a very satisfactory character, took such an unfavorable turn as to require his personal attention. As a husband, Philip had often given just cause of complaint to Olympias, his royal spouse. Wherever he went he formed liaisons, and several illegitimate children were openly recognized by him as his own. But when Olympias, the Queen, laid herself open to a suspicion of having violated her marriage vows in his absence, he repudiated her, charging her with gross infidelity, and intimating that he had very strong doubts of being the father of Alexander. Olympias thereupon went back to her native state, Epirus, accompanied by Alexander, who was highly incensed at the treatment shown to his mother and himself.

Philip contracted a second marriage with Cleopatra, a niece of Attalus, one of his generals; and it is said that at the wedding feast Attalus, half intoxicated, expressed the wish and hope that Cleopatra might give the Macedonians a lawful heir to the kingdom. This remark, overheard by Alexander, so enraged him that, throwing a full cup at Attalus's head, he shouted to him: "What, you scoundrel! am I then a bastard?" Whereupon Philip, taking Attalus's part, rose from his seat, and rushing with his drawn sword upon Alexander would have run his son through, if he had not, being himself more than half drunk with wine, slipped and fallen on the floor; at which sight Alexander scornfully said: "See there the man who is making great preparations to invade Asia at the head of a powerful army, and who falls to the

## PHILIP OF MACEDON

ground like a helpless child in going from one seat to another."

It is said that after this debauch both Olympias and Alexander retired from Philip's capital, the one going to Epirus, and the other to Illyria. By the counsels and efforts of Demaratus, the Corinthian, an old friend of the royal family, Philip was, however, induced to send for Alexander, and the son returned to his father's court. Soon afterwards, Cleopatra gave birth to a son; and the fears of Alexander, who remained in communication with his mother and was filled with jealous rage by her, revived.

It is more than likely — although absolute proof of it has never been furnished — that Olympias, in her revengeful jealousy, planned the assassination of the King who had so cruelly offended her pride as a woman, and who, she supposed, was also plotting to exclude her own son from the throne and place upon it the son of her young rival. An opportunity for this act of revenge soon presented itself. A young Macedonian, named Pausanias, had been mortally offended by Attalus and Queen Cleopatra. He appealed to the King for reparation of the wrong done to him; but this being refused, he resolved to revenge himself by taking the King's life. All historians seem to agree that Pausanias was encouraged and incited to this act of revenge by Olympias; but whether or not Alexander was cognizant of the murderous plot, and approved it, has never been satisfactorily explained, and remains one of the unsolved problems of history.

The occasion for the murderous act of Pausanias was the wedding of Alexander's sister with her uncle Alex-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ander, King of Epirus. Philip considered this marriage between his daughter and the brother of his first wife, Olympias, an act of consummate statesmanship, inasmuch as it transferred an enemy and an ally of Olympias to his own side and made a friend of him. He therefore resolved to make the nuptials of this ill-matched couple as brilliant as possible. Grand Olympian games and spectacular festivities were arranged, and an incredible display of luxury and pomp, unheard of in those days, was planned to show to the wondering eyes of Greece the court of the new master of the civilized world in matchless splendor and grandeur. All the cities of Greece had sent delegations to these brilliant festivities; most of them came with costly wedding presents, among which golden crowns were conspicuous. Poets sent nuptial hymns and poems celebrating the beauty of the bride and the genius of the father in the most extravagant terms; and a noted dramatist of that age, Neoptolemus, composed a tragedy for the occasion, in which Philip, under a fictitious name, was represented as the conqueror of Asia and the triumphant vanquisher of the great Darius.

It was at the theatre, in which this tragedy was to be performed, that Philip met his doom. Accompanied by a brilliant cortège of all that were renowned at his court for birth, talent, and wealth, he proceeded to the theatre. On approaching the entrance, he bade the noblemen surrounding him to advance, and his body-guard to fall back, so that he might be personally more conspicuous before the enraptured eyes of his subjects. The procession was led by priests in white robes, each carrying a statue of one of the twelve principal gods; and a thirteenth statue, even more richly draped and ornamented than the

## PHILIP OF MACEDON

others, with the insignia of divinity upon it, was that of Philip himself.

It was the supreme moment of his pride and happiness ; but it was also his last. The noblemen and courtiers had already disappeared in the building. The body-guard, obedient to the King's orders, remained behind. Just at the moment when the King stepped forward, alone, under the gateway of the theatre, a man sprang from a side corridor, thrust a sharp short sword into his side, and hurried off as the royal victim reeled and fell. In the tremendous confusion which arose, the assassin came very near making his escape. He ran toward a swift horse which was kept in readiness for him by friends who evidently knew of the murder and were in the plot ; and, dazed as the people were who witnessed the assassination, he would probably have escaped, had not his sandal caught in a vine-stock and caused him to fall, which gave some of his pursuers time to lay their hands on him before he could get up. In their rage, they killed him with their spears and tore him to pieces.

The surroundings and execution of this plot bear a strong resemblance to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. In both cases there was an individual murderer, the scene was a theatre, the act was done with incredible audacity in the presence of a large concourse of people, and the murderer was crippled by a misstep after the fatal blow.

The assassination of Philip of Macedon was not only one of the boldest and most dramatic in history, but it was also one of the earliest in point of time.

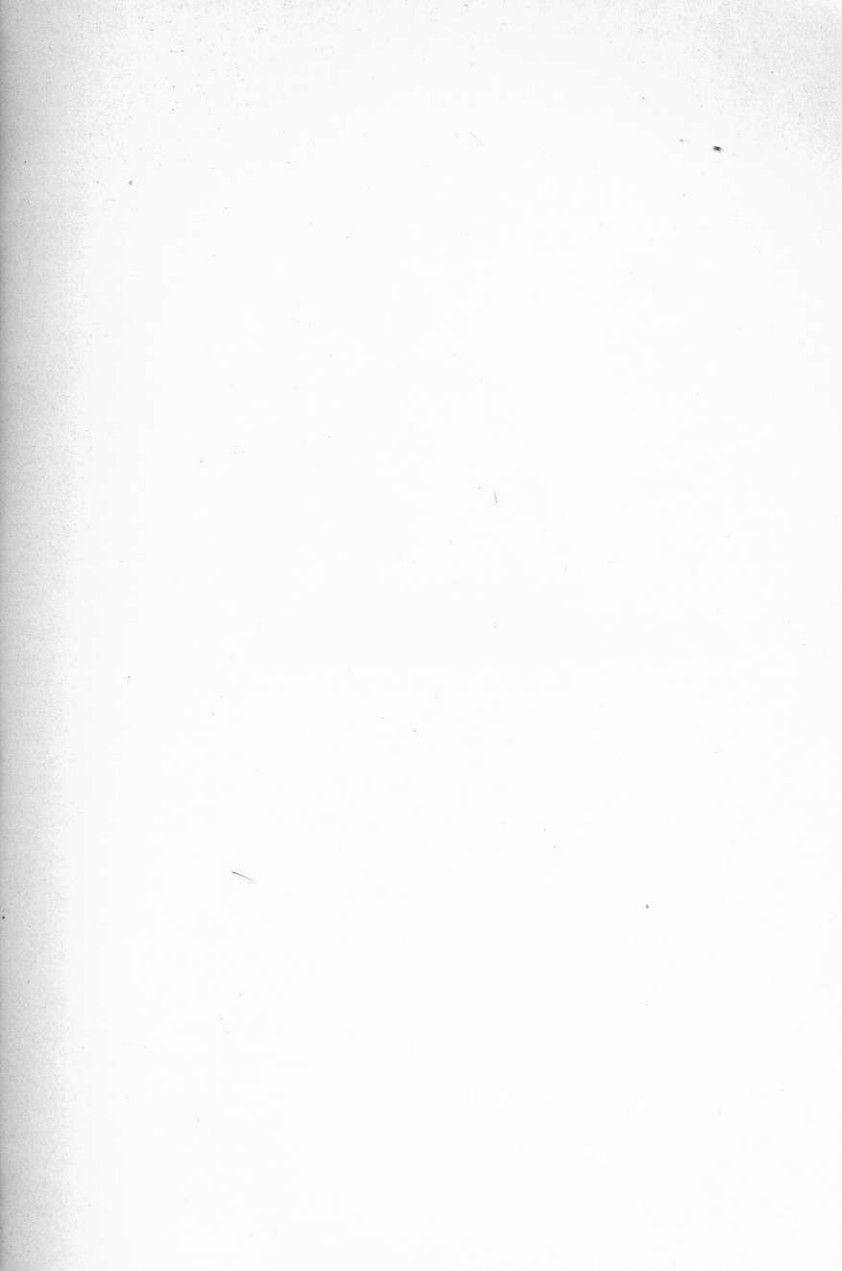


CHAPTER II

TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

CHAPTER II  
TIBERIAN GRACCHUS







TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

## CHAPTER II

### ASSASSINATION OF TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

(133 B. C.)

**I**N the history of ancient Rome there occurs one political assassination which stands out as an event of special significance, not only on account of the great celebrity of the victim, but also owing to the fact that it is the first occasion on record in which the conflicting economical interests of different classes in a republic were settled by a resort to arms, instead of being adjudicated on principles of equity and justice, or simply by public authority.

This great historical event was the murder of Tiberius Gracchus, which was soon followed by the forced suicide of his brother, Caius Gracchus, — the immediate result of their attempt to enforce an agrarian law passed as an act of justice to the poorer classes of Roman citizens. The law was violently opposed by the rich, who organized an armed revolution against its originators and were powerful enough to do away with them.

There is in the whole conflict about that agrarian law (the so-called Sempronian law) a modern feature which makes it especially interesting to Americans at a time when party issues turn largely on economical questions, and when the antagonism between capital and labor (or

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the rich and the poor) threatens to enter the acute stage. It will be noticed that at that early age (more than two thousand years ago) capital already had a power and commanded a political influence against which right and justice, allied to poverty, battled in vain. History, both ancient and modern, has been written largely in conformity with the ideas and prejudices of the ruling classes, and in praise of them, while their enemies and opponents have generally been unjustly criticised and denounced as disturbers of public order and peace, or even as anarchists and rebels against public authority. The two illustrious brothers, the Gracchi, have shared this unjust treatment of historians, and in the estimation of many, pass to-day as dangerous and seditious characters whose death alone could have saved Rome from greater calamities. An impartial investigation of their case will, in our opinion, furnish sufficient proof to reverse this historical judgment.

The two Gracchi were the sons of Sempronius Gracchus, the famous Roman tribune, who won distinction by his great independence and ability in the administration of his office, and of the equally famous Cornelia, daughter of Cornelius Scipio Africanus, the renowned vanquisher of Hannibal. The brothers, so closely united and so much alike in political sentiments, designs, and efforts, were of different character, temperament, and appearance. Tiberius, who was nine years older than his brother, was gentle and mild in conduct; and his countenance, his eyes, and his gestures were of peculiar and winning gentleness. His brother Caius was animated, vehement, and high-tempered. His eloquence was distinguished by the same characteristics, while that of Tiberius was tactful, per-

## TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

suasive, and conciliatory. Tiberius would have made an ideal preacher; Caius seemed to be predestined for the part of a popular advocate and orator.

Tiberius had seen military service and won distinction both by his bravery and prudence in Spain as aid to his brother-in-law, Scipio Æmilianus, who was the commander-in-chief. It was, therefore, not his illustrious birth alone, but individual merit also, which caused him to be elected tribune of the people in the year 133 B. C. As such he introduced a bill for the re-apportionment of the public lands and their distribution among the poorer citizens of Rome. Various explanations have been given for this action of Tiberius Gracchus. It has been said that he was instigated by others to introduce a measure which could not fail to arouse against him the strongest hostility of the rich proprietors of some of these lands. But from a statement in writing left by his brother Caius, it appears that the idea of the bill originated with Tiberius himself, and that its introduction sprang much more from a noble and generous impulse than from political ambition.

Even to-day the traveller who traverses the silent and depopulated desert of the Roman Campagna, which is owned by a limited number of large proprietors and is left in an almost uncultivated state, is struck forcibly with the thought that the unwise and unjust distribution of the land has had much to do with the desolate and unproductive aspect of this district, which under judicious and scientific cultivation might yield rich harvests and contribute materially to the welfare of the inhabitants of Tuscany. The same thought struck Tiberius Gracchus as, on his departure for Spain, he travelled through

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Tuscany and found it almost a desert, or, at best, only rudely cultivated in some parts by barbarian and imported slaves. It was at that time that he first conceived the idea of bringing about a change—an idea which continued to haunt his mind until he was in a position to realize it. And in doing so he found a precedent for legislative action.

There already existed a law at Rome—the so-called Licinian law—which limited the number of acres to be possessed by any one citizen to five hundred. But this Licinian law had been a dead letter for many years, and there were many rich citizens in Rome who counted the number of their acres by the thousand or even ten thousand. It was this violation of the Licinian law, and the open injustice done to the poor by this violation, which Tiberius Gracchus wanted to correct. He therefore introduced a new agrarian law which aimed to revive the Licinian law, but at the same time greatly modified and attenuated its provisions. The change in the law which Tiberius Gracchus proposed was in one respect an act of injustice, because it put a premium on the violation of the law as it had existed, instead of punishing that violation by imposing an adequate fine. Under the new law a citizen might hold 500 acres of the public lands in his own name, and in addition, 250 acres for each son still under the paternal roof and authority. Moreover, the new law provided that, whenever a citizen should be compelled to give up land which he held in excess of the share which the law allowed him, he should be reimbursed for this loss, at the appraised value, from the public treasury. Tiberius Gracchus also favored the immediate distribution of the confiscated lands among the poor as their absolute

## TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

property, and proposed that, whenever a Roman colony was founded on conquered territory, a similar distribution of the newly acquired land should be made.

The new law was enthusiastically applauded by the Roman people, even before it had been legally adopted; but the Senate most violently opposed it, because many Senators would have been deprived by its passage of most valuable lands. In order to defeat it they prevailed upon one of the ten tribunes to object to the third reading of the law. The unanimous support of the tribunes was necessary for its passage. When the day for the public vote on the law had come, an immense multitude of people was assembled at the Forum. The ten tribunes entered and took their seats on the platform. Tiberius Gracchus arose and ordered the clerk to read his law, but was immediately interrupted by Octavius, who ordered him to stop. The interruption caused an immense sensation and commotion among the spectators. Tiberius, after having vainly tried to persuade Octavius to withdraw his objection, adjourned the meeting to a later day. During this interval he used all his power of persuasion to overcome the resistance of Octavius, but in vain. It was then that Tiberius Gracchus, in his intense desire to pass a public measure which he considered highly beneficial to the people and almost indispensable to the public welfare, resolved to resort to an expedient which was really unconstitutional and which is the only public act of his that gives the least foundation to the charge of sedition so generally preferred against him. He came to the conclusion that the only way to overcome the veto of Octavius was to depose him from his office by a popular vote. This was a clear violation of the Constitution, and he



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

carried out his intention in spite of the loud protests of the Senate.

The scene on the Forum in which Octavius was deposed must have been very pathetic and impressive; and while it signified an immediate victory for Tiberius Gracchus, it nevertheless incensed a great many Roman citizens and turned them against him. It is safe to say that this scene sealed his doom and furnished the principal reason for his assassination. Plutarch, a reliable and impartial authority, describes the scene as follows:

"When the people were met together again, Tiberius placed himself in the rostra and endeavored a second time to persuade Octavius. But all being to no purpose, he referred the whole matter to the people, calling on them to vote at once whether Octavius should be deposed or not; and when seventeen of the thirty-five tribes had already voted against him, and there wanted only the vote of one tribe more for his final deprivation, Tiberius put a short stop to the proceedings, and once more renewed his importunities; he embraced and kissed him before all the assembly, begging with all the earnestness imaginable that he would neither suffer himself to incur the dishonor, nor him to be reputed the author and promoter of so odious a measure. Octavius did seem a little softened and moved with these entreaties; his eyes filled with tears and he continued silent for a considerable time. But presently looking toward the rich men and proprietors of estates, who stood gathered in a body together, partly for shame, and partly for fear of disgracing himself with them, he boldly bade Tiberius use any severity he pleased. The law for his deposition being thus voted, Tiberius ordered one of his servants, whom he had made a freeman, to remove Octavius from the rostra, employing his own domestic freed servants instead of the public officers. And it made the action seem all the sadder that Octavius was dragged out in such an ignominious manner. The people immediately assaulted him, while the rich men ran in to his assistance. Octavius, with some difficulty, was snatched away, and safely conveyed out of the crowd; though a trusty servant of his, who had

## TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

placed himself in front of his master that he might assist his escape, in keeping off the multitude, had his eyes struck out, much to the displeasure of Tiberius, who ran with all haste, when he perceived the disturbance, to appease the rioters."

The law was then passed, and commissioners were immediately appointed to make a survey of the lands and see that they were equally divided.

The forcible ejection of Octavius and the subsequent passage of the new agrarian law opened a chasm between Tiberius Gracchus and the patricians, which nothing but his death could close up. He had made himself immensely popular with the poor, and other laws which he introduced increased that popularity. But the more the poor idolized him, the more the rich hated and abhorred him; and a large number of the better and more thoughtful class of plebeians resented his bold violation of the Constitution in removing Octavius from office.

Such were the conditions when the time for the expiration of his official term as tribune approached, and he as well as his friends saw the necessity for his reelection as a measure for protecting his life. He therefore appeared as a candidate for reelection; and when on the first day of the election no choice had resulted from the vote, the next day was appointed for the final decision. Tiberius knew that not only his political career, but his very life depended on the result, and he therefore left no stone unturned to rally his friends to the rescue. But unfortunately, it being harvest time, many of his adherents were absent from the city, and could not be reached in time for the struggle.

On the day following, the Senate convened at an early hour, while the people assembled at the Capitol to proceed

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

with the vote. However, great confusion prevailed, and a large number of outsiders tried to force their way in and establish themselves among the voters. And even the appearance of Tiberius Gracchus, although he was received with loud acclamations, failed to restore order in the assemblage. Moreover, he showed by the depression in his countenance and conduct that he had lost confidence in the success of his cause. Several evil omens which he had encountered on his way to the Capitol disturbed his mind. At daybreak a soothsayer, who prognosticated good or bad success by the pecking of fowls, informed him that all his efforts to induce the fowls to eat had failed. Tiberius then remembered that, a short time before, two serpents had been found in his helmet. On stepping out of the house he stumbled on the threshold and hurt his great toe so badly that it bled profusely. As he walked through the streets he saw on his left hand two ravens fighting on the roof of a house, and suddenly a stone, detached from the roof, fell at his feet. The friends of Gracchus, who surrounded him, all stopped, and he himself hesitated as to whether he should proceed or return to his house. However, a philosopher from Cuma, one of his intimates, who was credited with inspiring Gracchus with his democratic ideas and who was free from the superstition of the Romans, persuaded him to continue on his way to the Capitol.

There the voting of the tribes was proceeding with great noise and confusion. All at once Gracchus noticed that one of his friends, Lucius Flaccus, a Senator, had mounted an elevation from which he could be easily seen, but where he was too far off to be heard, and was indicating by motions of his hand that he wished to communicate some im-

## TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

portant news. Tiberius told the crowd to let Flaccus pass. With great difficulty the Senator reached Tiberius and informed him that at the session of the Senate, after the Consul had refused to have him arrested, a resolution had been passed to kill him, and that the Senators had armed a large number of their clients and slaves to carry out this purpose. Tiberius immediately informed the friends who surrounded him of the action of the Senate, and signified to those at a greater distance the danger in which he was placed, by raising his hands to his head, — and it was this motion, entirely innocent in itself, which hastened his ruin. His enemies construed it as a desire on his part to wear a crown, and carried this ridiculous news to the Senate chamber. It caused a perfect explosion of maledictions and threats among the Senators; and Scipio Nasica, the most violent of all, immediately made a motion that the Consul be instructed to save the Republic and to exterminate the would-be tyrant. The Consul replied that he would resist any factious and criminal attempt against the Republic, but that he would not put to death a Roman citizen without trial. On this Scipio Nasica turned to the Senators, exclaiming: “Since the Consul betrays the city, let those who want to defend the laws follow me!” and followed by a large number of Senators and their clients, he rushed toward the place where Tiberius Gracchus, surrounded by his friends, was observing the progress of the election. Immediately a riot and fight ensued. The Senators, who were armed with clubs, canes, stones, or whatever weapon they could lay their hands on, rushed upon the crowd of voters, overthrew, beat, and killed them, stamping them under their feet and quickly and irresistibly advancing toward

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the spot where they beheld the man who was the object of their rage and bloodthirstiness. Tiberius, unarmed and forsaken by his friends, turned round to seek safety in flight, but, stumbling over those who had been knocked down, fell to the ground. It was at that moment, while Tiberius was trying to get on his feet again, that one of his own colleagues, a tribune of the people, dealt him a powerful and fatal blow, striking him on the head with the leg of a stool. Others rushed up and struck him again and again, but it was only a lifeless corpse which suffered from their abuse. Three hundred of his friends had fallen with him. It was the first Roman blood which had been shed in civil war, and this first conflict deprived Rome of one of its most illustrious citizens.

It is unnecessary to go into any details regarding the death of Caius Gracchus, who took up and continued the work of his brother. To the measures in favor of the poor which had been advocated by Tiberius, he added others,—for instance, regular distributions of corn among the poor at half price, the imposition of new taxes upon articles of luxury imported from foreign countries, and employment on public works for mechanics and laborers who could not find employment on private contract. It will be seen that these measures, as well as some other projects of minor importance which Caius Gracchus advocated and caused to be enacted as laws, form part of the platform of modern labor parties, and that the Gracchi can fitly be designated as the founders of these parties. They both fell victims to the attempt to carry out their theories. At first, it would seem, Caius Gracchus at the request of his mother, was inclined to abandon the projects of Tiberius; but one night, says Cicero in

## TIBERIUS GRACCHUS

his book *De Divinatione*, he heard Tiberius saying to him: "Why hesitate, Caius? Thy destiny shall be the same as mine — to fight for the people, and to die for them." It is said that this prophecy determined him in his course, and that his death was the consequence. In 121 B. C., during a public riot and conflict organized by his enemies for his destruction, he committed suicide, dying not by his own hand, but by commanding his slave to stab him, — an order which was promptly obeyed. The assassination of the one and the forced suicide of the other immortalized the two brothers.



## CHAPTER III

### JULIUS CÆSAR





## CHAPTER III

### ASSASSINATION OF JULIUS CÆSAR

(44 B. C.)

**A**MERICANS are not great students of history, especially ancient history. Very likely the assassination of Julius Cæsar, one of the most important events in the history of ancient Rome, would also be among the "things not generally known" among Americans, had not Shakespeare's great tragedy made them familiar with it. It is true, the aims of the dramatist and of the historian are wide-apart. The dramatist places the hero in the centre of the plot, and causes every part of it to contribute to the catastrophe which overwhelms him under the decree of fate. He is the victim of his own guilt. The historian makes the great man but one of the principal factors in the evolution of events, and if a Cæsar or a Napoleon succumbs in the struggle, it is by force of external circumstances against which his genius is powerless to contend, although his ambition or his passion may have been the dominant cause of arraying those circumstances against him. By his matchless genius and incomparable art, Shakespeare has, to a certain degree, in his "Julius Cæsar," solved the difficult problem of combining the task of the dramatic poet with that of the historian, and has placed before the spectator

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

not only Cæsar himself with his world-wide and imperialistic ambition as the central figure of the play, but also Rome with its republican recollections and aspirations in antagonism to Cæsar's ambition. The delineation of the character of the foremost man of the ancient world by the greatest dramatist of modern times, and his skilful grouping of the great republicans struggling for the maintenance of republican institutions, have been so indelibly engraved upon the minds of modern readers that the assassination of Julius Cæsar, which took place at Rome 44 B. C., is nearly as familiar to them as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. And if we, in this series of Famous Assassinations in History, devote a chapter to it, it is simply for the reason that the series would be incomplete without it. Moreover, it may be both interesting and useful to call to the mind of the reader the circumstances and surroundings which led to the downfall of Cæsar. The conspiracy and assassination removed from the scene of action the master-mind of the age, without saving the republican institutions; and it is only by explaining the causes that we can do justice to the noble intentions of the conspirators, while lamenting the assassination of Cæsar as a public misfortune for Rome, inasmuch as it removed the strong hand that could have prevented the anarchy and civil war which broke out among his successors, immediately after his disappearance from the public stage.

Cæsar was at the height of his power. His achievements had eclipsed the military glory of Pompey, and by his wonderful career he might truly be looked upon as the "man of destiny." On his return from Gaul, when the Senate had rejected his request for a prolongation of

his command, and had ordered him to disband his army and to give up the administration of his province, his popularity was so great that his homeward journey, escorted as he was by his victorious army, was but a continuous triumphal march. Not only Rome, but all Italy welcomed him home as its greatest man, and was ready to heap its greatest, nay even divine honors upon him.

The Senate and its chosen commander-in-chief, Pompey, had fled on the approach of Cæsar. In the decisive battle of Pharsalus Cæsar defeated Pompey, and by this victory became the sole ruler of the Roman Republic. Pompey was assassinated on landing in Egypt, as a fugitive, and Cæsar returned to Rome, where he was received with the tumultuous acclamations of the people, and conducted to the Capitol as the savior of the country. The Senate, which had just made war upon him and outlawed him as an enemy of the fatherland, appointed him dictator for ten years with absolute and supreme power, gave him a body-guard of seventy-two lictors to proclaim his majesty and inviolability, and ordered his statue to be placed beside that of Jupiter on the Capitol. A public thanksgiving festival, continuing for forty days, was proclaimed, and four brilliant triumphs for his victories in Gaul, Egypt, Pontus, and Africa, were accorded to him.

Never before in the history of Rome had such honors, which seemed to pass the human limit, been conferred on any Roman citizen. It was evident that of the Republic nothing but the name remained, and that Cæsar, the dictator, was in fact the absolute monarch of the immense Empire. Once more the friends of liberty made

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

an effort to shake off the yoke which Cæsar had imposed on the Republic. They flocked to the standards of the sons of Pompey, but the bloody and hard-fought battle of Munda sealed their fate; and Cæsar, again victorious, remained the absolute master of the civilized world, — not without an enemy, but certainly without a rival.

On his return to Rome new honors and new ovations awaited him. The dignity and pride of Roman citizenship seemed to have been lost entirely in the crouching servility with which the most distinguished and most highly stationed citizens prostrated themselves at the feet of the all-powerful ruler. Resistance to Cæsar had apparently disappeared. All bowed to his surpassing genius and ability, and to these qualities he added acts of clemency, kindness, and gentleness, which won him the hearts even of those who, from political principle, had opposed him. But while thus openly the more than imperial power of Cæsar was generally recognized, and while the Senate and the tribunes had been degraded to the position of mere tools to his autocratic will, there still remained in the hearts of a number of high-minded patriots the hope and anxious desire to save the republican form of government from the grasping ambition of the conqueror, who was evidently not satisfied with being Imperator in fact, but wanted to be also Imperator in name. At least the repeated attempts of the most intimate friends and most trusted lieutenants of Cæsar to induce him to accept the crown at the hands of a subservient people, and his rather hesitating conduct in refusing these proposals, seemed to confirm this suspicion.

These enthusiastic Republicans cautiously disguised their hostility to the Imperator under the mask of devoted

## JULIUS CÆSAR

friendship. Their hope was, perhaps, that Cæsar's imperial régime would be but temporary and that, like Sulla, he would sooner or later get tired of his dictatorship, and resign his imperial honors. But Cæsar did not think of abdicating the honors he had won; on the contrary, every act and every public utterance of his indicated that he wished to prolong and augment them rather than to abandon them. In public he was anxious to show his preëminence. He appeared dressed in the costume of the kings of Alba, and with royal insignia. One day, when the entire Senate waited upon him in front of the temple of Venus, he remained seated while he was addressed, during the entire ceremony. His statue at the Capitol was placed beside those of the ancient kings of Rome, as though he were to continue their line. New titles of honor, not to say worship, were added to those which had been conferred upon him at the first moment of his brilliant victories, and his lieutenants and followers welcomed and adopted them as something that was due to his superhuman wisdom and greatness. He was called not only "Father of the Country," but "Demi-God," the "Invincible God," "Jupiter Julius," — as though Jupiter himself had taken mortal form and shape in him.

This public adoration irritated the Republicans we have mentioned, to the highest degree. They secretly charged Cæsar with encouraging or instigating this worship of himself, because they knew that his friends would not have proposed it unless confident that he would be pleased by it. Brutus and Cassius were at the head of these Republicans. Brutus, a stern Republican, a Roman in the noblest acceptation of the word, was reputed to be Cæsar's son, the offspring of an adulterous love-affair, and was

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

openly favored and distinguished by him. Cassius, a distinguished general, was much more prompted by jealousy and envy than by civic virtue and republican principle. When these two men and their friends became thoroughly convinced that Cæsar's ambition would stop at nothing, and that the new imperialistic régime was to be permanent, they came to the conclusion that nothing but Cæsar's death could prevent these calamities. They therefore resolved to assassinate him.

The ides of March (the fifteenth day of the month) in the year 44 B. C., was selected as the day of the assassination. The conspiracy had been formed with the greatest secrecy, but it came near failing at the eleventh hour. Cæsar's wife had had dreams and presentiments of bad omen, and she persuaded him not to go to the Senate on that day. Very reluctantly he consented to remain at home. But Decimus Brutus, one of the conspirators, who was afraid that the postponement of the assassination might lead to its discovery, went to Cæsar's residence, ridiculed the dreams of a timid woman, and said he could not believe that they would influence the mind of the great Cæsar. Then Cæsar, half ashamed at having yielded to his wife's entreaties, accompanied him. On his way to the Senate a paper was handed to Cæsar, which gave all the particulars of the conspiracy, and warned him not to go to the Senate session on the fifteenth of March, because it was the day set for his assassination. But Cæsar kept the paper in his hand without reading it. Under various pretexts, all the particular friends of Cæsar had been kept from attending the session of the Senate, so that when he arrived, he was surrounded only by enemies or by those who were not considered his

## JULIUS CÆSAR

friends. The conspirators acted promptly. Cæsar was defenceless, and in a few minutes he lay prostrate, — a lifeless corpse, showing thirty-five wounds, many of which were absolutely fatal. The most celebrated of all political assassinations had been successful; and by a peculiar irony of fate, the dying Cæsar fell at the feet of the statue of Pompey, his great rival, whom he had vanquished at Pharsalus. His death did not, as the conspirators had hoped, prevent the establishment of the Empire; it but delayed it for a few years.

Cæsar has had many worshippers and admirers, and comparatively few calumniators and belittlers. Unquestionably he was one of the most extraordinary geniuses that ever lived, equally great as a general and as a statesman, as an orator and as a historian. In the whole range of history there is but one man — Napoleon — who, in the vastness of his conceptions and the masterly perfection of their execution, can be justly compared with him. All other men whom national vanity has occasionally placed by Cæsar's side only suffer from the comparison; their immense inferiority appears on even superficial investigation. He was in fact the foremost man the world had seen to his day, and, but for his equally great rival in modern times, would still occupy the pinnacle of human greatness alone. Very likely, if he had lived, Rome would have been the happier.





## CHAPTER IV

TIBERIUS, CALIGULA, CLAUDIUS,  
NERO

CHAPTER IV

TIBERIUS CALPURNIA CLAUDIUS

NERO





CALIGULA

## CHAPTER IV

### ASSASSINATIONS OF TIBERIUS, CALIGULA, CLAUDIUS, NERO

(A. D. 37-68.)

**A**T the time of the assassination of Julius Cæsar, the Roman people, and especially the higher classes, had reached a degree of perversity and degeneracy which appears to the modern reader almost incredible. They had become utterly unfit for self-government. The most atrocious public and private vices in both sexes had taken the place of the civic virtues and the private honor for which the ancient Roman had been famous the world over. In public life, corruption, venality, and bribery were general; a public office-holder was synonymous with a robber of the public treasury. Nepotism prevailed to an alarming degree, and the ablest men were unceremoniously pushed aside for the incapable descendants of the nobility. In times like those, only the very strongest hand and the sternest character and mind can restrain the masses from falling into anarchy and civil war, and impose on society moderation and the rule of law.

The assassination of Cæsar had a most demoralizing effect on the Roman people. The hand of the master who might have controlled the unruly masses and restrained the degenerate nobility lay palsied in death; the giant

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

intellect, which had embraced the civilized world in its dream of establishing a universal monarchy, thought no more; and the results were chaos, anarchy, and civil war. The absence of the master mind was lamentably felt; his heirs were unable to control the wild elements which the assassins had set free; and for many years, rapine, bloodshed, murder, and spoliation ruled supreme throughout the vast extent of the Roman Republic, until finally, in the year 30 B. C., Octavianus Augustus, Cæsar's nephew, succeeded in establishing that imperium of which Cæsar had dreamed, and for which his genius and his victories had paved the way.

The imperial era, beginning with a display of magnificence and splendor, both in military achievements and literary production, soon degenerated into an era of crime, which, at least in the highest classes of society, has never been equalled in history. Its worst feature was, perhaps, the utter degradation and depravity of the women even of the highest classes, and their readiness to sacrifice everything — chastity, shame, name, and reputation — to the gratification of their passions. Soon the women excelled the men in assassinating, by poison or dagger, their victims or rivals. Augustus, the first Emperor, showed on the throne much less cruelty than he had manifested as a triumvir; but Livia Drusilla, his third wife, was the first of those female monsters on the throne of the Cæsars — Livia, Agrippina, Messalina, Domitia — who never shrank from murder, if by blood or poison they could rid themselves of a rival or of an obstacle to their criminal ambition. Livia, who wished Tiberius, her son by a former marriage, to be the successor of Augustus on the imperial throne, caused Marcellus (the







CLAUDIUS

## TIBERIUS, CALIGULA, CLAUDIUS, NERO

husband of Julia, daughter of Augustus), and also Julia's two sons, to be poisoned; and by these crimes secured the succession for Tiberius. She is also suspected of having poisoned Augustus himself.

Tiberius, the second of the Roman Emperors, lives immortal in history rather by his crimes than by his valourous deeds. So does Caligula, the third, and Claudius, the fourth, and Nero, the fifth Emperor, — who were all assassinated after comparatively short reigns, but who had exhausted all forms of cruelty and crime; while their wives, Messalina, Agrippina, and Poppæa will live in history forever as the unrivalled types of female depravity. Above all, Messalina, the wife of Claudius, who ruled from the year 41 to the year 54 of the Christian era, became notorious for every species of vice. In her libidinous and voluptuous excesses, as well as in the demoniacal conception of her murderous plots against her enemies, she was easily first and foremost, — the real empress of the vicious and fallen women of Rome: she became their open rival in the houses of ill-fame in her capital, she contended with them for the palm of obscenity and prostitution, and vanquished them all.

Unless the great historians of Rome had recorded these excesses as facts abundantly substantiated by irrefutable testimony, the reports would have been relegated to the domain of fable, because they are too revolting to be believed without sufficient authority. Can the human mind conceive, for instance, an act of greater criminal insolence than that which the Empress Messalina committed by marrying, publicly and under the very eyes of the capital, a young Roman aristocrat, Caius Silius, for whom she was inflamed with an adulterous passion, while

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

her husband, the Emperor, was but a few miles away at Ostia? And yet Tacitus, a stern and truthful historian, records this as an undeniable fact, adding that future generations will be loath to believe it.

When, in the year 68 A. D., Nero expired by the dagger of a freedman, courage having failed him to commit suicide, the family of Cæsar the Great became extinct, even in its adopted members. Only one hundred and twelve years had elapsed since the greatest of the Romans had fallen by the daggers of the Republican conspirators; but that short period had sufficed to subvert the Republic and to erect a despotic Empire on its ruins, to flood the vast territory of Rome, which embraced the entire civilized world, with streams of blood, to place imbeciles and assassins on the throne of the Cæsars, and to adorn the brows of courtesans and prostitutes, their partners in crime and depravity, with the imperial diadem. Never before in human history had human depravity and human lust displayed themselves more shamelessly; never before had the beast in man shown its innate cruelty so boldly and so openly as during the reigns of these five Roman Emperors. It is almost a consolation for the sorrowing mind to read that Tiberius was choked to death; that Caligula was beaten down and stabbed; that Claudius was killed by a dish of poisonous mushrooms; and that Nero, the last of Cæsar's dynasty, was helped to his untimely death by the poniard of a freedman. Quick assassination was all too light a punishment for these monsters of iniquity who had so often feasted their eyes on the tortures of their innocent victims.

## CHAPTER V

### HYPATIA



## CHAPTER V

### ASSASSINATION OF HYPATIA

(A. D. 415.)

**N**EVER, perhaps, did the wonderful genius of Alexander the Great appear to better advantage than when he selected Alexandria as a commercial centre and distributing point for the products of three continents, and as an intellectual focus from which Hellenic culture should be transmitted to those countries of Asia and Africa which his victories had opened to Greek civilization. The rapidity with which the city — to which Alexander had given his own name — grew to the dimensions of a great capital and a world-emporium, proved the sagacity and ingenious foresight of its founder, and was unrivalled among all the cities of the ancient world. It became the greatest seaport of the world, surpassing in the grandeur and magnificence of its buildings every other city except Rome itself; and when, through the genius of the Ptolemies, the successors of Alexander as rulers of Egypt, the great library was added to its monuments and treasures of art, it became also the intellectual capital of the world, rivalling and in some respects eclipsing the city of the Cæsars. It is true, long before Alexandria had reached its greatest prosperity, the creative power of Hellenic genius in the higher spheres of poetry

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and philosophy had passed its zenith. In the so-called Alexandrian age of literature the most beautiful and most poetical inspirations were the idyls of Theocritus. But Alexandria was the first city in the ancient world which became the seat of a many-sided, methodical scholarship, and of systematic, zealous studies of the exact sciences, — a university in the modern sense. It also became the great library city of the world.

It is true, the great library of inestimable value collected by Ptolemy Philadelphus (who also purchased the large library of Aristoteles) had been ruthlessly destroyed in the Alexandrian war of Julius Cæsar. But Ptolemy Physcon collected a second valuable library, which was augmented by the splendid library of King Eumenes of Pergamus, and formed by far the grandest collection of books to be found in the world. Mark Antony gave this splendid library to Queen Cleopatra. It comprised the intellectual treasures of the ancient world, and was placed in a wing of the Serapeum, — in that gigantic and magnificent building which was the grandest temple of ancient Egypt and the pride of Alexandria. The great city of the Ptolemies, with a population of nearly a million souls, had also become a sort of neutral territory upon which all religions could meet on equal terms. The cosmopolitan character of this great commercial centre, in which Christians, Jews, and pagans of all countries competed for the acquisition of wealth, made it natural for all these different citizens to live in harmony and mutual toleration. The time came, however, when Christianity was proclaimed the official state religion under Theodosius the Great, upon whose instigation or order the Roman Senate (not by a unanimous, but by a simple majority vote)

## HYPATIA

passed a resolution declaring that the Christian religion should be the only true religion for the Roman Empire. This official declaration became the signal for a brutal persecution of the old religion throughout the Empire, and especially in its eastern provinces. Very prominent in this work of persecution and destruction was Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, who was famous far and wide as one of the great lights of the Church and as a man of exceptional piety, although many of his actions are utterly inexcusable from a moral point of view. Theophilus was in constant warfare with the pagans and Jews of Alexandria, who quite often joined hands in fighting him. But, as a rule, they were defeated by the pugnacious prelate, who, on such occasions, always found at his command a formidable army composed of the mob of the city and of the monks of the desert of Nitria, which was near the city. The main object of Theophilus's attacks was the great Serapeum, in which immense treasures of gold, silver, and sacred vessels were stored away, and which contained also the great collection of books, — a perfect armory of pagan philosophy, religion, and poetry, — which was especially obnoxious to him. By shrewdly misrepresenting the spirit of revolt among the Jews and pagans of the city, he succeeded in getting an edict from the Emperor authorizing him to destroy this temple of ancient wisdom and culture, — and, for the second time, the magnificent library of Alexandria was partly destroyed, partly scattered to the winds.

The audacity of Theophilus had inflicted terrible defeats on the non-Christian population of Alexandria, and had utterly disheartened it. On the other hand, the Christian inhabitants showed by their increasing arrogance



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

that they were conscious of the supremacy of their church and of the exclusive protection to which their religion entitled them. However, in spite of this cruel discrimination there still remained at Alexandria a large and intelligent element true to the old religion, or rather to the old philosophy.

Theophilus died in the year 412 A.D., and was succeeded by his nephew Kyrillos, better known as St. Cyril, who continued the vindictive policy against the Jews and pagans which his uncle had inaugurated. It was not long before Cyril had fanaticized the mob against the Jews to such an extent that the latter, driven to despair, took up arms against their aggressors, who had undertaken a regular crusade against their lives and property. Pitched battles and massacres took place in the streets of Alexandria. Hundreds of the unfortunate Jews were slain, and very likely the Jewish population would have been entirely exterminated or expelled from the city, had not Orestes, the imperial governor, interfered in their behalf, and defeated the infuriated mob and the monks of Nitria, who as usual had taken a hand in the fight. But it was a long and stubbornly contested battle. Although Cyril personally did not show himself, it was nevertheless well known that he directed the attacks against the Jews from his hiding-place. Moreover all his most intimate friends actively participated in the riot and strenuously resisted the efforts of the governor to restore peace.

One of these friends personally assaulted and seriously wounded the governor. After the revolt had been quelled, this man was put on trial and sentenced to death. In vain Cyril appealed for mercy and tried to save the life

## HYPATIA

of the accused man. Orestes was implacable, and the condemned man was executed. The disdain with which he had been treated by the governor, enraged the prelate and stimulated him to revenge. A large procession of priests and citizens took the body of the criminal from the gibbet and carried it to the principal church of Alexandria, where the Archbishop read high mass and delivered a sermon full of admiration and eulogy for the victim, filling the hearts of the congregation with hatred and contempt for the authorities, and invoking the punishment of Heaven upon their heads. But even this public demonstration did not satisfy the Archbishop; and with consummate cruelty he hit upon a plan for deeply wounding the governor without attacking him personally.

At that time there lived at Alexandria a young lady of great talent and renown. Her name was Hypatia. She was the daughter of Theon, a celebrated mathematician who lived at Alexandria, and whose genius for mathematics she seemed to have inherited. She first became his pupil, but soon surpassed him in ability and reputation. She also applied herself with great zeal and rare penetration to the study of the philosophy of Plato, whom she greatly admired and much preferred to Aristotle. Since Alexandria had no professors superior to herself in attainments and learning, Hypatia went to Greece and for several years attended the lectures of the most famous professors of Athens. She then returned to Alexandria, and was immediately invited by the authorities to the chair of philosophy in the University. Hypatia accepted this honor and filled the position with brilliant success. It was not only her profound and extensive learning, em-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

bracing the entire compass of the exact sciences, but also the charm of her persuasive and mellifluous eloquence which filled her hearers with admiration.

Her reputation as a public lecturer soon equalled her renown as a mathematician and philosopher, and a number of the most distinguished men of Alexandria and other cities were among her regular disciples, listening with delight to her dissertations. One of her most enthusiastic students was Synesius, afterwards Bishop of Ptolemais, who always held her in affectionate reverence, although she had steadily refused to profess the Christian religion. Orestes, the governor, was also among the number of her admirers and was frequently seen at her lectures, which were attended by Christians as well as by pagans. To the great qualities of her mind were added rare physical beauty and a suavity of manners which won the hearts of all those who became acquainted with her. Several of Alexandria's most prominent citizens desired to marry her, but she refused all proposals because she wanted to live only for the sciences to which she had devoted her life. In spite of her great popularity and the steadily increasing number of admirers, Hypatia's reputation was spotless; she had many friends, but never had a lover. While this eminent woman's celebrity as a thinker — which entirely eclipsed his own — would have been sufficient to fill the heart of Cyril with envy and jealousy, there was an additional reason for his hatred and hostility. Orestes, the governor, was a frequent visitor at her house and was known to consult her frequently on important public questions. The Archbishop, perhaps justly, attributed to Hypatia's influence the governor's evident leaning toward paganism and his open admiration

for the philosophical doctrines of the Greek philosophers. Seeking for a victim on whom to vent his spite against Orestes, he therefore selected Hypatia as the one whose destruction would hurt him most deeply, while at the same time it would deliver himself and the church from their most dangerous opponent. It was comparatively easy for him to inflame the minds of the ignorant masses with rage against the woman who was represented to them as the implacable enemy of their religion, and whose pernicious teachings had led so many others from the path of virtue and salvation.

Everything was carefully but secretly prepared for the fatal blow, which was struck in the month of March, 415. It was a beautiful sunny day, and Hypatia got ready to proceed to the University, where she was to lecture that forenoon. A carriage was waiting for her at the door of her residence. When she entered the carriage she was surprised at the unusual number of people filling the street, and at the great number of monks passing through their ranks and apparently haranguing them. She could not account for this strange gathering, for it was not a Christian holiday, nor was any civil procession to come off that morning.

All at once she noticed that this great assemblage of people began to move in the direction of her own house. As it came nearer she heard wild exclamations and threats, without comprehending, however, that she was the object of this hostile demonstration. At the head of the procession marched Peter, the reader, one of the most fanatical of the priests of the city; he had played a very prominent part in the previous riots, and was evidently the leader in this new movement. With grow-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ing astonishment Hypatia saw them coming, but in the consciousness of her innocence she had no fear. She was soon to be cruelly disabused.

As soon as the rioters were within a few hundred feet of her residence and saw her seated in her carriage ready to start, the leaders and those in the front rank rushed toward her. Peter, the reader, was the first to reach her and to lay hands on her. As she recoiled from his touch in terror, others climbed upon the wheels of the carriage and dragged her down into the street. She resisted and called for help, but her cries died away unheard in the tumult of the roaring and jeering multitude who surrounded the carriage and with ever-increasing violence uttered threats against her.

Popular excitement is a flame which feeds itself by the electric current emanating from thousands of impassioned and excited minds. It is ready on slight provocation to burst forth in all-devouring violence. But a few minutes had passed from the moment the procession reached Hypatia's carriage until the infuriated mob, holding the victim firmly in their grasp, had torn the garments from her body and hurried her with wild cheers and laughter to the Cæsarium, the great Christian church. Paralyzed with fear, unable to utter anything but screams and cries for help, she was dragged, in a state of perfect nudity, through the streets, and neither her helplessness nor her beauty softened the hearts of her tormentors and murderers. She was doomed to die, to be sacrificed at a Christian altar, atoning for her unbelief and her pernicious teachings with her life. One of her own friends, like herself adhering to the ancient cult and to Platonic philosophy, fitly compared Hypatia's murder to the sacri-

fice of a Greek goddess by drunken and infuriated barbarians. But the crowning infamy of this assassination, as brutal as any that history has recorded, was that the victim was dragged to the church of Christ, — Christ, the incarnation of love and mercy, — and slaughtered there amidst the yells and curses of the so-called believers.

Hundreds of women had swelled the mob, and like the men they were brandishing flints, shells, and broken pottery, with which to cut and lacerate their victim that they might feast their eyes on her agony.

Charles Kingsley has given in his famous novel, "Hypatia," a heart-rending description of the last moments of the illustrious woman-philosopher. The description may not be accurate in every little detail, but Mr. Kingsley sees the scene with the eye and with the imagination of a poet, and his description is poetically true. Our readers will thank us for quoting his words in rendering this final scene: —

"Whither were they dragging her? . . . On into the church itself! Into the cool dim shadow, with its fretted pillars, and lowering domes, and candles, and incense, and blazing altar, and great pictures looking from the walls athwart the gorgeous gloom; and right in front, above the altar, the colossal Christ watching unmoved from off the wall, his right hand raised to give a blessing — or a curse?

"On, up the nave, fresh shreds of her dress strewing the holy pavement — up the chancel steps themselves — right underneath the great, still Christ: and there even those hell-hounds paused. . . . She shook herself free from her tormentors, and springing back, rose for one moment to her full height, naked, snow-white against the dusky mass around — shame and indignation in those wide, clear eyes, but not a stain of fear. With one hand she clasped her golden locks around her; the other long white arm was stretched upward toward the great still Christ, appealing —

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and who dare say in vain?—from man to God. Her lips were open to speak; but the words that should have come from them reached God's ear alone; for in an instant Peter struck her down, the dark mass closed over her again . . . and then wail on wail, long, wild, ear-piercing, ran along the vaulted roofs. . . . What in the name of the God of mercy were they doing? Tearing her piece-meal? Yes, and worse than that! . . . It was over. The shrieks had died away into moans, the moans to silence. . . . A new cry rose through the dome: 'To the Cinaron! Burn the bones to ashes! Scatter them into the sea!'"

In the whole annals of crime not a more heart-rending and more brutal scene can be found than the murder of Hypatia. The assassination of the beautiful young Princess de Lamballe, the friend of Marie Antoinette, during the worst days of the French Revolution, bears some resemblance to it; but, after all, political fanaticism is never equal in its intensity and cruelty to religious fanaticism. Moreover, the fate of Hypatia shows that not all the martyrs were on the side of Christianity in the early ages of the Christian church. It should be stated, however, that a general cry of horror resounded through the world when the terrible news of Hypatia's death crossed the seas and was echoed from land to land, and that the Christian Church, by its most illustrious representatives, was loud in its denunciation of the murder.

Upon the fame and name of St. Cyril the murder of Hypatia has left a lasting stain; for the plan and execution were generally attributed to him. Even Catholic Church historians, both ancient and modern, criticise him severely for his imprudent and ill-advised instigations against Hypatia and her followers, although they try to protect his memory against the reproach of having intentionally caused her death.



CHAPTER VI  
THOMAS À BECKET









THOMAS À BECKET

## CHAPTER VI

### ASSASSINATION OF THOMAS À BECKET

(December 29, 1170)

ONE of the most remarkable careers and one of the most famous assassinations in the middle ages were the career and the assassination of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. His life (at least after he had been elevated to the Primacy of England) and his death show him as the great representative of the Church of Rome, standing up for the defence of its rights and dying in their defence; and they show also how necessary, in those dark ages, was a superhuman power, to hold the arrogance and brute force of warriors and princes in check, and bring into subjection their unbridled passions and their insolent usurpations. Even if Thomas à Becket miserably perished in his bold resistance to kingly assumption, his death was a wholesome lesson to the tyrants on European thrones, and raised him higher in the estimation of the world than a victory over King Henry the Second would have done.

Thomas Becket, or, as he is oftener called, Thomas à Becket, rose to his eminent station in State and Church from comparatively low birth. He was born in 1119, the son of a London merchant and an Oriental mother. This lady had followed the merchant to England after his

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

return from the Holy Land, where he had been a crusader. The merchant rapidly acquired wealth, and was able to give his son, who was distinguished by brilliant talents, a splendid education. After having studied for some time at Oxford, the young man was permitted to complete his studies at the University of Paris, which at that time attracted students from all parts of Europe by the reputation of its professors and the superiority of its methods of instruction. From Paris Thomas went to Bologna, in order to study theology; by his travels and the application and zeal with which he pursued his studies, he acquired an exceptional reputation for the extent, variety, and depth of his knowledge. On his return from Italy Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury was charmed with the attainments and learning of the young man, and recommended him to the King for the appointment of Chancellor. The King appointed him and made him also the tutor of his son. In the position of Chancellor he ingratiated himself with the King, and his counsels in matters of State and of importance to the crown proved so valuable that the King soon distinguished him above all other courtiers and officials, and treated him more as a friend than as a subject.

Having inherited immense wealth from his father, and having, moreover, been endowed by the munificence of the King with a number of offices and benefices from which he derived large revenues, the Chancellor made a great display of splendor and wealth. His household eclipsed almost that of the King himself, and looked more like the court of a prince than the household of a citizen. However, he neglected no opportunity to show his loyalty and devotion to the King. In 1159 he accompanied the

## THOMAS À BECKET

King to Toulouse, with a retinue of seven hundred knights and twelve hundred mounted men, all of whom he had equipped at his own expense. The King also intrusted him with a confidential mission to Paris, where he was to negotiate the marriage of the King's eldest son with the eldest daughter of the King of France. The Chancellor succeeded in concluding a family alliance between the two courts, and conducted the young princess personally to England.

In 1162 Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, died, and King Henry the Second immediately declared that Thomas à Becket should be his successor. When the King's plan to make him Archbishop was mentioned to Becket, he protested against it, and it would seem, sincerely. He even went so far as to tell the King, when the latter urged him to work for his election, that he was making a mistake in advocating his elevation to the See of Canterbury, using these words: "If I should be raised to that office, you would soon hate me as much as you now love me; for you will meddle in the affairs of the Church more than I can consent to, and people will not be wanting to embroil us." But the King laughed at these warnings. He supposed that Becket, as Archbishop, would be as complaisant and willing a tool to assist him in curtailing the prerogatives of the Church and transferring them to the crown, as he had been on a former occasion. He therefore continued to use his influence in favor of Becket's election, and succeeded in placing him in the Archbishop's See. At first the Pope objected to his election, but he finally ratified it in order to please the kings of England and France, who had both appealed to him in Becket's behalf.

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

No sooner had Becket been installed as Archbishop of Canterbury — which dignity carried with it that of Primate of England — than he entirely changed his mode of living. No more luxury, no more display of wealth, no more horses or magnificent costumes for him! On the contrary, the new Archbishop ostentatiously chose the coarsest and plainest garments. Instead of the fine lace shirt of former days he wore a coarse haircloth, dirty in the extreme, and his outer garments were frequently ragged. His food was of the plainest quality, consisting of bread, water, and skimmed milk. He affected austerity in every way, frequently flogged himself for impure thoughts or nominal sins which he might have committed, and every day he knelt and washed the feet of thirteen beggars. He resigned his office as Chancellor in order to devote all his time and zeal to his new office and the affairs of the Church.

The King did not like the change in the Archbishop's ways, and protested against his resignation, but Becket would not reconsider it. The King rightly guessed that there might be a hidden meaning and a secret ambition in the Archbishop's sudden conversion to Christian humility, which so strangely contrasted with his past conduct. The storm between the two mighty men, each self-willed and irascible, was brewing, and when it finally broke out, it was fierce and relentless. It never ended until the prelate lay prostrate as a victim of assassins before the altar of the church which he tried to protect from the King's usurpation.

It was not long before the conflict broke out. It then appeared that the change which had taken place in Becket was not confined to the outer man only, but had also

## THOMAS À BECKET

affected his relation to the Church and the State. From a King's counsellor and servant he had suddenly turned to be the counsellor and servant of the Church, and he carried over into his new station the impulsiveness and stubbornness which had always distinguished him in the service of the King. It is difficult to say which of the two, in this struggle for ascendancy, was right, or rather which of the two was the more to blame. For while the King was aggressive, arrogant, domineering, in the consciousness of his power, the Archbishop was imperious, insolent, and inconsistent, inasmuch as he now boldly condemned what he had formerly counselled. But it seemed to be a trait of Becket's character, that he always devoted himself unconditionally to the master he served at the time, and that from the moment he abandoned the service of the King for that of the Church it was quite natural for him to defend the interests and rights of the latter against the usurpations of the former.

At that time a priest who had committed any crime could be tried by an ecclesiastical court only; consequently very few criminals of this class were convicted and adequately punished; in most cases the accused, even if found guilty, were only reprimanded and degraded. This abuse was carried to such excess that during the first years of the reign of Henry the Second no less than one hundred murders committed by priests had not been punished. A priest had seduced the daughter of a gentleman living in Worcestershire, and, confronted by the angry father of the girl, assassinated him. Public indignation was aroused by this atrocity to such an extent that the King ordered the arrest of the guilty priest and his trial before a civil tribunal. Becket protested against



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

this order, claiming that it was an infringement of the prerogatives of the Church. He ordered an ecclesiastical court to investigate the charges, and the result was as usual, that the punishment awarded was only degradation. The King was furious. He made up his mind to beat the Archbishop at his own game and to punish him for his presumption. He therefore submitted the question of ecclesiastical immunities and of church prerogatives to a council of jurists and ordered them to investigate whether these prerogatives were founded on a solid historical basis. The jurists knew what sort of decision the King wanted, and they gave it. Thereupon the King convened a general council of the high nobility and also of the Church at Clarendon, and there, among other restrictions placed upon the Church, it was enacted that members of the clergy indicted for a crime should be tried by civil tribunals, exactly like other subjects.

Becket, seeing that all the barons and many prelates had submitted to the decree of the council, was compelled to yield, and swore to obey it; but his submission was caused only by his powerlessness. But when this so-called Constitution of Clarendon was sent to the Pope for ratification, he rejected it haughtily and condemned it in the most energetic manner. Thereupon Becket, basing his action on the condemnation of the Pope, openly retracted the consent which he had given to the Clarendon decree, and subjected himself to great austerities and macerations proportionate to the greatness of the sin he had committed in yielding to the royal demands. He even refused to perform any functions connected with his episcopal rank until the Pope had acquitted him of his great wrong against the Church. This action made the

## THOMAS À BECKET

rupture between the King and the Archbishop irreparable. Henry swore to have his revenge on a priest who was not only an ingrate but a perjurer. He arraigned him before a parliament convened at Northampton in 1165 as a rebel, as having violated his oath of allegiance. Becket was convicted, his personal estate was confiscated, the revenues of his archbishopric were seized, and Becket himself, abandoned even by his clergy, fled to France, whose King, in spite of the protests of Henry, offered him a refuge.

Becket's spirit was far from being broken. From his retreat in France he wrote to the bishops of England that the Pope had annulled the Constitution of Clarendon, and at the same time he excommunicated a number of those, bishops as well as other high officials, who had assisted in violating the sacred rights of the Church. The King answered by exiling all his relatives from England, and forbidding his subjects to correspond with him, or to send him money; he even forbade prayers in behalf of the Archbishop to be offered in church.

But the conditions between the Church and the court created by this conflict were such that the King found it expedient to make overtures of reconciliation to Becket, first through the bishops and church officials of England, and afterwards personally. In a conference which he held for that purpose with the King of France, he said to the latter: "There have been several kings of England, some more and others less powerful than myself; there have been also several Archbishops of Canterbury, in my opinion as respectable and as sainted as Thomas à Becket; let him show to me the same deference which the greatest of his predecessors have shown to the least powerful of

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

my predecessors, and there will be no controversy between us." King Henry also offered to take the clergy of France as umpires in the questions at issue; but when Becket stubbornly refused to be reconciled to the King of England, the King of France lost his patience and withdrew the protection which up to that day he had accorded to him.

These and other changes unfavorable to him finally induced Becket to lend to the King's proposals of reconciliation a more willing ear, and at last an interview took place between them which resulted in their reconciliation — apparently at least. The interview was much more cordial than might have been supposed from the exceedingly strained relations that had existed between them for years. The Archbishop approached the King as became a subject, and the King met him with the humility shown at that time to princes of the Church; when they parted, Becket bent his knee to the King, who held the stirrup of his horse as the Archbishop mounted. The interview had resulted in settling their differences. Both had made concessions, but the larger part of these had been made by the King. All the Archbishop's personal property had also been restored to him; he thereupon agreed to return to England and resume the functions of his office. He had been absent seven years.

The people at large, and especially the poor, greeted him with enthusiasm; but the barons kept away, and some of them showed open hostility to the Archbishop, or mysteriously hinted at a speedy ending of his newly regained honors. His arrival in England had been preceded by a messenger from the Pope carrying writs of excommunication for three English bishops who had been

## THOMAS À BECKET

especially hostile to Becket. These bishops immediately went to Normandy, where Henry the Second had remained, and laid their complaints before him, laying all the blame on Becket, whom they charged with inflaming the people of England against their King and sowing discord in their hearts. When these matters were laid before him, and also a statement that Becket had excommunicated two barons whom he considered his special enemies, the King got into a rage and exclaimed: "What? Is there among the cowards whom I feed at my table not one brave enough to deliver me from this firebrand of a priest?" These words could have but one meaning. Four of the barons took it upon themselves to deliver the King from the obnoxious priest. The King afterwards declared that he had never intended to suggest the assassination of Becket; but what other construction could be given to his words? The assassination itself was one of the most dramatic in history. The would-be murderers travelled in such haste that a messenger whom the King sent after them to warn them not to kill Becket could not overtake them. Arriving at Canterbury on December 29, 1170, they, with twelve other noblemen, went to the Archbishop's residence, and expostulated with him concerning the excommunication of certain priests and barons, and when he refused to revoke the excommunications, the barons left him with threats. They returned toward evening. The bell of the church was ringing for vespers, and the Archbishop had gone there. The priests wanted to close and barricade the doors, but he objected. "The doors of the house of God should not be barricaded like a fortress!" said he. Just then the assassins came in, brandishing their swords and calling

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

for the traitor. The priests surrounding the Archbishop fled in terror; only his cross-bearer stayed with him. It was so dark that neither the intruders nor the priest could be seen distinctly. Another voice called: "Where is the Archbishop?" "I am here," answered Becket. "I am no traitor, but only a priest of the Lord!" They were afraid to kill him in the holy precincts. Once more they asked him to absolve those he had excommunicated. He refused, because they had not repented. "Then you shall die!" they cried. "I am ready, in the name of the Saviour," he answered; "but I forbid you, by the Lord Almighty, to touch any of these present, priests or laymen." They heeded him not, but rushed upon him, and with three or four thrusts from their swords, one of them splitting his skull, laid him prostrate at the foot of the altar.

The murderers hurried back to Normandy to get their reward. The news of the murder, when it reached the ears of the King, struck terror into his heart. He knew he was, and would be held, responsible for Becket's death. Fear seized him, that he would feel the Pope's wrath, that he would be excommunicated, that England and his possessions in France would be placed under an interdict, that the Saxon population of England, which already revered Becket as a saint, might rise in open rebellion against him. He therefore made haste to disclaim publicly any complicity in the murder, and sent an ambassador to the Pope to assure him of his entire innocence and of his profound grief at the bloody deed. The Pope at first refused to receive the ambassador, and it was only by means of many prayers, promises, and humble supplications that he finally absolved the King of intentional

## THOMAS À BECKET

complicity in the heinous crime. The King actually purchased this absolution by pledging himself to support, during three years, two hundred well-equipped horsemen for the protection of the Holy Sepulchre.

But even this act of papal absolution was not deemed sufficient by the King to protect him from the evil consequences of the assassination. To remove this danger the King two years afterwards undertook a pilgrimage to the tomb of Becket, who had in the meantime been buried in the Cathedral with royal honors. As soon as the steeple of the Cathedral appeared on the horizon, the King dismounted, and proceeded on his way barefooted, his bleeding feet leaving a spot of blood at every step. On his arrival at the tomb he prostrated himself, and subjected himself to the humiliation of a severe flagellation at the hands of the monks, each of whom applied to his bare back three strokes from a knotted rope.

Having undergone this public chastisement, the King remained praying and fasting the following night, prostrated on the tombstone. Next morning he returned to London, where, immediately after his arrival, he fell seriously ill from the effects of his pilgrimage.

The Pope canonized the martyr who had so heroically died in the defence of the prerogatives of the Church.



## CHAPTER VII

GESSLER



CHAPTER VII

1851





GESSLER

## CHAPTER VII

### ASSASSINATION OF GESSLER

(A. D. 1307.)

**T**HE assassination of Julius Cæsar and of the first Roman Emperors led to greater demoralization of the people, and thereafter to anarchy, bloodshed, civil war, and ultimately to an atrocious despotism; but at an interval of twelve hundred and forty years after the death of Nero there occurred a political assassination, growing out of personal revenge, which freed a whole people from oppression and placed the murderer among the heroes of mankind and the liberators of nations. We speak of William Tell, the national hero of Switzerland, who in 1307 deliberately murdered Gessler, the Austrian governor.

This governor, who resided at the castle of Kuessnacht, had committed the greatest outrages and acts of despotism against the inhabitants of his gubernatorial district, embracing the so-called three Waldstädte (Forest Cantons), —Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden. Until then these Forest Cantons had enjoyed a republican government, and had given to the German Empire a merely nominal recognition, by acknowledging the German Emperor as their suzerain. There is a great resemblance in the relations between these Swiss Cantons and the German Empire to

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the relations which existed, before the South African war, between the two Boer Republics and the crown of England. Rudolph of Hapsburg, himself a Swiss by birth, who had been elected German Emperor, had pursued a liberal policy toward the Cantons and in special charters had guaranteed to them their inherited rights and liberties. But his son Albrecht the First, who succeeded Rudolph on the imperial throne, resolved to do away with these prerogatives, deprive the Swiss Cantons of their independence, and make them subject to the crown of Austria. Theretofore the German Emperors had been represented in a few cities of Switzerland by bailiffs, who exerted the same authority in the Cantons as our federal judges in United States Territories; but Albrecht changed their duties and authority entirely, investing them with many additional powers, so that they became practically governors of their districts, appointed by the Emperor and administering their office as imperial officials.

Against this change the inhabitants of the Cantons entered their solemn protests; they sent delegations to Albrecht to remonstrate with him; but he gave evasive answers, increased the soldiery protecting the governors, shut his ears to all complaints about their arrogance and growing usurpation, and secretly encouraged them "to do all in their power to break the stubborn resistance of these uncouth mountaineers and boors, and make them obedient subjects of the Austrian crown." To the strong men of the Cantons, who had never bowed their necks under the yoke of a foreign despot, the tyranny of these Austrian governors became intolerable; their leading men made up their minds to throw it off by all

means, and to maintain their independence at any cost. Even the members of the nobility scattered through the Cantons were indignant at the arbitrary and haughty ways of the imperial bailiffs, who treated them with the same arrogance as they treated the common people; they therefore made common cause with the latter, so that practically the imperial officials were isolated in a hostile country, without friends or party.

The public discontent culminated in a secret conspiracy, of which Walter Fuerst of Uri, Werner Stauffacher of Schwyz, and Arnold Melchthal of Unterwalden, were the originators. These three men, each a representative and influential citizen of his own Canton, met at the house of Walter Fuerst and agreed to meet for further consultation on the Ruetli, an elevated plateau, hidden in the woods, near the lake of Uri, on certain nights, each undertaking to bring along ten men tried and true, who had promised to act with them, for life and death, for the deliverance of their country. They also pledged themselves by oath to keep this league a secret from all but the initiated, who like themselves had sworn to coöperate for the deliverance of the country, until the time had come for united action on one and the same day. This was done in the fall of 1307. A later consultation of the conspirators on the Ruetli took place some weeks afterwards, and was attended by the three leaders and thirty others. They were all full of enthusiasm and hope of victory. They all pledged the almost unanimous support of the inhabitants of the three Cantons, and finally agreed that the people should rise in rebellion on New Year's Day, 1308. The humane feature of this proposed revolution appears from their joint agreement, affirmed under oath,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

that, in expelling the Austrian governors and their followers from their castles and their country, they would not kill them except in self-defence, but would treat them with leniency and charity. Is it not as if we heard Oom Krueger and his friends of the Transvaal and Orange Free State counsel on measures for their independence? They placed their full confidence in the justice of their cause, the assistance of God, and their own bravery.

The day for the execution of their plot was anticipated by an unforeseen event. Gessler, the Governor of Uri and Schwyz, had made himself especially odious by all sorts of petty acts of tyranny. Among these was an order that the ducal hat of Austria was to be placed on the top of a long pole to be erected on the market space of Altorf and that nobody should pass by it without uncovering his head and showing it respect as if the Duke of Austria (Albrecht, Emperor of Germany) himself were there. The citizens generally complied with the order. But one day William Tell and his little son passed by the hat without minding Gessler's order. William Tell was the son-in-law of Walter Fuerst, one of the three leaders of the Ruetli conspiracy, and, like Walter Fuerst himself, he was looked upon with suspicion by the Austrian authorities. The openness with which he ignored Gessler's order was immediately construed as an act of defiance and rebellion. He was taken before Gessler, and the cruel bailiff imposed upon him a punishment which, he thought, would wound him to the heart.

"Tell," said he to him, "by your act of disobedience you have forfeited your life. But I will be merciful to you," and pointing to Tell's crossbow, he continued: "You have the reputation of being the best archer of

## GESSLER

our Canton, if not of all Switzerland. I have never seen a test of your skill yet; very well, let your skill be tried now, and if it is as great as your reputation it will save your life. There is an apple. Place it upon your boy's head, and at a distance of thirty steps shoot it with an arrow. But take good aim! For, if you hit the boy, your life will pay for it!"

William Tell complied with the cruel order, and with his usual masterly skill brought down the apple from the boy's head. Gessler was enraged at the result, and, before dismissing Tell, he asked him with an insidious smile: "Now tell me, William Tell, why did you take two arrows from your quiver before you took aim at the apple on your boy's head? Tell me sincerely, and whatever your answer may be, your life shall not be imperilled."

Carried away by his wrath, Tell contemptuously replied: "If I had missed my aim and hit my boy, the second arrow was for you, and, by God Almighty, it would not have gone astray!"

"That's what I thought," cried Gessler, and turning to his escort he ordered them to put Tell in chains and take him to the boat on the lake. "Your life," said he to Tell, "is not in peril; but I will take you to my castle in Kuessnacht; there in one of the darkest dungeons underground you shall be imprisoned, and may find time to repent the rebellious words which you have uttered!"

In the immediate neighborhood of Kuessnacht, on a mountain top overlooking the town, was the fortified castle where Gessler resided. It was on the way to that residence that Tell did the act by which he satis-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

fied his personal revenge and also freed his country from the bloody tyranny of the despot. While Gessler and his prisoner were crossing the lake, a storm arose, which endangered the boat. The fury of the tempest filled the hearts of the boatmen with dismay and terror, and tremblingly they turned to Gessler, saying: "The boldest and most skilful boatman in the Canton is Tell. He may be able to save the boat, but we cannot! Set him free and he may bring us safe to port."

Gessler ordered the chains to be removed from Tell's limbs and ordered him to take the helm, promising him life, liberty, and a full pardon if he should bring them safe into port. Tell took the helm, and the boat, obedient to its master's hand, sped through the storm-tossed waves like a seabird dancing on the surface. But turning round a rock-bound bluff close to the shore, Tell suddenly took up his cross-bow lying on the bench near by, and with mighty leap jumped on the rock, hurling the boat far back into the hissing and tempestuous flood.

Gessler also escaped from the watery grave, but only to meet his doom on land even before he had reached his home. Tell was lying in ambush on the road from the lake to Kuessnacht. It was the road which Gessler and his party had to take on their return to the castle, if they should succeed in effecting a landing on the shore. After some time Gessler, accompanied by a few friends, came in sight. No sooner had the party entered the defile than Gessler, shot through the heart by Tell's unerring arrow, fell from his horse.

Tell's shot was the signal for the general uprising of the people of Switzerland. Years of struggle and warfare against Austria's nobility and armed forces followed

## GESSLER

Tell's heroic act, but the entire independence of Switzerland was finally secured. Switzerland is to this day a free and independent republic, and Tell's name shines with imperishable lustre not only as its great national hero, but also among the immortal patriots and liberators of mankind.

We are well aware that recent historical criticism has expressed doubt as to Tell's great act of deliverance, and even as to his existence, and that in some histories the tale is simply relegated to the domain of legend and tradition. But there is no real justification for this decision. It is founded only on a statement in the chronicle of Saxo Grammaticus recording a feat of archery in Scandinavia similar to that of William Tell, and performed hundreds of years before Tell's day.

As Johannes von Mueller, the great historian, judiciously says: "It shows but scanty knowledge of history to deny the truth of a historical event simply because another similar event occurred in another century and country." But truth or fiction, history or legend, the heroic act and name of Tell will live on, immortal and inspiring, as they have lived during the last six hundred years. Poets and novelists have immortalized the great national hero of Switzerland in song and story. Frederick Schiller, Germany's greatest dramatist, has made him the central hero of his greatest drama, and has given his name to that great hymn of liberty and patriotism, which stirred up the German nation to its glorious struggle against Napoleon the First. It is one of the few truly patriotic assassinations recorded in history.



CHAPTER VIII  
IÑEZ DE CASTRO

CHAPTER VIII  
INDEX DE CASTRO





IÑEZ DE CASTRO

## CHAPTER VIII

### ASSASSINATION OF IÑEZ DE CASTRO

(A. D. 1355.)

**A**S one of the most cruel and heart-rending tragedies of the middle ages, the love-story and the assassination of Iñez de Castro has lived in song and story for five hundred and fifty years, and still awakens echoes of pity and sorrow whenever read or heard.

Constancia, the wife of Pedro, son of Alfonso the Fourth of Portugal, and heir-presumptive to the crown of that kingdom, died in 1344, and left to her husband a son of tender age, named Ferdinand. Pedro thereupon desired to marry the countess Iñez de Castro, a young lady of great beauty and loveliness, and, like himself, sprung in direct lineage, but on her mother's side, from the royal house of Castile. Iñez de Castro was of an illustrious family, it is true, but her rank was not deemed sufficient to entitle her to become the wife of the Crown Prince; therefore when Dom Pedro mentioned to his father his intention to marry her, the King positively refused his consent. Dom Pedro, however, instead of obeying his father, secured permission from the Pope, and secretly married her, bestowing upon her the full rank and all the rights of a legitimate wife.

In the meantime the King and his advisers urged Dom



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Pedro to get married again, and proposed a number of young princesses of renowned beauty and ancestry for his choice. But Pedro, without disclosing the secret of his marriage with Iñez de Castro (rumors of which were nevertheless whispered and busily circulated at the court of the King), persistently rejected all these proposals, giving no other reason for his refusal than his personal disinclination to marry. While Pedro's father reluctantly accepted his son's emphatic declaration, the most trusted advisers and counsellors of the King, Diego Lopez Pacheco, Pedro Coello, and Alvaro Calvarez, did not, because they were afraid lest the influence of the beautiful and accomplished Iñez de Castro — no matter whether she was legally married to Pedro or not — would be dangerous and possibly fatal to their own preëminence at the court, as soon as Pedro should succeed his father on the throne. They shrewdly worked upon the King's mind by insinuating that if the rumor of Pedro's secret marriage should prove to be true, the ultimate succession of Ferdinand, Pedro's son by his first wife, to whom the King was very much attached, might be endangered, and that possibly the son of Iñez de Castro would become Pedro's successor on the throne.

The King summoned Pedro to a private interview, and asked him concerning his relations with Iñez de Castro, informing him at the same time of the rumor of his secret marriage. Pedro denied the truth of this rumor, admitting, however, that Iñez de Castro, while not his wedded wife, was so dear to his heart that on her account he would not consent to form a new matrimonial alliance, no matter how illustrious by birth or beauty the princess proposed to him might be. The emphasis with which

## IÑEZ DE CASTRO

Pedro made this assertion satisfied his father that the rumor of a secret marriage was true; and when the King, at the next cabinet council, repeated to his confidants the result of his interview with the Crown Prince, they predicted that the greatest calamities would arise, after the King's death, from the Crown Prince's infatuation for Iñez, which they ascribed rather to unnatural evil influences than to the surpassing beauty and loveliness of the young woman. The King, a man of very irascible temperament, became excited and indignant; he declared again and again that, if there were no other means of separating Pedro and Iñez, the young woman would have to die. The council then broke up.

It was but a short time afterwards that Dom Pedro left the court for a few days to go out hunting with some friends. But warned by his mother, who had heard of the King's evil designs upon Iñez de Castro, he had taken her and her two children to Coimbra, where he left them in a convent to await his return. On the day after his departure, King Alfonso suddenly appeared at the convent and demanded to see Iñez de Castro. Pedro's wife immediately made her appearance, accompanied by her two children. As she looked upon the King, whose mien was grim and menacing, and who was surrounded by a number of his knights in full armor, a presentiment of some terrible calamity which was to befall her and her two children entered her breast, and from an impulse of both fear, and of hope to save her children, she threw herself at the King's feet, imploring him to forgive her and to take pity on her innocent children. Alfonso's heart melted with pity at the sight of so much beauty and innocence. He raised her from her kneeling position and

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

told her to be of good cheer, and that no harm would befall her. And then turning round, he left the convent, followed by his attendants, who were not a little surprised at this peaceful ending of a visit which had promised to be a tragedy.

But while Iñez already congratulated herself on her lucky escape from a terrible death, and even on her good fortune in having softened the King's heart toward herself and her two children, she was nevertheless doomed to ruin. The three counsellors so hostile to her had not accompanied the King on his visit to the convent; they were waiting for the return of their sovereign at some distance from Coimbra, and were greatly disappointed when they learned from his own lips that, instead of having slain with his own hands, as he had promised to do, the woman who had seduced his son and enthralled him either by her beauty or by the employment of supernatural means, he had changed his mind concerning her, and now spoke feelingly and affectionately of her and her sweet children. The counsellors concealed with great difficulty the irritation and disgust with which the King's weakness filled them; they immediately proceeded to counteract the favorable impression which Iñez had made, uttering the foulest insinuations and aspersions upon her character. The very change which she had succeeded in effecting in the King's sentiments toward her was made the means of renewing and corroborating the charge that evil spirits were assisting her in bewitching the royal family for her own selfish purposes. "Since she has so easily captured your majesty," said one of them cunningly, "who can hope to resist her and her ambitious designs? Poor Ferdinand!"

## IÑEZ DE CASTRO

The artful mention of the name of the young prince, whose right of succession was endangered by the recognition of Iñez de Castro, was sufficient to elicit from the King the promise that his son's mistress should never be received at the court. Having obtained this concession, the three counsellors found it comparatively easy to persuade him that the original purpose for which they had come to Coimbra — the death of Iñez — was the only salvation for the throne and the dynasty, and that it was his duty as a monarch to remove her as soon as possible in order to avert greater calamities. They told him that it was perhaps right that he had not soiled his royal hands with the blood of one who was unworthy of the high distinction of dying by his sword, but that it was a duty he owed to the state and to the legitimate heir to the throne to order her death at the earliest moment. Alfonso was weak and foolish enough to believe them and to sanction the murder of the fair and innocent wife of his son. That very night Iñez de Castro fell a victim to the daggers of two assassins.

The assassination provoked terror throughout Portugal and Spain, and general were the denunciations of the King and the counsellors who had advised him to commit the crime. But in this case what followed the murder has, even more than the atrocity of the crime itself, made it famous in song and story. The murder of Iñez de Castro occurred in 1355.

A rumor of the tragedy reached Dom Pedro while he was taking dinner at the small tavern of a village, some thirty leagues from Coimbra. The Crown Prince was travelling incognito, and neither the host nor the guests of the tavern, except his own companions, knew him and

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

how deeply he was interested in the terrible news which a cattle dealer had just reported as the latest sensation in the city. Dom Pedro hurried back to Coimbra and to the convent. The rumor was only too true. His idolized wife was dead. Three horrible wounds, each of which would have been sufficient to cause death, disfigured her beautiful corpse; but her countenance shone with angelic radiance and sweetness, and the agony of death seemed to have left no trace on it. When Dom Pedro learned from the nuns how the assassins had demanded entrance in the name of the King and had burst open the bedroom of Iñez and butchered her without mercy, he knelt down by the coffin and swore bloody vengeance against all those who had taken a hand in this inhuman and atrocious crime. He called upon Heaven to assist him in bringing the assassins and their instigators to justice, and laying his hands upon the breast of his murdered wife, he swore that he would not desist from the pursuit of the guilty persons, even if he had to seek them on the throne. The meaning of these words could not be misconstrued, for it was generally understood that, while the three counsellors had proposed the murder, the King had given his consent to it. When Dom Pedro's threat was repeated to him, the King, highly incensed, loudly proclaimed that Iñez de Castro's death was a just punishment for her criminal liaison with the Crown Prince, in open violation of the King's order, and assumed the full responsibility for the murder. The Crown Prince, so rudely repelled by his father and deeply wounded by the disgrace heaped upon his virtuous wife, refused to return to the court; on the contrary, he called his friends, and the friends of Iñez de Castro, her brothers and cousins,

## IÑEZ DE CASTRO

to arms. The cruel and unjustifiable homicide he justly ascribed to the calumnies and intrigues of a set of rapacious cut-throats who were ready to sacrifice everything to their own personal interests, and who had deceived the King. In a very short time Dom Pedro found himself at the head of an army, with which he invaded those provinces in which the castles and mansions of the counsellors were situated. With merciless severity their lands were laid waste, their castles razed to the ground, their families and friends killed, and everything was done to make their very names and memories odious to their fellow-men.

By that time the King had also been informed by high dignitaries of the Church that the union between his son and Iñez de Castro had been consecrated, that the Pope himself had granted them permission to get married, and that strict secrecy had been observed simply out of high regard for the King, in the hope that he would never hear of it and would consequently not feel irritated by it. This information had a powerful effect on the King's mind. He began to see what a great crime he had committed in sanctioning the murder of a virtuous and innocent young wife, whose only fault had possibly been her yielding, against the King's outspoken wishes, to the Prince's ardent wooing. And when the Queen, Dom Pedro's mother, added her supplications and tears in behalf of her son, whom the murder of his wife had made nearly insane from grief, the King became more and more willing to be reconciled to him. He not only forgave his acts of rebellion, but even made amends, as much as he could, for the cruel wrong he had done him.

Under such circumstances it was comparatively easy

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

for the Archbishop of Braga, whom the Pope had authorized to impart to the King the information concerning Dom Pedro's marriage, to effect a reconciliation between father and son. Thereupon the son returned to the court, where he was received with the highest honors, after he had solemnly promised not to take revenge on the counsellors who had been instrumental in causing the death of his wife, and who had already been so severely punished by the devastation of their lands and the destruction of their castles. To consent to this condition was the cruelest sacrifice on the part of Dom Pedro, but he finally yielded to the tears and prayers of his mother — very likely, however, as we shall see, with a mental reservation.

Two years later, King Alfonso the Fourth died, and Dom Pedro ascended the throne of Portugal. The old King's death was also the signal for the flight of his three counsellors, Pacheco, Coello, and Gonsalvez, whose absence was first noticed at the King's obsequies. They had sought refuge in Castile, because they felt instinctively that it would not be safe for them to remain in Portugal, and that the ill-concealed hatred of Dom Pedro might break forth at any moment and punish them terribly for the part they had taken in Iñez de Castro's death. In fact Pedro had never forgiven the assassins of his wife. On the contrary, his heart had never ceased to yearn for the day when he could not only take full and bloody revenge on her persecutors and murderers, but also restore the honor of her name and memory, which had been sullied by the calumnies of those scoundrels.

Castile was at that time ruled by Pedro the Cruel, one of the worst and most bloodthirsty tyrants that ever sat upon a Spanish throne. Some of his victims



## IÑEZ DE CASTRO

had made their escape into Portugal and had found protection at the court of Alfonso, Dom Pedro's father. But when the counsellors of Alfonso arrived at his court, Pedro the Cruel formed the diabolical plan of delivering them up to Pedro of Portugal, provided the latter would deliver, in exchange for them, the Castilians who had found an asylum in his kingdom. No more agreeable proposition could have been made to the King of Portugal, and the exchange was readily made. Two of the counsellors, Coello and Gonsalvez, were transported in chains to Portugal, and executed with inhuman cruelty. They were put to the torture in the hope of extorting from them the names of other accessories to the crime; thereupon they were burned at the stake, and their hearts were torn out; and thereafter their ashes were scattered to the winds. Pacheco, however, escaped this terrible fate. Being absent from the court of Castile when his two colleagues were arrested, he fled to Aragon.

After having in this manner satisfied his vengeance on the assassins, King Pedro assembled the high nobility and the great dignitaries of his kingdom at Cataneda, and in their presence swore that, after the death of his first wife, Constanca, he had legally married Iñez de Castro; that the Pope of Rome had given him special permission to do so, and that the marriage ceremony had been performed by the Archbishop La Guarda, in the presence of two witnesses, whom he mentioned by name. He ordered these facts to be entered upon the archives of the state and to be proclaimed publicly in every city, town, and village of the kingdom. The children of Iñez de Castro were declared legitimate and entitled to all the



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

rights and prerogatives of princes of the blood, including succession to the throne of Portugal. Proceeding thence to Coimbra, the King ordered the vault in which the remains of Iñez had been deposited to be opened, her corpse, which had been embalmed, to be dressed in a royal robe and placed upon a throne, and her head to be adorned with a royal crown. He compelled his attendants, composed of the highest men of the monarchy, to pass by the throne and bow their knees and kiss the edge of the Queen's robe, — in fact, to show the same reverence and respect to the dead Queen as they might have shown to the living Queen on the day of her coronation. As soon as this ghastly ceremony was over, the corpse was placed in a magnificent metal coffin and escorted by the King and a most brilliant cortège of knights and noblemen to Alcobaza, a royal residence about seventeen miles from Coimbra, and placed in a royal vault. A magnificent monument, which represented Iñez de Castro in her incomparable beauty and loveliness, was shortly after erected near the vault. It was the last tribute which the love and admiration of her husband could render to her memory.

CHAPTER IX  
RIZZIO AND DARNLEY







DAVID RIZZIO

## CHAPTER IX

### ASSASSINATIONS OF RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

(March 9, 1566 ; February 9, 1567)

**A**MONG the female rulers of Europe there is one who on account of her matchless beauty, her genius, her adventurous life, but especially her tragic death, has enlisted the attention and admiration of authors and poets even to a higher degree than Catherine the Second of Russia or Elizabeth of England, who perhaps surpassed her in political genius. More regretted and admired for her misfortunes and accomplishments than condemned for her sins and crimes, Mary Stuart, the beautiful Queen of Scots, lives in the recollections of posterity as a vision of incomparable grace, beauty, and loveliness, hallowed by the genius of great poets and redeemed by a tragic and cruel death. To no historical memory poetry and tradition have been more kind and more idealizing than to Mary Stuart ; and yet she deserves a place in this gallery of assassinations not as a victim, but as a murderess.

After reading the descriptions in prose and verse of her personal charms, of her matchless beauty and grace, of her elegance and wit, of her poetical inspiration and musical accomplishments, it is almost impossible for the stern historian to maintain the self-possession of an im-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

partial judge and record the misdeeds of which this bewitching creature was unquestionably guilty. She seemed to combine in her incomparable personality all the physical and mental perfections woman is capable of. We will say, however, that the crimes which have justly been laid to her charge were, in part at least, excusable either on the ground of the surrounding circumstances or of great provocations. Murder itself, in the rude country and in the equally rude and violent times in which it was committed, had not that horrid significance which stigmatizes it in a more refined and cultured state of civilization.

Mary Stuart was the only daughter of King James the Fifth of Scotland by his second wife, Marie de Lorraine. She was the niece of the famous princes of the house of Guise — Duke Francis of Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine — who were rivals in authority and power with the kings of France, and who on several occasions rose superior to them. James the Fifth died young, with his daughter yet in her cradle. Quite young she was betrothed to the Dauphin of France, who became afterwards King Francis the Second, and she was married to him when a mere child. Her renown for beauty and genius resounded from one end of Europe to the other. With remarkable facility she learned French, Italian, Greek, Latin, history, theology, music, painting, dancing, and she excelled in writing poetry. Some of her short poems are still famous in French literature. But her life as Queen of France was but a short dream of splendor and delight. The weak and emaciated Francis the Second died after a reign of eleven months, and the crown went to his young brother, Charles the Ninth.

Mary Stuart retired for a while to a convent at Rheims,

## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

but soon, upon the death of her mother at Edinburgh, she proceeded to Scotland, where a throne awaited her. Quite a number of enthusiastic adorers among the high nobility of France followed her to her new home, because they could not bear the thought of separating from a princess so charming and beautiful,—a princess who kindled in the hearts of all men who were brought into contact with her, desires and frequently a passion which became fatal to them. Unquestionably Mary Stuart was one of the most dangerous coquettes who ever lived, and at the brilliant and voluptuous court of the Valois in France, almost under the personal direction of the famous Diana de Poitiers, she had cultivated the art of using her extraordinary charms and accomplishments for the seduction of men to her best advantage. One of the most conspicuous of these followers from France was Du Chatelard, the scion of one of the noblest houses of the French monarchy. He bears the sad distinction of having been the first victim to Mary Stuart's intrigues, and of having paid for the mad and uncontrollable passion which he had conceived for her with his life. Chatelard himself was a young man of high accomplishments. He was a poet and musician, and by his sweet voice he easily won the favor of the young Queen. She imprudently gave him so many proofs of her favor and openly admitted him to such a close intimacy that young Chatelard not without reason believed that she returned the love which he had conceived for her. And Mary was not in the least afraid to show her fondness for him. It is authentically reported, for instance, that in bidding him good-night in the presence of the court "she kissed him below the chin, looking at him in a way that set his whole



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

soul afire." No wonder that the young man in the transport of his passion committed acts of indiscretion and madness, which in a short time led to his execution, without visibly affecting the beautiful coquette who had encouraged his passion. One night the ladies of the palace discovered him hidden behind the curtains of the Queen's bed, but his audacity was ascribed to his thoughtlessness and vanity. He was expelled from the palace for a while, but was soon afterwards forgiven and received again into the Queen's intimacy. This act of pardon turned the young man's head again. He made no secret of his glowing admiration for the Queen, and addressed amorous verses to her, which were repeated by her attendants. One evening he was again discovered in the Queen's bedroom, where he had secreted himself under the Queen's bed. This second time he was put on trial, and was condemned to death for having conspired against the Queen's life. In vain he protested his undying love for Mary Stuart, but the judges were inexorable, and Mary herself, who had been trifling with his heart so long, and who with a single stroke of the pen could have ~~pardoned and saved~~ him, coolly handed him over to the executioner. A scaffold was erected before the windows of Holyrood Palace, where Mary resided, and Du Chatelard, the grand-nephew of the famous Chevalier Bayard, suffered death with a heroism worthy of his great ancestor. His last words were, as he cast a sorrowful look upon the windows behind which the Queen stood with her attendants: "Farewell, thou who art so beautiful and so cruel, who killest me, and whom I cannot cease to love!"

The death of Chatelard was the first of a series caused

## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

by the mad passion which Mary Stuart kindled in the hearts of her adorers. Another attendant who had followed Queen Mary from France to Scotland, and whose tragic fate is even more generally known than that of Du Chatelard, was David Rizzio, an Italian musician, who for some time had been attached to the court of Francis the Second of France. Rizzio was of low birth, but had some talent as a composer of songs and as a singer, and had been brought from Italy by the French Ambassador at Piedmont, from whose service he passed into that of one of the enthusiastic noblemen who had escorted the young Queen to Scotland. The Queen's attention was soon attracted to the Italian composer and singer, and she begged Rizzio of the nobleman, so that he might enter her own service and by his art make her forget the lonesome hours and the homesickness for France which she felt would be the inevitable result of her residence in Scotland. By a congeniality of taste the poor and low-born Italian artist and the beautiful young Queen were thrown together a great deal, and gradually the love for the art ripened into a preference for the artist. He soon became the declared favorite and private secretary of the Queen, who made him practically the omnipotent counsellor and minister of her policy.

The scandal of this singular preference, which was at once announced as a vulgar love affair, spread rapidly over all Scotland, and gave rise to loud complaints by the Protestants, headed by John Knox, who preached against the "woman of Babylon" and her low-bred paramour. The Queen was blind to the consequences of her infatuation for this lute player, a mere servant, who moreover, by his Italian nationality and Catholic religion,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

defied the narrow prejudices of the Scotch people. In spite of her beauty, youth, and loveliness the Queen became very unpopular, not only with the nobility, but with the great mass of the people.

At that very time Mary Stuart was induced, mainly through the influence of Queen Elizabeth of England, to contract a marriage with Henry Darnley, a young Scot of the almost royal house of Lennox, of great physical, although somewhat effeminate, beauty, but of very inferior mind. On seeing this young Adonis, Mary Stuart fell immediately and very desperately in love with him, while it was noticed that Darnley showed much greater coldness than men generally manifested in their gallantry toward her. Darnley, descending from a daughter of Henry the Eighth, had perhaps as good a title to the crown of England as Mary Stuart, and by a marriage of these two claimants, it was expected that their interests would be consolidated and consequently strengthened. The interest which Queen Elizabeth of England had to promote this marriage was her hope of lowering Queen Mary's standing and authority in the eyes of her many Catholic adherents in England by this marriage with an English subject, — an intention in which Elizabeth was largely successful. In spite of the strong opposition of a number of the most prominent Scotch nobles and most notably of Lord Murray, Mary's half-brother, the marriage was consummated on the twenty-ninth of July, 1565. On the other hand, David Rizzio, Mary's Italian secretary and confidant, had very warmly advocated and promoted the marriage, and Darnley openly paid court to him, expecting great results from his influence over the Queen. Why Rizzio should have so eagerly encouraged the mar-



LORD DARNLEY



## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

riage is involved in doubt. Very likely the scandalous stories circulated about the Queen's relations to Rizzio were mere inventions; and Rizzio, who moreover was deformed and ugly, far from being the Queen's lover, was only ambitious; he hoped to have even a greater share of political authority under a nominal king, whom he recognized as an intellectual nonentity, but whose personal beauty diverted the young Queen's thoughts from the cares of government.

During the first months after the wedding Rizzio's expectations were fully realized. The young Queen in the transport of her passion for Darnley paid no attention to government affairs; her whole mind and soul seemed to be enwrapped in her love for her young husband; apparently she cared for nothing else but to caress him and to shower her favors upon him. She conferred upon him the title of king, without, however, giving him the attributes of royal power, which she reserved for herself. If Darnley had been a man of greater mental calibre he could very easily have made himself king in fact as well as in name; but he was a weakling in every respect. After the first few weeks had passed away in the closest intimacy with her consort, Mary's extreme fondness, not to say idolatry, of him, entirely disappeared, and in a very short time her conduct toward him assumed a degree of estrangement and coldness which contrasted strangely with the cordiality which had preceded them. Mary's full confidence and intimacy turned once more toward Rizzio, whose ascendancy over her mind seemed to be greater than ever before. More than anybody else Darnley was dissatisfied with this turn of affairs. He saw that the chance of empire had slipped away from

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

him, and he found that it was impossible for him to recover his former standing with the Queen. In vain he tried to be admitted to a direction of the government affairs and to perform some of the duties which seemed to pertain to his exalted station in the state; but Queen Mary obstinately refused to accede to these demands. Darnley, who ascribed this refusal, in part at least, to Rizzio's influence, then joined the party of political malcontents who, either from motives of personal ambition or of religious antipathy, were anxious to bring about the overthrow of the Italian favorite and place a national and, if possible, a Protestant ministry in power. To carry out this plan they won Darnley over to their side, and filled his mind with dark insinuations and jealousy against Rizzio. It seems they also promised him a coregency with the Queen, and full royal authority equal to hers in case the much-hated Italian should be removed.

These prospects were sufficient to inflame Darnley's ambition and make him a willing tool in the hands of Rizzio's enemies. He did not shrink even from murder, and committed it openly and defiantly. As soon as the conviction had been established in his mind that Rizzio stood in the way of his ambition, he resolved upon his assassination, which was not only to lead to his own aggrandizement, but also to punish Mary for having preferred the Italian to him. He did not wait long to carry his plan into execution; and the brutality and reckless ferocity with which the murder was committed were even more atrocious and repulsive than the crime itself. Only a brute and cowardly knave could have planned it.

The murder was committed on the evening of Sunday, the ninth of March, 1566, in the Queen's private dining-

## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

room in the palace of Holyrood, adjoining her bedroom. The Queen was there with the Countess of Argyle, one or two other ladies, and Rizzio, her secretary. The best of feeling and humor prevailed in the little party. There was not the least indication or suspicion of impending trouble or danger. Nevertheless an armed force of five hundred adherents of the conspirators, under the lead of one of Darnley's lieutenants, had been posted on the outside so as to surround the palace entirely. The greatest caution had been observed to avoid all noise, and the first intimation that something was wrong was conveyed to the little party in the dining-room by the sudden appearance of Darnley. With great familiarity he throws his arm around the Queen's waist. He is almost immediately followed by Ruthven, one of his friends, who is clad in full armor and is ghastly pale from excitement and fear. The Queen haughtily commands him to leave the room; but before he can answer, her bedroom is filled with men bearing torches and brandishing their swords, nearly all under the influence of liquor, and calling with loud and threatening voices for Rizzio. The Italian knows immediately what this scene means. He jumps from his seat and takes refuge behind the Queen, clutching her gown with the grasp of despair and imploring her to save his life. Mary Stuart at this moment stands erect in the consciousness of her outraged dignity, her eyes sparkling with indignation and wrath, and trying to protect Rizzio against the crowd of aggressors who are pushing up to her, upsetting the table on which she leans her hand, and trying to push her aside in order to get at Rizzio. For a few moments she succeeds in keeping them at bay; but then it is Darnley who comes to their



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

rescue. He seizes the Queen, tries to push her away, and takes hold of Rizzio's hand in order to make him loose his grasp of Mary's gown. In this struggle Mary has partly uncovered the Italian, and one of the conspirators, espying the opportunity, plunges a dagger over Mary's shoulder into Rizzio's breast. It is a signal for a general assault on the unfortunate victim. Like madmen they rush upon him from all sides; they drag him from behind the Queen, who is herself in danger of being slain; they beat him, they kick him, they plunge their swords, their knives, their daggers into his bleeding and mutilated body, they pull him by the hair, lifeless and maimed as he is, through the dining-room, through the bedroom, to the outer door of the antechamber, and only desist when they see that it is nothing but a corpse which they are maltreating.

The dead silence which suddenly follows gives notice to Mary that the horrid crime has been fully committed, that her favorite lies prostrate and silenced forever at the threshold of her bedroom. What wonder that in that terrible hour thoughts of revenge and hatred against Darnley, the leader of this gang of savages and murderers, arise in her brain, never to leave it again?

The assassination of Rizzio had opened a chasm between Mary Stuart and Darnley which nothing but his own blood could fill up. From the very first moment it became evident — and the Queen made no secret of it — that Mary Stuart intended to resent the foul murder of one who, if he had not been her lover, had enjoyed her confidence and her friendship, and whom not even her personal intercession had been able to save from a most

## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

cruel and entirely undeserved death. Immediately after the murder, when Ruthven came back to her presence, with the blood-stained dagger still in his hand, and demanded wine, she answered: "It shall be dear blood to some of you!" Nor would she permit the blood of Rizzio to be washed off the floor; she wished that it should forever remain as a mark of the murder which had been committed there, and she ordered a partition to be built between the grand staircase and the door of the ante-chamber leading to her bedroom, in order to protect the blood-stained floor from being desecrated by the feet of visitors. In this condition the Palace has remained for centuries and the stains caused by Rizzio's blood have withstood the lapse of hundreds of years.

The halcyon days which Mary had tried to create for herself at Holyrood—the days and hours which she had hoped would console her by poetry, music, and song for her absence from France—had come to a sudden and cruel end. The conspirators were not satisfied with having slain Rizzio; his murder was only the unavoidable means to accomplish a certain purpose,—to get control of the government. They kept the Queen in close captivity and would not permit any of her friends, not even her ladies, to see or confer with her. It was then that Mary resorted to her great power of duplicity. Carefully concealing the profound horror and disgust with which the sight of Darnley filled her, she convinced him easily that her interests and his were identical, that his strength lay in his exalted station as consort of the Queen, and that their continued estrangement and enmity would only lead to the elevation of her half-brother, Lord Murray, or some other great nobleman. Darnley was only too

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

easily persuaded; he fell readily into the trap which the deceitful Queen had set for him. In his overweening vanity, and convinced of his own invincibility, he ascribed the passionate appeals and the affectionate solicitations of the Queen for his support to a renewal of her former love and passion for him. Carried away by her tenderness and loveliness, he promised to release her from her captivity and to abduct her to Dunbar castle, where she would be secure from any plots of her enemies. Darnley induced a number of his personal friends and adherents to join him in this undertaking, and a few nights later the flight from Holyrood to Dunbar was effected with complete success.

Darnley, after having thus separated his cause from that of the enemies of the Queen, — who were seriously debating whether she should be imprisoned for life, exiled from the country, or put to death, — went a step further. He openly denounced the assassination of Rizzio as an inexcusable crime, and disclaimed all previous knowledge of and complicity in it. Nobody believed him, — neither the Queen, who had seen his active participation in the murder when he could easily have prevented it; nor the conspirators, who knew that he had planned all the details, had helped in its execution, and had promised to protect those who would take a hand in it. But Darnley's lying declaration served the political aims of the Queen well. From Dunbar she issued an appeal to the loyal people and nobles of Scotland, imploring their assistance against the rebels who had driven her from Edinburgh and had insulted and threatened her in her own palace, and using the presence and the declaration of the King to contradict the stories and accusations circulated

## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

by the conspirators and "rebels" against her scandalous private life. Eight thousand loyal Scots responded to this appeal of their Queen, and at the head of this enthusiastic army Queen Mary and her husband returned to Edinburgh and once more took possession of Holyrood.

It was not long before the Queen threw off the mask of affection for Darnley, which she had assumed for political purposes, and openly again showed that aversion which she really felt for him. Not even the birth of her son, who afterwards as James the Sixth ruled over Scotland and as James the First over England, changed the strained relations between husband and wife. There seems to be no doubt that the new cause of these strained relations, which grew more apparent from day to day, was a criminal and adulterous love affair which had quite suddenly sprung up between the Queen and one of the noblemen of her court, the Earl of Bothwell.

The new favorite was a scion of one of the noblest and most renowned families of Scotland, but his personal history was far from being honorable. The mere fact that a man with such antecedents could appear at court and be received in the very highest society is a sad comment on the moral tone prevailing at that court and in that society. Bothwell was at that time no longer a young man. When quite young he had one day disappeared from the castle of his fathers and, on reaching the coast of the North Sea, had joined a gang of adventurers who, as pirates, infested those waters and were a terror to the merchant vessels of all the nations of Europe. By natural ability, unbounded courage and daring the young Scotchman had rapidly risen to a commanding position among the wild corsairs; his name was repeated with

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

fear and awe from the coasts of Denmark to the west coast of Ireland. In one of the desperate engagements with warships of the Hanseatic League he had lost one eye, but had saved his life and his freedom. Many years of his life he had passed in this wild and adventurous career. Then the news of the death of his father reached him, and one morning he reappeared in his ancestral home to take possession of his vast domain. The turbulent condition of Scotland, the civil war between Protestants and Catholics, the struggles for supremacy between the crown and the nobility, were congenial to his adventurous and reckless spirit. He had been among the first to greet Mary Stuart on her arrival from France and had shown her, from the first day he saw her, an enthusiastic, almost worshipful devotion. He was a passionate adorer of female beauty, and the romantic halo of his past life which surrounded his brow had secured for him triumphs in love-affairs with some of the fairest women of the court. He was among those who escorted Mary from Holyrood to Dunbar, and again he was one of those who led her back in triumph from Dunbar to Edinburgh. During this return march Bothwell distinguished himself by the skill of his military dispositions, by his boldness and intrepidity, and attracted the personal notice of the Queen.

At Holyrood the acquaintance between the Queen and the daring general quickly ripened into love and intimacy, although the Queen took great care at first to conceal the new passion which had taken possession of her inflammable heart, even from her closest friends. But while these efforts on the part of the Queen may have been successful in deceiving her intimate friends, there were always eyes turned upon her which were not so easily deceived,—

## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

and these eyes were those of the ambassadors of England, France, and Spain accredited at her court. They watched her conduct very attentively, and almost simultaneously reported to their sovereigns the nascent favor with which the Queen looked upon Bothwell, and the growing coldness which became noticeable between her and Darnley. It was only a serious accident, which befell Bothwell soon afterwards and which imperilled his life for several days, that revealed the new passion of the Queen to the whole court and placed the new favorite at the head of the government, with similar honors and similar powers to those previously showered on Rizzio.

. . . . .

We are neither writing a personal history of Queen Mary, nor a political history of her reign; we are merely writing a history of the assassinations of which she was, so to speak, the central figure that gave them world-wide celebrity. We have therefore carefully excluded from our narration all political and biographical facts which were either not directly connected with these assassinations or had not a psychological bearing upon them.

We have reached the period when Mary — blinded by passion and infatuated with love for a man utterly unworthy of her, or to speak more correctly, of the exalted position she occupied in the world — surrendered not only herself, but also the dignity of the crown and the honor and the interests of the realm to the Earl of Bothwell, known to the entire court as a profligate and libertine of the worst sort and as a most unscrupulous and reckless adventurer. It was this infatuation for Bothwell and the shameless liaison she formed with him from which all of Queen Mary's sufferings and disas-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ters now flowed in rapid succession. Not even her incomparable beauty and loveliness could save her from the contempt attached to this disgraceful liaison, of which she made soon no more a secret than she had formerly made of her preference for Rizzio. But while in her infatuation for the Italian singer the artistic taste of the Queen was rather successfully used by her admirers as an excuse for her enthusiastic preference for him, there was absolutely no excuse for her liaison with Bothwell. And Bothwell did all he could do to strengthen the unfavorable impression of Mary's conduct by the haughty and overbearing rudeness with which he treated the greatest lords and the highest dignitaries of the kingdom, including the King himself, for whom he openly showed the greatest contempt.

Outraged by the insults which he had to endure day after day and from which the Queen herself did not seem to be willing to protect him, Darnley suddenly left the court and went to Glasgow, where he took up his residence in the house of his father, the Earl of Lennox. The King's sudden departure caused more unfavorable comment than the Queen had anticipated. It greatly disconcerted her, because she was afraid that from Glasgow Darnley might issue an appeal to the Scotch people, and especially to the dissatisfied nobility, laying before them his complaints and calling upon them to overthrow the disgraceful rule of an adulterous wife and her paramour.

Soon the news came from Glasgow that Darnley had fallen seriously ill, that he was suffering from the small-pox and was expected to die. The Queen took advantage of this serious illness and once more resorted to her power of dissimulation, which had served her so well after



## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

Rizzio's death. She intended now to employ it not only to temporarily deceive and beguile her husband, but to decoy him into an ambush and put him to death. Incredible as the enormity and ferocity of the crime may appear, especially on the part of a young and beautiful woman distinguished by so many mental advantages, there seems not to be the least doubt that Mary, in going to Glasgow and appearing at the bedside of her sick husband as a loving wife, had this horrid crime in view and successfully paved the way for its execution. She again played with consummate art the part of a loving and trembling wife, and deceived Darnley so fully that he promised to follow her to Edinburgh as soon as the progress of his convalescence would make it possible for him to undertake the journey. Thus fully assured of Darnley's forgiveness, she returned to Holyrood and perfected there, together with Bothwell, the arrangements for his murder.

When Darnley arrived at Edinburgh, a short time afterwards, he was not, as he ought to have been, taken to the royal palace, where he could have been cared for better than anywhere else, but to a private residence in an isolated location in one of the suburbs of the city, whose salubrious location, it was alleged, would facilitate the King's rapid recovery. Darnley himself was greatly surprised at these arrangements, especially when he learned that the Queen would not take up her residence with him, but would remain at the Palace. Apprehensions of some impending danger haunted his mind, and he became melancholy and despondent. However, the Queen by her appearance and the excess of her tenderness soon dispelled his vague fears and convinced him



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

that only care for his enfeebled condition and the hope of quickening his convalescence had prompted her to select his residence, from which he would be promptly removed after his complete recovery. In order to reassure him fully, she remained several nights with him, occupying a room immediately beneath his own, and manifesting toward him the greatest affection and solicitude. One of her pages slept in the same room with him, and five or six servants, whom Bothwell had appointed, formed the entire household.

Late in the evening of February 9, 1567, the Queen left the house and went back to Holyrood to pass the night there, because one of the musicians attached to the royal chapel was to be married that night, and she had promised to be at the wedding. It was while the wedding-festivities were going on at Holyrood and while the Queen was dancing with some of the courtiers in the most careless and unaffected manner possible, that a terrific explosion took place which was heard and felt in all parts of the city and at Holyrood. Soon the rumor spread that the house of the King had been blown to atoms and that all the inmates were buried under the ruins. This rumor was only partly true. The morning light of the tenth of February revealed the fact that the house had been blown up by means of an underground mine; but the corpse of the King was not found among the ruins. On the contrary, it was found, together with the corpse of the page, in an orchard adjoining the house, and neither the King nor the page showed any marks of gunpowder; but the bloated condition of their faces and the marks of finger-nails on their necks showed that both had been choked to death and had been left lying on the ground where the assassins

## RIZZIO AND DARNLEY

had killed them. It was then surmised that both the King and the page, having been disturbed in their sleep by the approach of the assassins, had tried to make their escape through the orchard, but had been overtaken in their flight and slain. The explosion had unquestionably been intended to destroy all vestiges of the crime by burying both the assassins and their victims under the ruins, but it had either taken place too soon, before the murderers could have carried the King and the page back to the house, or the assassins had hurried away immediately after committing the deed. At all events, Darnley was dead.

The evidences of premeditated murder were so plain that from the very first not the least doubt was manifested as to the character of the calamity. Neither was there the least uncertainty in the public mind as to the author or authors of the terrible catastrophe and the assassinations attending it. The public voice immediately named Bothwell as the murderer and added, in a whisper, the name of the Queen as his accomplice. In those times murders were committed so often that the murderers in a majority of cases escaped unpunished. But in this case the rank of the victim was so exalted, and moreover the circumstances surrounding the crime were so damaging to the authority of the crown, that public opinion demanding an investigation of the death of the King could not be disregarded. The Queen, who, if innocent, should have been the first to insist on a thorough investigation of the crime by which her husband was killed, affected an absolute indifference in the matter. She utterly disregarded the damaging rumors which openly charged Bothwell with the murder, and by this indifference confirmed the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

suspicion of her silent active (or at best, passive) participation in the crime. The Queen even openly defied public opinion by leaving Bothwell in the undisturbed possession of the honors and dignities she had conferred upon him, and by adding new ones, showing the continued favor the Earl enjoyed, in spite of the public clamor raised against him. "But Banquo's ghost would not go down!" The excitement and the indignation of the people rose to the highest point. On her appearance in the streets, the Queen was insulted by the women. She found it necessary for her safety to leave Holyrood and seek refuge in the fortified castle. Bothwell had the audacity to demand a public trial, because the Earl of Lennox, Darnley's father, had openly accused him of the murder; and the cowardly judges, overawed by the power of the accused, by the royal troops, by the authority of the Queen, acquitted him, while the whole people considered and declared him guilty.

We have reached the end of this atrocious murder. Posterity holds Queen Mary guilty of the crime of having murdered her young husband. Her abduction by Bothwell and her marriage to him, although apparently forced upon her, had been planned by the two murderers even before the assassination. Mary's long imprisonment and final execution at the bidding of a cruel and jealous rival has often been deplored by biographer, historian, and dramatist,—but were they more than a just atonement for crimes as atrocious as they were unprecedented?

CHAPTER X

WILLIAM OF ORANGE







WILLIAM OF ORANGE

## CHAPTER X

### ASSASSINATION OF WILLIAM OF ORANGE

(July 10, 1584)

IT was said by one of the wild revolutionists of France, in extenuation of his incessant demands for the execution of a larger number of the nobility, that the tree of liberty, to grow vigorously, should be watered with plenty of blood. Alas! The history of the republics of the world, not only since the great French Revolution of 1789, but at all times, both ancient and modern, proves the justice of this assertion, but none furnishes a more convincing proof of it than the history of the Dutch Republic in its heroic struggle against the gigantic power of Spain and other monarchical nations. At the very threshold of that history stands the luminous figure of the great Prince of Orange, William the Silent, — warrior, statesman, orator, and patriot; whose assassination, closely following upon the murders of the night of St. Bartholomew, is but the first of the crimes committed against the illustrious men of the Dutch Republic — Olden Barnevelt, the brothers De Witt, and others.

The assassination of William of Orange is of a semi-political and semi-religious character. The revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish rule, of which the Prince of Orange was the principal figure, originated in religious



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

conflicts between the Netherlanders — most of whom were Calvinists or Lutherans — and the bigoted King of Spain, Philip the Second, who was more Catholic than the Pope himself. It was one of the fixed ideas of Philip the Second, a perfect monomania, that in the immense empire over which he ruled, none but faithful believers in the Catholic faith should be tolerated, and that all heretics or dissidents should be exterminated with fire and sword. In the Pyrenean peninsula — for Portugal was at this time annexed to Spain — this idea was most radically carried out, and year after year the Inquisition, which flourished there as the first institution of the state, handed over thousands of victims, convicted or suspected of heresy, to a most cruel death at the stake for the purpose of purifying the spiritual atmosphere of the country. But when an effort was being made on the part of the King to introduce the same system of spiritual purification into the Netherlands, which he had inherited from his father, the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and whose population was mostly of Germanic race, that effort met with a most stubborn and almost insuperable resistance.

Already, under Charles the Fifth, all attempts to smother the Protestant Reformation — which had entered the Netherlands both from Germany and France and which had immediately found many adherents — had failed. The Emperor, himself a Netherlander and familiar with the character of the people, had deemed it prudent to abolish the Inquisition (at least in name) and not to interfere too strongly with those personal rights of the inhabitants which their municipal or provincial statutes guaranteed to them. Moreover the Emperor had a very

## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

affable and popular way of dealing with the people, and he could do a great many things which no other ruler might have presumed to do. When Charles the Fifth abdicated in 1555, the grief of the people of the Netherlands was not only general, but sincere; they seemed to feel instinctively that the change which was to occur in the government was full of impending dangers and calamities for them. The personality of the new ruler fully justified these apprehensions. Philip the Second came to the Netherlands from England, where he had resided a short time as consort of Queen Mary, and his reputation for bigotry, fanaticism, and cruelty had preceded his arrival. Many of the acts of bloodshed and cruelty which were committed under that reign were more or less justly imputed to his influence, and his new subjects trembled at the prospects of similar scenes of persecution and despotism. No wonder that on the twenty-fifth of October, 1555, when the act of abdication was consummated at Brussels, and when the infirm Emperor, leaning upon the shoulder of Prince William of Orange, appeared before the representatives and high dignitaries of all the provinces constituting the Netherlands, and ceded the government to his son, who stood on his right side, a shudder passed through the high assembly. Many eyes passed apprehensively from the open and kindly countenance of the Emperor, then bathed in tears, to the sinister and cruel features of King Philip. What a contrast also between the majestic form and noble countenance of William of Orange and the small, feeble, narrow-chested son of Charles, who with distrustful eyes looked down upon this assemblage of nobles as if they were strangers or enemies, and whom not even

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the glitter of royalty could invest with dignity, although his features showed uncommon pride and haughtiness! The hopes of the people of the Low Countries rested upon the one; their fears were centred on the other.

Unquestionably it had been the Emperor's intention to place William of Orange by the side of his son as chief adviser and protector; but the characters of the two were so different — the one broad, humane, manly; the other narrow, bigoted, timid — that it soon became manifest that a hearty coöperation of the two men for the welfare of the state was impossible. Moreover the aspirations and tendencies in regard to the government of the provinces which the two men entertained were absolutely conflicting, the Prince being in favor of liberal institutions and scrupulous observance of the guaranteed rights of the provinces, while the King was illiberal and despotic, without regard for the local customs and rights of the Netherlanders, anxious to concentrate all powers in his hands and to subordinate the whole government to his autocratic will.

These conflicting tendencies and these antipathies grew and became intensified as the months and years passed by; consequently, when Philip in 1559 left Brussels for Spain, he did not appoint the Prince of Orange Governor-General of the Netherlands, to which position he was clearly entitled, but conferred that honor with the title of regent upon his half-sister, Margaret, Duchess of Parma, who shared his own fanatical ideas. As her chief adviser he appointed Cardinal Granvella, a man of great sagacity and talent, but filled with animosity against the enemies of the Catholic Church, and in full though secret accord with the King concerning the

## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

necessity of wiping out the privileges of the "arrogant burghers of the Low Countries." William of Orange was appointed Stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland, and a member of the Council of State, a sort of cabinet for the Regent Duchess in which Cardinal Granvella was the leading spirit. Several other prominent noblemen of the Dutch provinces, Count Egmont, the conqueror of Gravelines, and Count Hoorn, were also members of the Council of State; but they were in a minority, and the Spanish or Cardinalistic party ruled its decisions absolutely. All of these decisions were hostile to the guaranteed rights of the Provinces; they interfered with freedom of conscience; they reintroduced the Spanish Inquisition under the disguise of creating new episcopal sees and attaching two inquisitors to each; and by establishing Spanish garrisons in the fortified towns they violated the constitutional right of the provinces that no foreign troops should be stationed there. The protests of the Prince of Orange and of Counts Egmont and Hoorn were of no avail, so these three distinguished members refused to attend the sessions of the Council of State.

In the meantime a spirit of public dissatisfaction and disorder manifested itself which showed to the sagacious Regent that the measures enacted and enforced by Cardinal Granvella would lead to a revolt against the Spanish régime. The people of Brussels showed their hatred and contempt for the Cardinal in many ways. In public processions they carried banners with insulting inscriptions or offensive caricatures and cartoons exhibiting him in ridiculous positions. Alarmed at these manifestations of public hostility, the Duchess Regent applied to the King,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

implored him to remove Granvella from his post as President of the Council of State. The King reluctantly complied with the request, but Granvella's removal did not change the spirit of the Council; and it was only too evident that its decisions were emanations from the King's own mind. When Count Egmont, who had gone to Madrid on a special mission to plead for the personal and political rights of the Netherlanders, urged upon the King to give them greater religious liberty and to annul some of the stringent laws of the Council of State, Philip got into a rage and exclaimed: "No, no, I would rather die a thousand deaths and lose every square foot of my empire than permit the least change in our religion!" And he added that the decrees of the Council of Trent, which had recently been held, and which had affirmed anew the immutable doctrines of the Catholic Church, should be rigidly enforced in all his states. New instructions to that effect were sent to the Netherlands, followed by new convictions and new executions.

It was at this perilous and critical time that William of Orange openly accepted the Lutheran faith. Shortly before, he had been married to Princess Anne of Saxony, a daughter of the famous Maurice, Elector of Saxony, and a fervent Lutheran. William's conversion to Protestantism has been often ascribed to the influence of his wife, but it should be remembered that William was born a prince of Nassau in Germany and the son of Lutheran parents, and that his Catholicism dated only from the time of his later education at the court of Charles the Fifth, where he was placed as a page at the early age of nine years. William had never forgotten the lessons of Protestantism which he had imbibed in his early child-

## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

hood, and while professing the Catholic faith in later years, he had retained that respect and that affection for the principles of the Reformation which so peculiarly qualified him to act as umpire and leader in a contest in which religion played so conspicuous a part.

Up to that time the nobility had taken much less interest in the religious quarrels than the lower classes of the people; but the steadily increasing number of convictions and executions for heresy aroused their fears that the Spanish monarch intended to abolish their time-honored privileges and wished to substitute a Spanish autocracy for their liberal self-government. Against this intention they loudly protested, Catholics as well as Protestants, and bound themselves to stand together in their resistance to further acts of aggression. They presented petitions and protests to the Duchess Regent who received them in a conciliatory spirit, and forwarded them to the King, recommending at the same time greater leniency and moderation. But Philip the Second, getting tired of the many complaints and remonstrances reaching him from Brussels, and determined to stamp out heresy at whatever cost, sent the Duke of Alva, the sternest and most cruel of all his commanders, at the head of a considerable army to the Netherlands, with full powers to restore order and to reestablish the authority of the Catholic Church. From the well-known character of the commander-in-chief it could not be doubted that the King's severe orders would be carried out in the most cruel and unrelenting spirit, and that neither age nor sex nor rank would be spared. That Alva's mission would be successful, the King did not doubt for a minute. But it was on his part a case of misplaced judgment, because his narrow mind could not

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

measure the difference between the Jews and Moriscos, and the Netherlanders: against the former the policy of violence and compulsion had been successful; against the latter that same policy was doomed to ignominious failure. The rumor that he would come as a bloody avenger preceded Alva's arrival, and filled the hearts of the Netherlanders with terror. A regular panic ensued, and an emigration *en masse* was organized; it looked as though the northern provinces were to be depopulated entirely by this exodus of men, women and children, mostly belonging to the mercantile and working classes, and taking their merchandise and their household goods with them.

The sending of an army composed entirely of Spaniards and Italians into the Netherlands was so flagrant a violation of the constitutional rights of the provinces, which the King had sworn to maintain, that the Prince of Orange thought the time for open resistance had come, and he conferred with Egmont, Hoorn, and other prominent men concerning its organization. But finding it impossible to organize united resistance against Alva's army, William of Orange, with his profound insight and with his distrust in the Spanish King's intentions, deemed it prudent to leave the Netherlands and withdraw to his estates in Germany instead of imperilling his head by remaining at Brussels. It was in vain that he tried to persuade Egmont, to whom he was greatly attached, to accompany him and to place his valuable life beyond the reach of the Spanish "avenger." Egmont's openhearted and confiding character refused to believe the sinister forebodings of the penetrating genius of his friend; he relied on his immense popularity among the Netherlanders and on the great services he had rendered, on the



## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

battle-field, to the House of Hapsburg. He therefore remained at Brussels, and even welcomed Alva on his arrival at the capital. The Spanish commander conducted himself as the regent *de facto* without paying much attention to the Duchess, who still held that position nominally. One of his first official acts was the appointment of a special tribunal, which he named the Council of Troubles, composed exclusively of Spaniards, to try charges of heresy and treason. The people, however, found another, and more appropriate name for it. On account of the indecent haste and rapidity with which persons were tried, convicted, and executed by this Council, they named it "The Bloedraad" (The Council of Blood). The number of victims was so great that gallows and scaffolds had to be erected in all the cities and towns of the Netherlands, and that the executioners were kept busy in beheading and quartering the heretics and "traitors." Counts Egmont and Hoorn had been arrested, soon after Alva's arrival, on the charge of treason; they were also tried before the Court of Troubles and convicted on trumped-up charges. They were beheaded, together with eighteen members of the nobility, at the public square of Brussels.

This infamous act stirred up William of Orange to immediate action. What he had foreseen and predicted had come to pass. Evidently it was Alva's intention to kill off the leaders in order to get control of the great mass of the people without much difficulty or resistance. William of Orange himself was charged with treason and summoned to appear before the judges of the Court of Troubles. But since his appearance at Brussels would have been equivalent to his conviction, he refused to



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

recognize the jurisdiction of the court, claiming that as a knight of the Golden Fleece he had the right to be tried by the King personally and by no other judges than his peers. At the same time he published an address to the King in which he defended his public actions in a masterly manner, convincing every unbiased mind not only of his patriotic devotion to his country, but also of his loyalty to his sovereign in all his legitimate and constitutional acts of government. The Duke of Alva took no further notice of this defence; but when the day for William's appearance at court had passed, he was sentenced to death, and his property, personal and real, was confiscated as that of a rebel and traitor.

In the meantime the Prince of Orange had not been idle in Germany. He had appealed to his co-religionists for assistance, pointing out to the Protestant princes that the cause of Protestantism itself was the issue of the war in the Netherlands, and that the complete victory of the Spanish army over the Netherlanders would be followed by an overthrow of the Protestant churches, both Lutheran and Calvinistic, in Europe. He succeeded in collecting a considerable army, which he divided into two corps, placing the one under the command of his brother Lewis, Count of Nassau, and invading Brabant with the other. The Count of Nassau was defeated in battle and driven out of Frisia with heavy loss, while Alva avoided giving battle to the Prince of Orange. By skilful manœuvres the Spanish general tired out the patience of the German troops, and when the severe cold of winter set in, the Prince, finding himself without means of paying his soldiers and getting no support from the inhabitants (who were overawed by the Spanish authorities), had to dis-

## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

band his army and to return, temporarily, to Germany. Alva triumphed and pompously reported to the Spanish King that both the rebellion and heresy had been stamped out in the Netherlands, and that his presence was hardly required there any longer. In his overweening vanity he went even so far as to order a bronze monument to be erected in his own honor, in which he was represented as a conqueror, standing with one foot on a Dutch nobleman in full armor and with the other on a man of the people, kneeling and with a Lutheran prayer-book in his hands.

It is not my intention to go into the details of the cruel war in the Netherlands,—cruel even beyond human imagination,—to recount the sufferings, the tortures, the atrocities, the martyrdom imposed upon the unfortunate victims of political and religious persecution, conceived by human fiends educated in the school of the Spanish Inquisition and warmly applauded by him whom both his cotemporaries and posterity have justly named “the demon of the South.” Such a war had never been seen between nations claiming to be civilized; and never has patriotic devotion in defence of home and country, of liberty and creed, been carried to a higher degree than by those brave Netherlanders in the sixteenth century. The world should never forget the immense service which they rendered to mankind by victoriously maintaining the principles of religious liberty, which, without their heroic perseverance, would very likely have perished under the incubus of Spanish despotism and the Spanish Inquisition. That they did not succumb and perish must be considered one of the marvellous enigmas of history, in which the finger of God is plainly visible. Immortal

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

glory and renown should be accorded to the gallant leader who, under the most discouraging and desperate circumstances, never lost hope and confidence in the righteousness and final triumph of his cause, and who, undaunted by personal danger and persecution, never wavered in his loyalty to principle, and held high the banner of popular sovereignty and individual liberty, until the pistol shot of a hired assassin interrupted his glorious career.

If to-day, after the lapse of three centuries, we look back upon that career, our admiration for William of Orange grows steadily. We follow him from his first appearance on the public stage of the Netherlands, as a friend and confidant of Charles the Fifth, as a loyal adviser of the Duchess Regent, as a loyal subject pleading with Philip the Second and warning him to respect the rights of citizenship and religion of the Netherlanders, — pleading and warning in vain; we behold him unsheathing his sword for the defence and, when they appeared to be lost, for the recovery of those rights, toiling, struggling, fighting for the people, always subordinating his own interests to those of the nation and to the sublime cause of which he was the acknowledged champion; we recognize him as the first in the field, the first in the council-room, filling his countrymen with an enthusiasm and a confidence which alone could sustain them in undergoing sufferings and hardships unequalled in history. Thus he stands before us fully realizing and even surpassing the eulogy which Goethe wrote for the monument of another national hero, perhaps worthy, but certainly not so worthy of it as William the Silent: —

## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

“In advance or retreat,  
In success or defeat,  
Ever conscious and great,  
Ever watchful to see,  
From foreign dominion he made us free!”

In translating Goethe's inscription on the famous Blücher monument at Rostock we were strongly impressed with the fact that it was even better adapted for a monument of the great Prince of Orange than for that of the indomitable, but rather reckless, “Marshal Vorwärts.”

The King of Spain had from the first day of his accession known the powerful influence which the Prince of Orange exerted in the Netherlands. The Prince stood without a rival at the head of the nobility, and his eminent talents enhanced the authority which his illustrious birth had secured for him. The King was also informed by his special representatives — the Duchess Regent, Granvella, the Duke of Alva, Don John of Austria, and others — that this authority was steadily increasing, that the great mass of the people idolized the Prince, that his wish was a law for the burghers, and that practically the revolt, its failure or success, depended on him. The exalted character of the Prince precluded the very idea of winning him over to the other side by means of high distinctions or honors, much less by pecuniary bribes or corruption, and nothing remained therefore for the King to do, if he wanted to get rid of the dangerous popular leader, who held a number of the provinces entirely under his sway, than to place him beyond the pale of the law and to offer a high reward for his head. This method of removing rivals or enemies was not unusual in those days; and

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

it should cause no surprise that the monarch who is, and very likely justly, suspected of having ordered the murder of his half-brother, Don Juan d'Austria, and also that of his own son, Don Carlos, was perfectly willing to adopt this method of getting rid of the Prince of Orange, who in his eyes was not only a rebel, but also a heretic, and as such deserved death a hundredfold. The price he put on the Prince's head — twenty-five thousand ducats — showed sufficiently the importance he attached to his life, and how willing he was to tempt assassins by the enormous sum of the reward.

The King, who evidently had experience in such matters, had not miscalculated the temptation, for several attempts were made on the Prince's life in consequence; but they always failed, and it would almost seem as if that life was under the special protection of Providence that it might carry out the plans predestined for it. In 1582, Juan Jaureguy, a young man in the employ of a Spanish merchant of Antwerp, and a religious fanatic, fired a pistol shot at the Prince which came very near killing him. The ball entered the head under the right ear, passed through the roof of the mouth, breaking several teeth, and came out under the left jaw-bone. For a while the Prince's life was despaired of, but he finally rallied and recovered. His would-be assassin was immediately killed, and his accomplices, of whom there were several, were publicly strangled and quartered. In order to deter others from making attempts on the Prince's life, the ghastly remains of these accomplices, one of them a Dominican monk, were nailed to the gates of Antwerp. The joy at the Prince's recovery was general, and thanksgiving days, with divine service in the churches and pub-

## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

lic halls, were held in a number of the provinces. Unfortunately neither these public demonstrations of gratitude and delight, nor the terrible warnings addressed to assassins were sufficient to protect a life so valuable to his country and to the world.

Another assassin was more successful than Jaureguy. The scene of the murder, which took place on the tenth day of July, 1584, was the city of Delft in Holland. Shortly after the noon hour of that day a common-looking man, who had found access to the Prince's residence for the purpose of securing a passport, approached the Prince as he came from the dining-hall and fired three shots at him, one passing through the stomach and causing his death after a very short while. The assassin was a man still young, less than thirty years of age. He was a Frenchman, Balthasar Gérard by name, who had come from his home in Franche-Comté or Burgundy to carry out his hellish design, which was inspired by religious fanaticism and encouraged by Jesuits of the College of Trèves. Through these he was introduced to the Duke of Parma, then Governor-General of the Netherlands, who promised him the royal reward in case of success, and other royal favors besides. Gérard had made his preparations for the murder with considerable circumspection; these preparations were very similar to those which Booth made for his escape after the murder of Abraham Lincoln, and just like Booth, Gérard stumbled and fell in making his escape and hurt himself, and this led to his arrest.

After having undergone the most terrible tortures, his joints having been wrenched and his body nearly roasted alive, he was executed in the most cruel manner imagin-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

able. His right hand was burnt off with red-hot irons; the flesh was torn from half a dozen different parts of his body, which was then broken on the wheel. Gérard was still alive; his vitality was wonderful. The executioners then disembowelled and quartered him; tore out his heart and flung it in his face. It was then only that the unfortunate man breathed his last. His head was then cut off and placed on a pike of a gate in the rear of the Prince's residence, and the four parts of his body were fastened to the four gates of the city. This cruel mutilation and dismemberment of the assassin's body was hardly sufficient to satisfy the vengeance of the people; the certainty that the King of Spain stooped even to murder of the basest sort to recover his sovereignty over the Netherlands exalted their desire for absolute and lasting national independence to a sort of religious dogma which made all hope of peace illusory.

When the assassin's hand cut short the life of the Prince of Orange, he had not completed the great work for which he had toiled, fought, suffered and died. But part of that work had been done, and it had been done so well and so thoroughly that the Republic stood on a firm foundation ready to receive the other provinces which were still in the power of Spain as a fitting superstructure. For this reason history recognizes William the Silent as the founder of the Dutch Republic and of the independence of the United Provinces.

To Americans the character of William the Silent is of special interest because it bears, in many respects, a striking resemblance to that of George Washington. Both were the principal figures in wars for the independence of their countries; both were soldiers and statesmen of a



## WILLIAM OF ORANGE

high order. If Washington was very likely the greater general, William the Silent was very likely the greater statesman, and the success of the American cause would have been as impossible without Washington as the failure of the Dutch struggle would have been certain without William of Orange. Both were sterling patriots and subordinated their own interests to those of the nations they represented; but in this respect Washington was, perhaps, superior to William, who had an eye on the possibilities which might arise after a successful issue of the war. It should be remembered, however, that William of Orange was a prince and sovereign before he was made the head of the Netherlanders rising in revolt against Spain, and that, as a sovereign, it was natural for him to look after the interests of his family and dynasty. As far as mental and moral qualifications are concerned, both men were distinguished by that perfect equilibrium of powers of the mind and powers of the soul, which is but rarely found in men of the highest rank. Neither of these statesmen had the capacity of immediately conceiving and executing plans of a decisive character. Their minds, although full of resources, worked slowly in elaborating such plans; they weighed and hesitated before taking action; but as soon as their minds had been made up and a plan had been resolved upon, they acted without wavering, and held on to it until success or failure resulted from it. The great respect in which Washington has been always held by British historians and statesmen is, perhaps, the noblest tribute that can be paid to his character and abilities. The fact that Philip the Second relied less on his splendid armies, led by some of the ablest generals of Europe, and on his powerful navy, than



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

on the death of William the Silent is, perhaps, the greatest eulogy which can be given to the great founder of the Dutch Republic. Unquestionably the Spanish monarch considered the twenty-five thousand gold pieces which he offered for the assassination of William of Orange, although an enormous sum for those times, but a very cheap equivalent for the life of a man who had been the very life and soul, the inspiring genius of the rebellious Dutch provinces. If monuments of foreign statesmen and rulers are to be erected on American soil, no fitter and no worthier man can be found for that honor than William the Silent.

CHAPTER XI  
IVAN THE TERRIBLE

## CHAPTER XI

### IVAN THE TERRIBLE





IVAN THE TERRIBLE

## CHAPTER XI

### ASSASSINATIONS BY IVAN THE TERRIBLE

(1560-1584)

**R**USSIAN history abounds in instances of famous assassinations. Sometimes these murders were committed by the rulers of Russia, at other times these rulers themselves were the victims. Ivan the Fourth, whose very surname, "the Terrible," sufficiently indicates his character, was one of the most cruel and inhuman monarchs who ever ruled over a nation, either in ancient or modern times. It is therefore not one famous assassination which we wish to describe, but a series of monstrous crimes, unparalleled in history as the acts of one individual.

Ivan was only three years old when his father died. A regency was formed, composed of his mother and a council of boyars, belonging to different factions, who were constantly at war with one another. At no time had Russia been more poorly governed. As Ivan grew up, he was despised and maltreated by the haughty nobility; his favorites were abused. In order to divert his mind from nobler occupations and keep him in profound ignorance of public affairs, he was amused and entertained with coarse and brutal games which developed his innate cruelty and ferocity, and made him, at an early

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

age, the terror of those who were subordinated to him. He delighted in torturing and slowly killing domestic animals, and also in crippling and killing old men and old women whom he encountered in the streets while riding fast horses or driving a carriage like a madman, without looking either right or left. He was a mere boy yet — hardly fourteen — when the boyars began to fear him and predicted a reign of terror when he should assume the reins of government.

At seventeen, he dissolved the regency and declared his intention to reign for himself. He also wanted to get married, and sent out messengers to the different provinces of the Empire to pick out the most beautiful young girls and send them to the capital, that he might choose a wife from among their number. Many noblemen hid their handsome daughters, or sent them far away from home on hearing of the Czar's intention. His reputation for excessive cruelty had reached already the remotest parts of the Empire, and nearly every boyar trembled at the mere idea of becoming his father-in-law. But the messenger succeeded nevertheless in bringing together several hundred young girls of extraordinary beauty, and sent them to the capital. Ivan then chose from their number Anastasia Romanowna, a young girl of great beauty and great brilliancy of mind. He fell desperately in love with her, and through the superiority of her mind she gained a great influence over him, and succeeded even in keeping his cruelty in check.

Ivan was a man of natural ability. He had some striking qualities, and might have been a great ruler if his education had been entrusted to competent and wise teachers. At an early age he learned the art of dissem-

## IVAN THE TERRIBLE

bling to perfection, and possessed the rare faculty of keeping his plans and intentions secret even from his closest friends. It was only after the conquest of Kasan that he threw off the mask. Until then he had been exceedingly friendly and kind to a number of the powerful noblemen, who considered themselves almost his peers in rank and birth. But when that conquest had added to his power and authority, he suddenly said to his boyars: "At last I am free! God has made me the master over all. Beware!" Again it was his wife, Anastasia Romanowna, who with rare political sagacity prevented him from too openly showing hostility and impatience at their pretentious conduct. He was very young, and could afford to wait. But in 1560, when Ivan was only twenty-nine years old, Anastasia, his best friend and his ablest counsellor, died, and he found no loving hand to restrain his passions and keep his cruelty and ferocity in check. Nevertheless, for some time after her death the softening influence of his wife (whom he had really loved) over his cruel nature made itself felt, and for the next four years he proceeded rather cautiously. He considered all the boyars his enemies and traitors; and he commenced murdering them, one at a time.

In 1564 he threw off all restraint. He suddenly disappeared with all his soldiers and servants, and rumors were circulated that he intended to abdicate the crown and to retire from public life. The abject fear in which the people had lived for thirty years had fully demoralized them. Boyars, clergymen, and the great mass of the people went nearly crazy at the idea that their "dear little father" would no longer rule over them. At last



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

they discovered his place of retirement, and the manifestations of public delight at this discovery were almost boundless. Delegation after delegation waited upon him and implored him on their knees that he might return to his capital and continue to govern them. At last Ivan consented to return, but he consented conditionally. He demanded — and they all cheerfully agreed to the demand — that he should have full and absolute power to punish all his enemies and all traitors by banishment or death and confiscation of their property, without being interfered with, even by the clergy. It was a regular *coup d'état*. From this act dates the absolute rule of the emperors of Russia, and Ivan the Fourth thenceforth took the official title of "Czar of all the Russias," which his successors have retained to the present day.

Ivan had carefully matured his plan. He took possession of a certain number of cities and country districts, expelled the proprietors from them, declared them territory forfeited to the government, and distributed them among certain of his own adherents upon whose fidelity he could count. These adherents generally were taken from the lowest classes of the people, knew no other law than the will of their master, and obeyed him blindly. While confiscating all these estates without mercy or hesitation, on the most trivial or far-fetched pretexts, he was shrewd enough to respect constitutional rights in other parts of the Empire. His plan was to increase the imperial private domains gradually to enormous proportions by dispossessing year after year the legitimate proprietors of the soil, and by this method to destroy the power of the nobility. In order to accomplish this pur-

## IVAN THE TERRIBLE

pose he did not hesitate to employ the most cruel and disreputable means for the conviction and punishment of his intended victims.

One of his favorite ways for entrapping and punishing a rich boyar was to order one of the servants employed in the imperial household to steal jewelry or other valuables, and then to seek refuge in the boyar's residence. Of course, the fugitive was closely pursued by the Czar's guards, drawn from his hiding-place, and then massacred together with the boyar and his family, who, the Czar pretended to believe, were the thief's accomplices and deserved death as well as the offender. But much oftener the terrible Czar rushed down, with a numerous suite of his followers, upon the residence of a wealthy boyar, put all the men, the children and the old women of the domain to the sword, carried off the young women and girls, and abandoned them on the highways after he and his gang had satisfied their desires on them. On the trumped up charge that Grand Duke Wladimir, his own cousin, as well as the Grand Duke's wife and grown daughters had participated in a conspiracy against the Czar's life, he forced him to commit suicide by drinking poison, while the Grand Duchess and her beautiful young daughters, and all their ladies of honor and female servants, were divested of their garments, exposed in a state of complete nudity on the market space of the town adjacent to their domain, and afterwards butchered in cold blood. Wladimir's immense wealth and all his real estate were confiscated by the crown. In this manner Ivan succeeded in overpowering the boyars, one after another, in a very short time, and acquiring immense wealth. He visited the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

different provinces and departments in succession, and wherever he appeared he left a track of desolation, rapine, and murder. From the capital of each province he organized marauding tours in all directions, placing each under the command of an officer on whose devotion to himself and ferocity to others he could count. But the most terrible expeditions were those which he commanded himself. It can truthfully be said that wherever Ivan "visited," he destroyed everything in sight, — not only the human inhabitants, but also the farm and domestic animals, even dogs and cats. He took also a pleasure in draining ponds and creeks, so as to cause the fish to die, and after having killed or mutilated all things living, he ordered the buildings to be set on fire, and left the scene of his cruelty and lust amidst the wild huzzas of his comrades. No civilized, or half-civilized country had ever witnessed such atrocities on the part of its own ruler.

If Ivan was not travelling and marauding he resided generally in the Alexandrowna Convent, which he had strongly fortified. This convent, situated in the neighborhood of Moscow, and surrounded by dense forests, was not only the scene of his bestial orgies and excesses, and of his more than beastly cruelty, but also of his hypocritical zeal for religion and divine service. The convent, although transformed into a palace, remained still a convent. Ivan's most abject and infamous favorites were acting as monks, while Ivan himself performed the functions of the pontiff. He also acted as a bell-ringer for the church. Quite early in the morning, at four o'clock, mass was read and public service was held in the church, lasting till seven o'clock. Regularly every

## IVAN THE TERRIBLE

evening, from seven to eight o'clock, there was again divine service. The time intervening between the dinner and the last church service was employed by him in going to the torture rooms of the palace where his victims — and there was always a number of them — were subjected to the most excruciating pain, and in many cases tortured to death. To be invited to these scenes of horror was a mark of imperial favor.

Ivan was never in better humor or happier than after having witnessed the tortures or the execution of a man whom he had sacrificed to his greed for wealth or to his vindictiveness. It is reported that one day when one hundred and twenty persons were to be executed — either strangled, hung, beheaded, or quartered — at Moscow, and when the inhabitants of the streets near the place of the execution had fled in horror from the neighborhood, the Czar sent out his soldiery and compelled thousands of citizens to be spectators of the wholesale butchery. He sat there himself on an elevated stage applauding the torturers and executioners when, in his opinion, they had done their task well and had prolonged the agony of the victim as much as possible. When the cruel spectacle was over, he rose to his feet and addressed the spectators as follows: "My loyal subjects! You have seen torture and death! Some of you are horror-struck at what you have witnessed! My punishment is severe, but it is just. All these men and women were traitors to their Czar, and deserved to die. Answer me, was I right in punishing them?" And the tremendous audience, almost frightened to death, as with one voice replied: "Glory and long life to the Czar! Death to the traitors!" The sight of blood, of suffering and of death seemed to have

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

an intoxicating effect on this unparalleled monster, and he never tired of it to the day of his death.

The high dignitaries of the Church fared no better at Ivan's hands. Whenever they stood in the way of his ambition, or whenever they presumed to criticise him for his crimes, he treated them with the same cruelty and inflicted the same punishments upon them as upon the boyars. In that way he imposed silence on the clergy, and caused them even to sanction his worst misdeeds. But one day, after an especially atrocious marauding expedition of the Czar, the Metropolitan of Moscow mustered sufficient courage to reprimand him publicly. On the twenty-second of March, 1568, Ivan entered the cathedral, expecting the blessing of the high-priest. The latter did not stir, but kept his eyes fixed upon a picture representing Christ in all his glory. "Holy Father," said one of the boyars to the Metropolitan, "the Czar is here; bless him!" "I do not recognize the Czar!" replied the Metropolitan. "Since this world was created and the sun was placed in the skies, it has never been known that a Czar has committed such atrocities and crimes in his own state as ours has. Here in this church we offer our prayers to God, and beyond its walls the blood of innocent Christians is shed in torrents." Then turning to Ivan, he said in a loud voice: "The very stones under thy feet will rise against thee and cry out against thy crimes and atrocities! God has bidden me tell you and warn you, even if I should suffer death for my boldness!" And death was his punishment, although not at the very moment. As a rebel, he was sentenced to imprisonment for life at Twer. But it happened so that Ivan, the year after, passed through Twer on one

## IVAN THE TERRIBLE

of his marauding expeditions. It was then that he remembered Philip, the Metropolitan, who had accosted him so boldly. He sent half a dozen of his soldiers to the prison, and they strangled the Metropolitan without previous notice. This assassination paved the way for many others among the clergy, until Ivan had so intimidated them that thenceforth not even a whisper was heard among them against his cruelties.

It then became apparent how readily the example of an infamous ruler is followed by his courtiers and attendants. The boyars and officers accompanying him on his expeditions of murder and pillage tried to surpass him in iniquity; in their very appearance they showed their true character, adorning themselves with symbols of their ferocity. When they started on their marauding tour, they attached a bleeding dog's-head and a broom to the neck and saddle of each horse, signifying by these decorations that they would bite like savage dogs and sweep off the ground all they could find. Whomsoever they found on the highways they would arrest and hang as traitors to the Czar, and in the villages and towns on their route they would commit the most horrid excesses, sparing neither sex nor age. If the inhabitants had fled at their approach, they reported them to the Czar as his enemies who were plotting against his life, and he issued decrees of vengeance declaring their property confiscated and their lives forfeited. In this way they kept the inhabitants at home waiting in terror for the arrival of their tormentors.

After having decimated and terrorized the nobility and the clergy, Ivan turned his attention principally to the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

merchants and wealthy citizens. The commercial centres, in which a great amount of capital had accumulated, were the special objects of his greed, especially if they showed a spirit of independence. Prominent among these was Novgorod, the ancient and wealthy city, proud of her free institutions and her honored name. It was this pride and her great wealth which pointed out Novgorod as a victim for Ivan's wrath and cupidity, and the manner in which he planned and executed his evil designs on the city shows his diabolical genius at its height. Never has tyrant or despot conceived a more sinister and treacherous plot for the ruin of a great city and for the assassination of its inhabitants. The horrors of St. Bartholomew's night pale in comparison.

A Polish vagabond, on the personal command of Ivan, wrote a petition, with the forged signatures of the Archbishop of Novgorod and a large number of leading and wealthy citizens and addressed to the King of Poland, in which the latter was supplicated to assume the sovereignty over Novgorod and the province in which it was situated, and to assist the citizens in their desire of shaking off the yoke of Ivan. By Ivan's direction this petition was concealed in the great cathedral, behind a picture of the Holy Virgin. The Polish vagabond, after having executed the task dictated to him, came to Moscow and charged the city of Novgorod with treasonable designs against the Czar. Upon this information the Czar immediately sent messengers with the Polish vagabond to Novgorod, where, as a matter of course, the forged petition was found hidden behind the picture of the Holy Virgin in the cathedral. This was considered proof sufficient to condemn the whole city. No further



## IVAN THE TERRIBLE

investigation was deemed necessary. Ivan kept quiet, but the inhabitants knew what was in store for them. They trembled and waited. They had not to wait a long time. Two weeks after the discovery, on the twenty-first day of January, 1570, the first detachments of an imperial army, commanded by some of Ivan's most trusted and most cruel lieutenants, entered the city. They immediately proceeded to seal the doors of all the churches and chapels, and took possession of the residences of the wealthy inhabitants, where they established their headquarters. All traffic was suspended. No citizen was permitted to leave the city, nor could goods of any kind be shipped from it. A dead silence and fear hung over the city. Nobody knew what the Czar intended to do, but that he would do something horrible, everybody felt, and also that there was no escape from him.

At last he came. He took up his residence in the Archbishop's palace. He treated the priests and the Archbishop himself like servants; he drank and feasted with his boyars, while the priests had to wait upon him at table. And then suddenly, when he rose, he uttered a loud shout of triumph, and this was the signal for his lieutenants to order a general pillage throughout the city. Without any control by their superiors, the soldiers committed plunder, murder, violence, and outrages of all kinds. The treasures accumulated in the churches and large business houses Ivan had reserved for himself, and his orders were strictly observed; nobody touched what he had designated for his share. The palace of the Archbishop became the scene of the most beastly orgies and excesses. The wives and daughters of the



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

noblest families were dragged before Ivan, and after having picked out the most beautiful for his own use, he turned the others over to his lieutenants and companions. Many of the unfortunate women committed suicide, many others died from the effects of the terrible abuse to which they had been subjected. The Czar knew no pity. "Such scenes of horror, iniquity, and inhumanity," says a foreign eye-witness, "had not been seen in the world since the destruction of Jerusalem."

The work of devastation, pillage, murder, violence, and incendiarism lasted five weeks. At last the Czar thought it was time to stop the bloody carnival. The measure was full to overflowing,—not only the measure of misery, affliction, distress, and death for the unfortunate and innocent inhabitants of Novgorod, but also the measure of lust and cruelty for himself. The constant indulgence in voluptuous excesses told upon his constitution; he was worn out and surfeited with animal gratification; his eyes had a vague, almost lifeless expression; his herculean frame commenced to tremble, his legs to totter. No less than twenty-seven thousand persons, men, women, and children, had perished; there was not a family which did not lament one or more dead among its members. The corpses were thrown into the river, and at some points they had been thrown in in such numbers that the river was impeded in its current. On the first day of the sixth week, Ivan called citizens living in all the different streets of the city together and addressed them as follows: "Men of Novgorod, and all of you who are still alive, pray to God and thank him for your escape from peril; thank your Czar too, for it is to his

## IVAN THE TERRIBLE

mercy and his fear of God that you owe your safety; and thank also his soldiers, whose humane treatment saved you from death. Pray to God that he may give us power and strength to vanquish all our enemies! Much blood has been shed for the punishment of traitors. These traitors are responsible to God for all that has happened here during the last five weeks. May God have mercy on them. And now stop your crying and weeping! Live and be happy, and may your city grow and prosper!"

Cæsar Borgia could not have done better than this brutal monster of the North. He was the genius of cruelty and hypocrisy personified in one man.



## CHAPTER XII

### HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE







HENRY IV.

## CHAPTER XII

### ASSASSINATION OF HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

(May 14, 1610)

**R**ELIGIOUS wars — that is to say, civil wars for religious causes — had desolated France for half a century, and tranquillity and apparent harmony had finally been restored only by the genius of one man — Henry the Fourth. He it was who issued the Edict of Nantes, conferring equal religious and political rights upon the professors of both religions, the Protestant and the Catholic.

A short time after Martin Luther had inaugurated the great movement of religious reform in Germany, a similar movement had also been organized in France; but it was only since 1536 and through the influential and energetic agitation of John Calvin that it had assumed large dimensions and acquired a really national importance. After the disastrous battle of Pavia and after his release from Spanish captivity, King Francis the First had ordered a cruel persecution against the Protestants for political reasons, but it had utterly failed to put a stop to this movement. On the contrary, a great many noblemen had joined the new church and the originally purely religious movement had gradually assumed a pronounced political character. But this change of tendency only



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

added fuel to the flame of intolerance and persecution. Not only were hundreds of professors of the new church most cruelly executed on the gallows or burnt alive for heresy, but among the Waldenses in Provence and in the valleys bordering on Savoy a wholesale massacre was inaugurated, which aimed at nothing less than their entire extirpation. On account of their peaceful and industrial habits, these people had for a long time enjoyed toleration in spite of their dissenting religious opinions. No less than twenty flourishing villages were destroyed and burned to the ground, and their entire population, men, women and children, were butchered in the most barbarous manner. But it seemed as if the very horror which such acts of inhumanity inspired, and the heroic constancy and bravery with which these unfortunate victims of religious fanaticism had sealed their convictions with their blood, had rather increased than diminished the ranks of the Protestants. The French translation of the Bible, which was secretly circulated throughout the kingdom, proved also a powerful means of propagandism for the principles of reform among the better educated and thinking classes.

Francis the First died in 1547 and was succeeded by his son, Henry the Second, who considered the Protestant movement merely a political question, and treated it as such. In Germany he supported the Protestant princes in their fight against Charles the Fifth, but at home, in France, he persecuted the adherents of Calvin even more persistently and cruelly than his father had done. Hundreds of excellent citizens were sent to the gallows or to the stake for heresy, and even the possession or sale of a French Bible was deemed a sufficient crime to warrant

## HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

the death punishment. Henry the Second died after a reign of twelve years, in 1559, from a wound received in a tournament and inflicted accidentally by the captain of his own body-guard. His successor, Francis the Second, the husband of Mary, Queen of Scotland, was entirely under the control of his wife's uncles, the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine. For the Protestants matters grew worse and worse. Francis the Second, who was merely a boy, died after a reign of less than two years, and was succeeded by his brother Charles the Ninth, of bloody St. Bartholomew Night's memory. He was succeeded by Henry the Third, who after an inglorious reign, in which torrents of blood had flowed without quenching the fire of religious fanaticism, was assassinated in 1589 by Jacques Clément, a young Dominican monk, who had become exasperated at the concessions which the King had made to the Protestant Church. Before expiring, King Henry the Third recognized the young King of Navarre as his successor, who then ascended the throne of France under the name of Henry the Fourth.

The wars which devastated France during the preceding three reigns were waged almost without interruption; they were of a semi-religious and semi-political character. These wars must be largely ascribed to the pernicious influence of Catherine de Médicis, the wife of Henry the Second, and the mother of his three sons, Francis the Second, Charles the Ninth and Henry the Third. Her name stands in history as a synonym for an astute, unscrupulous, cruel, and intriguing ruler and politician. At the time of Henry the Third's assassination, he was investing the city of Paris, which was in the hands of his

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

enemies, the League, under the command of the Duke of Mayenne, who himself was aspiring to the throne. It was therefore not an easy matter for the new King to assume the reins of government, the half of his kingdom being in arms against him, and the royal army itself, in whose ranks he was fighting, being hostile to the religion he (as a Protestant) professed.

\* But Henry the Fourth was equal to the difficult task. In fact, he was one of the most remarkable men who ever sat on a European throne. His career up to that day had been extremely stormy; his escape from death and perils innumerable was wonderful and stamped him as a man of destiny. It is reported of him that when he was present one day as a very young man at a brilliant reception at the French court, where nearly all the prominent men of the French capital were assembled, he strongly impressed the foreign ambassadors with the brilliancy of his wit and the sagacity of his observations. One of them said: "In this whole assemblage of dukes, princes and great dignitaries, I see but one man fit to rule either as king or emperor," and pointing to Henry of Navarre he continued: "It is that young man with the eye of an eagle!"

Henry the Fourth was born in 1553, the son of Antony of Bourbon. His mother was Jeanne d'Albret, only child of Henry the Second, King of Navarre, and of his wife, Queen Margaret of Navarre, who has won a lasting place in literature by her famous collection of novels, known as the "Heptameron." Much of the genius and *esprit* which distinguished the grandmother was inherited both by her daughter and her grandson. Jeanne d'Albret was not only an excellent woman and mother, but she was also an

## HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

enthusiastic admirer and supporter of the Calvinistic doctrine, and brought up her son in that faith. On account of her religion both Philip the Second of Spain and Catherine de Médicis, Queen of France, hated her intensely, and it seems that at an early day a sort of rivalry arose between Catherine and the mother of the boy concerning his education. Catherine maintained that, inasmuch as Henry was a royal prince and might be called upon some day to ascend the throne of France, it was absolutely necessary to educate him in the Catholic faith in order to make him worthy to rule over a Catholic country and occupy a throne whose occupant had for centuries been honored with the noble title of the "eldest son of the Church."

In this contest over the boy the mother remained victorious, and, true to her religious convictions, she surrounded him with Protestant professors. But Catherine de Médicis was not a woman to abandon a scheme which she had formed and in which politics played a large part. She therefore concocted a plan for the abduction of young Henry, which would have succeeded and would have placed him under the immediate control of Philip the Second of Spain, had it not been betrayed to Henry's mother, the Queen of Navarre. Henry was thereupon hurried off to La Rochelle, the headquarters of the Protestant army, where he was soon placed in nominal command of all the Protestant forces, although the famous Admiral Coligny was its real leader.

We may fitly pass without comment the stormy years preceding Henry's elevation to the throne of France. In order to reconcile the Protestant and the Catholic branches of the reigning dynasty, Catherine de Médicis was suc-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

successful in her plan of a marriage between Henry of Navarre and her own daughter Marguerite, although the Pope hesitated a long time in giving his permission to this family alliance, which was in every respect a very unfortunate one. As far as Catherine de Médicis was concerned, her principal intention in planning it was the hope of continuing under Henry the Fourth's reign (if he ever should become king) the absolute rule which she had so successfully maintained under the reign of her sons. Far from using her influence and authority to secure, if possible, the happiness of the young couple, she held out to both all possible temptations to lead them astray, and openly advanced Henry's liaisons with other beautiful ladies of the court. It is also pretty well established by historical evidence that Catherine, in order to withdraw Henry from the beneficial influence of his mother, caused her death by poison in the very year of his marriage. At the massacre of St. Bartholomew's night, Henry escaped death by abjuring Protestantism, King Charles the Ninth having left him the choice between going to mass and suffering death. Henry preferred the former and professed Catholicism as his religion until 1576, when he suddenly and secretly left the court, and, retracting his forced abjuration, placed himself once more at the head of the Protestant party.

In 1584 the death of the Duke of Anjou made Henry the legitimate heir to the crown of France, and five years later, the death of Henry the Third made him King. But only the southern provinces and the Protestants recognized him as their king. The Catholics vehemently protested against this heretical king, and refused obedience to him. The League, which kept an army of 30,000 men

## HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

in the field against him, and which was supported by the King of Spain, not only refused to recognize him, but proclaimed an aged uncle of his, the Cardinal de Bourbon, King of France, and Spain adhered to this decision. The civil war between the contending factions continued with greater fury and obstinacy than ever, and it was in this campaign, in which Henry always fought against tremendous odds, that he displayed his wonderful ability and tact as a political and military leader. Finally his second conversion to Catholicism on the twenty-third of July, 1593, which was simply a political measure and not at all dictated by religious motives, decided the succession to the throne in his favor, although it took years of warfare and diplomatic negotiation to secure his recognition by Spain and the leaders of the League.

✓ Henry the Fourth's greatest political achievement, by which he manifested his far-seeing ability as a statesman, was the Edict of Nantes, promulgated on the thirteenth of April, 1598. It guaranteed freedom of conscience and equality before the law to Catholics and Protestants; and it was the first great manifesto of religious toleration issued by any ruler. But noble and high-minded as it was, even if inspired only by political motives, the fanatics of the Catholic Church would not forgive him. Unquestionably it was the Edict of Nantes which caused his assassination,—an act of revenge with which the Church paid back the injury it supposed it had received at his hands.

Henry, with the assistance of his great minister, the Duke of Sully, devoted the first few years, after peace had been restored, to building up the prosperity of the country, which had been distracted by war for nearly

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

forty years. In this he admirably succeeded. With wonderful rapidity the monarchy recovered from the disasters and calamities of the religious and civil wars. Without Henry's success, late as it came, this national improvement would have been impossible, and France would have sunk into the same condition of intellectual lethargy and material decay from which Spain has suffered for three centuries. But Henry's ambition went much beyond the borders of his kingdom. The house of Hapsburg, a branch of which ruled Spain, appeared to him too dangerous for the security and greatness of France. He supported the German Protestant princes in their opposition to Austria, which wanted to take possession of Juliers-Cleves, two German principalities, and sent an army of ten thousand men to their assistance. Henry wanted to join personally this army on the nineteenth of May, 1610. On the thirteenth of May he published a decree appointing the Queen, Mary de Médicis, Regent of the kingdom, and her coronation was celebrated on the same day with great pomp.

On the fourteenth of May, the day after the coronation, the King was assassinated by Francis Ravailiac in the Ferronière Street at Paris, where his carriage had stopped a few minutes. It was this short delay which gave Ravailiac a chance: he climbed upon the hind-wheel of the carriage and stabbed the King twice with a long poniard, with deadly effect. It was thus that the greatest King France has produced died at the hands of a miserable fanatic, at a moment too when, according to the statement of Sully, who knew him better than any other man, he had formed a plan of establishing a great European confederation, founded on the civil equality of Catholics



## HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

and Protestants and on an equilibrium of power among the great nations of Europe. Ravaillac was executed with revolting barbarity on the twenty-seventh of May, but not even the repeated application of the torture elicited the least information as to the motives or the accomplices which he may have had in his crime. Henry's death was a cruel loss not only for France, but for the whole world.

The assassination of Henry the Fourth ended in France the era of famous political murders, which during the religious wars had taken off Coligny, Henry of Guise, and the two kings, Henry the Third and Henry the Fourth, all during one generation. But of these only the assassination of Henry the Fourth has made a lasting and profound impression on his contemporaries as well as on posterity. It has enhanced his reputation and glory by enshrining his name among the great martyrs of history. It was one of the most patriotic and high-minded thoughts of Voltaire to make Henry the Fourth the hero of his epic poem "*La Henriade*," which although not ranking with the great poems of Milton, Tasso, and Virgil, in poetic merit, is still a noble hymn of liberty and a glorification of religious toleration, as well as of Henry, its representative. It is uncertain whether the profound horror which the assassination of Henry caused throughout the world, or the terrible punishment inflicted on Ravaillac, caused assassins to desist from their nefarious work, but certain it is that no new assassination of a king or any member of the royal family of France took place from the death of Henry the Fourth to the assassination of the Duc de Berry, the presumptive heir of Charles the Tenth, in 1820. Not that no attempts



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

on the life of any or all of the French monarchs since the days of Henry the Fourth were made; but all such attempts had failed, and instead of killing the rulers, had only led to the cruel and horrible execution of the conspirators.

Most remarkable among these was the assault of Damiens on King Louis the Fifteenth, one of the most dissolute and worthless monarchs, — one who in the gratification of his lusts was utterly oblivious of common decency and shame. Louis the Fifteenth came nearer reviving the atrocious immorality of Claudius, Caligula, Caracalla, Heliogabalus in the palace of the Cæsars of ancient Rome, than any other modern monarch had done. It was the age of Madame de Pompadour and the monstrosities of the “deer park.” The French nation blushed at the excesses of the court, which paved the way for the great Revolution, already dimly foreseen by some ingenious observers, as one of the necessities of the future. It was at this time, when public indignation, not to say public disgust, had reached its culminating point, that an attempt on the life of the King was made.

It was on the fifth of January, 1757, at six o'clock in the evening, on a cold and dark day, that he stepped out of the doorway of the palace of Versailles and went up to a carriage waiting for him to take him to Trianon. All at once he felt that somebody had run against him, and at the same time that he was bleeding from a wound in the side. He uttered a cry of pain and alarm, and when the torch-bearers drew near and surrounded him, the King noticed a man who alone among all those present had kept his hat on. “This man has assaulted and wounded me!” exclaimed the King, pointing to the man whose

## HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

head remained covered. "Arrest him, but do not harm him!" It makes almost a painful impression to find that an embodiment of vice and debauchery like Louis the Fifteenth should at such a moment have been inspired with feelings of mercy toward his assassin, and should have used almost the identical words which fell from the lips of the pure and high-minded President McKinley after Czolgosz had fatally wounded him! But history records them, and we must give even the devil his due.

The attempt on the King's life caused a tremendous sensation in Paris, where immediately the most exaggerated reports concerning the fatal wounding of the King and the discovery of a widespread conspiracy to assassinate him were circulated. Damiens was treated with the greatest severity. As though the crime which he had tried to commit had been really committed, and as though the stab he had given to the King had had fatal effect, the criminal was treated as a regicide, and the terrible machinery of the law provided for in such cases, and in France not employed since the trial of Ravallac, was put in operation. Even during his transportation from Versailles to Paris measures of precaution were used, as if a state prisoner of the most dangerous character and of the greatest importance were to be guarded. Regiments of soldiers surrounded his carriage, and six sergeants with drawn swords marched on each side. Strict orders had been issued to the citizens of Paris not to go out on the streets or appear at the front windows of their houses. Everything had been done to create the impression of a conspiracy against the government which counted many influential men among its mem-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

bers and of which the assassin was merely the tool, while those who were directing him and using his arm against the King, had to be sought in the highest classes of the aristocracy, and especially among the enemies of Madame de Pompadour. Great efforts were made to get a full confession from Damiens. Who was he? How had he formed the plan to assassinate the King? Who had instigated him to commit the act? Who were his accomplices? These were the questions to be solved by the French police authorities, and for whose solution they did not hesitate to apply the most cruel measures known to them. But the result of their painstaking investigation was far from realizing their expectations. It was found that Damiens belonged to the lower classes of the people. He had learned the trade of a locksmith, but had preferred to enter the service of rich lords and ladies as a domestic. Being of a very restless and quarrelsome disposition, he had changed his positions as often as Gil Blas had changed his masters. He had been in the houses of parliamentarians, clergymen, noblemen, orthodox Catholics, Jansenists, Molinists, Protestants, free thinkers. Often he had served at the table of the great lords and ladies of the kingdom and had listened to the conversation of the guests; and invariably the subject of the conversation had turned on the disgraceful conduct of the King, on his excesses, on the shameful orgies of the court, on the mysteries of the "deer park," where not only the virtue of young girls of the people was ruthlessly sacrificed, but also the money extorted from the sweat of the people criminally squandered. Wherever he had gone he had heard the same story, and it had made a deep impression upon him. Damiens had always been of an eccentric

## HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

turn of mind; he had even had spells of religious exaltation, and for three years he had seriously meditated on the possibility of rescuing the King from his sinful excesses and debauches.

He finally had come to the conclusion that the only possibility of turning the King's mind away from his vicious habits and arousing his soul to sentiments of honor and duty might come through fear, by placing him in the immediate presence of death. This thought preyed so incessantly and so strongly on his mind that he resolved to become the instrument of the King's redemption, by attacking and wounding, but not killing him. The attempt on the King's life was therefore the result of a psychological process which was, perhaps, based on wrong and extravagant premises, but which, if all the circumstances are taken into consideration, was rather meritorious than criminal in its aim. The assassin had acted strictly in accord with his preconceived theory. He had in his possession a knife with two blades, one of which was very long, sharp and pointed like a dagger, while the other was quite short and sharp. It seemed to be impossible to inflict a mortal wound with the short blade, and Damiens had used it in wounding the King. He had no accomplices. At first, very likely to mitigate his punishment, he had hinted at the existence of a widespread conspiracy, contemplating the assassination of the King, the Dauphin, and others, but he soon retracted these statements, and even the most severe application of the torture could not elicit from him any other declaration than this: that he had no accomplices, that nobody, not even his wife and his young daughter, had known anything of his intention; that he did not intend to kill the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

King, though he could easily have done so; that he had only intended to wound him for the purpose of frightening and warning him; that his act had been inspired by the wish of saving France and the dynasty.

But all these statements, which could not be controverted by conflicting evidence, made no impression upon judges who had fully made up their minds beforehand, and who looked upon the man that wanted to touch even the King's finger with the same horror as upon a regicide who might have stabbed him through the heart and killed him. The sentence passed upon Damiens was therefore in conformity with their preconceived opinion, and cruel in the extreme. It was based upon the sentence carried out against Ravillac for having killed the greatest of kings and one of the benefactors of mankind. Though Damiens was an eccentric ponderer, a foolish dreamer, who had but slightly wounded a heartless voluptuary that had deserved death a hundred times, his sentence was terrible beyond description, and was actually carried out in the presence of an immense multitude. At first his right hand, in which was placed the knife with which he had struck the King, was burned to the bone. Thereupon his arms, his legs, his breast, his back and his feet were lacerated with burning tongs; molten lead, boiling oil, burning sulphur, rosin, and wax were poured into the open wounds; and finally, while he was still suffering unimaginable pain, four strong horses, hitched to his arms and legs, tried for half an hour with all their might to tear out his limbs. After that time only one arm remained in the body, and it took another five minutes' work to pull it out of its socket. The body of the unfortunate man had been pulled to almost double its

## HENRY THE FOURTH OF FRANCE

length and width, and its power of resistance amazed all the spectators. When at last the cruel execution was over, the bleeding trunk and the arms and legs were thrown upon a pile of wood near the scaffold and destroyed by fire. The spectacle had struck terror into the hearts of the beholders.

But even with this terrible act of revenge the criminal justice of France was not satisfied; it reached out for the innocent family of the criminal. His father, his wife, and his daughter were banished from France for life, not to return there on penalty of death, while his brothers, sisters, and other relatives had to change their names. The house in which he was born was burned to the ground, and any other trace which he might have left was carefully obliterated. The crime of Damiens was not one of the famous assassinations in history, but it caused such a sensation in Europe, and it was punished so cruelly, that we thought his attempt on the life of Louis the Fifteenth might very properly be recorded in this book.



## CHAPTER XIII

### WALLENSTEIN









WALLENSTEIN

## CHAPTER XIII

### ASSASSINATION OF WALLENSTEIN

(February 24, 1634)

**I**N a previous chapter we have seen how a King of England got rid of a contentious Archbishop of the Church of Rome by assassination when the latter stood in the way of his usurpation. In a similar manner, also by assassination, an Emperor of Germany freed himself from a general who had twice saved him from ruin, but who had grown too powerful for his security, and whose loyalty he (perhaps justly) mistrusted. Although nearly three hundred years have passed away since Wallenstein's assassination at Eger, Bohemia, the most searching investigations of historians have been unable to establish beyond a reasonable doubt the certainty or extent of his treasonable intentions, although there are strong indications that they existed, and that the crown of Bohemia, as a sovereign state, was to be the price which he exacted for his treason.

The religious war, which had broken out between the Emperor of Germany, as representative of the Catholic Church, and the Protestant princes of North Germany in 1618, had been waged with great cruelty and varying success for several years. Neither party had won such decisive advantages that the end of the terrible struggle,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

which partook as much of the character of a civil war as of a religious war, could be predicted with any degree of certainty. The most unfortunate feature of this strife was that not only the different German princes were fighting against each other, but that also foreign princes, upon the invitation of the Germans, participated in the struggle and gave their support to either the Catholic or the Protestant side. The German princes themselves had formed two different alliances: the Catholics had formed the League, while the Protestants were members of the Protestant Union; and both parties had powerful armies in the field commanded by experienced and able generals, the Catholics by Tilly, the Protestants by Mansfeld and the Duke of Brunswick. The greatest of these generals was perhaps Tilly, but he was extremely cruel and vindictive, fully as much from religious hatred for the enemies of his church as from natural disposition. His conquest and pillage of Magdeburg has given to his name a deplorable immortality. The Emperor of Germany, Ferdinand the Second, was rather nominally than actually the war-lord of the Catholic party; for the Catholic League, which had placed the army in the field, had elected Maximilian of Bavaria as its supreme chief. Thus, while the Catholic armies were called the Imperialists, and while the victories which they achieved were supposed to redound to the Emperor's glory, Ferdinand could not repress a feeling of humiliation at the thought that he owed these victories and the advantages which resulted from them more to the generosity and loyalty of the Catholic League than to his own power and resources. Once or twice Protestant soldiers had even threatened him in his own imperial

## WALLENSTEIN

palace, and he had owed his safety from capture or death only to the timely intervention of some Spanish and Croatian horsemen who dispersed the aggressors.

In November, 1620, Tilly had, at the head of a powerful army, won a decisive victory over the army of the Protestant Union by the battle of White Mountain; then, having restored Bohemia and Moravia to the rule of the Emperor, the victorious general quickly marched to the Palatinate, where the cause of the Protestants was at that time supreme. But he was defeated there by the Protestant army under Mansfeld and the Margrave of Baden; and at that time Protestantism might have been triumphantly established in western and northern Germany at least, had not the two victorious Protestant generals made the mistake of separating their armies, — a mistake which proved fatal to both of them. Tilly was not slow to see the advantage which he gained by this dismemberment of the army which had so signally defeated him at Wiesloch; he rallied his forces and defeated first the Margrave of Baden at Wimpfen, and shortly afterwards Mansfeld and the Duke of Brunswick at Höchst. Then the Protestant armies crossed the frontier of the Netherlands in the hope of receiving assistance from England.

In the meantime the German Emperor, emboldened by the successes of Tilly, strained every nerve to re-establish Catholicism and stamp out Protestantism in the Empire. The excessive zeal which he displayed in accomplishing this purpose, and the terrible work of destruction which Tilly and his lieutenants were carrying on in all those districts of the Empire which were unfortunate enough to fall under their sway, were, however,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the means of setting Protestantism on its feet again, of reviving the waning hopes of the German Protestant princes, and of arousing a powerful interest in their behalf among their neighbors. The most important accession which the cause of Protestantism had at that time was that of King Christian the Fourth of Denmark, who joined the Protestants with a large army and took supreme command in northern Germany.

Such were the conditions in Germany at the moment when the man who is the subject of this chapter appeared on the stage as principal actor in the terrible war of thirty years. This man, one of the most remarkable men of the seventeenth century, and one of the most eminent generals in German history was Wallenstein. For seven years he was the greatest man of the war, eclipsing the fame of Tilly himself, filling the minds of enemies and friends, and finally that of the Emperor himself, with vague fears and apprehensions of his treason and unbridled ambition. But in the flower of his age his life was cut short by the hands of assassins.

The Empire seemed to be hopelessly divided between Catholicism and Protestantism, and civil war with all its terrors and horrors laid waste its fairest provinces. The Emperor had lost much of his authority, while Maximilian of Bavaria, commander-in-chief of the armies of the Catholic League, wielded a power which was supreme wherever the so-called Imperialists held possession of country or town. It was a humiliating position for the Emperor, but he was utterly powerless to extricate himself from it. Suddenly a deliverer came to him in the person of Albert, Lord Wallenstein, a Bohemian nobleman, who had married the daughter of Count Har-

rich, the Emperor's special favorite. He was immensely rich, and had won great military distinction in the Bohemian wars. It was this Lord Wallenstein who on a morning in June, 1625, presented himself before the Emperor Ferdinand of Germany with a proposition which, at first, appeared so extravagant and incredible to the Emperor himself and to his counsellors that they doubted the sanity or sincerity of the man who made it. But he insisted on the feasibility of his plan with so much eloquence and enthusiasm that they finally consented to it. Wallenstein proposed to the Emperor to enroll, entirely at his own personal expense, an army to fight for the cause of the Emperor and to protect his hereditary states, provided he should have the power to make that army at least fifty thousand strong, to appoint all the officers, and take supreme command himself, without being interfered with by other generals, no matter how highly stationed they might be. The immense wealth of Wallenstein guaranteed the financial success of the plan; moreover he received permission to make his army self-sustaining by pillage, marauding, and forced contributions in all those districts which it might temporarily occupy.

When the new plan and the appointment of Wallenstein to the command of a large army — larger than any other in the field — became known, the world, and especially Germany, was struck with amazement, and there were but few who believed that it could be carried out. But those who doubted did not know the tremendous energy, the boundless resources, and the towering ambition of the man. The plan was carried out to its fullest extent: within a few months a large and well-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

equipped army was ready to take the field, and Wallenstein, whose name was comparatively unknown in the history of war, suddenly assumed an importance which eclipsed that of the renowned generals of the Catholic League and of the Protestant Union. The suddenness of his elevation, the apparent mystery surrounding him, and the rumors of the royal rewards in store for him, made the imperialistic generals very jealous. It may be truthfully said that from the very moment Wallenstein took command of his army, he had not only to face the Protestant armies in the field, but also to guard against his Catholic rivals, who used their high connections at the imperial court to undermine his position and blacken his character in a most unscrupulous manner. The achievements of Wallenstein fully realized the high expectations of the Emperor. He displayed consummate generalship in the field, and had a magnetic power of attraction which caused his whole army, both officers and men, to idolize him. At the same time his army increased rapidly and wonderfully. It soon reached the one hundred thousand mark and still they were coming, while the armies of the League were decreasing at a fearful rate from camp diseases and the ravages of war. The Emperor made him Duke of Friedland, and "the Friedlanders" became soon a terror to friend and foe. In his march of victory, which extended from Hungary and Transylvania to the Baltic Sea, he swept the Protestant armies from the face of the earth. Where the Friedlanders had passed, no human dwelling, no human being remained to tell of the cruelty and devastation which had struck the country, and which fell with the same crushing weight on Catholics and Protestants. The army was to

## WALLENSTEIN

be self-sustaining and was therefore given full liberty of pillage and marauding wherever it went. Coming to the extreme north of Germany, he invaded Mecklenburg, whose dukes had furnished men and money to the King of Denmark in his campaign against the imperialists. The King of Denmark had after a decisive defeat left Germany and returned to his own kingdom, and on Wallenstein's approach the Duke of Mecklenburg also hastily decamped and left his country to the mercy of the conqueror. Wallenstein took possession of it and was rewarded with the title of Duke of Mecklenburg and the rank of a sovereign prince of the Empire. The royal crown of Bohemia, which rumor and secret whisperings designated as the reward in store for him after the conclusion of peace, was now not so far off as on the day he took the command of his army. But the higher he rose, the greater became the envy and hatred of his rivals, especially of the sovereign princes whose countries and cities had suffered from the passing of his army.

From Mecklenburg Wallenstein turned to Pomerania, where Stralsund, one of the greatest fortresses of the Empire, impeded his further progress. Wallenstein invested it with his army, and made several assaults, which were successfully repulsed. The brave inhabitants had sworn to hold out to the last and rather perish in the defence of their hearths and homes and families than surrender their city to a conqueror who showed no mercy to the vanquished. Wallenstein, on the other hand, was determined to enter the city as a conqueror. Hearing that the inhabitants would defend the city unto death, he swore that he would take it, even if it were bound

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

with chains to Heaven, and he laid a regular siege to it. But all his efforts were in vain. The Swedes succeeded in giving succor to the beleaguered city from the seaward side, reinforcing it with troops, ammunition, and provisions. Finally, after a delay of two months and a loss of twelve thousand men, Wallenstein abandoned the project of taking the city, raised the siege, and returned to Mecklenburg. There the conquest of the strongly fortified city of Rostock consoled him to a certain extent for his failure at Stralsund.

Emboldened by the great successes of Wallenstein and the almost complete overthrow of the Protestant armies, the Emperor rather rashly undertook to reinstate the Catholic Church in all its former privileges and to compel the Protestant states to restore all the property and real estate which had been confiscated and estranged from that church during the preceding eighty years. To carry out this imperial plan the so-called Restitution Edict was promulgated, — a very unwise measure, which spread consternation and alarm throughout the Empire, and fanned the dying embers of the religious war into a new flame. Not only Protestants, but many Catholics protested against the edict, and Wallenstein himself criticised it sharply. But the Emperor would not recede from the resolution he had taken.

Wallenstein's influence was already rapidly declining; his overthrow was near at hand. In 1630 the imperial diet of Regensburg was held. All the sovereign princes of Germany, and especially all the Electors of the Empire were present, and they made jointly a terrible onslaught on Wallenstein, whom they all hated or envied. They united their complaints against him and demanded his

## WALLENSTEIN

immediate and peremptory dismissal from the service, as a punishment for the outrages committed by his army and for the extortions and exorbitant levies which he had made from friend and foe for his own self-aggrandizement. For a long time the Emperor resisted these demands and stood up for the great general to whom he owed so much; but he was anxious to secure the votes of the Electors for his son, the King of Hungary, as heir to the imperial crown, and the dismissal of Wallenstein was to be the price for these votes. He therefore issued the decree, deposing Wallenstein from his office of generalissimo of the army. It is said that he trembled in affixing his signature to the document, and that for weeks afterwards he lived in extreme fear of the wrath of the powerful chieftain. But Wallenstein took his disgrace very coolly. The news came to him at a moment when he was with Seni, a famous astrologer, in whom he placed implicit confidence. Seni had just predicted to him, from a configuration of the stars, that he would experience a tremendous disappointment, but that this disappointment would be followed soon by his complete reinstatement in all the honors which he might be deprived of. Wallenstein took the decree of deposition as the confirmation of Seni's prediction. Without showing much irritation, and only with an expression of regret that the Emperor had been ill-advised and had yielded to bad counsels, he left the army and withdrew to Prague, the capital of Bohemia, to live there in royal splendor and luxury.

When Wallenstein's soldiers were informed of the dismissal of their chief, whom they idolized and regarded with an affection mingled with awe and terror, there

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

was danger of an open revolt against the Emperor's decree; but Wallenstein himself and some of his generals quieted their rage and suppressed all manifestations of rebellion. Thousands of soldiers and a great number of officers refused to remain in the Emperor's service, declaring that they had enlisted only in order to serve under Wallenstein and under no other commander. More than one half of the entire army left the service, and most of the officers, at their own request, accompanied the deposed general to his new place of residence, Prague. The disgrace of the general, or rather the act of removal which, in the eyes of the German princes, was intended to disgrace him, turned out to be a triumph, greater than a victory in the field, and made his position in Germany even more conspicuous. Moreover, everybody seemed to feel that the hour of his reinstatement would soon come. And Wallenstein, on his part, neglected nothing to confirm this opinion, which flattered his vanity, and which he firmly believed would be realized, because "it was written in the stars."

It was perhaps as a challenge to his princely enemies at the imperial court and in defiance of the Emperor himself that he established his household on a footing more becoming a reigning monarch than a private citizen. He had a secret desire to accustom the people of Bohemia to look upon him as the man who might, within a short time, be called upon to rule over them as king. Otherwise it is hardly reasonable to suppose that he would have paraded such wealth and magnificence as could not but confirm the charges preferred against him by his influential enemies, — namely, gigantic extortions and robberies of public and private moneys, and plans to

satisfy an insatiable ambition. His palace had six public entrances, and he caused a hundred houses to be torn down to enlarge the vacant place surrounding it. By day and by night it was guarded by sentinels, and during the night the public streets leading to it were barred with chains, that the rest of the Duke might not be disturbed. In the hall leading to the antechamber of his private apartments fifty halberdiers were constantly on guard, while sixty pages, all from the best families of Germany, four chamberlains, six barons, and a master of ceremonies belonging to one of the most illustrious houses of the Empire, were always ready to receive the orders of the great man. Whenever he travelled, his own carriage was drawn by eight full-blooded horses; his attendants followed in fifty carriages, each drawn by six horses, while as many baggage wagons, each drawn by four horses, transported the baggage for the ducal procession, and sixty richly mounted cavaliers formed the regular escort of "His Highness."

As if Providence wished to advance the pretensions of Wallenstein, the Emperor's affairs took a turn for the worse soon after his removal from the command of the army. Incensed at the intolerance of the German Emperor and his Restitution Edict, which was to be enforced in its full severity, Gustavus Adolphus, the great and high-minded King of Sweden, came to the assistance of the Protestant princes of northern Germany. He came not unsupported; behind him, and as his secret ally, stood the King of France, or rather Richelieu. This great French statesman, although a cardinal of the Catholic Church, saw the time had come to curtail the power of Austria, and therefore utilized the military genius of

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Gustavus Adolphus to effectually cripple the Emperor's power, and to raise France to a predominant position in Europe. Richelieu equipped and subsidized the Swedish armies and, by doing so, enabled the Swedish King, whose country was comparatively poor and whose resources were consequently limited, to take the field in Germany with a strong force.

On the twenty-fourth of June, 1630, Gustavus Adolphus landed his army in Pomerania. That date marks the turning-point in the fortunes of the Thirty Years' War. The Swedish King's piety, and the strict discipline which he maintained in his army, stood in such glaring contrast to the excesses and outrages committed by the armies of Tilly and Wallenstein that the King was welcomed by the sovereigns of northern Germany as a savior and liberator. It is not our purpose to describe the glorious and victorious career of Gustavus Adolphus in the Empire. Suffice it to say that the conditions of victory and defeat, of triumph and despondency, were entirely reversed, that the imperial armies were unable to stem the tide of victory which had set in for the Protestant cause since the Swedish King's appearance on German soil, that his progress southward was rapid and incessant, that the Catholic princes were either vanquished or fugitives from their states, and that the Emperor himself was trembling in his palace at Vienna, as report after report informed him of the uninterrupted onward march of the royal hero. Who can help? Who can oppose and prevent this steady march of conquest? To the terrified mind of the Emperor only one man presents himself. It is Wallenstein. But Wallenstein has been mortally offended by him. How can the Emperor humiliate him-



## WALLENSTEIN

self before a subject and assuage his wrath? The danger is increasing.

Gustavus is still on the Rhine, but he prepares an invasion of Würtemberg, many of whose inhabitants will gladly welcome him. The advance of his army, under General Horn, is in Franconia and driving the Imperialists before him. No time is to be lost. The Emperor sends a friendly message to Wallenstein; but the message is haughtily rejected, and the messengers are treated with arrogance, not to say contempt. He sends back word to the Emperor that he does not care to repair the faults of others; that he is not on friendly terms with the allies of the Emperor; that he is tired and sick of war; that he is in need of rest, etc. The Emperor sends new messengers, holds out new rewards. He insists and appeals. At last, in December, 1631, Wallenstein promises to raise a new army, equip it and place it in the field by the first of March, 1632; but he positively refuses to command it. The magic power of his name renews the prodigy of six years before. On the first of March the hereditary states of Austria—Bohemia, Silesia, and Moravia—had furnished him a splendid army of forty thousand men. But it was a body without a soul; it lacked a leader able to command it and lead it to victory. The most urgent demands, prayers, supplications of the Emperor at last decide Wallenstein to take the command of this army, which is crazed with enthusiasm when he finally accepts. But he accepts only on conditions most humiliating to the Emperor. He will be generalissimo of the armies of Austria and Spain; he will appoint all his subordinate officers; the Emperor will not be permitted to join the army, and will in no way interfere with its direction or



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

movements; Wallenstein will receive one of the hereditary states of Austria as a reward; he will be war-governor of all the territory occupied by his army; he will have the right to levy contributions, and all confiscated property will belong to him; he alone can grant amnesty; he will remain Duke of Mecklenburg, even if another crown be given to him; all his expenditures will be paid back to him at the conclusion of peace; and in case of defeat, he will have the right to retire upon Vienna, and remain there. These conditions, readily granted by the Emperor, made Wallenstein practically the Dictator of the Empire.

It was at Nuremberg, one of the most ancient and prosperous cities of Bavaria, that the two great captains met face to face for the first time. Gustavus Adolphus had many friends in the city, which he wanted to protect against the Imperialists and from which he had received many reinforcements and supplies. His army had taken quarters in the immediate neighborhood. When Wallenstein approached, the King expected an immediate attack, but in this expectation he was disappointed. Whether he was afraid to endanger his party and his own reputation by the chances of a battle, or whether he thought that to check the victorious progress of the King was equivalent to a victory and would dishearten his allies, or whether the hope of starving the army of the King by cutting off his communications and supplies prompted his action, Wallenstein massed his army in front of Nuremberg, erected breastworks and strongly fortified them, and observed every movement of his great antagonist. It was evident that he wished to avoid giving battle. In this way they remained for eleven weeks

## WALLENSTEIN

opposed to one another, neither daring to become the aggressor or to leave his fortified position. It was the King who moved first. Provisions both in his camp and in the city were getting very scarce, and a contagious camp disease had broken out among his troops and spread to the city, decimating the ranks of his army. He therefore resolved to attack the position of Wallenstein and take it by storm. A terrible battle ensued. The Swedes and the Protestant army showed wonderful bravery, but the heavy artillery of Wallenstein mowed them down in long lines, and they were unable to stand the incessant volleys of shot and shell which poured into their ranks all day long. The assault was repulsed with terrible loss to the Swedish army, and Wallenstein had the glory of having inflicted the first defeat on Gustavus Adolphus. This defeat was the more painful to the King because he had lost from ten to twelve thousand of his best soldiers and some of his ablest commanders in the vain attempt to take Wallenstein's position. But the defeat had no other bad results for Gustavus Adolphus, for Wallenstein permitted him to retreat from Nuremberg without molesting, attacking or pursuing him, although his army was greatly superior in numbers to the King's army, and although his loss during the battle of the preceding day was much smaller; in fact Wallenstein's loss in killed and wounded was estimated at no more than one thousand.

This neglect of Wallenstein to annihilate the King's army, when everything seemed to favor such an attempt, is among the strongest evidences of his treacherous sentiments. It caused consternation at Vienna, and his enemies charged him openly with treason. But the Em-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

peror had no right to interfere! Finally Wallenstein also left his fortified camp, but instead of following Gustavus Adolphus to Thuringia, he went in an easterly direction and invaded Saxony, where he captured a detachment of two thousand five hundred Swedes and with them Count Thurn, a German nobleman, who for some reason or other had left the Emperor's service and had entered the Swedish King's. This Count Thurn was especially odious to the Emperor, and when the news of his capture reached Vienna, there was general rejoicing. The Count would unquestionably have been executed, but to the utter dismay of the court Wallenstein set him free and permitted him to return to the King,—as his enemies asserted, with secret overtures from the Imperialist commander. It is possible, although by no means certain, that Wallenstein, remembering how ungratefully he had been treated before, and thinking that the same ingratitude might be shown to him again as soon as his services were no longer needed, may have tried to open negotiations with the Swedish King to secure from him personal recognition and advantages which he was afraid would be withheld from him after the King's final overthrow. His fears were certainly not unreasonable, for the Emperor was surrounded by, and lent a willing ear to, the bitter enemies of Wallenstein, and to the very men who had brought about his first disgrace and dismissal. The King, on the other hand, if he received such overtures from Wallenstein, either distrusted him or did not see fit to act upon them favorably, possibly because Wallenstein's terms were too extravagant.

As soon as Gustavus Adolphus had learned of Wallenstein's invasion of Saxony he turned round, and in forced

marches hurried also to Saxony in order to protect that unfortunate country from the ravages of the Friedlanders. The Elector of Saxony, while secretly favoring the German Emperor, had appealed to the King of Sweden for protection, and Gustavus Adolphus had granted his request. He marched so rapidly that Wallenstein, when informed of his approach, at first refused to believe the truth of the report, but nevertheless prepared to give him a warm reception. Having sent, a few days before, his most renowned cavalry general, Pappenheim, in another direction, he now sent messengers after him to recall him. The two great captains met at Lützen on the sixth of November. A terrible battle ensued, in which Gustavus Adolphus was killed. But Wallenstein was defeated; at least he left the battle-field in the possession of the enemy and retreated to Bohemia.

This retrograde movement and his retreat from the battle-field were unfavorably commented on at Vienna and declared unnecessary. Insinuations of treason were again whispered into the Emperor's ear, and his suspicion was aroused to such a degree that Wallenstein's removal from the army was resolved upon, although this intention was kept secret for a while. The Emperor surrounded himself with Spanish soldiers to be safe from an attack of the Friedlanders. He also succeeded by bribes and promises in estranging a number of Wallenstein's prominent lieutenants from him and in securing them for his own service. To some extent Wallenstein was kept informed of these secret steps of the Emperor, and he tried to counteract them and to protect himself. He renewed his negotiations with the Swedes and the Protestant princes, who had found in Bernard, Duke of

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Saxe-Weimar, a worthy successor of King Gustavus Adolphus as a military leader; and it is said that an agreement had been made by the two leaders of the opposing armies that Wallenstein's forces should join the Protestant army, and that they jointly should impose conditions of peace upon the Emperor. It goes without saying that a sovereignty for Wallenstein — most likely that of Bohemia — was included in the terms of peace.

Before this agreement could be carried out, events occurred which not only precipitated the downfall, but cut short the life of the over-ambitious military chieftain. It was of the greatest importance to Wallenstein to find out how far he would be able to rely on his army commanders and on their regiments in carrying out his treasonable projects. He first revealed these to three of them, — Terzky, Kinsky, and Illo, — the first two related to him by marriage, and the last an avowed and bitter enemy of the Emperor, who had refused to raise him to the rank of count. It was Illo who undertook to find out how the generals and colonels would feel and act; he called them together one evening and very cautiously proceeded to inflame their minds against the Emperor and glorify the services of Wallenstein, who, he said, was the only one who could have saved the Emperor from ruin, and who was now to be sacrificed again to the envy and jealousy of his enemies. This announcement caused loud protests and great indignation among those present. "But," concluded Illo, "the Duke is not willing to undergo this new humiliation, which is a shameful reward for his long and glorious services; no, he will not wait until it pleases the Emperor to kick him out, but he will go voluntarily and resign his command;

but what pains him deeply is the thought that, in doing so, he must leave his devoted friends and comrades, and cannot reward them as he intended." It may well be thought that these remarks kindled revolt in the hearts of the soldiers, and that they swore they would not let the Duke leave the army. The next morning they sent a delegation to their commander-in-chief, imploring him to desist from his intention of leaving the army, and assuring him that they would stand by him, no matter what might happen. It was only when a second delegation of the highest and most popular officers waited upon him, that the Duke gave way to their entreaties and promised to remain at the head of the army. But he attached one condition to this promise: he exacted from all the commanders a written pledge that they would all, jointly and singly, stand by him as their chief, and would consider his removal from the command of the army a public calamity. They all agreed to this condition, and a paper embodying this declaration was gotten up to be signed by all of them.

Illo took it upon himself to secure all the signatures, and in order to make short work of it, invited the commanders to an evening party at his headquarters, where he read the paper to them; but, in order to preclude all suspicion in the minds of the signers, Wallenstein had inserted a clause which bound the signers to the agreement only as long as Wallenstein used the army in the service of the Emperor. After Illo had read the paper containing the saving clause, he dexterously withdrew it and substituted for it another copy without the clause, and unknowingly the commanders signed it. Moreover, most of them were half or entirely intoxicated and could

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

not have discovered the deception; but one or two had remained sober, and when they read the paper again before signing it, they found that it was different from the one which had been read to them. They indignantly charged Illo with having practised a fraud on them, and the company broke up in confusion and anger. This half-failure seems to have opened Wallenstein's eyes to the real situation in which he found himself. Many of his commanders were too devoted Catholics to make common cause with the enemies of their Church, and while they were willing to stand by Wallenstein to the last as the defender of their faith, they refused to follow him into the Protestant camp and as a deserter from the Emperor's service. It also opened the Emperor's eyes to the necessity of prompt action, unless he would permit Wallenstein to concoct some plan by which he might lead the whole army into the camp of the Protestants. He therefore secretly commissioned General Gallas, one of Wallenstein's subordinates, to take command of the army as soon as the time had come for openly deposing the Duke of Friedland. It was a game of duplicity and deception on both sides. The Emperor tried to cheat Wallenstein out of his command and reward, and Wallenstein tried to cheat the Emperor out of the army.

Until then Wallenstein had been at Pilsen; but after the demonstration of the commanders, he deemed it advisable for his own plans and interests to transfer his headquarters to the strongly fortified city of Eger, which was commanded by Gordon, whom he considered one of his most reliable friends. The larger part of the army remained at Pilsen, while Wallenstein himself, escorted by a number of picked regiments under the command of



his most trusted lieutenants, went to Eger. But there he was to meet his doom. The thunderclouds of imperial wrath had been gathering more and more threateningly above his head. Wallenstein saw them not and feared them not. Had not the stars prophesied his coming elevation? Even when the Emperor published a proclamation, which was secretly distributed in the army, declaring him a rebel and offering a reward for his surrender, dead or alive, he would not believe it; he laughed at it when it was shown him. Under ordinary circumstances he would have had the courage to treat any imperial edict with contempt, for with his army his name was a much greater power and authority than that of the Emperor; but a complication had arisen which in the minds of his soldiers paralyzed his efforts and reëstablished the Emperor's supremacy. This complication was the increasing strength of the Protestant armies. The Duke's army, lawless, cruel, and violating every rule of morality, was nevertheless composed of men who stood in slavish fear of the Church and of the priest, and as soon as Wallenstein turned against these two, the soldiers turned against him. They were willing to follow him to death in a Catholic cause, when death would open to them the gates of Paradise, but they refused to follow him to death when death would deliver them to the everlasting torments of hell.

With this invisible moral power the great commander had not reckoned. Among the very men whom he had picked out as his escort to Eger were his murderers. And they did not wait long, for fear that others might anticipate them in their bloody work, and capture not only the imperial reward, but also the benedictions of the



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Church. These men were Gordon, the commander of the Eger garrison, and Leslie (both Scotchmen), Deveroux and Butler (both Irishmen). They had always been enthusiastic friends and admirers of Wallenstein, but they were also fanatical Catholics, and when they had to choose between their commander and the Church, their devotion to the latter prevailed. Deveroux was the leading spirit in the plot. He had received private instructions from Gallas and Piccolomini and won over the others. They also secured the assistance of a number of soldiers in their regiments, and solemnly pledged themselves to surrender Wallenstein's person, dead or alive, to Gallas, who was to take command of the imperial army. But in order to prevent interference with their dark design, Gordon, the commander of the garrison, invited them all to the citadel for an evening entertainment. At this entertainment, while eating supper, Illo, Terzky, Kinsky and Newman, were murdered. It was on a Saturday evening, February 25, 1634, the day after they had arrived with Wallenstein at Eger. Wallenstein himself was not present. He had retired early that night, after having once more consulted the stars with his Italian astrologer, who discovered unfavorable signs in the constellations. But it seems Wallenstein paid no attention to these warnings, and fell soundly asleep soon afterwards. Toward midnight, or perhaps shortly after midnight, he was aroused from his sleep by a loud noise. Coming from the citadel, where Wallenstein's lieutenants had been slain, Butler, with a number of his dragoons, and Deveroux, with a number of his halberdiers, marched up to Wallenstein's residence. Since both Butler and Deveroux were well known to the guards in the hall,

## WALLENSTEIN

they were immediately admitted, but when they reached the anteroom to the Duke's apartments, the sentinel wanted to stop them. He was cut down, not, however, before he had called for help, and cried out: "Murderers! Rebels!" It was this tumult that aroused Wallenstein. He jumped out of bed and hurried to the window to ask the sentinel posted at the entrance what was the matter. At that moment the door leading to the anteroom was burst open, and Deveroux, a halberd in his hands, and followed by half a dozen of his men, entered the bedroom, where he found himself face to face with Wallenstein. "Are you the scoundrel," said he, "who wants to rob his Imperial Majesty of his crown? You must die now!" And without having given any answer, Wallenstein received a stab of the halberd which lacerated the intestines and caused almost immediate death. Like Cæsar, he might have exclaimed, "Et tu, Brute!" for he had always especially befriended and distinguished this man Deveroux, who had come to him poor and friendless, and who owed to him everything. One of the halberdiers wished to throw Wallenstein's corpse out of the window, but Deveroux would not permit it; he rolled the body up in a table cover and had it transported to the citadel, where the Duke's murdered friends were lying in the yard, waiting for their burial. Wallenstein's body was placed by their side. It was then resolved to send the bodies of the dead generals to one of Illo's country-seats, which was in the neighborhood. In placing them in their coffins, it was found that Wallenstein's coffin was too small, and in order to force him into it his legs had to be broken.

Thus died one of the most remarkable men of the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

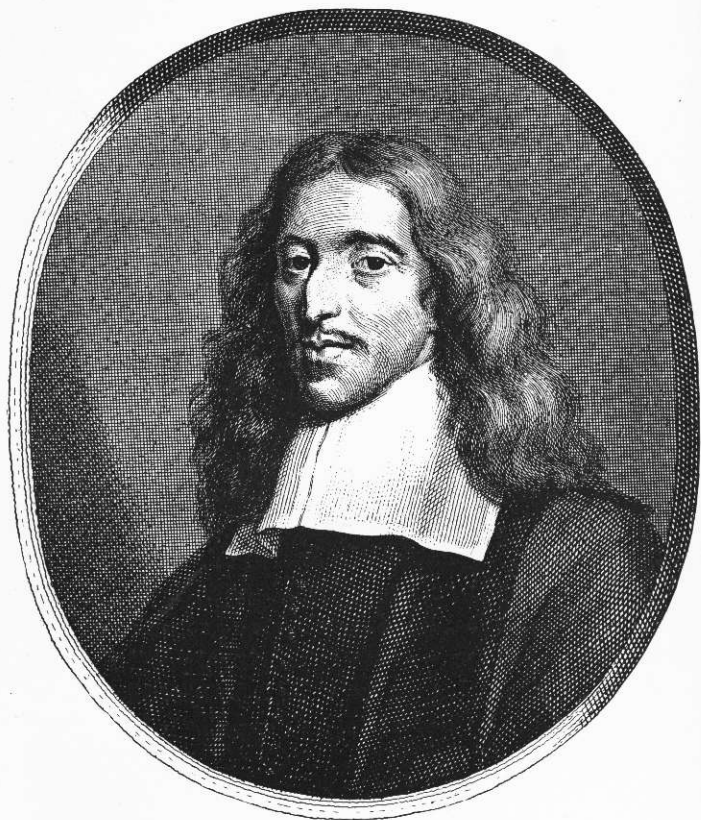
seventeenth century, — the greatest of the German generals of the terrible Thirty Years' War. As a strategist, he may not have been fully the equal of Gustavus Adolphus, but he had a magnetic power over his men which even that great commander did not possess, and which would have made him invincible, had not superstition and religious awe counteracted it. The German Emperor, hearing of his assassination, appeared to be overwhelmed with grief, and ordered three thousand masses to be read for the salvation of his soul; but he tried in vain to deceive the world by this hypocritical sorrow for a murder which he had planned and for which he rewarded the assassins. To this very day the treason of Wallenstein remains shrouded in doubt; and very likely it will remain forever an unsolved problem.

## CHAPTER XIV

JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT







JOHN DE WITT

## CHAPTER XIV

### ASSASSINATION OF THE BROTHERS JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

(August 20, 1672)

**N**EVER, perhaps, was the old saying, "Republics are ungrateful," more strikingly verified than in the case of the two brothers De Witt, who, after having rendered many great services to the Dutch Republic, were foully murdered by an infuriated mob in the streets of the Hague, August 20, 1672. John and Cornelius de Witt were the sons of a distinguished citizen of the city of Dordrecht, who had represented that city in the general assemblies of Holland and Friesland and was known as an eloquent and incorruptible defender of popular rights. He had placed himself at the head of the anti-Orange party because he considered the ambition and power of the princes of Orange a standing danger to the Republic. Grown up under the direction of such a father, the two sons had naturally imbibed his strong democratic principles, and their undoubted patriotism was strongly tinged with hostility to the house of Orange. The two De Witts have often been compared to the Gracchi, and, like those illustrious Romans, they worked and died for their democratic principles. Both were highly talented and, while



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

quite young, rose to the highest honors and dignities among their countrymen, — Cornelius, the elder of the two, by his eminent legal ability and his skill as a military and naval director and commissary, and John, by his eminence as an administrator and statesman. It is difficult to decide which of the two was intellectually the superior. A medal struck in their honor bore the inscription, "*Hic armis maximus, ille toga.*" It should not be inferred, however, from this inscription, that Cornelius, to whom the word "*armis*" applied, was at any time commander-in-chief of the Dutch army and navy, since he held only the office of government inspector of the navy, in which capacity he greatly distinguished himself.

John was, at the age of twenty-five, elected pensionary of the city of Dordrecht, and two years later, in 1652, Grand Pensionary of Holland, one of the highest offices in the United Provinces. His political influence was very great, and he used it to the best of his ability against the house of Orange. William the Second, Prince of Orange, had died on the second of October, 1650, leaving only a widow and a posthumous son as his heirs. On these circumstances, so unfavorable to the illustrious house which had played for so many years a conspicuous part in the history of the Netherlands, John de Witt built his hopes of dealing a deathblow to its political pretensions and of abolishing forever the office of stadtholder. It was, however, no easy task to accomplish this object. The province of Zealand was full of friends and partisans of the late stadtholder, who vigorously opposed any attempt in the direction contemplated by De Witt; and the other provinces, either from loyalty to the house of Orange, or from a secret jealousy of the supremacy of

## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

the states of Holland, which always wanted to control the policy of the Republic, either openly rejected the plans of De Witt or modified and attenuated them as exaggerated.

At the moment when John de Witt took the reins of government, the states were at war with England, and the war had taken a very unfavorable turn for them. The Dutch admirals had suffered several terrible defeats. Tromp, one of their most celebrated naval heroes, had been killed in battle, and an English fleet was cruising along the coast of Holland, blockading its ports, and paralyzing its commerce. But De Witt repaired these disasters with such rapidity, and restored to the Dutch navy such a formidable strength by his administrative genius, that Cromwell was willing to enter into negotiations for peace, which he had haughtily rejected before. A treaty of peace, submitted by the Grand Pensionary of Holland and signed at Westminster on the fifteenth of April, 1654, reëstablished virtually the conditions which had existed between the two nations before the war. However, the Dutch Republic was compelled to recognize the superiority of the English flag in the channel, and bound itself to give the Stuart dynasty no support, and that no Prince of Orange should be elected again either Stadtholder or Captain-General. This last section of the treaty was signed, at first by the province of Holland only, and was kept secret for a long time. In getting this provision of exclusion of the house of Orange passed (which, by the way, was as welcome to De Witt as to Cromwell) by the other provinces also, the Grand Pensionary practised a good deal of duplicity, and laid himself open to serious charges of official deception which later on contributed to his downfall.

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

In the meantime another complication had arisen and taxed the statesmanship of the Dutch government and the patriotism of the Netherlands to the utmost. In France Louis the Fourteenth had taken the reins of government into his own hands, and manifested an ambition for conquest which endangered the security of all his neighbors. Although the wife of Louis, at the time of her marriage, had solemnly renounced all her rights of succession to the Spanish throne and any Spanish provinces, the King nevertheless after the death of his wife's father, Philip the Fourth, claimed the Spanish Netherlands as justly belonging to his wife, and defended this claim not so much by argument as by an invasion and armed occupation of the disputed territory. No state was more deeply interested in the outcome of this dispute than the Netherlands. With growing fear they beheld the rapid progress which the armies of the French King under the command of great generals were making, and they thought that their own independence might suffer from the immediate neighborhood of so powerful and aggressive a monarch. With great skill the Dutch government secretly formed an alliance with Sweden and England by which these three powers agreed that the Spanish Netherlands should remain under Spanish dominion and that Louis the Fourteenth should be prevented from annexing them to the French monarchy. This Triple Alliance was too powerful to be defied by the French King, and he made peace with Spain, evacuating Franche-Comté, which he had already conquered, but retaining possession of a number of important cities in the Netherlands,—such as Charleroi, Douai, Lille, Tournay and Oudenarde, which by the genius of

## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

Vauban were converted into almost impregnable fortresses. Dutch statesmanship was the obstacle which had placed itself in the King's way and frustrated his ambitious designs. Personal irritation and offended vanity were added to his chagrin at the failure of his plans.

A boastful medal was struck in the Netherlands commemorating the diplomatic victory which their government had achieved over the power of France. On this medal a Dutch statesman was represented as Joshua bidding the sun (the symbol of Louis the Fourteenth) to stand still. For this arrogance the Republic was to be punished, and with matchless skill and cunning the French government went to work to prepare for its overthrow. The general political situation of Europe was highly favorable to the consummation of the French designs. The Emperor of Germany, a weak and pusillanimous sovereign, had his hands full in the eastern provinces of the Empire, in which the Turks had advanced victorious up to the very gates of Vienna; he was therefore powerless to oppose French aggression in the Netherlands. Moreover special negotiations had been opened with some of the sovereign princes of northern Germany by which the French monarch secured the right to march his armies through their territory on their way to the United Netherlands without touching Spanish territory. With equal success the French diplomats dissolved the Triple Alliance, and made both Sweden and England, former allies of the Dutch Republic, subservient to the French monarch. Sweden received an annual subsidy of 600,000 dollars from the French treasury, and England a subsidy of 350,000 pounds sterling and also the promise of the province of Zealand as its share of the dismemberment of

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the United Netherlands. Princess Henrietta of France, wife of the Duke of Orleans and sister of Charles the Second of England, was sent by the wily French King to England to negotiate this infamous treaty. She succeeded in accomplishing her object mainly through the influence which one of the ladies of her suite, Mademoiselle de Querouet, gained over the mind of the English King, who made her his mistress and bestowed on her the title of Duchess of Portsmouth.

Having thus fortified himself on all sides and deprived the United Netherlands of the possibility of taking the field against him with any chance of success, Louis declared war upon them. The result could not be doubtful. Moreover the domestic discord and the active struggle between the political factions added much to the gravity of the situation, and partly paralyzed the efforts of the government to arouse the provinces to a full comprehension of the danger. John de Witt was the chief executive of the government, and upon him rested largely the responsibility of the situation. The Orangist party turned its main attacks against him, and spared neither criticism nor calumny to undermine his standing and authority. It charged him directly with having, either through incompetency or something worse, neglected to place the country in a suitable state of defence, and then having provoked a war with a powerful enemy. These charges against De Witt were largely unjust, and were preferred only to punish him for his opposition to re-instating the house of Orange in the stadtholdership and in the chief command of all the military forces of the Republic.

John de Witt had made two radical errors in his esti-

## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

mate of the political situation. He knew that Louis the Fourteenth felt irritated at the Dutch Republic's action in preventing his acquisition of the Spanish Netherlands; but he did not know that the French King would resent that action, and make gigantic preparations for crushing the Dutch Republic. Never before had such tremendous efforts been made by a great nation to destroy a weak neighbor. The war was to be short and decisive, and the insolent "traders" — that was the name the haughty French King gave to the citizens of the Netherlands — were to be punished radically. The second error which De Witt committed was his underestimation of the venality and corruption existing in the government circles of his former allies, England and Sweden. He learned at an early day that French diplomacy had induced them to recede from the Triple Alliance; but he did not realize at the time that French gold and French promises had persuaded these two powers to make common cause with him for the dismemberment of the Republic, and to furnish troops for that purpose. When finally the full reality of the King's revengeful plan was revealed to him, he not only aroused the people of the Netherlands to a realization of the terrible danger which threatened them, but he also, with his usual energy, went to work to find assistance against the overwhelming odds among the other European powers, and his experienced statesmanship served him well in bringing into play all the different motives, both personal and political, by which he could hope to influence their decisions.

Unfortunately the allies he could enlist in his cause were too weak to constitute an adequate counterpoise to the enormous power of his opponent. In stating the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

general political situation of Europe preceding the attack of Louis the Fourteenth on the Dutch Republic, we have already mentioned the causes which prevented the other powers from active interference in behalf of the Netherlands. The aggressive Turk, also influenced by French money, kept the Emperor of Germany busy in his eastern provinces, and left him little time to care for other things than his own protection. Moreover Louis the Fourteenth had, by munificent presents and liberal payments, won the secret support of the Emperor's prime minister, Lobkowitz, who did all in his power to overcome his master's fears concerning the intentions of the French King, and frustrated the efforts of the King's enemies to draw him over to their side. De Witt had to contend with these difficulties in securing little more than the moral support of the Emperor; but when the rapid progress of the French arms had revealed to him the danger which threatened the Empire, he consented reluctantly and hesitatingly to a sort of active intervention for the protection of the German territory.

One ally of the Dutch Republic should not be forgotten here — Frederick William, the great Elector of Brandenburg, whose political genius enabled him to see the disastrous consequences which the growing power of the King of France would have not only for the German Empire, but also for his own possessions on the Rhine. He, therefore, concluded an alliance with the Dutch Republic, promising an army of twenty thousand men in defence of German soil against the aggression of the French King, and used besides his influence over the German Emperor in persuading him to join the alliance. The Elector of Brandenburg was for one reason a particu-



## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

larly valuable ally, because his army was needed to keep in check the Swedes, who were to take the field in northern Germany as soon as the German Emperor would show a disposition to coöperate with the Dutch Republic. The decisive victory of Fehrbellin, in which the great Elector routed a Swedish army much superior in numbers to his own, showed how gloriously he performed his part of the programme.

It was at this time that the Prince of Orange, although only twenty years old, appeared to the Dutch people as a savior from these threatened calamities. The young Prince, after the death of his mother, in 1661, passed under the guardianship of John de Witt, who had him instructed in political science and in the study of modern languages. It would seem that, with the foresight of genius, he foresaw the prominent part which Prince William would sooner or later play in the history of the Republic, and that, in spite of his personal antipathy to the house of Orange, he was patriotic enough to educate him well for his coming career. The precarious condition of his health, which seemed to disqualify the Prince for the hardships and exposures of military life, had no influence whatever on his ambition to equal the great achievements of his ancestors. An opportunity for reaching the goal of his ambition was given him when the States-General, in obedience to the urgent demand of the people, appointed him Captain-General of the Republic. Although the powers of the new commander-in-chief were limited by several provisions, yet the Republican party, under the leadership of De Witt, demanded more and better guarantees for curbing the ambition of the Prince. It demanded and obtained from the States-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

General an order that the Captain-General should be obliged to swear to maintain the Perpetual Edict suppressing the stadtholdership and prohibiting its reëstablishment. John de Witt also strongly opposed the life-appointment of the Prince of Orange until he should have completed his twenty-second year, while the Orangists and the Prince himself made his life-appointment a condition for his acceptance. A compromise was finally reached, and Prince William of Orange, known in history as William the Third, was solemnly inaugurated in his new office of commander-in-chief. On him was imposed the difficult task to oppose the armies of Louis the Fourteenth, commanded by Condé, Turenne, Luxembourg and Vauban. Entire harmony and good-will seemed to exist between the Grand Pensionary and the Prince after the latter's appointment to the command of the army. They corresponded in a very cordial tone, and De Witt showed the greatest eagerness to satisfy the wishes of the Prince for the thorough defence of the country. It is not our purpose to mention in detail the indefatigable exertions of John de Witt to place the country in a suitable state of defence. But these exertions and the measures they resulted in were not sufficient to avert the calamities of the war and to prevent a conquest which everybody had foreseen. The Netherlands had enjoyed peace for twenty-four years, and this long rest had unaccustomed the country to war. The constant quarrels between the different parties had weakened the unity of the Republic, and when the time for united and patriotic action came, the nation was but ill prepared for it.

On the sixth of April, 1672, France issued a declaration

## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

of war which had been long expected. Louis the Fourteenth celebrated beforehand the conquest he was about to undertake, although some of his most experienced generals, Condé for instance, did not share his confidence. However, the rapidity with which the French, after having crossed the Yssel, took cities and fortresses almost without firing a gun, seemed fully to justify Louis the Fourteenth in his anticipation of an easy and brilliant victory. One short month had sufficed to place at the mercy of the French monarch the flourishing and prosperous Republic, which four years before had interrupted him in his march of victory. No man suffered more both as a patriot and as a public official, from the disastrous turn in public affairs than John de Witt. He had done all that a sagacious statesman and a noble-minded patriot could do to prevent, and failing in this attempt, sought to repair the disasters which overwhelmed the Republic. But the ungrateful people failed to stand by him and reward his exertions for the public welfare. And not only the honor of having saved the independence of his country in this unequal conflict was denied to him, but his life itself was lost, as a sacrifice to popular hatred and fanaticism.

Under these exasperating circumstances — each new day bringing information of a new calamity, of the surrender of a fortress, of the capitulation of a garrison, of the precipitate retreat of the army — it was not only natural, it was a matter of duty and patriotism for John de Witt, the head of the government, to enter into negotiations with the conqueror in order to check his rapid advance and get from him better terms of peace than might be expected after he had captured the last bul-

warks of Dutch independence. It was by no means De Witt's plan to open negotiations for the surrender of Dutch independence; but he hoped that the French King would consent to suspend hostilities during the progress of the negotiations, and that this intermission would give the Republic time to strengthen its bulwarks. In case of an unfavorable result, he would resume armed resistance with greater chances of success than before. John de Witt had frequently, during the months preceding the outbreak of the war, insisted on making adequate preparations to meet an attack of the French King, whose restless ambition for military glory and territorial expansion was well known. He had also pointed out (if all other means should fail) the necessity of again, as in the war with Spain, resorting to those means of defence which nature had placed in the possession of the Dutch, by opening the sluices and cutting the dykes, in order to let the sea overflow the bottom lands of the country, and thus protecting Holland, and above all Amsterdam, from foreign occupation. This last measure of defence, terrible and destructive as it was necessarily, was really the anchor of hope upon which the minds of Dutch patriots rested their expectations of final triumph.

The Dutch navy was in excellent condition. It was still mistress of the seas, and it had lately, under the able command of De Ruyter one of the greatest naval heroes that ever lived, won two great victories over the fleets of France and England, which secured the Republic against the landing of foreign troops from the sea side. The Republic had spared no efforts to keep the navy in splendid condition, and more than any other man Cornelius de Witt had contributed to its efficiency. He was

## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

an intimate friend of Admiral de Ruyter, and during the naval battle of Solbay, although seriously ill, he sat by his side, as the official delegate of the States-General, assisting him with his counsels, and by his very presence inspiring sailors and commanders with patriotic devotion. The greatness of his services to the Republic had been formally recognized after that battle by a unanimous vote of thanks of the States-General.

It would seem almost a matter of impossibility that with such a record of patriotism, integrity and devotion to the public welfare, the voice of calumny should have been successfully raised against the two illustrious brothers; but it was done nevertheless by the Orange party, which did not forgive their opposition to the elevation of Prince William. The young Prince had, during the short campaign, won no martial laurels by victories in battles or by the capture of fortresses; but he had shown eminent qualities which promised glorious results if an opportunity were given for unfolding them. He was wise and circumspect beyond his years, self-collected and cool amid the most pressing dangers, inexhaustible in resources, and while thoroughly loyal to the Republic, yet proud of his ancestors and the pre-eminent part they had played in the history of their country.

As soon as the report became public that the Grand Pensionary had taken steps for negotiations with the French King, the Orange party denounced them as acts of treason, and loudly demanded that Prince William should be placed in supreme authority. It also asserted that the failure of the campaign so far was due to the restrictions foolishly and criminally imposed on

the Prince, who might have saved the Republic if he had been permitted to follow the inspirations of his own genius and had not been fettered by instructions from men that had been his life-long enemies and who preferred the rule of a foreign monarch to the stadtholdership of a Prince of Orange. In this manner the public mind was filled with hatred toward the De Witts, while gradually the young Prince of Orange became the idol of the nation. Recollections of the glorious achievements of his forefathers, of their perseverance and patience, of their intrepidity and resoluteness, and of their final triumphs in situations as perilous as theirs, were awakened in the hearts of the burghers, and made them inclined to a restoration of the stadtholdership in behalf of the Prince. It was to be expected that sooner or later public excitement, aggravated from hour to hour by the unfavorable reports from the seat of war, would manifest itself in a violent explosion and fall with destructive force upon the very heads which were most entitled to public gratitude and veneration.

Two attempts on the lives of the two brothers in the summer of 1672 — an attack on John de Witt which came very near killing him and prostrated him for weeks on a sick bed, and the other on Cornelius, who escaped from it almost unhurt — were the first serious manifestations of the public ill-will. It was only too evident that the Orange party was at the bottom of these outbursts of hostility, and that Prince William himself was not a stranger to the intrigues. On the second of July, 1672, the Prince of Orange was elected Stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland for life. These were the only two provinces not occupied by the French armies, and the Prince's





CORNELIUS DE WITT

## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

election was therefore equivalent to his appointment as Stadtholder of the Republic. In effect it placed the De Witts at his mercy.

In vain the Grand Pensionary handed in his resignation on the fourth of August. The Orange party was not satisfied with permitting him to retire from the public service; it formed a sinister conspiracy which engulfed the two illustrious men in ruin and death. A worthless scoundrel, a certain Tichelaar who on several occasions had been accused of felonies, openly charged Cornelius de Witt with having tried to bribe him to assassinate the Prince Stadtholder, — a proposition which he had indignantly rejected in spite of the tempting rewards offered to him. Incredible as it may appear, the accusation, contradicted both by the noble character of Cornelius de Witt and by the bad reputation of the informer, was eagerly acted upon by the authorities of Holland. Cornelius was arrested and imprisoned at the Hague, where for four days he was subjected to the infamy of the torture. It was hoped that in his agony he would make a confession of guilt which, true or not, would justify his partisan judges in passing a sentence of death on him. But Cornelius remained firm in his disdainful denial of the odious accusation, and the repetition of the torture on four different days did not change his testimony. Under these circumstances his base judges, instruments of the Stadtholder and his party, did not dare to pronounce the death sentence against him; but they found him guilty nevertheless, deprived him of all his public dignities, and exiled him for life from the territory of the Republic.

It may appear strange that the Orange party perse-



cuted Cornelius de Witt, who was the brother of the Grand Pensionary, with such venomous hatred; but an occurrence which had shortly preceded his arrest will explain the ill-will of the leaders of the Orange party. Like the other cities of Holland, the city of Dordrecht had, by a vote of its Common Council, revoked the Perpetual Edict. Cornelius de Witt had but a few weeks before returned from the battle of Solbay, where he had so greatly distinguished himself, and was confined to his bed by serious illness. Being one of the highest city officials, his signature was required on the act of revocation, and the Orange leaders demanded that the document should be forthwith presented to him. City officials, followed by an excited and hostile mob, took it to his residence and requested him to sign it. He refused. In vain his family, his friends, and his servants implored him to affix his signature, telling him that a mob of thousands of excited people surrounded the house and threatened to demolish it and kill the inhabitants if his name should not appear on the paper. Finally the supplications and tears of his wife and children, imploring him not to sacrifice their lives by his obstinacy, induced him to affix his signature, but he added the two initials V. C. to it; and when the officials asked him what those two letters meant, he answered, "They stand for the words 'Vi coactus'" (yielding to violence). This declaration caused an outburst of indignation in the crowd, and but for the speedy erasure of the obnoxious initials by his wife, and the energetic efforts of his friends to protect him, Cornelius de Witt would very likely on that day have paid for his boldness with his life. It was ascertained that Tichelaar, who shortly afterwards accused

## JOHN AND CORNELIUS DE WITT

him of having planned the assassination of the Prince of Orange, had been one of the mob surrounding the house and vociferously demanding the punishment of the rebellious magistrate. The infamous charge of Tichelaar against the great patriot had unquestionably sprung from the scene at Cornelius de Witt's residence. The Orange leaders saw that it would not be safe for them or their master to let republicans like the two De Witts remain among them, and their death was resolved upon.

The twentieth of August, 1672, was the fatal day which was to seal the doom of the two illustrious brothers. Cornelius, crushed by the sentence of perpetual banishment pronounced against him, remained in his cell at the Buitenhof, the terrible prison of the Hague. On the morning of that day John de Witt was called to the Buitenhof, where his brother wished to see him. Although warned by his friends not to go, the brave ex-Pensionary did not hesitate to comply with the summons. It was a false message. Reaching the prison, he found himself entrapped and at the mercy of the mob, which had assembled before the prison howling and shouting, "Hurrah for Orange! Death to the traitors!" It was but a short time after his arrival, and after a hurried and pathetic interview with his brother, that the rabble, instigated by the calumnies of the Orange men, burst open the doors of the prison, and with axes and sledge-hammers and clubs forced their way up to the cell where Cornelius was imprisoned. At the sight of the two brothers the fury of the mob knew no bounds. Like tigers they jumped upon them, threw them down, clubbed and slew them amid cries of beastly exultation. "There goes the Perpetual Edict!" one of the butchers

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

is said to have exclaimed as a powerful blow with the butt-end of his musket prostrated John de Witt senseless at his feet. Another murderer came up, and noticing symptoms of returning consciousness in the countenance of the Pensionary, he fired his pistol at him, blowing out his brains. Cornelius was killed by a tremendous blow with an iron bar which fractured his skull; he died instantly. But death alone did not satisfy the slayers. With unheard-of brutality they kicked, beat and abused, in every possible manner, the lifeless bodies, and finally, after having stripped off their clothes, dragged the mangled and disfigured remains from the jail to a gibbet which had been erected by volunteer executioners, and hung them by the feet. The popular frenzy went so far that the murderers cut and tore the flesh in pieces from the bodies of "the great traitors, John and Cornelius de Witt," and sold them in the streets of the city for a few cents each.

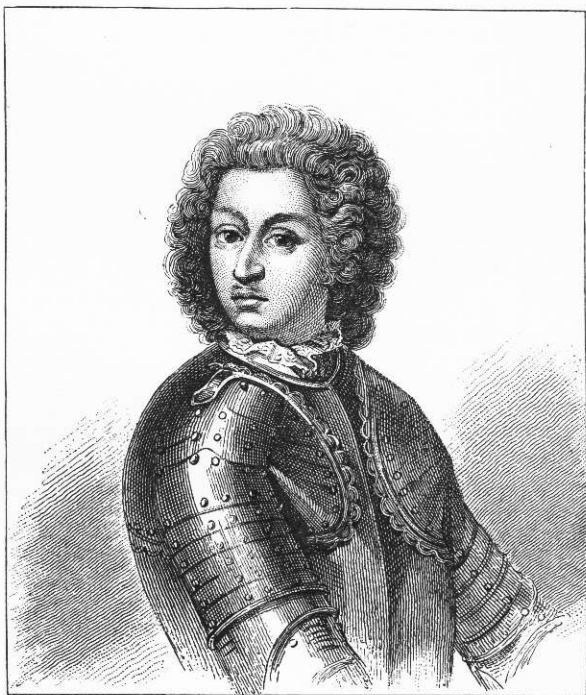
Thus suffered and died, on the twentieth of August, 1672, two of the purest and most high-minded patriots that any nation has produced, — murdered by their own people, whom they had served faithfully and successfully for many years. Their death is a dark blot on the annals of the Dutch Republic; and it is an indelible stain on the otherwise great and fair name of William the Third of Orange, Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic and afterwards King of England. History has forgotten many crimes, but it will not forget the assassination of the brothers De Witt.

## CHAPTER XV

ALEXIS, SON OF PETER THE GREAT







ALEXIS

## CHAPTER XV

### ASSASSINATION OF ALEXIS, SON OF PETER THE GREAT

(June 26, 1718)

**T**HE sudden death of Alexis, son of Peter the Great by his first wife Eudoxia, has always been and is still shrouded in mystery; but the prevailing opinion of historians is that the unfortunate young man was assassinated by direct order of his father, and all the surrounding circumstances point to this conclusion. We think we are therefore justified in placing it here among the famous assassinations in history. It is the darkest chapter in the history of Peter the Great, a monarch whose achievements as a civil administrator, reformer, and general entitle him to a high rank among the really great rulers of Europe; but these achievements should not be made a cloak or excuse for a crime from which not only modern civilization, but human nature itself, shrinks back in horror.

It is not necessary here to go into the details of the marvellous activity and energy of Peter's life. More than any other ruler of ancient or modern times he stands before the world as a model national reformer, introducing, by the force of an indomitable will, the most sweeping changes and reforms into the social,



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

economical, political, industrial, and commercial life of the nation over which he rules, breaking with all the traditions of the past, and lifting his nation by a supreme effort from comparative barbarism into semi-culture, and starting it on the road to political greatness and commercial importance, on which it has made such astounding progress during the last two hundred years. The personal genius and initiative of Peter the Great have contributed more to the development of Russia's resources, and he has done more to raise her to her present position in Europe than all other causes combined. It is sad for the philanthropist and historian to admit that these great qualities were obscured by vices and habits that were, perhaps, the tribute which even the greatest of mortals has to pay to his age and to his nation.

As a very young man Peter had married Eudoxia Laputkin, the daughter of a powerful and influential family. It was not a love marriage, but he had hoped to gain from this alliance a strengthening of his pretensions to the throne. Eudoxia was very handsome, but, while she pleased Peter, she had not the power to win his exclusive affection. She bore him a son, Alexis, but even the birth of an heir — generally so anxiously expected by autocrats — could not firmly establish intimate relations between Peter and Eudoxia while he permitted the boy to remain entirely under the care of the mother and her relatives. Unfortunately the Laputkin family was strongly attached to ancient Russian traditions and usages. It was entirely under the influence of the priests and clung to the prejudices and prerogatives of the Russian aristocracy. Alexis was brought up in these

## ALEXIS

opinions and absorbed them from his infancy. In fact no two minds, and no two temperaments could have been more at variance than those of the father and of the son; and, as the boy grew up, the antagonism between Peter and Alexis became greater and more pronounced.

Whether from incompatibility of temper or some other cause, Peter discarded Eudoxia and had her shut up in a convent in 1698; he then took the boy out of her hands and entrusted his education to teachers in sympathy with his own ideas. But they found it impossible — and even Peter himself, in spite of rigorous measures and cruelty — to eradicate from the mind of the boy the conservative and old-Russian principles which his mother and the Laputkins had, as it would seem, planted deep within it. When Peter divorced Eudoxia and shut her up in a convent, the antipathy of the boy turned into hatred, and he clung only the more stubbornly to his mother and her family. As he grew older, he became intemperate and dissipated; but, more than these vices, the sluggishness of his mind and the open hostility with which he looked upon the great reforms in which Peter was engaged and in which he took great pride, irritated his father to such a degree that the Czar formed the plan of excluding him from the succession.

In order to break his bad habits and possibly to bring about a salutary change in his rude and uncouth conduct, Alexis was married quite young to a Princess of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, a lovely and refined young woman of great personal beauty; but Alexis treated her very coldly and cruelly. The fact that his father had selected his bride was sufficient cause for him to treat

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

her with contempt and aversion. She bore her misfortune with great resignation; but died of a broken heart, after having given her husband two children, a daughter and a son. The latter afterwards ascended the throne as Peter the Second.

The death of his wife made but little impression on Alexis, who had been living for a long time in open adultery with his mistress, an illiterate serf from Finland. When this matrimonial attempt to reform Alexis had failed, the Czar, more than ever incensed at his obstinacy, gave him the choice between changing his ways and being sent to a convent. The Czar was the more inclined to shut him up in a solitary place of confinement because Catherine, his second wife, had just given birth to a son, and Peter might hope to have a male heir, even with Alexis out of the way. The birth of this half-brother filled the mind of Alexis with vague fears. But being assured by his friends, and especially by the Laputkins and the priests, that he might easily, at the proper time, get out of the convent, since the cowl would not be nailed to his head, he hypocritically declared in favor of the convent, and told his father that he had a greater vocation for spiritual things than for the government of an empire. The confinement was, however, not so very solitary as it might have appeared to the Czar; on the contrary, both Alexis and Eudoxia were the chief personages around whom the malcontents and all the opponents of reform clustered with hopeful expectation. Alexis treated his imprisonment so lightly that he imprudently spoke of what he was going to do as soon as he had ascended the throne. "I shall be the Czar," said he; "they cannot keep me out of the succession.

## ALEXIS

Let his foreigners intrigue against me; I shall beat them all, for the people are for me, and I'll set all things right again. We shall then be Russians once more!"

In the meantime Peter the Great had started on a new European tour. Catherine, his wife, accompanied him. He went to Prussia, Denmark, Holland, England and France, and was received everywhere with the greatest honors and distinctions. At Amsterdam the unwelcome news reached him that Alexis had left his convent under a false pretence, saying that he would join the Czar on his travels; but he had proceeded to Vienna and placed himself under the protection of the German Emperor. The Czar immediately despatched two of his most intimate friends with instructions to bring him back, alive or dead. But when the two messengers reached Vienna, the Czarowitz had left that city already, and his whereabouts was unknown. But after a diligent search, it was discovered that he had gone to Naples and had found an asylum at the Castle of St. Angelo. The messengers hurried to Naples and succeeded in getting an interview with the Prince, in which they exhausted their eloquence to induce him to return with them to Russia. They read to him also a letter written by his father, who promised him that, upon his immediate return, his escapade would be forgiven and forgotten. The Prince was not willing to go, and consented only when the Viceroy of Naples joined his own request with the entreaties of the messengers. The Czar had returned already to St. Petersburg when Alexis arrived.

The Prince hoped to be kindly received and to be treated like a repentant son; but in this expectation he

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

found himself badly deceived. He was immediately arrested and subjected to a very severe interrogatory, in the course of which he implicated a number of prominent persons in having planned and assisted him in his flight from Russia. And then a mock trial of the most infamous character was enacted. The young Prince had already renounced all his rights to the crown; but this renunciation did not assuage the vindictive spirit of his father. Those whom Alexis, in his confusion and in the agony of the torture, had implicated in the crime of which he was accused, were tried for high treason, convicted, and beheaded or broken on the wheel. The ex-Empress Eudoxia was transferred to a dungeon in another prison, after having been cruelly chastised by two nuns. Alexis himself, from whom the cruel application of the torture (during which the Czar was present) had extorted the confession of crimes which he had never committed, was convicted of high treason and sentenced to be beheaded. The Czar insisted on a verdict of capital punishment, and the one hundred and eighty-one judges composing the court obeyed the imperial brute; they rendered a unanimous verdict. Peter hypocritically said that he would pardon him. When the decision of the judges and his father's promise of clemency were communicated to Alexis, he was overcome with terror and excitement, and led back to prison. The next day it was reported that he had died of apoplexy, but that in his last moments an affectionate interview had taken place between him and his father. Another report stated that the Czar had withdrawn his pardon and ordered his son to be beheaded without delay. And still another report, almost too horrid to be true, says that Peter, with his own hands,

## ALEXIS

cut off the head of his son. There is no doubt that the young man was foully murdered. The story of his death by apoplexy was merely invented to whitewash the memory of one of the greatest, but also of one of the most brutal and cruel rulers that ever lived.



CHAPTER XVI

PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA









PETER III.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ASSASSINATION OF PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

(July 17, 1762)

**I**N a previous chapter we have told the story, full of horror and crime, of the life of Ivan the Terrible of Russia. It was not one famous assassination which placed that life-story in this series of historical murders; it was an uninterrupted, long-continued succession of butcheries and assassinations which entitled it to this place. In the long line of historical characters extending through the ages there is not one who so fully deserves the designation of a wholesale assassin as Ivan the Terrible, the demon of the North. But strange to say, the Russians, who during his lifetime execrated him and fled from him as from contagion, to-day seem to have forgotten his iniquities, and place him among their great rulers. Let Karamsin, one of the few great historians Russia has produced, explain this seeming anomaly: "Such was the Czar! Such were his subjects! Their patience was boundless, for they regarded the commands of the Czar as the commands of God, and they considered every act of disobedience to the Czar's will as a rebellion against the will of God. They perished, but they saved for us, the Russians of the nineteenth century, the greatness and the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

power of Russia, for the strength of an empire rests in the willingness of an empire to obey." Words like these make us comprehend — what otherwise would be utterly incomprehensible to us — that a monster like Ivan the Terrible was permitted to continue his career of crime and murder until it was terminated by death brought on by disease and not by violence.

The history of Russia, after the death of Ivan the Terrible, is full of crimes and assassinations. Czars and heirs to the crown were ruthlessly murdered in order to make way for usurpers and pretenders, until these again fell victims to conspiracies. The most famous of these assassinations is that of Peter the Third, not only because it was carried out in the interest of his own wife, the Empress Catherine, but mainly perhaps because Russia, at that time, — 1762 — had already entered the list of great European powers. Peter the Third was the son of Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, and of the Grand-Duchess Anna of Russia, oldest daughter of Peter the Great. As such, young Peter had even a better right to the crown of Russia than the Empress Elizabeth, who was a younger daughter of Peter the Great; and it was Elizabeth herself who, in 1742, sent for Peter — then a boy at school in Germany — and declared him her heir and successor to the crown.

Peter was then only fifteen years of age. His education until then had been designed to fit him for the throne of Denmark and Sweden, upon which his father had a just claim; but preferring the prospect of sitting on the throne of the Czars, he went to St. Petersburg. The Empress spared no pains to educate her nephew for the high and difficult task which was in store for him as

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

the future ruler of Russia. But it was in vain that she tried to make a Russian of him; he remained not only at heart, but also in his tastes, his manners, his conduct, his amusements and occupations a German; and what was worse, he liked to show publicly and privately how strongly attached he was to the land of his birth, and how profoundly he despised the people of Russia, over whom he was to rule. In a foreign-born crown-prince such a disposition would have been a serious political mistake under all circumstances, but it was especially so in this case, since Russia had been engaged, for years, in war with Frederick the Great of Prussia, and had made great sacrifices in men and treasures to conquer him and to cripple his growing power and influence in Europe.

Elizabeth hated Frederick the Great with the passion of a woman offended in her vanity. He had said of her: "She is as ugly as a cat and as treacherous; the very thought of her makes me sick." The hatred of the Empress did not prevent the Crown Prince from openly expressing his unbounded admiration for the Prussian King. True, Peter was mentally too insignificant to comprehend the real greatness and genius of Frederick; but he admired the strict discipline, the rigid training, the incessant military exercises, the severe punishments for the slightest infraction of the rules and the least symptom of insubordination, — in short, all the outward and visible work in the preparation of a model army; and the Prussian army had become the model of Europe since the days of King Frederick William the First. He was anxious to introduce these Prussian features into the Russian army, expecting very likely that such externals

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

would be the principal means of making an army invincible. That it took the genius and the untiring energy of a Frederick to bring about this invincibility he failed to see. When Peter had grown up to manhood his military zeal increased and became a perfect passion. But he felt no desire to join the Russian army in the field and earn military distinction and honors; no, he preferred to stay at home and act the drillmaster of a regiment of Holsteiners, which the Empress had organized for his especial pleasure, and to whose equipment, drill and exercises the young Grand Duke devoted most of his leisure hours. The men were uniformed and armed exactly like Prussian grenadiers, and all the officers belonged to prominent German families. The organization of this regiment made the Grand Duke very unpopular among the members of the Russian nobility, and they lost no opportunity in blackening his character and belittling his mental qualifications.

In 1745 Peter married the Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, the daughter of a Prussian field-marshal. She was distinguished by great beauty and high mental attainments, and afterwards won world-wide renown under the name of Catherine the Second. She was originally named Sophia Augusta, but when the Empress Elizabeth selected her for the wife of her successor, she adopted the name of Catherine. Before his marriage, Peter had led a rather dissolute life, but for a couple of years after the wedding the young couple seemed to be quite happy. Peter himself was very good-looking and, although not a man of brilliant mind, was of average intelligence and culture. An attack of small-pox destroyed his good looks; and this circumstance combined with the volatile

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

character of his wife caused an estrangement, which seemed to grow from year to year, and finally degenerated into absolute hatred. From that time on husband and wife, although not formally divorced or even separated, lived each a life of unrestrained vice.

No sooner had the courtiers noticed the growing coldness between them than they tried to ingratiate themselves with the young and beautiful but profligate Catherine, and some of them succeeded only too well. The first of her lovers was Count Soltikoff, one of the handsomest men of the Russian court, and first chamberlain of the Grand Duke. In his privileged position in the service of the Grand Duke he had so many opportunities of meeting the Grand Duchess, that soon the closest intimacy was established between them. But somehow or other a report of the liaison reached the ears of the Empress, and she sent Soltikoff on a diplomatic mission to Turkey in the hope of putting a stop to it. But the Grand Duchess easily consoled herself. No sooner had Soltikoff left the capital than Catherine formed a new liaison. Her next lover was the beautiful and chivalrous Prince Poniatowski, of the renowned Polish family; the scandal became so notorious and excited so much envy and jealousy among the Russian courtiers that it reached the ears of the Grand Duke, who applied to the Empress and demanded that his wife be punished for her shameful conduct. The Empress, who was guilty herself of many scandalous love affairs, did not reprimand the Grand Duchess, but sent Poniatowski back to Poland. A short time afterwards he returned, however, having been appointed Polish Ambassador at the court of St. Petersburg. The Grand Duke was indignant at his unlooked-for re-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

turn, and having one day surprised him in a very intimate *tête-à-tête* with Catherine, upbraided him and her in the presence of the whole court, threatening at the time to drive him like a dog from the palace, and to imprison her in a convent. At the same time the Grand Duke himself was very far from leading an exemplary life. He had picked out among the ladies of the court a young and beautiful girl, Countess Woronzow, and made her his mistress.

The time came when the Empress Elizabeth was on her deathbed. She made then a last attempt to reconcile the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess, in order to secure peace for Russia; but the estrangement and repugnance which they felt for each other was so great that this attempt failed utterly. In fact, the chasm widened immensely after the death of Elizabeth, and neither the husband nor the wife took care to conceal it. Moreover, immediately after Peter's accession to the throne, a radical change occurred in the policy of the government,—a change that was warmly approved by some, but most bitterly opposed by others. Two great political parties were formed, and although the opponents of the government were compelled to practise their agitation in secret, they nevertheless counted a number of the most influential men among their leaders. The new Emperor broke loose entirely from the traditional policy of Russia; he not only withdrew from the Franco-Austrian alliance, but he sent orders to the Russian generals in the field against Frederick the Great of Prussia to coöperate with him. Peter himself donned the uniform of a Prussian general, which grade Frederick the Great had conferred upon him at his special request; all exercises

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

and manœuvres of the Russian army were, by direction of the Czar, fashioned after those of the Prussian army, and Russian traditions and customs were disregarded.

The indignation and discontent among the high nobility of Russia at these "reforms"—which they ridiculed and despised—knew no bounds. In these sentiments they were encouraged by the Czar's wife, who both from personal hostility and from the intuition of her far-sighted political genius, opposed them as anti-Russian and as the manifestations of a Teuto-maniac unfit to rule over the great Russian nation. Her husband became more and more aggressive in his threats. He spoke openly, among his intimates, of his intention to imprison Catherine in a convent and to marry his mistress, Elizabeth Woronzow, and branded the son whom Catherine had borne to him, as a bastard, who would be excluded from the succession. It was therefore in self-defence that Catherine surrounded herself with men of power and influence. She entered into close relations with high officers of the Russian army, who still adhered with loyal devotion to the traditions of Peter the Great and Elizabeth; and although far from being pious and religious herself, she surrounded herself with the high dignitaries of the Russian Church, whom Peter insulted by neglect. Catherine, on the other hand, manifested a great interest in religious ceremonies and a strict observance of the Greek Church service; and at all times prominent clergymen were guests at Peterhof, her residence.

Peter the Third wished to realize on the throne of Russia the ideal of enlightened despotism, of which his idol, King Frederick the Second of Prussia, was so illustrious a model. One of his first acts was to recall the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

political exiles from Siberia — among them the two field-marshals Münnich and Biron, who had been exiled by Elizabeth. It is assuredly one of the most lamentable spectacles to behold on the throne of a great Empire an ignorant, narrow-minded, whimsical, and fanatical ruler, introducing, under the name of "reforms," vital and extraordinary changes in the administration and government, utterly unsuited to the character and culture of his nation. Even with the best intentions he will fail and pass for a fool.

Many of Peter's measures were humane and just, and might have been considered judicious if he had not, by the manner in which he introduced them, provoked a resistance which proved fatal to them. He had no knowledge of Russian character, and looked down upon public sentiment. Even as Czar he gave public expression of his contempt for Russia, and placed it in every respect below Germany. With incredible self-sufficiency he disregarded all counsels to be more prudent in his public utterances and to proceed more slowly in his efforts to Prussianize Russia's methods of administration and her system of civil and criminal jurisprudence. He abolished time-honored institutions; he attacked the privileges of the Church and the clergy; he ordered the churches and chapels to be deprived of their wealth and golden ornaments and images; he confiscated real estate belonging to the government, but occupied and taken possession of by the clergy; he reduced the exorbitant salaries of great noblemen in the provinces. By such acts he engendered protests, dissatisfaction, and threats in the very classes upon which the throne has to lean in despotic countries. To cap the climax, he dismissed

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

the Russian body-guards and surrounded himself exclusively with German troops. The Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, his own cousin, was placed in command of these German regiments, under whose protection the Emperor considered himself absolutely safe. The King of Prussia, who was well informed on all matters going on at the Russian court, and who more than anybody else in Europe had an interest at stake to prolong the reign of his admirer, warned him again and again against the intrigues of his wife and the "old-Russian party," but Peter was blinded by his prejudices and paid no attention to the warnings. He underrated his wife's talent for political combinations and intrigue, and was far from suspecting that from the very first day of his reign his fate was sealed and his days numbered.

A great historian has called Catherine of Russia "the Messalina-Richelieu" of history, indicating by that combination that she was a monster of voluptuousness, insatiable in lust, and a prodigy of statecraft and political shrewdness. The name is wonderfully appropriate, for hardly ever has any female ruler, with the exception of the infamous Roman Empress, so shamelessly prostituted herself as Catherine the Second of Russia, and never has any woman, not even Elizabeth of England, possessed political genius to a higher degree. It was Peter the Great who introduced Russia into the list of European states, but it was Catherine the Second whose genius breathed into the gigantic empire its policy of grasping and ambitious expansion, which has placed her standards as tutelary guards already over the northern half of Asia, and which is yet far from being satisfied.

While the Czar was amusing himself with new re-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

forms which were at best dead letters and created new enemies for him, his wife was untiring in her efforts to win new friends and new supporters for the great *coup d'état* which she was preparing as the crowning act of her ambition. She wanted to be Empress in her own name, in order that she might make Russia great and not be molested and embarrassed by a husband whom she hated and despised. Her own personal memoirs, written in French and published in London in 1858, whose authenticity has never been seriously doubted, shows that when only fifteen years old, she was possessed by this ambition, which she afterwards so fully realized. Among the influential persons whose active coöperation Catherine had secured for her ambitious plans was Princess Dashkow, a young woman of excellent education and great ability, and sister of Elizabeth Woronzow. Princess Dashkow, who, on account of the superiority of her mind had great influence over her sister, proved a powerful auxiliary to Catherine in this most critical period of her married life. Through her, Catherine gained Count Panin, one of the ablest men of Russia and governor of the young Grand-Duke Paul, Catherine's son, as her ally. She told Panin that she knew from her sister (the Czar's mistress) that Peter the Third was on the point of repudiating his wife, that he denied the legitimacy of the young Grand Duke, that he intended to exclude him from the succession, and to declare Ivan the Sixth his successor. This Prince had been dethroned by Elizabeth and was retained as a prisoner in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, but had fallen into idiocy. These confidential communications induced Panin, who trembled for his own position and possibly for his head, secretly

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

to join the army of malcontents, whose programme it was to dethrone Peter the Third, proclaim his son, Paul, Emperor, and Catherine Regent of the Empire during Paul's minority. This programme was not exactly that of Catherine, who aspired to be the sovereign Empress of Russia, and not merely the Regent during her son's minority, but with consummate ability she welcomed Panin's overtures as steps leading to her own elevation.

Whether Catherine had fully weighed and approved all the possibilities which might result from the revolution which she had planned and for which she had found so many instruments willing to help her, will very likely remain forever an unsolved problem. Was she willing to sanction the murder of her husband in order to step over his corpse to the throne? This has been an open question with native and foreign historians. Perhaps she honestly believed with Panin that she might get rid of Peter in some way without either killing him or imprisoning him for life. But it is absolutely certain that Catherine, in the summer of 1762, came to the conclusion that the time had come for striking a decisive blow; and it is equally certain that, although not cruel by nature, she never shrank back from any means to remove obstacles standing in the way of her ambition. By the agency of her generals, Suwarow, Potemkin, and Repnin, she sacrificed whole nations to her ambition, and swept them off the face of the earth without feeling any compunction at the barbarities committed. Does it look improbable therefore that she may have consented to the assassination of her husband, whom she detested, when all other means of silencing his claims to the throne appeared unsafe?

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

A very important part, in fact the most important of all, in the conspiracy against the Czar, was taken by the Orloffs, and especially by Count Gregor Orloff, the favored lover of Catherine, who had the reputation of being the handsomest officer of the Russian army. The Empress was passionately in love with him, although pretty well founded rumors asserted that she bestowed her secret favors also on Gregor's brother, Alexis, a perfect giant in stature and of herculean strength. All the Orloffs — Gregor, Alexis, Ivan, and Feodor — held positions as officers in the imperial guards or in the artillery, and were among the warmest adherents of Catherine, whose elevation would raise them, as they well knew, to the highest position in the Empire, immediately by the side of the throne. They became active agitators for her in the army, and were really the principal actors in the terrible drama of Peter's assassination. Quite a bloody tradition attached to the Orloff family, and the part which they were to play in the revolution against Peter the Third lent new confirmation to it and recalled it to the minds of the Russian people. At the time when Peter the Great abolished the strelitzi, attended their horrid executions, even helped in them, one day the block of the executioner was so crowded with the heads of the victims that there was no room for others. Then one of the condemned coolly stepped forward and pushed several of the heads off the bench, as if it had been his business to do so. The Czar looked on in astonishment and turning to the man, who had already attracted his attention by his herculean frame and the classic beauty of his features, asked him: "What are you doing that for?" "To make room for my own



## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

head!" was the cool reply. Peter the Great, who admired personal courage above everything else, was so well pleased with the reply, that he immediately pardoned the condemned and set him free. This pardoned officer was a young nobleman, named Orloff—the grandfather of the five Orloffs who played such a conspicuous part in the revolution of 1762, and one of whom murdered Peter the Third with his own hands.

The outbreak of the revolution, as is usual in such cases, was caused by an unexpected and trifling occurrence. A young officer of the imperial guards, who had been won over to the party of Catherine, one evening while under the influence of liquor, talked about the impending revolution and was arrested by other officers who were not in the conspiracy. Gregor Orloff heard of the arrest and immediately hurried to Catherine, who was at Peterhof and had already retired for the night. But Orloff went directly to her bedroom, aroused her from sleep and told her that immediate action on her part was necessary, unless she wanted to imperil and very likely lose the game for whose success they had been working so patiently.

Catherine's resolution was quickly taken. She immediately got up, dressed rapidly, and half an hour afterwards the carriage which had carried Orloff from St. Petersburg, returned thither with the Empress and her attendant. It was five o'clock in the morning of the twenty-ninth of June when they arrived at the capital. Two hours later Catherine was on horseback, dressed in the uniform of a general of the imperial guards, which Count Buturlin had furnished, on her way to the armory of the Preobrajenski guards, accompanied by Gregor



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and Alexis Orloff, and an escort of high officers who were in the conspiracy. Princess Dashkow, also in an officer's uniform, had preceded her, and had announced to the officers of the guards that the Emperor, Peter the Third, had died suddenly, that the Empress would shortly appear among them in order to receive their homage and their oath of obedience as heiress to the throne and Regent of the Empire during the minority of her son. The officers consented immediately and influenced their soldiers without difficulty when they were reminded of the late Czar's unjust partiality for the German regiments, and of Catherine's unwavering kindness to them. Both officers and soldiers greeted Catherine, therefore, very enthusiastically when she arrived an hour later, and both swore allegiance and devotion to her. Catherine's bearing on this trying occasion, was full of courage and dash. She had never looked more beautiful, and the three regiments were perfectly charmed with their new ruler. She then proceeded with her escort to the Casan Church, where, in the meantime, the Archbishop of Novgorod and the entire clergy of the capital had been assembled and were waiting for her. The Archbishop administered the oath of office to her, and Catherine swore to respect the laws and institutions of the Empire and to protect the religion of the people, whereupon the entire clergy swore allegiance to her. A solemn *Te Deum*, sung by thousands of voices, terminated the grand ceremony, while the roar of artillery announced to the inhabitants of St. Petersburg the accession of a new ruler. Catherine had reached the goal of her ambition; she was now the sovereign ruler of Russia, not merely in name, but in fact. She returned to the

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

imperial palace, where an immense multitude greeted her with enthusiastic cheers. Many thousand roubles were scattered among the populace, which was moreover treated liberally with whiskey and other intoxicants, and cheered vociferously, until Catherine, who looked charmingly beautiful in her gaudy uniform, showed herself again and again on the balcony. Count Galitzin, vice-admiral of the Russian fleet, was on a visit at St. Petersburg on that day. Catherine sent for him, won him over to her side by amiability and promises, and sent him back to Kronstadt, the Russian naval port, to inspire the garrison and sailors of that stronghold with enthusiasm for the Empress, — so that the capital was protected on the seaward side against a possible attack by Peter the Third.

But even after having acted so promptly and so energetically, and after having got possession of the capital and the principal part of the army and the navy, Catherine had still a great deal to do, and her penetrating genius did not underrate the danger of the situation in which she found herself. All her successes in the capital among officers had been secured by the fraudulent assertion that the Czar had died suddenly, and there was no certainty whether Peter's sudden appearance at the capital, or a well-authenticated report that he was still among the living and was hastening toward the capital, might cause a sudden change in public sentiment. Undaunted by these secret apprehensions, and impelled by the restless energy of her devouring ambition, she never wavered in her resolution, but pressed onward toward the consummation of her dangerous but tempting project, which seemed to be almost within her grasp. Through the

active agitation of her friends, and the strong and widespread hostility of the people and the army against Peter's ill-advised measures of "reform," she could, almost from the first announcement of her accession to the throne, command an army of fifteen thousand well-equipped men, who were ready to die for her against any pretender, Peter the Third included.

The outbreak of the revolution was so sudden that Peter was taken entirely by surprise, and would not listen to the first reports when they reached him. He had gone on that very day to Oranienbaum, an imperial summer resort, about twenty miles from St. Petersburg, where he enjoyed himself with his Holstein guards, his favorites, and his mistress, Elizabeth Woronzow. There were altogether about two thousand soldiers with him; but there was also Field-marshal Münnich, Russia's most renowned soldier, and a man of great authority in the army. Moreover Münnich was a man of great personal courage, and if Peter had followed his counsels, he might have saved his crown and his life. Münnich's advice was to take immediate and bold measures, to meet aggression by aggression, and to oppose the immense prestige of the legitimate ruler to the revolutionary usurpation of an ambitious and adulterous wife. But neither Peter's personal character, nor his immediate surroundings would admit of the acceptance of such bold and aggressive action. He was like a helpless child, hesitating and vacillating, sending out orders, and revoking them the next hour; asking everybody's advice, and following nobody's. His mistress was bewailing his misfortune, cursing Catherine and her treachery, and falling into hysterics at the mere thought of a bloody struggle for supremacy between

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

Peter and his wife. It was easy to foresee the outcome of so much indecision, vacillation and cowardice on one side, and of so much determination, firmness and courage on the other.

After nearly the whole day had been spent in fruitless attempts to come to a decision, Münnich finally, at about eight o'clock in the evening, succeeded in persuading Peter to go on board of a yacht and proceed to Kronstadt, where, he expected, the Emperor would be warmly welcomed. If this step had been taken earlier in the day, it would very likely have been successful. But it will be remembered that Catherine, after her return from the Casan church, had an interview with Count Galitzin, commander-in-chief of the naval forces at Kronstadt, and had secured his coöperation. The Emperor was therefore not permitted to enter the harbor, and when he himself appeared in the fore-part of the yacht and proclaimed his identity, he was simply told to return to where he came from, and that Russia had no longer an emperor, but an empress. Münnich then appealed to Peter not to be deterred by such words, but to get into one of the boats, in which he would accompany him, and to effect a landing. "They will not shoot you," the old field-marshal said, "this whole affair is a bold game some of the high officers are playing, but the soldiers are kept in ignorance, and when they meet their Emperor face to face they will throw down their arms." But when the women heard from Peter that he would undertake to effect a landing on the coast, they burst into tears and filled the ship with loud lamentations and cries, and the Czar's mistress threw herself at his feet imploring him not to expose his precious life to the bullets of the rebels,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and not to abandon her, helpless and heartbroken, to the revenge of his enemies. Peter was only too glad to take her despair as a pretext to recede from Münnich's proposition.

Münnich was disgusted and wished the women were a thousand miles off; but he made still another proposition. He wanted to turn the imperial yacht toward Reval, where quite a number of Russian warships were assembled. Peter was to take command of this fleet, sail to Pomerania, land on Prussian soil, proceed as rapidly as possible to the large Russian army concentrated there, and return at the head of that army to St. Petersburg, which, as the old and bold field-marshal believed, would not even attempt to make resistance. "Within sixty days," said he to Peter, "your Empire will be at your feet again, your wife will be at your mercy, and your whole people will hail you as a conqueror and savior!" The plan was good and would very likely have succeeded if it had been promptly acted upon. There were nearly eighty thousand Russian soldiers — and they were the *élite* of the Russian army — in Pomerania, and if Peter had been supported by them, he could easily have quelled the rebellion and recovered the throne.

But Peter was not the master of his own decisions. He obediently bowed to the will of his mistress and her lady friends, and they strongly protested against this new plan of the old fighter and "war-horse," who, they declared, had no heart and did not know what love meant. Countess Woronzow persuaded Peter that the proper thing for him to do was to return to Oranienbaum or Peterhof and make his peace with the Empress, who would be only too glad to make an arrangement with

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

him satisfactory to both. This suggestion corresponded too well with the pusillanimous and vacillating character of Peter to be rejected by him. So the whole party returned to Peterhof, and negotiations were at once opened with Catherine tending towards a reconciliation of the husband and wife. Peter addressed a letter to his wife in which he offered her the co-regency of the Empire, assuring her at the same time that the occurrences of the past week should be entirely forgotten and that love and harmony should in the future prevail in the imperial household. The letter was haughtily rejected by the Empress; no answer came to it but a verbal message that it was too late, and that no further communication from him would be received except an act of entire abdication. Peter thereupon surrendered unconditionally. He wrote a second letter to his wife, in which he very humbly asked permission both for himself and his mistress, Countess Woronzow, and a number of his attendants to return to Holstein, where they would live quietly in retirement from all public affairs. In order to carry out this wish, he asked for a pension enabling him to live in becoming style, and in exchange for these favors he recognized Catherine as Regent of the Empire during his son's minority.

Major-General Michael Ismailoff, one of Peter's most intimate and most trusted friends, was the bearer of this valuable document, which seemed to satisfy Catherine, but was not equally satisfactory to Count Gregor Orloff, who hoped to secure the hand of the Empress when Peter had been put out of the way. Orloff's secret design was to assassinate Peter and then take his place by Catherine's side. The Orloffs therefore took hold of

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

General Ismailoff, after he had handed the Czar's letter to the Empress, and induced him by supplications and brilliant promises to come over to their side, and to assist them in making Peter a prisoner as the only means of restoring peace and avoiding civil war. At first Ismailoff resisted their offers, but at last he yielded. He returned to Peterhof and played the part of a traitor to perfection. He told Peter that he had delivered his letter to the Empress, and that she would, as a matter of course, grant the request he had made, but that she was overcome with sorrow at the turn things had taken, that she was perfectly willing to admit him to a co-regency and to be reconciled to him, and that she was anxious to meet him in a private interview at Oranienbaum in order to arrange matters to their mutual satisfaction.

Peter fell easily into the trap. He immediately accepted the invitation and got ready to go to Oranienbaum. At first he proposed to go there under the escort of his Holsteiners, but Ismailoff persuaded him to let them stay at Peterhof, because it might look as though he distrusted the Empress and might offend her. Peter therefore went to Oranienbaum, accompanied only by Ismailoff, who encouraged him in his most extravagant expectations of a brilliant career still in store for him. But there was a sad and sudden awakening from this dream of greatness. On his arrival at Oranienbaum he found the courtyard filled with forty or fifty kibitkas; and Ismailoff, changing his conduct and tone suddenly, told him that he was a prisoner. Peter, without arms and without friends, resigned himself to his fate almost without a word of protest. He was led to one of the kibitkas, already occupied by two strong officers armed to the teeth, and then all



## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

the kibitkas started at once in as many different directions as there were roads leading to Oranienbaum. This was done in order to deceive the spectators as to the direction which Peter's kibitka had taken. He was conveyed to Robzak, a country villa near the village of Kraskazelo, a short distance from Petersburg, but rather isolated and out of the way of the regular traffic. Moreover precautions were taken to surround the villa with soldiers. Peter was treated almost with cruelty in his solitary confinement. He was not permitted to communicate with anybody, and his friends were kept in profound ignorance as to his whereabouts. Many of them believed that he was either at Peterhof or at Petersburg. He addressed a pitiable letter to the Empress in which he humbly petitioned her to send him his negro servant, with whom he liked to play, his favorite dog, his violin, his Bible and a few novels. But the letter remained unanswered, and none of the things asked for were sent.

In the forenoon of July seventeenth, Alexis Orloff, accompanied by several officers, arrived at Robzak. They had an order from the Empress admitting them to Peter's presence. Orloff and an officer named Tepelof — both men of herculean strength — entered the deposed Emperor's room, and found him in a despondent mood. They carried some delicacies, — among them bottles of old Burgundy wine, which was poisoned. They announced to Peter that his term of imprisonment would soon be ended, and that he would then be permitted to return to Holstein, his native country. Peter was overjoyed at this announcement, and invited the officers, whom he treated as his guests, to take dinner with him; they readily consented and produced the delicacies and the wine they had



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

brought. At the dinner-table Orloff presented a glass of Burgundy to Peter, who swallowed it rapidly; but the wine was so strongly poisoned that he felt the effect almost instantly. He jumped from his chair, screaming and howling with pain. "I am poisoned! I am poisoned!" he cried, "give me milk, give me oil!" The two assassins terrified with what they had done sent for milk and oil, which he swallowed eagerly. But after a few minutes they took courage again and resolved to complete their murderous work. Peter's cries had attracted two or three officers, who entered the room; but instead of protecting him, they assisted the conspirators. All at once Alexis Orloff rushed upon Peter, who had thrown himself upon his bed, writhing in pain, and tried to choke him. Peter himself was a man of herculean strength, and defended himself with the courage of despair. The iron grasp of Orloff's fingers did not release his throat, and the Czar's face became as black as a negro's. At last, by a terrible blow, he freed himself from Orloff, but while he tried to take breath, the four or five assassins rushed upon him all at the same time; they dragged him from the bed, and when he fell into an arm-chair, they threw a large napkin round his neck and strangled him until he was dead. He fell from the chair to the floor and expired in a few minutes. A number of officers had witnessed the terrible scene from a terrace which afforded a full view of the prisoner's room.

The admirers of Catherine have often denied her active participation in the crime of Peter's assassination; but they have never succeeded in making the world believe in her innocence. In fact, how could she be innocent,

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

since the assassins were admitted to Peter's presence upon a direct order issued by her, with no other business for them to do than to kill him? And then her conduct after the horrible crime had been perpetrated is sufficient evidence of her guilt. She did not regret the murder, and she rewarded the murderers. Even in the announcement of Peter's sudden death she manifested a brutality which defied decency and common-sense. In a few words, without adding one word of sorrow at the death of one who, as she asserted, was the father of her son, she announced to the Russian people and to the foreign ambassadors at St. Petersburg that the dethroned Czar, Peter the Third, had suddenly died from the effects of a hæmorrhoidal colic, to which he was subject, and which had caused a stroke of apoplexy. This cool declaration was to account for the horrible appearance of Peter's countenance, which looked almost black even in death, and which could not be concealed from the people. It had always been customary to exhibit to the public the corpse of a deceased Czar and to place him on a catafalque where the people could see him and pay their respect to him. This public exhibition could not be avoided without immensely strengthening the suspicion of foul play; and Catherine boldly underwent the ordeal. The black hue of the countenance could not be changed, but Peter's neck was entirely covered up with a very high and stiff stock, which concealed the finger-marks of his assassins. Among the spectators was the old field-marshal, Prince Trubetzkoi, well known for his rudeness and sincerity. He rapidly stepped up to the bier, where Peter lay in state, and exclaimed in a loud tone of voice: "Why, why, Peter Fedorowitch, what ridiculous kind of

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

necktie have they bundled around your neck? You never wore such a thing in your life; why should you wear it now when you are dead?" And he began to open the stock, and would have exposed Peter's throat to public view, if the guards, in spite of the high rank of the Prince, had not forcibly dragged him away.

Unfortunately for the memory of Catherine the Second the assassination of her husband was not the only assassination caused by her usurpation of the Russian throne. It will be remembered that Peter had repeatedly threatened to disown, and consequently to exclude from the succession, Paul, the son whom Catherine had borne to him, and whom he openly branded as a bastard, and to this threat he added the declaration that he would name as his successor the young ex-Emperor Ivan the Sixth, who had been dethroned by the Empress Elizabeth, and who was still imprisoned at Schlüsselburg. This threat was fatal to the poor young Prince, who during his long seclusion had become half-idiotic and had lost the knowledge of his identity. But nevertheless the fear that he might be used by her enemies as a legitimate pretender, with better rights to the crown than her own, haunted Catherine's mind, and she did not rest until he had fallen a victim to the assassin's dagger.

Strict orders had been issued to the commandant of the fortress of Schlüsselburg that on the first attempt to liberate Ivan he should be immediately put to death. And then a new infamy was committed which very likely sprang from Catherine's own diabolical genius. There was a young and poor lieutenant named Mirowitch, in the garrison of Schlüsselburg who was infatuated with admiration for the Empress and anxious to render her a

## PETER THE THIRD OF RUSSIA

service. He was approached by one of his superior officers (probably an Orloff) and his attention was directed to Ivan. "If he were out of the way," he was told, "the Empress would never forget it, and would reward the service in an imperial manner." Mirowitch took the hint and resolved to merit the Empress's gratitude by assassinating Ivan. Under some pretext he really came to the door of the room in which Ivan was kept a prisoner. Two officers were on guard there, but when they heard Mirowitch's voice demanding admittance and threatening to break open the door, they rushed upon Ivan and put him to death. Then they opened the door, and finding Mirowitch before them, they showed him Ivan's corpse and arrested him. Mirowitch was put on trial. The crime he was charged with was an attempt to abduct the imprisoned Ivan and to proclaim him Emperor of Russia. Mirowitch did not defend himself. He only smiled. He knew who stood behind him and would protect him from injury. He was found guilty and sentenced to be beheaded. He laughed at the sentence and never lost courage. With a smile he ascended the scaffold and looked around, wondering why the imperial messenger with the pardon and the reward was not coming. The priest approached him and prayed for him. He listened with little attention, and still a smile hovered on his features. But suddenly the executioner took hold of him, held him in his iron grasp, and threw him down. It was the last moment and no messenger appeared yet; and then only Mirowitch realized his terrible fate. With a scream of mad rage he commenced wrestling with the executioner, and while uttering a cry of execration against Catherine, his severed head rolled upon the scaffold. The assassi-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS 19

nation of two czars — one of them her own husband — was the bloody price which Catherine paid for the throne which she was to make great and renowned by a long and glorious reign. How easily great crimes are forgotten if committed by sovereigns of genius!

## CHAPTER XVII

GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN









GUSTAVUS III.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ASSASSINATION OF GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

(March 17, 1792)

ON the seventeenth of March, 1792, Gustavus the Third, King of Sweden, was assassinated by Ankarström, a Swedish nobleman, and this crime caused a sensation throughout Europe, although the horrors of the French Revolution and the wholesale executions by the guillotine had made the world familiar with murder and bloodshed. This assassination was of a political character, and private revenge or other considerations had nothing whatever to do with it. But in order to understand fully the causes leading up to the tragedy, it will be necessary to refer to the condition of public affairs in Sweden during the period preceding the reign of Gustavus.

The continuous and costly wars of Charles the Twelfth had left Sweden in a terrible state of exhaustion and misery. A number of her most valuable provinces had been taken by Russia, and the domestic affairs of the country, its finances, industry and commerce were utterly ruined. Charles died during his invasion of Norway; it would really be more proper to say "was assassinated"; for, on the evening of the eleventh of De-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

cember, 1718, while leaning against a parapet and looking at the soldiers throwing up the breastworks, he was struck down by a bullet, which could not have come from the enemy, in front of the fortress of Fredericks-hall. In spite of the very severe winter weather, Charles had insisted on laying siege to the strong fortress, and he paid for his obstinacy with his life.

When the news of his death reached Sweden, the nobility took advantage of it and of the unsettled question of the succession to the throne in order to recover those privileges and rights which it had lost through the genius and statesmanship of Charles the Eleventh, and which had not been restored to it during the reign of Charles the Twelfth. The Reichsrath was immediately reinstated in its old rights, and arrogated to itself the power of deciding the succession according to its own will and advantage. It coolly passed by the lawful heir, Charles Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp, the son of Charles the Twelfth's elder sister, and elected Frederick of Hesse-Cassel, who had married Charles the Twelfth's younger sister; not, however, without having compelled the royal couple to renounce, both for themselves and for their heirs, all absolute power, and also to make a solemn promise that the Reichsrath should be reinstated in all its former rights and prerogatives, which made that Assembly actually co-regent of the kingdom. The Reichsrath was declared sovereign; it had seventeen members, and each member had, in the decision of public questions, one vote, and the King only two. It decided all questions of domestic and foreign policy arbitrarily, and controlled not only the legislative, but also the executive action of the government. The King was a mere figure-

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

head, poorly salaried and of little influence. But this degradation of the crown was only one feature of the oligarchy established by the Reichsrath. It restored to the nobility all the domains and landed estates which had been appropriated by the crown during the preceding century, exempted them from taxation, conferred upon them the exclusive right of holding all the higher offices in the army, navy and civil service, and heaped all public burdens upon the lower classes of the people. The King, shorn of all power, was utterly helpless to prevent these wrongs. His timid protests were always met with a reminder that he had been elected to the throne only after having promised to reinstate and not to disturb the nobility in the enjoyment of their ancient rights. The Reichsrath also concluded treaties of peace with the powers upon which Charles the Twelfth had made war, and as the members negotiating these treaties looked out much more for their own advantage than for that of their country, Sweden was so badly crippled that it ceased being a great European power. That honor passed from Sweden to two other countries which up to that time had been considered Sweden's inferiors in power and influence, — Russia and Prussia.

It was not long before the Reichsrath, whose members sold themselves to foreign rulers, was split up into different factions which fought bitterly for supremacy. One of these factions favored France and was regularly subsidized with French money, while the other faction was equally well subsidized with Russian money and followed blindly the dictates of the Czar and Czarina of Russia. The French faction was called "the party of the hats," and the Russian faction was known as "the party of the

caps." These two factions fought each other most bitterly, each charging the other with almost any crime committed against divine and human law; and both were right in the charge, because both were equally guilty. At the beginning of the war of the Austrian succession, France wanted to prevent Russia from siding with Austria, and thought a war between Sweden and Russia would be the right thing to accomplish that object. The French Ambassador at Stockholm therefore ordered the "party of the hats" in the Reichsrath to declare war upon Russia, and a resolution to that effect prevailed against the violent and menacing protests of the "party of the caps." In great haste a Swedish army was recruited to take the field against the Russians in Finland; but since all the money sent by the French government for the proper equipment of that army had disappeared in the pockets of the members of the Reichsrath, the army was so poorly equipped and its war-material was of such inferior quality that it could not hold the field against the well-armed and well-equipped Russians, and suffered defeat after defeat at their hands. The "caps" were jubilant over this discomfiture and humiliation of the "hats" and forced them into a treaty of peace with Russia, which was disgraceful to Sweden, but which would have been even more hurtful if the Russian Empress had not for personal reasons offered very mild terms of peace. But one of these terms was that Adolphus Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp, whose father had been so shamefully cheated out of the Swedish succession in 1718, should be declared heir to the Swedish throne. The Reichsrath cheerfully accepted this condition, made all other concessions which the Russian Empress demanded, and

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

ceded a part of Finland to the Russian crown. Peace between the two countries was restored by the treaty of Abo in 1743.

Conditions were not improved under the rule of the next King, — the said Adolphus Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp, who ascended the throne in 1751. The new King had married the younger sister of Frederick the Great of Prussia, but he had so little influence on the direction of the public policy of Sweden, both at home and abroad, that in the great European war which Frederick had to wage against the other powers, Sweden took sides against him by the dictation of the Reichsrath. In fact, the Reichsrath became more aggressive and arrogant from year to year. It interfered in the education of the royal princes. It presumed to attach the King's signature to public documents after he had refused twice to sign them. The "caps" made an effort to strengthen the King's authority by amending the constitution, but it failed, and resulted in a complete victory for the "hats." The "hats" had it all their own way for a while. Under orders from the French government, and also out of hatred and contempt for the King, they declared war on the King of Prussia, and Sweden was, without any cause or provocation, drawn into the terrible Seven Years' War, which resulted in the victory of Frederick the Great over all his enemies.

This disastrous result of the war caused the temporary overthrow of the "hats." But the Russian faction, as soon as they had got control of the government, established a tyranny worse than that of their predecessors, so that the King, provoked to the utmost, threatened to resign and appeal to the people, unless a popular Diet

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

should be called to establish the rights of the crown on a firm and more dignified basis. Under the strong pressure of public indignation the Diet was called; it restored to the crown part of the rights and prerogatives annulled by the Reichsrath and dismissed a number of those officials most hostile and objectionable to the King; but a proposition of the young, ingenious and ambitious Crown Prince — to change the constitution thoroughly, to reestablish autocratic government in Sweden in order to renew an era of glory and prosperity for the unfortunate country — failed through the irresoluteness of the King. In 1771 the King died, and the Crown Prince ascended the throne under the name of Gustavus the Third.

The Crown Prince was at Paris, where he was paying the court a visit, when his father died. His presence in the French capital and his conversations with Choiseul, the able prime minister of Louis the Fifteenth, had strengthened and confirmed his own personal views about the necessity for a change in the government of Sweden and for a return to an absolutistic régime. He formally renewed the secret alliance between Sweden and France, receiving the promise of liberal subsidies from the French treasury in order to enable him to carry out his plans. He took with him to Sweden a large sum of money, which was, so to speak, the first instalment of the new subsidy. Moreover, Choiseul gave the young King, on his return trip to Sweden, an experienced and sagacious companion and adviser in the person of Count de Vergennes, who nominally was to take charge of the French embassy at Stockholm, but who in reality was to guide and assist Gustavus in his attempt to overthrow the constitution of the

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

monarchy and to restore the absolute *régime* of former days. The personality of Gustavus the Third was peculiarly fitted for the *rôle* which he was to play in the great drama of a political revolution. He was young, enthusiastic, talented, eloquent, bold and chivalrous; he was a poet of considerable ability, and his political ideal was Louis the Fourteenth of France, whose majestic declaration: "The state? I am the state!" struck a sympathetic chord in his heart. Choiseul had found it an easy task to change the vague aspirations and dreams in the young King's mind into a fixed determination to put an end to the oligarchic *régime* of the nobility and to reëstablish absolute monarchy in its pristine glory. The art of dissimulation, of which he was a consummate master, and which he had practised with great success as Crown Prince in order to throw his instructors, who were mere tools of the Reichsrath, off their guard, served him admirably in perfecting the initiatory steps, and finally, when the proper time had come, for the successful execution of his *coup d'état*.

When Gustavus arrived at Stockholm, he found the Swedish Reichstag (the Diet) in session. It had recognized him, during his absence, as King, but the members were busily engaged in the discussion of a new constitution, which they insisted would be necessary for protecting the rights of the nobility against the usurpation of the King. The rights of the people and the prerogatives of the King were hardly thought of in this discussion, and the people were disgusted with the whole proceeding. So was the King, but he had shrewdness and self-control enough not to interfere with the work of the Diet; and when, after a hard-fought battle of



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

eight months' duration between the contending factions of the "hats" and the "caps," the new constitution was finally completed and submitted to him for his signature, he readily signed it, without reading it, explaining his extraordinary readiness with the words "I have confidence enough in the patriotism and wisdom of the Reichstag to believe that they all have worked for the welfare of the state, and that my own rights were safe in their hands."

In order to make this rather strange indifference on his part appear quite natural, he had lived most of the time at his country-seat, at some distance from Stockholm, surrounded by a few literary friends and writing comedies and poems, without paying the least attention to the political work going on at the capital. He came but rarely to Stockholm, but whenever he went, he took good care to insinuate himself into the good graces of the people. His natural eloquence and the fact that he was born in Sweden and spoke the Swedish language correctly, as well as his pleasant and affable manners, made him immensely popular with the common people, while at the same time his friends lost no opportunity to incite the people, and also the soldiery, against the nobility, whom they charged with having caused all the miseries from which the State, and especially the rural population, were suffering. Poor crops and great financial distress added to the popular dissatisfaction, and the royalist party did not fail to attribute these public calamities to the aristocracy's injudicious administration; thus the people were thoroughly aroused for the impending battle between King and nobility.

In the Reichsrath the faction of the "caps" had suc-

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

ceeded in utterly defeating the faction of the "hats," and driving all their adherents out of the public offices. The official slaughter and persecution of the "hats" was carried on so recklessly and injudiciously by the "caps" that even the Russian ambassador protested against their imprudence, which, he was afraid, might lead to a revolution that would overthrow both factions and place absolute power in the hands of the monarch. But the "caps," in the intoxication of their victory, were too blind to see the danger; moreover, they felt absolutely safe because the King had sworn to obey and uphold the constitution, and the constitution deprived him of all power of action. Gustavus had so fully duped them that not even a suspicion of foul play arose in their minds. With masterly dissimulation and with marvellous strength of mind he waited in apparent indifference until the proper moment for action had come. His friends, however, had been very busy. They had won one hundred and fifty of the higher officers of the Stockholm garrison over to the King's cause, and this acquisition placed practically the entire military power of the capital under his orders.

It had been arranged, however, that the first outbreak should not occur at Stockholm, but in another city. In compliance with this programme Captain Hellichius, a devoted friend of the King, and Commandant of the garrison of Christianstadt, on the twelfth of August, 1772, issued a manifesto, in which he fiercely denounced the pernicious administration of the Reichsrath, and called upon the inhabitants of Sweden to shake off the tyranny of the oligarchy which held both the King and the people in bondage. It had also been arranged that Prince Charles, the King's brother, Commander of the troops in Scania,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

should immediately march, with the army under his command, toward Christianstadt, ostensibly for the purpose of suppressing the revolt, but really for the purpose of swelling the ranks of the malcontents. When this news reached Stockholm, some of the members of the Reichsrath suspected that the King was implicated, but he feigned absolute ignorance of the matter, and deceived his enemies so well that they left him alone. Prompt action on their part, in arresting and guarding the person of the King, would very likely have quelled the revolt at the very outset. But the King was so powerless that he preferred to wait for news from Christianstadt announcing the success of the movement before resorting to active measures which might have caused the failure of the whole plan.

Only when the Reichsrath ordered the troops of the whole country to be concentrated at the capital, and also ordered Prince Charles to turn over his command to a general who was strictly in sympathy with the existing condition of things, the King thought the time for him to act had come, and he hesitated no longer. It was the nineteenth of August, 1772, and Gustavus knew that that day was to decide not only the success or failure of his intended *coup d'état*, but very likely also his life or death, his honor or disgrace. In taking the offensive so promptly, the King showed great personal bravery and courage, and made good his claim to be a God-given leader of men. At an early hour he went to the Assembly Room, where the Reichsrath was already in session. At a glance he saw that the prevailing sentiment was hostile to him. No sooner had he taken his seat than one of the members in a rather insolent tone asked

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

him whether he had not received a letter during the night from Christianstadt, and on receiving an affirmative answer, demanded that the King should communicate the letter to the Reichsrath. The King refused to deliver the letter, stating that it was private, and expressed indignation at the disrespectful request. A general murmur arose among the members, and voices were heard saying that it might be advisable to arrest the King. He hurriedly arose from his seat, and placing his hand on the hilt of his sword, as if ready to kill the first one who should stand in his way, he passed through the seats of the Senators with head erect and haughty mien.

None dared oppose him, and he proceeded directly to the armory, where two regiments of the Royal Guard were drawn up in line under the command of officers devoted to him. He addressed them in an eloquent speech, promising to restore the kingdom to its previous proud position among the nations and make the army again a source of honor to the Swedes and of terror to its enemies, such as it had been in the great days of Gustavus Adolphus. The officers and the men cheered him enthusiastically, and declared they would follow him to death or wherever he would lead them. Not only the soldiers in the city, but thousands of armed citizens gathered around him shouting, "Down with the nobility! Down with the Reichsrath! Long live the King!" He mounted his horse and at the head of this enthusiastic army proceeded to the State House, where the Reichsrath was still in session, devising means to bring the King to terms. The troops were so placed as to make it impossible for the members of the Reichsrath to leave the building. The King, flushed with the excitement of victory,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

with his flashing sword drawn, and surrounded by a few of the most popular officers and citizens, rode through the streets, harangued the people on the public squares, and carried them away by his eloquence and chivalrous appearance. It was a personal triumph, which he relished to its fullest extent, and which gave assurance of the complete success of his plans for constitutional reform.

The revolution which Gustavus the Third had inaugurated so boldly at Stockholm proved a complete success. The common people flocked to him in great numbers; the women and girls offered him flowers and bouquets, and threw kisses to him; the men knelt down and, with tears of joy in their eyes, kissed his boots or his hands, blessing him as the savior of his country, and calling the blessings of Heaven down upon his head. Surrounded by thousands of enthusiastic adherents, he rode to the City Hall, where the municipal authorities were already assembled, and received from them the assurance of their unconditional allegiance and loyalty. The same ovation and enthusiastic demonstration greeted him at the palace of the Board of Admiralty. Not a shot was fired, not a sword was drawn, not a drop of human blood was shed to overcome opposition to the royal plan of changing the government and to end the rule of the nobility. Never before in history had a revolution been so quickly, so successfully accomplished; never before had a government in the full possession of all public powers been so suddenly and so successfully overthrown as in this instance. The *coup d'état* was a masterstroke of public policy which gave Gustavus a wonderful prestige throughout Europe. Even the English and Russian ambassadors, who were most interested in the contemplated change of govern-

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

ment, and who might have raised obstacles to the King's autocratic action, were disarmed entirely by a courteous invitation to the royal palace, where they were entertained in the most pleasant manner until the whole excitement was over and Gustavus the Third in complete possession of the government. On the day following, the war department and all the high state officials made haste to swear obedience to the King. The citizens of the capital were called together on the public square and the King addressed them again, this time in the full splendor of triumphant royalty and surrounded by all the high dignitaries of the kingdom, telling them, amid their enthusiastic shouts and applause, that he considered it his greatest glory to be the first citizen of a free nation. He then took out of his pocket the new constitution prepared by him and read it to them in his clear and melodious voice. Renewed shouts and boisterous applause rewarded him when he had concluded.

But the part most difficult for him remained to be done,—to get the assent of the States. They were convened for the next day, August 21, and in ordering them to appear, the King had added that any member not appearing in his seat on that day would be treated as a traitor. During the night preceding the meeting of the States a strong detachment of soldiers and artillery was placed in a position commanding the State House. When the King appeared and sat down on the throne his eye looked upon a hall well filled. The most profound silence reigned when he got up and read the constitution in a clear and firm voice. He supplemented the reading with a very eloquent and patriotic speech, in which he referred to the degradation and contempt to which the monarchy had

been reduced by the incapacity, venality and corruption of the government and of the nobility. He painted this government and the disgrace it had brought upon Sweden in the darkest colors, and then added, in a voice trembling with emotion : " If there is any one among you who thinks that I am misstating facts or exaggerating the disgraceful condition of our public affairs, I challenge him to contradict me, and to state here in the presence of all in what respect I have misrepresented the administration of the Reichsrath. I vow to God Almighty that I shall devote all my energy to the task of restoring the welfare of my beloved country and the happiness of its inhabitants, and I know of no other way to accomplish these results than by the change of the constitution as I have read it to you." Then turning to the members individually, he asked whether they were in favor of sanctioning the proposed change. They all answered in the affirmative and swore the oath of allegiance. Thereupon the King drew from his pocket a hymn-book, and removing the crown from his head, he began to sing the " Te Deum Laudamus," in which they all joined him. Gustavus had won again in the most perilous stage of the dangerous game he was playing.

The new constitution which had been adopted reinstated the King in all those rights and prerogatives which his ancestors had possessed up to the death of Charles the Twelfth. He was the commander of the army and navy; the revenues of the state were to be under his exclusive care; he disposed arbitrarily of all offices, civil and military; he alone had the right to negotiate treaties and alliances; he had unlimited power to conduct a war of defence, but for foreign wars he needed the consent of



## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

the States; he alone had the right to convene the Congress, and the Congress was not to transact other business than was submitted to it by the crown; the Reichsrath was subordinate to the King; it became merely an advisory board, and its decisions were not of binding force. It was a constitution which the Emperor of Russia might have subscribed to.

While Gustavus had, by his boldness and eloquence, secured the success of his *coup d'état* at Stockholm, his brothers travelled through the different provinces, promulgated the new constitution, and were everywhere welcomed enthusiastically. Gustavus himself made during the winter months of the same year the traditional tour of the old kings through the kingdom even to the farthest borders of Norway—the old riksgata—and exactly in the same manner as the old kings had done—on horseback. Wherever he went he was only escorted by the inhabitants of the neighborhood, whom he delighted by his affability, his nobility of soul and his eloquence. He seemed to have no enemies and needed no soldiers to protect him. These were the golden days of his reign. The two parties which had so bitterly fought for supremacy had been wiped out by his victory. The “hats” and the “caps” were heard of no more, and Sweden seemed to be in a fair way of entering upon a new era of greatness and prosperity.

Tempting as the task may be for the historian to go into the details of the life of the extraordinary man who, endowed by nature with talents of a high order, rose to the heights of human glory and then abruptly fell by reason of his own folly, we must forego this pleasure and confine ourselves to a rapid sketch of the events



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

which led Gustavus the Third slowly to the terrible tragedy of his assassination. It would seem almost incredible that a prince so popular and so idolized by his people as Gustavus was on the morning of his *coup d'état* could in the course of a few years so utterly lose the confidence of his people and forfeit their love as to make the execution of the conspiracy against his life even possible. But it must be admitted that this loss of popularity and esteem was, in part at least, caused by grave faults of the King, which, with reckless audacity, he committed again and again, while the general loss of royal prestige and authority throughout Europe as a consequence of the French Revolution of 1789 had also a great deal to do with it.

During the first years after the *coup d'état* general satisfaction seemed to prevail throughout the country; the common people felt relieved of many unnecessary burdens, while the nobility, who had been so utterly routed, kept silent in the consciousness of their weakness. Many measures of reform, calculated to promote the national prosperity, were initiated by the personal agency of the King. The currency, which was in a deplorable condition, was put on a sounder basis; many benevolent institutions — hospitals, orphan asylums, poor-houses, etc. — were established; the public highways were improved; large canals connecting with the seacoast the mines of the kingdom (which were among its most important industries) were constructed; trade and industry were assisted according to the prevailing theories of those times; free trade, both at home and with foreign countries, was established; privileges and franchises which oppressed the people at large for the benefit of the few were abolished;

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

both the criminal and the civil code of laws were revised and improved; strict impartiality in the application of laws and in the punishment of criminals was insisted upon; the torture, which up to that time had played an important part in criminal trials, was done away with, and a more humane treatment of convicts was introduced in prisons and penitentiaries. Gustavus was in this respect a disciple of Montesquieu and Beccaria. His great ambition was also to renew the ties of friendship and brotherhood between Finland and Sweden, and in order to do so, he personally visited Finland, and established there a number of valuable reforms which are gratefully remembered by that unfortunate country to the present day.

But highly commendable and worthy of admiration as the young King's action was in these and many other respects, the defects of his character soon appeared, and gave his enemies an opportunity to undermine his work and his popularity. He lacked steadiness and firmness of purpose. He wanted to see and enjoy immediately the beneficent results of his reforms. Many of them were therefore abandoned before they had had time for full development; many very costly undertakings were discontinued because the King had either changed his mind or was tired of waiting. And then, he was extravagant in his personal expenses and in arranging grand court entertainments fashioned on the brilliant festivities of the French court at Versailles, which remained his model in all matters of court etiquette and royal display. Like Frederick the Great, to whom Gustavus the Third bears in many respects a striking resemblance, although he lacked the great Prussian's military genius and wise

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

frugality, he was fond of French literature and art, and made strenuous efforts to give them a supreme place in the educational institutions of the kingdom. The national genius of the Swedish people and language were consequently relegated to a secondary place. To make up for the unpopularity and protests which these efforts caused among the people, he devised a national costume for all the inhabitants; but in this attempt he failed entirely. The costume he had devised was copied from an ancient Spanish one, and utterly unsuitable for a northern country of short summers and severe winters. The King's ordinances introducing these Spanish garments were openly disobeyed and laughed at. People began to look on him as a dreamer, and lost their respect for him.

But that which more than anything else hurt his popularity was the way in which he treated the liquor question. The mass of the Swedish people were strongly addicted to the excessive use of intoxicating liquors. The vice had assumed such proportions that measures of reform were urgently called for. But, with the usual impracticability of temperance reformers, Gustavus managed the matter so unskillfully that, instead of correcting the abuse, he made himself highly unpopular and aroused the most stubborn resistance to his reform policy. He had issued an edict prohibiting the manufacture and use of distilled liquors, but he found it impossible to enforce the edict: the peasants and farmers, who had been distilling their own whiskey, simply ignored it, while in a number of cities where distilleries were maintained for the manufacture and sale of the liquor, regular battles were fought between the police trying to suppress them, and the inhabitants enraged at the attempt to close them. Gus-

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

tavus then repealed the edict and introduced a new system, which he hoped would at once diminish the vice of drunkenness and replenish his treasury, which was in a chronic state of exhaustion. He made the right of manufacturing and selling alcoholic liquors a crown monopoly, and established agencies for the sale of these liquors in all large and small cities and towns of the kingdom. But the peasants were not satisfied with this arrangement either. The whiskey they were to buy at the agencies was much dearer than their own home-distilled beverage; moreover, the towns and cities, at that time only thinly scattered over Sweden, were often so remote from the farms, and the roads leading to them were often in such an impassable condition that the purchase of whiskey was a difficult matter for the rural population. The clandestine and illicit manufacture of the beverage was carried on therefore as it had been before. But the very name of the King became odious to the people. They contemptuously called him "a crank, a visionary and a poet." Writing poetry, in which Gustavus excelled, was in their eyes a symptom of folly and madness.

The hostility of the nobles and their rebellious spirit, which had been overawed and silenced for some years by the great personal popularity of the King, reappeared and gained ground with the disaffection of the people, and especially of the rural population. For a King like Gustavus the Third, ambitious and high-spirited, military glory had a tempting attraction, and he had commenced soon after his successful *coup d'état* to prepare for winning it. The army was in a really deplorable condition at the time of his accession to the throne, being entirely

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

without artillery and deficient in equipment. Gustavus lost no time in remedying these defects. He modelled the Swedish army after the Prussian army as reorganized by Frederick the Great, which was then considered the finest and best equipped in Europe, and within two years he had made it, with its splendid personnel and its modern material, a formidable machine of war, which, under the leadership of a military genius, might have renewed the great days of Gustavus Adolphus or Charles the Twelfth. But it was the ambition of Gustavus the Third to command the army himself, and he was not a military genius. He declared war upon Russia, with the intention of recovering the lost provinces of Finland, and proceeded to Finland himself in order to take command of the invading army.

It was there that the first misfortune overtook him. After a few engagements, — rather skirmishes than battles, — in which the Swedes were victorious, the King decided to invest or take by assault the small fortress of Frederickshamm. It would have been better for him if he had marched directly upon Petersburg, which was not in a condition to resist an immediate attack of a superior army. If he had done so, very likely the Esths, first cousins of the Finns, and anxious to shake off the yoke of Russia, would have joined him and would have placed him in possession of the Russian borderland; but Gustavus frittered away the time and by his inactivity enabled the commanders of his own regiments (generally appointed from the ranks of the high nobility) to organize a conspiracy against him and virtually drive him from the field. Very likely bribed with Russian gold, they jointly issued a manifesto that Gustavus had vio-

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

lated the constitution of Sweden by declaring war upon Russia without the consent of the Reichsrath, and they were therefore not bound to obey him in this criminal undertaking. They also used their influence on the other officers and on the soldiers of their regiments, and made them rebellious against the King's commands. In vain Gustavus implored them not to abandon him and the cause of their country; but they were deaf to his prayers and to his threats, and he left the army as a humiliated and disgraced commander.

Upon his return to Stockholm, he made a journey through Dalecarlia, the province in which his ancestor Gustavus Vasa had found the followers who raised him to the throne; he used his extraordinary eloquence so successfully that the people again rallied round him. They swore to stand by him in his struggle against Russia, and not to lay down arms until a peace honorable to Sweden could be secured. Gustavus then convened the Reichstag for the twenty-sixth of January, 1789, in order to get authority to continue the war and restore his kingly prerogatives, which by the revolt of the army had been so signally impaired. The nobility at last openly threw off the mask; but they were overpowered by the three other estates, who would rather strengthen the King's authority than return to their former condition of bondage under the *régime* of a corrupt and arrogant nobility. The Reichstag therefore fully sustained the King's action, taking the view that the offensive war against Russia was really a war of defence.

Sufficient appropriations were made to carry on the war to a successful end, and thirty prominent members of the nobility were indicted for treason and *lèse majesté*,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and punished severely. At the same time an important revision of the constitution was made in the interest of the King, and, in spite of the violent protests of the nobility, his prerogatives were largely extended. The Reichsrath was entirely abolished, and the King authorized to declare war on other countries whenever war was deemed advisable to protect the interests of the country. He also obtained the absolute right to appoint all military and civil officers, while formerly many of these appointments had to be confirmed by the Reichsrath. After having thus secured the rights of the crown at home, Gustavus departed again for the seat of war, with new regiments and new commanders. Russia had also strengthened herself, and what might at first have been an easy undertaking, and might have led to a brilliant success, was now a very serious one, and one of very uncertain chances of success. It soon became evident that the results of the war would depend on the naval supremacy of either of the two powers, and all efforts were therefore directed on both sides toward strengthening their navies.

Several big naval battles were fought, and in all of them the King, who personally commanded his fleet, performed wonders of valor. The last of these battles was that of Swenskasund on the ninth of July, 1790; and the King, who fought with the bravery of despair because the fleet of the Russians was considerably superior in numbers to his own, won a brilliant victory. No less than fifty-nine Russian warships, carrying altogether six hundred and forty-three guns, fell into the hands of the Swedes. But even more than this great material success was the prestige which Gustavus derived from the

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

victory. He was tired of the war, and he could now as a victorious hero offer terms of peace, honorable and advantageous to his country, instead of humbly accepting terms from Russia. On the fourteenth of August, 1790, a treaty of peace was concluded by which, while Sweden did not receive any territorial indemnity, she secured rights and trade privileges in the Baltic Sea which Russia until then had denied her. The honors of the war were therefore on Sweden's side, and the King personally, for his unquestioned heroism, was entitled to a liberal share of them.

On the other hand, the results of the war were disastrous for the country, and the King was by his enemies, the nobility (who were more bitterly opposed to him than ever), held responsible for these disasters. The heavy expenditures for the war had necessitated extraordinary tax levies which were burdensome to the whole people, rich as well as poor, and these could not be abolished immediately on the termination of the war. The brilliant festivities, balls and entertainments, which greeted the King on his return to his capital, could not fully conceal the great distress and poverty of the people; but with that levity which was a conspicuous feature of his character and which gave him such a mental resemblance to Marie Antoinette, whom he greatly admired, he tried to forget in the intoxication of incessant amusements and pleasures the personal privations he had suffered during the war and the sorrows and wants of the nation. That this conduct, which he did not care to conceal from the public eye, irritated the people and filled many of those who had been his admirers with disgust and hatred may easily be imagined. But that by which he gave the great-



est blow to his popularity was his active and over-zealous sympathy in the misfortunes of Louis the Sixteenth and his Queen, Marie Antoinette, and his efforts to release them from captivity and save them from death.

Gustavus showed his lack of political sagacity in estranging the very element upon which he had founded his autocratic power, — the great mass of the people. Their devotion had made it possible for him, not only to continue the war against Russia, but also to be more than a mere figure-head in the government of his kingdom. The support of the nobility he had lost beyond redemption. They hated him, and only hoped for opportunities to humiliate him. All efforts on his part to reconcile them failed. His true policy should have been to ingratiate himself still more with the people, relieve their burdens, make the laws and institutions more liberal, and carry out the promise he had made to them, that he wanted to be clothed with supreme power in order to make the nation more happy and the country more prosperous. But his character did not permit him to pursue this policy dictated by common-sense. The French Revolution had broken out, and the misfortunes of the French King and Queen enlisted his profound sympathy. He watched the progress of the revolution with eager interest, and when it became apparent that Louis could not master it, he formed the adventurous and fantastic plan of placing himself at the head of a large army, composed of contingents of all the European powers, and restoring absolute monarchy in France, as he had restored absolute monarchy in Sweden. In order to realize that dream which corresponded so well to his visionary, chivalrous, poetical temperament, he opened negotiations with

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

Russia, Prussia, Austria, and especially with the French *émigrés*. These men had assembled in Germany and other countries waiting for an opportunity to return to France under the standards of some friendly power coming to the rescue of Louis the Sixteenth and monarchical institutions. Gustavus had tried his best to assist the French King in his flight from Paris. It was a Swedish carriage, with Swedish attendants, which was to convey Louis the Sixteenth and the royal family beyond the borders of France, and which was so abruptly stopped at Varennes. After this attempt at flight had failed, Gustavus saw no other means of saving the monarchy — not only in France, but throughout Europe — than by making war upon the Jacobins, stamping out the Revolution in the blood of its adherents, and seating Louis the Sixteenth in the full glory of absolutism once more on the throne. The execution of this plan, he imagined, would immortalize him, and would make him in effect the dictator of Europe.

The Reichstag of Gefle, which was opened January 25, 1792, had already greatly disappointed and incensed him, because it had unanimously rejected his demand for an appropriation of ten million dollars which he needed for his new undertaking. The utter disregard of his wishes and the contempt with which his urgent appeals were ignored by the lower order, which had so firmly stood by him in the Reichstag of 1789, showed also his great unpopularity; and the nobility thought that the time had come for striking a bold blow not only to get rid of him, but also to reinstate themselves in power. As we have seen, the moment was very opportune. The public debt was enormous; the distress was general; vague rumors

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

of another war, not against an enemy, but against the rights of the people, were in the air. Then the conspiracy was formed. There were five principal conspirators; and they all belonged to the highest nobility. While some of them had personal grievances, not one of them would have thought of raising his hand against the King, unless a much more important object had been in view. These five were Ankarström, who had already been among the rebellious officers in Finland, Count Ribbing, Count Horn, Count Liliehorn and Baron Pechlin.

The mainspring of the conspiracy was the hope of overthrowing the autocratic system of government, and reinstating the nobility in all its prerogatives. At first the conspirators did not want to resort to murder, but they hoped to be able to abduct the King, compel him to resign, and then to extort from his successor the recognition of those rights and privileges of which Gustavus the Third had deprived them. Having made two or three attempts in that direction, they changed their plan, and concluded that the easiest and safest way to accomplish their aim would be to assassinate the King.

Ankarström volunteered to shoot the King at one of the popular masked balls, which he was in the habit of visiting, and at which he freely mingled with the other visitors. Twice he failed to recognize Gustavus. But the last masquerade of the season at Stockholm was to come off on Friday, March 16, 1792, and Ankarström resolved to make a last effort to strike his victim. And he did, although Gustavus was warned that very evening by one of the conspirators (Count Liliehorn) that it would be dangerous for him to go to the ball, for an attempt would be made on his life. The ball was to come

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

off at the Grand Opera House, and an immense crowd was expected. Four of the conspirators — Pechlin, Ankarström, Horn and Ribbing — took supper together, and afterwards went to the theatre. They wore black dominoes of a uniform pattern, to be able to recognize each other easily. On the other hand, Gustavus had taken supper with one of his closest friends, Count Essen, in a little private room arranged for his use at the theatre itself. During this supper, at ten o'clock in the evening, an anonymous letter was handed to him, written in French and with a lead pencil. The author revealed the whole plot, which, as he asserted, he had learned only during the afternoon. He implored the King not to go to the ball, and to change his conduct and his policy if he wanted to escape assassination. He confessed having opposed the King's autocratic measures and his *coup d'état*, which he considered illegal and unconstitutional. But, being a man of honor, as he said, the very idea of murder was horrid to him, and he therefore again implored the King to keep away from the ball. This note came from Count Liliehorn. Gustavus read it twice very attentively; but he did not say a word about its contents. He quietly completed his supper and then, accompanied by Count Essen, he proceeded to his box, where he was plainly to be seen by all. It was then only that he showed the note to his companion, who also implored him not to go on the floor among the dancers. Gustavus said he would hereafter put on a coat of mail before going to such places of amusement, but he insisted on going on the floor. They thereupon left the box, put on light dominoes and descended to the floor, which was crowded with a throng of brilliant, gay and grotesque masks.

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

The King had taken Essen's arm, and while passing through the stage scenery said to him: "Now let us see whether they'll dare attack me!" Although he wore a face-mask, the dancers whispered to each other: "There is the King!" Gustavus made the tour of the ball-room without stopping; then he stepped into the green-room in order to rest a moment; but on leaving, he found himself surrounded by a group of black dominoes, one of whom (it was Count Horn) laid his hand on the King's shoulder, saying: "Good-evening, my beautiful masquerader!" These words were the signal. At the same moment Ankarström fired a shot from his pistol, which had been wrapped up in raw wool in order to weaken the detonation, and the shot was heard by but a few persons. Gustavus exclaimed in a loud voice: "I am wounded! Arrest the assassin!" At the same time loud cries: "Fire! Fire! Leave the hall!" resounded from different parts of the building, and a great confusion followed. In the panic there was a general rush toward the doors, and all the conspirators would have escaped, but for the presence of mind of Count Armfeld, who ordered the doors to be closed, and assuring the tumultuous crowd that there was no fire, but that a great crime had been committed, ordered all the dancers and visitors to take off their masks. The conspirators nevertheless managed to escape immediate discovery by their very audacity, although they attracted attention and suspicion. As he passed through the door, Ankarström with a haughty smile said to the officer: "I hope you do not suspect me?" "On the contrary," replied the officer, "I am sure you are the assassin!" but before he could stop him, Ankarström had passed out. He was, however, arrested

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

the next morning, and also Liliehorn, who had sent the anonymous note to the King. Counts Horn and Ribbing were arrested a few days later, and Baron Pechlin some time afterwards.

Gustavus the Third was the only one who had kept his presence of mind during the tremendous confusion. Essen, covered with the King's blood, had rather carried than conducted him first to one of the private boxes and thence to a small adjoining parlor with a sofa, where he could lie down. The King was the one who directed what measures were to be taken in the grave situation. He ordered the gates of the city to be closed and the Duke of Sodermanland to be sent for. As soon as the surgeons had applied the necessary bandages, he was conveyed to the royal palace, and issued, with perfect self-command, orders for the appointment of those officials who during his illness should conduct the affairs of the kingdom. The King himself ascribed the assault to the influence of the Jacobins of Paris, and the murderers eagerly circulated this rumor, in order to mislead public opinion. However, after Ankarström had been arrested and made a confession, there could no longer be any doubt as to the motives which were at the bottom of the conspiracy. Public opinion took the cue immediately.

From the very moment of the assassination the people of Stockholm seemed to be delirious with grief. During the thirteen days of his agony all the King's mistakes and faults, which quite recently had been magnified into crimes and atrocities, were forgotten; there was but one voice of sympathy and affection for him and of condemnation for his assassins. All the 'good and chivalrous qualities of Gustavus reappeared during the illness pre-

ceding his death. When the public indignation threatened the families of the conspirators, he immediately began to plead eloquently for them and wished them to be protected. When delegations of the municipalities of Stockholm and other cities were admitted to his presence to assure him of the unfaltering loyalty of their cities to him and the royal family, he shed tears of gratitude, and told them that such proofs of loyalty were not too dearly purchased at the price of a serious and possibly fatal wound. When old Count Brahe, one of the leaders of the opposition in the Reichstag, knelt down at his bedside and swore to him that he was a stranger to the conspiracy and condemned it with horror, Gustavus raised him to his feet and embraced him, weak as he was, and told him with tearful eyes that he blessed his wound, because it had reconciled him with a friend so valued and noble-hearted. When his brother showed him a list of all those who had been ferreted out as accessories to the crime, he refused to look at it, and implored his brother to destroy it so that no further bloodshed might result. When some one in his presence swore bloody vengeance on the conspirators, he interfered in their behalf, adding: "If Ankarström is to die, then let there be mercy at least for the others! One victim is enough!" At first it looked as though he would get well. His conversation, fluent and logical, at times even brilliant and eloquent, was taken as proof that his vitality had not been exhausted, and that his excellent constitution would carry him safely through this terrible ordeal. But late on the twelfth day after the assault, he grew worse, and began to sink rapidly. The change came so suddenly that even the physicians were surprised, and suspected foul play.

## GUSTAVUS THE THIRD OF SWEDEN

But nothing has ever come to light to give confirmation to that suspicion.

Thus ended, most sadly and prematurely, one of the most brilliant careers of the eighteenth century, — that of a man of splendid attainments, who lacked perhaps depth, and certainly application, to become one of the greatest men of his age and century; a man of noble, chivalrous character, who had placed his ideals of human greatness unfortunately in the splendid and brilliant outside of things instead of their solid, substantial and imperishable worth.



the nothing has ever come to light to give confirmation to that suspicion. The third and presumably one of the most brilliant careers of the eighteenth century, that of a man of splendid attainments, who indeed perhaps might and certainly appeared to deserve one of the greatest names in his age and century, a man of noble mind, an aristocrat, who had placed his liberal education to great use in the study of the physical and mathematical sciences, of the history of that solid, substantial and im-

CHAPTER XVIII

JEAN PAUL MARAT







JEAN PAUL MARAT

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ASSASSINATION OF JEAN PAUL MARAT

(July 13, 1793)

**I**N the letter of farewell which Charlotte Corday, from her prison cell as a doomed murderess, addressed to her father, she used the phrase (the French words are a well-known verse from a famous tragedy):

“’T is not the scaffold, but the crime, that brings disgrace”;

for she still adhered to the belief that in killing Marat she had not committed a crime, but an act of patriotic devotion for which posterity would honor her, and history would place her name among the benefactors of mankind. In this belief she was more than half right, for in the long list of political crimes and assassinations there is not one which has been so willingly condoned by the world, so eloquently defended by historians, so enthusiastically immortalized by poets, and so leniently criticised even by moralists as that of Charlotte Corday. In her defence the law of heredity has been invoked, for it has been maintained that Charlotte Corday, who was a great-grandniece of the great Corneille, had inherited those sublime patriotic and republican sentiments which the great tragic poet so often and so eloquently expresses in his dramatic poems. In fact everything has been done

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

to surround her crime with the halo of martyrdom, and to secure for her the glory of a national heroine.

It was in the middle of the year 1793. The French Revolution had reached that turning-point when the Revolutionists had almost exhausted their fury against the Royalists, and engaged in factional fights among themselves, always ending in the execution of the members of the vanquished party. The National Assembly — transformed into the National Convention — was under the absolute control of the Jacobins, and Marat, Danton and Robespierre were the absolute rulers of Paris and consequently of France. The King had been guillotined, the Queen and the other members of the royal family were imprisoned, and their execution was only a question of time. An insane craving for blood seemed to have taken possession of the men who were guiding the destinies of France. Danton, by far the most gifted of these Jacobins, had forever sullied his name as the author of the "September Massacres"; but far more odious was Marat, "the friend of the people," the blood-thirsty demon of the Revolution, who quite seriously demanded, in the paper of which he was the editor and publisher, that two hundred thousand persons should be guillotined to purify the aristocratic atmosphere of France.

The powerful party of the Girondists, who were distinguished by a certain degree of moderation and had been a sort of counterpoise in the Convention to the Jacobins, had not only been defeated, but had been actually driven out of the Convention and been branded as traitors and enemies to the Republic. With Marat, Robespierre and Danton in the absolute and unrestrained

possession of power, the destruction and execution of the Girondists was therefore only a question of time, — of months, weeks, perhaps only of days, — and most of them fled from Paris, seeking refuge in those parts of France which were known to be strongly attached to the moderate views of the defeated party. Normandy was one of these provinces, and in its ancient towns and villages quite a number of the proscribed leaders of the Girondist party—Buzot, Pétion, Barbaroux, Louvet and others—appeared with the outspoken intention of arousing the population and inducing them to march against Paris. There had been great excitement before their arrival. The enemies of the Terrorists were in a large majority, and had been active in organizing, equipping, and drilling an army, and General Wimpfen, the commandant at Cherbourg, was bold and imprudent enough to announce that he would march upon Paris with an army of sixty thousand men.

At that time there lived at Caen in Normandy a young girl of noble descent, very beautiful and ingenious, but poor. Her name was Charlotte Corday, or rather Marie Anna Charlotte Corday; she lived at Caen in the house of her aunt, Madame de Bretteville. Charlotte was the daughter of Monsieur de Corday d'Armans, and a great-grandniece of Pierre Corneille, the greatest of the tragic poets of France. The statement that she was the great-granddaughter of the poet is erroneous. She was the great-granddaughter of Marie Corneille, the only sister of Pierre Corneille, whose daughter married Adrian Corday, Baron of Cauvigny. This lineage makes the claim of heredity for Charlotte's sublime character, which is so often insisted on, rather fanciful, especially since no other



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

members of the great poet's family have manifested these characteristics. Charlotte had a sister and two brothers, who had left their father's house after he married his second wife. Her two brothers went to Germany to take service in the army of the Prince of Condé in his campaign against the French Revolutionists.

Charlotte had been placed in a convent at Caen when only twelve years of age, and being naturally contemplative, the retirement and silence of the convent made her even more so. She abandoned herself entirely to those vague dreams and exaltations which so often fill the minds and souls of young girls on the threshold of womanhood. Especially the proud, exalted, grandiose heroines, whom her great-granduncle had immortalized in his tragedies, Cinna, Horace, Polyeucte, Le Cid, made a profound impression upon her, and she learned the most beautiful passages by heart. Her very education seemed to prepare her for the great historic *rôle* which she was to play some ten or twelve years later. At the age of seventeen or eighteen she left the convent and was kindly received in the house of Madame de Bretteville. Her mind was filled with the exalted sentiments of Corneille and Plutarch, whom she read and reread with great delight. Her soul was restless at the sight of the increasing agitation against the corruption of the aristocratic classes and of the profound misery and degradation of the poor. The house of Madame de Bretteville was one of those sombre, sad-looking, narrow residences which are still found occasionally in the silent and sleepy streets of old Norman towns, and well adapted to the stern and dreamy character of Charlotte. In the rear of the house there was a garden, surrounded by high walls,

and this garden became the favorite spot of Charlotte in her readings and studies. Her extraordinary beauty, which consisted as much in the classical cast of her features, her dazzling complexion, her magnificent eyes, as in the intellectual expression of her countenance and her queenlike bearing, had fully unfolded itself in the quietude of her home.

Those who have found in books the greatest joys and pleasures of their lives know what an immense enthusiasm, what an ardent and insatiable curiosity fills the soul when circumstances permit them to explore the vast field of human thought and inspiration and to dive into its treasury. Madame de Bretteville's library was well filled with translations of the great classics of Greece and Rome, and also with the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu and other modern writers. These became the favorite study of Charlotte. One of her greatest favorites was Raynal, whose famous History of the two Indies had just appeared and filled Europe with admiration. Very likely that which appealed so strongly to Charlotte's heart was the sympathy which the author felt for the oppressed races, and especially for the black slaves. With untiring zeal and passion she devoured everything in her aunt's library, — novels, history, philosophy, — and these studies finally led her to politics, which engaged at that time the minds of the foremost writers of France and became the favorite subject of public and private discussion. In this way two parallel currents of ideas had formed themselves in Charlotte's mind, — on the one hand, a powerful desire for greater liberty and the elevation of the oppressed and degraded; on the other hand, a profound admiration for those who

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

devote and sacrifice themselves to the great cause of humanity, and a vague but ardent desire to adorn her name with the halo of heroism and immortality. Left entirely to the instincts and aspirations of her own nature, the young royalist (for her entire family was strictly royalistic) had become a republican, but a republican in the sense of Plutarch and Tacitus, nourished by the sentiments of Corneille and Rousseau. Nothing in her appearance indicated her enthusiastic and soul-devouring ambition to make herself the deliverer of her country from the terrible calamities which had recently befallen it. Her political studies had filled her, republican though she was, with extreme disgust and hatred for the Terrorists, and especially for Marat, who seemed to be their inspiring genius. This was the general situation and also the personal frame of mind of Charlotte Corday at the time the Girondists who had escaped from Paris came to Caen to organize armed resistance to the terrorism of the "Mountain." —

Charlotte Corday had zealously followed the reports in the newspapers she could get hold of concerning the situation at Paris, and her heart beat warmly for the cause of the Girondists. Like all others in the city she lived in, she believed that Marat was the secret spring that kept the entire machinery of the Revolution in motion, that he was the head and soul of the anarchists and murderers, that he was the centre of all conspiracies, the originator of all crimes, and that, with him out of the way, peace and liberty would soon regain the ascendancy, and a freer, nobler, greater France would arise from the ruins. With such convictions in her mind she attended the meetings of the Girondists, where appeals were made

## JEAN PAUL MARAT

to the citizens of Caen and all Normandy to enroll themselves in the service of their country, of liberty, of humanity, against the tyrants at Paris. The impression which these meetings made upon her soul can hardly be described. For the first time she saw and heard the men she had read so much about, and whose patriotic utterances had so often found a loud echo in her own heart; they were there, young, beautiful, enthusiastic, made doubly interesting by the ban of proscription which had exiled them from Paris; they were there with their inspiring eloquence and patriotic appeals, and in the tumultuous audience there was no one more fully enchanted and carried away than the young girl, the disciple of Plutarch and Rousseau. The words: "Country!" "Duty!" "Public Welfare!" repeated again and again by the orators, were deeply engraved upon her impressionable heart. An extraordinary exaltation took possession of Charlotte's soul; she aspired to a part as grand as that of these orators; she longed for a chance to devote herself to the holy cause of liberty and to suffer for it.

These projects and aspirations remained mere vague dreams, until an event occurred which gave them definite shape. On the seventh of July the volunteers who were to march on Paris assembled on a large plain in the immediate vicinity of Caen. The plain was large enough to hold one hundred thousand men; but only thirty volunteers appeared. General disappointment was visible among the spectators; but no one was more deeply affected than Charlotte Corday, who was also present. It seems that from that very sorrow there sprang up within her mind a project both heroic and terrible, — to

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

assassinate Marat, whose words had been most influential in expelling and proscribing the Girondists. To Charlotte's mind the cause of the Girondists was identical with that of liberty, country, and justice. And how often in the past had a pure and blameless life sacrificed for a great cause appeased the wrath of Destiny! She went home and requested an interview with the Girondist deputies.

Charlotte Corday was then twenty-four years old, but looked much younger. She was tall, and of beautiful proportions; her complexion was of dazzling whiteness, her hair was blond, her luminous eyes of charming sweetness, her nose finely cut, and her chin indicated firmness and determination. Her face was a perfect oval, and the total impression was that of perfect beauty. Both her smile and her voice were of angelic sweetness. Charlotte made a profound impression upon the deputies; but they were not inclined to take her seriously. One day Pétion came in while she was in conversation with Barbaroux. "Ah, ah," said he, "there is the beautiful young aristocrat paying a visit to the Republicans." "You judge me wrongly," she replied, "but some day you will know who I am."

The question has often been asked whether the Girondists put the dagger in Charlotte Corday's hand to assassinate Marat. The enemies of the Girondists persistently asserted this, but there is no evidence to that effect. Possibly in her two conversations with Barbaroux her determination to assassinate Marat, and not Danton or Robespierre, became confirmed by the intensity of hatred and contempt manifested for him by the famous Girondist leader. At all events, after these interviews she made

her preparations to go to Paris with great circumspection, and great tranquillity of mind. A little dressing-case, a night-gown and a volume of Plutarch's Lives, with some money, was all her baggage. But before going to Paris she proceeded to Argentan to bid her family farewell. Her father and her sister were living there, and she told them that she intended to go to England, and would remain there until the storm of the Revolution had blown over. She bade them farewell without showing an excess of emotion, but also without faintness, and then departed for Paris in the public stage-coach.

During the journey, which at that period lasted two days, she appeared serene and happy; no preoccupation seemed to disturb the tranquillity of her mind. Her fellow-travellers all fell in love with her and treated her with distinguished courtesy. One of them offered to marry her. Charlotte smiled, but refused politely. Moreover they were all radical revolutionists, and swore by Danton, Robespierre and Marat.

At Caen nobody had any idea of her plan. She had told her aunt she would go to Argentan and thence to England. She had always concealed her political views so carefully that nobody could have suspected her.

She arrived at Paris on the forenoon of the eleventh of July, and put up at the Providence Hotel. Tired out by the long and tedious journey, she went to bed early in the afternoon and slept well till the next morning. No conscientious scruples disturbed her. Her mind was fully made up, and she did not for a minute hesitate to execute her project. The next morning she went to the Palais Royal, purchased a strong and sharp steel knife,

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and carefully hid it in her bosom. She then asked herself when and where she was to use her weapon. She would have preferred to give her act a certain solemnity. At Caen, while brooding over her purpose, she had conceived the plan to assassinate Marat on the Champ de Mars, on the fourteenth of July, during the celebration of the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastille and the overthrow of the monarchy. She hoped to slay this king of anarchy, surrounded as he would then be by thousands of his murderous followers; but when the celebration was postponed, she planned to assassinate him at one of the sessions of the Convention, the scene of his crimes and proscriptions. When she learned that Marat was ill and did not attend the sessions of the Convention, there seemed no way left for her except to go to his residence and meet him there. She addressed a letter to him asking for a private interview. The letter remained unanswered. She sent a second letter, more urgent than the first, in which she requested an immediate interview for the purpose of communicating to him a secret of great importance. Moreover she represented herself as unhappy, as a victim of political persecution and appealed to his protection. After this appeal she hoped to be admitted.

At about seven o'clock in the evening of July 13 she left her hotel, took a cab and proceeded to the residence of Marat, a dismal old building, No. 20 in the Rue des Cordeliers. There Marat lived, and there also he had the office and the press and composing-rooms of his newspaper, "The Friend of the People." Marat's living apartments, which were furnished with a certain elegance strangely contrasting with the general appear-



## JEAN PAUL MARAT

ance of the building, were situated on the second floor and were shared by his mistress, or rather his wife, who loved him passionately, and who watched over him with the fidelity of a dog. Knowing the great peril to which the idol of her heart might be exposed from foreign visitors, she subjected each of them, before admitting him, to a careful scrutiny and painstaking examination.

When Charlotte Corday had ascended the stairway leading to Marat's office, she suddenly found herself in the presence of Catherine Evrard—she continued to call herself by that name, although afterwards it appeared that she had been married to Marat. Catherine was surprised at the strange visitor, who, with a firm and melodious voice, inquired for the citizen Marat and desired to see him. With great attention Catherine scanned the young woman, who was dressed with great modesty and looked like a lady from the provinces, and demanded the object of her visit, and as Charlotte either refused to give her that information or failed to impress her favorably, she declined to admit her to Marat's room, who, she said, was just taking a bath and could not be seen. At this moment Marat's voice was heard from a room whose door was not tightly closed, and he told Catherine to admit the young stranger. He thought it was the young woman who had written to him, and who had announced her visit for that evening. Thus invited, Charlotte entered the room, much against the wish of Catherine. It was a small and dark room. A bath-tub stood in the centre, and Marat was taking a bath, covered up to the neck, except his right arm and shoulder, for he was in the act of writing an editorial for his newspaper. A board had been placed across the tub,



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and in this way a table had been formed to hold his manuscript. As she stepped up to him he began to ask her concerning the important news from Normandy she had promised in her letter. He also inquired about the Girondists who had gone there, and wanted to know what they were doing. She told him. "It is all right," he said, while marking down their names. "Within a week they will all be guillotined." If anything had been needed to confirm her resolution and to stir her up to speedy action, it was this announcement. She quickly drew the dagger from her bosom and plunged it into Marat's breast up to the handle. This thrust, aimed from above, and executed with wonderful force and firmness, pierced the lungs, and severed the main arteries, from which a stream of blood rushed forth.

"Ah, this to me, my dear friend?" exclaimed the wounded man. It was all he could say. A moment later he was dead.

The assassination of Marat created a rage, a frenzy among the lowest classes of the population of Paris which it is impossible to describe. That the courageous young woman who had slain the demon of blood was not torn to pieces is a wonder. Charlotte, in thinking of the fate which might befall her after her task was performed, had not forgotten the possibility or even probability of falling a victim to the fury of the people, but even this terrible prospect did not deter her. She received what may be called a fair trial and she had the benefit of an official defender. Since she did not deny the act of assassination and readily admitted that it was an act of premeditation and careful preparation, any painstaking investigation might have been deemed unnecessary but

## JEAN PAUL MARAT

for the hope which the Terrorists entertained, of connecting the Girondist party, and especially the Girondists assembled at Caen, with her crime, — a hope in which they were utterly disappointed. She was therefore arraigned before the Revolutionary Tribunal and subjected to a rigorous examination as to her accomplices.

“Who filled your mind with so much hatred for Marat?” asked the judge.

“I did not need the hatred of others,” she replied; “my own was sufficient.”

“But somebody must have instigated you to commit this deed?”

“We do but poorly what others tell us to do.”

“What did you hate him for?”

“For the enormity of his crimes.”

“What do you mean by his crimes?”

“His crimes against France and humanity.”

“Why did you kill him?”

“In order to give back peace to my country.”

“Do you believe you have killed all the Marats of France?”

“His death may frighten the others.”

“Do you regret and repent your deed?”

“I rejoice that it was successful.”

Only once during this trial her heart failed her. It was when Catherine Evrard, Marat's mistress, took the stand to testify against her, and in a voice choked with tears told the story of her visit to Marat's house. Looking at the woman who through her deed had lost him whom she loved, the tears burst from her own eyes, and she exclaimed: “No more! No more! I implore you. It is I who killed him; I do not deny it!”

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Again she was deeply moved when the dagger with which she killed Marat was presented to her. "Do you recognize this instrument?" She turned away her face and exclaimed: "I do! I do!" The public prosecutor called attention to the fact that she had plunged the dagger into the breast of her victim from above, that it was a difficult thrust, and that she must have practised it before she acquired so much skill.

She listened attentively to what he said, and exclaimed with unfeigned indignation, "Shame! Shame! The wretch wants to brand me as an assassin!"

Her words caused a sensation. The audience and even the judges were struck with admiration, so much energy and patriotic devotion were expressed in her answers. She stood before them like an antique heroine, not trembling for her life, but provoking death and inviting it by her justification of the crime she had committed to save her country. The trial resulted in her conviction. She received her sentence of death without showing any emotion; was it not the crown of immortality to which she had aspired? Her official defender, Chauveau Lagarde, — the same who three months later so nobly defended Marie Antoinette, — might have saved her by pleading insanity, but he comprehended her nobility of soul and would not offend her by such a plea. "She refuses to be defended," he said; "she pleads guilty and is beyond the fear of death!" After the death sentence had been pronounced, she stepped up to her defender, and with a smile of angelic sweetness thanked him for his noble-minded, graceful and kind defence. "You understood me," she said, "and your esteem consoles me for the contempt of the ignorant masses."

## JEAN PAUL MARAT

One thing remarkable about this trial was the respect, not to say the admiration, with which this young woman, who had killed their idol, was looked upon by the spectators. They seemed to feel instinctively that a divine inspiration, a heaven-born principle of humanity and patriotism, had prompted her to commit an act which human law condemned and punished, but which posterity would forgive, if not glorify.

From the very hour of her conviction, she became a national heroine. The wild Maratists clamored against her, but there were thousands and thousands even among the Revolutionists who sympathized with her and admired her. Brutus ceased to be the patron saint of patriotic assassins; his place in the hearts of enemies of tyranny and despotism was taken by the young girl who had so heroically thrown life and beauty away to redeem her country. Poets and authors immediately celebrated her in song and prose; it may be said that her immortality commenced even before her beautiful head fell under the knife of the guillotine. She died on the evening of the nineteenth of July.

When she was taken to the place of execution in the costume of the condemned victims — a scarlet shirt — the sun was setting. His last rays sent a farewell greeting to the young heroine, who seemed to be bathed in a halo of glory, as she ascended the steps of the scaffold with firm step and serene countenance. A shudder passed through the multitude as her head fell into the basket.

She was not insane; she was an exalted, enthusiastic dreamer, who looked upon her crime as an act of justice demanded by the necessities of the times, — an act in-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

spired by a higher Power which had guided her in her design and helped her in its execution. Thinking of Jeanne d'Arc, who had saved France and immortalized herself by her self-sacrificing devotion, she felt convinced that God often chooses woman as his instrument for interposition in the history of nations. If she deceived herself in the nature of the act by which she hoped to restore the happiness of France and to terminate the era of bloody hecatombs sacrificed to the fury of sanguinary monsters, is it the duty of the historian to judge her severely? Should he not rather, while pointing out the error of her judgment, be willing to bestow on her the laurel-wreath of a patriotic heroine, which has been accorded to her by poets, by her grateful countrymen, and by the whole world?

## CHAPTER XIX

PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA









PAUL I.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ASSASSINATION OF PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA

(March 24, 1801)

THOSE who have followed the preceding chapters will remember that Catherine the Second of Russia got possession of the throne by the murder of her husband, fortified that possession by the murder of another Czar imprisoned in the fortress of Schlüsselburg (the weak-minded Ivan the Sixth), and finally, haunted by the constant fear of being dethroned by some new pretender, sacrificed all those whose claims might become dangerous to her security. History, which is filled with the crimes of remorseless rulers, furnishes, however, abundant proof that such crimes, although successful at first, are frequently visited upon their authors or their authors' children, and that blood cruelly and unjustly shed will blossom forth in a new crop of crime and bloodshed. It was so in the case of the murders committed by Catherine the Second; and while she, very likely, personally suffered from a mental agony which made her life on the throne miserable in the extreme, it was her son who finally paid the penalty.

The life of this unfortunate son had been full of disappointment and sorrow, almost from the moment of his birth. (Born as the son of Peter the Third, he was almost

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

openly repudiated by his reputed father as a bastard. Quite often Peter the Third had declared in the presence of gentlemen and ladies of the court that the little Grand-Duke Paul was not his son, but either Alexis or Gregor Orloff's, and that he had no right to the succession. Catherine, however, insisted that Paul was Peter's son, and as the boy grew up, his many peculiarities of mind showed such a remarkable similarity to those of Peter the Third, that the legitimacy of his birth could hardly be doubted. It was really the manifestation of these peculiarities that filled the mind of the mother with that insuperable aversion, not to say hatred, for the son, which would have been incomprehensible but for the remorseful recollections which the traits of the father necessarily awakened in her mind. The boy could not fail to notice this aversion and hostility on the part of his mother, especially since the courtiers, modelling their conduct toward him on the sentiments of the Czarina, treated him with the same coldness and contempt. His whole education was carefully arranged on a premeditated plan to keep him as much as possible in ignorance of those very things which might be useful to him as a ruler, while his character was rendered distrustful and suspicious to such a degree that he became a misanthropist of the blackest hue. Not a day passed but he discovered espionage, treachery, ingratitude and intentional hostility among those whom the Empress had placed near his person as his tutors, teachers and confidants. They shamelessly deceived him, betrayed him, and lied about him. They cautiously instilled into his mind the story of the assassination of his father and of his mother's knowledge of the crime, and when the young man, horror-

## PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA

struck at this disclosure, clenched his fists and gnashed his teeth, they reported to their imperial mistress that the young Grand Duke had manifested dangerous symptoms of impatience and independence, which would require even greater care and watchfulness on the part of his tutors and a more severe isolation of the young prince. Their only intention was, of course, to show their indefatigable zeal in the task entrusted to them and to make themselves absolutely indispensable to their imperial employer or her favorites; but the effect on his mind was most disastrous. Burdened with the suspicion that his own mother was a murderess, and with the evidence afforded by thousands of little occurrences of her hatred toward himself, and of the treachery of his attendants, in constant fear of impending assassination, — is it not almost wonderful that his mind, not naturally strong, did not absolutely give way?

When Paul had grown up to manhood, he was married to a lovely young German princess; but since his mother had selected this wife for him, he regarded her with constant suspicion. She died without having succeeded in overcoming his distrust. A second marriage, which he was compelled to contract, had no happier results, although his wife bore him four sons. By special order of the Empress these sons were taken away from him and educated under the special supervision of Catherine herself, while Paul was ordered to proceed to Gatschina, a country-seat near St. Petersburg, where he amused himself with drilling a battalion of soldiers and arranging sham battles, just as Peter the Third, his father, had done before his elevation to the throne. But rarely was he permitted to receive his children, and when they came

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

to see him, he was always afraid that some secret danger might surprise him.

In this manner thirty-five years had elapsed since the death of Peter the Third. During these thirty-five years the name of Peter had hardly ever been heard at the court, or at least not in the presence of the Empress. Then Catherine herself falls a prey to the grim destroyer; and Paul inherits the crown. His mother's body is laid out in state on a catafalque, by whose side stands another coffin, magnificently ornamented and with an imperial crown on its top. It is the coffin of Peter the Third, whose remains had been deposited in a vault of the Alexander Nevski Monastery. It was one of Paul's first official acts to proceed to this convent, to open the vault and the coffin containing his father's mortal remains. One of the gloves of Peter the Third was still well preserved. Paul took it out of the coffin, knelt down in the presence of the whole court and reverently kissed it. Then he ordered the coffin to be carried to the imperial palace where the body of his mother lay in state, and an imperial crown to be placed on it. It was, perhaps, the most unique coronation which ever took place in history. But Paul wanted not only to honor his father's memory; he wanted also to punish and to hand over to public contempt his murderer. He therefore ordered Alexis Orloff, who had planned the assassination of Peter the Third, to act as chief mourner at the funeral. Orloff obeyed; but immediately after the obsequies, during which he was the target of the contemptuous eyes of the whole people, he was thrown into a kibitka and sent into exile. Such was the opening of Paul's reign.

In his physical make-up Paul bore not the slightest

## PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA

resemblance to Peter the Third, and this circumstance seemed to give confirmation to the circulating rumors that he was not Peter's son. But if, as a great historian has pointed out, Catherine's intense hatred of her son could have left any doubt in that respect, Paul's personal acts of government, almost from the very first day after the funeral of his mother, absolutely removed it. (For, intellectually and morally, never a son bore a greater resemblance to his father than Paul the First did to Peter the Third.) Paul had good qualities, and with proper education and assistance, he would very likely have made a good ruler; but without both, his well-meant but ill-timed plans of reform failed to do the people any good, while they created untold enemies for him. Exactly like Peter the Third, he had prepared a number of plans of reform, which he immediately promulgated without consulting with any one about their opportuneness or advisability. Like Peter's reform plans, Paul's turned mostly on trivialities, — on the style of hats or coats or military uniforms, — and by strenuously trying to enforce these edicts he made himself odious. He hated anything that might remind him of the French Revolution, and would not permit a Frenchman to enter the Russian Empire without a passport signed by one of the French Bourbon princes (then living in exile); like his father he idolized the Prussians and wanted Prussian military regulations, uniforms and equipment introduced into the Russian army; in these efforts he was strongly opposed by the Russian officers and soldiers. They made fun of the imperial ordinances and (admitting then that he was Peter's son) said that he had inherited Peter's Prussomania and insanity. Citizens and peasants were equally indignant at

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Paul's arbitrary interference with their personal rights and liberties. He also tried to introduce church reforms, which irritated the clergy and caused angry protests throughout the Empire. In attempting to introduce these "reforms" he sometimes manifested symptoms of real insanity. He declared war upon round hats, which he considered revolutionary and hostile to the government. He carried this war to such an extent that he ordered the police and even the soldiery to confiscate the obnoxious hats and arrest the owners, even while the latter were promenading in the streets, and without any regard to the weather. In this manner it was not long before he had estranged the good feelings of the aristocracy, the army, the clergy and the people at large. They began to regard him as a trifler and maniac, who was imbued with an excessive idea of his own authority, who defied national sentiment and prejudice, and who would not counsel with anybody because he distrusted everybody.

In his foreign policy he was selfish and vacillating. He subordinated the national interests of Russia entirely to his own personal whims and prejudices. He formed alliances and cancelled them without cause, and thus made enemies of all foreign powers. The most prominent statesmen and generals became convinced that Russia, which under Catherine's rule had won a commanding position among the powers of Europe, would lose all prestige if forced into a state of political isolation by the foolish policy of Paul the First.

Plots and conspiracies were formed, of which the most prominent court officials in immediate attendance on the Emperor became members. Some of these men he hated

## PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA

because they had been favorites and counsellors of his mother ; others he had in his sudden fits of passion abused and insulted. Most prominent among these were Count Pahlen, the brothers Zubow, and Count Talizin, commander of the Imperial Guards. They added their personal grievances to the public dissatisfaction, and joined hands in bringing about Paul's dethronement. They commenced working on the Grand Dukes, Paul's sons, and especially upon the oldest of them, Alexander, whom Count Pahlen convinced that the Emperor held in readiness an order for the arrest of the Grand Dukes, with the exception of Nicholas, his third son, whom he had designated for the succession to the crown. Alexander was of a sentimental turn of mind. For a while he resisted the tempting offers of the conspirators, but when the reports of his impending arrest and transfer to Schlüsselburg were confirmed by others, he finally consented to the arrest of the Emperor and to the demand for his forced abdication. This he did with tears and heart-rending supplications not to harm his father and to treat him with becoming respect. Having received this consent, the conspirators proceeded to work with great promptness and energy. The time was propitious for the immediate execution of their conspiracy ; for they knew very well that what originally had been planned only as dethronement by abdication might easily lead to the assassination of the Czar, and they had taken precautions and measures tending towards such a result.

It was during the Masnaliza, the Russian Carnival, that the conspirators resolved to carry their plot into execution. The whole population was in a state of frenzy, drunkenness, and wild excesses. The conspira-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

tors knew that during these days they could meet and make all necessary arrangements without attracting the least attention. Paul the First resided in the palace of St. Michael, which he claimed to have built on a direct order of St. Michael himself. He had entirely isolated himself; his most faithful servant, Count Rostopchin, and his wife, whom he had really loved, had been banished from his apartments. It was this Rostopchin who twelve years afterwards burned the city of Moscow. He distrusted them as well as all others. His only confidante (and, as is asserted, his mistress at the same time) was an ugly old cook, who prepared his meals in a kitchen adjoining his bedroom, that he might be secure against poison. The Empress Maria, distinguished by the gentleness and tenderness of her sentiments, who had given him innumerable proofs of her affection and devotion, was in his eyes a traitress who he supposed was plotting with his enemies against his life. He had therefore ordered the doors leading from his own apartments to hers to be walled up.

The assassination itself presents some points of resemblance to that of Wallenstein, Duke of Friedland. On the evening of March 23, 1801, General Talizin, chief of the Imperial Guards, gave a brilliant party, to which only gentlemen of great intrepidity and resoluteness, all of whom were known to be personal enemies of the Emperor, had been invited. When the guests were heated with wine and in a condition of semi-intoxication, Count Pahlen entered the *salon* in which the guests were assembled; he referred in a few impressive words to the despotism and tyranny of the Emperor, to the widespread spirit of rebellion, to the dissatisfaction prevailing among

## PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA

officers, people, and clergy, to the public disorders and disturbances breaking out on all sides, and closed his inflammatory harangue by appealing to his hearers to make an end of these intolerable conditions. He knew his speech would be enthusiastically received, and for several minutes there was perfect bedlam among the guests. Some of them hurled chairs above their heads, others grasped their knives or swords, and swore that they would kill the insane fool who had already too long disgraced the imperial throne.

(The plan according to which the conspirators proceeded had been carefully projected. Pahlen, who was Governor-General of St. Petersburg, left the palace in the general confusion, but returned soon with a detachment of cavalry and guarded the one side of the Winter Palace. Talizin marched up from the other side with a regiment of grenadiers. When these soldiers marched through the botanical garden of the palace, their loud and heavy steps frightened away many thousand crows, which were sleeping upon the high lime-trees of the garden. The loud croaking of this immense army of black birds ought to have aroused Paul from his sleep and warned him of his impending danger. But he slept on.

After the palace was fully surrounded, the conspirators crossed the ditch on the ice. A battalion of soldiers, who were not in the secret, and who were on guard on the outposts, offered some resistance, but were easily overpowered and disarmed. Not a shot had been fired. After having passed the gates of the palace, the conspirators were joined by Colonel Marin, the Commandant of the palace, who conducted the riotous throng, among whom were hardly any sober persons, over winding-stairs up to

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the door of the Emperor's bedroom. On the threshold of the door the guard was asleep, and when aroused and trying to resist, was very rudely handled and barely escaped alive. He ran down the stairs and called the guards to arms. They demanded to be taken to the Emperor's rooms, but Marin interfered. He made them present arms, and in this position no Russian soldier dares move a limb or speak a word.)

The crowd entered the bedroom. Prince Zubow and General Benningsen — the latter a Hanoverian by birth, but of great authority in the army on account of his energy and reckless audacity — stepped up to the bed of the Czar, brandishing their swords. "Sire," said Benningsen, "you are my prisoner!" The Emperor stared at them in speechless surprise. "Sire," continued Benningsen, "it is a question of life or death for you! Yield to circumstances and sign this act of abdication!" The room was becoming filled up with drunken conspirators, all of whom wanted to see what was going on, and tried to get in. In a moment of confusion caused by this pushing and crowding in, which others tried to prevent, the Emperor sprang from his bed and took refuge behind the screen of a stove, where he staggered over some obstacle and fell to the ground. "Sire," exclaimed Benningsen once more, "submit to the inevitable! Your life is at stake!" At this moment a new noise was heard from the anteroom, and Benningsen, who so far had been the only protector of Paul's life, turned to the door, to see whether the new-comers were friends or enemies. Paul was, for the moment, alone with his assailants. His courage returned. He ran up to a table upon which lay several pistols. He reached for them, but some of the

## PAUL THE FIRST OF RUSSIA

conspirators had watched the motion of his hand; one of them almost severed it from his arm by a stroke of his sword. Agonized with pain the Czar rushed upon his enemies. A short struggle, a heavy fall, and it was all over.

The murder of Peter the Third was brought about by the use of a napkin; his son, Paul the First, was strangled with an officer's sash. There is another point of resemblance in the assassination of the two Czars, father and son. Alexis Orloff and Nicholas Zubow, the murderers of the two Czars, had both taken dinner with their victims on the day of the murder.

When the death of their father was reported to the Grand Dukes, Alexander especially, the heir to the crown, was almost overcome with emotion and terror. The details of the murder were carefully concealed from him; on the contrary, he was made to believe that a fit of apoplexy brought on by the excitement of the scene had caused the Czar's death. After much lamentation he was finally persuaded to address a proclamation to the Russian people in which apoplexy was given as the cause of the sudden and unexpected death of Czar Paul the First during the night of the twenty-third of March. Quite early next day this proclamation was promulgated throughout the city of Petersburg by military heralds. But the people were not deceived by these official lies. Everybody knew in what manner Paul the First had died. The news of the murder in all its details had spread with lightning-like rapidity through the streets and alleys to the remotest corners of the city.

The conspirators, far from denying their guilt, boasted of the crime as of an act of heroism and patriotism.

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Many officers who were at the time miles away from the palace of St. Michael claimed to have been witnesses of the tragedy and to have lent a helping hand in slaying "the tyrant." It is recorded that Count Münster, the Prussian ambassador at the court of St. Petersburg, a short time after Paul's assassination, spoke with horror and indignation of the catastrophe at a dinner party at which a number of the most prominent army officers and state officials were present; one of these officers quite unconcernedly defended the crime, saying: "Count, you should not blame us for defending ourselves! Our Magna Charta is tyranny, or if you prefer to call it so, absolutism, tempered by assassination, and our rulers should regulate their conduct accordingly!" And this state of affairs has existed in Russia to the present day.

CHAPTER XX

AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE









AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

## CHAPTER XX

### ASSASSINATION OF AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

(March 23, 1819)

**A**FTER the downfall of Napoleon the monarchs of Europe had a very difficult task to perform. Not only were the domestic institutions of their states, which had been overthrown by the French conquest and in many cases altered by French decrees, to be regulated anew or reinstated on a firm footing, but the relations between governments and subjects were to be reorganized on a new basis, in conformity with the liberal principles which had spread from France and been adopted readily by the intelligent and educated classes in Germany. Solemn promises had been made by the German princes to their peoples in order to enlist their sympathies in their final efforts against Napoleon, and after the Corsican had been dethroned, they were expected to carry out these promises. Especially was this true of Prussia and the smaller German states, whose inhabitants had been promised a system of representative government and a constitution limiting the powers of the executive. Such promises were very inconvenient to some of these governments, and they were rather inclined to forget and abandon them than to carry them out in good faith. Moreover Russia

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and Austria, the representatives of autocratic power in Europe, exerted their influence on the German governments in a direction opposite to the popular aspirations, and encouraged them to ignore their pledges given under the stress of invasion. It should be remembered that the Holy Alliance, of which Metternich was the inspiring genius, had been formed not only against Napoleon, but also against the freedom and the popular rights of the nations of Europe. In spite of its high-sounding and sanctimonious title, the Holy Alliance was the curse of nations, and it would have extended its nefarious influence even beyond the Atlantic Ocean, and would have crushed the national aspirations for independence and self-government in the states of Central and South America but for the timely issue of the Monroe Doctrine, which saved the Western hemisphere from "Holy Alliance" interference.

It was only after the united efforts of the nations culminated in the final dethronement of Napoleon, and after the Vienna Congress had apportioned the heritage of the Empire among the victorious monarchs that the nations became aware that the liberal promises they had received while these monarchs were in distress were either not to be redeemed at all, or redeemed only in part. The sagacity of the statesmen of continental Europe was bent on defrauding the people of those civil and political rights which had been held out to them as part of the reward to be won by repelling the attacks of Napoleon, and the sovereigns were only too willing to assist them in carrying out this deception.

Unfortunately some of these sovereigns were of inferior mental calibre and not at all fitted for the great

## AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

work of reconstructing their shattered monarchies after the tremendous convulsions of the preceding twenty years, and they were perfectly dwarfed by a comparison with the colossus who had moulded Europe so long solely according to the inspirations of his genius or ambition. Alexander of Russia had the reputation of being a man of ability; but this reputation was without solid foundation. At the period immediately following the overthrow of Napoleon he was entirely under the influence of Madame Krüdener, a religious enthusiast and visionary, who skilfully concealed her immorality under pietistic propagandism. She filled Alexander's mind with vague and mystic ideas of his divine mission as a ruler, in which the human rights of his subjects had no place. Frederick William the Third, King of Prussia, was a weakling of the worst sort. He had actually been forced into the anti-Napoleonic movement by the enthusiasm of his people, and after national independence had been accomplished he trembled lest anything might occur to endanger the public order and tranquillity so dearly purchased. It was therefore comparatively easy for the reactionary elements to get full control of the Prussian government and to prevent any bold reform in a democratic direction. All they had to do was to fill the mind of the timid King with a vague fear that the scenes of the French Revolution might be renewed by inviting the people to coöperation in the government. Even less reliable was the Emperor of Austria, Francis the First, a man naturally distrustful and suspicious, who knew how to conceal his cunning and his antagonism to liberal ideas under the appearance of great personal kindness and *bonhomie*. These were the three men of whom Europe expected a great political re-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

form, and never perhaps, in political history, were hopes and expectations so woefully misplaced and doomed to more cruel disappointment than in this case.

It would be unjust to assert that the great mass of the German people felt a deep interest in the introduction of those measures of political reform which the sovereigns had promised when they appealed to the patriotism of their subjects. Most of the Germans, even those belonging to the educated classes, had up to that time paid but little attention to politics, and their political indifference had survived the war for national independence. The nobility, with a few noble exceptions, were not at all anxious to see measures of political reform introduced, because they knew that such measures would curtail their aristocratic privileges and prerogatives.

But there was one class of citizens which had hailed the promises of the sovereigns with unbounded enthusiasm, for they had hoped from their realization a political renaissance for the whole Fatherland and a new era of greatness and world-wide influence recalling the days of the Hohenstaufen, — the glorious days when the German Empire was the first power in the world, and when all civilized nations from the Baltic Sea to the southern shores of the Mediterranean bowed their necks in obedience to the demands of its rulers. This class was the students of the many German universities, scattered over Prussia, Austria, Bavaria, and the smaller German states. Inspired by Schiller, Körner, Arndt, and other poets, these young men had flocked to the standards of Blücher, Scharnhorst, York, and Bülow, and had fought with the courage of lions on the battle-fields of Germany and France for the holy cause of German independence. The

## AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

hope and dream of another Germany, greater, nobler, more progressive and worthier of being the leader of nations than they had known it before the war, had fanned their enthusiasm into a flame which nothing could extinguish, and which after their return from the war burst forth, here and there, in great patriotic demonstrations.

Dreamers and idealists though they were, they began to transform some of their dreams into reality. They formed a great association embracing the students of all the German universities, north and south, — the German Burschenschaft, in whose organization they embodied the noblest principles of manhood, patriotism, and civic devotion. The ancient German colors, black, red and gold, were revived to adorn their banners, their caps, their sashes and badges. Quite a literature of patriotic and students' songs suddenly sprang into existence, in which the dream of a great united Germany appeared in the mind's eye as a living reality. Many of the professors of the universities, who had also been volunteers in the war and had shared the enthusiasm of the students, joined them in their patriotic devotion and lent the authority of their names and writings to their aspirations of national political revival. Arndt's famous national song, "Where is the German's Fatherland?" with the reply, that the German fatherland embraces all the countries in which the German tongue is heard and in which German song rises heavenward, is the typical expression of that most enthusiastic period of German student-life.

The Burschenschaft became an organization of national importance. It had its admirers, but it had also its enemies; and unfortunately the latter were mostly to

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

be found among the nobility. The feeling prevailing against the Burschenschaft in the government circles of the different German states was therefore decidedly hostile, and waited only for an opportunity to show that hostility. This opportunity soon presented itself and, it must be admitted, was brought about by the reckless audacity of the members of the association. In the year 1817 the tercentenary of the great German Reformation was to be celebrated with unusual splendor, and the Burschenschaft profited by this occasion to make a public demonstration in behalf of its patriotic principles. It selected as the place of its convention the Wartburg, where Martin Luther resided upon his return from the Diet of Worms and, to make the convention especially noteworthy and solemn, had chosen the eighteenth of October, the anniversary of the battle of Leipsic, as the principal day for the celebration.

An immense number of visitors from all parts of Germany came to Eisenach, situated at the foot of the Wartburg, and delegations of students from all German universities, adorned with their German colors and carrying black, red and gold banners with patriotic inscriptions, assembled on the historic ground and participated in the festivities, for which an elaborate programme had been arranged. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed, and for the time being all those petty jealousies which had so often disturbed the cordial fellowship of the inhabitants of different German states had disappeared, and all those present revelled in the exuberance of patriotic sentiment; they were all the children of one great fatherland, a great united nation! The songs and the speeches repeated and echoed this one thought. It lived uppermost in the hearts

## AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

of those young enthusiasts, but presented itself to their minds rather as a vague poetic ideal than as a stern political reality. Among the thousands of visitors there was, perhaps, not one who had seriously thought of the political realization of the dream. Imprudent as these too boisterous demonstrations had been during the day, there was enacted late in the evening, when most of the guests had already left the famous castle, a sort of theatrical performance, which irritated the conservative and reactionary classes exceedingly and resulted disastrously for the Burschenschaft. This performance was gotten up in imitation of a famous scene in Luther's life — the burning of the papal bull. Massmann, a student of the university of Jena, represented the Luther of the nineteenth century. A large bonfire was built, and amidst boundless enthusiasm a number of books and other materials, odious to the students, were thrown into the flames and destroyed. Among the books was Kotzebue's "History of the German Empire," Haller's "Restoration of Political Science," Section 13 of the Federal Constitution, etc. Besides the books, a corset such as used to be worn by the officers of the Prussian guards, a Hessian queue, and an Austrian corporal's mace were also thrown into the fire.

The Wartburg celebration produced tremendous excitement throughout Germany. The reactionary elements were wild with indignation. They accused not only the managers of the festivity and the Burschenschaft of revolutionary tendencies, but they included in this charge all the young men of the Empire, averring that they had grown up under the influence of the pernicious doctrines of the French Revolution and French armies of occupation, and wanted now to apply those doctrines to the reor-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ganization of German institutions. They also demanded that the organizers of the Wartburg celebration should be prosecuted and punished as traitors. All the conservative and government papers opened a regular war upon the seditious and revolutionary tendencies of the universities, and the agitation reached its climax by the publication of a memorandum addressed by Baron Stourdza, a Russian councillor of state, to the Emperor Alexander, in which he predicted that a bloody revolution would result unless these seditious tendencies were speedily repressed. The Stourdza memorandum had originally been intended for the use of the governments only. The Czar had sent a copy to each European government, but one copy of it had found its way to the office of a Paris newspaper and had been published. The excitement among the German students rose to the boiling-point, and their wrath was concentrated against Russia. It was only too well known that Russia had in her employ a number of spies scattered throughout the German states, who kept her government well posted on the political and social currents. The most prominent of these spies was August von Kotzebue, a man of great literary talent and distinguished as the author of many comedies and dramas, but politically of extreme conservative views. The attacks of the liberal press were therefore mainly directed against Kotzebue, whose reports to the Russian government were supposed to have inspired Stourdza's memorandum.

At that time there was at Jena a student of the University, of irreproachable character, excellent conduct, not especially distinguished by eminent ability or talent, but inclined to religious and patriotic exaltation. His name was Carl Ludwig Sand; he came from Wunsiedel,

## AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

the birthplace of the famous German humorist, Jean Paul Friedrich Richter. He had been a volunteer in the war against France and had embraced the doctrines of the Burschenschaft with the greatest enthusiasm. The denunciations of the German students in Stourdza's memorandum filled him with profound indignation, especially against Kotzebue, whom he blamed as the principal sinner. Moreover the frivolous, half indecent character of many of Kotzebue's plays had often revolted Sand's moral sentiment. He considered him a source of corruption for the young men and women of the nation, and when to this wrong the charge of political treason and espionage was added, Sand thought that nothing but death was an adequate punishment for Kotzebue. He considered also that it was not only a moral, but a patriotic duty to inflict upon him that punishment. He knew that the act would cost him his life, but that consideration did not for a moment deter him from undertaking it. He did not consult with anybody about it, but he conceived, planned, and executed it all alone.

On the ninth of March, 1819, Sand left Jena and proceeded to Mannheim, where Kotzebue lived. Two weeks later, on the twenty-third of March, 1819, a young stranger appeared at the Kotzebue residence, and said that he wished to see the councillor in order to hand him personally a letter of introduction. The servant delivered the message, and after a few minutes Kotzebue himself appeared in the hall and invited Sand — for it was he — to come in. Sand handed him the letter; but no sooner had Kotzebue opened it and begun to read it than Sand plunged a long dirk-knife into his breast with the words, "Take this as your reward, traitor to your country!"

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

And he stabbed him again and again with fatal effect. Thereupon he thrust the knife into his own breast, but had strength enough to run out into the hall, where he handed the astounded servant a sealed document containing a well-written justification of his murderous act, and inscribed: "Death Punishment for August von Kotzebue in the name of virtue." Running out into the street, where a crowd of people assembled, attracted by the screams of the servant, he called out in a loud voice: "Long live my German fatherland!" and kneeling down he forcibly plunged the knife into his breast once more, exclaiming: "Great God, I thank thee for this victory."

Sand's wound was serious, but a skilful operation saved his life. On the twentieth of May, 1820, he was executed at Mannheim, after a lengthy trial and a painstaking investigation, in the course of which the German and the Russian police made great efforts to discover accessories to his crime. All these efforts failed, however, and the murder of Kotzebue could be accounted only an individual act of patriotic exaltation. The result of Sand's self-sacrifice was very different from what he had expected. In fact, Kotzebue's assassination proved disastrous to the liberal movement throughout Germany; it furnished a welcome pretext for the most repressive measures against the press, against the universities, against the Burschenschaft, against liberty in whatever shape or form it might manifest itself. That long era of political reaction was inaugurated against which the German people rebelled with only partial success in 1848 and 1849, and from which only the ejection of Austria and the reorganization of a new German Empire on a more liberal basis in 1871 gave them permanent relief.

CHAPTER XXI  
DUC DE BERRY







DUC DE BERRY

## CHAPTER XXI

### ASSASSINATION OF THE DUC DE BERRY

(February 13, 1820)

THE political situation in France, after the overthrow of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbons, was even more difficult and more precarious for the governing classes than it was in Germany. The French nation, proud in the consciousness of having occupied the first place in Europe for twenty years, chafed at the idea of living under a king whom foreign rulers and foreign armies had imposed on France, and who, in consequence, had to act in blind obedience to the dictates of these foreigners. The danger of a new violent outbreak against the Bourbon government was therefore ever present not only to the French mind, but to the mind of Europe, and to guard against it the foreign powers had made it one of the terms of peace with France that a foreign army of occupation should hold possession of the northern and northeastern provinces of France until the entire war indemnity exacted from the vanquished country had been paid. While the foreign occupation was ostensibly a financial measure, it was in reality a military measure giving to the foreign powers the keys to the interior of France and to Paris, in case a new invasion



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

should become necessary. Not only was the position of the King rendered difficult by his political opponents, the Imperialists and the Republicans, but its hardships and difficulties were materially aggravated by the senseless and extravagant demands of the Royalists, who had in large number returned to France with the foreign armies. These Royalists, many of whom had been absent from France for twenty years or more, on their return from their voluntary exile, found their estates and manors, which had been confiscated under the Revolution, in the possession of strangers; all the superior offices in the civil service and the higher positions in the army, which they claimed as their own by right of birth, were filled by men of low extraction. They therefore turned to the King and demanded of him the restoration of their lost estates of their aristocratic privileges.

The King, Louis the Eighteenth, was perhaps the most intelligent of all the monarchs of Europe, but he lacked force of character, and, moreover, his long life in exile, with its pleasures and enjoyments as a sybarite and epicurean, had but poorly qualified him for his suddenly imposed tasks. He was expected by Europe to hold his own in a population the majority of whom were opposed to him, and who had learned that a king could be easily got rid of, if the people did not want him. Although Louis the Eighteenth, with his penetrating sagacity, clearly saw the instability of his throne, he honestly wished to make the best of the chance the fortune of war had given him. He was willing to give the French people a liberal government, provided it could be done without endangering the throne, and without violating the pledges given to the monarchs who had reinstated him. He might have even

## DUC DE BERRY

more energetically opposed the reactionary demands of the ultra-Royalists, who recognized his younger brother, the Comte d'Artois, as their leader, if his experiences, especially during the "Hundred Days," had not filled him with disgust and suspicion toward the Imperialists. While Napoleon was in Elba, Louis the Eighteenth kept all the Bonapartist generals and high officials in office, relying on their promises and assurances of fidelity; but on Napoleon's return they all betrayed him, and either flocked to the standards of the Emperor or declared their adhesion to his cause as soon as he had set foot on French soil.

Perhaps the man who had sinned most in this respect was Marshal Ney, who in a personal interview asked of the King as a personal favor to be placed in command of an army corps and to be sent against the Emperor, pledging himself to bring Napoleon in chains before his throne. Louis granted the Marshal's request, but instead of capturing the Emperor, Ney went over to him with his entire army corps and fought at Waterloo again as the "bravest of the brave" in the imperial army. In vain he sought death on the field, when he saw that the battle was lost; it was reserved for him to die by French bullets in the Luxembourg garden of Paris, fired by royalist officers, disguised as common soldiers. From party hatred, these men had volunteered to act as executioners of one of the greatest military heroes of revolutionary France. Labédoyère and other famous generals who were traitors to Louis were executed; others saved their lives by flight. The great Carnot and other Imperialists were banished from France.

The impression made upon the ultra-Royalists by these

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

severe measures against men who had shed lustre upon France, was in the highest degree deplorable. These fanatics supposed that the Bonapartists and Republicans of the whole kingdom were utterly at their mercy. They secretly organized a special government, under the presidency of the Comte d'Artois, at the Pavilion Marsan for the purpose of bringing to justice all those who had participated in the Napoleonic *coup d'état* or in the Revolution of 1789. A new era of terrorism was organized by these "white Jacobins," as they were significantly called, and the most cruel excesses were committed in the provinces. La Vendée, which had fought so heroically for the Bourbon dynasty, treated the Imperialists and Republicans generously; but in the South, where religious fanaticism added fuel to the flame of political hatred, the most atrocious excesses and murders were committed. Avignon, Nîmes, Montpellier, Toulouse and other cities of the South were disgraced by the butchery of hundreds of Protestants; in some of them the victims of religious and political persecution died at the stake. At Avignon the famous Marshal Brune was assassinated; at Toulouse, General Ramel; at Nîmes, Count de la Garde. Wholesale assassinations and butcheries were organized; armed bands, fanaticized by the priests, roamed through the country, and butchered the Protestants *en masse*. Ten thousand of the unfortunates fled to the mountain recesses of the Cevennes, choosing rather to die from hunger and cold than to be tortured to death. Juries composed of the most intolerant Royalists lent their aid to these outrages, by condemning the Protestants to death and acquitting the assassins. The veterans of Napoleon's army and forty thousand officers, many of whom had

## DUC DE BERRY

served with distinction under the imperial eagles, were driven from their homes and wandered from village to village begging for bread and shelter. The northern provinces were spared these outrages, but the one hundred and fifty thousand foreign soldiers stationed in their towns and fortresses were terrible reminders of the humiliation and shame which the restoration of the Bourbons had brought upon France.

The French Chambers were entirely under the control of the extreme Royalists. They enacted laws which reduced the political conditions of France to those which had existed prior to 1789. They looked upon the Revolutionary era and the Empire as upon a lawless interregnum which should be ignored by the government, and they demanded that all the old institutions of the kingdom should be revived. They were so bold and so insolent that they overawed the government for a while. Very reluctantly the King consented to several tyrannical laws, — for instance, the law referring all political crimes to special courts, composed of one officer and four judges, from whose decision no appeal could be taken. But the King saw to his regret that his acquiescence in these immoderate demands had no other effect than to make the ultra-Royalists bolder and more arrogant. They demanded a curtailment of the right of suffrage, a reenactment of the right of primogeniture and other feudal measures.

The King's patience was exhausted; he refused to sanction any of these laws and dissolved the Chambers. In their impotent rage the disappointed ultra-Royalists applied to the foreign powers, asking their intervention in behalf of absolute royalty, and imploring them to com-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

pel the King to desist from his pernicious protection of Jacobins and regicides. Metternich sent this strange petition to the French government. But neither the King nor his favorite minister, M. Decazes, was scared by such foolhardy steps. They coolly ignored them and courageously inaugurated a series of political reforms in order to reassure public opinion. Instead of reducing the number of electors (as the ultras demanded), they largely increased it. To the periodical press and the daily newspapers was given greater liberty; the censorship, which had been exceedingly annoying, was abolished. At the same time, by the able financial management of the Duc de Richelieu, the 1,600,000,000 francs war indemnity was reduced to 502,000,000 francs and a large number of the foreign troops were withdrawn from the northern provinces. These liberal and patriotic measures followed one another in quick succession and made a very favorable impression upon the people. The liberal parties were willing to coöperate with the government in its endeavor to restore the prosperity of the country, to relieve the distress of the masses, and to free France from foreign occupation. The Chambers of 1818 and 1819 also coöperated with the government, and the liberal party was represented in them by a small number of illustrious men, — such men as Lafayette, General Foy, Benjamin Constant, — men who were more patriots than partisans. In fact, everything indicated a return of speedy prosperity, when an event occurred which at one blow crushed the hopes of the patriots, paralyzed the hand of the government, and reinstated the extremists in power. This event was the assassination of the Duc de Berry, the hope of the Bourbon dynasty.

## DUC DE BERRY

On its return from exile the royal family of France consisted of:

The King, formerly Comte de Provence.

The King's brother, the Comte d'Artois, and his two sons:

The Duc d'Angoulême, and

The Duc de Berry.

The Comte d'Artois, the presumptive heir to the throne, was born in 1757, and was consequently fifty-seven years old on his return to Paris. He was ultra-Royalistic in his political views and was considered the head of the extremists. His eldest son, the Duc d'Angoulême, was born in 1775, and had retired from France with his father at the commencement of the Revolution. He was a man of very mediocre ability, but of exemplary character. In 1799 he was married to his cousin Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte, daughter of Louis the Sixteenth, who had passed her unhappy childhood in prison, which she had left only in 1795. She was worshipped by the entire royal family as an angel of kindness and mercy. They had no children.

The younger son, the Duc de Berry, was born in 1778, and had passed his youth and early manhood in exile. He had a more manly character than his brother, and the French nobility of the old *régime* looked upon him as the hope of the Bourbon dynasty. Far from being a genius, the Duc de Berry was a man of good intelligence, brave, dashing, and the very type of a French officer, prior to the Revolution. He had many of the generous traits, but also some of the vices of that elegant and high-spirited class of young men. While living in exile, in England, he formed a liaison with a young English-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

woman, who bore him two daughters, to whom he was greatly attached and whom he took to Paris and placed in a young ladies' academy. In 1816 the King married him to a Neapolitan princess, Caroline, daughter of the Crown Prince of that kingdom, a handsome, high-spirited, healthy young woman, who gave promise of giving the dynasty direct heirs. The newly married couple lived very happily together, and enjoyed life in the French capital to its fullest extent. They were really the official representatives of royalty and its splendors, — neither the King nor the Duc d'Angoulême caring much for the entertainments, balls, and receptions of court life. The prominence thus given to the Duc de Berry, and the expectation that through him the elder line of the Bourbons would be continued explain fully why he was singled out as the victim of assassination. He was not only identified with the extreme Royalists, so odious to the people, but, with him out of the way, it was only a question of time when the elder branch of the dynasty would die out entirely, no more issue being expected from the Duc d'Angoulême, who had been married already twenty years without having children. Such were at least the considerations of the young man who undertook the perilous task of killing the Duc de Berry, and who fully accomplished his purpose.

This young man was Jean Pierre Louvel, a resident of Versailles, an enthusiastic admirer of Napoleon, whom he considered the living embodiment of the greatness and honor of France. Napoleon's dethronement he wanted to revenge on the Bourbons, in whose interest it had taken place, and who, in his opinion, were utterly unworthy to rule over the French nation. Louvel was a saddler,

## DUC DE BERRY

thirty-two years of age, debilitated in appearance, and considered a political fanatic by all who knew him. He had no family or relations except one sister, considerably older than himself, who had brought him up, and with whom he lived. He hated the Bourbons so intensely that in 1814, when the royal family landed at Calais on their return from exile, he intended to make an attempt on the life of Louis the Eighteenth; but the great enthusiasm of the people discouraged him. During all these years his wrath against the Bourbons had steadily grown, and he had never for a moment abandoned his plan of killing the whole family, — first the Duc de Berry, then the Duc d'Angoulême, then the Comte d'Artois, and finally the King. He considered De Berry the most important and the most dangerous man of the whole family because in him were centred the hopes of continuing the dynasty.

He had been very persistent; he had found employment in the royal stables at Versailles, and whenever the Duc de Berry was out hunting, he tried to find an opportunity to get near him; he frequently went to Paris and studied the advertisements of new plays or operas, expecting that the Duke would attend a first performance. Twenty times he had been close to him on such occasions, but had always been prevented by the number of friends or attendants surrounding him from getting near enough to stab him, and stab him so well that he could not escape; for everything depended on making a success of the attempt.

After long and patient waiting he found his opportunity. It was during the last days of the carnival preceding the season of Lent, in February, 1820. The grand masquerade ball at the opera was to take place on the



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

thirteenth, and it was a matter of absolute certainty that both the Duc and the Duchesse de Berry, who were very fond of dancing, would attend it. When Louvel got up and dressed, he had a joyful presentiment that that day would bring him the realization of his long-cherished plan. He had in his possession two daggers of very superior quality, both sharp as razors and strong enough to penetrate flesh and sinew to the handle. He had studied the human anatomy well enough to know exactly where to strike his victim. He chose the smaller dagger of the two because he could more easily conceal it; took his supper with good appetite and without betraying unusual agitation; and then he started on his mission of death. He was promptly at his post at eight o'clock when the carriage of the Duc de Berry drove up to the private entrance reserved for the members of the royal family. The Duke was not expected so early in the evening, and consequently there were not so many attendants gathered near the entrance. The Duke jumped out of the carriage, and held out his arm to help the Duchess to alight. This was the proper moment for Louvel, if he wanted to commit the crime. He was on the point of rushing toward the Duke, when the smiling and lovely face of the Duchess appeared in the light of the lantern, and this sight paralyzed the arm of the murderer. He hesitated at the thought that his crime would plunge these two happy persons into nameless misery, and before he had recovered his equanimity, the Duke and his wife had disappeared behind the entrance door of the theatre.

Louvel blamed himself for his faintness of heart and wanted to postpone the deed to some later day; but the thought that he would have to go back to Versailles in

a few days and that no such opportunity might offer itself for a long time, caused him to change his mind. That very night his plan must be executed, and either the Duke or himself should perish. For several hours he strolled through the streets in the neighborhood of the Opera House, went to the garden of the Palais Royal and back again, always keeping a watchful eye on the carriages that stood waiting for the call of their owners. At twenty minutes past eleven the carriage of the Duc de Berry drove up to the entrance door. Louvel stood near by, almost hidden in the shadow of the wall, and entirely unnoticed by the attendants of the royal equipage. He was not kept waiting for a long time; for a little accident had occurred which induced the Duchess to return much sooner than they had anticipated. Their box at the Opera House was near that of the Duc and Duchesse d'Orléans, who were also at the theatre that evening; the two families were on terms of great intimacy, especially the two duchesses, both being Neapolitan princesses. At one of the intermissions of the performance De Berry and his wife went to the box of the Duc d'Orléans for a friendly chat, but on their return to their own box, a door opposite was quickly opened and struck the Duchess with such violence that she felt very unwell. In her delicate condition (she was enceinte at the time) she thought it would be better for her to return home than to wait for the close of the performance and the masquerade ball. The Duke therefore conducts his wife back to the carriage and lifts her into it; the Comtesse de Bétysi, her lady of honor, takes her seat by her side; the duke shakes hands with both ladies and with a smiling "*au revoir*, I'll be home soon," steps back from the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

carriage. At this moment Louvel rushes forward, lays his left hand on the duke's right shoulder and plunges his dagger with so much force into the Duke's right side that the weapon remains in the wound. The Duke, mortally wounded, sinks to his knees, and utters a slight scream, more of surprise than of pain. As is usually the case in such assaults, the victim had rather felt the shock than the wound, and only when he reached out with his hand to the spot where he had been hurt, he found the handle of the dagger, and comprehended the meaning of the attack. He then cried out: "I am struck to death, I have been assassinated!" and as he pulled the dagger from the wound, a stream of blood gushed forth. The Duke fainted in consequence of the loss of blood, and was carried back into the Opera House, where the Duchess followed him with loud screams. In the first confusion Louvel made his escape, but he was soon overtaken and brought back to the scene of the murder. The excitement and the indignation of the people were so great that he would have been torn to pieces but for the active protection of the police and of the servants of the Duc de Berry who were afraid that by his death his accomplices and accessories to the crime might be shielded.

The most eminent surgeons of Paris were immediately summoned to the assistance of the Prince. But the wound was fatal, and all their efforts were in vain. In the presence of death the Duc de Berry showed a very generous and magnanimous heart. He implored his wife, his brother, and all others surrounding his bed to use their influence with the King to get his murderer pardoned, and expressed his profound sorrow that he had been stabbed by a Frenchman. Up to his last moment

the thought that his murderer would be executed in a cruel manner disturbed him, and when toward morning the King came to bid him farewell, he repeated his request that the murderer should be forgiven and not be executed; but without eliciting the promise from his uncle. With this dying request for the life of his murderer on his lips, he expired very early in the morning.

The sensation which the assassination of the Duc de Berry created not only in Paris, but throughout France and Europe, was enormous. All parties equally condemned and lamented the crime. While the ultra-Royalists deplored in the murder the extinction of all their hopes for the establishment of the old Bourbon dynasty on a sure foundation, the liberal parties foresaw that it would put an end to the liberal tendencies of the government of Louis the Eighteenth. The sinister forebodings of the liberals were only too well founded. The Royalists tried at first to create the impression that the murder was but the symptom of a widespread conspiracy organized by the revolutionary elements of the kingdom against the royal family and the entire nobility, and boldly charged the liberal policy of the government as being the cause of it. In a session of the Chambers one of the deputies went even so far as to move the impeachment of M. Decazes, Minister of the Interior, as an accessory to the crime committed by Louvel. While the Chambers refused to act upon this infamous motion, the entire Royalistic press demanded the dismissal of Decazes, and the King reluctantly yielded to the universal demand. "M. Decazes has slipped in the blood shed by Louvel's dagger," wrote Chateaubriand in commenting on the dismissal of the liberal minister. And

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

that era of reaction and repression commenced which ten years later ended in the dethronement of the elder branch of the Bourbon dynasty and in the flight and exile of Charles the Tenth. The entire liberal party was punished for the crime of one fanatic.

Louvel was tried before the Chamber of Peers. He pleaded guilty. He denied having any accomplices. He had conferred with nobody. He recognized the dagger as his own; he gave his hatred and abhorrence of the Bourbon family as his only motive for the crime. He was convicted unanimously. He expressed no regret for what he had done, and died with stoical indifference. He was guillotined June 7, 1820.

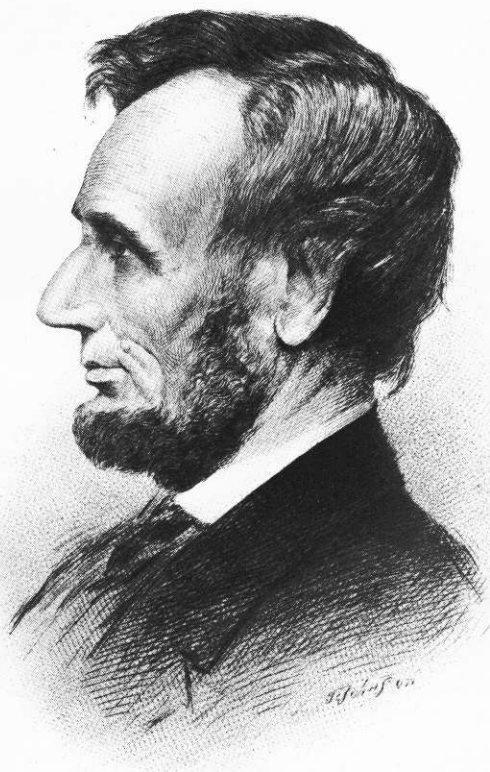
CHAPTER XXII

ABRAHAM LINCOLN









ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## CHAPTER XXII

### ASSASSINATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

(April 14, 1865)

**I**N the annals of this nation no tragedy more pathetic has been recorded than the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.

The Civil War which had divided the country into two hostile camps for four years and had laid waste the Southern States of the Union — or the Confederate States of America, to designate them by the name they adopted — was at an end. General Lee had surrendered the army of Virginia, the flower of the Confederate fighting forces, to General Grant at Appomattox Court House, and while General Johnston's army in North Carolina, and a few separate minor corps, still remained in the field, Lee's surrender was generally construed as the termination of the long and cruel war, and joy ruled supreme throughout the North. Liberty had triumphed, and four million slaves had been emancipated!

The surrender of Lee took place on the eighth of April, 1865. On the following day President Lincoln visited the late capital of the Confederacy. He traversed the city in all directions, and everywhere he manifested the kindest disposition towards the South, and expressed the wish that all traces of the unfortunate war should

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

disappear as soon as possible and that cordial relations between the two sections of the country should be re-established at once. Very likely there was not a man in all the Northern States happier at the prospect of a lasting peace than Abraham Lincoln. His great and noble heart, sensitive as a woman's, had been bleeding for years at the sight of the gigantic fratricidal war, of which Providence had made him the most conspicuous figure. But five weeks before, he had entered upon his second presidential term, and in his inaugural address he had foreshadowed the policy of leniency and moderation which he intended to show to the "rebels" in case of the final victory of the Union armies. That address revealed the true inwardness of the great man; it was spoken with an eloquence peculiarly his own; it was full of thought, sweetness, firmness, unswerving fidelity to duty, high morality made more impressive even by the simplicity and originality of language. At the same time it breathed a tenderness for the vanquished which made it almost an olive-branch tendered to those who were still in arms against the government and inviting them to return to the hearthstones of the nation of which they had been the favored sons and daughters for nearly a century. Although the triumph of the Union and its armies was already in sight as an event of the near future, nothing in that address indicated boastfulness and supercilious pride. No arrogance, no pompous reference to the superiority of the North in heroism or exploits! On the contrary, the President humbles himself before the decrees of the Almighty, he confesses the great national crime and the justice of the immense punishment.

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In the tone of sadness pervading the beautiful oration there is almost the presentiment of death and that supreme resignation which sometimes takes possession of the soul on the verge of the grave. Already he had planned a proclamation of pardon, — a general amnesty, excluding none, a full and complete restoration of concord and brotherhood between the North and the South, when all at once the terrible news “Lincoln has been assassinated! Lincoln is dead!” flashed over the telegraph wires and filled the whole North with terror. As if nothing was to be wanting to make this gigantic Civil War a tragedy to both sides, the man whose very name was the embodiment of liberty and the symbol of emancipation, and who more than any other man had contributed to the great triumph, had to succumb at the moment of victory. The election of Abraham Lincoln had given the signal for the organization and outbreak of the slaveholders’ rebellion, and it was certainly a remarkable coincidence that the tolling of the church-bells in towns and cities through which Lincoln’s funeral train slowly wended its way from the capital to his Western home was heard simultaneously with the news of the collapse of that rebellion and of the final extinction of human slavery on American soil. This coincidence was almost providential, and if the great Emancipator could have chosen his own time for his death, he certainly could not have made a more appropriate and glorious choice. He became, so to speak, the hero of the great epic of the Civil War — one of the greatest the world had seen, — and his tragical death marked the conclusion of the strife. In the eyes of the fanatical advocates of the Southern cause Abraham Lincoln had always held this prominent

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

position as the principal author of the feud dividing the North and the South, and it is therefore not surprising that some of these fanatics had formed a conspiracy to assassinate him and some of his most intimate advisers. About a week after Mr. Lincoln's visit at Richmond this plot was to be executed.

On the fourteenth of April, 1865, an especially brilliant performance was to be given at Ford's Theatre, Washington, and Mr. Lincoln, General Grant, and Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War, were expected to be present; in fact, the Washington newspapers of that date had announced that they would be present. But at the very last moment General Grant was compelled to leave Washington and go North. Mr. Stanton, being overburdened with business and unable to find time to go to the theatre, remained at his office, and only Mr. Lincoln went, accompanied by Mrs. Lincoln and a few friends. His appearance was the signal for a grand ovation. He seemed to follow the presentation of the play with close attention and great interest. The third act had just commenced, when the audience was startled by the sound of a pistol-shot proceeding from the President's box. At the same moment a man appeared in the foreground of that box, jumped upon the balustrade, and thence down to the stage, shouting, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" In leaping from the box, one of the man's spurs got entangled with the flag with which Mr. Lincoln's box was decorated. He fell and broke a leg, but immediately recovering himself and getting on his feet he had sufficient presence of mind and power of will to make his escape. He knocked down those who tried to stop him, ran through the aisles of the scenery, jumped upon a horse which was kept in

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

readiness for him by an accomplice, and disappeared in the darkness of the night.

This man, who with lightning-like rapidity had appeared on the stage and disappeared from it, was the murderer of Abraham Lincoln; and the murder had been committed so suddenly that the great majority of the audience, even after his flight, were in profound ignorance of what had happened. It was then only that the cries of horror, the loud lamentations of Mrs. Lincoln and of the other persons in the President's box conveyed to the awe-stricken audience the news of the tragedy which had occurred in their midst. The President, shot through the head from behind, had lost consciousness immediately, and the blood oozed slowly from the wound. However, life was not extinct, and immediately the hope arose that Mr. Lincoln's life might be saved. He was carried into a neighboring house, and the best surgeons were called to his assistance. But alas! the murderer's ball having passed through the cerebellum had pierced the cerebrum, and the wound was fatal beyond all hope. Mr. Lincoln died early in the morning without having regained consciousness. The North had lost its greatest citizen and the South its best friend.

While this murder was being committed at Ford's Theatre, another assassin entered the residence of Secretary of State William H. Seward, who had been seriously injured by an accident a few days before. The assassin pretended to be the bearer of a medical prescription, and demanded to be admitted to the room of the patient. The servant refused to admit him, but was rudely pushed aside, whereupon the visitor, who evidently was familiar

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

with the location of the rooms, burst into the one where Mr. Seward was lying ill in bed, rushed toward him, seriously wounded Mr. Seward's son, who threw himself in his way, and thereupon engaged the invalid in a furious combat, stabbing him several times. In spite of his disability, the Secretary defended himself bravely and fought with the courage of despair, until at last the assassin, after having badly cut and disfigured his face, made his escape.

As has been stated already, the plan of the conspirators was to kill not only President Lincoln, but other prominent men, such as Andrew Johnson, the new Vice-President, Secretary Seward, Secretary Stanton, and General Grant. On several occasions the assassins had been on the point of perpetrating these murders, but always unforeseen circumstances had occurred and prevented them. At last this gala performance at Ford's Theatre seemed to invite them to execute their plot, and they resolved to assassinate Lincoln, Grant, and Stanton at the theatre, and Seward and Johnson at their private residences. By removing these five men the assassins hoped to decapitate the republic itself and imagined that very likely during the terror and confusion which these assassinations would cause, the Southern rebels would take up arms again and capture Washington city. But only one of the five victims designated was killed — alas! it was the most illustrious one of the five — while the others escaped owing to fortuitous circumstances.

As to the murderer of Lincoln, who was identified as John Wilkes Booth, it was ascertained that he had been inspired by an implacable and sincere fanaticism. Son of a celebrated English tragedian who had lived several

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

years in the United States, John Wilkes Booth was himself an actor of considerable ability, who had frequently played on the very stage which he was to desecrate by one of the most infamous assassinations of modern times. Young, handsome, eloquent, and audacious as he was, Booth had a certain prestige among his companions and great success with the ladies of his profession. He was an enthusiastic Democrat, became a prominent member of the "Knights of the Golden Circle," and believed in the divine origin of the institution of slavery. He had been among the lynchers of John Brown and frequently boasted of his participation in that crime. He often expressed the wish that all such abolitionists should die on the gallows. He and some others, equally extreme in their views on the slavery question, met frequently at the house of a Mrs. Surratt, who was also fanatically devoted to the Southern cause, and concocted there the plot to murder the President and his associates.

After having performed that part of the plot which he had reserved for himself — the assassination of the President — with almost incredible boldness, Booth fled to Virginia. He had intended to continue his flight until he had reached the extreme South, and possibly Mexico, but his injury prevented him from carrying out this plan. In company with one of his accomplices he hid himself in an isolated barn on the banks of the Rappahannock, hoping that as soon as the first storm of indignation had blown over, the search for the murderer would gradually relax, if not cease altogether, and that he would then have an opportunity to escape. But in this calculation he was mistaken. A roving detachment of federal soldiers discovered him in his hiding-place, during the night of the



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

twenty-sixth of April. His companion, realizing that all resistance would be useless, surrendered immediately. But Booth wanted to sell his life as dearly as possible. He tried to break out and escape from his pursuers, but a pistol-shot brought him down with a fatal wound in his head, from which he soon afterwards died. The assassin who had assaulted and seriously wounded Secretary Seward had, a few days before, been captured at Mrs. Surratt's house.

The effect of Mr. Lincoln's assassination on the people of the North was indescribable. It filled their hearts with bitterness and their minds with thoughts of revenge. It was averred that the murderer in crossing the stage of the theatre and defiantly brandishing a long knife had exclaimed: "The South is avenged!" This exclamation seemed to implicate the whole South, or at least its government, in the murderous act of Booth. The natural consequence was that the people of the North, who immediately after the surrender of Lee's army were inclined to great leniency toward the vanquished and willing to receive them back into the Union with open arms, suddenly turned against them. The army and the government circles, and in fact the entire population of the national capital, who had learned to love Mr. Lincoln, demanded the most severe punishment for the rebels. Then began the long and tedious work of reconstruction, retarded by party spirit and retaliatory measures on both sides. It was terminated to the satisfaction of both only during the last few years, when the sons of the South fought shoulder to shoulder with the sons of the North for the deliverance of Cuba from Spanish oppression under the glorious banner of the Union. But how often

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

during these years of contention, was the great man missed whose truly humane spirit would have contributed so much to bring the discordant elements of both sections together in fraternal harmony and mutual respect, and whose hands had penned the noblest document of the nineteenth century — the proclamation of emancipation — setting free four million slaves. Such deeds as his can never be forgotten.

The assassination did a great deal for Mr. Lincoln's standing in history. It added the halo of martyrdom to his renown as a statesman, and it has made him a national hero, who, next to Washington — or with Washington — holds the highest place in the estimation of the American people. It is doubtful whether Abraham Lincoln, if he had not crowned his career with a martyr's death, would have held this place. It had especially the effect of wiping out an impression which many had formed of Mr. Lincoln's character, and which, during the first years of his presidential term, lowered him considerably in the eyes of the people. His Southern enemies and detractors made a great deal of Mr. Lincoln's "undignified bearing," his "lack of tact," "his mania for telling funny stories, in and out of season," and the Northern Democrats were only too busy repeating and circulating these stories, because they could not forgive Lincoln for having beaten their idol, Stephen Arnold Douglas.

Mr. Lincoln's distinction was his strong originality and self-reliance. As a young man, with no adviser to guide him through the hardships and embarrassments of life, he took counsel with his own mind, which fortunately was of peculiar depth, rich in resources, — and the advice he received from this consultation, the instruction

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

he gained by this appeal to the fund of his own knowledge and experience served him splendidly as schooling for the task which was in store for him. And joined to this self-education nature had bestowed on him some of her rarest gifts, — humor, kind, genial, and peculiarly humane, blending tears with laughter, and a mother-wit always ready to make fun of his own misfortunes and shortcomings, and to joke away any embarrassing situation in which either untoward circumstances or his own mistakes might have placed him. In addition to all this he possessed that truly American characteristic—shrewdness, which far from being an objectionable quality with him, was modified by his kindness of heart and his moral uprightness.

In that great and distinctly English book, Robinson Crusoe, we find a young Englishman in consequence of a shipwreck thrown upon a deserted island in mid-ocean. He is cut off from civilization and its resources and thrown upon his own ingenuity to carve out a living for himself which, to a degree at least, comes up to the experience which he has had while living in civilized society. A few tools and instruments which he saves from the wrecked ship are the only things to assist him in the building up of his future life, yet by industry, shrewdness, and perseverance he really succeeds in making that life not only tolerable, but to a degree comfortable. Possibly the trying circumstances in which young Robinson was placed whetted and sharpened his wits, strengthened his nerve, and inspired him with enough confidence to become equal to his difficult task; at all events, he succeeded, and the book narrating his experience, his trials, and his sufferings forms one of

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

the most delightful and at the same time one of the most instructive books for young and old ever written. Its educational value can hardly be overestimated. It may be said that Robinson Crusoe is but a novel, and that his adventures and achievements all originated in the fertile mind of Daniel Defoe. But even if it was so, which is by no means proven, the feat of Defoe's genius shows that a young man of strong character and full of resources, with an ideal placed before his mental eye, can find the means to raise himself to a higher level than he could have reached under ordinary circumstances and without the stimulating influence of personal hardships and pressing necessity.

It was so with Abraham Lincoln. The means of education which the wild West offered to him were of the most elementary kind, but his innate genius and energy knew how to make them serviceable to the high aim and to the ideals which he had proposed to himself. The loneliness of the primeval forests in which his childhood was passed fostered the tendency to reverie and thoughtfulness which formed one of the principal traits of his character. An American boy in the full meaning of the word he learned to love and appreciate that Union from which the West expected its development, and on which it depended as on the natural source of its future greatness. As if to prepare him for the great part he was to act in American history, he was made to see at an early day the wrongs and cruelties of slavery. His pure mind, which had been strengthened and refined by immediate contact with nature, felt the stain which soiled the American name and flag. As he went down the Mississippi river on a flatboat and became witness of

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

a slave-auction, where family ties were brutally torn asunder, he vowed to himself to do his share as a man and citizen to wipe out that wrong against humanity. How nobly he redeemed that vow and how cruelly he suffered for redeeming it, we have told in the preceding pages, and the crown of immortality is his just reward.

If we should wish to compare the great martyr-president with any historical personage of preceding ages, it would be Henry the Fourth of France. While unquestionably there are many differences in their traits of character, they have nevertheless so many traits in common that the comparison is, in our opinion, a decidedly just one. Both were placed in leading positions at a time when their country was torn up by civil war. In the case of Henry the Fourth religion, or rather Protestantism, was the cause of the fratricidal strife; in the case of Abraham Lincoln it was negro slavery. Both were enlisted in the cause of humanity and progress. It is true, Henry the Fourth renounced Protestantism to win a crown, in the possession of which he alone could hope to render immortal service to the Protestant Church and the principle upon which it is founded, religious toleration; and by the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes he gloriously performed the historical task which Providence had allotted to him. Abraham Lincoln was willing to make any sacrifice for the maintenance of the American Union, for only as President of the United States and as conqueror of the rebellious South, could he hope to become the champion of the abolition of negro slavery. He was fortunate enough to live through the gigantic Civil War, and Clio, the Muse of History, has entered in imperishable letters on the asbestos leaves of

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

our national annals his immortal declaration of the emancipation of the black race. As two great reformers they will both live in history,—Henry the Fourth, as the embodiment of the principle of religious toleration, Lincoln as the evangelist of negro emancipation. It is a strange coincidence that these two great men were endowed by nature with so many analogous traits, but rarely found in other great men. Both had a keen relish for humor, fun, and wit, and indulged this taste under the most trying circumstances; both were lenient and forgiving to a fault; both displayed statesmanship and executive ability of a high order; and if Henry the Fourth has won greater laurels as a warrior, Lincoln has crowned his great life with the glory of being a great orator. Mankind has grown better by having produced these two men.



CHAPTER XXIII

ALEXANDER THE SECOND OF RUSSIA



CHAPTER XXIII

ALEXANDER THE SECOND OF RUSSIA





ALEXANDER II.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ASSASSINATION OF ALEXANDER THE SECOND OF RUSSIA

(March 13, 1881)

**T**HE assassination of Abraham Lincoln leads up to that of the other great emancipator of the nineteenth century, Alexander the Second of Russia, which occurred on the thirteenth of March, 1881, and which filled the world with horror.

In one of Goethe's most famous poems a magician's apprentice, in the absence of his learned master, sets free the secret powers of nature which his master can control by a magical formula. The apprentice has overheard the formula, and has appropriated it to his own use; but lo! when the apprentice wants to get rid of the powers he has let loose, he has forgotten the magic words by which to banish them, and miserably perishes in the attempt. The poem is symbolical of the life and experience of Czar Alexander the Second of Russia. As a young man, enthusiastic and desirous to promote his country's welfare, he set loose the turbulent and revolutionary powers slumbering in his gigantic empire, and they grew to such enormous proportions that even his power, great though it was, was insufficient to curb them; finally he paid with his life for his attempt

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

to confer blessings upon his subjects. In order to comprehend the difficulties which confronted Alexander the Second on his accession, it is necessary to take a retrospect of the preceding reign.

The Emperor Nicholas the First died on the second of March, 1855. He had reigned twenty-nine years and nine months. During all these years he had ruled his gigantic empire with an iron hand and had stood before the world as the most brilliant as well as the most imperious ruler who had sat upon the throne of the Czars since the death of Peter the Great. He was the model for the other sovereigns of Europe, and his policy was adopted with almost servile humility by the monarchs of Austria and Prussia, the former of whom he reinstated on his throne by overthrowing the Hungarian revolution, while the latter was allied to him by ties of marriage. His dislike for reform and "the modern spirit" was caused, it is said, by the sad experience he had made but a few weeks after his accession, when a rebellion of the Imperial Guards in his own capital compelled him to throw shot and shell into his own regiments, and to quell a widespread conspiracy by the severest measures. At that time cheers coming from the ranks for "Constantine and the Constitution" had made the very name of a constitution odious to him. He might not have taken the demonstration so seriously if he had known that the soldiers, on being asked by their officers to cheer for Constantine and the Constitution had asked: "Who is the Constitution?" and were told that she was Constantine's wife, whereupon the soldiers cheered lustily. At all events, Nicholas, who had intended to introduce a number of Western reforms, took suddenly a great aver-

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

sion to anything which deviated in the least from the most autocratic form of government; he punished the slightest disagreement in political opinion or the most timid opposition to his imperial will as an act of rebellion. The whole system of government had been fashioned upon a half Asiatic, half European model; it combined the absolute — almost divine — power of the Oriental ruler with a formidable and well-drilled bureaucracy blindly obedient to the Czar and knowing no other law than his will.

Nicholas the First was a man of superior intelligence, of indomitable will, and of great vigor of mind, which enabled him to pay strict attention to the different departments of the public service. His most effective instrument was the third section of the Czar's personal bureau, — a secret political police by which he overawed the empire and whose very name caused terror in the heart and home of every Russian family. Whosoever was unfortunate enough to fall under the suspicion of this terrible *Hermudad* — more cruel and more vindictive than the Spanish Inquisition — might just as well resign himself at once to his fate, — life-long exile to Siberia or a secret execution, most probably by strangulation, in one of the prisons of Russia. It was the office of this secret police, which reported directly to the Emperor, not only to ferret out crime and bring criminals to justice, but to protect the subjects of the Czar from contact with hurtful foreign influences, to confiscate books and newspapers from abroad, to open and read letters, and to learn family secrets which might be used against the correspondents or their friends. Everything, in fact, which the imperial government could think of to cut off Russia from the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

current of European ideas, to prevent its subjects from receiving a liberal education at the universities, to expand their minds by travelling abroad, to become familiar with the great political and philosophical questions of the day by a study of literature and newspapers, was done with rigorous care by the police and approved by the Czar.

Occasionally the Emperor became indignant at the venality and corruption of high public officials; but he did not see that this venality and corruption were but the logical consequence of the system of despotism and Byzantinism which his will imposed even on the highest members of the aristocracy. His smile, his praise, was the highest distinction, the highest aim of the ambition of the aristocracy, and for this servile subjection to the imperial will they compensated themselves by unbridled licentiousness and beastly excesses, and by robbing the public treasury. Because it was well known that the Emperor looked with suspicion on the universities as nurseries of liberal or revolutionary ideas, the nobility did not send their sons thither, for fear that the young men might become infected with these ideas, and that transportation to Siberia might suddenly interrupt their studies. The nobility, therefore, deemed it more prudent to send the lads to court or to the military schools, where they were safe at least from the contagion of European liberalism. It is really a wonder that, with such an organization of society and with a system of police surveillance perhaps never equalled in the world, with a Damocles' sword always suspended over their heads, there still remained a number of liberal-minded men, who never abandoned the hope of better days, never renounced their dream that the time would come for Russia, as it

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

had come for western Europe, to enter socially and politically the family of enlightened nations, blessed with liberal institutions and freed from the despotism of semi-Oriental rulers. These liberal-minded men and true patriots — professors of the universities, literary men, and a very small number of young noblemen — lived mostly at Moscow, where the distance from the observing eye of the ruler and his court saved them from detection, although their secret influence pervaded the whole empire, and kept the flame of liberalism burning in the hearts of the intellectual élite. While Nicholas had thus succeeded in building up an Eastern despotism on the banks of the Neva, he endeavored at the same time to impress Europe with the idea of his unrivalled power. His army was considered one of the best in Europe, and the immense population of his empire — larger than that of any two of the other great powers — gave him almost unlimited material for recruits. The generals commanding these armies were also renowned throughout Europe. They had won their laurels in the battles against the revolutionary armies of Poland and Hungary, in conquering the warlike population of the Caucasus, and subjecting large territories in western Asia to the white eagle of the Czar. The Russian diplomats had the reputation of being the shrewdest in Europe, and had either by secret treaties or by matrimonial alliances succeeded in making Russian influence preponderant on the continent of Europe. The Emperor Nicholas stood, therefore, on a commanding height when he provoked the great western powers of Europe, together with Turkey, to mortal combat. It was a challenge born in arrogance and political short-sightedness, and it found its deserved rebuke in a



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

total defeat of the Russian armies and a thorough humiliation of the Russian Emperor. Nicholas ought to have known that, in engaging in war with the western powers, he not only endangered his military prestige, but put to the test also his system of domestic administration, based entirely on his autocratic will, and silently, although reluctantly, submitted to by his subjects, as a tribute to his dominant position in Europe. When by the disasters of the Crimean War that position was lost, when it became clear to the Russian people that the Emperor was not absolutely the universal dictator of Europe, not only his military prestige was destroyed, but his system of domestic government lost immensely in public estimation. Nicholas felt this double humiliation so keenly that it was just as much personal chagrin as physical disease which caused his death even before the war was over.

It was therefore a heavy burden which his successor, Alexander the Second, assumed when he ascended the throne on the second of March, 1855. His first duty — and it was a painful and humiliating duty — was to terminate the Crimean War by accepting the unfavorable terms demanded by the western powers. In the exhausted condition of the Russian treasury, and after the disorganization of the Russian armies by a series of disastrous defeats, nothing was left to the young Czar but to submit to the inevitable. In doing so he also signed the sentence of death of the autocratic rule established by his father. A general clamor for reform, for greater freedom and more liberal laws arose, and Alexander the Second was only too willing to grant them. He was liberal-minded himself and kind-hearted, and he was anxious to let the Russian nation partake of the progress of European civ-

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

ilization. He opened the Russian universities to all who desired a higher education. He reduced to a reasonable rate the price for passports, which had been enormous under Nicholas, he <sup>annul</sup> ~~rescinded~~ <sup>heavy</sup> the burdensome press laws, and modified the law subjecting all publications to a most rigorous government supervision; he issued an amnesty to Siberian exiles, including many who had been banished for political crimes; and he finally crowned this system of liberal measures by the emancipation of many million serfs, freeing them from their previous condition of territorial bondage and placing them directly under government authority. Important changes were also made in the personnel of the different departments of the public service; a thorough investigation of these departments proved that the grossest abuses existed throughout the empire. The army magazines were filled with chalk instead of flour, and officers who had been dead for twenty years still remained on the pension lists. Numerous other frauds and depredations were disclosed, which were eating up the public revenues, and which had been practised for years by high officials who had enjoyed the protection of the late Czar. The reforms which Alexander the Second introduced did not find favor with the officials, and the emancipation of the serfs fully estranged the nobility, whose interests were damaged by the loss of their slaves. The Czar therefore soon found himself between two fires: the Liberals were immoderate in their demands for still greater liberty, and the nobility attacked the government for having granted those liberal measures, predicting that the new policy would terminate in disaster, revolution, and assassination.

It should not be supposed, however, that Alexander

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

was liberal-minded in the American sense of the word; he was not, — not even as liberalism is understood in the western states of Europe. What he tried to be during the first years of his reign was a liberal-minded autocrat like Frederick the Great of Prussia and Joseph the Second of Austria; but the slightest attempt to limit his authority by any constitution he resented as a personal insult. When the landed proprietors of the province of Tver sent him a petition worded in the most humble language, in which their desire for a constitution was expressed, he flew into a rage, and sent the two leaders of the meeting to Siberia. But he was inclined to grant as a personal favor what some of his subjects demanded as their right, which they wanted guaranteed by law. The system of police espionage and persecution ceased, because Alexander hated police denunciations. This change had almost immediately its marked effect on public life; the people commenced breathing easier. The nightmare of Siberian exile or perpetual imprisonment ceased haunting their minds.

After a few years Russian society seemed to have changed its character, its ideas, its manners; it showed its independence openly, and acted as though its liberties and rights were safely secured by a magna charta or constitution. Many thousands of Russian noblemen went to France and England, no longer simply to amuse themselves and to live well, but to study western institutions or to place their sons in the colleges; and no nationality has a greater faculty of assimilation than the Russian. The ideas of central and western Europe found ready and intelligent reception in their minds. Hundreds of newspapers, periodicals, and magazines were founded, and

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

most of them found numerous and eager readers. Some of these papers became a real power and shaped public opinion to a remarkable degree. While direct criticism of Russian affairs and Russian institutions was prohibited, the newspapers nevertheless found a way to keep their readers posted on all public events and public men. They published sketches of every-day life in which every particular was true except the names, and in this human comedy, scarcely veiled by the transparent fiction, the governors of provinces, the generals of the army, and especially the directors of the police, and all the high government officials were exhibited in their true character; their frauds were exposed, their arbitrary actions, their abuses of power, and their excesses were denounced. The reading public were in the secret, and the daily and weekly newspapers became a regular *chronique scandaleuse* without subjecting the editors or publishers to prosecution.

While these periodicals, published in Russia under the very eyes of the Czar and of Russian censors, did their share in undermining the authority of the government, there was another class of Russian periodicals, published at Paris, London, and Leipsic, which were free from the embarrassing observation of Russian censors, and which consequently could speak openly, mention names, attack high officials and the imperial family. The most famous of the editors of these periodicals (which were printed abroad, but had nearly their entire reading public in Russia) was Alexander Herzen, the famous editor and publisher of "The Bell" (Kolokos). Mr. Herzen was a man of great talent, and his newspaper soon gained an influence in Russia which became a real danger to the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

government. "The Bell" did more for the spread of socialism in Russia than all other publications combined. It was more active and more successful than all other newspapers in showing up the official wrong-doers of the empire and breeding among the masses contempt for the government and its officers, because every Russian who could read, read "The Bell," and got his information about Russian affairs from Alexander Herzen. The mystery always was: How did "The Bell" get into Russia? since the government made a most relentless war on the paper. Nobody could ever tell; the most searching investigations of the secret police failed to discover the mysterious channel through which the dangerous paper found its way into Russia. As soon as it had crossed the frontier, secret printing establishments, unknown to the police, struck off many thousand copies and circulated them gratuitously throughout the empire. It was evident that a socialistic or revolutionary committee was identified with its circulation in Russia.

But the most notable result brought about by "The Bell" was the change of attitude in which the Russian government was placed, and (since the government was the Czar) the attitude in which the Czar suddenly found himself toward his subjects. The imperial government, under Nicholas, has been bold and aggressive; under Alexander the Second it was placed on the defensive; it was compelled to plead with public opinion in order to clear itself of the attacks made against it, and when these pleas failed to convince, it resorted again to the old repressive and despotic measures which were even more odious from having become obsolete for a number of years. Autocracy, which in the hands of a strong man

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

like Nicholas the First had been a source of strength and protection, became in the hands of a weak and vacillating man a source of weakness and danger. Public opinion, which under Nicholas had been silent, because it dared not assert itself, turned openly against Alexander, who had removed the bars which kept it in check and the fear which repressed its utterances.

It is time here to refer shortly to the origin and growth of a political doctrine which at this time appeared in Russia and which has had a great and pernicious influence on Russian history, — Nihilism. The name appears for the first time in the famous novel of Ivan Turgenieff, "Fathers and Sons," and designates a political programme which has found its most numerous and most enthusiastic adherents among the young men and women of Russia, especially of the educated and professional classes, the students and professors of the universities. It first manifested its existence shortly after the death of the Emperor Nicholas, when, through the liberal measures of his successor, the high schools and academies of the empire were opened to the people, when the universities were filled with thousands of young students, eager to learn and imbibe philosophical and political principles which until then had been unknown to them. The Nihilistic party aimed at a total regeneration of society and at the destruction of its present organization in state, church, and social institutions, and it found its explanation and excuse in the widespread corruption, brutality, and despotism of the officials. It is a mistake to confound the Nihilists with the Liberals or even with the Socialists who are advocating reforms or the abolition of certain politi-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

cal or social abuses. The Nihilists are not aiming at reforms; they simply demand the overthrow and complete annihilation of the existing social system with all its institutions, until nothing (nihil) remains standing. The reconstruction of society, based upon principles of reason and justice, is their ideal; but they leave the realization of this ideal to future generations, and advocate for the present the employment of all means, even the most reprehensible, for the attainment of their immediate aim. The originators and great apostles of the new party were Alexander Herzen and Bakúnin, who imbued the young persons of both sexes with an implacable hatred for the present system of government and social organization. They made not only despotism but all authority odious.

The first public manifestation of Nihilism was Karakasow's attempt on the life of Alexander the Second in 1866. It failed, and at the trial it appeared that the attempt was not founded on individual hostility, but on abhorrence of authority in general. The attempt on the life of General Trepow, minister of police, in 1878, showed the dangerous and rapid progress which the party had made. The assailant was an educated young woman, Vera Sassoulitch, who wanted to revenge official injustice by punishing one of its most prominent representatives. She was acquitted by a jury at St. Petersburg on February 5, 1878; and this acquittal, brought about by the ostentatious manifestation of the sympathy of the higher classes during her trial, caused a sensation throughout Europe. The Czar himself was enraged at the result of the trial, and devoted himself to the extermination of Nihilism by all means in his power. The issue



## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

had then been clearly made. Nihilism had by that time become very aggressive. It was no longer satisfied with preaching a philosophical doctrine, but it openly advocated a policy of murder and incendiarism, in order to frighten and disorganize society, and especially public officials. On the other hand, the government resorted to the most rigorous measures to exterminate the Nihilists wherever they could be found.

Alexander the Second suffered terribly when he became aware, too late for him to master it, of the new intellectual movement and its political results in his empire. The situation was the more painful to him, because his own conscience as well as the old Russian party held him principally responsible for it. It was he who had set free that liberal propagandism which had culminated in this terrible agitation for the destruction of society, and which had entirely outgrown his control. Alexander's mental condition, on this discovery, would form an interesting subject for the psychologist. From the day when he began to reign as an enthusiastic, well-intentioned man of thirty-seven, to the days of his disappointments as a ruler and reformer, ending with one of the most terrible catastrophes of modern times, his career challenges, for adequate treatment, the genius of a Shakespeare. No wonder that he became despondent and thought of abdication,—a thought which reappeared with ever increasing force to the end of his reign.

Nor was this feeling of discouragement and weariness of life caused exclusively by the fear of personal danger; on the contrary, Alexander knew only too well that he was not the only object of Nihilistic persecution, but that all those dear to his heart and also those whom he hon-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ored with his confidence and friendship were equally exposed.

The attempt on the life of General Trepow had still another effect on the Czar. It effectually eradicated from his mind his previous predilection for liberal reforms and a paternal government; it stirred up a feeling of resentment and hatred against revolutionists, reformers, and liberals which had never been noticed in him before, and which manifested itself in the most severe measures of repression. To his great chagrin he saw soon that these measures were utterly unavailing to repress the spirit of rebellion in the empire and in his own capital. Nihilism spread with the unconquerable fury of a contagious epidemic and defied all measures of the authorities to check it. On the twenty-first of February, 1879, Prince Krapotkine, Governor of Charkow, was assassinated; and shortly after, attempts were made on the lives of General Drentelen, a great favorite at court, and of Count Lewis Melikow, Secretary of the Interior.

Alexander himself was exposed to a number of murderous attempts. His escape from the one made by Alexander Sokoloff, a school-teacher of Toropetz, in the district of Pskoff, is almost miraculous. On the fourteenth of April, 1879, at nine o'clock in the morning, the Emperor, seated in an open carriage, was waiting in front of the palace of Prince Gortschakoff, his Secretary of State. Sokoloff approached the carriage without having been noticed by the attendants. He was well dressed, wore a military cap, and looked like a retired officer. Standing within a few feet of Alexander, he suddenly pulled forth from under his coat a revolver, and, in rapid succession,

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

fired four shots at him, all of which, however, missed their aim. The would-be murderer was immediately overpowered by the Emperor's attendants; but during the struggle he fired a fifth shot which severely wounded one of the servants. Sokoloff had two capsules containing poison, fastened with wax under his armpits. He succeeded in swallowing one of them before he could be prevented, but an antidote was immediately administered and saved his life. He was sentenced to death and executed without having confessed the motive of his assault or given the names of any accomplices.

After this attempt the most vigorous and ingenious measures were taken for the Emperor's protection. When, in the summer of the same year, Alexander travelled from St. Petersburg to Livadia, he was taken to the depot in an iron carriage and escorted by four companies of cavalry. Moreover the depot was surrounded by several regiments of infantry and cavalry, and nobody was permitted to approach it. Similar measures of precaution had been taken at all railway stations along the route where the imperial train was expected to stop. At all railroad crossings police officers and detectives had been stationed to prevent even the possibility of a collision with the imperial train. Another train filled entirely with the body-guards and high police officials preceded, at a short distance, the Emperor and his family. A large detective force was stationed along the whole route, and scoured the country for miles on both sides of the railroad, making it impossible for anybody to approach the track without being closely observed. At night, the entire route was lit up on either side with immense bonfires built at short distances in order to make

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

the surveillance of the road as complete during the night as during the day. In order not to delay the imperial train on the road, all other trains were stopped for days, and the most stringent orders were issued that no persons should approach either the depots or any part of the railroad.

That travelling under such circumstances was not a pleasure, and would make a man exceedingly nervous, if not absolutely ill, may well be imagined. But in spite of these and other precautions almost passing human belief, a new attempt on the Emperor's life was made during his return trip from Livadia to Moscow. On the first of December, 1879, Alexander had arrived at Moscow safely; but about ten or fifteen minutes later a mine exploded, which had been established under the railroad track in the immediate vicinity of the depot. The explosion occurred at the moment when the second imperial train was passing. It demolished the baggage car and threw seven or eight passenger cars off the track. Fortunately nobody was seriously hurt. The Emperor and his suite were on the first train this time, while the Nihilists had supposed they would be on the second.

Less than three months later, on the seventeenth of February, 1880, the Czar was in much greater danger at St. Petersburg. At about seven o'clock P. M., on that day, as he was on the point of entering the dining-room of his palace, suddenly a terrible dynamite explosion occurred underneath the hall occupied by the Imperial Guards. The explosion was so violent that all the windows in that wing of the palace were shattered, the ceilings of the rooms in the lower story and of the hall of the guards were full of holes, and the floors torn to pieces, while the

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

tables and the dishes in the imperial dining-room were hurled in all directions. Eight soldiers and two servants of the imperial household were killed, while forty-five were more or less seriously wounded.

This new attempt on his life, with the attending number of victims, impressed the Czar's mind so deeply that it brought on a new attack of melancholy which his physicians were powerless to subdue. Domestic troubles added to his mental depression, and caused apprehensions of a total collapse of his mental faculties. His general health had also greatly suffered from the long continued strain of his nervous system. In June, 1880, his wife died after a lingering illness. She was a princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, very handsome and highly accomplished when he married her, in 1841. But the marriage was not a happy one. For quite a number of years the Czar carried on a liaison with the beautiful Princess Dolgorouki, and shortly after the death of the Empress he contracted a morganatic marriage with her, in spite of the energetic protests of the Czarowitz and his other children. The Princess had great influence over Alexander's decisions as a ruler; and when he seemed to have made up his mind to abdicate and retire to private life, she prevented the consummation of this design by her emphatic protests. Alexander had formed the plan to transfer the crown to his son, but only on one condition: that the Princess, his wife, should always be treated by the imperial family with the same consideration as the deceased Empress, and that her children should also be treated as brothers and sisters by the Czar. But when he informed the Princess of this plan, she flew into a passion, rejected the proposition most angrily, saying that she

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

knew the feelings of the Czarowitz toward her too well to place any confidence in his promises, and demanded, as a proof of his affection for her, that Alexander should forever renounce his plan of abdication. Alexander therefore remained, much against his own inclination, on the throne until the day of his death, the thirteenth of March, 1881.

On the forenoon of that day he returned from the residence of the Princess to the Winter Palace, driving along the St. Michael's Canal. He was escorted by a small detachment of cavalry and an adjutant of the Director of Police. About midway between the residence of the Princess and the Winter Palace a man ran up to the imperial carriage throwing a bomb charged with dynamite under the horses. It killed two men of the Czar's escort and wounded three others. In spite of the protests of the police officer and the driver, who insisted on taking the Czar as rapidly as possible to the Winter Palace, he alighted, unhurt as he was, to look after the victims of the attack. In doing so, he exclaimed: "Thank God, I was not hurt!" But the man who had thrown the bomb and been seized by the escort, hearing the Czar's exclamation, replied: "Perhaps it is not time yet to thank God!" At the same time another person hurled a bomb at the feet of the Emperor. His legs were broken by the explosion, his abdomen was torn open so that the intestines protruded, and his face was badly disfigured. The Emperor fell to the ground, exclaiming: "Help me! Quick to the Palace! I am dying!" The explosion was so violent that the windows of a church and of the imperial stables situated on the opposite side of the Canal were shattered. Many persons were killed or wounded. The

## ALEXANDER THE SECOND

imperial carriage was also considerably damaged. The Emperor was therefore lifted into a sleigh, which returned to the Winter Palace at a gallop. The blood flowed in great quantity from his wounds, and as he was carried up the large stairway of the Palace he fainted. The surgeons found it impossible to stop the hemorrhage, and at thirty-five minutes past three o'clock in the afternoon he breathed his last without having recovered consciousness for a moment.

The assassination caused the most intense excitement in the capital. A shout of triumph went up from the Executive Committee of the Nihilists, and a few days afterward the people of St. Petersburg could read the following manifesto, which, in spite of the care of the police, had been posted in several conspicuous places:

"The Executive Committee consider it necessary once more to announce to all the world that it repeatedly warned the tyrant now assassinated, repeatedly advised him to put an end to his homicidal obstinacy, and to restore to Russia its natural rights. Every one knows that the tyrant paid no attention to these warnings and pursued his former policy. Reprisals continued. The Executive Committee never drop their weapons. They resolved to execute the despot at whatever cost. On the thirteenth of March this was done.

"We address ourselves to the newly crowned Alexander the Third, reminding him that he must be just. Russia, exhausted by famine, worn out by the arbitrary proceedings of the administration, continually losing its sons on the gallows, in the mines, in exile, or in wearisome inactivity caused by the present *régime*, — Russia cannot longer live thus. She demands liberty. She must live in conformity with her demands, her wishes, and her will. We remind Alexander the Third that every violator of the will of the people is the nation's enemy and tyrant. The death of Alexander the Second shows the vengeance which follows such acts."

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

These accusations were only partly true. Alexander, on ascending the throne, had honestly tried to introduce reforms, abolish abuses and pave the way for a progressive, liberal government. But his liberal policy did not satisfy the Nihilists. And when in self-protection he fell back on the former policy of repression, the Nihilists began a war of reprisals, and finally murdered the Czar.

CHAPTER XXIV  
WILLIAM McKINLEY









WILLIAM McKINLEY

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ASSASSINATION OF WILLIAM MCKINLEY

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

(September 6, 1901)

THE North-American Republic had lived eighty-nine years before political assassination made its entrance into its domain. From 1776 to 1865, a period occasionally as turbulent, excited and torn by political discord and strife as any other period in history, political assassinations kept away from its shores, and appeared only at the close of the great Civil War between the North and the South, selecting for its victim the noblest, gentlest, most kind-hearted of Americans who had filled the Presidential chair.

Sixteen years later, on July 2, 1881, the second political assassination took place in the United States, resulting in the death of President James A. Garfield, after months of intense suffering from a wound inflicted by a bullet fired by Charles J. Guiteau, a disappointed office-seeker. By removing the President this man hoped to restore harmony in the Republican party, which, in the state of New York at least, had been disturbed by the feud between James G. Blaine and Roscoe Conkling. Guiteau imagined that President Garfield had become an interested party in this feud by appointing Mr. Blaine

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

his Secretary of State. His was the act of a vindictive madman.

Twenty years had elapsed since Guiteau's horrible crime, and again a President of the United States was prostrated by the bullet of an assassin, who, at the moment of committing the crime, proclaimed himself an Anarchist. When William McKinley was reëlected President in November, 1900, a successful and perhaps glorious second term seemed to be in store for him. During his first term the policy of the Republican party had earned great triumphs, and the President, who was in full accord with his party on all economical questions, and was even its most prominent leader on the tariff question, had justly shared these triumphs.

Quite unexpectedly the question of armed intervention in Cuba had been sprung in the middle of Mr. McKinley's first term of office, and after having exhausted all diplomatic means to prevent war and to induce Spain to grant satisfactory terms to the Cubans, the President was forced into a declaration of war by the enthusiasm of the Senators and Representatives assembled at Washington. But, as if everything undertaken by Mr. McKinley was to be blessed with phenomenal success, the war with Spain was not only instrumental in securing the thing for which it had been undertaken,—the liberty and independence of the island of Cuba,—but it had also an entirely unexpected effect on the international standing of the United States. Up to the time of the Spanish-American War the United States had always been considered an exclusively American power, and while the European powers seemed to be willing to concede to it a leading position—a sort of hegemony—in all American affairs (including Cen-

tral and South America), which the United States had assumed by the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, they had never invited the American government to their councils treating of European or other non-American affairs. The Spanish-American War was a revelation to Europe. It opened its eyes to the fact that over night, while Europe had been sleeping and dreaming only of its own greatness, a young giant had grown up on the other side of the Atlantic who was just beginning to feel his own strength and who seemed to make very light of time-honored sovereignty rights and inherited titles of possession. As the Atlantic cable flashed over its wires the reports of American victories and achievements of astounding magnitude, — the destruction of two powerful Spanish fleets, followed by the surrender of the large Spanish armies in the Philippine islands and Cuba, — Europe stood aghast at this superb display of power and naval superiority, and European statesmen reluctantly admitted that a new world-power of the first order had been born, and that it might be prudent to invite it to a seat among the great powers. History is often a great satirist; it was so in this case. Spain had for a long time made application for admission to a seat among the great powers of the world and had pointed to her great colonies and to her splendid navy as her credentials entitling her to membership in the illustrious company. But England and Germany, fearing that Spain would strengthen France and Russia by her influence and navy, kept her out of it. And now comes a young American nation which nobody had thought of as a great military and naval power, makes very short work of Spain's navy, robs her of all her colonies, and coolly, without having

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

asked for it, takes the seat which Spain had vainly sighed for.

In a monarchy a large part if not the whole of the glory of these achievements on land and sea would have been ascribed to the ruler under whose reign they occurred. It was so with Louis the Fourteenth and Queen Elizabeth, but William McKinley was entirely too modest to claim for himself honors which did not exclusively belong to him. Nevertheless a great deal was said about imperialism and militarism during the campaign, and these charges were even made a strong issue against Mr. McKinley's reelection. However, the good judgment of the American people disregarded them and reelected Mr. McKinley by a considerably larger majority than he had received four years before.

It might have been supposed that this flattering endorsement of Mr. McKinley's first administration would have allayed all opposition to him personally, because certainly his experience, his conceded integrity and ability, his great influence in the councils of his party, and his immense popularity would have been of inestimable value in adjusting and solving the new problems of administration arising from the acquisition of our new insular possessions in the Pacific and the West Indies. While the two great political parties, and in fact all other parties, had bowed to this decision of the people at the ballot-box, there was, unfortunately, a class of men in the United States as well as in Europe who made war upon the present organization of society as unjust to the poor man, and upon all government, which they declared hostile and detrimental to the rights of individuals, and which they considered the source of all wrongs and mis-

eries. This doctrine was originated by a French philosopher, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, in his famous pamphlet published in 1850 and entitled: "What is Property?" He denounces the unequal division and distribution of property among men and the unjust accumulation of capital in the hands of the few as the source of all social evils, and, concluding with the emphatic declaration that all property is theft, demands its readjustment and re-portionment on a basis of strict justice as the sole hope for happiness. Proudhon's ideas and arguments found an echo throughout Europe. He had considered the question only in its economical bearings; but some of his disciples extended the inquiry in all other directions, and showed the hurtful influence of accumulated power and property on all other social conditions, especially on politics and the government of nations. They demanded the reinstatement of the individual in all his natural rights, and a destruction of all those powers and laws which stood in the way of the free and unobstructed exercise of those rights. This meant a declaration of war on all established authority and government. It meant anarchy in the literal sense of the word, and the men who had adopted this doctrine as their political platform called themselves Anarchists.

On the twenty-ninth of September, 1872, a violent schism occurred at the congress of the International Association of Laborers, held at the Hague, between the partisans of Carl Marx and those of Bakúnin, and from this date we must count the origin of the anarchistic party. In the United States the first symptoms of an anarchistic movement appeared in 1878. At the Socialist congress held at Albany, N. Y., the majority of dele-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

gates, who were advocates of peaceable methods of propaganda, were opposed by a minority of revolutionists preaching the most extreme measures. The leader of this minority was Justus Schwab, who was then publishing a socialistic newspaper, "The Voice of the People," at St. Louis. He was a friend and admirer of John Most, who had been imprisoned in England for his revolutionary and seditious articles, and who was, unquestionably, the intellectual leader of the radical minority at Albany. The final rupture between the two factions occurred a year later, at the congress at Alleghany, Pa., in 1879, when the radical revolutionists, who were in a majority, expelled the moderate faction from the convention. The radical wing has grown rapidly in numbers and power, and its influence has made itself felt repeatedly on lamentable occasions, the last of which was the assassination of William McKinley, President of the United States, during the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, on September 6, 1901.

The great American cities, from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific, are hot-beds of extreme political radicalism; Italian Carbonarism and Russian Nihilism are represented in those cities by some of their most daring representatives, whose official programme is destruction of authority by the assassination of its most exalted heads, and subversion of law. By placing William McKinley in line with the monarchs who were the special targets of their inflammatory harangues and writings, danger and death were attracted to his person with magnetic power; and what in the intention of party opponents was but a forcible means of attacking Mr. McKinley's and his party's colonial policy (to disappear again with his election) may have lingered in the heated imaginations of these

avowed regicides, and may have intensified their feelings against him, as the most exalted representative of law and order (with alleged imperial designs) in this country. Several months before the assassination took place it was reported that detectives had ferreted out at Paterson, N. J., which is known as a gathering-place of Italian anarchists and assassins, a conspiracy which had for its object the assassination of all European monarchs and of President McKinley. This report, when published in the newspapers, was received with laughter and contempt by the reading public. The mere idea appeared too absurd to deserve even a moment's attention, and the result was that to the recent assassinations of the Empress of Austria and King Humbert of Italy was added the tragedy of Buffalo.

Only a few months after Mr. McKinley was inaugurated for his second term of office, the Pan-American Exposition was held at Buffalo. Mr. McKinley had, from the very inception of the great undertaking which was to shed new lustre upon his administration, given to it great attention and cordial encouragement. For the first time, such an exposition was to exhibit all the products, natural and artificial, of the two Americas in one common presentation, challenging the admiration or the criticism of the world on the intellectual and industrial standing which this display manifested. The result was grand, and in many respects surpassed expectation. It emphasized the impression already created by the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, that America would within a short time become a dangerous rival for Europe in many departments of industry, not only at home, but even in foreign countries which up to that time had almost

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

held a monopoly for supplying certain articles of manufacture. The departments in which articles of steel and iron manufacture, electrical machines, etc., were exhibited showed such superiority over what old Europe could show that even the most prejudiced visitors from abroad had to concede it.

It had been expected that President McKinley, by his presence on several days in some official capacity, would heighten the interest and emphasize the importance of the Exposition. He had promised and planned to do so. In the summer of 1901 he made a trip to the Pacific coast, and was everywhere welcomed with boisterous enthusiasm. Mrs. McKinley accompanied him, sharing his popularity and triumphs. Perhaps no President since George Washington had to a higher degree possessed the confidence and love of the whole people than Mr. McKinley did at the time of his second inauguration. Even his political opponents conceded his eminent worth, his integrity, his loyalty to duty, and his sincere desire to promote the general welfare of the country. The short addresses which he made during his trip to California found an enthusiastic echo in the hearts of his fellow-citizens, East and West; the ovations he received and which he accepted with becoming modesty and tact, were heartily endorsed by the nation as symptomatic of the universal feeling of harmony and of good-will toward the administration. The ante-election charges of imperialism were laughed at, and both parties seemed to be willing to make the best of the results of the war. Moreover the great urbanity of manners, and the personal amiability which distinguished Mr. McKinley were the strongest refutations of these ridiculous imperialistic

## WILLIAM McKINLEY

charges and of Mr. McKinley's ambition to be clothed with royal honors. He showed equal courtesy to rich and poor, and his grasp of the laborer's hand was just as cordial as of the rich merchant's.

The Presidential party had reached San Francisco, and its reception there was fully as enthusiastic as it had been in the cities along the route to the Pacific. It had been the President's intention to stop at Buffalo on his return from his trip to California, to be the guest of the managers of the Exposition for a few days, and to perform those duties and ceremonies which were expected of him as head of the nation. Unfortunately this programme could not be carried out. Mrs. McKinley, always in very delicate health, fell seriously ill at San Francisco, and for several days her life was despaired of. She recovered; but as soon as she was able to bear the discomforts of transportation, without inviting the danger of a relapse, the President's return to the East was decided on, and all his previous appointments were cancelled. His intention to visit Buffalo, during the continuance of the Exposition, was, however, not abandoned, but simply postponed to a more opportune time, after Mrs. McKinley should have recovered her usual strength.

Mr. McKinley came to Buffalo in the first week of September. The Exposition had attracted many thousands of visitors who were anxious to greet the President. On the fifth — which had been made President's Day — he delivered an address to a very large audience, in which he spoke feelingly of the blessings bestowed by Providence on this country, and in eloquent terms referred to the unexampled prosperity enjoyed by its citizens. That secret and unaccountable influence, which frequently in-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

spires men on the verge of the grave and endows them with almost prophetic foresight seemed to have taken possession of Mr. McKinley on this occasion. The speech was, perhaps, the best he had ever made. It was the speech of a statesman and patriot, full of wisdom and love of country. He did not know, when he made it, that it would be his farewell address to the American people; but if he had known it and written it for that purpose, he could not have made it loftier in spirit, more patriotic in sentiment, and more convincing in argument.

On the afternoon of the next day a grand reception had been arranged for the President at the Temple of Music. An immense multitude had assembled, eager to shake hands with Mr. McKinley and to have the honor of exchanging a few words with him. He was in the very best of spirits and performed the ceremony of hand-shaking with that amiable and cordial expression on his features which won him so many hearts. It had been arranged that only one person at a time should pass by him, and that after a rapid salutation his place should be taken by the next comer. Hundreds had already exchanged greetings with the President, when a young man with smooth face and dark hair stepped up to him. Mr. McKinley noticed that the right hand of the young man was bandaged, as though it had been wounded, and he therefore made a move to grasp his left hand; but at that moment the young man raised his right hand, and in quick succession fired two shots at the President, which both wounded him, — the one aimed at his chest, lightly, because the bullet deflected from the breastbone; the other, which had penetrated the abdomen, very seriously. The assassin had carried a revolver in his right hand and

## WILLIAM McKINLEY

had covered it with a handkerchief in order to avoid detection. Mr. McKinley did not realize immediately that he was wounded, although from the effects of the shot he staggered and fell into the arms of a detective who was standing near him.

"Am I shot?" asked the President. The officer opened the President's vest, and seeing the blood, answered: "Yes, I am afraid you are, Mr. President."

The assassin was immediately thrown to the ground. Twenty men were upon him, and it was with some difficulty that he was rescued from their grasp. At first he gave a fictitious name, and, when asked for his motive, replied: "I am an Anarchist, and have done my duty." His statements shortly after his arrest seemed to implicate a number of more or less prominent Anarchists in the crime and to make it appear as the result of a widespread conspiracy. In consequence a number of the recognized leaders of the party — especially Emma Goldmann, whom the assailant named as the person whose teachings had inspired him with the idea of committing the crime — were arrested and held for a preliminary examination; but nothing could be proven against them, and they were discharged.

After a few days the assailant made a full confession. His name was Leon Czolgosz; he was a Pole by birth, and his family lived at Detroit. He was a believer in Anarchism and had murdered the President because he considered him the chief representative of that authority which, in his opinion, was hurtful to the development of a society founded on the equal rights of all its members. He had had no accomplices; he had not consulted with anybody concerning the plan, time, or execution of the

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

crime, but he had resolved upon and executed it on his own responsibility. While his confession fully exonerated both the Anarchist party at large and all its members individually, it nevertheless showed what terrible consequences may arise from the propagandism of a party which has declared war on the existing organization of society, when its doctrines inflame the mind of a fanatic or of an unthinking proselyte. Public opinion in the United States was stirred to its very depths, all parties vying with one another in showing not only their abhorrence of the crime, but also their love and admiration for the illustrious victim.

Unfortunately the hopes of the American people that Mr. McKinley would survive the foul and senseless attempt on his life were disappointed. For about a week his condition seemed to improve, and his strong vitality seemed to rise superior to the weakening effects of a dangerous surgical operation which failed to produce the second bullet, deeply seated as it was in the spine. At first he rallied from the severe shock, and his physicians were hopeful of saving his life, but in the afternoon of September 12, a sudden change for the worse occurred which, it was soon noticed, indicated the approach of dissolution. He remained conscious till about seven o'clock in the evening of September 13, and faced death in the same spirit of calmness and submission to the will of God which had characterized his whole career. "Good-bye, all; good-bye. It is God's way. His will be done!" were his last conscious words to the members of his cabinet and other friends who, overcome with emotion, were at his bedside. The end came shortly after two o'clock in the morning, on September 14, apparently without pain.



## WILLIAM McKINLEY

President McKinley's death made a profound impression on the American people. The rage of the people of Buffalo against the assassin was boundless, and but for the efficient measures for protecting him at the station-house in which he was imprisoned, he very likely would have fallen a victim to the fury of the thousands who surrounded it. The entire police force and several companies of soldiers were kept under arms to be ready for any emergency.

The body of the dead President was first taken to Washington, and thence to its final resting-place at Canton, Ohio. The obsequies were of imposing grandeur and magnificence; but even more impressive than these, and more honorable to his memory, was the sorrow of a whole nation in tears over his untimely and cruel death.

President McKinley's death is typical of the modern attempts on the lives of sovereigns and prominent men. These attempts have lost much of the personal character which in former times made them so interesting. They are much more the results of a wholesale conspiracy against the organization of society than against great individuals. Unfortunately political assassinations have not become of rarer occurrence during the last fifty years, as might have been hoped from the progress of education and civilization. On the contrary, they have multiplied with the spread and development of Anarchism. The Anarchist makes no distinction between the bad ruler and the good ruler. The fact that the ruler occupies an exalted station above his fellow-men makes him an object of hatred for the Anarchist, and justifies his removal from an elevation which is a danger to all. At the present time men very high in authority, whether



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

in a monarchy or in a republic, are always exposed to the daggers or pistols or — what is much worse — to the dynamite or other explosives of assassins.

The field of operation of these murderers — who are generally the deluded agents of a central organization of Anarchists, and who have frequently no personal grievance against their victims — extends not only all over Europe, from Russia to Spain, but also to the western hemisphere.

While these murders fall with the same crushing effect upon the nations immediately stricken in the persons of their rulers or intellectual leaders, the interest in the causes leading to them is essentially diminished since they are all inspired by the same general motive, — destruction of authority, — and since the hand armed with the fatal weapon strikes with blind fanaticism, sparing neither age nor sex nor merit; in fact, quite often slaying those who deserve to live, and sparing those whose death might be a benefit to their country and the world. In this way we have seen the Czar Alexander the Second of Russia, the emancipator of the Russian serfs; General Prim, who, if he had lived longer, might have secured a constitutional government for Spain and her political regeneration; the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, a faultless and much betrayed wife as well as a bereaved mother; King Humbert, whose best endeavors were made in behalf of a reunited Italy; President Sadi Carnot, one of the purest and most patriotic statesmen the French Republic has had; and last, though not least, our genial and noble-hearted President, William McKinley, — all falling victims to the senseless vindictiveness of men who do not persecute wrong and oppression, but power and authority

## WILLIAM McKINLEY

in whatever form they may present themselves. We have selected the assassination of President McKinley as representative of this class of political murders, because he was dearest to the American heart, and also because, in our opinion, he was the most illustrious of the many victims of anarchistic vengeance.



CHAPTER XXV  
ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA







ALEXANDER I. OF SERBIA

## CHAPTER XXV

### ASSASSINATION OF ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA, KING AND QUEEN OF SERVIA

(June 11, 1903)

THE Balkan countries — Servia, Bulgaria, Roumania, Bosnia, and Herzegovina — are generally considered the political centre from which will spread, sooner or later, the conflagration of a gigantic war, which will eventually place Russia in possession of Constantinople and European Turkey. Some of these Balkan countries are nominally independent, others are still under the suzerainty of the Sultan, who holds on to them with the energy of despair. He watches every change in the political situation with the carefulness of a physician who knows that his patient is doomed, but who hopes that he may for a while prolong his life. The half Oriental, half European character of the populations of these Balkan states, their unquenchable thirst for national independence, their defiance and hatred of their oppressors, their contempt for the impotent Turkish administration, and their hope of improving their condition by some political change, — are singularly favorable to insurrections and revolutions. Russia is nursing this revolutionary spirit with great skill and prudence, trust-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ing to the proper moment for harvesting the fruit of the seed which she has been sowing for upwards of a century. Ever since the days of Catherine the Second Russia has stood, so to speak, like a sentinel on the lookout for the favorable moment to pounce down on Turkey, to plant the White Eagle on the peaks of Macedonia and Roumelia, and to take possession of the Dardanelles as a Russian ship-canal between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Every commotion and revolution in any of the Balkan states helps her in her far-seeing ambition, especially now since France will stand by her as an ally. It is in this sense and for this reason that the terrible tragedy which occurred at Belgrade, Servia, on the eleventh of June, 1903, may claim a place in this gallery of historical assassinations. From it sooner or later events of the first magnitude may develop, and while at present comparative quiet has been restored at the Servian capital, the change of dynasty may lead to the most serious international complications.

The reign of Alexander the First of Servia was ushered into existence by means of a *coup d'état* at midnight on the sixth of March, 1889; it terminated after midnight on the eleventh day of June, 1903, by assassination.

The manner in which King Milan forfeited his throne, and again the manner in which King Alexander lost both his throne and his life, as well as the many tragedies and comedies which occurred in the royal family of Servia between these two events,—all these details seem to be rather detached chapters of a highly sensational novel than the sober and truthful records of recent history.

At the age of twenty-one, on the seventeenth of October,

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

1875, King Milan of Servia married Princess Natalia Keschko, the daughter of a colonel in the Russian army; Natalia's mother, however, was the daughter of a Roumanian prince. Natalia was seventeen years old at the time, and of marvellous beauty. She was one of the most admirable beauties of the Russian capital, and King Milan, who fell desperately in love with her at first sight, found but little encouragement from her, in spite of his exalted rank, because the young lady herself was in love with a Russian officer and was loved in return. But Colonel Keschko, who was ambitious and prized very highly the honor of a family alliance with a reigning King, by his paternal veto put an end to his daughter's sentimental love-affair and compelled her to accept King Milan's hand.

It is but just to say that Princess Natalia proved herself in every respect worthy of the honor conferred upon her. As Queen of Servia she was not only the most beautiful woman of the kingdom, but she was a model wife, and opened her heart and mind to all the patriotic aspirations of the Servian people. When shortly afterwards a war broke out between Servia and Turkey, she personally appealed to the Czar for assistance, went to the hospitals to nurse the wounded, cared for the widows and orphans, and became not only a popular favorite, but deservedly won the esteem of the Servian nation.

It was a day of public rejoicing, when on August 14, 1876, she bore the King a son, who was named Alexander after his godfather, Alexander the Second of Russia. Another son, born two years later, died a few days after his birth. Soon after the birth of his son Alexander, King Milan commenced neglecting his wife

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

and bestowed his favor on other women of the court. The Queen felt the King's neglect very keenly, and became often an indignant witness to his liaisons, which he did not think it worth while to conceal from her. The anger and contempt she felt for the indelicate voluptuary gave her strength to overcome the love which had gradually grown up in her heart for the father of her son, and to this son she transferred all the tenderness her heart was capable of. The Servian people soon saw and learned what was going on at court, and while they condemned and despised the King, they praised and idolized the Queen.

Under such lamentable conditions young Alexander grew up to adolescence. He was greatly attached to his mother, and applied to her as his adviser and friend in all questions, while he could hardly conceal his profound aversion for his father. The King noticed this growing hostility in his son and heir, and blamed the Queen for having incited it. He saw in it a deep-laid plot on her part to secure a controlling position which would enable her, at any given opportunity, to place her son on the throne and to assume the reins of government under his name. The breach thus created between the father and the mother, and every day widened by the excesses and orgies of the King, reached its climax when the question arose who should be appointed instructors to prepare the prince for his future duties as the head of the Servian nation. Milan wanted Austrian instructors for his son, because he had been leaning on Austrian influence; the Queen, in sympathy with the national demands as well as prompted by her own impulses, insisted on Russian preceptors, to initiate him into the maze of European

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

politics and to open his mind to the aspirations of Servian genius. It is said that one day when the discussion had grown very warm between husband and wife, and when he accused the Queen of purposely estranging his son's heart from him, she reproached him with the indignities he had heaped upon her, with his many acts of infidelity, and with his low and vulgar excesses, which, she said, imperilled the dynasty. The King was dumfounded by this torrent of invectives, which he could neither stop nor contradict, but which left in his heart a wound which his pride would not permit to heal up. It seems certain that from that day his resolution was taken to obtain a divorce from his wife for a double purpose: first, that he might not be hindered by her from following his low inclinations; second, that he might withdraw his son from the Queen's influence and surround him with his own creatures. The question was, how could he obtain this divorce from a wife whose conduct was exemplary, and who was almost worshipped by the whole people for her private and public virtues? It was clear to him that to succeed in his design he had to ruin her character, and on this conviction he built a plot of diabolical malice. Under a plausible pretext he arranged a private meeting in the Queen's apartments between her and the Metropolitan of Servia. This bishop was known to have an almost worshipful admiration for the Queen; upon him, therefore, it was supposed, the suspicion of illicit relations with her could be fastened easily. No sooner had the Metropolitan entered the Queen's apartments than the King, accompanied by some of his intimates, appeared on the scene and "surprised the guilty couple." The plot failed miserably; the King's hand appeared too

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

visibly in the arrangement and execution to leave any doubt in the public mind as to the Queen's innocence. His evident intention to brand an innocent and much wronged wife as an adulteress lowered Milan even more in the estimation of the people, and they commenced talking openly of the necessity for his abdication.

The Queen thereafter refused to live with the King, and this refusal gave him the desired pretext to obtain a divorce. They separated in 1888. Alexander was then twelve years old. The Queen went to Wiesbaden, and took her boy with her; but on the application of King Milan to the German authorities, the boy was taken away from her and sent to Belgrade. The King's scandalous conduct had now exhausted the patience of the Servian people. They insisted on his dethronement, either by voluntary abdication or by forced removal. A delegation of notables placed before him the alternative of either abdicating in favor of his son, or of sharing the fate of his uncle, Michael Obrenovitch, who just twenty years before was assassinated in a park near Belgrade. Milan did not hesitate long. He declared his willingness to abdicate, but he demanded two million dollars as the price of this abdication, and the Servian people, only too glad to get rid of him at any price, paid the sum demanded.

On the sixth of March, 1889, Alexander, who was then thirteen years old, ascended the throne of Servia. A regency of three prominent men — General Bolimarcovitch, M. Ristitch, and General Protitch — was appointed to conduct the public affairs of the kingdom. Everything promised a prosperous reign. There was absolute order and tranquillity in the country; the people seemed

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

to be satisfied. The Queen returned to Servia, and the government designated one of the royal palaces of Belgrade for her residence. She was then at the height of her popularity, and the young King shared in that popularity because it was generally supposed that he had great respect and love for his mother.

These happy and peaceful conditions, however, soon underwent a change. Ex-King Milan, who could not forget the days of luxury he had enjoyed at Belgrade, was busy stirring up intrigues and conspiracies which might lead to his restoration; and on the other hand, Queen Natalia, to counteract his manœuvres, built up a party of her own, and took an active interest in politics. This became embarrassing to the government, since it continued to inflame the minds of the people. Through these conflicting parties the country was actually brought to the verge of civil war, which very likely would have broken out had not the government taken energetic measures to put a stop to the strife. The regents first applied to Milan, and bought him off. They restored to him the property which had been confiscated when he went into exile, and paid him one million dollars besides. Milan on his part solemnly promised never to set foot on Servian soil again, and even renounced his right of citizenship. The contract between the ex-King and the council of regency was made on April 14, 1891. Thereupon the regents addressed a request to the Queen, asking her, in the interest of peace and order, to leave the country. She refused to comply with the request, and a week afterwards an attempt was made to remove her by force. She was arrested in her palace, and rapidly driven in a coach to the quay, where a steamer was wait-

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ing to convey her across the frontier. But a number of young students delivered her from the hands of the officers who had charge of her person, conducted her back in triumph to her palace, and constituted themselves her guard of honor. Quite a bloody conflict occurred between the students and the police, in the course of which a number of persons were killed, and many more wounded. However, a second attempt made by the police authorities a day or two later was more successful. She was conveyed by railroad to Hungary. The young King showed that he was a true Obrenovitch by the fact that he never interfered or even uttered a kind word in behalf of his mother. He showed the same ingratitude to the three regents in 1893 when he dismissed them unceremoniously like body-servants for whom he had no further use. The first *coup d'état* which Alexander made occurred on April 14, 1893. It would seem that the radicals had in some way secured an influence over his mind, for it was to their advantage that the *coup d'état* principally turned out. But Alexander showed considerable self-assurance on that occasion.

On the evening of the day mentioned Alexander had invited the three regents and the members of the cabinet to take supper with him. Altogether eight persons sat down at the supper-table. The very best of humor prevailed among the guests. After the third course had been served the King rose from his seat, and addressed his guests as follows:

"Gentlemen, for the last four years you have exercised royal authority in my name, and I sincerely thank you for what you have done. I feel now, however, that I am able to exercise that power myself, and will do so



## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

from this moment. I therefore request you to hand me your resignations forthwith."

Mr. Ristitch was the first to recover his presence of mind. He told the King that it would be impossible to comply with his request, because by doing so they would violate the constitution. The King thereupon left the table without saying another word; but soon afterwards an officer appeared renewing the King's demand for the resignation of the members of the Council of Regency and of the Cabinet.

During that very night the young King, who was then only seventeen years old, went to the different barracks and armories where the troops were under arms, proclaimed his accession to the throne, received the enthusiastic homage of the regiments, and returned to the palace. The *coup d'état* was a complete success. Alexander the First was King, not only in name, but also in fact. He dismissed the old cabinet, and appointed a new one, composed exclusively of moderate radicals.

A few years afterwards Alexander visited the different courts of Europe, in the hope, it was commonly reported at the time, of finding a young princess willing to accept his hand; but in this hope he was either disappointed, or the report of his intentions was unfounded. At all events he returned to Belgrade without a bride. It was soon after this that the eyes of the young King were for the first time directed toward the woman whose striking beauty and sensual charms inflamed him with a passion to which he blindly yielded. He elevated her to the throne, and for this act he paid the penalty with his life. For it is absolutely certain that the King's marriage with Draga Maschin, and his blind subordination to her dom-



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ineering spirit in private and public affairs, had much more to do with his tragic downfall than all his political mistakes.

*Draga* Lunyewitza, better known as *Draga Maschin*, was the widow of a Servian nobleman who had occupied a prominent position at the court of King Milan. Even more prominent than her husband had been Madame *Draga*, not only on account of her beauty, which was of a pronounced sensual type, but also on account of her brilliant conversational powers. Her most conspicuous feature was her wonderful eyes, large, lustrous, and beaming with an intensity of feeling and intelligence so penetrating that it was said that no man whose conquest she had resolved upon would be able to resist them if properly brought under their influence. That Madame *Draga Maschin's* eyes had often proved victorious was well known from the long list of her favored lovers, — a list which included statesmen, high military officers, bankers, and noblemen, and lastly, King Milan himself. In the eyes of the people of Belgrade Madame *Draga Maschin* was not only a coquette, but a courtesan. By means of her brilliant mental powers, her wit, her interesting conversation, her suavity of manners, and her diplomatic skill, she still maintained her position in society, although shunned by the most exclusive circles.

It was principally on account of those brilliant qualities of mind, and on account of Madame *Draga's* intimate acquaintance with a number of the leading politicians at Belgrade that the ex-Queen made her one of her attendants in her exile.

It was in this capacity that King Alexander met Madame *Draga Maschin* at Biarritz in the Pyrenees,





QUEEN DRAGA

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

where his mother spent the summer of 1900. The experienced coquette tried the power of her eyes on the young man, who had inherited the sensual temperament of his father. Alexander was by no means a novice in love-affairs, but he had never come in contact with so consummate a mistress of the arts of seduction as Draga Maschin. When he left Biarritz he was passionately in love with her, and those who had observed her game predicted that something serious would come of it. His mother was either too deeply engaged in politics to pay much attention to the flirtation, or she secretly favored it in the hope of securing a new and reliable ally.

Some time afterwards Draga Maschin returned to Belgrade, and the game of love-making was immediately renewed. Their intimacy became a matter of public notoriety. It also reached the ears of ex-King Milan, who was overjoyed at hearing it; he hoped that his former "good friend" Draga would use her influence for his benefit. But Draga Maschin worked neither for the Queen, nor for the King; she worked for herself only, and very successfully too.

Almost maddened by passion the King one day called a cabinet meeting and informed his ministers that he had made up his mind to make Draga Maschin his wife, and that a proclamation to that effect would appear in the official newspaper of the kingdom. The members of the cabinet were struck with amazement, and implored him to desist from his project, which they said would be fatal to the Obrenovitch dynasty. They employed every argument they could think of to change the King's resolution; but in vain. With his usual stubbornness, he declared: "I am the King, and can wed whomsoever I please."

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

As a last protest they all tendered their resignations. The King coolly accepted them, and the royal proclamation was published.

When on a July morning of 1900 the people of Belgrade were surprised by the announcement that the widow Draga Maschin was to be Queen of Servia, and when she was held up to their wives and daughters as a model of all womanly virtues, their disappointment and their protests against this "insane" act of the King were so general and so loud that serious apprehensions of an insurrection were entertained. These fears were not realized; but the people of Belgrade remained in a state of sullen discontent. They knew that a speedy and terrible punishment would overtake the guilty youth. It was reported that on reading his son's proclamation, ex-King Milan, who was then a patient at Carlsbad in Bohemia, left his sick-room and rushed to the depot to take the train for Belgrade. He declared that this outrage should never be committed, and that if the King should persist in accomplishing it, he would kill him with his own hands. But Milan's wrath had been telegraphed to Belgrade, and he was not permitted to enter Servian territory.

No less great was the shame of Queen Natalia. She implored her son to desist from his pernicious intention, laying stress on the disparity of the ages, — he being twenty-four and Draga thirty-six, and on the scandalous reputation of the woman whose beauty had for the moment infatuated him.

But neither the father's threats nor the mother's tears made the least impression on Alexander, who once more realized the often-quoted Latin saying:

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

"Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat."

The Skuptshina (the Servian Parliament) was amazed at the proclamation, and its president as well as the Metropolitan of Servia implored the King on their knees to revoke it. He had only deaf ears for them.

On the fifth of August, 1900, the wedding was solemnized, and Draga Maschin took her place on the throne of Servia.

If the King had hoped that the irritation of the public would die out after the wedding, he must have been a badly disappointed man; for the scandals about Draga continued. Not only was her past life with its many stains and blemishes laid bare unsparingly, but her life as queen consort was also unmercifully exposed. Every word and every act of her married life were carefully weighed in the scales of public opinion, and hardly ever was a word of praise accorded to her, while vituperation, insinuations, and direct accusations abounded. The Belgrade correspondents of foreign newspapers knew that anything they might have to report of King Alexander, Queen Draga, or any member of her family would be read with interest. If they could not pick up anything of interest they invented some unfavorable story. Unquestionably many of the stories circulated about Draga, and also of Alexander are utterly untrue. It should also be remembered that the elevation of Draga to a station which none of her rivals could hope to attain made her an object of envy, and that they resented this elevation by telling about her all the bad things they knew. But after making all these allowances, we still find enough to justify us in saying that the two were an exceedingly

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

ill-matched couple, — he a voluptuous, ungrateful, good-for-nothing simpleton, and she a designing, ambitious, unscrupulous woman of powerful mind.

The scandal which has been most widely circulated referred to the fictitious pregnancy of the Queen. Unquestionably the young King was anxious to have a son. Alexander was the last Obrenovitch, and it was natural for him to desire to have a son so that his dynasty might continue to rule over Servia. It was equally natural for Draga to desire to become the mother of an heir, because as such she would have had an additional claim on the affection of her husband, — a claim which might have outlasted her physical beauty. This desire was certainly not unreasonable in a wife twelve years older than her husband. This pregnancy was officially announced by the court physician, but it was afterwards stated that the announcement had been premature. These are the facts in the case; and on these slim facts a superstructure of rumors and fables has been erected. Very likely the great anxiety of the couple to have an heir was the real cause of the announcement. The rumors so widely circulated in the kingdom did certainly not contribute to improve the reputation of the Queen, or to give the people the impression of a happy domestic life.

The generally recognized mental superiority of Queen Draga over her husband had still another unfavorable consequence, — one of a political character. While Alexander was unmarried, his political mistakes, his autocratic interference with the work of the Skuptschina, his violation of the constitution, were charged to himself; but after his marriage all the political sins of the government were ascribed to Draga's instigation.

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

The political conditions of the Balkan countries are of the most unsettled kind. They resemble very much the political conditions in the South American and Central American states, and while nominally they are regulated by constitutions and by a parliamentary system of government, they are really controlled by the principle that "might constitutes right." It has been so in Servia from the day of the establishment of its national independence: continuous party strife, revolutions, assassinations — frequently winked at, if not directly instigated and supported, by foreign powers. In 1903 the Radicals had been several years in full control of the government. They had filled all lucrative offices with their party friends, many of whom belonged to the rural population, and had so apportioned the public taxes as to place the principal burden upon the city populations, where the Liberals had their voting strength. The misgovernment under the Radicals was so great that it became a national scandal. The public debt had been nearly doubled, the annual deficit was enormous, the most flagrant corruption and extravagance existed in all branches of the public service; but the Servian Congress refused to correct these abuses, and it remained for the King to interfere personally. He did so by a new *coup d'état* in March, 1903; the old Constitution was abrogated, a new Constitution was promulgated, and new general elections were ordered.

One of the most alarming features of the political situation in Servia was the dissatisfaction of the army, and especially of its officers. This dissatisfaction was not, as has been asserted frequently, caused by patriotic considerations or by disapproval of the King's personal conduct, but simply by the unpardonable neglect of the



## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

army on the part of the government. While in the royal palace at Belgrade an uninterrupted series of festivities, all arranged in the most sumptuous and expensive style, kept the gay capital on the tiptoe of excitement, the army was reduced nearly to a state of starvation, because neither officers nor men had been paid for months, "for want of funds in the public treasury." Instead of being a firm support of the government, the army therefore turned against it. It easily lent itself to propositions for a change, especially if that change would come in with the payment of their arrears of wages.

There was another cause of dissatisfaction, which evoked a direct and strong protest against the Queen and her influence. Disappointed in her hope of giving the King a son and heir, Draga devised another plan to perpetuate her own power, — namely, to select an heir to the throne. Her choice fell upon her own brother, Nicodemus Lunyevitch, a young lieutenant in the Servian army, and she succeeded in winning the consent of the King. It is even stated that Alexander intended to adopt this brother-in-law, who was twenty-four years old, and formally proclaim him his heir. No sooner had the plan been mentioned than a very loud, and almost general, opposition to it manifested itself. The cabinet ministers heard of it, and waited on the King in a body to enter their protest. When their arrival at the palace was announced to him, the King knew what they wanted, and kept them waiting for a long time. He finally received them in the large assembly hall. He was dressed in full uniform; the Queen was by his side and leaning upon his arm. He turned to the prime minister and requested him to state the object of the visit, whereupon the prime minister

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

asked the Queen in a very courteous manner to withdraw for a short time from the conference. She haughtily refused, and the King coolly informed the ministers that he had no secrets either private or public which he wished to conceal from his wife.

The ministers then presented their complaints. They stated that public opinion was excited to such a degree that there was imminent danger of a revolution if the King should persist in carrying out this new plan. "Moreover," added the prime minister, "the Skuptschina should be consulted in a matter of such great importance—a matter in which the state and the people are principally interested. In default of direct heirs, the representatives have the right to say who shall succeed to the throne."

The King interrupted him angrily, and said brusquely: "I am the King, and can do as I please."

"But the will of the people should also be consulted!" repeated the prime minister.

"The King's will is supreme!" interposed Draga, and suddenly taking the King's arm, she dragged him from the room, leaving the ministers confused and almost stupefied.

It may be said that this was the beginning of the end. Both Alexander and Draga were blinded to such a degree by passion and by the idea of their own infallibility that they could not see what everybody else did see—that the measure of their follies was full to overflowing, and that the day of reckoning was approaching very fast. Anonymous letters came to the King and to the Queen informing them of plots and conspiracies against their lives; they disregarded and laughed at them. They

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

openly showed their contempt for the will of the people and of the Cabinet by installing Lieutenant Nicodemus Lunyevitch as the heir apparent, in a brilliant suite of rooms of the royal palace, and abandoned themselves to an incessant whirl of pleasures and extravagant follies. Concerning this matter, a guest, the correspondent of a paper in Paris, wrote: "The King and the Queen do not seem to realize that they are dancing on a volcano!"

In the newspapers of the different capitals of Europe dark and ominous predictions were published about a conspiracy which was being formed at Belgrade, and of which persons of the highest station would be the victims.

Then came the elections of the first of June, and they resulted in such an overwhelming victory for the government that the predictions of conspiracy and death were momentarily silenced and a feeling of greater security was established in the royal palace. It was, however, only the calm before the storm.

Evidently the conspiracy which foreign papers had so often hinted at not only existed, but was well organized. The officers of the Sixth Regiment stationed at Belgrade were the leaders of it. Another leader was Colonel Maschin, the cousin (not, as is often stated, the brother-in-law) of the Queen, who for some personal reason had become her bitter enemy, and who was the very soul of the conspiracy.

It is of course impossible, so soon (two months) after the terrible tragedy, when absolutely reliable data are still lacking, to give with historic accuracy the details of the plot which culminated in the assassination of the King, the Queen, two of her brothers, and some of their most prominent adherents; but from the best and most

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

authentic information obtainable at present it appears that the events of the night of June 10-11 were as follows:

Ninety army officers, representing nearly every garrison and military organization in Serbia, had planned to overthrow the government. On Wednesday, June 10, Colonel Mitshitch, lieutenant-colonel of the Sixth Regiment, invited his fellow officers belonging to the conspiracy to a conference at the Helimagdan Garden at 11 P. M. At that conference, which was largely attended, the immediate execution of the plot was agreed upon.

At 1:40 after midnight these officers proceeded in eight groups to the Konac, the royal residence, which had been closed for the night. But the conspirators had accessories on the inside. They were Colonel Maschin, mentioned above, commanding the King's body-guard, and Colonel Maumovitch, personal aid of the King. The conspirators were in possession of the keys of the garden gate of the Konac which had been handed to them by Captain Panapotovitch, the King's adjutant. The first bloody encounter occurred when the conspirators reached the guardhouse near the gate. On their approach some soldiers rushed out. "Throw down your arms!" commanded one of the officers. The soldiers fired, but were shot by the conspirators, who entered the gate and passed through the garden, without encountering any obstacle until they reached the courtyard of the old Konac, where Colonel Maumovitch was waiting for them. He opened the iron door that gave access to the front room of the first floor. The officers ascended and, by the noise of their steps, attracted the attention of the royal couple and some of the officers of the palace.

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

Lieutenant Lavar Petrovitch, who had been alarmed by the unusual noise, ran to meet them, holding his revolver in one hand, and his drawn sword in the other.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Show us where to find the King and the Queen!" was the reply.

"Back, back!" shouted the Lieutenant; but he fell instantly, killed by three or four bullets.

The conspirators advanced, but suddenly the electric lights went out, and all were enveloped in profound darkness. Utterly confounded and slowly feeling their way up the stairs, the revolutionists reached the ante-chamber of the King's apartment. It was dark, but one of the officers discovered a wax candle in a chandelier. He lighted it, and they could see their way. This trifling little circumstance, entirely accidental, decided the success of the plot. Without light it would have been impossible for them to find the victims, who might have made their escape through the long corridors and numerous apartments of the palace, with which they were familiar while the conspirators were not, and could not have followed them.

Some of the officers now carried lights, while the others followed them with revolvers in their hands. In breathless haste they hurried through the rooms in search of the royal couple. They opened the closets and raised the curtains, but no trace either of the King or of the Queen. At last Queen Draga's servant was found. He dangerously wounded Captain Dimitrevitch, who discovered him, but his life was spared for a little, because he was needed. It was in fact this servant who indicated to the officers the place where the King and the Queen had

## ALEXANDER I AND DRAGA

gone to hide themselves. Thereupon he was shot. At this moment Colonel Maschin joined the conspirators and took them to the King's bedroom, where the King's adjutant tried to prevent their search, but was shot by the Colonel's companions.

After a long search a small door was discovered leading to an alcove. The door was locked and had to be burst open with an axe. In this alcove the royal couple had taken refuge. Both were in their night robes. The King was standing in the centre, holding the Queen in his arms, as if to protect her. Colonel Maumovitch commenced reading to the King a document which demanded that he should abdicate the throne because he had dishonored Serbia by wedding "a public prostitute." The King answered by shooting Maumovitch through the heart. Another officer renewed the demand for the King's abdication; but the younger officers had become impatient and now fired their revolvers at the royal couple until both expired. The body of the King showed thirty wounds, while the body of the Queen was so terribly lacerated by pistol-shot and sword wounds that her features could not be recognized, and the wounds could not be counted. Both died heroically, trying to protect each other with their own bodies.

Together with the King and the Queen, two brothers of the latter, and a number of their most prominent adherents were murdered in cold blood. This terrible butchery reveals the semi-savage ferocity of the Balkan population.

When the people of Belgrade awoke from their sleep early in the morning of June 11, there was not, as might have been expected, a manifestation of horror, pity, and

## FAMOUS ASSASSINATIONS

sorrow, among them, but, on the contrary, rejoicing and exultation on all sides. Flags were raised, houses were decorated, salutes were fired; a stranger entering the city might have supposed that a great national festival was being commemorated by the enthusiastic crowds of men, women, and children.

It may be taken as a convincing proof of the sincerity of the wrath and the depth of the contempt which the people of Servia felt for Alexander I and Draga, that of the immense multitude which came to inspect the lacerated bodies of those who but the day before had been their King and their Queen, not one expressed a word of regret, or shed a tear of sorrow. Many, on the contrary, spat on the mangled remains, or mumbled words of execration as they passed by the plain coffins. Death itself had not been able to wipe out the misdeeds of these two persons.

History, the terrible but just avenger, will preserve for many ages the memory of Alexander the First of Servia, not so much for any single crime, as for having persistently insulted the national pride and the moral sentiment of the people over whom Providence had placed him as ruler and protector.

# INDEX



INDEX

# INDEX

ABO, Treaty of, 253  
 Adolphus Frederick, 252-254  
 Æmilianus, Scipio, 13  
 Africa, 27, 41  
 Agrarian law, 11, 17  
 Agrippina, 36, 37  
 Alba, kings of, 29  
 Albany, N. Y., 385, 386  
 Albrecht, of Germany, 68, 70  
 Albret, Jeanne d', 150  
 Alcobaza, 86  
 Alexander, of Epirus, 5  
 Alexander I., of Russia, 307, 311,  
     317, 322  
 Alexander II., of Russia, 357-378,  
     394, 401  
 Alexander III., of Russia, 377  
 Alexander I., of Servia, 397-420  
 Alexander III., the Great, 3, 4, 5, 41  
 Alexander Nevski Monastery, 304  
 Alexandria, 41-45  
 Alexandria, Library of, 41, 43  
 Alexandrian age, 42  
 Alexandrian war, 42  
 Alexandrowna Convent, 136  
 Alexis, son of Peter the Great,  
     209-217  
 Alfonso IV., of Portugal, 77-85  
 Alleghany, Pa., 386  
 Altorf, 70  
 Alva, Duke of, 117-121, 123  
 America, 387  
 America, Central, see Central  
     America

America, South, see South America  
 American Union, 354  
 Amphictyon League, 3  
 Amsterdam, 202, 215  
 Anarchism, 391, 393  
 Anarchists, 382, 385, 391-394  
 Angoulême, Duc d', 333, 334, 335  
 Anjou, Duke of, 152  
 Ankarström, 249, 274-278  
 Anna, daughter of Peter the  
     Great, 222  
 Anne, Princess of Saxony, 116  
 Antony, Mark, 42  
 Antwerp, 124  
 Appomattox Court House, 343  
 Aragon, 85  
 Arc, Jeanne d', 298  
 Argentan, 291  
 Argyle, Countess of, 97  
 Aristotle, 42, 45  
 Armfeld, Count, 276  
 Arndt, E. M., 318, 319  
 Artois, Comte d', 329, 330, 333,  
     335  
 Asia, 4, 6, 41, 229, 363  
 Athens, 45  
 Atlantic Ocean, 316, 383, 386  
 Attalus, General, 4, 5  
 Augustus, Octavianus, 36, 37  
 Austria, 68, 154, 175, 177, 273, 316,  
     318, 360, 394  
 Austria, Ducal hat of, 70  
 Austria, Duke of, 70  
 Austrian Governors, 68, 70

# INDEX

Austrian succession, War of, 252  
Avignon, 330

BAKÚNIN, Michael, 370, 385  
Baltic Sea, 170, 271, 318  
Barbaroux, 285, 290  
Barneveldt, Olden, 111  
Bastile, 292  
Bavaria, 178, 318  
Bayard, Chevalier, 92  
Beccaria, 265  
Becket, Thomas à, 51-63  
Belgrade, Servia, 400, 404, 405,  
407, 408, 410, 414, 416, 419  
Bell, The, 367, 368  
Benningsen, General, 310  
Bernard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar,  
181  
Berry, Duc de, 155, 325-340  
Berry, Duchesse de, 334, 336, 338  
Bétysi, Comtesse de, 337  
Biarritz, 408, 409  
Biron, Marshal, 228  
Black Sea, 400  
Blaine, James G., 381  
Bloedraad, see Blood, Council of  
Blood, Council of, 119  
Blücher, Marshal, 318  
Blücher monument, 123  
Boer Republics, 68  
Bohemia, 165, 167, 171, 173, 174,  
177, 181, 182  
Bohemian wars, 169  
Bolimarcovitch, General, 404  
Bologna, 54  
Bonapartist generals, 329  
Bonapartists, 330  
Booth, John Wilkes, 125, 348-350  
Borgia, Cæsar, 143  
Bosnia, 399  
Bothwell, Earl of, 101-108  
Bourbon, Antony of, 150  
Bourbon, Cardinal de, 153  
Bourbon dynasty, 330, 332, 333,  
340

Bourbons, 327, 331, 335  
Brabant, 120  
Braga, Archbishop of, 84  
Brahe, Count, 278  
Bretteville, Madame de, 285-287  
Brown, John, 349  
Brune, Marshal, 330  
Brunswick, Duke of, 166, 167  
Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Princess  
of, 213  
Brussels, 113-115, 117-119  
Brutus, 29, 297  
Brutus, Decimus, 30  
Buffalo, N. Y., 386, 387, 389, 393  
Buitenhof, 207  
Bulgaria, 399  
Bülow, General, 318  
Burgundy, 125  
Burschenschaft, 319-321, 324  
Butler, Walter, 186  
Buturlin, Count, 233  
Buzot, —, 285  
Byzantinism, 362  
  
CAEN, 285, 286, 288, 289, 291, 292,  
295  
Cæsar, 23-31, 35, 36, 42, 67, 187  
Cæsarium, 48  
Cæsars, City of, 41  
Cæsars, Palace of the, 156  
Calais, 335  
California, 388, 389  
Caligula, 33-38, 156  
Calvarez, Alvaro, 78  
Calvin, John, 147, 148  
Calvinistic church, 120, 151  
Cantaneda, 85  
Canterbury, 61  
Canton, Ohio, 393  
Caps, Party of the, 251-253, 256,  
257, 263  
Caracalla, 156  
Carbonarism, 386  
Carlos, Don, 124  
Carlsbad, Bohemia, 410

# INDEX

- Carnot, Sadi, President of France, 329, 394  
 Casan church, 234, 237  
 Cassius, 29, 30  
 Castile, 84, 85  
 Castro, Iñez de, 75-86  
 Catherine I., Empress of Russia, 214, 215  
 Catherine II., Empress of Russia, 89, 222, 224-227, 229-237, 239-246, 301, 304-306, 400  
 Catherine de Médicis, 149, 151, 152  
 Catholic church, 114, 116, 117, 153, 165, 172, 175  
 Catholic League, 166, 168, 170  
 Caucasus, 363  
 Central America, 316, 382, 413  
 Cevennes, 330  
 Chæroneia, Battle of, 3  
 Champ-de-Mars, 292  
 Charkow, Governor of, 372  
 Charleroi, 194  
 Charles V., Emperor, 112, 113, 116, 122, 148  
 Charles II., of England, 196  
 Charles IX., of France, 90, 149, 152  
 Charles X., of France, 155, 340  
 Charles XI., of Sweden, 250  
 Charles XII., of Sweden, 249, 250, 251, 262, 268  
 Charles, Prince, of Sweden, 257  
 Chateaubriand, 339  
 Chatelard, Pierre de, 91-93  
 Cherbourg, 285  
 Chicago, 387  
 Choiseul, Duc de, 254, 255  
 Christian IV., of Denmark, 168, 171  
 Christianstadt, 257, 258, 259  
 Cicero, 20  
 Cid, Le, 286  
 Cinna, 286  
 Civil War, 345, 354, 381  
 Clarendon, Constitution of, 58, 59  
 Claudius, 33-38, 156  
 Clément, Jacques, 149  
 Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, 42  
 Cleopatra, Queen of Macedon, 4, 5  
 Clio, 354  
 Coello, Pedro, 78, 84, 85  
 Coimbra, 80, 81, 82, 86  
 Coligny, Admiral, 151, 155  
 Condé, Prince of, 200, 201, 286  
 Confederacy, 343  
 Confederate States of America, 343  
 Conkling, Roscoe, 381  
 Constancia, wife of Pedro I., 77, 85  
 Constant, Benjamin, 332  
 Constantinople, 399  
 Corday, Adrian, 285  
 Corday, Charlotte, 283, 285-298  
 Corday d'Armans, Monsieur de, 285  
 Corneille, Marie, 285  
 Corneille, Pierre, 283, 285, 286, 288  
 Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, 12  
 Crimean War, 364  
 Croatian horsemen, 167  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 193  
 Crusoe, Robinson, 352, 353  
 Cuba, 350, 382, 383  
 Cuma, 18  
 Cyril, Saint, 44, 46, 50  
 "Czar of all the Russias," 134  
 Czolgosz, Leon, 157, 390, 391  
 DALECARLIA, 269  
 Damiens, R. F., 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161  
 Damocles, Sword of, 362  
 Danton, G. J., 284, 290, 291  
 Dardanelles, 400  
 Darius, 6  
 Darnley, Lord, 87-108

# INDEX

- Dashkow, Princess, 230, 234  
 Decazes, M., 332, 339  
 Defoe, Daniel, 353  
 Delft, 125  
 Demaratus, the Corinthian, 5  
 Denmark, 102, 215, 222  
 De Ruyter, Admiral, 202, 203  
 Detroit, 391  
 Deveroux, —, 186, 187  
 De Witt, Cornelius, 111, 189-208  
 De Witt, John, 111, 189-208  
 Diana of Poitiers, 91  
 Dimitrevitch, Captain, 418  
 Dolgorouki, Princess, 375, 376  
 Dominican monk, 124  
 Domitia, 36  
 Dordrecht, City of, 191, 192, 206  
 Douai, 194  
 Douglas, Stephen A., 351  
 Draga, Queen of Servia, 397-420  
 Drentelen, General, 372  
 Dunbar, 102  
 Dunbar castle, 100  
 Dutch Republic, 111, 126, 128,  
 191, 193, 195, 197-202, 208  
  
 EDINBURGH, 91, 100, 102, 105  
 Eger, Bohemia, 165, 184, 185, 186  
 Egmont, Count, 115, 116, 118, 119  
 Egypt, 27, 41, 42  
 Eisenach, 320  
 Elba, 329  
 Elizabeth, Empress of Austria,  
 387, 394  
 Elizabeth, Empress of Russia,  
 222-228, 244  
 Elizabeth, Queen of England, 89,  
 94, 229, 384  
 England, 59, 60, 62, 68, 167, 193-  
 195, 197, 202, 215, 291, 333, 366,  
 383, 386  
 Epirus, 4, 5  
 Essen, Count, 275, 276, 277  
 Esths, 268  
 Eumenes, King of Pergamus, 42  
  
 Europe, 101, 120, 127, 155, 176,  
 195, 198, 211, 223, 264, 273, 287,  
 306, 315-317, 327, 328, 339, 363,  
 364, 366, 370, 383-385, 387, 388,  
 394, 416  
 Evrard, Catherine, 293, 295  
  
 FEHRBELLIN, 199  
 Ferdinand II., of Germany, 165-  
 167, 169, 173-175, 179, 180, 185,  
 188  
 Ferdinand, son of Pedro I., 77,  
 78, 80  
 Finland, 214, 252, 253, 265, 268, 274  
 Finns, 268  
 Flaccus, Lucius, 18, 19  
 Ford's Theatre, 346, 347, 348  
 Forum, 15, 16  
 Foy, General, 332  
 France, 59, 60, 62, 91, 93, 103, 112,  
 147, 152, 154, 155, 160, 161, 194,  
 195, 202, 215, 251, 252, 254, 272,  
 273, 284, 285, 287, 288, 295, 298,  
 315, 318, 323, 327-329, 331, 333,  
 334, 339, 366, 383, 400  
 Franche-Comté, 125, 194  
 Francis I., of Austria, 317  
 Francis I., of France, 147, 148  
 Francis II., of France, 90, 93, 149  
 Franco-Austrian alliance, 226  
 Franconia, 177  
 Frederick II., King of Prussia,  
 223, 226, 227, 229, 253, 265, 268,  
 366  
 Frederick William, Elector of  
 Brandenburg, 198  
 Frederick William I., King of  
 Prussia, 223  
 Frederick William III., King of  
 Prussia, 317  
 Frederickshall, Fortress of, 250  
 Frederickshamm, Fortress of, 268  
 French chambers, 331  
 French Empire, 331  
 French Republic, 394

# INDEX

- French Revolution, 50, 111, 156,  
249, 264, 272, 273, 284, 288, 291,  
305, 317, 321, 328, 330, 331, 333  
French Revolutionists, 286  
Friedlanders, 170, 181  
"Friend of the People," 292  
Friesland, 191  
Frisia, 120  
Fuerst, Walter, 69, 70
- GALITZIN, COUNT, 235, 237  
Gallas, General, 184, 186  
Garde, Count de la, 330  
Garfield, James A., 381  
Gatschina, 303  
Gaul, 26, 27  
Gérard, Balthasar, 125, 126  
German Empire, 67, 198, 318, 324  
German Reformation, 320  
German Universities, 318-320  
Germany, 112, 118, 120, 121, 147,  
148, 167-169, 171, 174, 175, 195,  
222, 273, 286, 315, 318-321, 324,  
327, 383  
Gessler, Hermann, 65-73  
Gil Blas, 158  
Girondists, 284, 285, 288, 290, 294,  
295  
Glasgow, 104, 105  
Goethe, 122, 123, 359  
Golden Fleece, Knight of the, 120  
Goldmann, Emma, 391  
Gonsalvez, —, 84, 85  
Gordon, General, 184, 186  
Gortschakoff, Prince, 372  
Gracchus, Caius, 11, 12, 13, 20, 21,  
191  
Gracchus, Sempronius, 12  
Gracchus, Tiberius, 9-21, 191  
Grammaticus, Saxo, 73  
Grant, General, 343, 346, 348  
Granvella, Cardinal, 114-116, 123  
Greece, 3, 6, 45, 287  
Greek church, 227  
Guise, Duke of, 90, 149  
Guise, Henry of, 155  
Guiteau, Charles J., 381, 382  
Gustavus I., 269  
Gustavus II., 175-182, 188, 259, 268  
Gustavus III., 247-279
- HAGUE, The, 191, 205, 207, 385  
Haller, Albrecht von, 321  
Hannibal, 12  
Hanseatic League, 102  
Hapsburg, House of, 119, 154  
Harrach, Count, 169  
Hats, Party of the, 251-253, 256,  
257, 263  
Helimagdan Garden, 417  
Heliogabalus, 156  
Hellichius, Captain, 257  
Henrietta, Princess of France, 196  
Henry II., of England, 53-63  
Henry VIII., of England, 94  
Henry II., of France, 148-150  
Henry III., of France, 149, 152, 155  
Henry IV., of France, 145-161, 354,  
355  
"Heptameron," 150  
Hermidad, 361  
Herzogovina, 399  
Herzen, Alexander, 367, 368, 370  
Hesse-Cassel, Frederick of, 250  
Hesse-Darmstadt, Princess of, 375  
Hessian queue, 321  
Höchst, 167  
Hohenstaufen, 318  
Holland, 115, 125, 191, 193, 202,  
204-206, 215  
Holstein, 239, 241  
Holstein-Gottorp, Charles Fred-  
erick of, 222, 250  
Holstein-Gottorp, Duke of, 229  
Holstein-Guards, 236  
Holsteiners, 224  
Holy Alliance, 316  
Holy Sepulchre, 63  
Holyrood Palace, 92, 97, 99-102,  
105, 106, 108

# INDEX

- Horace, 286  
 Hoorn, Count, 115, 118, 119  
 Horn, Count, 274-277  
 Horn, General, 177  
 Humbert, King of Italy, 387, 394  
 "Hundred Days," 329  
 Hungarian Revolution, 360  
 Hungary, 170, 363, 406  
 Hungary, King of, 173  
 Hypatia, 39-50  
  
 IDES of March, 30  
 Illo, General, 182-184, 186, 187  
 Illyria, 5  
 Imperial Guards, 307, 308, 360, 374  
 Imperialists, 166, 168, 178, 328, 330  
 Ireland, 102  
 Ismailoff, General, 239, 240  
 Italy, 27, 54, 93, 394  
 Ivan IV., 129-143, 221, 222  
 Ivan VI., 230, 244, 245, 301  
  
 JACOBINS, 273, 277, 284, 332  
 Jacobins, White, 330  
 James I., of England, 101  
 James V., of Scotland, 90  
 James VI., of Scotland, 101  
 Jaureguy, Juan, 124, 125  
 Jena, 322, 323  
 Jena, University of, 321  
 Jerusalem, 142  
 Jesuits, 125  
 Jews, 118  
 John of Austria, 123, 124  
 Johnson, Andrew, 348  
 Johnston, General, 343  
 Joseph II., of Austria, 366  
 Julia, daughter of Augustus, 37  
 Juliers-Cleves, 154  
 Jupiter, 29  
 Jupiter, Statue of, 27  
  
 KARAKASOW, —, 370  
 Karamsin, N. M., 221  
 Kasan, 133  
  
 Keschko, Colonel, 401  
 Kingsley, Charles, 49  
 Kinsky, General, 182, 186  
 Knox, John, 93  
 Kolokos ("The Bell"), 367, 368  
 Konac, 417  
 Körner, K. T., 318  
 Kotzebue, August von, 313-324  
 Krapotkine, Prince, 372  
 Kraskazelo, 241  
 Kreuger, Oom, 70  
 Kronstadt, 235, 237  
 Krüdener, Madame, 317  
 Kuessnacht, 71, 72  
 Kuessnacht, Castle of, 67  
 Kyrillos, see Cyril, St.  
  
 LABÉDOYÈRE, General, 329  
 Laborers, International Association of, 385  
 Lafayette, 332  
 Lagarde, Chauveau, 296  
 La Guarda, Archbishop, 85  
 "La Henriade," 155  
 Lamballe, Princess de, 50  
 Laputkin, Eudoxia, 211-215  
 Laputkin family, 212, 214  
 La Rochelle, 151  
 La Vendée, 330  
 League, The, 150, 152, 153  
 Lee, General, 343, 350  
 Leipsic, 367  
 Leipsic, Battle of, 320  
 Lennox, Earl of, 104, 108  
 Leslie, —, 186  
 Liberals, 365, 369  
 Licinian law, 14  
 Lilliehorn, Count, 274, 275, 277  
 Lille, 194  
 Lincoln, Abraham, 7, 26, 125, 341-355  
 Lincoln, Mrs., 346, 347  
 Livadia, 373, 374  
 Livia, Drusilla, 36  
 Lobkowitz, Prime Minister, 198

# INDEX

- London, 367  
 Lorraine, Cardinal de, 90, 149  
 Louis, XIV., 194, 196, 198, 200, 203, 255, 384  
 Louis XV., 156-161, 254  
 Louis XVI., 272, 273, 333  
 Louis XVIII., 328, 329, 335, 339  
 Louvel, J. P., 334-340  
 Louvet de Couvray, J. B., 285  
 Lunyevitch, Nicodemus, 414, 416  
 Luther, Martin, 147, 320, 321  
 Lutheran church, 120  
 Lutheran faith, 116  
 Lützen, 181  
 Luxembourg, 200  
 Luxembourg Garden, 329  
  
 MACEDONIA, 400  
 McKinley, William, 157, 379-395  
 McKinley, Mrs., 388, 389  
 Madrid, 116  
 Magdeburg, 166  
 Mannheim, 323  
 Mansfeld, General, 166, 167  
 Marat, 281-298  
 Maratists, 297  
 Marcellus, 36  
 Margaret, Duchess of Parma, 114, 115, 117, 122, 123  
 Margaret, Queen of Navarre, 150  
 Margrave, The, of Baden, 167  
 Maria, Empress of Russia, 308  
 Marie Antoinette, 50, 271, 272, 296  
 Marie de Lorraine, 90  
 Marie Thérèse Charlotte, 333  
 Marin, Colonel, 309, 310  
 Marx, Carl, 385  
 Mary de Médicis, 154  
 Mary, Queen of England, 113  
 Mary, Queen of Scots, 89-108, 149  
 Maschin, Colonel, 416, 417, 419  
 Masnaliza (Russian Carnival), 307  
 Massmann, 321  
 Maumovitch, Colonel, 417, 419  
  
 Maurice, Elector of Saxony, 116  
 Maximilian of Bavaria, 166, 168  
 Mayenne, Duke of, 150  
 Mecklenburg, 171, 172  
 Mecklenburg, Duke of, 171, 178  
 Médicis, Catherine de, see Catherine de Médicis  
 Médicis, Mary de, see Mary de Médicis  
 Mediterranean, 318, 400  
 Melchthal, Arnold, 69  
 Melikow, Count, 372  
 Messalina, wife of Claudius, 36, 37  
 Metternich, 316, 332  
 Mexico, 349  
 Milan, King of Servia, 400-405, 409, 410  
 Milton, John, 155  
 Mirowitch, Lieutenant, 244, 245  
 Mississippi River, 353  
 Mitshitch, Colonel, 417  
 Monroe Doctrine, 316, 383  
 Montesquieu, 265, 287  
 Montpellier, 330  
 Moravia, 167, 177  
 Moriscoes, 118  
 Moscow, 136, 137, 308, 363, 374  
 Most, John, 386  
 Mueller, Johannes von, 73  
 Munda, Battle of, 28  
 Münnich, Marshal, 228, 236, 238  
 Münster, Count, 312  
 Murray, Lord, 94, 99  
  
 NANTES, Edict of, 147, 153, 354  
 Naples, 215  
 Napoleon I., 25, 31, 73, 315-317, 327, 329, 330, 334  
 Nasica, Scipio, 19  
 Nassau, Lewis, Count of, 120  
 Natalie, Queen of Servia, 401-406, 410  
 National Assembly, 284  
 National Convention, 284



# INDEX

- Neoptolemus, 6  
 Nero, 33-38, 67  
 Netherlands, 112-114, 116-121, 126,  
 167, 192, 194, 195, 197, 198  
 Neva river, 363  
 Newman, —, 186  
 Ney, Marshal, 329  
 Nicholas I., 360, 361, 363-365, 368,  
 369  
 Nicholas, son of Paul I., 307  
 Nihilism, 369-372, 386  
 Nihilists, 369, 370, 371, 374, 377, 378  
 Nîmes, 330  
 Nitria, 43, 44  
 Normandy, 61, 62, 285, 289, 294  
 North Carolina, 343  
 Northampton, England, 59  
 Norway, 249, 263  
 Novgorod, 140, 142  
 Novgorod, Archbishop of, 140, 141,  
 234  
 Nuremberg, 178  
  
 OBRENOVITCH, Michael, 404  
 Octavius, 15, 16, 17  
 Olympian games, 6  
 Olympias, Queen of Macedon, 4,  
 5, 6  
 Orange, House of, 191, 193  
 Orange Free State, 70  
 Oranienbaum, 236, 238, 240, 241  
 Orestes, 44-47  
 Orléans, Duc d', 196, 337  
 Orléans, Duchesse d', 337  
 Orloff, Alexis, 232, 234, 241, 242,  
 245, 302, 304, 311  
 Orloff, Feodor, 232  
 Orloff, Gregor, 232, 233, 239, 302  
 Orloff, Ivan, 232  
 Ostia, 38  
 Oudenarde, 194  
 Oxford, 54  
  
 PACHECO, 78, 84, 85  
 Pacific Ocean, 384, 386, 388, 389  
  
 Pahlen, Count, 307, 308, 309  
 Palais Royal, 291  
 Palais Royal, Garden of the, 337  
 Pan-American Exposition, 386,  
 387, 389  
 Panapotovitch, Captain, 417  
 Panin, Count, 230, 231  
 Pappenheim, General, 181  
 Paris, 54, 55, 149, 154, 157, 254,  
 273, 277, 284, 285, 288, 289, 291,  
 294, 322, 327, 333-335, 338, 339,  
 367  
 Paris, University of, 54  
 Parma, Duke of, 125  
 Paterson, N. J., 387  
 Paul I., of Russia, 231, 244, 299-  
 312  
 Pausanias, 5  
 Pavia, Battle of, 147  
 Pavilion Marsan, 330  
 Pechlin, Baron, 274, 277  
 Pedro I., of Portugal, 77-85  
 Pedro the Cruel, of Castile, 84, 85  
 Peers, Chamber of, 340  
 Perpetual Edict, 200, 206, 207  
 Persia, 4  
 Peter, a priest, 47, 48, 50  
 Peter I. (the Great), of Russia,  
 211-215, 222, 227, 229, 232, 233,  
 360  
 Peter II., of Russia, 214  
 Peter III., of Russia, 219-246, 301,  
 302, 303, 304, 305, 311  
 Peterhof, 227, 233, 238, 239, 240,  
 -241  
 Pétion, 285, 290  
 Petrovitch, Lavar, 418  
 Pharsalus, Battle of, 27, 31  
 Philip II., of Macedon, 1-7  
 Philip II., of Spain, 112, 113-117,  
 121-124, 126, 127, 151  
 Philip IV., of Spain, 194  
 Philip, the Metropolitan, 139  
 Philippine Islands, 383  
 Piccolomini, Octavio, 186

# INDEX

Piedmont, 93  
 Pilsen, 184  
 Plato, 45  
 Plutarch, 16, 286, 288, 289  
 Plutarch's Lives, 291  
 Poitiers, Diana of, *see* Diana of  
   Poitiers  
 Poland, 225, 363  
 Poland, King of, 140  
 Polyeucte, 286  
 Pomerania, 171, 176, 238  
 Pompadour, Madame de, 156, 158  
 Pompey, 26, 27, 28  
 Pompey, Statue of, 31  
 Poniatowski, Prince, 225  
 Pontus, 27  
 Pope of Rome, 55, 58, 59, 62, 63,  
   77, 83, 85, 112  
 Poppæa, wife of Nero, 37  
 Portugal, 81, 84, 85, 112  
 Potemkin, General, 231  
 Prague, 173, 174  
 Preobrajenski guards, 233  
 Prim, General, 394  
 Protestant church, 120, 149, 165,  
   354  
 Protestant reformation, 112, 117  
 Protestant Union, 166, 167, 170  
 Protestantism, 354  
 Protitch, General, 404  
 Provence, 148  
 Provence, Comte de, 333  
 Providence Hotel, 291  
 Provinces, United, 126  
 Proudhon, P. J., 385  
 Prussia, 215, 251, 273, 315, 318,  
   360  
 Pskoff, 372  
 Ptolemies, 41, 42  
 Ptolemy Philadelphus, 42  
 Ptolemy Physcon, 42  
 Pyrenean peninsula, 112  
 Pyrenees, 408  
 QUEROUET, Mademoiselle de, 196

RAMEL, GENERAL, 330  
 Rappahannock River, 349  
 Ravallac, François, 154, 155, 157,  
   160  
 Raynal, Abbé, 287  
 Regensburg, Diet of, 172  
 Reichsrath, 250-259, 262, 263, 269,  
   270  
 Reichstag of Gefle, 273  
 Reichstag, Swedish, 255, 256, 269,  
   273, 278  
 Repnin, General, 231  
 Republicans, 328, 330  
 Restitution edict, 172, 175  
 Reutli, 69  
 Reutli conspiracy, 70  
 Reval, 238  
 Revolutionists, 284, 297  
 Rheims, 90  
 Rhine, 177, 198  
 Ribbing, Count, 274, 275, 277  
 Richelieu, Cardinal, 175  
 Richelieu, Duc de, 332  
 Richmond, 346  
 Richter, 323  
 Ristitch, M., 404, 407  
 Rizzio, David, 87-108  
 Robespierre, 284, 290, 291  
 Robzak, 241  
 Romanowna, Anastasia, 132, 133  
 Rome, 11-14, 25-27, 41, 156, 287  
 Rome, Ancient kings of, 29  
 Roman Campagna, 13  
 Roman Empire, 27, 43  
 Roman Republic, 27, 28, 36  
 Rostock, 123, 172  
 Rostopchin, Count, 308  
 Roumania, 399  
 Roumelia, 400  
 Rousseau, 287-289  
 Royalists, 284, 328-331, 334, 339  
 Rudolph of Hapsburg, 68  
 Rue des Cordeliers, 292  
 Russia, 131, 215, 216, 221-223, 226-  
   230, 234, 237, 249, 251, 252, 268-

# INDEX

- 271, 273, 306, 312, 315, 322, 361,  
 362, 367-369, 377, 383, 394, 399,  
 400  
 Russian Carnival, 307  
 Russian Church, 227  
 Russian Empire, 305  
 Russian serfs, 394  
 Russian universities, 365  
 Ruthven, —, 97, 99  
  
 ST. ANGELO, CASTLE OF, 215  
 St. Bartholomew, Eve of, 111, 140,  
 149, 152  
 St. Louis, 386  
 St. Michael, Palace of, 308, 312  
 St. Michael's Canal, 376  
 St. Petersburg, 215, 222, 225, 233-  
 236, 238, 241, 243, 268, 303, 311,  
 370, 373, 374, 377  
 St. Petersburg, Governor-General  
 of, 309  
 San Francisco, 389  
 Sand, C. L., 322, 323, 324  
 Sassoulitch, Vera, 370  
 Savoy, 148  
 Saxony, 180, 181  
 Saxony, Elector of, 181  
 Scandinavia, 73  
 Scania, 257  
 Scharnhorst, General, 318  
 Schiller, Frederick, 73, 318  
 Schlüsselburg, 230, 244, 301  
 Schwab, Justus, 386  
 Schwyz, 67, 69  
 Scipio Africanus, Cornelius, 12  
 Scotland, 91, 93, 100-102  
 Sempronian law, 11  
 Seni, the astrologer, 173  
 Serapeum, 42, 43  
 Servia, 399, 400, 401, 404, 405, 411,  
 413, 417, 419  
 Servia, Metropolitan of, 403, 411  
 Servian Parliament, see Skuptshina  
 Seven Years' War, 253  
 Seward, William H., 347, 348, 350  
 Shakespeare, William, 25, 371  
 Siberia, 228, 361, 362, 366  
 Siberian exiles, 365, 366  
 Silesia, 177  
 Silius, Caius, 37  
 Skuptshina, 411, 412  
 Socialism, 368  
 Socialist congress, 385  
 Socialists, 369  
 Sodermanland, Duke of, 277  
 Sokoloff, Alexander, 372, 373  
 Solbay, Battle of, 203, 206  
 Soltikoff, Count, 225  
 Soothsayer, 18  
 South African War, 68  
 South America, 316, 383, 413  
 Spain, 13, 81, 103, 111, 112, 126,  
 127, 153, 154, 177, 194, 202, 382,  
 383, 394  
 Spanish-American War, 382, 383  
 Spanish Inquisition, 112, 115, 121,  
 361  
 Spanish Netherlands, 194, 197  
 Stanton, E. M., 346, 348  
 Stauffacher, Werner, of Schwyz,  
 69  
 Stockholm, 252, 254-257, 260, 263,  
 269, 274, 277, 278  
 Stourdza, Baron, 322, 323  
 Stralsund, Fortress of, 171  
 Sulla, General, 29  
 Sully, Duke of, 153, 154  
 Surratt, Mrs., 349, 350  
 Suwarow, General, 231  
 Sweden, 175, 194, 195, 197, 222,  
 249, 251, 254, 256, 257, 262, 263,  
 265, 267, 269, 271  
 Swenskasund, Battle of, 270  
 Swiss Cantons, 67, 68  
 Switzerland, 68, 71, 73  
 Switzerland Republic, 73  
 Synesius, 46  
  
 TACITUS, 38, 288  
 Talizin, General, 307, 309

# INDEX

Tasso, 155  
 Tell, William, 67, 70, 72  
 Tepelof, —, 241  
 Terrorists, 285, 288, 295  
 Terzky, General, 182, 186  
 Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, 54, 55  
 Theocritus, 42  
 Theodosius the Great, 42  
 Theon, father of Hypatia, 45  
 Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, 43, 44  
 Thirty Years' War, 176, 188  
 Thuringia, 180  
 Thurn, Count, 180  
 Tiberius, 33-38  
 Tichelaar, —, 205, 206  
 Tilly, General, 166-168, 176  
 Toropetz, 372  
 Toulouse, 55, 330  
 Tournay, 194  
 Transvaal, 70  
 Transylvania, 170  
 Trent, Court of, 116  
 Trepow, General, 370, 372  
 Trèves, College of, 125  
 Trianon, 156  
 Tribunal, Revolutionary, 295  
 Tribunes, Ten, 15  
 Triple Alliance, 194, 195, 197  
 Tromp, Admiral, 193  
 Troubles, Court of, 119  
 Trubetzkoi, Prince, 243, 244  
 Turenne, Marshal, 200  
 Turgenieff, Ivan, 369  
 Turkey, 225, 363, 400, 401.  
 Turkey, European, 399  
 Tuscany, 13  
 Tver, 366  
 Twer, 138

UNITED NETHERLANDS, 195, 196  
 United Provinces, 192  
 United States, 343, 354, 381-385,  
 392

United States Territories, 68  
 Unterwalden, 67, 69  
 Uri, 67, 69  
 Uri, Lake of, 69

VARENNES, 273  
 Vauban, Marshal, 195, 200  
 Venus, Temple of, 29  
 Vergennes, Count de, 254  
 Versailles, 156, 157, 265, 334-336  
 Vienna, 176, 178, 180, 195, 215  
 Vienna congress, 316  
 Virgil, 155  
 Virginia, 343, 349  
 "Voice of the People," 386  
 Voltaire, 155, 287  
 Vorwärts, Marshal, 123

WALDSTÄDTE, Three (Forest Cantons), 67  
 Wallenstein, General, 163-188, 308  
 Wartburg, 320  
 Wartburg celebration, 321, 322  
 Washington, D. C., 346, 348, 393  
 Washington, George, 126, 127, 351, 388  
 Waterloo, 329  
 West Indies, 384  
 Western Hemisphere, 316  
 Westminster, 193  
 White Mountain, Battle of, 167  
 Wiesbaden, 404  
 Wiesloch, 167  
 William I., Prince of Orange, 109-128  
 William II., Prince of Orange, 192  
 William III., Prince of Orange, King of England, 199, 200, 203, 204, 207, 208  
 Wimpfen, 167  
 Wimpfen, General, 285  
 Winter Palace, 309, 376, 377  
 Wladimir, Grand Duchess, 135  
 Wladimir, Grand Duke, 135  
 Worcestershire, England, 57

# INDEX

World's Fair, 387  
 Worms, Diet of, 320  
 Woronzow, Elizabeth, Countess,  
     226, 227, 230, 236-239  
 Wunsiedel, 322  
 Würtemberg, 177

YORK, —, 318  
 Yssel, 201

ZEALAND, 115, 192, 195, 204  
 Zubow, Nicholas, 310, 311  
 Zubow Brothers, 307