CHAPTER XI

AWAITING THE HEIR

(1751-1755)

At the beginning of 1751 the Grand Duke who, like me, had struck up a great friendship with Count de Bernis, the Austrian Ambassador, decided to talk to him of his Holstein affairs, of his debts, and of the negotiations started with Denmark on the exchange of Holstein against Oldenburg. He asked me also to speak with Count de Bernis and I did so at the first masquerade. The Count listened to me with great interest and attention. I spoke quite frankly, pleading ignorance and lack of experience, but added that in my own opinion the situation in Holstein did not appear to me as desperate as it was made out to be. As to the exchange against Oldenburg, it seemed that Russia might profit by it more than the Grand Duke, that the latter, no doubt, at heart, had the interests of the Empire greatly at heart, and if for that purpose it was necessary to abandon Holstein the only question would be to choose the favourable moment. The present did not seem propitious, as the whole affair had an air of intrigue, and if successful, might influence public opinion against the Grand Duke. He loved his native country passionately, I continued, and it was paradoxical to persuade him to give it up for Oldenburg which he did not know at all, and which was further from Russia, when the port of Kiel alone might, in his hands, one day be of great importance for Russian navigation. Count de Bernis replied to me: 'As ambassador, I have no instructions on this matter but as Count de Bernis I believe you are right.' To the Grand Duke he said later: "All I can tell you is that I think your

192
wife is right and you would do well to listen to her." After that
the Grand Duke showed great coolness towards the negotiations
and the matter was more or less dropped.

After Easter we went to Peterhof where each year our stay
became more curtailed.

This time, something happened which gave the courtiers food
for gossip. It was brought about by the intrigues of Count
Shuvalov. Colonel Beketov, out of boredom and not knowing
what to do during the days of grace he was enjoying (though his
prestige had risen so high that at any moment it was expected that
either he would yield his place to Ivan Shuvalov or vice versa),
decided one day to get the Empress’s choirboys to come and sing
at his residence. He took a particular fancy to some of them be-
cause of the beauty of their voices and as he himself was a versifier
he composed songs for the children to sing.

An odious interpretation was put on this. It was known that no
vice was more detested by the Empress. Beketov, in the innocence
of his heart, used to stroll in the garden with these children. This
was imputed to him as a crime. The Empress went to Tsarskoe
Selo for a couple of days and then returned to Peterhof. M.
Beketov, under plea of illness, was ordered to remain there. He
did in fact remain there, fell sick of a brain fever of which he
almost died, and in her delirium raved only of the Empress, who
occupied all his thoughts. He recovered but remained in disgrace
and retired into the background. Afterwards he was transferred to
the Army where he made no progress. He was too effeminate for
the military profession.

During that time we went to Oraniensbaum, where we hunted
every day; towards the autumn we returned to town.

In September 1751 the Empress appointed M. Leon Naryshkine
Gentleman of the Bedchamber to our Court. He had just returned
from Moscow with his mother, his brother, his sister-in-law, and
his three sisters.

The father of this Leon Naryshkine, Semyon Naryshkine, was the Mar-
shal whom the Empress had sent to Riga to welcome Catherine and her
mother upon their arrival on Russian soil. (Ed.)
He was the strangest individual that I have ever known and never has anybody made me laugh so much. He was a born clown and had been of different birth he would certainly have made fortune as a comic actor. He was witty, had a superficial but widespread knowledge and a unique way of interpreting everything. He was capable of giving dissertations on any subject, art or science, would use technical terms and talk for a quarter of an hour or more and at the end neither he nor anyone else could make head or tail of the flow of words streaming from his mouth, and all would end in a general burst of laughter.

Naryshkine said about history that he did not like history in which there were too many histoires, that if history was to be any good it should have none and that otherwise it became monotonous.

On politics he was particularly inimitable; when he started on that subject it was impossible to remain serious. He also used to say that well-written comedies were usually boring.

As soon as he was appointed to the Court, the Empress commanded that his older sister should marry M. Sinevina, a man who was repulsive to her. Everybody put the blame for that on M. Shuvalov, the Empress' favourite, who had been enamoured of this lady before his rise to favour. This unsuitable marriage was now planned in order to remove the girl from his sight. This was really an act of tyranny. The girl married M. Sinevina and very soon afterwards died.

At the end of September 1751 we moved again to the Winter Palace. The Court was at the time so badly supplied with furniture that the same mirrors, beds, chairs, tables, and chests that were used in the Winter Palace went with us to the Summer Palace from there to Peterhof and then followed us to Moscow. A lot of it was broken and chipped on the way and we got it in a disordered condition, so that often we found it hard to use. As an order from the Emperor was necessary to get it renewed and she was often difficult to reach or even inaccessible, I decided to buy, little by little, some chests, tables, and more necessary furniture with my own money, for the Winter as well as for the Summer Palace.

and then when I passed from one house to the other I would find all I wanted without the difficulty of transport and the wear and tear of it.

This arrangement appealed to the Grand Duke. He too did the same for his apartment. For Oranienbaum, which belonged to the Grand Duke, we obtained all that we wanted at our own expense; in that house I paid for everything in my apartments, in order to avoid complications and disputes, since the Grand Duke, though very extravagant as far as his own whims were concerned, was not so in my regard—anything but generous in fact—but since what I did for my apartments at my own expense served to embellish the house, he was quite satisfied.

During that summer Mme Choglokov suddenly began to show great affection for me. This was so genuine that, back in town, she could not bear to be without me and was bored if I was not with her. This affection was based upon the fact that I had not responded to the advances her husband had seen fit to make to me; this had regularly raised me in her opinion.

Back in the Winter Palace, Mme Choglokov kept inviting me to spend every afternoon with her. She did not have many visitors but certainly more than I had; I would sit alone in my room and talk unless the Grand Duke came in to walk up and down and talk to me about things which interested him but had no attraction for me at all.

These exercises lasted one or two hours and were repeated several times a day. I had to walk with him until I had no strength left; I had to listen attentively, I had to reply. His dissertations usually had no point whatsoever, and were often just a figment of his imagination.

I remember that during almost a whole winter he was busy planning to build a pleasure-house near Oranienbaum, in the shape of a Capuchin convent, in which he and I and his whole entourage were to be dressed as Capuchin friars; he found that it was both charming and comfortable. Each of us was to have a donkey and drive it in turn to fetch water and bring provisions to the imaginary convent. He would almost faint with laughter and
bliss at the thought of all the wonderful and entertaining possibilities of his idea. He made me draw a sketch of this work of art, and every day something would be added or deleted. Resolved though I was to treat him with patience and good nature, I admit frankly that I was often worn out by his visits, talks, and conversation, which was of an insipidity beyond parallel. When he left me, to read the most tedious book seemed a delightful pastime.

At the end of the autumn the Court and public balls began again, marked by tremendous splendour and studied elegance of fancy-dress. Count Zakhar Chernishiev came back to Petersburg. On the strength of our old acquaintance I was always very friendly with him. This time I had to decide what interpretation to give to his attentions. He started by saying that he found me much more beautiful. This was the first time that anyone had said anything kind to me. I found it quite pleasing. I did more, I had grace to believe that what he said was true. At every ball I repeated the same statement; one day Princess Gagarine brought me a posy from him. When I opened it I found it had been opened and gummed up again; the motto was printed as usual, but it contained two beautiful and sentimental verses. I had several posies brought to me that afternoon and searched for a motto which would contain a reply, without compromising me. I found one, placed it in a posy representing an orange, and gave it to Princess Gagarine, who passed it on to Count Chernishiev.

Next day she brought me another one from him, but this time I found in it a note with a few lines written in his own hand. On the spur of the moment I replied and there we were in regular and sentimental correspondence. At the next masquerade, when I met him, he said he had a thousand things to tell me which he could not confide to paper, nor put into a posy which Princess Gagarine might lose or which might get damaged on the way. He begged me to grant him an audience in my rooms or wherever else I thought suitable.

I told him it was quite impossible, that my rooms were inaccessible and that I had no means of leaving them either. He told me that if necessary disguise himself as a servant. But I refused, and the matter remained limited to this correspondence, buried in posies; in the end Princess Gagarine became aware of what lay behind it and scolded me for having used her as an intermediary, refusing to go on. Thus 1751 came to an end and 1752 began.

At the end of the carnival, Count Chernishiev left for his regiment. Several days before his departure I felt I needed a blood-cleansing. It was a Saturday. The next Wednesday M. Choglokov invited us to his island at the mouth of the Neva; he had a house there with a hall in the middle and a few rooms on either side. I had heard by word of mouth that he had set up some snow slides. When I arrived I found there Count Roman Worontsov, who, on seeing me, said: 'I've got a surprise for you. I've had a lovely little sleigh made for the snow slide.'

As he had often taken me before I readily accepted his offer and he had a small sleigh brought at once, where there was a small bench in which I sat with myself. He stood behind me and we went down; but in the middle of the slope Count Worontsov lost control of the sleigh and we overturned. I tumbled out and Count Worontsov, who is of an ungainly, clumsy stature, fell on the back of me, or more precisely on top of my left arm, which had been bled four or five days before.

We both jumped up and walked to a Court sleigh which was waiting for those who came down to take them back to the point from which they started. Sitting in this sleigh with Princess Gagarine, who had followed me with Count Ivan Chernishiev, the matter and Worontsov standing behind, I felt a sensation of warmth spread over my left arm—and did not know why. I put my right hand into the sleeve of my fur cloak and found it covered in blood. I told the two Counts and the Princess that I thought my vein might have broken open and was bleeding. They speeded up the sleigh and we returned home. We found only the butler there. I removed my cloak, the butler brought some vinegar, and Count
Chernishev performed the duties of a surgeon. We all agreed not to breathe a word of this adventure. As soon as my arm was seen, I returned to the hill to slide, danced the rest of the evening, had supper and came home very late, without anyone knowing what had happened to me; my thumb was sprained for about a month, but it gradually got better.

During Lent I had a violent altercation with Mme Choglovok. My mother had gone to Paris some time before and sent me from there two beautiful pieces of rich material. As I admired them in the presence of Shkurine in my dressing-room, I inadvertently allowed myself to let slip the remark that the materials were so beautiful I would like to offer them to the Empress. I watched for a moment to speak of this to the Empress, but I saw her only rarely and hardly ever in private. I did not mention the matter to Mme Choglovok as I wanted this to be a personal offering and told Shkurine to keep his mouth shut. He went at once, however, and reported everything to Mme Choglovok. A few days later Mme Choglovok came into my room and said that the Empress thanked me for the material, that she was keeping one piece and sending me back the other. I was thunderstruck upon hearing this and angrier than I had ever been. I scolded her; I could scarcely speak. I told Mme Choglovok that if she had learnt about my intentions it was through the mouth of a treacherous servant. She replied that she knew it to be a formal order that I was not to speak of anything to the Empress and that the servants had instructions to report to Mme Choglovok all I said, so that the man had only done his duty and she knew. Anger so choked me that I could not utter a word, but when she left the room I walked into the ante-chamber, where Shkurine usually remained in the mornings. Finding him there I slapped him on the face with all my strength and told him he was an ungrateful, treacherous wretch and that I would dismiss him. I asked him how he expected to profit by such behaviour since I would remain for ever what I was, while the Choglovoks would end by being sent away by the Empress when she discovered their inability to perform their functions adequately. If he liked he could go and repeat what I had said. He threw himself on his knees, crying and begging for forgiveness with what seemed to me sincerity. I was touched and said his future behaviour would show me what measures I should take. He was an intelligent boy and never failed me again, but, on the contrary, proved his loyalty in more difficult times. I complained of the matter loudly, so that it would get to the Empress’s ears and learnt later that she had disapproved highly of Mme Choglovok’s behaviour. She thanked me very graciously for the gift, next time we met.

After Easter we moved to the Summer Palace. I had noticed for some time that Chamberlain Serge Saltovik attended Court more assiduously than ever. He always came with Leon Naryshkin, whose originality amused everyone and about whom I had already spoken. Serge Saltovik was Princess Gagarine’s pet aversion; I was very fond of her and trusted her completely. Leon Naryshkin was friendly with everybody; he was looked upon as a man of no consequence, but a witty crank.

More and more Serge Saltovik danced attendance on the Choglovoks. As the latter were neither clever nor amusing, nor even amiable, his attentions could only have had some secret purpose. Mme Choglovok was pregnant at the time and often ailing; as she pretended that I alone was able to entertain her, she wanted me to visit her all the time, in summer as well as in winter. Serge Saltovik, Leon Naryshkin, Princess Gagarine, and a few others were usually at her house when there was no concert at the Grand Duke’s or theatricals at Court. The concerts wearied M. Choglovok but he never missed them.

Serge Saltovik devised for Choglovok a peculiar way of spending his time at them. I do not know how he discovered in this heavy-minded and unimaginative man a passion for writing lyrics which made no sense at all. Once this became known every time anyone wanted to get rid of M. Choglovok, he was asked to write new lyrics, and would at once eagerly go and sit down in a corner of the room, usually near the stove, and start writing them, which took him the whole evening.

His lyrics were usually warmly praised so as to encourage him
to write fresh ones. Leon Naryshkine set them to music and sang them with him; in the meantime conversation in the room became unrestrained and one could say anything one wanted. I had a whole book of his lyrics. I do not know what happened to it.

During one of these concerts, Serge Salitkov gave me to understand the reason for his attentions. At first I did not reply to him. I asked him, when he reverted to the subject, to explain what he expected to get from it. Then he began to draw so joyful and exciting a picture of the happiness he expected that I said: 'And what about your wife whom you loved so passionately two years ago when you married her and with whom you are supposed to be still in love and she with you—what will she say to that?'

To this he said that all is not gold that glitters and that he was paying a high price for a moment of folly. I did all I could to make him see reason; I hoped I would succeed, for I was sorry for him. But unfortunately I could not help listening to him; he was handsome as the dawn; there was no one to compete with him in that, nor at the Imperial Court, and still less at ours. Nor was he lacking in intelligence or the accomplishments, manners, and graces which are a prerogative of the grand monde, but especially of the Court.

Aged twenty-six, he was a distinguished gentleman both by birth and other qualities; he knew how to conceal his faults, the greatest of which were his spirit of intrigue and lack of principles; these were not very clear to me at the time.

I held firm during the spring and part of the summer. I saw him almost every day, but did not alter my behaviour towards him, treating him as I had always done and as I treated everyone else. I only saw him in the presence of the Court or of part of it. One day I decided to tell him, in order to get rid of him, that he was following the wrong track and added: 'How do you know that my heart is not engaged elsewhere?' This, instead of discouraging him, made his pursuit all the more ardent. There was no question in all this of the dear husband because it was a recognized thing that he was ruthless even regarding those with whom he was in love, and he was in love all the time or made love to all women, the only exception being the woman who was his wife.

Meanwhile Choglokov invited us to a hunt on his island; we went there in a launch; our horses had been sent ahead. As soon as I arrived I mounted a horse and went to join the pack. Serge Salitkov only waited for the moment when the others were pursuing the hares to come up to me and start upon his favourite subject; I listened to him more patiently than usual. He drew me a picture of the plan which he had evolved in order, as he said, to envelop with great mystery the happiness which some people might experience in such circumstances. I remained silent. He profited by my silence to persuade me that he loved me passionately and begged me to permit him to believe and hope that I was at least not wholly indifferent to him. I told him that he could hope what he pleased as I could not prevent his thoughts. Then he started comparing himself with other men at Court and made me admit that he was preferable to them; from this he concluded that he was preferred. I laughed at what he said, but had to admit that he was agreeable to me.

After about an hour and a half, I told him to go because our conversation might give rise to suspicion. He told me he would not go unless I said I tolerated him. I replied: 'Yes, yes, but go away!' He said: 'I will remember that,' put spurs to his horse, and while I was shouting: 'No, no!' kept repeating: 'Yes, yes.'

And so we parted. Back in the house on the island, we had supper and during the meal a strong gale began to blow. The waves rose so high that they reached the steps of the house; the whole island was under water several feet high. We were compelled to stay with the Choglokoves until the storm had abated and the waves retreated, which was not until about two or three in the morning.
In the meantime Sergei Saltikov kept saying to me that Providence itself was on his side that day because it permitted him to enjoy the sight of me for a longer time, and many things of that kind; he already believed himself in the seventh heaven, but it was not the same for me; a thousand apprehensions assailed me and I was unusually dull that evening and dissatisfied with myself. I had believed it possible to govern and influence both his heart and mine but now realized that this was going to be a difficult if not an impossible task.

Two days later Sergei Saltikov came to tell me that one of the Grand Duke’s valets, called Bressan, a Frenchman, had told him that His Highness had said in his room: ‘Serge Saltikov and my wife do nothing but fool Choglovok they make him believe anything they like and then make fun of him.’ To tell the truth, this was not far wrong and the Grand Duke had become aware of it.

I replied, advising Saltikov to be more circumspect in the future.

The Grand Duke was then in love with young Marthe Chafiaev, whom the Empress had recently appointed to attend to me, together with her elder sister, Anne. Sergei Saltikov, who was a devil in matters of intrigue, won the girls’ confidence so as to find out what the Grand Duke said to them about him and to profit from this knowledge. These girls were poor, rather silly and very mercenary, and became, indeed, very frank with him in a short time.

We then went to Oranienbaum where I rode the whole day and never wore anything but a habit except on Sundays. Choglovok and his wife had become as meek as lambs.

I had acquired a new merit in Mme Choglovok’s eyes: I was very fond of one of her children, and often caressed the boy, for whom I had clothes made and heaven knows how many toys and garments I gave him. The mother was mad about the child who later on became such a scamp that he was sentenced to fifteen years’ imprisonment in the Fortress for his escapades.

Serge Saltikov had become the friend, confidant, and adviser of M. and Mme Choglovok; assuredly no man with any common sense would have submitted to the ordeal of listening to two such arrogant, egotistical, and vain fools, talking nonsense the whole day, if he had no ulterior motives. People began to make conjectures and guesses as to what these could be—which reached Peterhof and the ears of the Empress. It often happened at that time that the Empress, when she wished to scold, did not scold for what deserved a scolding, but made a pretext of something which one would never have suspected could have aroused her wrath. All her courtiers agreed about that; I heard it from the horse’s mouth, namely from Count Zakhar Chernishev.

In Oranienbaum everybody in our entourage, men and women alike, had agreed to order the same coloured dresses for the summer: grey below, blue on top, with a black velvet collar, and no other ornament. Such uniformity suited us for many a reason. The scolding got from the Empress was because of this dress arrangement and especially because I always wore a habit and rode astride.

Having arrived from Peterhof to spend a day at Court the Empress told Mme Choglovok that riding in that way prevented me from having children and that my riding clothes were not suitable; that when she herself rode in a man’s clothes she changed her clothes afterwards.

Mme Choglovok replied that there was no question about my having children; these, after all, could not appear without something being done about it and that though their Imperial Highnesses had been married since 1745—nothing had been done about it yet. Then Her Majesty scolded Mme Choglovok and blamed her for not persuading the interested parties to do their duty; she showed much ill-temper and said that Mme Choglovok’s husband was an ass who allowed himself to be led by the nose by mere dirty-nosed brats. All this was repeated by the Choglovoks to their confidants twenty-four hours later; the brats at this mention of themselves felt the cap fit and wiped their noses and at a special meeting held by them for this purpose it was decided and determined that following very precisely Her Majesty’s intentions.

1 Everybody knew that the marriage between me and the Grand Duke had not been consummated.
wise would have been impossible as the bottom of the canal was lower than the sea, but such things were not known at the time.

From Kronstadt we all went various ways, the Empress returning to Peterhof and we to Oranienbaum.

M. Choglokov asked for and was granted permission to go to one of his country seats for a month. During his absence his spouse gave herself a lot of trouble to execute the Empress’s wishes to the letter. She had many conferences with the Grand Duke’s valet, Bressan, who in Oranienbaum had found the pretty widow of a painter, Mme Groot. It took several days to persuade her, promising her I do not know what, and then to instruct her in what was expected of her and what she had to agree to do. Then it was left to Bressan to bring the Grand Duke together with the young and pretty widow.

I could see that Mme Choglokov was intriguing busily but I could not make out what it was about until Serge Saltikov came back from his voluntary exile and explained matters to me as much as he could. At last, after many efforts, Mme Choglokov obtained what she wanted and when she was certain of her facts, she informed the Empress that everything was going on according to her wishes. She had dreams of great rewards for her efforts, but was mistaken; she got nothing, though she kept repeating that the Empire was in her debt.

After this we returned to town and I tried to persuade the Grand Duke to break off negotiations with Denmark, reminding him of the advice of Count de Bernis, who had already left for Vienna. He listened to me and ordered that the negotiations should be closed.

After a short stay at the Summer Palace we moved to the Winter Palace. It seemed to me that Serge Saltikov’s attentions had diminished, that he had become absent-minded, at times arrogant, flippant, and dissipated; this upset me and I spoke to him about it; he gave me a halting explanation and said that I did not understand the subtlety of his behaviour.

He was right for I found it distinctly peculiar. We were told to
prepare for a journey to Moscow, and left Petersburg on December 14th, 1772. Sergey Saltikov remained behind and joined us only several weeks later. I left Petersburg with a few slight symptoms of pregnancy. We went at great speed, night and day; at the last station before Moscow, the symptoms vanished with violent haemorrhages. Arrived in Moscow and seeing the turn matters were taking, I began to suspect that I had had a miscarriage. Mme Choglokova had remained in Petersburg; she had just had another child, a girl; it was her eighth.

When she was able to travel, she joined us in Moscow. We were living in a wooden wing, newly built that autumn, so that water flowed down the panelling and the rooms were singularly damp. This wing had two rows of five or six rooms on each side; those on the street were for me, and those on the other side the Grand Duke’s. In the room which was to be my dressing-room they put all my women and maids with their servants, so that there were seventeen women all in one room which, though it had three very large windows, had no other exit but my bedroom through which they had to pass for all their necessities, which was not comfortable either for them or for me.

During the first ten days after my arrival in Moscow both they and I had to bear with this inconvenience, the like of which I have never known. Furthermore, their dining-room was one of my anterooms. I was ill on my arrival and in order to try to diminish the discomfort I had great big screens brought to my bedroom and thus divided it into three parts. But this did not help much; inevitably the doors went on being continually opened and shut. At last on the tenth day the Empress came to see me and seeing this continual traffic she walked into the other room and told my women: ‘I will have an extra door made for you besides the one leading through the Grand Duchess’ room.’ But what did she do? She had a partition put up which removed one of the three windows from the room where seventeen women had already very little space; this corridor made the room even smaller. Some steps were added and the window was turned into a door into the street where my women had to go for their needs and

where suitable accommodation was put up for them; to go to their meals they had to cross the street. In short all this rearrangement achieved nothing, and I do not know how these seventeen women, heaped up together and sometimes unwell, did not catch some malignant fever in this habitation, and all this next to my bedroom, filled with every kind of insect preventing me from sleeping.

At last Mme Choglokova, after her confinement, arrived in Moscow and several days later, Sergey Saltikov. As Moscow is very large and people are very much scattered there, he took advantage of this fact to disguise his feigned or real absences from Court.

To tell the truth, this saddened me greatly but he gave me such sound reasons for his behaviour as well as I had seen and talked to him about it my doubts vanished.

We decided that to reduce the number of his enemies I would send a few words to Count Bestujev which would allow him to hope that I was less antagonistic to him than I had been before. I entrusted this message to a man called Bremse, who, when he was not at Court, often visited Count Bestujev’s house and was employed in the Holstein offices.

He accepted the mission with great alacrity and told me that the Chancellor was beside himself with joy. He asked Bremse to tell me that he was at my disposal whenever I wanted and begged that if he could be of any help to me I should indicate a safe channel through which we could communicate should we find it necessary. I realized what he meant and replied to Bremse that I would think about it.

I repeated all this to Sergey Saltikov and he at once decided to visit the Chancellor, pretending that he had only just arrived. The old man received him warmly, took him aside, spoke to him of the ins and outs of our Court and of the Choglokov’s stupidity, saying, among other things: ‘I know that although you are a friend of theirs, you can see through them as well as I do, as you are an intelligent man.’ He then spoke of me and my position as though he had lived in my room; he added: “In gratitude for the good will the Grand Duchess has shown me, I will render her a
that she scolded me for it often, both in town and in the country, where we went after Easter. 1

On April 21st the Empress celebrated the anniversary of her coronation in Moscow. The ceremonial was to follow exactly the lines of the day itself. On the eve, Her Imperial Majesty was to sleep in the Kremlin, while we remained in the wooden palace and were ordered to the cathedral for Mass. We were all bitterly cold in Court dress. The Empress put on a fur tippet, but though she had another one in her box, she did not offer it to me.

When the service was over we prepared to follow the Empress as she left church but she sent orders that we should go home. As on her coronation day, she was going to dine on the throne, alone. She had repelled us, publicly. We returned, as we had

1 The story of the conversation between Catherine and Mme Choglokov was omitted from the edition of the complete works of the Empress Catherine II, published in 1907 by the Academy of Science of St. Petersburg. The reason for this omission jumps to the eye: in the omitted passage, in fact, Catherine suggests that it was on Mme Choglokov's invitation, with the explicit or tacit complicity of the Empress, that she surrendered to the love of Serge Saltikov in order to provide an heir to the throne. In the next chapter we shall see the tacit and cleverness with which Catherine, while admitting nothing, inclines the reader to the near certainty that the future Paul I was the son of Serge Saltikov. Everything: the Empress's suspicion, Saltikov's cautiousness, the speed with which Saltikov is removed as soon as the child is born (but not before the child is born), the Empress's health, the Grand Duke's attitude, that of the Empress who snatches the new-born child from Catherine, everything seems to indicate that Catherine's courage had no doubt whatever that Saltikov was the father of the child. The secret had to be closely guarded as in these circumstances the heir to the throne was no longer of the blood of the Romanovs. It is surprising that Catherine should have half-revealed it in memoirs which were essentially destined for her son and for her grandson, Alexander. No doubt she considered that Serge Saltikov, of the old Russian nobility, was more 'Russian' than the Grand Duke Peter who never stopped longing for his beloved Holstein and had nothing but aversion for the religion and way of life of the Russian people. Perhaps she was also justifying herself for having inspired or allowed the murder of her husband who became, at Elizabeth's death, Tsar Peter III; it was not the father of her child who was being put to death, but a man who had only been her husband in name. (Ed.)
come, in great ceremony, but cold, hungry, and in the worst of tempers. The Grand Duke complained to the Shuvalovs next day but the matter remained there.

About the same time we heard that Zakhar Chernishev and Nikolai Leontiev had quarrelled over cards and challenged one another to a duel. Count Chernishev was rumoured to have been badly wounded in the head. Leontiev was arrested by order of the Empress.

In the course of May 1733, I had once again shown symptoms of pregnancy. We went to Liberita, a country seat which the Empress had given to the Grand Duke, six or seven miles from Moscow. The stone house which had been built long ago by Prince Menshikov was in ruins and we could not live in it. To help us out, tents were set up in the courtyard. I slept in a kibitka. In the morning, from three or four o'clock, my sleep was interrupted by the sounds of axes and the noise round the wooden building which was being erected almost next door to our tents, for us to live in during the rest of the summer. The remaining time we spent hunting and taking walks; I did not ride any more, but drove in a carriage.

Towards St. Peter's Day we returned to Moscow and I was so overcome with drowsiness that I slept every day until midday and could only with effort be roused for dinner. St. Peter's Day was celebrated as usual. I dressed, went to Mass, to dinner, to the ball, and then to supper. Next day I was suffering from a severe headache. Mrs. Chuglovok called a midwife, who diagnosed a miscarriage, which in fact took place in the night. I must have been with child for two or three months. My life was in danger for thirteen days because it was believed that part of the after-birth had remained behind. This was concealed from me; finally, on the thirteenth day, it came out without pain or effort. I was made to stay for six weeks after this accident in my room, during an unbearable heat. The Empress came to see me the day I fell ill and seemed upset by my condition. During the six weeks that I spent in my room I was bored to death. I had no other company

but Mrs. Chuglovok, who came very seldom, and a little Kalmuk whom I liked because she was sweet; I often went from enui.

As for the Grand Duke, he spent most of the time in his room, where a Ukrainian whom he employed as resident valet, a fool and a drunkard, entertained him as best he could and supplied him generously with toys and alcohol, without the knowledge of M. Chuglovok, who was bamboozled and made fun of by everyone. But during the Grand Duke's secret nocturnal bacchanales with his servants, among whom there were several Kalmuks, he often found himself disobeyed and ill-served, for in their state of inebriation they did not know what they were doing and forgot that they were with their master and that their master was the Grand Duke.

Then His Highness would have recourse to the stick or the sword; even then his men hardly obeyed him and very often he had to call upon my help, complaining of them and begging me to make them see reason. Then I would go into his rooms and rebuke them, bringing them back to their sense of duty. They always responded at once, so that the Grand Duke often said to me, and repeated to Bresan, that he could not understand how I handled his men; when he flogged them, they still disobeyed him whereas I obtained all I wanted with a word.

One day when I walked into His Imperial Highness's apartment with this object in view, I was struck by the sight of an immense rat which he had hanged, with all the paraphernalia of torture, in the middle of a small room which he had had partitioned off. I asked what was the meaning of this; he then told me that the rat had been convicted of a crime and deserved the severest punishment according to military law. For it had climbed over the walls of a cardboard fortress standing on a table in this recess and eaten two sentinels on duty, made of starch, one on each of the bastions, and he had had the criminal court-martialed. His sister had caught the rat which had at once been hanged, as I had seen, and would be exposed to the public for three days as an example. I could not help laughing at the madness of the whole thing, but this greatly displeased him, because of the importance