THE MEMOIRS OF
CATHERINE
THE GREAT

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CHAPTER I

THE FIRST YEARS

(1729–1739)

I was born on April 21st, 1729 (forty-two years ago) at Stettin in Pomerania. I was told later that, a son having been more desired, my arrival as the first-born had given rise to some disappointment. My father, however, showed more satisfaction at the event than all the rest of the entourage. My mother almost died in bringing me into the world and it took her nineteen irksome weeks to recover.

My wet-nurse was the wife of a Prussian soldier; she was only nineteen, gay and pretty. I was placed in the care of a lady who was the widow of a certain Herr von Hohendorf and acted as companion to my mother.

I was told that the lady showed so little sense in her treatment of me that I developed an unaccountable obstinacy. She also showed little sense regarding my mother and was soon dismissed. She was very abrupt and fond of raising her voice; she succeeded so well in her method that I never did as I was told unless the order was repeated at least three times and very loudly.

When I was two I was consigned to the care of a French refugee, Madeleine Cardel, who had a sycophantic and obsequious disposition, and the reputation of being slightly false; she took great care that I should please my father and mother in every way and thus gain their approval of herself.

This caused me to become very secretive for my age. My father, whom I saw very seldom, considered me to be an angel, my mother did not bother much about me. She had had, eighteen months after my birth, a son whom she passionately loved, whereas I was merely tolerated and often repulsed with violence.
and temper, not always with justice. I was aware of all this, but not always able to understand what I really felt about it.

When I was about four years old, Madeléine Cardel married a lawyer called Collard and I passed into the hands of her younger sister, Elizabeth. I do not hesitate to say that she was a paragon of virtue and wisdom; she had a natural spiritual quality, a kind heart, an educated mind; she was patient, gentle, gay, just, loyal; in truth all that one would always hope to find in a guardian of children. On Madame Collard's wedding-day I drank too much at dinner, refused to go to bed without her, and shouted so loud that I had to be carried away and put to bed between my father and mother.

At first I took an acute dislike to Babé Cardel; she did not flatter me, or caress me, as her sister had done; I was later, by giving and promising the various sweetsmeats, succeeded in destroying my teeth and in teaching me to read more or less adequately without knowing how to spell. Babé Cardel, who was not, like her sister, fond of frippery, put me back to the alphabet and made me spell the words out until I felt confident that I could do without it. I had a writing teacher and a dancing teacher; the writing teacher traced letters in pencil and I had to go over them in ink; the dancing teacher made me walk and execute a few steps on the table, but I am certain that it was money misspent for I really learnt to write and dance much later. This is how too precocious an education usually leads one nowhere.

When I was three my father and my mother took me to visit my grandmother in Hamburg. The only event that I recall of this journey was being taken to the German opera, where I saw as an actress dressed in blue velvet embroidered with gold; she held a white kerchief in her hands and when I saw that she was wiping her eyes with it, I began to weep and wait so broken-hearted that I had to be sent back home. This scene left such an impression on me that I remember it even now.

1 This was a maternal grandmother, the Duchess of Holstein-Gottorp, born Albertine-Méridée of Baden-Durlach, who after the death of her husband, the Lutheran Bishop of Lübeck, resided usually in Hamburg. (Ed.)

Back in Stuttgart I almost killed myself in the following manner. I used to play in my mother's room where there was a cupboard to which I had the key, full of toys and dolls. One day I so contrived that the cupboard fell down on me, covering me completely, so that my mother believed I had been crushed under its weight. She rushed to my rescue, but the doors of the cupboard having luckily been flung open, it merely penned me in and I lay there safe and sound, quite unhurt except for the shock. On another occasion I almost perforated my eye with a pair of scissors, the edge injuring the eyelid.

In 1754 my mother gave birth to a second son. The elder, who became gradually lame, only lived to the age of twelve when he died of a purpuric fever. After his death they discovered the reason why he could walk only with crutches. He had undergone many ineffective cures after examination by the most famous German doctors, who would send him to Aix, Teplitz, and Karlsbad. He returned from these cures as lame as before and his leg shrunk as he grew taller. After his death the autopsy revealed that he had a sprained hip—the accident could only have happened shortly after his birth.

I do not remember ever being ill until I was seven—the only ailment I was prone to being that kind of rash which covers the head and the hands and frequently occurs with children, called zolotukha¹ in Russian. As the cure is more dangerous than the disease, no remedy therefore was applied to me. When my head was affected it was shaved, the scalp powdered, and I had to wear a bonnet. When it appeared on the hands I had to wear gloves until the scabs fell off.

At the age of seven I was suddenly seized with a violent cough. It was the custom that we should kneel every night and every morning to say our prayers. One night as I knelt and prayed I began to cough so violently that the strain caused me to fall on my left side, and I had such sharp pains in my chest that they almost took my breath away. I was carried into my bed where I

¹ Probably the dermatitis commonly called impetigo. The disease might also be of a scrofulous nature. (Ed.)
remained for three weeks, lying always on the left side and coughing, with a high fever and sharp pains in the chest. There was no doctor well enough versed in his science in the neighbourhood. I was given many mixtures to take, but God alone knows what they were!

Finally, after much suffering, I was well enough to get up and it was discovered, as they started to put on my clothes, that I had in the meantime assumed the shape of the letter Z; my right shoulder was much higher than the left, the backbone running in a zigzag and the left side falling in. The women who attended me, also my mother's women, whom they consulted, decided to break the news to my father and my mother. The first step undertaken was to swear everybody to secrecy concerning my condition. My parents were distressed to see one of their children lame, the other a cripple. Finally after consulting several experts in strict confidence, it was decided to summon a specialist in matters of dislocation.

They searched for one in vain; they were loath to ask the only man who knew anything about it, as he was the local hangman. For a long time they hesitated. Finally, under a pledge of great secrecy, he was called in and only Babet Cardel and a household were allowed into the secret. This man, after examining me, ordered that every morning at six, a girl should come to me on an empty stomach and rub my shoulder and backbone with her saliva. Then he proceeded to fabricate a sort of frame, which I never removed day or night except when changing my underclothes, and every other day he came to examine me in the morning. Besides this he made me wear a large black ribbon which went under the neck, crossed the right shoulder round the right arm, and was fastened at the back. I do not know whether it was because of all these remedies or that I was not meant to become a cripple, but after eighteen months I began to show signs of straightening out. I was ten or eleven when I was at last allowed to discard this most cumbersome framework.

1 That is, corset. (Ed.)

At the age of seven all my dolls and other toys were taken away, and I was told that I was now a big girl and therefore it was no longer suitable that I should have them. I had never liked dolls, and found a way of making a plaything out of anything, my hands, a handkerchief, all served that purpose. The trend of my life went on as before and this deprivation of toys must have been a mere question of etiquette, as no one interfered with me in my games.

Early in my life it was discovered that I had a good memory and I was constantly urged to learn things by heart; this was supposed to cultivate memory, but in my opinion it weakened it. Sometimes it would be fragments from the Bible, then pieces specially composed for memorizing, or La Fontaine's fables, that I had to learn by heart or recite, and I was scolded when a word escaped me. I do not believe that it could be humanly possible to remember all that I had to learn by heart, nor that there was any point in doing so. I have kept to this day a German Bible, in which all the verses I knew by heart are marked in red ink.

I was given a teacher to instruct me in religion, to teach me history and geography. I learnt French and German as a matter of course. One day I asked this Lutheran priest, for that was what my teacher was, which of the Christian Churches was the most ancient. He told me that it was the Greek Church and that it was also the one closest to the teachings of the Apostles, he was convinced of that. From then onwards I have always had a great respect for the Greek Church and curiosity to learn about its doctrine and ceremonies. Now I am the head of that Church.

I remember having several wrangles with my instructor, for which I risked being flogged. The first was because I considered it unjust that Titus, Marcus Aurelius, and all the great men of antiquity, virtuous as they were, should have been damned because they did not know about the Revelation. I maintained my point with passion and determination, arguing in favour of justice, with a priest who based his opinions on passages from the Bible.

The priest complained to Babet Cardel and wanted to resort to the rod in order to convince me. Babet Cardel was not authorized to perform such operations; with great gentleness she told me that
a child should not be so obstinate when arguing with a respected man of the Church and that I ought to accept his views. Babet Cardel was a Protestant and the clergyman, as I said before, a determined Lutheran.

The second argument arose about what had preceded the world. He told me that there had been chaos and I wanted to know what that chaos had been like. His reply never seemed to satisfy me, we both lost our tempers and Babet Cardel once again was summoned to our rescue.

My third quarrel with the clergyman concerned circumcision:

I was told to know what the meaning of it was and he refused to explain it to me. Babet for once exhorted me to silence. I yielded to her alone; she smiled to herself and reasoned with me so gently that I could not resist her. All my life, in fact, I preserved this inclination to yield only to gentleness and reason—and to resist all pressure.

The clergyman was bent on lowering my spirits: during one autumn he talked to me so much of the Last Judgment and of the arduous task of working out one's salvation that every night, at dusk, I would go and cry by the window. At first nobody noticed my despondency, but finally Babet Cardel became aware of it and wanted to know the reason. I was reluctant to confide in her, but did so in the end and she had the common sense to speak to the clergyman and prevent him from instilling further terror in me.

I was instructed in various womanly tasks, but took as little interest in them as I did in reading. I wanted to write and draw—but I learnt little drawing for want of a good teacher. Babet had a remarkable method for making me concentrate on my work and do anything she wanted: she loved reading; when my lessons were over, if she was satisfied with the results she would read aloud to me, if not, she read to herself. I was heart-broken when deprived of that honour.

Babet taught me to sing. She had a lovely voice, she was fond of singing and knew a lot about music. After seven years of vain effort she declared that I had neither voice nor talent for music. She was right on both points. Only a lute-player called Belo...
family, was glad to relinquish one daughter to that lady whose
claim to her was that of the successor to the rights of her husband's
first wife, my grandfather's sister.

My mother, on whom the choice fell, was brought up on the
same footing as the Duchess's daughter. The Duchess arranged
for her marriage and dowry. In 1736, I went with my mother to
visit her benefactress. I was sated and made much of, small as I
was; so often was I told that I was clever, that I was grown up,
that I began to believe it. I took part in all the entertainments, the
late nights, the balls and masquerades, I chattered like a magpie
and was insufferably forward. To illustrate this, when I was four
years old the late King of Prussia arrived at Stettin and I was told
to kiss his coat. I was summoned into his presence. I went up to
him and every time I tried to catch his coat, he pulled it away.
So I turned towards my mother and said loudly: 'His coat is so
short that I cannot reach it. Is he not rich enough to have a
longer one?' He wanted to know what I had said. It was repeated
to him, by whom I do not remember, and he then laughed and
said: 'Das Mädchen ist naseweis.' One could see he was not too
pleased. But after that my father went to Berlin or the King
came to Stettin he always asked about me.

In 1737 I went for the first time with my mother to Berlin. The
present Queen, who was there at the time, expressed the wish to
see me. I went to the Palace where they let me chatter and play. I
had supper with the Queen and then with the Prince Royal. We
stayed all the winter in Berlin and the rest of the time until 1747
in Stettin and then in Zerbst.

1 Frederick-William I, King of Prussia, who ruled from 1716 to 1740.
2 He had noticed the intelligence sparking in the child's eyes. One day he
was going to use it. (Ed.)
3 'The little girl is very saucy.' (Ed.)
4 Elizabeth of Brunswick who married in 1733 the Crown Prince, the
future Frederick II. (Ed.)
5 Prince Henry of Prussia, younger brother of Frederick II. (Ed.)

CHAPTER II

THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

(1739–1744)

I began to grow taller and the extreme ugliness with which I
was afflicted was beginning to disappear when I went to visit the
future King of Sweden, my uncle, then Bishop of Lübeck, in
Eutin in 1739. There I met for the first time the Grand Duke,
who was good-looking, well-mannered, and courteous; in fact,
this boy of eleven, whose father had just died, was considered a
prodigy. He was pale and looked delicate; the trouble was that his
entourage tried to make this child behave as an adult and forced
him to a strict discipline, thus developing in him deceitfulness and
hypocrisy.

It was rumoured that he already had a great inclination for
drink and that his tutors had difficulty in preventing him from
getting drunk at table. He was hot-tempered and rebellious, and
disliked his tutors, especially Marshal Brumner, a Swede by
origin. It was rumoured that Brumner, the moment he became
aware of the Empress's intention to make the Grand Duke her
heir, deliberately proceeded to undermine his character, just as

1 The elder brother of Catherine's mother, Adolf-Frederick of Holstein
Gottorp, who in 1743 was elected Crown Prince of Sweden. (Ed.)
2 Catherine's future husband, Duke Charles-Peter-Ulrich of Holstein.
3 His mother was a daughter of Peter the Great and died of consumption
two months after his birth. Charles Frederic, Duke of Holstein, nephew of
Charles XII, King of Sweden, was his father. When he died, he left his son
in the guardianship of his cousin, Adolf-Frederick, Bishop of Lübeck, subse-
sequently King of Sweden. In 1744 Elisabeth, Empress of Russia, summoned
the Duke to St. Petersburg to declare him heir-apparent and conferred
upon him the title of Grand Duke and the name of Peter Fedorovich. (Ed.)

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CHAPTER III

'INVITATION AU VOYAGE'

(1744)

On January 1st, 1744, we were all sitting at the dinner table when my father was handed a large parcel of letters. After tearing open the first envelope, my father passed to my mother several letters addressed to her. I was sitting beside her and recognized the writing of the Marshal of the Duke of Holstein's Court, Brunnherg. (The Duke was then a Russian Grand Duke.) My mother had written to him now and then since 1739 and he replied to her. My mother opened the letter and I saw the words: 'With the Princess, her elder daughter.'

I realized at once what it meant—I guessed what followed and it turned out that I had guessed right. My mother was being invited by him, on behalf of the Empress Elizabeth, to come to Russia under the pretext of expressing her gratitude to Her Majesty for all the favours the latter had bestowed upon my mother's family. True, my grandmother had received from her an annuity of ten thousand roubles, the Bishop, my mother's brother, had been proclaimed by her heir to the throne of Sweden, and my mother had received the Empress's portrait framed in diamonds when she gave birth to my sister Elizabeth, to whom the Empress stood godmother. As soon as we rose from the table.

1 Elizabeth had seized the Russian throne in December 1741. She had been helped in the coup d'etat by the French Ambassador, the Marquis de Chateaude, who had given her money to distribute among the men of the Preobrazhenski regiment; he had had orders to encourage a revolution which would put an end to German influence and break the Austrian alliance. Elizabeth was twenty-eight. She was bold and beautiful, a taste liked by my father and mother who retired alone to another room and the whole house was astir; everyone else was summoned into their presence but no one addressed a word to me.

Three days went by in this way. Since the last journey to Hamburg my mother had made more fuss about me than she had ever done before. This caused me to become bolder towards her. Two things had contributed to this. The first was that Count Gylenburg, while visiting my grandmother's house every day, had had occasion to become better acquainted with my mother and myself. He noticed that my mother paid but little attention to me and said to her one day: 'Dear lady, you do not know your child. I guarantee that he has more wit and merit than you give him credit for. Please pay a little more attention to him than you have done until now—he deserves it, anyway.'

Count Gylenburg was determined to lift my mind towards the finest sentiments and the highest principles with which young people could be inspired. I absorbed them greedily and benefited from them.

The second thing that enhanced my importance in my mother's eyes was the affection of my uncle which carried a lot of weight with her. She treated me as though I were her future sister-in-law; she did not know, I never knew, whether she had in any way committed herself in this regard, but I venture to think that it was so, because I know that she tried to influence my father against the journey to Russia and it was I who finally made my parents take this decision. This is now I proceeded to do it.

After three days had elapsed I came into my mother's room in the morning and told her that the letter she had received on New Year's Day was stirring up rumours in the whole household. She asked me what was being said about it. I replied that the opinions pronounced were varied but that I, personally, knew without doubt what the letter contained. She wanted to find out how much

would readily drink with her men in their barracks, and agree to be godmother to their children. She immediately became very popular, having, as a Russian, chased away the Germans, who had tyrannized the people in the preceding reign. (Ed.)
I knew and I told her that it was an invitation on behalf of the
Empress of Russia and that I was included in it.
She wished to be told how I came to know this, to which I
replied: 'By the art of divination,' and as a short time before there
had been some talk about a man who pretended to foretell the
future by figures and signs, I added that I shared this knowledge
with him. She laughed and said: 'Well, dear girl, as you seem to be
so learned you will not find it difficult to discover all that there
remains to know from a business letter of twelve pages.' I promised
to work on it and after lunch I brought her a piece of paper on
which I had indited the following words:
'The omens agree—
That Peter the third thy husband shall be.'
My mother read this note and seemed surprised by it. I profited
by the moment to demonstrate to her that if such suggestions
were made to her from Russia she ought not to ignore them, as
my whole fortune was at stake. She told me that the risk was also
great, owing to the instability of that country, to which I retorted
that God would see to the stability if His wish were that it should
be so, that I had sufficient courage to face the risk and that my
instinct whispered to me that all would be well.
She could not help saying: 'But what will my brother George
say to this?' (It was the first time she mentioned him to me.) I
blushed and replied: 'He can only wish me luck and happiness.'
She remained silent and went away to discuss the matter with my
father who wanted to dismiss the whole proposition and the jour-
ney. He wished to speak to me himself, or rather my mother
desired that I should speak to him. I said to him that at the ques-
tion concerned me I permitted myself to make it clear to him that
the journey did not commit us to anything, that upon arriving there
my mother and I would be able to judge whether it would be better
to stay or go. In short I persuaded him to agree to the journey.
I then burst into tears; it was the most moving moment of my
life, I was torn between conflicting sentiments: gratitude to my
father, the fear of upsetting him, the habit of blindly obeying
him, the affection I had for him, the respect. No man deserved it
more, his actions were always guided by pure virtue. I can truly
say that I have never heard him utter a word that contradicted his
convictions and I believe that it was this sincerity that caused him
to be so attached to the republican ideas which I have inherited
from him. This may seem almost unbelievable considering my
position and the ambitions I have always fostered.
He gave me written instructions for my behaviour and we left
for Berlin together. Before leaving I had a little tiff with Made-
moiselle Cardel, our first and our last, as we never saw each other
again. I was very fond of Babet and concealed nothing from her
except for my uncle's infatuation which I took care not to reveal:
I was not the sort of thing one talks about. My father and mother
urged me to treat the journey to Russia with extreme secrecy.
Seeing me going to and fro between my mother's room and my
own more often than usual, Babet questioned me about the jour-
ney and about the letter received at the dinner table—I told her
that I could say nothing to her about it.
She said: 'If you owe me, you will either tell me what you
know about it, or that you have been forbidden to talk about it.'
I replied to her: 'My dear friend, do you think it would be honest
if I spoke of something that I was asked to keep secret?' Babet did
not say another word and sulked a little, but I told her nothing
and I could see that she was angry. This upset me, but at that
moment my friendship had to submit to my principles. A year
before I had shown her a sign of friendship that had greatly
touched her. She had caught an intermittent fever in Dornburg;
my mother had forbidden me to see Babet during the paroxysms,
for fear that I should catch it in the infected atmosphere, but in
spite of that prohibition I used to rush to see her whenever
she could manage it and attended to her needs so far as lay in my
capacity. I remember making some tea for her one day when her
maid had gone away; another time I administered the medicine;
in short, I surrounded her with little attentions. When the day of
our departure arrived, we said good-bye to each other, both weep-
ing copiously and I kept repeating to her that we were only going
to Berlin.
When we arrived in Berlin\(^1\) my mother thought it unsuitable that I should appear at Court, or leave the house at all, but things turned out differently. The King of Prussia, through whose hands all the correspondence from Russia addressed to my mother had passed, was fully aware of the reason of my father's and mother's journey to Berlin.

There were two schools of thought at the Russian Court at that time. One, headed by Count Bestuziev, wanted to marry the Grand Duke of Russia to a Princess of Saxony, daughter of August II, King of Poland—the Princess who subsequently married the Bavarian Elector. The other was called the French school, to which belonged Count Brummer, Marshal of the Grand Duke, Count Lestoq, Marshal Rumiantsev, and several others, all friends of the Marquis de la Chétardie, Minister of France. The latter would have preferred to introduce into Russia one of the daughters of the King of France, but his friends did not have the courage to propose such an idea, the Empress being opposed to it, and Count Bestuziev, who at that time ranked very high in her esteem, supported her in this attitude. This minister had little affection for France. Therefore a middle course was chosen which was to propose my candidature to the Empress Elizabeth.

The Minister of the King of Prussia and consequently the King himself were in the secret. Apparently in order to humour Count Bestuziev and prevent him from thinking that the intention was to thwart his plans, though that was indeed the case, a rumour was put about that I had been summoned without the knowledge of M. de la Chétardie, the donor of his party, in order to prevent the marriage of the Grand Duke to one of the ladies of France. (The Marquis had, indeed, permitted my name to be considered only after he had abandoned all hope so far as the daughters of his master, the King, were concerned.) On my arrival in Berlin, the King of Prussia, knowing where I was going, wanted to see me at all costs. My mother pleaded my illness. He invited her two days later to dine with his wife, the Queen, and insisted once more that I should be brought to see him.

My mother promised him, but on the appointed date she went to the Court alone; as soon as she saw her, the King asked after me, and she told him I was ill. He responded by saying that he knew this to be untrue; then she argued that I had no suitable clothes, upon which the King declared that he would wait until the next day with his dinner. Finally my mother told him that I had no Court dress. He ordered that one of his sisters should send me one. Realizing that no excuse would serve, my mother sent word to tell me to dress and come to Court. I was forced to go so, my dressing took three hours of the afternoon. Finally I arrived, the King received me in the Queen's antechamber. He spoke to me and took me to the Queen's room. I felt shy and embarrassed. We sat down to dinner at last and rose from it very late.

As we left the table Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, brother of the Queen, whom I had known well for a long time and who never left the side of the King of Prussia, came up to me and said: You will be my partner at the King's table tonight in the Opera House.' I told him that this would be a great pleasure for me. As we went home I repeated to my mother the Duke of Brunswick's invitation; my mother said: 'This is very strange as I am invited to the Queen's table.'

My father was given one of the tables to preside at so that I alone found myself at the King's table. My mother went earlier on the gala evening to join the Princess of Prussia and followed on with her. I spent the day strolling about with the elder Countess Henckel, lady-in-waiting to the Princess of Prussia. As I had told her that I was to be seated at the King's table, she took me to the hall where it was to take place, as the time for supper approached. Barely had I entered when the Prince of Brunswick rushed to meet me and offering me his arm, led me to the end of the table. As the other pairs began to arrive we advanced further and further until I found myself finally beside the King.

When I discovered that he was my neighbour, I made as if to withdraw but he restrained me and talked to me all the even-
ing, asking me a thousand questions and talking about opera,
comedy, poetry, dancing, everything in short that one could pos-
sibly imagine in conversing with a girl of fourteen. To begin with,
he intimidated me, but gradually I began to feel quite at my ease
and eventually we were talking in so cordial a manner that every-
one opened their eyes wide as they gaped at His Majesty talking to
a child.

Towards the end His Majesty made a sign to somebody passing
behind us. I stretched my arm to pick up a plate of sweetmeats
that stood opposite me and to pass it on to him, but he said: 'Give
it to that man,' adding his name which I have forgotten; he then
turned to the man and said: 'Take this gift from the Hand of the
Loves and the Graces.' I blushed, we rose from the table, and
several days later I left Berlin for Stettin, or so it was given out.

As Stettin came in sight my father very tenderly took leave of me
and this was the last time I saw him; I cried bitterly.

Our journey was long, very tiresome and harrowing; my feet
were so swollen that I was carried in and out of the carriage.
We were six weeks on the way. My mother had assumed the name of
Countess Reinbech, assigned to her from Russia. She had few
people in attendance: M. de Laterf, her Chamberlain, Mlle von
Kayn, her lady-in-waiting, four chambermaids, a valet, a few
lackeys, and a cook.

In Kurland I saw the terrible comet that appeared in 1744—it
never saw a larger one— it looked so very close to the earth.
When we arrived in Mitau, M. Voigtov, then Colonel command-
ing the Russian troops in Kurland, asked to be presented to my
mother; she was surprised by this visit, put me in another room,
and received him; he told her that his orders were to inform her
of the arrival of a lady of distinction and he had come to find out
if she had any instructions for him. He added that Court carriages
and the Chamberlain Naryshkin had been waiting in Riga for
eight days and that she was no doubt the lady they were waiting
for.

My mother replied that she was unaware of all this, but that
she was glad to make his acquaintance. Thereupon he left to send
word to Riga and begged my mother to wait until his messenger
came back. He had supper with us and left with us for Riga.

He explained to my mother many things usually unknown to
foreigners. Among others, I remember his saying, when he spoke
to him about Boyars, that they no longer existed; in days gone
by they had held high rank comparable to that of army
commander.

Half-way between Mitau and Riga we found waiting for us at an
Inn Marshal Naryshkin, Grand Master of the Hunt, whom I
already knew, having met him in Hamburg when he was returning
from his post in England, M. Afzine, later a lieutenant in the
Guard, the cooks, the lackeys, and the Court carriages. They
accompanied us to Riga where we were received with great pomp.
The garrison under arms, the civic Vice-Governor, Prince Vlad-
im Dolgorukoi, and the whole town crossed the Dvina river to
welcome us, guns were fired, and we were then brought to our
quarters. As we left the coach M. Naryshkin presented my mother
with saddle fur coats and tippets.

The next day, Marshal Lacey came to visit us with all the
prominent figures of the town, among them General Saltikov. He
was there because he had in his care in the Duchy of Brunswick
Prince Anton-Ulrich of Brunswick and his wife, Princess Anne
of Mecklenburg, with their children and attendants. The
Empress Elizabeth at the beginning of her reign had decided to
send them back to their native country, which was the best thing
she could have done, but when they arrived in Riga, the Empress
commanded their journey to be postponed pending a further
order. This further order arrived shortly after we left Riga and
the unfortunate family, instead of being deported, was brought

1 Granddaughter of Ivan Aleksewife, elder brother of Peter the Great.
Anne of Mecklenburg's sor by her marriage with the Prince of Brunswick
was proclaimed Tsar Ivan VI at the death of the Tsarina Anne in 1740. As
soon as the Empress Elizabeth came into power the Tsar and his family were
deposed. (Ed.)
An invitation to a voyage

Taman-Kulikhan, alias Shuh-Nadir, had given to the Empress, to be brought into the courtyard of the Palace. There were fourteen of them and they all performed every kind of trick. After that we were taken for a drive—it was the carnival week. We saw the town and the hills and then returned to the Palace where all the ladies were assembled and we started playing cards. The Marquis de la Chaetardie, an old acquaintance of my mother's who had remained in St. Peters burg, arrived and advised my mother to hasten her departure to Moscow in order to arrive before February roth, the Grand Duke's birthday. My mother asked M. Naryshkine to speed our journey and indeed two days later we left.

I became more closely acquainted on this first day with the ladies Karr and Saltikov, and they offered to dress my hair next day in the same style as theirs; the Court and the town imitated them but we were not aware that the Empress did not approve of the fashion, which Princess Anne of Brunswick had launched. Nothing, in fact, could have been uglier; the hair, unpowdered and unwaved, was folded over the ears, a small curl was pulled out towards the middle of the cheek and attached to it with gum; finally a ribbon was placed round the head and tied up with bows hanging down the neck.

As we left Petersburg, the sleigh in which my mother was travelling bumped into a house at a turning and an iron hook attached to the carriage fell on her head and shoulder. She protested she had received grave injuries though nothing could be seen, not even a bruise. This accident delayed our journey for several hours. We travelled day and night and took fifty-two hours. The populace on the way murmured: 'This is the Grand Duke's betrothed.'

At the end of the third day we found ourselves at Viesvetkoe. There the Empress had sent a courier, M. Sievers, to welcome my mother. He told M. Naryshkine that Her Majesty wished us to cross Moscow by night; I say cross Moscow, as the Imperial

1 Tsar of the Persian throne.
2 A small village about thirty miles north of Moscow. (Ed.)
he had been greatly attached, and had rendered considerable services to both mother and daughter; he was not lacking in intelligence, but he was crafty, full of malice, and his heart was dark and evil.

All these foreigners schemed to replace Bestuiev by bringing Count Michel Worontsov into prominence. He had played a part in the revolution and had accompanied Elizabeth on the night she ascended the throne. She had arranged his marriage with a niece of the Empress Catherine I—Countess Anne Carlowna Skavronski, who had been brought up with the Empress Elizabeth and was very much attached to her. Also siding with the anti-Bestuiev party was Count Alexander Rumiantsev, father of the Marshal who had signed the Abo peace with Sweden, about which Bestuiev was hardly consulted. So were the Procurator-General, Prince Trubetskoi, the whole Trubetskoi family, and, in consequence, the Prince of Hesse-Homburg, who had married a Princess Trubetskoi. The rest of the Empress’s retinue consisted of the Shuvalov family, who sat on the fence, Rasumovski, Master of the Hunt, and a Bishop, who was the favourite of the moment. Count Bestuiev knew how to make the best of all these, but his chief support was Baron Cherkassov, Secretary of the Empress’s Cabinet—a rough and headstrong man who stood for order and justice in everything. The rest of the Court sided one way or the other, according to the Empress’s moods from day to day.

Towards 7 or 8 p.m. on February 9th, 1744, we arrived at the Annenskoi Palace which was then occupied by the Court. This Palace was burnt down in 1733, was rebuilt in six weeks, and burnt down again in 1771 during the plague which wiped out the town. At the foot of the stairs we found the Prince of Hesse-Homburg, the Empress’s A.D.C., Field-Marshal and Chief of the whole Court. He offered his arm to my mother and led us to the apartments allotted to us; hisler, after a short interval, came the Grand Duke with his Court and towards 10 p.m. Count Lestocq who announced that the Empress sent greetings on my mother’s arrival and that Her Majesty invited Her Highness to proceed to
her apartment. The Grand Duke offered his arm to my mother, while the Prince of Hesse offered his to me. As we crossed the antechamber the ladies- and gentlemen-in-waiting were presented to us.

After we had passed through all the state apartments we were brought to the room where the Empress held her audiences. There, on the threshold of her state bedchamber, the Empress appeared before us. Certainly it was quite impossible on seeing her for the first time not to be struck by her beauty and the majesty of her bearing. She was a large woman who, in spite of being very stout, was not in the least disfigured by her size nor was she embarrassed in her movements; her head, too, was very beautiful.

On that day she wore an immense hoop of the kind she favoured when she dressed up, which she did only on great occasions. Her dress was of silver moiré with golden braid; she wore a black feather erect at one side of her head and many diamonds in her hair. My mother curtsied and thanked her for all the favours she had bestowed on our family; after this the Empress entered her bedchamber and asked us to follow her; chairs were arranged there for sitting down, but neither she, nor consequently anybody else, sat down. She talked at great length to my mother and looked at me very attentively.

After about half an hour's conversation, she dismissed us on the pretext that we must be tired after our journey. While she was talking to my mother, the Grand Duke talked to me. He took us both to our apartments, had supper with us, as did his Court and many other people whom I do not remember. I was on the Grand Duke's left and on my left was the Master of the Empress's Household, Count Munich, brother of the Marshal of the same name, who was then exiled in Siberia, whether he had been banished at the beginning of the Empress Elizabeth's reign. (I remember this table neighbour of that day, because he surprised me so much by his singular manner of speaking very slowly with his eyes closed. He was a man of great erudition and very honest, though a little pedantic. Later he became the laughing-stock of this Court through his mania for reading his wife's letters aloud to everyone; he began with the Empress and ended with the young pages if he found no other audience.)

During supper the Empress came to the door of the apartment to watch incognito how we were progressing. After the meal, all retired to their respective rooms.

The next day, February 10th, Friday of the first week of Lent, was the Grand Duke's birthday. There were great celebrations. Towards 11 a.m. we were told to come to the Empress's apartment. We did so—there were large crowds in all the anterooms through which we passed before we arrived at the Empress's state bedchamber, where we found Mmes Worontsov and Choglovok, both friends of Empress Catherine I.

A few moments later the Empress emerged from her room in full dress. She wore a brown robe embroidered with silver and her head, neck and bosom were covered with jewels. The Master of the Hunt, Count Rasumovski, followed her. He was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen in my life. He carried on a gold plate the insignia of the Order of St. Catherine. I was closer to the door than my mother; the Empress handed me the order and then conferred the same honour on my mother; after that she kissed us. Countess Worontsov pinned the star on my mother's breast, while Madame Choglovok pinned it on mine.

The Empress moved through her smaller rooms to the church, while we remained in the audience chamber. After the service we were asked to proceed to the Grand Duke's apartments, and the Empress arrived a few moments after we had entered. She said she was going to confession on that day and would take communion the next. After she had retired we dined at the Grand Duke's with many of the Court.

I forgot to say that, as we passed from the apartments of the Empress to those of the Grand Duke, the Princess of Hesse-Homburg, born Princess Trubetskoi, and the ladies of the Court of Moscow were presented to us. The next day we were told that Rasumovski was Elizabeth's lover; he was nicknamed 'the Night Emperor'. (Ed.)
ordered to the Court chapel to assist at the Empress's communion. In the evening we attended Court and there was a concert in the Empress's apartments. The first days of our sojourn in Moscow were spent in receiving and returning visits; in the evenings the Grand Duke came to play cards with us, Foreign Ministers and many courtiers came too and so did the Empress once or twice, after which she left for the Troitza convent with a select retinue and came to take leave of us in our apartments. That day she wore a dress with long black velvet sleeves and all the Russian Orders—the ribbon of St. Andrew and St. Alexander round her neck and of St. Catherine on her left breast.

The Grand Duke seemed glad to see my mother and me, I was in my fifteenth year and he showed himself very assiduous for the first ten days. In that short space of time I became aware that he was not greatly accustomed to the nation over which he was destined to reign; he was a convinced Lutheran, did not like his entourage, and was very childish. I kept silent and listened, which helped to gain his confidence. I remember that he told me among other things that what he liked most in me was that I was his second cousin and in that capacity, as a relative, he could talk freely to me; after this he confided that he was in love with one of the Empress's ladies-in-waiting who had been expelled from Court, and at the time of the tragedy concerning her mother, a certain Miss Lopukhin, exiled to Siberia, he would have liked to marry her, but he had resigned himself to marrying me as his aunt wished it. I listened to these disclosures with a blush, thanked him for his premature confidence, but privately observed with astonishment his imprudence and lack of judgment on a number of matters. I already had three teachers; one, Simon Theodorski, to instruct me in Greek religion, another, Basil Adadurov, for the Russian language, and Landé, ballet master, for the dance.

To make more rapid progress in the Russian language I jumped

1 Compromised in a plot intended to depose Elizabeth in favour of Ivan, and to introduce a political move in the direction of Austria (the Austrian Ambassador, Botts, was one of its instigators), Miss Lopukhin had her tongue cut out and was exiled to Siberia (1735). (Ed.)
she was beginning, however, to admit that I was not suffering from smallpox.

The Empress had appointed Countess Rumiantsev and several other ladies to attend me and it seemed that my mother's judgment did not inspire confidence.

At last the abscess which had formed in my right side burst owing to the ministrations of Dr. Sanchez, a Portuguese. I vomited it up and from that moment began to recover. I realized at once that my mother's behaviour during my illness had antagonized everyone towards her. When she saw me in extremis, she wanted a Lutheran priest brought to me; I was told that, profiting by a moment of consciousness, they had asked me whether this was what I wanted, and that I had replied: 'To what purpose? Better send for Simon Theodorski, I would like to talk to him.' He came and talked to me in the presence of a few others in a manner that satisfied everyone; this raised me in the eyes of the Empress and of the whole Court.

Another small incident served to discredit my mother. Towards Easter she sent me word one morning through a maid asking me to give her a piece of blue and silver material, which my father's brother had presented to me on our departure for Russia, as I had expressed my admiration of it. I sent word to say that she could please herself, but that I liked it particularly, because my uncle had given it to me, knowing that it was my own choice.

The people round me, seeing that I was loath to part with the material and that I had been at death's door for so long and only shown a slight improvement in the last two days, began to whisper that it was thoughtless of my mother to cause the slightest upset to a dying child and that instead of trying to deprive me of the material, she should put it out of her mind. This was all instantly repeated to the Empress who at once sent me large pieces of magnificent, rich material, one of them blue and silver. But the incident lowered her opinion of my mother, who was accused of showing no affection or solicitude for me.

I had grown into the habit during my illness of keeping my eyes closed; at such times everyone thought me asleep and
Countess Rumiantsev and the other ladies would unfold all their secrets to one another; in that way I learnt many things. When I started to feel stronger, the Grand Duke came to spend the evening in my mother's apartments which were also mine. He, as well as everybody else, had seemed to show great concern about my condition. The Empress had often wept on my account.

At last on April 21st, 1744, my birthday, I was strong enough to appear in public for the first time after this dreadful illness. I do not think that my appearance made an edifying impression on the company. I had become as thin as a skeleton, I had grown taller, but my face and features were drawn, my hair was falling out, and I was mortally pale. I appeared to myself ugly as a scarecrow and did not feel at my ease. The Empress sent me a pot of rouge that day and ordered me to put some on.

With the spring and the fine weather, the Grand Duke's daily attendance at our quarters ceased; he preferred to go walking and shooting in the neighbourhood of Moscow. Sometimes, however, he would come to dine or have supper with us and then his childish confessions to me would continue, while his entourage were entertained by my mother, who received a great deal and in whose salon many matters were discussed, a fact which aroused hostility among all those who were not allowed to take part in these receptions, including Count Bestuzev, whose enemies all forgathered in our house, such as, for instance, the Marquis de la Chétardie, whose letters of credence as Ambassador were still in his pocket.