

Historic Blackguards

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Robin Hood, Who "Robbed the Rich to Feed the Poor"

"Here, underneath this Lyttel stone, lies Robert, Earl of Huntingdon. For twenty years and something more he robbed the rich to feed the poor. No archer was as hee soe goode. And menne did call hym 'Robin Hood' Such outlaws as hee and bys meyne Will England never see agayne.

SO RUNS an old rhyme. The man about whom it was written undoubtedly lived and was known from one end of England to the other. But whether half the stories told about him is true is quite another matter. It is hard in writing of Robin Hood to sift fact from legend. This story can but tell the popular version of his career without vouching for its entire truth.

Robin Hood is said to have been born in 1160, and to have been a nobleman's son who, through injustice, was outlawed. He took refuge in Sherwood forest, in Nottinghamshire, England. There he gathered about him a band of unfortunate men as desperate as himself, and prepared to make war on the world at large.

It was a rude, violent age. Human life was held lightly. Laws were barbarous. For shooting deer in the royal forests the penalty was torture and (for the second offense) death. The barons and other rich and powerful men could overtax and ill-use the poor almost without restraint. Persons who suffered under such tyranny had usually no redress. Often they revenged themselves by plundering their former masters and by preying on humanity at large. Says one old historian (Stow):

"In this time were many robbers and outlaws, among which Robin Hood and Little John, renowned thieves, continued in the woods, despoiling and robbing the goodes of the rich. The said Robin suffered no woman to be oppressed or molested. Poore men's goodes he spared; abundantly relieving them with that which by theft he got from the houses of the rich. Of all thieves Maior (an early writer) affirmeth him to be the prince and the most gentle theefe."

Robin and his band dwelt in the greenwood, patrolling the highroads and holding up rich travelers. Especially did they enjoy capturing dishon-

est money lenders and cruel landlords. Robin's favorite method with such prisoners was to conduct them to his secret glade and there regale them with a feast. (The food consisted largely of stolen deer and dainties filched from noblemen's larders.) After the meal he would suggest that they pay for their entertainment by giving him all their money and jewels. At other times he would go, disguised, to some town, make friends with a local rich man and under some pretext lure him to the forest.

That Robin did not steal from the poor was not an especially noble trait. The poor had nothing worth stealing. Moreover, by helping the peasants with a little money now and then he made them his friends and gave them an interest in warning him against his pursuers.

Robin and his men were splendid archers. Their skill with bow and arrow reached the king's ears. His majesty is said to have been so much pleased with the band's archery that he pardoned them all. But Robin could not long remain out of trouble. He fell foul of the law once more, and the sheriff of Nottingham was sent to crush him. In the woodland battle that followed the sheriff's men were beaten off. Soon afterward Robin fell dangerously ill. There was no surgeon nearby. So his men carried him to a convent, where his cousin was a lay sister. She had great repute in medicine and Robin thought she might save him. She dared not refuse shelter to the sick man for fear of his followers' wrath. But she dared not cure him, lest the king should hear that the convent had harbored and aided an outlaw. So, according to the story, she opened a vein in his arm and left him to bleed to death.

When the dying man learned of her treachery he set his bugle to his lips and blew a feeble blast. Little John, his lieutenant, heard it, and rushed to the sick room. Robin, so runs the old ballad, forbade Little John to take vengeance on the convent. Then, setting arrow to bow for the last time, he sent the shaft whizzing out through an open window and begged to be buried at the spot where his arrow should strike earth.

A likeable, rollicking, sentimental outlaw. His life story (even stripped of all legend and folklore) seems to entitle him to a goodly place among Historic Blackguards.

The Earl of Leicester, a "Might-Have-Been" Who Failed

"Here lies a vallant warrior who never drew a sword. Here lies a wily courtier who never kept his word. Here lies the Earl of Leicester who governed the estates: Whom, living, Man could never love and a just Heaven now hates."

THIS scurrilous, mock-epitaph, written by a political foe, sizes up the character of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, far better than do the stately lines on his tomb. But neither of the two tell the most important thing about him: namely, that he probably came within an ace of being prince consort of England, husband of Queen Elizabeth, and (if the laws could have been juggled to fit the case) even king.

Leicester's only claims to success were good looks, charm of manner and total lack of conscience. Yet these three qualities lifted him higher than almost any other man of his day. He had the still further handicap of beginning his political career in prison. The start was not favorable. But the man's luck quickly made up for this drawback.

His father, the duke of Northumberland, plotted to make unlucky little Lady Jane Gray (his daughter-in-law) queen of England. Queen Mary, daughter of Henry VIII., crushed the plot, mounted the throne herself, and condemned to death Lady Jane, her young husband, and Northumberland himself. Robert Dudley (Northumberland's second son and Lady Jane's brother-in-law), was also thrown into jail, accused of a share in the conspiracy and sentenced to death. But he was soon set free and given a court position.

When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, her fickle fancy was caught by young Dudley. He was strikingly handsome—and she loved handsome men. He was a clever flatterer—and she adored flattery. She gave Leicester one high office after another, heaping rank and honors upon him to the scandal of all Europe.

There can be no doubt the queen was deeply in love with him. It was rumored that this capricious sovereign, who had stubbornly refused to marry any European prince or king, meant to bestow her hand on Dudley.

But there was a hitch in this plan. He was already married. When he was a mere youth he wedded Amy Robsart, daughter of a rich old knight. For years Amy had been kept away from court in an obscure Berkshire country house, Cumnor hall. There Dudley, once in a great while, visited her. But for the most part she lived a wretchedly lonely life. Now that

he was an aspirant for Elizabeth's hand, it became necessary for the neglectful husband to get rid of his wife. Accordingly, Amy was found one day lying dead in Cumnor hall, her neck broken.

It was soon after this tragedy that the queen raised Dudley to the rank of "Earl of Leicester." She also suggested him as a suitable husband for the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots. (This was thought to be a blind to hide her own love for him. Leicester afterward proposed that Mary, who was then a prisoner of Elizabeth's, be put out of the way by poison.) Elizabeth gave Leicester the magnificent castle of Kenilworth and other rich estates in Warwickshire. At this castle, in 1575 he entertained the queen for some days with a series of gaudy spectacles and revels that cost him \$300,000, which sum his various court officers doubtless permitted him to gain back from the people.

At this time his coming marriage to the queen was a matter of common talk. Just what wrecked the plan no one knows. In any case, something occurred to destroy Leicester's hopes and to turn him, in a moment from a possible prince consort to a mere "might have been."

He revenged himself by marrying the countess of Essex, whose husband he was suspected of poisoning. Elizabeth could never bear to have her courtiers look at any other woman except herself. She flew into a mad rage at news of Leicester's marriage and swore he should die in the Tower of London. But she soon forgave him and even afforded him new chances for official incompetency.

In 1588, in his fifty-seventh year, Leicester died. It was at the time, rumored that he met death by drinking a cup of poison he had prepared for his wife. This may have been a bit of malicious court gossip; or, if true, it may have implied that he still believed he could win Elizabeth's hand.

A Butcher Shop Idyl.

She was pretty and she looked soulful. "How much is porterhouse?" she timidly inquired.

"Umpty cents a pound," said the butcher, a large, coarse man.

"Oh, I cannot afford that. I'm discouraged at these high prices." She began to weep.

"Take heart," murmured a benevolent looking old gentleman.

"I guess I will. That comes cheaper. Please wrap me up half a pound."

MOST UNHAPPY QUEEN OF THE WORLD



The EMPRESS OF RUSSIA



The CZAR and EMPRESS OF RUSSIA



HEIR TO RUSSIAN THRONE



FROM time to time the press of Europe has recorded accounts of the ailments of the Russian empress. The Russian press, even now that there is supposed to be no censorship in Russia, is forbidden to print anything concerning the imperial family aside from the official reports distributed by the official news bureau. From the various fragmentary reports it has become known that the czarina, who had come to Russia with lofty ideals and a liberal western education, is an invalid and a martyr, alone in the palace of the czar, misunderstood and tormented with melancholy and fear.

Now a chronicler, intimately familiar with the home life of the Russian czar, has described vividly the sufferings of the woman who had hoped to reform the Russian czar and the Russian land, and it may be said without exaggeration, that Alexandra Feodorovna is today the unhappiest of all queens.

Princess Alice of Hesse-Darmstadt, according to the biographer of the czarina, lived amid ideal and idyllic surroundings throughout her childhood. The small, good looking princess, dressed as beautifully as her dolls, was told that the flowers daily presented her were so beautiful and fragrant for her sake, and that when she was crying, the little flowers were also shedding tears, and when she was laughing, the little flowers were kind hearted and obedient, and she did all she could to refrain from crying, for she recalled that every tear drop of hers would cause so much pain to all those who loved her.

But the tears she repressed in her childhood days she is shedding now within the walls of the palace, as the queen of the long suffering Russian people. Being of a sensitive, impressionable and artistic nature, the princess was deeply interested in the best kind of literature. She familiarized herself with the most important works of the masters of fiction in Europe and she even made some attempts at writing poetry and dramas.

As she was frail, the physicians feared that she was undermining her health by devoting most of her time to books, and she was told that her health was more important than all the books in the world, and then for the first time she learned that she was not free. The books were now selected for her by physicians and she was permitted to read only a very limited number of such books. To while her time away she took up the study of drawing, and soon showed considerable talent in that direction.

Little by little she commenced to notice the life beyond the boundary of her fairyland; she saw the life of the people who were suffering and starving, and she learned that what was new to her was not new to her father, to her mother, to her aunts, to all those who lived contented in her fairyland of luxury. And she began to ask herself the question which she was for a long time unable to answer: "How can they all remain care free and so shamelessly cheerful when beyond the windows of this palace is the moan of an entire suffering nation?"

Princess Alice became the czarina of Russia. She came to the Russian land at a time when the people, exhausted by the burden of absolutism, were returning from the funeral of Alexander III., and were hopefully waiting for a more merciful reign on the part of the new czar, Nicholas, who was reputed at that time to be a liberal.

The first day of the new reign was marked by the Khodynka tragedy, when thousands of people lost their lives amid the festivities. The tragedy made a profound impression upon the czarina. It seemed to her a foreboding of a terrible future.

The superstitious inclinations and weaknesses of the czar, manifested in his eagerness for a male heir to the Russian throne, filled the czarina with untold grief.

She had to obey the orders of various charlatans who were welcome advisers of the czar. And the intrigues directed against her in the

palace added to the misery of the young empress. She noticed that the czar was angry at her because she was "endeavoring to introduce in Russia western reforms and that she considered herself more intelligent than the entire household in the palace."

In the meantime storms of unrest had broken out in the land, and orders were given to pacify the discontented at all cost. The empress did not know of the horrors that were perpetrated in Russia, and when she learned of them she consoled herself in the thought that all the cruelties directed against the Russian people were not committed by order of the czar. She believed that the czar, like herself, was ignorant of what was going on in the land.

But she soon found out her error. Then her suffering grew ever more intense. She looked with disgust upon the clique surrounding her, upon their hypocritical smiles and greetings, but she was unable to change anything even in the palace. It was then that she became seriously ill.

When the empress had recovered she divided her time between her children and her desk. She turned once more to the reading of books and also devoted considerable time to writing. Nevertheless the feeling that she was alone and misunderstood in the palace weighed heavily upon her. She grew ever more and more melancholy.

One day, after having worked for some time upon the tragedy she was writing, the empress entered the czar's study. She found him seated at his desk looking over numerous documents. He brightened up when she entered and he kissed her hands.

"Why are you so sad?" she asked. "I am thinking of the future of our children," he replied.

The empress looked at him surprised. "I do not understand—" she began, looking into his troubled eyes.

"A plot has just been unearthed," he said cheerfully, yet with a shade of confusion.

"Oh, I know about it—" "No, I mean another plot—a new one. They have just learned of it today." And shaking his head he added:

"Do you understand now?" And he described to her in detail the conspiracy of the terrorists against his life. They became more sad than before. The shadow of danger was still hovering over their heads.

They endeavored to calm each other, but somehow their words were uncertain.

"Thank God, it is all over now," said the empress, heaving a deep sigh. "I had a terrible presentiment during the last few days. Wherever I went I could not rid myself of the terrible thoughts that haunted me."

"Really. Do you know," answered the czar, "I also felt ill, feverish, weak. They keep me in a constant state of terror."

The empress tried to calm him again. He smiled bitterly and handed her a document bearing numerous notes in red ink.

The empress made an effort to appear calm as she read the document, for she felt that the emperor was watching her closely.

"What wicked people! Savages!" said the empress as she looked up to him.

"That is exactly what is troubling me," replied the emperor with a sad, forced smile. "I should not like to leave to my son a heritage in such a dreadful state!"

"Do not speak of this, do not speak of this!"

The empress advanced to him and took his hand.

"With the help of God all will be well. All will be well!" she repeated. "And you, would you want to remain a widow?" the czar suddenly smiled strangely. His eyes were cold and moist.

The empress shuddered at these words. She released his hand and looked at him fixedly.

"My dear," she said in tremulous voice, "I have wanted to speak to you seriously for some time. This is impossible! Do you understand? This life we are leading is impossible. You must do something to change it. You must decide to do something!"

The empress' voice quivered and there were tears in her eyes.

"For my sake and four yours, for the sake of our dear children, do something! Even if you have to—even if you have to yield. Do it!"

"What can I do?" asked the czar. "Tell me. Do they know what they want? Some of the people want one thing, others want another. Don't you know that yourself?"

"Will you deny that there is a system of provocation and spying in Russia," she demanded.

The empress spoke with firmness and authority.

"There is an infernal machine in your hands," she said, "and you look upon it as a plaything. I know that upon some occasions you speak with

authority, but when a matter requires energy and determination you yield to the first adviser who knows how to influence you!"

Then the empress spoke more softly. "I understand that you often find yourself in an embarrassing position. But you believe everything that should be repulsive to you. You yield to flattery and—"

"My dear, do not talk to me about these fables. You and I cannot think of anything that will change all this. The laws of nature cannot be changed. Some of the people will demand water, others will demand fire. All I could do would be to make some concessions. Otherwise everything must remain as it is. It must be so. Do you understand?"

The czar seemed pleased with his words. He leaned back in his armchair and added angrily:

"I have tried everything!"

"But I cannot go on like this," cried the empress. "I cannot. I am going away. I have no strength any longer. I am afraid to look at myself! When I see myself in a mirror I am seized with terror."

"What can I do? You must consult the physicians."

The empress looked at him angrily and shook her head.

"Perhaps things will run more smoothly when you will be a widow," said the czar, rising from his seat and running back and forth in his study.

"That is nonsense," he said suddenly and rang the bell, pausing in the center of the room perplexed.

When the servant entered the czar shouted and stamped his feet. The empress had fainted. She was taken to her room and remained for a long time under the care of her physicians.

The czar neglected all important affairs of state when the empress was ill. In the evening the minister of the interior arrived at the palace with an important report. When he was ushered into the czar's study the czar shouted at him nervously:

"For God's sake leave me alone! The empress is ill! Do whatever you like! It is all the same to me."

When the minister of the interior offered a few words of consolation the czar interrupted him:

"I know you! I know everything! I know you all!" and he waved his hand.

The minister of the interior walked out of the czar's study confused and humiliated.

And the minister of the interior heard the czar shouting to himself: "Monarchy, constitution, anarchy. Even my nearest are against me."

The health of the empress was shattered and for a long time she was suffering from a nervous breakdown.

During that illness various rumors were spreading in the palace. It was said that the czarina was planning to leave the palace and return to her native land. It was then also rumored that she wanted the czar to abdicate and leave Russia. But all knew that she rebuked the czar for his lack of will power and determination