

Scottish Influences in Russian History

CHAPTER III.

**THE FIRST ROMANOFFS. MICHAEL FEODOROVITCH.
HIS SON ALEKSEI MICHAELOVITCH.
REFUSES TO RECOGNISE CROMWELL.
INFLUX OF ROYALIST SCOTS.
THE TSAR'S MARRIAGE TO NATALIA NARISHKINA, NIECE OF A HAMILTON.**

AFTER the quick change of Tsars, the Godounoffs, 'false Dmitris,' the Shuiskis, and the rapine and murder that came in their train, it was a mercy for Russia that, by what passed at that date for the will of the people, the first Tsar of the new Dynasty, Michael Feodorovitch Romanoff was elected. The Romanoff family stood high in popular estimation. They were descended in the female line from the Princes of Susdal of the blood of Rurik, connected by marriage both with the old Dynasty of Rurik and the newer one of Godounoff. More than all, the new Tsar was an amiable young man, soon to be supported by the guidance of his father, the Patriarch Philarete, and already by that of his mother, the astute Nun Marfa, in the world, Ksenia Ivanovna Shestova. He was summoned to the throne in March, 1613, and a stable Dynasty was once more established. [Even in the time of the Troubles trade must have continued with the West. In 1614 Jean Ruthven writes from Whitehall to Anna, Countess of Eglinton, about a 'bowat' or lantern. 'The casements of it is not of horne but of Moscovia glas, such a thing as will nether bow nor brek easily.' - *Historical MSS. Commission Reports, the Earl of Eglinton's MSS.*, p 43.] To have a better army was his first thought, and the fear of another Polish war forced him to send for foreign mercenaries to teach the native levies European methods. In 1614 foreign soldiers began to pour into Russia, preferably from Protestant countries, for the Orthodox Church looked askance at Catholics on account of their Polish sympathies. Still, in 1624 we note in the Russian service 445 foreign officers, 168 Poles, 113 'Germans,' who probably included the Scottish officers, Leslie, Keith and Matthison, and the Englishmen, Fox and Sanderson, and sixty-four Irish. Tsar Michael's army, says Dr. Nisbet Bain, [R. Nisbet Bain, *The First Romanovs*, p. 57.] 'was an improvement upon all previous Moscovite armies, but when it came to be tested in the Second Polish War, the chief event of Michael's later years, its inadequacy was most painfully demonstrated.'

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In 1631, when the first Romanoff reigned, a Scot, Sir Alexander Leslie of Auchintoul, arrived in Russia with a letter from King Charles I. to the Tsar Michael. The Patriarch Philarete, then co-regent, sent him to Sweden to hire 5000 infantry, and persuade smiths and wheelwrights, carpenters, etc., to come to Russia. He was successful, and by the end of 1631 there were 66,000 mercenaries in MOSCOW. [R. Nisbet Bain's *Slavonic Europe*, pp, 194-195.] Another Scot, Captain William Gordon, was at the same time in the Muscovite service, and in 1634, a Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Gordon. He appears in Sir Thomas Urquhart's 'Jewel' among the 'Scottish Colonels that served under the great Duke of Muscovy, against the Tartar and Polonian.' Among Sir Thomas Urquhart's Scots was another, 'Colonel Thomas Garne, agnamed the Sclavonian and upright Gentile, who, for the height and grossness of his person, being in his stature taller, and greater in his compass of body than any within six kingdoms about him, was elected King of Bucharia,' a statement that we feel still needs verification!

In the reign of the next Tsar, Aleksei Michaelovitch (1645-1676), we find a marked increase in Scottish influence in Russia. He it was, and not his greater son, who first saw the necessity of more foreign soldiers. Two regiments, 'one of cavalry and one of infantry, were commanded by a Scotsman as Colonel, and have a staff's company in each of them. He received four times the usual pay.' [Tooke's *View of the Russian Empire*, p. 474.] This Scot was probably Sir Alexander Leslie of Auchintoul, already mentioned as in the Russian service. On 28th March, 1633, Captain James Forbes had had a Royal Letter to allow him to raise in Scotland 200 men for the Russian service under Sir Alexander Leslie, and on 1st May, 1633, a warrant to levy the same number of men for Sir Alexander Leslie, Knight, 'Generall Colonel of the Forrain forces of the Emperour of Russia,' [*Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vol. v. 2nd series, pp. 79, 548.] was granted, and though the Parliamentary Wars broke out soon, there is no doubt many Scots went to Russia and into the Russian Army.

The new Tsar sent an ambassador, Docturoff (Gerasimus), to England to inform King Charles I. of his accession. The troubles were far afield by that time, and Parliament, which offered to receive his credentials, was spurned by him. In May, 1646, when he heard that the King had surrendered to the

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Parliament, the Russian again demanded an audience. Eventually he was presented to both Houses, but he still refused to present his credentials to anyone but the King. In consequence of his report the Tsar rescinded the privileges of the English merchants in Russia, and, when news arrived of the execution of Charles I., Aleksei issued a *Ukase* forbidding them residence in his Empire. 'At the request of your sovereign, King Charles, and because of our brotherly love and friendship towards him,' he wrote, 'you were allowed to trade with us by virtue of letters of commerce, but it has been made known to us that you English have done a great wickedness by killing your sovereign, King Charles, for which evil deed you cannot be suffered to remain in the realm of Muscovy.' [R. Nisbet Bain, *The First Romanovs*, p. 98.] This did not affect the Scots, whom the Tsar welcomed from their loyalty. Cromwell he abhorred, and with him he had 'no dealings,' so the exiles who upheld the Stuart cause were welcomed with open arms.

In 1656 Thomas Dalrymple of Binns, who never shaved his beard after the execution of his beloved master, King Charles I., and another loyalist, William Drummond of Cromlix, entered the Russian service together. The former became a General, and the latter a Lieutenant-General, and both returned to Scotland (only permitted to do so by the Tsar at the direct entreaty of King Charles II.) in 1665. The autocratic rule they bore over their men was noticed by the unfortunate Covenanters after their return home. Kirkton [*History of the Church of Scotland*, p. 225.] wrote of Dalrymple as a man whose 'rude and fierce natural disposition had been much confirmed by his breeding and service in Muscovia, where he had the command of a small army and saw nothing but tyranny and slavery,' while Bishop Burnet wrote of 'Drummond' that he 'had yet too much of the air of Russia about him, though not with Dalziel's fierceness.' Dalrymple was also denounced as 'a Muscovia beast who used to roast men,' and accused of having, with General Drummond, 'who had seen it in Muscovia,' introduced the playful torture of the 'thumbmiks' or thumbscrews into Scotland, though Lord Fountainhall [*Historical Notices of Scottish Affairs*, i. p. 32, ii. p. 557] has to point out that it was already known there, though called by 'another name,' *i.e.* 'the pilliewincks.' These two Generals were 'nobly entertained' by the Tsar, and Drummond became Governor of Smolensk. He was created, in 1686, Viscount Strathallan, and Dalrymple died at Edinburgh in August, 1685.

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One must note also Paul Menezius, a son of Sir Gilbert Menzies of Pitfoddels, who came to Russia from the Polish service in 1661, with Patrick Gordon. The Tsar Aleksei at once singled him out and matched him to a Russian wife, and in 1661-2, he became (as we shall see) a member of the suite of the Boyar Feodor Michaelovitch Milotawski, envoy to Persia. In 1672 he acted as the Tsar's envoy to Prussia and to Vienna to propose a league against the Turk. He proceeded to Rome to petition Pope Clement X. to assist Poland against the Sultan, and brought off his mission (which involved the question of the full obeisance as an equivalent of kissing the Pope's slipper and other difficult questions) with dignity. He returned from his mission in 1674, and advanced in rank. He is said to have been tutor to Peter the Great until 1682, when the Regent, Princess Sophia, sent him to Smolensk, and made him take part, in 1689, in the war against the Tartars of the Crimea. The Narishkins called him back to Moscow in that year, where he died, a Lieutenant-General, 9th November, 1694, leaving a wife and children. [As a faithful Catholic and a good Scot, he, when at Rome, obtained from Pope Clement X. the permission for a service commemorating Saint Margaret, Queen of Scotland. (See also Chapters IV., V.)] Several of the Catholic family of Menzies tried their fortune in Russia under the hospitable Tsar; Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Menzies of Balgownie was another. He married at Riga in July, 1651, 'the Ladie Marie Farserson, borne of noble and honourable parentage in the dukedome of Curland,' and was wounded and taken prisoner by his countryman, Lord Henry Gordon (fighting for the Poles), at Szudna, in 1660. We are told that he 'dyed of his woundes in Ukraine, and was buried in the fields at Szudna.' We shall see that his widow remarried, in 1661, Ruitmaster Ryter at MOSCOW. [He is also styled Sir William Reuter. By her first husband she had three sons, Thomas Alexander, who died young at Riga, John Lodovick, and William, both living in February, 1672.]

Sir Alexander Leslie of Auchintoul, who, as we have seen, was the chief of the permanent foreign legion, remained in Russia, and did not return to Scotland to die, like Generals Dalryell and Drummond. He became 'a Colonel there under the Great Duke of Musco' and 'had a son there called Theodorus.' [*Macfarlane's Genealogical Collections* (Scottish History Society), vol. i. p. 66.] He was made General and Governor of Smolensk, and died in 1661 at the great age of ninety-five. Two other Leslies, probably basking in his great favour, Alexander (a son of Kininvie) who 'died sans Issue being a Captain,'

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and a Leslie of Wardis, were in Russia about the same time, as well as George Leslie, a Capuchin at Archangel.

It is pleasant to be able to reconstruct a little the *coterie* of Sir Alexander Leslie of Auchintoul from the demands for 'Birthbrieves,' which some of his brothers-in-arms desired and obtained to prove their nobility. In 1636 (13th October) the Privy Council of Scotland [*Reg. vi. and series, p. 327.*] allowed 'Colonel John Kynninmonth, Governor of Nettenburg in Russia,' of an adventurous family who had an offshoot also in Sweden, to have his 'Certificat of his lawful birth and progenie . . . exp'd under the Great Seal.'

The Keith family, - to distinguish themselves in Russia so greatly, - sent an offshoot there early. One 'Lieutenant George Keith, who did serve under the Lord of . . . as levtenant Colonell in Ireland and is now certanely informit to be departit this lyff in Muscovia some yeirs ago.' [Perhaps this Keith sent home the picture which belonged to Mary, Countess Marischal (wife of the head of the Keith family) at the House of Fetteresso, 25th October, 1722, and was marked in her Inventory as 'The Czar of Moscovie.' - *The Lords Elphinstone of Elphinstone*, by Sir William Fraser, K.C.B., vol. ii. p. 274.] He left an heir, Alexander Keith, who claimed, [*Birthbrieves from the Registers of the Burgh of Aberdeen* (Spalding Club Miscellany), viii. p. 340.] 8th July, 1662, under the guardianship of his mother's brother, Sir Alexander Keith of Ludquharn, to be 'only lawful son' of Major William Keith, only son of Robert Keith of Kindruct, eldest brother of the Russian soldier. Perhaps the latter's widow or daughter (forgotten by or not known to her Scottish relatives) was the Juliana Keith whose marriage in the Moscow *Sloboda* of the Strangers we shall find witnessed by Patrick Gordon.

There is also a petition for a 'borebreiff' from Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Hamilton, who thought that a deed under 'the great seall' would 'clear his descent,' and got it, 1st March, 1670. He was eldest son of Sir Alexander Hamilton of Fenton and Innerwick in East Lothian, and is stated [*Douglas, Baronage of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 462.] to have left no issue.

We notice that in 1665 'ane Kenedy,' a Scot, was at Moscow apparently connected with medicine, as he was with the English doctor who 'lodged by Dr. Collins,' the Tsar's physi-cian, who published, in 1671, an excellent and

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rare book on “The Present State of Russia.” Kennedy was entrusted with letters to Scotland [Diary of Patrick Gordon, p. 69.] but they never reached there, as he (though he lived after) ‘had a fitt of a frensy’ at Riga.

It is also quite possible that Christopher Galloway, the ‘English clockmaker,’ who went out to the Court of the Tsar Michael Feodorovitch, and was later the architect of the Tower of the Troitski Gate of the Kremlin in Moscow, built early in the seventeenth century, was from North Britain, as his name would seem to indicate.

We have already mentioned the marriages of two sisters, Hamiltons, of the Sloboda, one to Artamon Sergievitch Matveeff, the Tsar’s favourite and chief Boyar, and the other to Feodor Poleukhtovitch Narishkin. These had a marked effect on the position of the Scots, and in the following way. There lived, it is said, much with Matveeff and his Scottish wife, [Dr. Collins, the Tsar’s English Physician, however, says that the Grand Master of the Court, ‘Bogdan Batfeidg’s’ fondness for Polish girls made his wife so jealous that he had her poisoned and that he had heard he was about to marry a former love. Perhaps this was his second wife. He adds ‘He did not love the English, having been gained over by the Dutch, by presents.’] her sister’s niece, Nathalia Kirillovna Narishkina, a pretty Russian *Barinia*. Madame Matveeva educated her according to the free manner of the Scots, allowing her to receive male visitors, a practice horrible to the cloistered seclusion of the women of the Russian *Terem*. After the death, in 1669, of his first wife, Maria Ileinishna Miloslavskaya, the Tsar, Aleksei Michaelovitch, seeking distraction, went to see his familiar friend Matveeff, and in his house met his *protegee*. Attracted by the girl, he first promised her a husband, and then demanded her in marriage. Matveeff, frightened at the honour, and more especially at the un-Byzantine way the lovers had met, begged the Tsar to reconsider his decision. A *via media* was found. The Byzantine ‘choice of brides’ was summoned. Sixty Boyars’ daughters came to the Tsar’s call, and then, as may be imagined, the middle-aged Tsar made choice of Nathalia and wedded her on 21st January, 1672.

Nathalia Narishkina thus became mother of Peter the Great, and though she did not do anything extraordinary herself for the Westernisation of Russia, she undoubtedly instilled the desire for it into the great brain of her son. Her influence with her husband was considerable. She was allowed to go

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unveiled, and, once at least, to 'receive,' and - unheard of innovation - to drive in an open coach or litter; and owing to her influence, he, who began his reign with religious discussions and persecution of sorcerers, ended it by seeing the first theatrical performances in Moscow.