

## Held at Bay by Coolness.

In the year 1868 I was at Molapololo, the chief town of Sechle, King of the Bakwana tribe of the Bechuana family. The situation of this town is so romantic, situated amid tall, perpendicular hills of red sandstone, that I had been loitering here for some little time, exploring the country, enjoying the society of Mr. Price, the missionary, or drinking Kappe beer with the King. Mr. H. Shelton, who keeps a large store here, also offered me hospitality, so that I had a prolonged period of enjoyment. But inactivity is liable to become irksome, and the arrival of a trader bound for Mangwato with a cargo of Cape brandy decided me to travel with him.

Mangwato is 133 miles north-north-east of Molapololo, and at the time I am writing of, was the capital of Machin, chief of the Bakalihar tribe of the Bechuanas. Not long before I visited the town, Machin had driven his brother Sekomo from the sovereignty.

The journey from Molapololo took fourteen days to accomplish, but it lay through a very pretty wooded region where big game was abundant, so that we had plenty of shooting. It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived at our destination and outspanned on the outskirts of the thickly populated town of some 12,000 inhabitants. News soon got abroad that the trader was loaded up with brandy, and the storekeepers, some fourteen in all, came flocking out of the station to make purchases. Conviviality was the order of the day, but unfortunately neither native or European was wise enough to distinguish the boundary line between moderation and excess, so that before night set in nearly all had indulged too freely, and a few continued the orgy until the small hours of the morning. As ill-luck would have it, the Rev. Mr. McKenzie and his family had only left the day previous for England, and, as there was nobody to act for him in his absence, we were left without a guiding hand in a perilous emergency. It must be understood that the native population at the time I am writing of was far less civilized than it is at present under Khama's enlightened rule; fierce and savage passions were easily aroused, and were with difficulty assuaged without terrible bloodshed.

When I went to bed that night I little dreamed that a dangerous crisis was being prepared by the foolishness of two or three reckless toppers. As it was, my peaceful sleep was rudely broken at daylight by the sudden outbreak of a tremendous uproar, resounding from one end of the town to the other, huge waves of indignation crashed into my ears with terrifying effect, and the clang of assagai and the rattle of knobkerries on shields told me only too surely that Machin's warriors were up in arms and bent on ruthless slaughter. Hastily arraying myself in a scanty costume, I jumped from the wagon and saw my driver and two Kafir boys standing trembling with fright, and uncertain what to do to insure the safety of their own skins. At this moment Strombom, a Mangwato trader, and a Swede by nationality, came rushing into my camp to tell me that chief had given orders that every white man should be killed. The news was not conducive to producing a good appetite for breakfast, but I could hardly believe it, as Machin had hitherto been a very good friend to the traders and others visiting his country and consequently I expressed my incredulity.

"I have no time to waste in argument," said the trader, "You must come up to my store, for if you remain here in the open you will be massacred to a dead certainty. Come back with me at once, for the road will be closed against us in ten minutes."

"But what is the reason for this sudden frenzy on the party of Machin?" I asked.

"Fitzgerald is the man who has caused it. After drinking himself idiotic through the night he took it into his head to kill a pig this morning. Then an idea passed through his crazed brain, and the fool proceeded to put it into execution. He cut a leg off the pig and marched with it straight to the kolla or enclosure, where the king was sitting in council with his chiefs. He advanced direct to Machin, and, thrusting the pork under his nose, asked him if he liked the smell!"

"It was foolish and insulting!" I exclaimed. "But it was not bad enough to warrant Machin to issue orders for our extermination."

"Ah, you do not know that the Bakalihar have an even stronger aversion to pork than the most orthodox Jew," said Strombom.

"That alters the case," I answered dolefully. "It seems that our plight is all but desperate."

"And that is Fitzgerald's condition also," continued Strombom. "The Indians did not allow the outrage to pass unpunished. They knocked him down and gave him such a severe beating that he is almost at the point of death."

"Poor beggar!" I could not help ejaculating.

"Now will you come with me?" urged my visitor. "Your wagon certainly will be looted, but that is nothing compared with losing your life."

I thought for a moment, but came to the conclusion that I should stand as much chance here as anywhere, so announced my determination of sticking by my property. Strombom urged me strenuously to alter my resolve, and at last, when he saw I was obstinate, hurried away to barricade himself in his store, a proceeding which all the other traders were adopting.

When Strombom left me to my own devices I felt annoyed at having refused his offer of protection, for the first marauding party might make short work of me with their assegais. What chance could I possibly have now that had prompted me to estimate my wagon and even as of value with my life! Yet the die was cast and even if I would I could not now reach my white brethren, for a band of Bakalihar was now rushing from

the station, blocking the only road to safety. And a veritable set of demons they looked as they brandished their long spears and yelled out vengeance in most blood-curling shrieks. I jumped on to the wagon box and saw the three rifles were loaded and ready to hand.

This apparent sangfroid seemed to stagger them. For they stopped their wild rush and stared at me with great curiosity, which seemed to increase when they noticed I had no offensive weapon within reach. What exactly passed through their minds as they saw me sitting there the least concerned of them all I cannot tell, but I believe they must have taken me for a wizard or medicine man. However, they merely jumped onto the front wheel, some poisoning their spears as if to hurl them at me, others flourishing knobkerries in my face, and all employing their tongues in such a voluble fashion that the noise they made prevented me from gathering their meaning. After enduring this unpleasant demonstration for quite five minutes, the warriors withdrew without so much as having touched me! Of course my driver and Kafirs had disappeared completely during the performance of this almost tragedy, and I could not help laughing when I saw them sneaking out of some native gardens as the hindmost of the enemy moved out of sight. Their astonishment was ludicrous when they found that I still possessed a whole skin, but I put on a stern air and angrily asked them where they had been.

"Ah, Boss!" exclaimed Piet, the driver, "I never thought to see you alive again."

"Yet, here I am, safe and sound, without having had to crawl away into the bush like a coward," I answered, so sternly that Piet looked thoroughly ashamed of himself, although his self-abasement could not entirely destroy the look of wonderment with which he still regarded me. Although we had so far escaped I still felt anything but safe, knowing full well that I should have many visits from bands of raging Bakalihar, anyone of which might prove fatal. Barely an hour had elapsed when my wagon was discovered by another furious horde, which came swooping down like a vulture on its prey. I repeated the same tactics of calm indifference, with arms folded and pipe emitting volumes of smoke—tactics which were so puzzling to the native mind that I again escaped with nothing more serious than a hostile demonstration. This kind of thing went on at intervals during the whole of the day, and I never felt more thankful than when the sun sank and darkness sent the yelling Kafirs to their hut.

The Bakalihar has probably been unsuccessful in this attack on the stores, for the shouts which went on through the night made me imagine that they had set a guard over the traders, while the bulk of the warriors turned in to rest until daylight, when the siege would be resumed. Somewhere about 2 in the morning the sentinels appeared to be getting drowsy, for their calls became less and less frequent, until they finally ceased altogether. I began to think that I might now take a little much needed sleep, so I awoke Piet, and was giving him strict instructions to keep a careful watch, when a loud cry from the adjoining bush arrested my attention. My hand was instantly clasped on a rifle, and I was raising it when the figure of my friend Strombom together with another trader, stepped out into the dull grey light. An exclamation of astonishment broke from both of them as they came nearer and recognized my features. "Thank God!" muttered the Swede. "We crept out here to give your body burial, and behold you rise up, unharmed to receive us. What miracle is this?"

"The whole thing is as puzzling to me as to you," I answered. And then I gave account of what had befallen me during the day.

"Your coolness saved you," said Strombom. "Had you fired one shot, you would have been mercilessly assaged."

"But how has it fared at the stores?"

"We have had our work cut out, I can assure you," said Strombom. "The black devils made most determined assaults upon our position, but by barricading the doors and windows with packing cases, boxes, planks, and anything we could lay our hands upon, we have managed to keep them at bay without firing a shot."

After a little further conversation my two friends left, and I am happy to say, safely accomplished their perilous return journey. When day broke the noise in the town increased and bands of armed men began to collect around the different stores to continue the assault. For some time I was in a woful state of anxiety, for want of rest made me doubtful whether my nerves would stand another day like the last. Nobody, however, came out to molest me, although the tumult at the station waxed louder and louder. Then, for some inexplicable reason the hubbub suddenly ceased, and a strange, almost oppressive silence reigned over everything. I was not left long in doubt as to the cause, for very shortly after an Indian, accompanied by a band of warriors, came slowly up to my wagon and informed me that Machin had consented to spare the lives of the white men, but that they must all leave the place, bag and baggage, by 4 o'clock that afternoon. Any one remaining after that time would be put to death!

The rest of the story is soon told. We sent a deputation to Machin to solicit permission to return to his town, as the outrage, which all deplored, had been committed by a drunken man who had already been very severely punished. After some demur Machin assented to the petition, but many, including myself, felt that Mangwato would be unsafe ground for some time to come, so we decided to go on to Molapololo. Fitzgerald recovered from his wounds, though he was ill for many a long day, and no doubt received a lesson which has made him a wiser man.

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## THE CZAR OF RUSSIA.

A GIANT IN YOUTH, BUT A HIGH LIVER AND DISSIPATED.

AN ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER—HIS SON, WHO WILL NOW TAKE THE THRONE, FOND OF GAY LIFE, STRONG-WILLED AND INSIGNIFICANT.

The Emperor Alexander III, who was born in 1845, was never expected to reign, but was intended to lead the life of a soldier. It was upon his brother Nicholas, the Czarevitch, that all the best training was lavished. It was he, who, as the eldest son, was supposed to be destined to ascend the throne and rule autocratically 100,000,000 unhappy Russians.

But his eldest son, tended like a hot-house plant, was over-educated, over-exhausted and died of physical and nervous exhaustion in the flower of his early manhood.

Alexander, who had always been regarded as the fool of the family, now became the heir to the throne.

What sort of a young man was he? What preparation had he received for the exalted position to which he would now in the fullness of time be called?

A GIANT IN YOUTH.

Well, he was a surly young giant. Opinions he was believed to have none. If he possessed any he at least kept them pretty much to himself. Like his brothers, Vladimir and Alexis, he was the performer of fabulous feats at the supper table. He was a splendid wrestler, extremely powerful, who could drink more champagne than any of his brothers and who took pleasure in imitating the tricks with which history has credited Peter the Great.

Thus he used to crush horseshoes in the hollow of his hand, rub silver rubles into tubes, between his thumb and finger, and used to sally forth with his brothers in disreputable drinking places, at night, in strict incognito, and thrash the assembled company. Whether he ever stopped the sails of a windmill in full motion, as Peter is reputed to have done, is not on record.

He had been brought up in strict belief in the orthodox Greek church, and while his father was a free-thinker and believed in little else than pleasure, the young Alexander swallowed whole the superstitions of his national Byzantine faith, and made of his religious preceptor, Pobedonostzeff, his friend and confidant, almost the keeper of his conscience.

For the rest, he cared little for books and less for art, but he delighted in the details of militarism, and, being big and strong, was on the whole harmless and even gentle, though harmless and self-contained.

HIS MARRIAGE.

It was this giant, living in intellectual darkness, who fresh from the wine cellars of St. Petersburg was thrown into the arms of the beautiful Dagmar of Denmark.

This princess had been betrothed to the heir-apparent to the Russian throne. What did it matter that Nicholas was dead? There was still an heir apparent! Her parents were poor and anxious for good matches for their daughters, besides there were high political reasons.

Her sister had married the Prince of Wales. Russia and England would thus become related. The ever-meddling Queen Victoria was suspected to have a finger in the pie. And then Denmark, the best part of which has just been swallowed up by Prussia, wanted powerful friends.

In short, the beauty and the beast were united, the beautiful Dagmar to the repulsive and dissipated Alexander.

The repulsive giant developed into what is called a good husband. But not suddenly. Horrid scandals had to pave the way. It was across the vilest wickedness of corrupt court that the road to domestic peace lay.

At first Alexander neglected his wife, who was too beautiful and delicate a flower for him to appreciate. But his father's attentions to her and the stories which these attentions called into circulation made him madly jealous. He satisfied himself that these were slanders, but he began to see that the flower he was neglecting was beautiful and sweet.

The Empress Dagmar certainly had as little brains as her husband. She was frivolous, and having been brought up in great poverty, was naturally very extravagant. She loved dress and vanities and especially dancing. If her husband was sullen and taciturn, a sort of Saul, she was a kind of female David, full of life and animation, and he grew to love her.

Alexander III. had few opinions and little learning, but he had an ambitious favorite in the person of his old tutor, Pobedonostzeff. This man is very nearly a genius—an evil genius, perhaps, but still a genius.

He saw that Russia was drifting towards republicanism. It was then the fashion to be either liberal and "Western" or to talk of a revival of the old Republic of Novgorod under the form of a confederation of all Slavonic countries.

TAKES THE THRONE.

A clever journalist saw how to turn this latter movement to account. He urged that the autocracy was a purely national institution, and that the confederation of Slavonic nations should be consummated under a czar. This man was Karkoff. He won over Pobedonostzeff, and he succeeded in inducing the Czarevitch to put himself at the head of this national party.

The Czarevitch hated his father. The stories about Dagmar and the treatment he had received as the fool of the family were sufficient for this, for he was resentful Alexander II. was a Western. He coquetted with France and Germany. His son hated both countries, and also hated theories.

When, in 1881, the czar fell a victim to the intrigues of his brother Constantine and was murdered, it was due largely to the energy of Vladimir, who then

commanded the Imperial Guards, that Alexander III. ascended the throne, and a palace revolution did not place the crown on Constantine's head. For this reason Alexander has forgiven his brother many acts of robbery and debauchery.

On the throne he remained the chief of the Slavonic party. But he was practical, and did not advocate any of those wild schemes which his friends wished him to carry out. He had commanded an army in the Russo-Turkish war, and knew something of the terrors of warfare. He was, therefore, obstinately in favor of peace. Besides, much as he respected the religious and intriguing fanatic Pobedonostzeff, the Empress hated this man, and so the fanatic never quite got the upper hand.

Alexander III. had a certain kind of cunning, which stupid men possess, and did not mind increasing the power of Russia by the arts of diplomacy. When his cunning failed him, as in the case of Bulgaria, he had the common sense to swallow his pride, and did not proceed to bloodshed. This was his great merit.

Otherwise he was an indifferent and lazy monarch, who governed Russia by means of favorites. He picked them up wherever he could find them, and prides himself on his faculty of discovering genius. In this respect he had something of Napoleon about him.

A GIANT IN YOUTH.

But all the talk of his great industry is sheer nonsense. He spent most of his time sleeping, eating and drinking. This was the cause of his disease. He did not take sufficient exercise. When his ministers presented him with projects of laws he would retire to his study and go to sleep over them.

He is also very miserly and hated expense. The furniture in his house is in a disgraceful state of untidiness because he grudged the money for repairs. In his dress also he is untidy, and his valets have the greatest difficulty in turning him out creditably.

He is very shy and a poor speaker. In fact, he has no talents, but he is an honest and a moral man, who tried to do his duty, who was brave and did not fear death, and who, if he could, would have done a great deal of good, but he had not the originality of character to rise superior to his advisers, and he was intensely jealous of his imperial authority.

Six foot three in height, weighing 250 pounds, the Emperor looks like a giant. He had small eyes, straight hard eyebrows, a small forehead, a fair beard and a course mouth. In appearance he is not unlike the peasants he ruled.

A very different person is Nicholas Alexandrovitch. Short in stature, insignificant in appearance, generally supposed to be an idiot, he has nevertheless many amiable and gentle qualities, and a kind heart, besides a very strong will.

Born in 1868, he developed so slowly and showed so few mental gifts, that his parents called in a specialist to pronounce upon his health. This scientific gentleman pronounced the youth a congenital idiot, and was nearly killed for his frankness by the irascible Czar, who gave him a swinging box on the ear.

But the young Prince, if very far from being a genius, is certainly no fool. He has the weedy physique of his mother, is very sallow, and has extraordinary expressionless bluish-gray eyes the bushy black eye-brows over which do not improve his appearance. He had lately grown a beard which has given him a more manly aspect, and made him look like the cousin he is of the Duke of York, but it is an ugly likeness. There is the square Tartar head and the curious Tartar snub-nose, which pronounces him a Russian.

As a boy his appearance driving through the streets of St. Petersburg, in his Cossack uniform, and seated in a small sleigh, was distinctly insignificant. The writer remembers seeing him in 1890, looking nervously at the passers-by in the street, as though he expected every next minute to have a bomb hurled at him. Imposing he was not, but simple, and kindly certainly.

His masters, charged with the duty of educating him for his great position, in the freedom of private conversation used to testify to his intelligence and application.

It has been stated that he has no knowledge of politics. This is not correct. For the last five years he has been in the habit of presiding over the council of state, a duty which his father's laziness made irksome to him. At these meetings the young man conducted the business with surprising ability and tact. Much more tact than his father ever showed.

CONDUCTORS AND THEIR TROUBLE.

"I hope this changing about of conductors will not result as it did when the G.T.R. and G.W.R. were amalgamated," says an old Grand Trunk conductor. "At that time a number of new men were put on at the same time, and the result was several serious mishaps. There is a wonderful difference to a man when he undertakes a new run besides his old, along which he knows every farm and cross road."

"The conductors now are being watched by means of commercial travellers' passes," he went on. "The company seem to believe that the travellers take many advantages of them. They cannot understand how 'Commercial ticket, No. —' for instance, can be at one station and later can loom up at another without having bought a ticket there. But it often happens that a commercial man will buy a cheap rate ticket that happens to be going, perhaps to a fair or something of the kind. Yet in such cases a suspicion is created, and thus conductors come to be talked about and watched."

"The last means used to get a conductor in trouble—and it was successful, too, in one case—was told to me by the Italian himself. The latter works upon the sympathies of the conductor by a pitiful story, and his white accomplice sits behind and buys a ticket when he has to. The fellow claimed to me to get \$50 for each job he reported,

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