he attributed to procedure. I retired and apologized, pleading womanly ignorance of military law, but he continued to sulk with me for having laughed at him. At least it could be said, on behalf of the rat, that it had been hanged without a hearing.

During the sojourn of the Court in Moscow, one of the lackeys suddenly went mad. The Empress ordered her doctor, Boerhave, to attend to him and he was lodged in the room next to Boerhave’s apartment. It so happened that that year several people became insane and as soon as the Empress learnt of it she had them placed near Boerhave’s apartments, so that a small lunatic asylum gradually collected at Court. Among them was a major of the Semionovski regiment, Chadacev, and a monk of the Voskressensky monastery, who had cut his private parts with a razor. Chadacev’s folly consisted in regarding Tamas Kulikhan, the usurper and tyrant of Persia, as God. The doctors were unable to cure him, so he was put in the hands of priests, who persuaded the Empress to have him exorcised. She attended the ceremony but Chadacev remained as mad as ever; some people, however, maintained that he was quite sane for he was reasonable on every other point except about the Persian tyrant. It was said he had once been caught in some shady business in the past and had escaped a possible trial by this ruse.

In mid-August we returned to the country. On September 1st, her birthday, the Empress went to the Voskressensky monastery. Lightning struck the church as she attended Mass, but luckily she was standing in one of the small adjoining chapels. She only learnt about it through the fright of her retinue—but no one was wounded or killed in this incident. A few days later she went back to Moscow and we joined her there, coming from Liberita.

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CHAPTER XII

BIRTH OF THE HEIR

(1734-1735)

On November 21st, 1734, at three in the afternoon, I was in Mme Choglovkov’s rooms, when her husband, Serge Salitkov, Leon Naryshkine, and several other gentlemen-in-waiting left us to go to Chamberlain Shuvav’s rooms, to congratulate him on his birthday. While Mme Choglovkov, Princess Gagarine, and I were talking, we heard a noise in a small chapel near by; several of the gentlemen came back and told us they had been unable to pass through the rooms of the Palace as it was on fire.

I went at once to my room and as I passed through one of the antechambers I saw that the banister in the corner of the large hall was ablaze. This was only a few steps away from our wing. I entered my rooms to find them already filled with soldiers and servants dragging out the furniture and retrieving all they could. Mme Choglovkov had followed me and as there was nothing more to do about the house but wait for it to burn out, Mme Choglovkov and I went outside; at the door we found a carriage belonging to the choirmaster Araja who had come to a concert of the Grand Duke’s and whom I had already informed that the house was on fire; we both got into the carriage, since the streets were exceedingly muddy from the constant rain of the last few days, and watched from there the progress of the fire and the furniture being brought out of the house from all sides. I also saw a remarkable spectacle: a prodigious number of rats and mice coming down the stairs in a file, showing very little hurry about it.

Nothing could be done to save that large wooden house, for lack of suitable machinery; what little there was had been stored
under the hall now on fire. This hall was in the centre of the buildings that surrounded it, stretching about a mile round the circumference. I left the house at three; by six o'clock there was not a trace left of the building. The heat of the fire was so great that neither I nor Mme Choglovokov could stand it any longer, and we ordered our carriage to take us into the fields a hundred yards away from the scene of the fire.

At last M. Choglovokov appeared with the Grand Duke to say that the Empress was going to her house, Pokrovskoe, and had ordered us to go to Choglovokov's, which was in Sloboda Street, on the first right-hand corner of that wide street. We went there immediately; the house had a hall in the middle with four rooms on each side. Nothing could have been more uncomfortable. The wind blew in on all sides, the windows and doors were half rotten, the floor had cracks and gaps three or four fingers wide, and it was filled with vermin. M. Choglovokov's children and servants who were living there at the time were thrown out of this horrible house to make room for us.

Our clothes and all our belongings had remained in the mud in front of the smouldering Palace and were brought to us during the night and the next day. What I regretted most were my books. I was then finishing the fourth volume of Bayle's *Dictionary*, which had taken me two years to read; every six months I completed a volume, and one can judge by that in what solitude I spent my life. At last my books were brought to me.

The Empress lost in this disaster all of her immense wardrobe which had been brought from Moscow. She honoured me by saying that of the four thousand dresses which she had lost, she regretted only the one made of the material I had given her, which I had received from my mother. She also lost many other valuables, among them a bowl inlaid with stones which Count Rumiantzov had bought in Constantinople and for which he paid eight thousand ducats.

This is how the fire started.

The stokers came in to light the stoves in the hall. The room was filled with smoke. They threw water on the fire to put it out, but the smoke increased and made its way into the ante-chamber where there was a sentry. Not daring to move, the soldier broke a pane of glass and then, when no one heard him, fired his musket.

The report was heard and the alarm given.

During the fire M. Choglovokov made a discovery. The Grand Duke had very large cupboards in his apartments. When these were removed from the room, some of the drawers were half-open or badly shut and their contents were revealed. Who would have believed it? All they contained was an immense number of bottles of wine and strong liquor. The cupboard had served as His Highness's cellar. Choglovokov spoke to me about it. I told him I had known nothing of it, which was true; I knew nothing about the cellar but I often saw, almost daily, the Grand Duke in a state of drunkenness.

We remained about six weeks in Choglovokov's house after the fire. We often passed a wooden house in the gardens close to the Saltikov bridge, which, because the Empress had bought it from a bishop, was called the Bishop's House; we took it into our heads to go and live there because it seemed more habitable than the house in which we were staying. After many comings and goings we received permission to occupy the Bishop's House.

It was a very old wooden house with no view at all. It was built on top of stone vaults and therefore higher than the Choglovok's, which was all on the ground floor. The stoves were so old that when they were heated one could see the fire through the chinks and the rooms were filled with smoke, making our heads ache and our eyes smart. We ran the risk of being burnt alive if a fire broke out in that house, for there was only one wooden staircase and the windows were placed very high. Fires did in fact start two or three times while we lived there, but each time were put out. I caught a sore throat then and had a high fever.

The day I fell ill Herr von Breitbach, who had come back to Russia on behalf of the Court of Vienna, was to have supper with
us before he went away; he found me with red and swollen eyes. He thought I had been crying and was not mistaken: ennui, indisposition, and the moral and physical discomfort of my life had been making me feel a hypochondriac the whole day. I had spent it alone with Mme Choglokov waiting for those who did not come; she kept saying: 'This is how they neglect us!' Her husband had gone out to dinner and taken everyone with him. In spite of Sergei Saitkiakov’s promises that he would slip away from the dinner, he only returned with Choglokov—all this made me feel like a bear with a sore head.

Several days later we were at last given permission to go to Liberika. There we felt as if we were in paradise; the house was quite new and rather comfortable, there were balls every evening, and our whole Court was reassembled. During one of the balls we saw the Grand Duke whispering for a long time to M. Choglokov, after which the latter seemed upset, thoughtful, and more sullen and distant than usual.

Sergej Saitkiakov saw this, and also that Choglokov was giving him the cold shoulder, sat down beside Mlle Marthe Chafirov and tried to find out from her what could have been the reason for such unusual intimacy between the Grand Duke and Choglokov. She told him she did not know the facts of the matter but had her suspicions, as the Grand Duke had often repeated to her: ‘Sergej Saitkiakov and my wife are pulling the wool over Choglokov’s eyes in a dastardly fashion; Choglokov is in love with the Grand Duchess, while she cannot stand the sight of him. Sergei Saitkiakov is Choglokov’s confidant; he makes Choglokov believe that he is trying to get him into my wife’s good graces, instead of which he is working for his own ends; as for her, she may well like Sergei Saitkiakov who is amusing, but she uses him to lead Choglokov a dance and, in fact, cares little for either of them. I really must enlighten that poor devil Choglokov; I feel quite sorry for him. I must tell him the truth and he will then see who is his real friend, my wife or myself.’

As soon as Sergei Saitkiakov heard of this dangerous conversation and realized what an outrageous situation it might lead to, he repeated it to me and then went to Choglokov and asked him what was the matter. Choglokov, at first, refused to throw any light on the matter and went on lamenting; then he started complaining about the general lack of trustworthy friends, but finally Sergei Saitkiakov manoeuvred him in so many directions that he got him to repeat the words he had exchanged with the Grand Duke.

When I learnt all this I admit I was indignant with the Grand Duke. To prevent him from making further mischief, I made him understand that I knew all about what had been going on between him and Choglokov. He blushed, did not say a word, and went away, sulking, leaving matters as they were.

Back in Moscow we had to move from the Bishop’s House to apartments in what was called the Empress’s summer house, which had not burnt down. The Empress had had new quarters built for herself in six weeks; for this purpose beams had been transported from the houses of Perovo, of Count Hendrikov, and of the Georgian princes. She occupied it towards the New Year (1754).

It was there that the Empress celebrated the New Year and we, the Grand Duke and I, had the honour of dining with her in public under the canopy. She seemed gay and talkative during dinner. At the foot of the throne there were several tables laid for about a hundred people of the first rank. During dinner, the Empress asked who was this thin ugly person with a crane’s neck (so she said), who was sitting over there (she indicated the place). She was told that it was Mlle Marthe Chafiros. She burst out laughing and turning to me said that the girl reminded her of the Russian proverb: Shita dolgo, ne viteziusa guda (A long neck is convenient for hanging). I could not help smiling at this display of Imperial malice, which was not wanted and which the retinue went on repeating to each other so rapidly that by the time I left the table I found many people had already heard it. As to the Grand Duke, I do not know if he heard what Her Imperial Highness said, but he certainly did not say a word about it and I took good care not to mention it.
Never had there been such a fertile year for fires as 1713-4. It often happened that I saw from the windows of the Summer Palace two, three, four, sometimes five fires at the same time in different parts of Moscow.

During the carnival, the Empress ordered that balls and masquerades should take place in her new abode. During one of these, I saw the Empress deep in conversation with the wife of General Matushkin. The latter did not wish her son to marry Princess Gagarine, my lady-in-waiting, but the Empress managed to persuade her; and Princess Gagarine, well into her thirty-eighth year, received permission to marry Dmitri Matushkin. She was happy about it and so was I. It was a love match. Matushkin was then very handsome.

Mme Choglokov did not come to live with us in the summer quarters; on various pretences she remained in her own house, which was near the Court, with her children. The truth was that this woman, so righteous and apparently devoted to her husband, had fallen madly in love with Prince Repnine and taken a dislike to her husband. She could not feel really happy without a confidant and believed me to be the most reliable one. She showed me all the letters she received from her lover, and I kept her secret very loyally, with scrupulous discretion.

Her meetings with the Prince were very secret. The lady's husband, however, grew suspicious; an officer of the Horse Guards was his informer, a man who was by nature the incarnation of jealousy and suspicion, an old friend of Choglokov's. The latter confided in Serge Saltikov who tried to reassure him; of course, took care not to mention to Serge Saltikov what I knew about it for fear of an unwitting indiscretion. Finally the husband came to me for information. I feigned ignorance and surprise and held my tongue.

In February I showed symptoms of pregnancy.

On Easter Day, during Mass, Choglokov was struck down with colic; he was given every possible drug, but grew worse. During Easter week the Grand Duke went riding with some gentlemen-in-waiting, among whom was Serge Saltikov. I stayed at home as there was some anxiety about letting me go out in my condition since I had already had two miscarriages; I was alone in my room when Choglokov sent and asked me to visit him.

I went, and found him in bed. He began to complain about his wife; he told me that she was constantly seeing Prince Repnine, who used to walk round to see her, that during carnival Repnin had come to a Court ball dressed as Harlequin; heaven knows all the details he repeated to me. In the middle of all this excitement, he said his wife had arrived and he at once began reproaching her in my presence, saying that she had abandoned him while he was ill.

Both he and his wife were limited and suspicious people. I was terrified that the woman would believe that it was I who had betrayed all the details about her meetings, with which he seemed so familiar. His wife told him it would not be at all surprising if he punished him for his behaviour towards her, that at least until now neither he nor anyone else could have reproached her for any lapse so far as he was concerned and ended by saying that he was not the one to be complaining. They both kept referring to my judgement, asking for my arbitration.

I kept silent for fear of offending either one or the other or both, or of being compromised. My face was flushed with apprehension and I felt nervous at being all alone with them.

In the middle of the dispute Mme Vladislavov arrived to tell me that the Empress had come to my room. I rushed there at once; Mme Choglokov came with me, but instead of following me, stopped in the corridor, where there were steps leading into the garden, and sat down there, as I was told later. I was panting for breath as I entered my room. I found indeed the Empress there. Seeing me out of breath and a little flushed, she asked me where I had been. I told her I had come from Choglokov who was ill and had been running to arrive as soon as possible after I learnt that she had honoured me with her visit.

She asked no more questions but seemed to me puzzled, as
though what I said had seemed odd to her, but she went on talking to me and did not ask where the Grand Duke was because she knew he was out. Neither he nor I, during the Empress’s reign, dared go to town or even to leave the house without first getting her permission. Mme Vladislavov was in my room; the Empress spoke to her several times and then addressed me again on trivial subjects. After about half an hour she left, telling me that she released me from appearing on April 21st and 25th because of my pregnancy.

I was surprised that Mme Choglokov had not followed me; I asked Mme Vladislavov, when the Empress left, what had become of her. Mme Vladislavov said she had sat down on the steps and wept. When the Grand Duke came back I told Sergei Salkitov what had happened to me during their ride, how Choglokov had asked me to come, what words had passed between husband and wife, of my fears and of the Empress’s visit.

Then he said: ‘I presume that the Empress came to see what you were doing in your husband’s absence. In order that they should realize that you were quite alone in your rooms as well as at Choglokov’s, I am going to take all my gentlemen, covered in mud as they are, to Ivan Shuvalov at once.’

As the Grand Duke had retired, he did really proceed with all the men who had been out riding with the Grand Duke to the apartment of Ivan Shuvalov who lived at Court. When they arrived, Shuvalov questioned them about their ride and Sergei Salkitov told me later that from the questions put to him he gathered that he had not been mistaken.

Choglokov’s condition went from bad to worse. On April 24th, my birthday, the doctors declared him to be beyond hope of recovery. The Empress was informed and ordered that he should be taken to his own home, as she usually did in such cases, for fear that he should die at Court, as he was afraid of the dead. I was very much upset when I heard about his condition; he was dying just at the moment when, after much effort and study of his character on my part, he had become not only less malicious and unkind, but transformed into a positively quite tractable person; while his wife was sincerely attached to me and had become a loyal friend instead of a harsh and malevolent Arbogast.

Choglokov lived on in his house until April 25th, the anniversary of the Empress’s coronation, when he died in the afternoon. I was informed immediately. I had been sending for news of him almost every hour. I was deeply disturbed by his death and cried a great deal. His wife had also been confined to bed during the last days of her husband’s sickness; she was in one part of the house, she in another.

Serge Salkitov and Leon Naryshkin were in her room at the moment of her husband’s death. The windows were open, a bird flew in and perched itself on the cornice opposite Mme Choglokov’s bed. On seeing this she said: ‘I feel certain that my husband has passed over. Please send someone to find out.’ They came to tell her that it was indeed so. She said that the bird was her husband’s soul. They tried to convince her that it was just an ordinary bird, but no one could find it again. They told her it had flown away, but as nobody had seen it she remained convinced that it was her husband’s soul that had visited her.

As soon as M. Choglokov’s funeral was over, Mme Choglokov wished to come to me; the Empress, seeing her cross the long Yauza bridge, sent someone to meet her and tell her that she was relieved of her duties with me and should return home. Her

1 At one time Choglokov had suddenly imagined himself to have fallen in love with the Empress. He confided this first to Salkitov, then to me; he had been kindly received and all went well, but he spoiled everything with too much zeal. The Shuvalovs took umbrage over the situation: the frequent masquerades that winter contributed to it—the glances thrown at Choglokov were too languorous. They started many rumours and tried to make out that it was an intrigue on the part of Salkitov and myself, which was untrue, but seeing that progress had been made, I cannot conceal that we encouraged him. Finally the Empress showed him that his day was over and addressed him publicly at table as a madman and a traitor, which upset him so much that he developed jaundice. Concordia was called to his side; devoted to the Shuvalovs and knowing Choglokov to be their enemy, he may have believed he was doing them a service by contributing to Choglokov’s death; anyway the doctors called in during his last days maintained that he had been treated like a man marked down for killing.
Majesty considered that she was doing wrong to leave the house when she had been a widow such a short time. The same day she appointed M. Alexandre Shuvalov to perform M. Choglokov's duties with the Grand Duke.

This Alexander Shuvalov, not on his own account, but because of the position he occupied, was the terror of the Court, of the town, and of the whole Empire. He was the Head of the State Inquiry Tribunal, which was then called the Secret Chancery. These functions, so it was said, had given him a sort of convolution that affected the entire right side of his face, from the eye to the chin, whenever he was overcome with joy, anger, fear, or anxiety.

It was astonishing that a man with such a hideous facial affliction should have been chosen to be continuously with a young pregnant woman. Were I to have brought into the world a child with such a dreadful twitch, I imagine the Empress would have been very upset, but this could easily have happened, as I saw him constantly, always reluctantly and mostly with irresistible repugnance.

But this was merely the beginning of a wonderful time that was being prepared for us and for me in particular. Next day they came to me to tell me that the Empress was going to appoint Countess Rumiantsev once more to attend me. I knew that she was the sworn enemy of Serge Salitikov, that she hated Princess Gagarine, and had done my mother much harm, lowering her in the Empress's opinion.

When I heard this, I really lost patience. I began to weep bitterly and told Count Alexander Shuvalov that if this appointment took place I would consider it a great misfortune for myself. This woman had harmed my mother and would do the same to me; she had been feared like the plague when she was here before, and there would be many victims of this appointment if he did not find a way to obviate it.

He promised to do what he could and tried to reassure me, particularly because he was anxious about my condition. He did, in fact, go to see the Empress and came back to tell me that he had hopes that she would not appoint Countess Rumiantsev. And certainly her name was not mentioned again and the departure for Petersburg was the one thing that occupied all our minds.

It was decided that we should be twenty-nine days on the way, that is with only one post station a day. I trembled with fear lest Serge Salitikov and Leon Naryshkine should be left in Moscow, but through I do not know whose intervention they were kindly included in our entourage. We set out on the tenth or eleventh of May from the Moscow Palace. I occupied a carriage with the wife of Count Alexander Shuvalov, the most tiresome minx God ever made, Mme Vladislavov, and the midwife without whom I was now supposed never to move. I was bored to distraction in the carriage and did nothing but cry.

Princess Gagarine, who disliked Countess Shuvalov personally, found a moment when she could speak to me alone to say that she was trying to influence Mme Vladislavov in my favour, because she herself and everybody else feared that the depression which had overcome me in my condition would harm both myself and the child I was bearing. As to Serge Salitikov, he did not dare come anywhere near me because of the embarrassing and perpetual presence of the Shuvalovs, husband and wife. Princess Gagarine did succeed in impressing Mme Vladislavov, who showed a desire to relieve the uneasy and heavy atmosphere which gave rise to the depression which I could no longer control. It needed to little, just a few friendly words; anyhow she succeeded.

After twenty-nine days of a rather tiresome journey we arrived at the Summer Palace in Petersburg. The Grand Duke at once resumed his concerts. This gave me more opportunities for conversation, but my melancholy had reached such a point that at every moment and on every occasion I was ready to cry and a thousand preoccupations filled my mind; I could not bear the thought that everything seemed to indicate Serge Salitikov's withdrawal. We went to Peterhof, and I went for long walks, but all my troubles followed me relentlessly.

In August we went back to town and occupied the Summer Palace. It was a deadly shock for me to learn that the rooms being
prepared for my labour adjoined the Empress's apartments, in fact were part of them.

Alexander Shuvalov took me to see the two rooms; they were dismal like all the rooms in the Summer Palace. They had only one entrance, were badly furnished in red damask, contained little furniture and no comfort. I knew I would feel lonely in them, without anything to entertain me, miserable and left in the lurch. I told this to Serje Saltikov and Princess Gagarine, who, though they did not care for one another, were united in their affection for me. They agreed with all I said, but there was no way of helping me. I had to move there on Wednesday; these rooms were very far from the rooms of the Grand Duke.

I went to bed on Tuesday evening and woke up in the night with pains. I woke up Mme Vladislavov; she sent for the midwife, who declared that labour had started. The Grand Duke was roused from sleep in his room and so was Count Alexander Shuvalov. The latter advised the Empress, who came about two in the morning. I had a very hard time; at last between noon of the following day, September 20th, I gave birth to a son.

As soon as he was swaddled the Empress called for her confessor who conferred on the child the name of Paul, after which the Empress ordered the midwife to take the child and follow her. I remained on my lit de misère, placed in front of a door through which I could see daylight. Behind me were two windows which did not fasten properly and to the right and to the left of the bed two doors, one leading to my dressing-room and the other to the room occupied by Mme Vladislavov. As soon as the Empress left, the Grand Duke also departed, as well as M. and Mme Shuvalov and I saw nobody until past three o'clock.

I had sweated abundantly, and I begged Mme Vladislavov to change my linen and put me back into my own bed; she said she dared not do that. She sent several times for the midwife but the latter did not come. I asked for water and got the same response. At last after three o'clock Countess Shuvalov arrived. She had dressed up for the occasion.

When she saw me still lying on the labour bed where she had left me, she cried out with indignation. It was enough to kill me, she said—which was very reassuring for me. I had been in tears ever since the birth had taken place, particularly because I had been so cruelly abandoned, lying in discomfort after a long and painful labour, between doors and windows which did not close properly, with nobody daring to carry me back to my bed although it was close by and I was too weak to drag myself there. Mme Shuvalov left the room at once and I believe went to fetch the midwife, for the latter arrived half an hour later and told us that the Empress had been so busy with the child that she would not let the midwife leave her for an instant.

Nobody worried about me. This neglect was not very flattering to me. In the meantime I was half-dead with fatigue and thirst; at last I was carried into my bed and I did not see a soul for the rest of the day nor did anyone come to ask after me. The Grand Duke in his room did nothing but drink with whoever came to see him, while the Empress was busy with the child.

In the town and in the whole Empire this event had caused great joy.

The next day I began to feel a dreadful rheumatic pain in my side, along the hip and the left leg; the pain prevented me from sleeping and gave me a high fever. Nevertheless the attention given to me on that day was about the same as the day before; I saw no one and no one asked after me, though the Grand Duke, it is true, came to my room for a moment and then went away saying he had no time to stay.

I cried and moaned in my bed. There was only Mme Vladislavov in my room; she was sorry for me, but could do nothing to help. Besides, I did not like being pitied, nor did I like to complain. I was too proud and the very idea of being miserable was repulsive to me. Up to now I had done everything I could not to show my misery. I could have asked to see Alexander Shuvalov and his wife but they were so dull and tiresome that I was only too glad they were not there.

On the third day someone came on behalf of the Empress to ask Mme Vladislavov if a blue satin cloak, which Her Majesty
had been wearing on the night of the confinement, because my room was so cold, had not been left in my apartments. Mme Vladislavov searched for it everywhere and at last found it in a corner of my dressing-room where it had remained unnoticed as hardly anyone had been in that room since the day of the birth. As soon as she found it, Mme Vladislavov sent it to the Empress at once.

This cloak, as we learnt a little later, had been the cause of a singular incident. The Empress never had any regular hours for going to bed or getting up, nor for meals or dressing. One afternoon during the last three days she lay down on a sofa on which she had had a mattress and some pillows arranged and asked for the cloak because she felt chilly. Everybody searched for it and could not find it as it was in my room.

Then the Empress ordered them to look under the mattress, thinking that it might be there. Mme Krause's sister, Her Majesty's favourite maid, passed her hand under Her Majesty's mattress and pillows and pulling it out again said that the cloak was not there, but that there was a clump of hair or something similar, she did not quite know what. The Empress rose at once and had the mattress removed and to their great astonishment they saw a piece of paper containing some hair wound up round the root of a vegetable.

The Empress's women and she herself said it must be some magic charm or witchcraft and they made conjectures as to who would have been so bold as to put it under the Empress's pillow.

Suspicion fell on one of the women Her Majesty was most fond of, known by the name of Anna Dumasheva; a short while before this woman, having become a widow, had contracted a second marriage with a valet of the Empress's. The Shuvalovs did not like her; she was opposed to them and, having enjoyed the affection and confidence of the Empress since her youth, she might well have used her influence to discredit them in the Empress's eyes.

The Shuvalovs' partisans soon began decorating this story with a cloak of crime; the Empress was rather vulnerable on the subject as she believed in magic and sorcery.

Consequently she ordered Count Shuvalov to arrest the woma

along with her husband and two sons, one of whom was a Guards officer and the other a page-in-waiting to the Empress. The husband, two days after the arrest, asked for a razor to shave himself and cut his throat. His wife and the sons were in prison for a long time and she admitted that in order to strengthen the Empress's feelings in her favour she had used these charms and also put some grains of burnt salt in some Hungarian wine on Maundy Thursday and given it to the Empress to drink. The matter was closed by exiling the woman and her sons to Moscow; the rumour was spread that the fainting fit the Empress had had a short time before my confinement was the result of the drinks this woman had prepared for her, but the fact is that she had only given her a sip of the concoction on Maundy Thursday, which could not really have harmed the Empress. All that was reprehensible was the woman's impudence and her superstition.

At last the Grand Duke, who was bored in the evenings without my ladies-in-waiting whom he liked courting, offered to spend an evening in my room. He was then courting the ugliest one, Princess Elizabeth Woontsov.

On the sixth day my son was baptized; he had almost died in the meantime of ulceration in the mouth. I had news of him only fitfully, for to ask for news would have seemed to express doubt about the care the Empress was giving him and would have been ill-received. She had had him taken to her room and the moment he cried, she rushed and literally smothered him with her attentions.

He was kept in an excessively hot room, swaddled in flannel, laid in a cot lined with silver fox, covered with a sateen, wadded quilt over which was another counterpane of pink velvet lined with silver fox. Later or, I often saw him lying like that, bathed in sweat from head to foot so that when he grew up the slightest whiff of air brought about colds and sickness. In addition, he was surrounded by a great number of old matrons who with their half-baked remedies, resulting from ignorance, inflicted upon him much more physical and moral harm than good.

On the day of the christening, the Empress came to my room
after the ceremony and brought me on a golden plate an order to her Cabinet to send me one hundred thousand roubles; she added a little jewel-case, which I opened only after she had left the room. The money was very welcome, for I had not a kopeck to my name and was crippled with debts. As for the jewel-case, when I opened it, the contents did not make a great impression upon me; in it was a miserable little necklace with earrings and two dirty rings which I would have been ashamed to give to my maids.

In the whole case there was not one single stone worth a hundred roubles and neither the style nor workmanship was very striking. I did not say a word and put this Imperial present away. The utter meanness of the gift must have worried someone's conscience for Shuvalov came to say he had been ordered to find out how I liked it. I replied that I was accustomed to treat anything which came to me from the hands of the Empress as priceless. He carried away this compliment with great satisfaction. He broached the subject again later when he saw that I never wore this magnificent necklace or, more especially, the miserable earrings and told me to put them on. I replied that at the Empress's parties I was used to wearing the most beautiful things I had and that these did not qualify.

Four or five days after I received the money the Empress had given me, Baron Cherkassow, her Secretary of the Cabinet, came to beg me in God's name to lend it to the Empress's private funds, because she had asked for money and there was none.

I gave him the money and he returned it to me in January. The Grand Duke, upon hearing about the present the Empress had given me, had flown into a terrible temper because she had given nothing to him. He spoke about it angrily to Shuvalov. The latter repeated the conversation at once to the Empress who immediately sent the Grand Duke a sum similar to the one she had given me—which is why the money had to be borrowed from me. The truth must be told: the Shuvalovs were extremely cowardly people and their weakness could always be used against them; these splendid qualities had not yet, however, been entirely revealed to me.

After my son's christening there were balls, celebrations, illuminations, and fireworks at Court. As for me, I remained in my bed, ill and suffering great ennui. At last the seventeenth day after my confinement was chosen to announce to me two very unpleasant items of news at the same time. The first was that Sergei Saltykov had been appointed to take the news of my son's birth to Sweden, the other that Princess Gagarine's wedding had been fixed for the coming week. That is to say, in plain language, that I was about to be separated almost immediately from the two people in my entourage whom I loved most.

I buried myself even deeper in my bed, where I could sorrow in peace. To remain in it I pretended the increased pains in my leg prevented me from getting up, but the real truth was that I could not and would not see anybody in my grief.

After certain delays caused by the Empress never being ready to sign an order, Sergei Saltykov eventually left; Princess Gagarine, however, got married on the appointed date. When the required forty days after my confinement had passed, the Empress came a second time to my room for the churbing ceremony. I had got out of bed to welcome her but she found me looking so weak and worn that she made me sit down for the prayers read by her confessor. My son had been brought to the room, and this was the first time I had seen him since his birth. I found him beautiful and the sight of him made my heart rejoice, but the moment the prayers were over the Empress had him carried away and herself departed.

November 18th, 1754, was the day fixed by Her Majesty for me to receive the usual congratulations after six weeks of confinement. For this occasion the room next door to mine was richly furnished and there, while I sat on a bedcover of pink velvet embroidered with silver, everybody came to kiss my hand.

The Empress came too, and then proceeded to the Winter Palace where we were to follow her two or three days later. I made the move with the firm resolution that I would not leave my room until I felt enough strength to overcome my melancholy.

I was then reading the Histoire de l'Allemagne and Histoire Universelle by Voltaire. After that I read all the Russian books I
could get hold of during that winter, among them two immense volumes of Baronius translated into Russian. Then I devoted myself to Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*; after that I read the *Annales* of Tacitus which produced a curious revolution in my mind, aided perhaps by the gloomy disposition of my spirit at the time. I began to see everything in black and searched to find deeper and more intrinsic causes for the various events which presented themselves to my sight.

I gathered all my strength to emerge for Christmas. In fact I attended Divine service, but in church I was overcome with ague and pains in the whole body, so that back in my room I undressed and lay down on my bed, which was in fact no more than a couch which I had placed against a blocked-up door because it seemed to me that no draught could come through it. Besides a double door lined with cloth there was a large screen in front of it, but in spite of this the draught caused all the colds that I contracted that winter.

The day after Christmas my fever was so high that I was delirious; when I closed my eyes the faint lines of the tiles of the stove at the bottom of my couch seemed to flicker in front of me, the room being small and narrow.

I did not go into my bedroom, because it was very cold on account of the windows which looked out to the east and to the north, on both sides of the Neva; the other reason why I stayed out of it was the proximity of the Grand Duke's apartments by day and through half of the night there was an uproar as in a barrack-room; besides, as he and his entourage were always smoking, the unpleasant fumes and smell of tobacco penetrated through the doors.

I remained the whole winter in this miserable little narrow room, about five to six feet long and four across, with its two windows and three doors. Thus began the year 1755.

From Christmas to Lent there were many balls at Court and in town—they were still celebrating the birth of my son. Everybody surpassed everyone else in their desire to give dinners, suppers, balls, masquerades, firework displays and illuminations, each more splendid than the last. I was present at none, pleading illness.

Towards the end of all this carnival, Serge Saltikov returned from Sweden. During his absence the Grand Chancellor, Count Bestuziev, sent me all the news he got from him as well as the dispatches of Count Panin, then Russian envoy in Sweden. These messages were passed on to me by way of Mme Vladoslavov, who received them from her son-in-law, the Grand Chancellor's first clerk. I sent messages back in the same way.

I also learnt, through the same channel, that, as soon as Serge Saltikov returned, the intention was to send him as Russian Minister to Hamburg, in place of Prince Alexander Galitzine, who was appointed to the Army. This new arrangement did not make my grief any less.

When Serge Saltikov returned he asked me through Leon Narshkine to indicate some method whereby I could see him. I spoke of this to Mme Vladoslavov who agreed to arrange a meeting. He was to go first to visit her, then me. I waited for him till three o'clock in the morning, but he did not come; I underwent agonies wondering what could have prevented him.

Next day I learnt that he had been dragged off by Count Roman Vorontsov to a Freemasons' lodge. He claimed that he could not have avoided going without arousing suspicion.

But I questioned and importuned Leon Narshkine so much that it became clear as day to me that Saltikov had failed to come from a lack of consideration, that he was no longer eager to see me, and was blind to all I had suffered lately only out of attachment to him. Leon Narshkine himself, though his friend, found no excuse for him on this point. To tell the truth I was deeply hurt. I wrote him a letter bitterly reproaching him for his behaviour.

He replied and came to see me. He did not find it hard to appease me, for I had a deep feeling for him. He persuaded me to show myself in public. I took his advice and made my appearance
on February 10th, the Grand Duke's birthday and Shrove Tuesday.

I had a superb dress made for the occasion, of blue velvet embroidered with gold. Having reflected a great deal during my solitude, I had resolved to make those who had caused me so much grief realize that they could not hurt me with impunity nor gain my affection and approval by their graceless behaviour.

Consequently I missed no opportunity to show the Shuvalovs how hostile I was to them. I showed them how much I despised them, pointed out their malice and stupidity to others, held them up to ridicule, and wherever I went I dropped sarcastic remarks about them, which went the round of the town and made them the butt of all the gossip—in short, I revenged myself in every possible way, and when I was in their presence I never failed to pay particular attention to the people they disliked.

As many people hated them I found numerous disciples. The Counts Rasumovski, whom I had always liked, were shown more favour than ever. I treated every one with marked kindness and favour except the Shuvalovs. In short, I drew myself up and, with head erect, stood as one bearing great responsibilities rather than a humiliated and oppressed person. The Shuvalovs soon did not know on which leg to dance. They held council and had recourse to all the characteristic wiles and intrigues of courtiers.

At that time a certain M. Brockdorff appeared in Russia, a gentleman from Holstein who had once upon a time been sent back from the Russian frontier by the then tutors of the Grand Duke, Brunner and Bergholz, who knew him to be a doubtful character and an intriguier.

This man was a useful weapon for the Shuvalovs. He held the office of Chamberlain to the Grand Duke in his capacity as Duke of Holstein. This facilitated his entrée to His Highness, who anyhow was always favourably disposed to any blockhead coming from that country. Brockdorff had obtained access to Count Peter Shuvalov by scraping acquaintance, in the inn where he lodged, with a man who, apart from frequenting every inn in St. Petersburg, had only one other occupation: visiting girls.

more especially three pretty German ones called Reifenstein. One of these was Peter Shuvalov's mistress.

The man, whose name was Braun, was a sort of shady, underhand broker, and it was he who introduced Brockdorff to the girls. Through them, Brockdorff met Peter Shuvalov, who spoke with great fervour and devotion about the Grand Duke and gradually came round to complaining about me. M. Brockdorff at the first opportunity repeated all this hearsay to the Grand Duke who was made to see that it was his duty, as Brockdorff said, to bring his wife back to her senses.

With this object in view His Highness came to my room one day after dinner and declared that I had become insufferably proud and that he would soon bring me to see reason. When I asked him in what my pride consisted, he said that I held my head too high. I wanted to know if in order to please him I should bend to the ground like God's own slaves. He flew into a rage and repeated that he would soon pull me up short. I asked him how he would proceed to do so. At this, he stood with his back to the wall, half-drew out his sword, and showed it to me.

I wanted to know what this signified, and whether he intended to challenge me to a duel, in which case I, too, ought to have a sword. He pushed it back into its sheath and told me that I had developed an evil temper.

I asked in what way. He replied, stammering: 'Towards the Shuvalovs, of course.' I retorted that this was only retaliation and that he had better not speak about something of which he knew and understood so little. He began: 'This is what happens when one does not trust one's real friends—everything goes wrong then. Had you trusted me, all would have been well.' 'But trust in what way?' I asked. Then he started making such extravagant statements, devoid of all common sense, that I let him go on talking and did not attempt to reply. Finally, seizing upon what seemed a favourable interval, I suggested he should go to bed, for I could see that he was acting under the influence of drink which had dulled his mental powers. He followed my advice and went off to bed. By this time he had begun to give off a perpetual
odour of alcohol mixed with tobacco, which was quite insufferable to those who came close to him.

The same evening, as I was playing cards, Count Shuvalov came to intimate to me on behalf of the Empress that she had for some reason to wear on their dresses certain materials which were specified in a regulation. To show him how much I had improved in the subject, I laughed in his face and said that I might have refrained from notifying me of this regulation as I never wore any of the materials which Her Majesty did not like, and that in any case my quality was not a matter of beauty and clothes; when the first had gone the second became ridiculous—nothing remained permanent, I said, but character. Character—nothing remained permanent, I said, but character. He listened to the end, his right eye winking, and then left, still with the usual grimace on his face. I remarked on this to those who were playing with me and imitated him, which made everybody laugh.

Several days later, the Grand Duke told me that he wanted to ask the Empress for some money for his Holstein properties which were deteriorating and that Brockdorff had advised him to do so. I could see that this was just bait dangled by the Shuvalovs to give him hope. I asked him whether there was any way of remedying things without taking this step. He replied that he would see the matter as conveyed to him by people from Holstein. He did so and after persuading the papers I told him that it seemed to me that he could do without begging for money from his aunt, which she might well refuse him, as she had just given his aunt one hundred thousand roubles. However, he remained of his own opinion and I of mine. In fact, though he had been led to hope he would get the money, he actually got nothing.

After Easter we went to Oranienbaum. Before we left, the Empress allowed me to see my son for the third time since his birth. I had to cross all Her Majesty's apartments before reaching his room, where the heat was suffocating, as I have already said.

Arrived in the country near Oranienbaum, we witnessed a phenomenon. The Grand Duke, to whom his Holstinians always complained of a deficit and whom everybody advised that he should reduce this unnecessary army which he could only see by stealth and piecemeal, suddenly took the daring resolution to summon a whole detachment from Holstein.

This was another intrigue of that sycephant Brockdorff, who fancied the Prince's dominating passion. He had intimated to the Shuvalovs that if they allowed him this playing they would secure his favour and be certain of his approval of anything they undertook in other directions. To start with, the matter was apparently concealed from the Empress (who loathed Holstein and everything to do with it, and who had seen how these military hobbies had ruined the prestige of the Grand Duke's father, Duke Charles Frederick, in the eyes of Peter the Great and of the Russian people). She was told that it was a trifle not worth mentioning and that anyhow the presence of Alexander Shuvalov was sufficient brake to keep the matter under control. Embarking at Kiel, the detachment arrived at Kronstadt and came on to Oranienbaum. The Grand Duke, who, in Chaglovski's time, had only worn the Holstein uniform secretly in his room, now wore nothing else except on his days at Court, though he was lieutenant-colonel of the Preobrajenski regiment and had, besides, a regiment of cuirassiers in Russia. On Brockdorff's advice the Grand Duke kept this matter of the transport of troops very secret from me. I admit that when I heard about it I trembled to think what a disastrous effect it would have on the Grand Duke's prestige from the Russians' point of view, let alone from that of the Empress whose feelings on the subject were known to me. Alexander Shuvalov saw the detachment pass in front of the balcony in Oranienbaum, his eye watching; stood beside him. At the bottom of his heart he disapproved of what both he and his parents had agreed to tolerate.

The guard of the Oranienbaum Palace was chosen alternately from the Ingermanland and the Astrakhan regiments. I heard that when these regiments saw the Holstein troops pass they said: "Those accursed Germans are all puppets of the King of Prussia: traitors, all of them, being brought to Russia." The people were
scandalized by this manifestation; the ultra-loyal ones shrugged their shoulders, the more moderate found the affair ridiculous. The whole thing was a highly dangerous, childish prank. I myself kept silent; when asked my opinion I gave it in such a way as to leave no doubt that I did not at all approve such behaviour which from whatever point of view one considered it could only harm the Grand Duke. His private pleasure could not compensate for the damage it would do him as far as public opinion was concerned. But the Grand Duke, elated by the presence of his troops, went off to join them in a camp he had set up for the purpose and proceeded to exercise them.

They had to be fed but no one had given a thought to the matter which now became pressing; there were some disputes with the Marshal of the Court, who had not been prepared for such a request, but finally he organized supplies and the Court lackeys with the soldiers of the Palace guard from the Ingermanland regiment had to carry food from the kitchen to the camp for the new arrivals.

The camp was some distance from the house; the men got nothing for their additional trouble, and one can imagine what a splendid impression all these wise and prudent arrangements must have made. The Ingermanland soldiers said: 'We are now the lackeys of these accursed Germans.' The liveried servants of the Court said: 'We are now employed to wait upon a gang of ne'er-do-wells.'

When I learnt what was happening I resolved firmly to keep away as far as possible from this harmful, childish game. The married gentlemen-in-waiting of our Court were accompanied by their wives, making up a large group; these gentlemen had nothing to do with the Holstein camp, from which His Imperial Highness now never moved. With these courtiers I used to go for long walks always in the opposite direction from the camp, which we never approached closely.

The fancy took me to lay out a garden in Oranienbaum and as I knew that the Grand Duke would not give me a shilling's worth of soil for the purpose, I asked Princess Gallitzin to sell me about half an acre of abandoned wasteland belonging to several members of her family near Oranienbaum; they willingly let me have it without payment. I began to make plans to build and plant; as this was my first attempt of the kind, it became very elaborate. My old French surgeon, Gyon, used to watch me do this and say: 'What are you doing it for? Remember what I said. I foretell that you will one day abandon it all.' His prognostication proved to be right, but I needed something to amuse me and this exercise of imagination entertained me at the time. At first I employed the old Oranienbaum gardener, Lambert, to help me plant. He had worked for the Empress at Tsarskoe Selo when she was still a Princess and later she had moved him to Oranienbaum. He used to tell fortunes, and what he foretold for the Empress came true: he predicted she would come to the throne. This man told me, and repeated as often as I wished, that I should become sovereign Empress of Russia, that I should see son, grandson, and great-grandson and should live to a very great age, over eighty. I did more, he fixed the date of my coming to the throne six years before it took place. He was an odd man and spoke with unshakable conviction. He affirmed that the Empress did not wish him well because his predictions had come true and that she had sent him from Tsarskoe Selo to Oranienbaum because she was afraid of him, now that there was no further throne for him to promise her.

1 In fact Catherine died in 1796, aged sixty-seven. (Ed.)