

**DMITRI: A DRAMATIC  
SKETCH FROM  
RUSSIAN HISTORY**

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Dmitri: A Dramatic Sketch from Russian History by G. G. Alexander

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**G. G. ALEXANDER**

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# DMITRI

*A DRAMATIC SKETCH from RUSSIAN HISTORY*

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL G. G. ALEXANDER, C.B.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THERE are few more striking instances of successful imposture than that of the individual who, at the commencement of the seventeenth century, became Czar of Russia, and who is known in history as 'the False Demetrius.' A variety of circumstances had combined to favour his attempt. The energetic, but ruthlessly cruel, rule of Ivan 'the Terrible' had been followed by a period of anarchy, and the general discontent was intensified by the horrible and widely-spread sufferings, consequent on a succession of bad seasons, so that society had become completely disorganised, and all classes were ripe for revolt. A leader was alone wanted, and when a pretender appeared, and put forward a claim which appealed to some of the most cherished popular convictions, he obtained ready credence and support. But although



he was a man of remarkable ability, who had prepared himself with the greatest care for the part he had to play, his success would have been extremely doubtful had it not been for the aid afforded him—unquestionably on political grounds—by Sigismond and the Polish Diet; neither could it have been assured had he failed to persuade the weak or ambitious Marpha—for the motives by which she was actuated seem doubtful—to recognise him as her son; and in the following pages it is upon her action in this matter that his success is made mainly to depend.

In dealing with the character of Dmitri, the author, whilst preserving its most salient features, has sought to depict the strange complexities and contradictions, which would seem inseparable from the individuality of one who had made deception his rule of life, and whose very success had filled him with a cynical contempt for those whom he had deceived; but it is only in the incidents which serve as the groundwork of the plot—such as the pretender's recognition by Marpha, his marriage with Marina, the pardon of Schouiski, the fidelity of Basmanoff, and the 'émeute' which ended in his death—that any attempt has been made to preserve strict historical accuracy.

The episode itself is one singularly adapted for dramatic treatment ; but the author of the following sketch would hardly have ventured upon it, had he known at the time that the outline of a drama on the same subject, exhibiting in the boldness of its touches the skilful hand of a great master, was amongst Schiller's unfinished works.

