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Alexander I as a boy, after a portrait by Lampy.

Constantine Pavlovitsh as a boy, after a portrait by Lampy.

THE CURSE OF THE ROMANOVS

THE CURSE OF THE ROMANOVS

A STUDY OF THE LIVES AND THE REIGNS OF TWO TSARS PAUL I AND ALEXANDER I OF RUSSIA : 1754-1825 : BY ANGELO S. RAPPOPORT, PH.D.

PUBLISHED AT LONDON BY CHATTO & WINDUS MCMVII



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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh.

This book is dedicated to the memory of the noble martyrs who have fallen in the struggle for Russian freedom

PREFACE

THE eyes of Europe are directed towards Russia, the European China, where the scion of the house of Romanov is seated on his tottering throne, frightened at the phantom of an approaching Revolution. Convulsively he is clinging to the throne of his ancestors, reluctant to give up what he considers his right. But has Nicholas II a right to the Russian throne? Yes, the right of the usurper! Michael Romanov was elected Tsar of Russia by the voice of the nation, but Peter I, his grandson, was the son of an unknown parent. The Tsar himself knew that he was not the son of Alexis, and one day he asked Count Yaguzhinsky to tell him whether he was his father. The Count, however, replied that it was difficult to say, as the Tsaritza had so many lovers. Elizabeth may or may not have been the daughter of Peter the Great. She was in any case the daughter of Catherine I, a former Livonian servant. The legitimacy of Paul I is doubtful, and if one is to believe the confessions of Catherine II he was not a Romanov.

For nearly three centuries these so-called Romanovs have ruled over Russia, but they have remained strangers to the people under the sway of their sceptre. From the time of their accession, there has been an ever-widening gulf between

Autocracy and the Russian nation. It is the doom of Autocracy not to work hand in hand with, but against, the nation. The affectionate bond which unites the subjects of a constitutional country such as England, for instance, with their sovereign, is absent in the land of the Tsar. Fear takes the place of loyalty. The Tsar remains an alien in the midst of his people. He is not one of them, he is an usurper. Ever since the rise of the power of Moscow, ever since the first development of Autocracy, the rule of the Tsars has appeared to the people not as a legitimate government, but as a foreign tyranny, as the incarnation of the spirit of Tshengis Khan and Tamerlane, imposing laws by ukases and knouts. The subjects in Russia owe everything to the ruler, but the latter owes nothing to his subjects. The Tsar can dispose of his throne as he pleases, he may even change the form of government, he may rule despotically and he may grant a constitution. "The Tsar giveth and the Tsar taketh, the name of the Tsar be ——." That is the difference between the history of constitutional countries and that of Autocracy. The histories of Windsor Castle and of the Tower are full of hideous reminiscences and of bloody deeds; the walls of the Louvre and the Escurial could tell a terrible tale or two; but the *ensemble* of English, French, and Spanish dynasties in their records represent the history of a nation, whilst the records of Russia are nothing else but a history of slavery. "The idea of a powerful Autocracy is the idea of slavery," wrote Alexander Hertzen. The sovereigns of the house of Romanov have done nothing for the people. The latter think

of their rulers in connection only with their misfortunes, with oppression, war, military colonies, police, prisons, Schluesselburg, Siberia, the mines, tortures, and the knout. And it is also the doom of Autocracy that even its attempts at liberalism should be frustrated. Autocracy, I do not hesitate to maintain, must be the enemy of the people or Autocracy would cease to exist, but the logical result of its attitude will one day be its annihilation. Sooner or later assassination is the inevitable fate of the ruler whose oppression becomes unbearable, as in the case of Paul I, whilst disappointment and a return to reactionary measures is the result of all liberal attempts on the part of Autocracy, as in the case of Alexander I. Paul I and Alexander I, the subjects of the present study, are two typical examples of the fate of the Romanovs. They either remain faithful to the spirit of Autocracy, and assassination stares them in the face, or they inaugurate an era of liberalism, but finding that they thus undermine their own existence, they turn reactionaries and lose their mental balance, as in the case of Alexander.

This is the Curse of the Romanovs. For it is a dynasty ruling over a nation against the interests of the nation. The interests of the reigning house cannot fail to clash with those of the people. All attempts on the part of Autocracy to grant liberal institutions to the country must therefore, as I have pointed out, unavoidably end in a fiasco and in a farce. Such was the case of Alexander I, and such is that of Nicholas II. Alexander I, the dreamer of Republics, crushed the aspirations of Poland and Greece and suppressed the liberal movement in

his own country, and Nicholas II, whilst pretending to grant a constitution to Russia, instituted courts-martial. He has granted his subjects the right to die. Every Russian enjoyed for some time the privilege of being arrested, tried, and sentenced to death within twenty-four hours, and promptly executed. Of course, nominally this privilege was only granted to "revolutionaries," but the Russian Government applied this term in a very liberal and generous manner. One need not have thrown a bomb or fired a revolver to be court-martialled. Among revolutionaries and enemies of the Government were counted, not only Zenaida Konopliannikof, who shot General Minn, but also the majority of the members of the Douma, who signed the Manifesto of Vyborg, all those who dared to ask citizen rights, nay elementary human rights, for their countrymen whom they represented. And yet only a few months ago M. Stolypin—with a *sang-froid* which I really admire—declared to a French journalist, M. Ludovic Naudeau, that the Russian Government "does not and will never prosecute anybody for his political opinions, but it does and will prosecute all those who propagate revolutionary ideas and commit revolutionary acts." This declaration is certainly amusing for its *sans-gêne*, but in any case it clearly indicates the decision of the Government to muzzle and proscribe all revolutionaries and progressionists. And who are the revolutionaries? All those whom the Government chooses to designate as such; in other words, all those who are in the way of Tsardom, and who either do not further its work or who refuse obediently and submissively to accept its laws and orders. The courts-martial were instituted in

the interest of order and peace. Thus it is quite comprehensible that whilst one crime was severely punished by the court-martial, another was very indulgently treated : whilst the girl, Mlle. Shakerman, who threw a bomb at an official Poltavtshenko, because he had taken part in the massacres of the Jews, but missed him, was hanged, the murderer of Herzenstein went free ; whilst any one expressing a liberal idea was immediately arrested, the reactionary bands were enjoying full freedom of speech ; whilst the ex-deputies of the Douma who signed the Vyborg Manifesto were being prosecuted, M. Dobruvin, the leader of the League of Russian men, affiliated to the Black hundreds, was invited to lunch by General Kaulbars, complimented and followed to the station by a crowd of 300 people to whom he addressed the following words : " We have made up our minds to exterminate the enemies of Russia. Friends, you know where to find them. Down with the revolutionaries and the Jews."

One must indeed be an extraordinary optimist to continue to see things in a roseate light, and a still greater optimist to expect reforms, liberty, and progress from the Russian Government. Such hopes are built upon the quicksand of Tsardom. Although the Government freely uses the words liberty and rights, in a vague manner, all the promises tumble down like a house of cards when some more precise definition of these terms is attempted. Two Doumas have been dissolved, and there will be no difficulty in dissolving another. In other words, either the Douma will do whatever Tsardom commands, and approve such reforms as the Government may think fit to institute, in order

to strengthen its own power, or the Douma will be dispersed. And what reforms may be expected? If, as long as the liberals and revolutionaries seemed to possess some influence, the Government only vaguely promised but never kept its promises, it is absurd to expect anything when it will have entirely gained the upper hand. Is it reasonable to imagine that after courts-martial, shooting and hanging, flogging and sending to Siberia have exterminated a large number of liberals and revolutionaries, and frightened many more into speechlessness, when by such means of persecution, as were and still are employed, all those in Russia who had decided to fight Autocracy will have been reduced to silence—Autocracy will grant a constitution and a popular government?

There is a certain sense of mockery, of contradiction and incongruity in all liberal attempts emanating from Autocracy. And indeed all constitutional attempts in Russia, from the times of Michael Romanov to those of Nicholas II, have ended in failure. There are only two alternatives for the future of Russia: the disappearance of the house of Romanov-Soltykov-Holstein-Gottorp as a reigning family, or the continuation of a rule of slavery. I confess that I hope fate will decide in favour of the first alternative.

As for the sources upon which the present study is based, I have enumerated them in the appended Bibliography. The facts have been more especially collected from the *Sbornik*, the *Archives of Prince Voronzov*, and the *Russian Archives* and *Russian Antiquities*. I have endeavoured to sketch the history of two rulers of the house of Romanov, and

to show that both the rule of oppression and that of liberalism ended in assassination and failure respectively. *Caveant Consules.*

I cannot terminate these preliminary remarks without expressing my sincerest thanks to my friend W. Teignmouth-Shore, who kindly read some of the final proofs, and to Miss M. Edwardes, for her valuable assistance.

A. S. R.

LONDON, *June* 1907.

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PART I

PAUL I

THE CURSE OF THE ROMANOVS

CHAPTER I

FROM THE COLOSSEUM TO THE KREMLIN

"God is Tsar in heaven,
The Tsar is God on earth."
—*Russian Proverb.*

Crime and insanity—Genius and folly on the throne—Rome and St. Petersburg—Roman Cæsars and Russian Tsars—Tyrants and assassins—The curse of the Romanovs.

SAD and gloomy is the picture which the Rome of the Emperors offers to the student of history. Looking back from modern times upon the remote past, we are somewhat astonished to see millions, whose ancestors were the "*viri antiqui et vere Romani*," submitting to the tyranny of a single individual whose exploits, in the case of an ordinary mortal, would meet with death at the hand of the executioner. The whims and fancies of criminals, idiots, and imbeciles, wearing the purple, were law to the Roman masses; for the criminal or imbecile was the all-powerful, almighty Emperor. About his madness men only dared to whisper with pale cheek and trembling lip; his crimes were loudly styled acts of supreme justice; his mad pranks were praised as deeds dictated by the

wisdom and benevolence of a great ruler. He was the Cæsar, before whom all human beings were but shrinking, kneeling slaves.

And yet only a short span of time, a century and a half, separates us from the period when a vast European Empire was ruled in a similar manner, when numerous millions were oppressed, worked to death, sent to mines and into exile, knouted and beheaded, at the absolute will and mercy of modern Cæsars—the Tsars of Russia. Tyrants, prostitutes, degenerates, imbeciles and lunatics, ruled the destinies of nations, and, as once the Cæsars in Rome, the Tsars and Tsaritzas of St. Petersburg had only to lift their finger to see their slightest whims fulfilled. The life and goods of the highest dignitary of State no less than the miserable existence of the most wretched moujik were at the mercy of the master. All-mighty, all-powerful Cæsars and Tsars! To venture to criticise you meant death, to appear to disobey you worse than death. You spoke, and the world was hushed; you frowned, and proud and valiant men bowed their heads, cowed before your gaze; you grew angry, and millions trembled before your mighty wrath. You smiled the smile of an imbecile, and fawning courtiers, cringing slaves, prostrated themselves before you, singing "Hosannah" to the most benevolent ruler on earth! you are the Elect of the Gods whom you represent on earth; you are the "anointed of the Lord," the "shadow of God on earth," and "Not all the water in the rough rude sea can wash the balm from an anointed king" (Richard II). You are never unjust, never unkind, never cruel, for you are the representatives of Providence on earth, and

Providence, religion teaches us, is always kind and benevolent, even when it appears cruel and malicious to men. And just as we cannot understand the ways of Providence, so are we unable to fathom your ways. Everything is allowed to you, and the life and death of your subjects is in your hands. Millions must readily die for you, so as to spare you the slightest inconvenience. Your cruelty is termed justice, your obstinacy firmness, your weakness clemency, your passionate wrath righteous indignation, your debaucheries excessive love of the beautiful or political wisdom. Augustus committed many adulteries, said his friends, not out of lust and voluptuousness, but in order to learn from the wives the secret plans of their husbands.[1]

If Cæsar's wife is above suspicion, much more is Cæsar so. But you are not only sacred, divine, august, but also very clever. You make a feeble attempt at an insipid joke and the world is convulsed with laughter. You nod or slightly touch your hat to vast crowds and you are proclaimed paragons of kindness and condescension. Your facial expression betrays a gloomy frame of mind, and commiseration is at once felt for your worries, for, as Atlas of yore who carried the world, you have to carry on your shoulders the cares and troubles of millions of your beloved subjects.

What wonder, therefore, degenerates that you were, with the germs of insanity lurking like a hidden worm in your brain, if, intoxicated by your omnipotence, your actions and conduct soon became those of madmen, unchecked and uncontrolled.

[1] *Cf.* Suetonius, Aug. LXIX.

Weak-minded creatures that you were, you easily fell victims to an intellectual alcoholism or the Cæsarean insanity.

Must it not logically follow that if everything a man does or says or thinks is good, great, noble, right, just, and wise, never bad, never miserable, and that if he is never wicked, never wrong, unjust, or cruel, he must gradually lose every conception and sense of difference between justice and injustice, between good and evil, between right and wrong, unless he is armed with a deep contempt for humanity and with a powerful and unshakable personality? Ignorant as he is of danger and privation, of pain, physical and moral, how can he help falling a victim to his whims and fancies or fail to grow furious at the slightest opposition? Yet, unable to govern himself, he nevertheless pretends to be able to govern and rule millions, empires, and the world; scarcely master of his own will he continues, however, to be the absolute master of the wills of millions.

The irritability of the degenerate, of the mentally diseased, who is seized with fits of megalomania, which suffer no criticism and brook no contradiction, leads to systematic cruelty if it is not checked, and it is disastrous if, on the contrary, it is accompanied by the unlimited power of Tsar or Cæsar. In ordinary men their wills, their whims and fancies, their manias, are checked and controlled by the will of others, by law and by society. There are prison cells, lunatic asylums, strait-jackets, for the ordinary mortal who grows diseased, loses his balance and strikes out in his wild strength, but there is but slight control for the idiot or madman

on a throne, at any time and in any country. It did not and does not exist at all for the Cæsars and for the Tsars. Who, indeed, has ever dared to doubt aloud the soundness of their minds? Who has dared to dam the current of their anger or check their mad outbursts which lash the smooth existence of their subjects into foam-crested waves and break and ruin everything before them? There is no law, no power to oppose their will. On the contrary, they are supported by the abject adoration of their entourage, and woe unto him who shows the slightest inclination not to be submissive. Crowds of slaves surrounding the throne are constantly singing their praises, extolling their vices, flattering their vanities, treating the ruler not as a mortal but as a superior being, nay, as a God, standing beyond good and evil. But if this fancied God, or at least Superman, happens to have a diseased brain and a wild dash of degenerate blood in his veins, then this abject veneration, coupled with an unrestrained will, and the knowledge of omnipotence, finally unhinges his feeble mind. What wonder if every vestige of his judgment is destroyed and his moral feelings are corroded.

The omnipotence, however, upon the pinnacle of which the Cæsars and the Tsars suddenly found themselves, was not the real—at least not the only—cause of the Cæsarean insanity. It was simply the soil upon which their madness took root, bringing forth eccentric blossoms and fruits; it was the means which allowed unlimited scope to their maniacal whims, and lent unto them vast dimensions. Placed as they were high above the ordinary mass of human beings, seeing on one side riches and power, and

worshipping nations at their feet, and, on the other, the bottomless abyss into which the assassin's knife could at any moment throw them, a sense of giddiness seized them and they lost their mental equilibrium. But whenever fate has placed a real genius, a giant with a vast brain and a powerful mind, one of nature's aristocrats, upon the pinnacle of power, upon the Cæsarean throne, the mixture of exultation and terror to which the degenerate and the parvenu so easily fall a prey, produced no disastrous effects upon them.

If unlimited power fosters and fostered the so-called Cæsarean insanity, it was not the sole factor, for it affects and affected only those who have and had a predisposition to abnormality, degeneracy, and insanity. It requires, indeed, an aristocratic mind, a noble spirit, to preserve the mental balance of the autocratic ruler in the lofty atmosphere of a throne. Whenever a genius, nay, even a strong-minded man, happened to don the purple, the strong wine of power failed to intoxicate him and he preserved his full vigour. Such was Napoleon, such were some of the Cæsars, Hadrian, the two Antonines, even Augustus. The majority of Cæsars and Tsars carried the germs of insanity in them before they found themselves absolute masters of the world or of vast empires. Their madness would have manifested itself in a more modest way, even had they remained private individuals. Caligula, Nero, or Paul I would not, under any circumstances, have remained normal, but as private individuals they would have lacked the opportunity to cause much harm. The Cæsarean dignity fostered their manias, giving them full and

unlimited scope. Napoleon suddenly found himself master of a mighty Empire; he put his foot on the neck of Europe, but the blood of the Corsican, the son of strong-minded Lætitia Ramolini, was not corrupt, it was fresh and vigorous unlike that of his whilom enemy and later admirer, the mad son of Catherine Minerva, Paul I. Augustus and Hadrian and the two Antonines stood just where Caligula and Nero had stood, but the thought of ruling the world, of commanding all its riches and all its pleasures, the knowledge that they could swallow up provinces, nay, the world itself, did not drive them mad. They were great and wise. They, too, could exclaim, with Charles V in "Hernani":—

"Ye gods! To stand alone
Upon the topmost summit of the world,
The head and front of all; to be the stone
That binds the whole together; to behold
The heads of kings submissive 'neath my feet;
And, lower still, the houses of the great,
Then priests and men of war; lowest of all,
Deep in the shadow that my greatness casts,
The world!
A mighty pyramid whose base is stretched
From pole to pole upon the nations' backs,
The world! a sea,
An ever-troubled flood, which all is moved
If aught be cast therein!
In its depths,
If one perchance should gaze adown the gloom,
Are countless Empires, noble vessels wrecked,
Tossed by the ebb and flow of that same tide
That knew them once, but know them now no more.
And of all this to be the lord! To climb,
At their election, to this pinnacle,
Knowing one's-self a man as other men!
To see the abyss below! What if my head
Turned dizzy at the sight!"

But their heads did not grow dizzy on the summit of the "restless pyramid." They trod upon the trembling world, they felt the pulsing of its eager life, but their strength did not fail them; they looked down from their giddy height into the surging deep, but neither reeled nor tottered; on the contrary, their spirits increased in strength, for they were of no common mould. Cæsar, the real founder of the Cæsarean dignity, was an unquestioned monarch, but his head was never turned. "No sudden wave of passion," said Antonius in his funeral oration, "made him cruel, no fortune or success spoiled him, no power changed him, and even the complete possession of the highest power in the State failed to influence him."[1] Cæsar was one of the few mighty ones, "who, in great things as in little, never acted on whim or prejudice, but always, without exception, in accordance with his duty."

This is no place in which to investigate the causes that led to the degeneration of the Cæsars or other reigning European families. Their neuropathic state has been attributed to consanguineous marriages, which are the prerogative of royalty, and which, in the end, produce depravity and mania in the descendants. A famous Russian specialist in insanity has attributed the development of the pathological element in, and the deterioration of, the members of royal and imperial houses, from the Cæsars down to the Georges, to the detrimental influence exercised upon them by their consciousness of power and the exalted exclusiveness of their position. It is the retribution by which Nature

[1] *Cf.* Dio Cassius, *Historiæ Romanæ*, 44, 42.

punishes the crime which is committed by one class assuming power over another.[1] Personally, I am rather inclined to consider the mental condition of reigning houses as the result of exhaustion. The heirs of genius are *doomed* to decay and deterioration. Intellectual development, in individuals as in races, leads to a neuropathic state, to weakness and to extinction. The descendants of great men cannot escape physical and mental decay. Nature, having perfected herself in a great man, has exhausted her force, and what follows is necessarily weak and miserable. Jealous fate makes the descendants pay heavily for the gifts she has heaped upon one of their ancestors. It is the curse of inheritance, the curse of ancestry that weighs on their shoulders. Now the members of the reigning houses have been and are in most cases the descendants of a great man who has been the founder. It is due to this fact that their successors, who are, if not their sons and daughters, their very near kinsmen and descendants, must carry in them and propagate the germs of disease and degeneration. Although in Rome as well as in Russia, from Peter to Paul, the dynasty was not hereditary, the Cæsar and Tsar designating his successor during his lifetime, this choice was limited to relatives or descendants. Thus, whilst in Augustus, the nephew of Cæsar, who was a universal genius, the first signs of mental deterioration were noticeable, these rapidly increased in his successors, members of the Julian house. Antonia the younger, sister of Augustus, was the mother of Claudius.

[1] *Cf.* Paul Jacoby, *Etudes sur la Sélection chez l'homme.* Paris, 1904.

Her son, Germanicus, was the father of Caligula, whose mother was Agrippina, grand-daughter of Augustus and daughter of the depraved Julia. Nero's mother was Agrippina the younger, a great-grand-daughter of Augustus. The father of Claudius, the great-grandfather of Nero, was Drusus, son of Augustus and Livia. Tiberius alone was not related to the Julian house, and, in fact, historians have endeavoured to prove that he has been misrepresented to posterity. Napoleon once warmly defended the character of this emperor. But, whatever the causes, it is admitted that the princes of the Julian-Claudian house, unlike the great Julius himself—soldier, statesman, legislator, historian and orator—were unfit to rule the world, and this statement is equally true of the Romanovs, whose history in many points resembles that of the Roman Cæsars. Almost the same thoughts must occur to the student of history whether he read the annals of the Cæsars or those of the Russian Tsars. The similarity of their fate is often striking. It could not be otherwise.

The Rome of the Emperors and the St. Petersburg of the Tsars in the eighteenth century offer pictures differing only in their framework. Here as there we see the same crowned criminals, clowns and madmen, ruling supreme; the purple hiding their bloodstained hands. The gratification of their own personal wishes constitutes in their minds the welfare of the State, and patriotism takes the shape of the veneration of Cæsar and Tsar. In St. Petersburg, as once in Imperial Rome, everything is the property, not of the State, but of the ruler. On all sides hundreds of thousands are starving,

whilst the few revel in fabulous luxuries. Hunger and epidemics decimate the subjects, whilst the ruler is richly remunerating the courtier whose imagination hits upon a new and hitherto unheard-of luxury or pleasure; the starving masses cast eager, hungry glances upon a piece of bread, whilst vast sums are wasted to satisfy the gluttony of the ruler. The complete absence of a prosperous middle-class, the bone and sinew of cities and of empires, is equally noticeable in Cæsarean Rome as in Imperial St. Petersburg, both mainly consisting of two classes, wealthy nobles and patricians, moujiks and slaves.

Hundreds of thousands, nay millions of miserably wretched beings are suffering from famine, are exposed to insalubrious climates and a baneful atmosphere, whilst a few *beati* revel in luxury and debauchery. Excessive love of pomp and extravagance in feasts and revelries, in dress and presents, were characteristic of the Cæsars as of the Tsars. Snow in summer, roses in winter for Caligula and Nero, *pâtés de Perigord* by special messenger from Paris for Elizabeth Petrovna, and if the Romanovs could boast neither the artistic refinement nor the rich imagination which characterised the revelries of the princes and princesses of the Julian-Claudian house, they nevertheless displayed an equal love for pleasure and debauchery. Fortunes were spent on entertainments during the reigns of Elizabeth and Catherine of which Roman Empresses would perhaps not have been ashamed. The Roman nobles indulged in luxurious and voluptuous recreations and escaped to Baiæ and the other fashionable watering-places of Campania, whilst the plebs

were slowly festering in the unhealthy quarters of the Esquiline and the Quirinal. Fever and leprosy are good enough for the plebs. Worse off than the slaves was the nominally free *civis Romanus*. As long as he was healthy and robust Cæsar cared for him, it is true. He gave him *panem et circenses*, bread and games. But Cæsar did not protect him against sickness and fever, he opened no hospitals —for what did Cæsar care for dying wretches? Why should he save the lives of proletarians whom it cost him vast sums to feed?[1] Cæsar had no need of them. What a contrast between the Roman rich, whose magnificent dwellings on the heights of the Carinæ dominated the Forum Romanum, and the crowd teeming in the dirty hovels, in the narrow streets of the Suburra or in the suburbs beyond the Pomœrium. But is the contrast less between Russian nobles, who have their *grandes et petites entrées* to the Winter Palace and the Hermitage, and the Russian plebs? Still the Roman slave, the client from the Aventine, was happier than his Russian counterpart of centuries later. For, after all, Cæsar was afraid of the plebs, of the so-called *Populus Romanus*, who nominally constituted, though in connection with the Senate, the official government of Rome. The *Populus Romanus* was not only able to pass laws ; it could prevent the passage of laws and it could revolt, for it was a surging, dangerous crowd, animated by a turbulent spirit. It was in Cæsar's interest, therefore, to flatter this crowd so as to gain its favour. Cæsar fed and amused this rabble ; he gave it bread

[1] Cf. *Nompère de Champagny: Les Césars*, Paris, 1841–43, vol. iv, p. 37; and Dio Cassius, *Historiæ Romanæ*, lv, 15.

and games, all that the rabble required, and as his own safety greatly depended upon the temper of the mob, Cæsar was most punctual in the distribution of his bounties and the supply was most regular. But no Tsar will feed the hungry moujiks; he is so sure of their meekness of character. They will not riot, and, even if they make a feeble attempt at it, cannon-shots soon silence them. No five measures of grain for you, my poor moujiks, from the hand of the Tsar; no largesses on special occasions, no bread and no games, no *congiarium* and no *sportulæ* for you, O plebs of the Neva, of the Volga and of the Kama, as once for those of the Tiber. Anna, Elizabeth, and Catherine will waste large sums on pleasure, Catherine will lavish twenty million of roubles on her favourites, Paul will make princely gifts on the occasion of his coronation; he will give thousands of presents to his friends, to his servants, to his mistresses and to their relatives, but you alone, great silent mass, will be ignored. You will be ignored, because no one is afraid of you, because you have shown to your rulers that you lack the spirit of the ancient Roman mob, that you are silent and submissive, that you will not rebel, will not threaten the Russian Cæsar, not only when you are refused bread, but even when your humble petitions are greeted with cannon-shot and salvos.

In the rooms of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg the visitor may admire one of the finest collections of pictures in the world, whilst high on the ruins of the Villa of Zeus on the island of Capreæ, where Tiberius passed the last years of his life, stands the chapel of Santa Maria del Soccorso; but

if stones could speak what a tale they could whisper into the ears of the visitors, tales of hideous cruelties, of lust and obscenity. What scenes the walls of the palaces of the Russian Tsars and of the Roman Cæsars must have witnessed; the walls of the Hermitage and of the Kremlin, the ruined walls of the palaces on the Palatine and of the Caprean villas, what strange sounds they must have heard. They witnessed all the passions dwelling in the human breast let loose, lust and cruelty, and vice and folly; they heard the sighs of agony of the assassinated, and the tumultuous uproar of bacchanalian revel.

In St. Petersburg, as once in Rome, it is the same rule of favourites and of freed men, of mistresses and of lovers. Messalina, the wife of Claudius, and Catherine, the spouse of Peter III, manifest an utter contempt for the moral sense and decency of the nation. Cæsars and Tsars get rid of their wives, of their nearest relatives and of their rivals, by foul and treacherous means, and no law punishes them. Emancipated Grecian slaves are the advisers of the Cæsars, whilst German adventurers, Turkish barbers and French dancing girls, influence the Russian Tsars and Tsaritzas. Men of low birth and of foreign origin, to whom the interest of the State is nothing, companions of Cæsars and Tsars in their excesses, who stand and fall with the ruler, fill the palaces in Rome and St. Petersburg, dictating laws to the world and to a vast Empire. Cæsars and Tsars alike take equal care to throttle the hydra-head of opposition. But opposition in Rome had no hydra-head to rear; it no longer dared to oppose the purple-clad tyrants. Tiberius could rightly feel disgusted with the servile spirit of the Senate

and, on leaving the Curia, express his contempt for the "souls of slaves." It was this Cæsar, too, who once sneered: "Oh, how this people hasten towards servility;"[1] and if Russian Tsars knew Latin, they might with equal right have indulged in some such similarly contemptuous remark after a Council or Cabinet-meeting. The lunatics and the profligates, the "angry boys" and the depraved young women, on the Cæsarean throne and in the Imperial Palaces, on the Palatine and on the banks of the Neva, were actually supported by the spirit of cowardice and servility of their subjects. Slavery and servility are writ in large letters on the blood-stained pages in which astonished posterity has read and will continue to read the history of two mighty Empires, of pagan Rome and of Byzantine-Christian Russia. The same invertebrate Senate and Cabinet, the same fawning, flattering camarilla, the same servile rabble and the same influential *Officers of the Guard* and Prætorians.

The Roman plebs, the city rabble, had lost all conception of liberty, desiring nothing but bread and games; a hundred days of pleasure in the year, and corn gratuitously given by Cæsar, were all that the descendants of the ancient liberty-loving Romans required. The Senate had lost its energy, its ardour and its pride; devoid of statesmanlike faculty, it was a mere tool in the hands of the Emperor. The days when the Senate proudly declared: "Where the Senate is, there also is Rome" were gone for ever. The knights, the capitalists, were indifferent to the form of government, so long as there were no financial crashes. As for the

[1] *Cf.* Tacitus, *Annals*, 3, 65.

soldiers they were certainly on the side of the Emperor. Thus the spiritless and craven Senatorial aristocracy, the lazy, pleasure-seeking populace, and the flattering army of gilded mamelukes, were rivals in supporting Cæsar's mad outbreaks.

> "And why should Cæsar be a tyrant, then?
> Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf,
> But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:
> He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.
> Those that with haste will make a mighty fire
> Begin it with weak straws: what trash is Rome,
> What rubbish, and what offal, when it serves
> For the base matter to illuminate
> So vile a thing as Cæsar!"

We need but read Russians for Romans, and St. Petersburg for Rome, and Shakespeare's lines are equally applicable to the dominions of the Tsars as to those of Rome. A fawning, flattering bureaucracy, a servile Senate, spiritless Cabinet-ministers and adventurers, surrounded Paul I as once Caligula and Nero. Even so late as 1897 at a Medical Congress held in Moscow, the Russian Rome, built on seven hills like the city on the Tiber, before an assembly of 7000 International representatives of science, the Russian Cæsar, the man who is sending thousands to the mines and is crushing the liberties of nations, was referred to by a Russian Cabinet Minister as "*voluptas et deliciæ humani generis.*" [1]

But if the Cæsarean insanity remained equally unchecked in ancient Rome as in holy Russia, owing to the weakness or indifference of nobles and of plebs, the Cæsars and Tsars themselves were

[1] Kuhn, F.J., *Betrachtungen über Majestäten*, &c., p. 43. 1901.

nevertheless in constant fear of Palace revolutions, of the conspiracy of the Prætorians, of the sword of the assassin lurking in the dark, of the poison in the goblet of Grecian wine. Prætorians or officers of the Preobrazhensky guards hurl one Cæsar down from the summit of his pyramid and place another in his place. Amid his pomp Cæsar trembles; indeed, few are the members of the Julian-Claudian house who die a natural death. The aged Tiberius is throttled in his agony; furious and remorseless, Claudius finds death in a poisoned cup; Verus, Domitian, Commodus—not one of them dies a natural death. The same spectre, terrorising the mighty Cæsars, will stretch its icy hand to seize—centuries later—the puny forms of the Tsars. Peter III is throttled at Ropsha by Orlov, the lover of his wife; Paul is brutally murdered by a drunken band of officers, with the consent of his own son and heir. And even those whom poison and sword spared, and who did not end their wretched lives in a secluded cell in Schlusselburg, what agonies, what sleepless nights they suffered. The people of St. Petersburg were prepared to go to bed under one ruler and awake in the morning under another. He or she who only yesterday was all-powerful was to-day on the way to the distant ice regions of Siberia, if his or her life has been spared. Elizabeth Petrovna will not dare to sleep; she has her *gratteuses* who keep her awake till the morning. The conspirators, the officers of the Preobrazhensky, protected by the silence of the night, might already be on their way to the Palace to seize the person of the ruler.

History repeats itself: There Cassius Charea,

and here Orlov and Platon Zoubov; there Macro, the chief of the Prætorians, and here Pahlen, Chief of the Police of St. Petersburg. Here Alexander awaiting in one of the rooms of the Palace the news of Paul's death, and there Caligula counting the last moments of his grand-uncle, Tiberius, on Capreæ. There the Roman tribune of the Prætorian cohort is stabbing Caligula in the street of Rome, and here, Orlov throttling Peter, and Platon Zoubov knocking down Paul in his bedroom, hitting the Tsar on the temple with a golden *tabatière*. Nero, the master of the world, to save his life creeping on hands and knees through a hole which his freedman Phaon makes in the wall; Paul, proud of his Imperial dignity, crawling on all-fours behind a screen like a trembling schoolboy—what a tragi-comedy! Nero sighing, "This is loyalty," and Paul asking in astonishment, "What have I done?" You lacked Imperial dignity in death, Cæsars and Tsars. What pigmies you appear by the side of the giant who died on St. Helena, and whose name historians have often coupled with yours.

Madmen and imbeciles, terrorising and, in their turn, terror-stricken by the mad fear of the assassin among their very protectors and blood relatives, striking pitilessly, but receiving the blow in their turn—such was and is the fate of the Cæsars and of the Tsars. The curtain fell upon the tragedy of the Cæsars, of the Julian-Claudian and Flavian houses, enacted in the Imperial Palaces on the Palatine in pagan Rome, but it rose again on the "Curse of the Romanovs" in the eighteenth century in Byzantine-Christian Moscow and St. Petersburg. The scene had merely been shifted

from the Colosseum to the Kremlin, from Rome to Constantinople, and from Constantinople to Peterhof and Oranienbaum. Different surroundings, different scenery, different costumes, a different cast, but the same play. It is perhaps lacking in the grandeur, in the intensity of thrilling passions, in the consummate art of the classic actors, but it is still the same play, and it is not yet concluded. It began in the eighteenth century, but the death of Alexander I did not bring it to a close. In a storm of battle and murder the Julian-Claudian house passed away. Horror mingled with astonishment and not wholly unmixed with some admiration clings to the tragedy of the Cæsars. Many shades of victims haunted the ruined palaces on the Palatine, and round the Kremlin, too, they are now darkly crowding. Their number is continually swelling. They are the exiles to Siberia and the victims of the tyranny of Tsardom. They have watched during the agony of Paul I and the remorse of Alexander I, a guilty party to his father's death. They are now silent spectators of the progress of the play, ready to greet with grim applause the final fall of the curtain upon the Curse of the Romanovs.

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF A TYRANT

"A child has been born unto us;
A son has been given unto us."

The successors of Peter I—Elizabeth Petrovna—Peter III, the unwashed Emperor—The Grand Duchess Catherine and her lovers—Paul's paternity—He is not a Romanov—His education—Panin appointed tutor of the Prince.

On the 20th of September (O.S.) (October the 1st) 1754, the Summer Palace in St. Petersburg and the entire capital of Russia offered a festive appearance. A great event, affecting the vast Empire and its millions of inhabitants, had occurred—an heir was born to the Russian throne. The little Grand Duchess Catherine (Sophia before she adopted the Greek orthodox faith), afterwards the great Empress Catherine II, wife of the heir-apparent Peter, nephew of the Empress Elizabeth, had given birth to a son—Little Paul, "the Son of Minerva" had come. The aged Empress, the clever daughter of Peter the Great, was happy; she could now sleep quietly, for the spectre of a Palace revolution ceased to frighten her. In order, however, to give the reader an adequate idea of the importance attaching to the birth of Paul, it will be necessary briefly to sketch the circumstances amid which the successors of Peter the Great, from his wife, Catherine I, to his daughter, Elizabeth, ascended the throne.



PAUL I.

After a portrait in the possession of the Academy of Science in St. Petersburg.

Peter I died somewhat suddenly in 1725. Some little time previously he had framed a law—afterwards abolished by Paul I—which gave the ruling sovereign right to designate his successor. Although shortly before his death, Peter, furious at the scandalous conduct of Catherine, whom he surprised in the arms of her lover, M. de la Croix, had intended to repudiate his wife, her former lover and friend, Alexander Menshikov, placed this Livonian servant, his whilom mistress, on the Russian throne. She was succeeded by Peter II, the son of Alexis, the rebellious son of Peter the Great, who was knouted to death by order of his Imperial father. Peter II died of small-pox, after a reign of three years. The crown was offered to Peter's niece, Anna Ivanovna, during whose reign, 1730–1740, her lover Biron, a man of low origin and high ambitions, ruled supreme in Russia, banishing thousands of subjects to Siberia or sending them to the scaffold. Anna Ivanovna had selected as her successor to the Russian crown the little Ivan, the infant son of her niece Anna. On her death-bed the Empress appointed her lover, Biron, as Regent during the minority of the young Tsar. The mother of the baby Emperor, jealous of Biron's power, availed herself of the help of Field-Marshal Munich, and brought about the downfall of the Regent. Biron, arrested in his bed, was sent to Siberia, whilst Anna, Duchess of Brunswick, was appointed Regent. Her reign, however, was not long. Elizabeth, the clever, handsome and pleasure-loving daughter of Peter the Great and of his second wife, Catherine, of whom the English Ambassador wrote that "she will be too fat to be

in a plot," was persuaded to ascend the throne rather than end her days in a convent, with which prospect the Regent had threatened her. On the 5th of December, 1741, on a cold winter night, Elizabeth, at the head of three hundred Grenadiers of the Preobrazhensky regiment, marched to the Winter Palace, where the Regent and the baby-Emperor were arrested, and the next morning the population of St. Petersburg was informed that Elizabeth Petrovna was Autocrat of Russia. Soon after her accession she appointed an heir to the throne in the person of her nephew, Karl Ulric, the son of her sister Anna. Anna had been married to the Duke of Holstein, but died two months after having given birth to a son. The boy, now fifteen years old, was brought to Russia, and in 1745 married, at the recommendation of Frederick II, to Princess Sophia Augusta of Anhalt Zerbst, who, on becoming a member of the Greek orthodox faith, was given the name of Catherine. After nine years of sterility, which made the Empress fear new complications and dangers for the dynasty, Catherine, to the delight of Elizabeth, gave birth in 1754 to a boy, the future Emperor Paul I. The dynasty was now consolidated.

Thus the long-desired event had at last come, and the Russian Court and Russian society celebrated it joyfully. The guarantee of a more peaceful order of things had appeared in the person of the little Grand Duke, around whose cradle were now centred Russia's hopes for times less blood-stained than those of his predecessors. "It was not a family event," writes a Russian historian, "but a political occurrence of an Imperialistic importance."

The figure of the imprisoned child-Emperor, Ivan III, now faded away behind the cradle of little Paul and ceased to be an object of terror to Elizabeth.[1] Elizabeth had looked forward with eager expectancy to the delivery of her niece, and no sooner was the child born than the Empress summoned her confessor, who gave it the name of Paul, and at once ordered the midwife to take the boy and follow her to her own apartments. Catherine herself remained—as we are informed in her Memoirs—in bed and alone. The bed was placed between two doors and windows that did not close properly, "no one daring to lift her into her own bed" or to give her something to drink. Elizabeth was taken up with the child, Peter did nothing but drink, whilst no one cared or inquired after Catherine, who was soon seized with a violent fever. She received not the slightest attention. She was not allowed to see her child for forty days, and dared not so much as openly inquire after him, for such would have been considered by Elizabeth as a doubt of her care. In fact, the Empress took such care of the young Prince that she nearly killed the infant by the excess of her solicitude. She would run up to him herself whenever he cried, but her ideas of baby comfort and hygiene were rather primitive. The room, the Empress's own room, in which the cradle stood, was kept at an extremely high temperature, whilst the infant was wrapped up in flannels and almost smothered by a number of coverlets lined with wadding and black fox-skins. "I saw him myself," writes Catherine, "many times afterwards, lying in this style, the perspiration

[1] *Cf.* Bilbassov, V. A., *Geschichte Katherina II*, vol. i, p. 272.

running from his face and whole body, and hence it was that, when older, the least breath of air that reached him chilled him and made him ill. Besides, he had in attendance on him a great number of aged matrons, who, by their ill-judged care and their want of common-sense, did him infinitely more harm than good, both physically and morally." Only when the forty days of her convalescence were over was Catherine allowed to see her child for the first time. He was brought into her room, accompanied by the Empress, and her confessor who read the prayers. "I thought the child pretty," writes Catherine, "and the sight of him raised my spirits a little; but the moment the prayers were finished, the Empress had him carried away and then left me."[1]

On the 25th of September (O.S.) (October the 6th) little Paul was christened with great pomp. The christening was followed by festivities which lasted a whole year. The Imperial Chamberlain, Shouvalov, Elizabeth's favourite, gave a fancy dress ball which continued for forty-eight hours and at which the Empress was present. "Who would ever have thought," wrote Count Voronzov, an eye-witness of the general rejoicings, forty years afterwards, "that it was the birth of a tyrant we were then celebrating."

The question of Paul's paternity is still very vexed. If Paul was not a son of Peter III, who, through his mother, was a grandson of Peter the Great, the present ruler of the Russian Empire is neither a Romanov nor a Holstein Gottorp. He

[1] Cf. *Mémoires de l'Impératrice Catherine II*, London, 1859, pp. 216–225.

would simply be Nicholas II Soltykov. It would be true then that the revolutionary exile, Prince Kropotkin, the scion of an ancient Slav family, is possessed of a greater right to the Russian throne than the great-grandson of Paul I, the usurper. The doubt which shrouded in mystery the birth of Paul, as it has that of many other of the world's rulers, is one of those that can only be cleared by mothers and midwives. Catherine herself admitted in her Memoirs, in her cynical manner, that not Peter, but Sergius Soltykov, was Paul's father. She had received the order of her aunt and Empress Elizabeth that an heir to the Russian throne should be forthcoming. She was told that "there were situations in which a higher interest demanded an exception to the rule," and that she must "choose between Sergius Soltykov and Leon Narishkin" as the father of her son. Catherine decided in favour of the former. Her words, however, have been discredited by historians, who believe that Catherine, who hated Paul because he really was the son of Peter, wrote these lines in order to disqualify him for the throne. Personally, I am of opinion that even if the paternity of Paul may be ascribed to Peter, this unhappy monarch was not his only possible father. Catherine had not waited for the Imperial command of her aunt to break the seventh commandment. She had sought consolation in the arms of her lovers for her disappointment in an unhappy marriage, long before she had been told that "for the good of the State she must sacrifice her scruples."

"One day," relates an ambassador at the Court of St. Petersburg, "Catherine was confidentially con-

versing with the Princess Dashkov when a splendid regiment of soldiers passed the window. 'Which one among these soldiers do you like best?' asked the future Empress of Russia. 'It is hard indeed,' replied the Princess, 'to make a choice.' Catherine smiled. 'To avoid this *embarras du choix*,' she cynically observed, 'I should love the entire regiment.'"[1]

She was as good as her word when she became Autocrat of all the Russias. It is difficult to imagine that Catherine's admission, with regard to the paternity of Paul, was dictated by her wish to prevent him from ascending the throne. Did she not in so doing also disqualify her grandson Alexander, whom she intended to appoint as her successor? In any case, no one at the Court of St. Petersburg believed Paul to be the son of Peter, and Sergius Soltykov was always mentioned as the father of the heir apparent.[2]

One day, relates Count Fedor Golovkin, a contemporary of Catherine and of Paul, and Russian Ambassador at Naples in 1794, when Paul was accused of conspiring with Saldern against Catherine, Count Panin, Paul's preceptor, brutally told him that he was an illegitimate child.

"Do you know who you are?" asked Panin.

"The successor to the throne."

"Yes, but how? I will tell you what you still ignore. You are the heir apparent only by the gracious will of your mother. You have hitherto

[1] Cf. *Histoire secrète des Amours de Catherine II*, Paris, 1873, p. 38.

[2] Cf. *Bourrée de Corberon, Un Diplomate Français* (*Journal Intime*, 1901), vol. i, p. 245.

been left in the belief that you are the son of Peter III, but it is now time that you should learn the truth. You are an illegitimate child, and the witnesses to this fact still exist." [1]

Immediately after the birth of Paul, Soltykov was sent away. He was despatched to Sweden, officially to announce the birth of an heir to the Russian throne. Peter III himself never considered the child as his own, and we shall presently see that he intended to exclude him from the dynasty.

As for Paul, in spite of his attitude after the death of his mother and his apparent filial love for his pretended father, he never believed himself to be a son of Peter III, of whom he often spoke as "a drunkard and an imbecile." His conduct was dictated by his hate for Catherine and Potemkin rather than his reverence for Peter III. We shall have occasion to return to this subject in a subsequent chapter. Count Fedor Golovkin informs us that Paul, having, in 1796, invited all the dethroned sovereigns to St. Petersburg, Stanislaus Poniatovsky, the former lover of Catherine and King of Poland, appeared at the Russian Court. "The King has told me," writes Count Golovkin, "that Paul, with tears in his eyes and kissing the king's hands, implored him to acknowledge himself as his father." Paul was very disappointed when Poniatovsky declined it.[2]

Paul was able to walk when little more than a

[1] *Cf.* Golvokin, *La Cour de Paul I*, pp. 102–103. The MS. discovered by M. S. Bonnet, in the possession of M. de F., in the Manor of Monuaz, in the vicinity of Lausanne, was published in 1905.

[2] Golovkin, *ibid.*, p. 138.

year old. The women who were about him bestowed small care on his person; his hours for going to bed were arranged according to their convenience, and varied from eight o'clock in the evening to one o'clock in the morning. His meals were equally irregular, and the neglect of the child went so far that it was possible for him to fall out of his crib at night and nobody know anything about it, until he was found the following morning asleep on the floor.

He never left his own apartments during the lifetime of the Empress Elizabeth, of whom he stood in trembling awe, such was the terror in regard to her with which he had been inspired by his attendants. While he was still young she never missed a day in going to his apartments, and frequently repeated her visits at night, but these ceased as he grew older. Of his parents, on the contrary, he saw very little; so rare indeed were their visits, that one paid by Catherine to her son was considered an occurrence important enough to be mentioned in the diary of the Sergeant of the Royal Household. We know from Catherine herself how, after her long course of suffering in Russia, she applied to the Vice-Chancellor, Voronzov, expressing her wish to return to her native land. He, hoping to turn her from her resolution, reminded her of her children, but all her answer was that, as she was denied the natural pleasure of seeing them except by express permission of the Empress and was not allowed to live with them, it was a matter of no consequence whether they were separated by a hundred yards or a hundred versts. Her Majesty, she added, no doubt took good care of them.



COUNT N. J. PANIN.

From an engraving by Kaaig.

Apart from the different servitors, in the way of nurses, pages and others, who overran his apartments, the young Grand Duke Paul was, in 1758, personally attended by Alexis Gerebzov and Count Martin Skavronsky. The Empress further recalled Theodore Bekhteev from Paris, where he was acting as Chargé d'Affaires, in order that he might enter the service of the Grand Duke as Master of the Ceremonies, and on July 9, 1760, she nominated the Chamberlain, General Nikita Panin, as the Grand Master of Paul's household.

This appointment was not favourably looked upon by the ladies of Paul's household. Panin being at dinner with the Empress, the Grand Duke sent some one to spy at him through the door and bring him word of his appearance. The report he received was that Panin, who at that time was only forty-two years of age, was a heavy, cross-looking old man, with a hideous wig on his head. When, therefore, shortly after, Paul came across an old man in a wig, clad in a long, blue, yellow-lined coat, walking in the gardens in St. Petersburg, he naturally concluded that this was Panin; the child was terrified, and, having been led to believe that all his old attendants were to be taken from him and all further pleasure denied him, it was with tears in his eyes that he received the first visit of his Grand Master.

Paul's first attendance at any theatrical performance, as we learn from the diary already mentioned, was on the 12th of August 1760, when the French tragedy of "Mithridate" was given at the Opera House in the presence of the Empress. The 11th of October of that same year saw his first appear-

ance at a public dinner, Paul being then six years of age. After this event he was considered old enough to give private audience to the members of the diplomatic corps.

Paul, although of a rather weakly constitution, which, as has been pointed out above, may to a great extent be ascribed to the ridiculous and exaggerated care his Imperial aunt took of him, seems, in his early youth, to have given unmistakable signs of intelligence. His tutor, Poroshin, relates that Paul was only seven years of age when Buturlin, before leaving to rejoin the army, came to pay his respects to the future Emperor; and that on this occasion the latter observed that M. de Soltykov had gone to conclude peace but had failed, and that M. de Buturlin would now make neither peace nor war. Paul, who was very ugly, is reported to have been very handsome in his early youth, if we are to believe the testimony of his mother, of Count Golovkin, and of others. Count Stroganov had in his picture-gallery the portrait of Paul at the age of seven by the side of one of his son Alexander I taken at the same age and in a similar costume, and so great was the resemblance between father and son that strangers inquired why the Count Stroganov had two copies of the same portrait. Alexander, it must be borne in mind, was exceedingly handsome. Paul's ugliness is, therefore, attributed to his severe illness in 1764, which nearly had a fatal issue.

CHAPTER III

MOTHERHOOD AND AMBITION

The death of Elizabeth—Peter III—He is assassinated at Ropsha—Impression produced on Paul—Catherine and d'Alembert—Paul's education—His tutors, Panin and Poroshin—Paul's amorous disposition—He is encouraged by Catherine and Orlov—His sweetheart Vera—Paul's military studies—Estimate of Paul's character—Inoculation for smallpox—Dr. Dimsdale's visit to Russia—Catherine's feigned affection for her son.

ELIZABETH is dying. Frederick II will soon be able to exclaim in his exultation, on learning the news of the demise of his enemy, that the "sky begins to clear." *Morta la bestia, morto il veneno.* For nearly a year the Empress has been confined to her Palace. In vain did sorrowing courtiers, in vain did sheepskin-clad moujiks pray for her recovery. On Christmas Eve (O.S.) 1761, the proud daughter of Peter the Great lay on her death-bed. Her nephew, Peter, soon to be Emperor Peter III, and his spouse, Catherine, were kneeling before the Empress. With tearful eyes the Grand Duke was listening to the last instructions of his aunt and benefactress. She recommended him to be kind to his subjects, to live in peace with his wife, but, as a special mark of his gratitude for her past kindness, she implored him to cherish his son, the Grand Duke Paul. This last injunction is very significant. Elizabeth was well aware of the fact that her nephew refused to recognise little Paul as his own flesh and

blood. The weeping Peter promised everything, but he failed to keep his promise with regard to his son.[1] On the following day, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Elizabeth died, and Peter ascended the throne. The name of Paul, as heir to the throne, was omitted from the form of the oath of allegiance taken by the subjects on the accession of Peter III. According to a message despatched by M. de Breteuil, the French Ambassador, there was an attempt at Court to make Peter repudiate his wife, disavow Paul, and marry Princess Voronzov. Peter lacked courage to take this step, but he never ceased thinking of it. "The Emperor," wrote M. de Breteuil, "has seen his son only once since his accession. Should he get any male issue by his mistress, it is probable that he will marry the latter and appoint the boy as his successor. The epithets, however, which Mademoiselle Voronzov hurled at His Majesty during one of their disputes in public are rather reassuring in this respect."[2] Peter, it seems, also recalled Sergius Soltykov from Paris and treated him with marked kindness. His Majesty —so the courtiers maintained—was *à la recherche de la paternité* of his son, and wished Soltykov to acknowledge himself as the real father of the Prince.[3]

On the death of the Empress, Peter III continued to leave Panin in attendance on his son, and besides conferring on him, in 1762, the rank of Privy Councillor, also decorated him with the Order of St. Andrew. He was, however, not without his suspicions of the Grand Master, and appointed one

[1] Cf. *La Cour de Russie*, p. 178. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[3] *Cf.*, however, Helbig, *Biographie Peters des Dritten*, 1808–1809, Bd. 2, p. 75.

of his aides-de-camp to keep him in sight and watch his movements.

It was as impossible to Catherine as it was to the Emperor to give thought or time to their son. Catherine's position during the short reign of Peter III was unenviable, nay, painful in the extreme and menaced with danger.

After a reign of six months Peter III, who, in spite of his many eccentricities, his drunkenness and his abhorrence of a bath, had many good qualities, was dethroned by his wife, who succeeded him as Empress Catherine II. A few days after his abdication the grandson of Peter the Great was assassinated at Ropsha. One tragedy had thus come to an end with his death, and another was in course of preparation. The curtain rose again upon it thirty-five years later, when the great Empress lay on her death-bed unconscious, while her son was burning her secret papers.

When, on the 28th of June (O.S.) (July 9th) 1762 Catherine ascended the throne, Paul at that time being under eight years of age, current events did not fail to produce a deep impression upon his imaginative mind and delicate frame. He was frightened out of his wits by the information of some courtiers that his father intended to take his life. This information and the fright it gave the Prince very seriously affected his health and shattered his nerves.[1] Young as he was, Paul was, however, aware of the fact that many courtiers, and among them his own tutor, Panin, thought that Catherine had usurped the throne which by right belonged to her son, whom Elizabeth had intended to appoint as her successor.

[1] *Cf.* Sabathier de Cabres, *La Cour de Russie*, p. 252.

He brooded over the wrong that was done to him for thirty-four years, until he could take his revenge. Panin himself did not hesitate to make Catherine understand that, after the death of Peter III, her son, Paul, was the rightful successor, and she, his mother, could only be considered as the Regent during the minority of the Emperor. Panin found no support for his plans, but this expression of his opinion was sufficient to make Catherine hate and fear both Panin and Paul.

The German Princess, now Empress of Russia, was not a woman to be afraid of a crime. Her conscience was elastic to the highest degree. Peter III met his death in Ropsha, and Orlov, who plainly avowed and accused himself of the deed, was generously rewarded for it. The Prince Ivan, dethroned by Elizabeth, might still be considered a dangerous rival; Ivan was promptly assassinated. She knew, too, that an agitation was on foot to exclude her from the throne and to place Paul in her stead. The best of mothers seem to lose all their affection for their sons, and to be animated by a spirit of selfishness, when it is a question of renouncing a crown. But Catherine had never been guilty of too much affection for any members of her family, and if she showed little tenderness towards her parents and her brother, it is not to be wondered at that Paul, whom she was bound to consider as her rival, could not be the object of her excessive love. Her position, however, was still very precarious, and Paul was necessary to her; as long as he lived she could safely reign in his name. "She would not remain long at the head of the State should the young Tsar die," wrote

the French Ambassador, de Breteuil.[1] Catherine showed, therefore, great anxiety when the Prince suddenly fell ill during his voyage from St. Petersburg to Moscow for the coronation of his mother. He arrived in a state of ill-health at Moscow, but soon seemed to rally. Catherine was crowned on the 22nd of September, and a week later Paul had again an attack of fever and lay dangerously ill in the Kremlin. For a whole week his serious condition was a matter of great anxiety, and his mother never left his bedside. She made a solemn vow that she would build a hospital in the name of Paul if the latter recovered. Paul got better, and Catherine erected the Paul's hospital in Moscow.[2] But who can fathom the human heart? Was it her motherly affection, or the thought that Paul was the link that united the German Princess to the Russian throne, that was at the bottom of her solicitude? In any case, the Empress had learned the extent to which the population was attached to the Prince. His illness and recovery gave cause to successive grief and rejoicings. She shaped her attitude towards, and her treatment of, her son accordingly.

Catherine was no sooner on the throne than she took a step on behalf of her son's education, which, if it did not in the end prove successful, at least won for her the applause of the Encyclopædists. She sent orders to Soltykov, the Russian Minister in Paris, to beg d'Alembert to undertake the education of the Tsarevitsh. Whether d'Alembert was gifted with the qualities which would have made

[1] Cf. *Russie in Archives des Affaires étrangères.* Paris, vol. lxxi, No. 22.

[2] *Cf.* De Breteuil, *l.c.*, and Sbornik, vol. vii, pp. 144–149.

him a suitable tutor for the heir of the Russian throne, it is almost impossible to say; at any rate, he did not take the Empress's proposal as a serious one, and wrote a bantering letter to Voltaire on the subject:—

"You may like to know that I—who am without the honour of being a Jesuit—have been asked to undertake the education of the Grand Duke of Russia; but I am too much subject to hemorrhoids, which, in that country, are dangerous."

D'Alembert sent his refusal to the Empress through her Cabinet Minister, Odar. Whereupon Catherine wrote to d'Alembert expatiating on her great wish to place so precious a being as an only son under the care of one in whom she had such blind confidence. She pressed him to come to Russia, giving him full liberty to bring what friends with him he liked.

"I know you too well," wrote Catherine, in her second letter to d'Alembert, "to be an honest man, to attribute your refusal to vanity. I am sure that the sole motive of it is the love of leisure enabling you to cultivate letters and friendship. But where is the objection? Come with all your friends; I promise them too every advantage and comfort that depends upon me. Do not listen to the representations of the king of Prussia; this prince has no son. I confess that I have the education of my son so much at heart, and you are so necessary to it, that perhaps I press you too much. Excuse my indiscretion for the sake of the cause."[1]

The proposal, however, which had been made by the Tsaritza to one of its members, was duly pub-

[1] Sbornik, vol. vii, pp. 179–180.

lished in the Minutes of the Sittings of the French Academy. Voltaire complimented his friend in moving terms, and Catherine's enlightened action was recorded far and wide in the papers and became the talk of the whole civilised world.

And so this first effort to enter upon the road of popularity had been attended with success.[1] That Catherine had at heart no sincere desire for the welfare of her son is sufficiently proved by the little trouble she took to find another tutor for him in place of the one she had proposed. A rumour ran through the literary world of Paris that Catherine, being disappointed with regard to d'Alembert, was intending to renew her request either to Diderot, Marmontel, or Saurin—what really happened was that Paul was left under the care of Panin.

On the 15th July 1762 Paul was made Colonel of a regiment of Cuirassiers, henceforth known as the Cuirassiers of the Hereditary Grand Duke. On the 20th December of the same year the following ukase was issued to the Senate: "Moved by the zealous and ever-present loving anxiety which we feel for the welfare of Our Nation, and for the prosperity of the Fleet, which above all things claims our care, we have been graciously pleased, in imitation of our Grandfather Peter the Great of imperishable memory, to create our well-beloved son and heir Paul, Grand Admiral of the Fleet, in order to inculcate in him from his earliest years, that feeling of solicitude concerning it with which we ourselves are animated."

Moreover, as Duke of Holstein, the privilege of conferring the order of Saint Anne, which had

[1] *Cf.* Kobeko, *Der Caesarevitsch Paul*, 1886, p. 10.

been instituted by his grandfather, Duke Charles Frederick, was reserved to the Grand Duke, or, to speak more correctly, on him fell the duty of signing the brevets, no one but Catherine herself being allowed to award the honour.

Finally, on the 21st July 1762, Catherine settled an allowance upon him of one hundred and twenty thousand roubles, and the following year made over the estate Kamenny Ostrov to him as a gift.[1]

Catherine also took good care to be well posted up in all that was said or done by those who were about her son. She appointed certain valets and other personal attendants, less for the purpose of waiting upon him than to make report to her of all that took place in the Grand Duke's apartments. Having once confided him to Panin's care, she gave herself no further trouble in the matter of Paul's education. Rooms were set apart for him, and into these she very seldom entered. She wrote to Panin during the long pauses between her visits to her son, but her solicitude was always about the latter's health; as to all that concerned his studies she appears to have been quite indifferent.

Panin, to whom the education of Paul had been entrusted already by Elizabeth, was certainly one of the ablest and most highly cultivated Russians of the day. He knew how to win his pupil's affection, so that Paul's childish attachment to him developed into a firm friendship in the after years. Whether Panin possessed all the qualities necessary for his post is rather doubtful. "M. Panin," wrote the Earl of Buckinghamshire, "has the care of the Grand Duke, superintends his education, attends

[1] *Cf.* Shilder, "The Emperor Paul," p. 38, note.

him almost everywhere, dines with him, and lodges in the same room; add to this, though a sensible and a worthy man, long used to business, he is indolent in the taking it under consideration, and tedious in the agitation of it; his constitution is weak, and he has a taste for pleasure and dissipation."[1] Panin's love affairs, too, did not fail to occupy Paul's imagination and to distract his mind from serious studies. "M. Panin," wrote Sir George Macartney, "conceived a violent passion for the Countess of Stroganov, daughter of the Grand Chancellor Voronzov. The ill effects arising to M. Panin from this unfortunate connection are that, by his negligence and dissipation, all business is either at a stand or moves with more than Russian slowness; that he begins to lose the respect of the public, which can scarcely pardon an undisguised boyish passion in a man of his years, station and experience; that his enemies have not failed to lay hold of this opportunity, to represent the indecency and ill example of such weakness in the Minister of Her Majesty and in the Governor of the Heir of her Empire."[2] In spite, however, of his failings, the English Ambassadors spoke in praise of his honesty, sincerity and ability. "He is certainly incorruptible, and the most capable man in this country," said Sir George Macartney; and Lord Cathcart testified that "Panin aims at nothing but utility and integrity. He is in many respects an exception to all I have seen of his country; he has more the character and manners of a German."[3]

Panin's first care on entering upon the duties of

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xii, p. 182. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. xii, pp. 256–257.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. xii, pp. 428, 429.

his new office of Grand Master, was to draw up a scheme for the education of the Grand Duke. In this it was arranged that his education should be divided into two periods. During the first of these, which was to last until Paul was fourteen years old, the subjects to be taught him were Bible History, Arithmetic, and three languages, French, German and Russian. Emphasis, however, was laid on the necessity, during these early years, of giving the lessons the tone of instructive advice and wise counsels, rather than of allowing them to be merely dry and arduous scientific studies.

As for the second period, it was deemed unnecessary that the Grand Duke should be taught all sciences indiscriminately, and Panin, therefore, was asked to prepare a list of those of which he considered the knowledge was indispensable to one in his position, and he further undertook to arrange how these subjects were to be taught.

The choice of tutor fell on Poroshin, who was installed in his office on the 9th July 1762. Poroshin was learned and accomplished; he was a sound mathematician and a fine linguist, and the intercourse with him was in a high degree instructive to his pupil.

He became passionately attached to the Grand Duke, whom he never left; indeed, the only reproach that can be cast at him is that he carried his affection for his pupil to an exaggerated extreme. His kindness to the Tsarevitsh, who confided all his childish secrets to him, on some occasions amounted to weakness.

The only document of any reliability from which we learn anything of Paul during this period is the

Diary kept by Poroshin from September 12th, 1764, to the month of January 1766.

The hours of Paul's day were divided as follows: he rose at seven, sometimes earlier; dinner was *after one o'clock, supper at half-past eight.* There were lessons both before and after dinner; these being finished, the remainder of the day was frequently spent in going to the theatre, to Court receptions or to masked balls.

Paul's religious instruction was not neglected. A certain portion of time was put aside for this on three days of the week, and it was further ordered that, on Sundays and Saints' Days, a pious address was to be read to him before attending Divine Service, the length of which was to depend on the time at disposal for this.[1]

French and German were taught him thoroughly, besides Russian, and he was given some slight knowledge of Italian and Latin, Platon being his instructor in the last-named language.

Panin was only concerned in the Grand Duke's education in so far that he superintended those under him, who submitted their plan of work for his approval. He urged Paul to learn passages from the best French authors by heart, or to study scenes in the French tragedies so as to be able to recite them, but beyond this he seems to have exercised no personal influence as regards the course of his learning.

He was, however, a firm adherent of Betzky's theory that children learn a great deal from their games, and, although he did not interfere in Paul's actual studies, he occasionally appeared with a

[1] *Cf.* Prince Vyazemsky, *infra.*

plaything of some kind or another which he considered might help to instruct him. Thus he brought him a carpenter's bench and showed him how to use it, or some silk-worms, or a house of cards. He took him one day to the Convent at Smolna, and to the Academy of Fine Arts, of which the Grand Duke was made an honorary member.

Poroshin quotes instances to show with what respect the Grand Duke regarded his instructors. Prince Golytzin, Master of the Royal Household, having said to Paul that he must know his rule of three before learning fractions, the latter replied, "I have been taught otherwise, but, believe me, dear Prince, Monsieur" (pointing to Poroshin) "knows far better than you do what, as well as in what order, I ought to learn."

There was never any effort made to find out how far the Grand Duke was profiting by his studies. On one occasion only did he undergo an examination in sacred history, in the presence of the Empress and certain dignitaries of the realm. Panin thought it would be advisable for Paul to be examined on other subjects, but whatever proposals were suggested as regards this matter they were never carried into practice. Valuable information regarding the manner in which Panin and Poroshin conducted Paul's education is found in the works of Prince Vyazemsky.[1]

The intellectual and social surroundings, writes the Prince, amidst which he was reared were, may be, somewhat in advance of his age, but in every way suited to the development of his intellect and to his general enlightenment, as well as calculated

[1] Vyazemsky, Prince P. A., Works, vol. vii, pp. 69-77.

to render him serious and practical in character and eminently patriotic; it brought him into contact with the most distinguished men of his country, and into touch with everything that laid claim to superiority; in a word, he grew up in close relation with all the moral forces of the country of which he was one day to be the master.

The conversations which took place before him at table and elsewhere, although at times they might be ill-timed and far-fetched, were, as a whole, entertaining and instructive; they denoted a freedom of opinion and liberty of thought fitted to awaken and confirm the young Prince's judgment and to accustom him to hear and appreciate the truth. The society around him, and this should be well borne in mind, was not composed of cavillers, or men in any way opposed to their sovereign and country, but, on the contrary, men devotedly attached to both. And for this very reason they allowed themselves to speak openly, having no fear of compromising themselves or of betraying their country's cause, by blaming what they thought worthy of censure and contrary to its true interests.

Count Panin, the young Grand Duke's tutor, statesman and Minister for Foreign Affairs as he was, not only inclined to Russian principles in his politics, but was himself a Russian all over from head to foot. He had been brought up on national traditions, and nothing that had to do with Russia was unfamiliar to him or a matter of indifference. His love for his country was therefore not the lukewarm attachment of the man in office, who loves it for interested and selfish motives, merely because he loves power; he was ardently and enthusiastically devoted to his

country, as only a man can be who is attached to it by all the ties of life, by community of interests and sympathy, and to whom its past, its present, and its future are equally dear. It is such love as this which renders true and loyal service; it does not ignore the vices, the weaknesses, or the eccentricities of the nation, but puts forth all its strength to combat and overcome them. All other love is blind, futile, unintelligent, and even harmful.

As regards the education of the young Prince it is necessary to notice the following particulars.

The military element was not prominently represented either in the Grand Duke's education or among his surroundings. There were no military exercises or formalities to disturb him at his studies. He was not taught to look upon himself as a soldier above all things else. It is true that the future sovereign of so great a power as Russia could not be left in ignorance of what in part constituted the nation's strength and security; but he was spared all minute practical details, such as might warp the intellect of a child, and only allowed to study military matters from a higher and general point of view. Care was taken that duties which would have been only an amusement for him should not be represented as of supreme importance, nor were they permitted to interfere with more serious studies, and so hinder him from learning how to fulfil duties of a far more difficult and more sacred character. A prince naturally gifted with military talents of a high order, and likely one day to develop into a great commander, will, by the mere force of circumstances and innate ability, fulfil his vocation. It is not only superfluous, but dangerous, to forcibly instil tastes

such as these while he is still a child, so that they become, so to speak, mechanical and habitual. To give a direction of this kind to his inclinations is likely to stunt his intelligence, and to divert it from some other path which would have led to finer results more conducive to the good of the State and more likely to shed lustre on his name and reign. An education carried out principally on military lines is apt to lead to a confusion of ideas, which may well translate themselves later on into confusion of facts and principles. Where the army forms a powerful and privileged caste in a country, it is always to be feared that it will become a state within a state. Noble and self-sacrificing as the profession of arms is, and, in time of war, productive not only of heroes, but of men great in all ways by its power of developing the best capabilities and virtues of humanity, it is, all things considered, in times of peace a sterile and objectless occupation, calculated to stupefy and deteriorate the higher mental faculties. A man of high military achievement may well become a great statesman, for the science of war is connected with all other branches of human service; but every soldier is not gifted with high military abilities, and is certainly not fitted for civil and administrative duties, merely by virtue of the uniform he wears.

Extreme care was bestowed on the Grand Duke's religious instruction. In addition to the lessons given him by the arch-priest Platon, who later was one of the most illustrious men of the Orthodox Church, pious works were read to him on Sundays and Saints' Days. Platon was admitted

to his society and frequently dined with him, so that the Grand Duke not only knew him as a spiritual adviser, only seen at stated intervals, but became intimately acquainted with him apart from religious studies. Platon was the Court preacher, and the words of truth which he uttered in the name of God could not but have exercised a beneficial and restraining influence on the young Prince and on the Court in general. We gather from Poroshin's journal, that even the Empress was impressed by his preaching. The sermons delivered in the presence of the Court helped to increase the moral authority of the priest in Russia, an authority sorely needed and so sadly neglected there. Religious eloquence was also thereby encouraged, and a stimulus given to other preachers who either did not preach at all or preached only in the desert. The example of the Court must have helped to make preaching the fashion, and as a fashion it has its good side.[1]

Paul grew up alone, without any companions of his own age. Occasionally the children of some of the members of the Court were invited to share his dancing lessons. Reading and the theatre were among the means of education in the system adopted by the Grand Duke's teachers.

The reading was of an indiscriminate character ; Paul laid hold of whatever fell to his hand. The chief works purchased for him, and these in large numbers, were plays and operas, which gave him the opportunity of studying French verses and of humming them over to himself. At last, however, so little was discernment shown in the choice of

[1] *Cf.* Prince Vyazemsky, Works, 1882, vol. vii, pp. 69–72.

books, the Grand Duke himself asked to be allowed to give up reading.

It need scarcely be said that Voltaire's works held a prominent place in the Tsarevitsh's library. About this time, Voltaire had started a correspondence with Catherine, and was in high favour at the Russian Court. The Empress had the *Discours aux Welches*, which is among the tales which Voltaire published under the pseudonym of "Vadé," translated in her presence by Kosmin, the Secretary of State. She asked Paul if he had read it, and advised him, if not, to do so, advice which, it is unnecessary to add, was followed by her son.

Theatrical performances were very much in the fashion during the reign of Catherine, who also looked upon them as a method of instruction. At the Royal Theatre it was customary to begin with a play, which was followed by a ballet, and the entertainment wound up with a comic opera or some short piece.

Paul took part in the private theatricals got up by the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. In 1765 they played "Semira" by Soumarokov, the play being followed by a ballet, "Galatea and Acis." Paul, who was then ten years old, took the part of Hymen. After this performance Paul acted in several plays and ballets; more serious pieces were not allowed. Panin had noticed that the Empress was not fond of tragedies.

The Grand Duke, being of a highly impressionable disposition, was naturally greatly affected by this excitement. His imagination was extremely developed, and at an early age he began to grow conscious of vague longings and sensations which

he was unable to explain to himself. These budding feelings in her son were met with kindly indulgence from Catherine.

Being one day at the Convent of Smolna she asked her son in jest whether he would not like to remain there with the young girls. On another occasion, when at the theatre, Catherine interrogated him as to which actress he liked best; he answered that it was the young Mademoiselle Kadishe. Then she went on to question him as to which of the maids of honour pleased him most. The Grand Duke made reply that he had no choice; whereupon the Empress, laughing, told him to whisper his confession into her ear. But the Grand Duke made answer as before, at the same time throwing a significant glance towards his tutor, which was luckily unperceived.[1]

Count Grégory Orlov, the Empress's favourite, was equally ready to give encouragement to the prematurely developed feelings of the Grand Duke. He suggested to the latter that he should call on the maids of honour who were living in the palace, which the Tsarevitsh would have been delighted to do, if it had not been for his mother, whose presence intimidated him. Her Majesty, however, decided the matter by telling him he was to go. Never was order executed with greater alacrity. Panin and Orlov followed the Grand Duke, and they visited all the maids of honour in turn. The Grand Duke returned home full of enthusiastic delight, and talked of nothing but his visits. To every one who came in he immediately turned and said, "Where do you think I have been?"

[1] Poroshin, Diary, 1844, p. 403.

At last overcome with languor, he lay down on the couch and began to dream, then, calling Poroshin to him, he told him he had seen the lady he cared for, and liked her more and more. Whereupon they opened the Encyclopædia and read the whole article on "Love."

The youthful Paul, aged eleven, now passed from dreams to what we should nowadays call "flirtations." Mademoiselle Tshoglokov, one of the maids of honour, was the subject of his attentions.

Vera Tshoglokov had been left an orphan by the death of her father, Nicholas Tshoglokov, in 1754, and that of her mother, Marie, in 1756. Taken into the Royal household with her elder sister, Elizabeth, the pair were brought up at Court and became maids of honour to the Empress.

Poroshin, in his Diary, gives an account of Paul's first love, of his feelings, his hopes, and his childish jealousies.[1]

"*October 24th.*—The Grand Duke asked me if I was as fond of my sweetheart as he was of his, and when I answered that I certainly did not love her any less, he said, our feelings were in geometrical proportion, and wrote them out as follows :—

"Paul : Vera :: Simeon : Anna.

"*October 25th.*—The Grand Duke has been dancing a great deal lately, yesterday more especially, with his corresponding factor in the geometrical equation ; they chatted and flirted in the most open manner. She certainly looked more than usually beautiful, and His Highness's attentions were not, I must confess, repulsed with over-much severity.

[1] Poroshin, Diary, pp. 460–535.

"*October 29th.*—His Highness has been playing at skittles, and making endless signs through the window to the lady of his heart. The room in which he plays looks out on a court into which the windows of the maids of honour also open. They watch the Grand Duke at his game, and carry on intercourse with him by signs, more particularly our heroine. It is this which makes His Highness so fond of playing at skittles. After luncheon had been served he put a pear in his pocket to offer to his lady-love while the acting was going on, which intention he carried out during the course of the evening.

"*October 31st.*—The Grand Duke has spent the whole morning talking to me of his Dulcinea, expending all his flowers of rhetoric on the description of her charms. Then he wanted to know if I thought that he would be allowed to marry, and expressed to me the happiness it would give him to do so. Panin joked with the Grand Duke, and reminded him how much in love he was at one time with the Princess Hovansky, whom he now cared for no longer. They went off together to the theatre, and Panin asked permission to invite Count Schérémétiev into their box. His Highness throughout the whole evening talked to no one but to us two; we were very much amused at the way in which the opera-glasses of a certain lady continued to be turned towards the Grand Duke. Our young friend, on his side, though without opera-glasses, kept his eyes well fixed on his particular lady; the Empress herself could not help noticing it. When we visited the Imperial box later on, to pay our respects to Her Majesty, she, in joke (aware

of what was going on), told the Grand Duke that the masked ball fixed for the following day had been put off, at which piece of news he appeared plunged in despair.

"*November 1st.*—We have been to the masked ball; the Grand Duke as usual talked and danced a great deal with the object of his ardent devotion. Just at first the relations between them did not appear quite amicable. Our charming lady mask went off in a fit of jealousy (she thought her elder sister, Elizabeth, was coming into fashion); this put the Grand Duke out of temper; but the clouds soon dispersed, and the dancing and talking went on again without intermission. On reaching home, the Grand Duke confided to me that during the polonaise, as they were doing the chain, he had said to his lady-love, 'If only it were not contrary to etiquette, I should love to kiss your hand on the spot.' She lowered her eyes and responded, 'That would be going too far.' Then she went on and said to the Grand Duke, 'See how the Beaumont is watching you' (this was an actress at the French theatre, who happened to be at the ball). Whereupon the Grand Duke clasped his hands together and replied, 'And I, I have no eyes for any one but you.' All this is quite natural, for he has had no ideas on these matters given him from outside.

"*November 2nd.*—The Grand Duke condescended to talk with me during tea, and asked about whom I was talking with Vera Nicolaevna. Yesterday he nicknamed her the 'ten of hearts,' since she distributed her heart among so many adorers. She told him in reply that as she had only one heart, she could only give it to one person. Then he

went on to ask her if she had already given it to any one, and on her answering him 'Yes,' he wished to know if the happy possessor of it was far off. 'No, close at hand,' she replied. 'If I look for him among those around you, shall I find him?' he continued, and was assured in return that he was so near that it would be impossible to miss him. 'You see how far we have gone,' he then said to me.

"*November 12th.*—The Grand Duke spent the evening with the Empress; he played at orelan with the ladies-in-waiting, Tshoglokov and Stakelberg; he sported with his much beloved Vera Nicolaevna and they tore a ten of hearts to pieces.

"*December 5th.*—The Grand Duke went to supper with the Empress. The ladies-in-waiting were Tshoglokov and Polianskaja, who sat at a separate table facing the Grand Duke. The Empress joked with her son about his keeping his eyes turned in their direction, and at his seeming to find his supper so amusing.

"*December 22nd.*—The Grand Duke condescended to relate to me how much he had enjoyed himself at the house of Count Sievers, the Grand-Marshal. His sweetheart, Vera Nicolaevna, was among the invited, and he had plenty of dancing and talking with her. 'I told her, what I am always telling you, that I should like to be with her for ever.' She in return said that she longed to kiss his hand; whereupon he replied that he longed even more for her to do it. On the way back she was in a little sledge ahead of the Grand Duke; she kept continually turning round, and they did nothing but kiss their hands to one another. The Grand Duke remarked to her that he feared they would

not have another such a delightful day for a long time. 'I fear not, Monseigneur,' was her reply. 'Perhaps,' he continued, 'you would have enjoyed yourself more if Devière had been sitting there in my place?' But in answer to this she told him that it was wrong of him to doubt her, and that she perfectly detested Devière."

The Hereditary Grand Duke went to a soirée at Count Orlov's on the 3rd January 1766. The places at table were numbered, and the company drew lots for them. The Grand Duke drew a number which placed him beside his beloved Tshoglokov, or, to be quite correct, Providence arranged this with the help of a little assistance. The Grand Duke was at the height of bliss, his young heart bursting with love.

Paul Petrovitsh was fourteen years old in October 1768. This was the period fixed by Panin in his scheme of education for the beginning of the preparatory studies which were to initiate his pupil into the general affairs of government. These were to include instruction regarding commerce, the ins and outs of administration, home and foreign politics, the navy, the army, and the chief manufactures—in short, everything that goes to constitute a state. Among the masters who were engaged to teach him these various subjects Teplov may be especially mentioned. He was employed in the privy service of the Empress, and all petitions passed into his hands. A cultivated man and agreeable in manner, he was at the same time crafty and intriguing. Teplov, it is not without interest to notice, was one of the murderers of Peter III.

"Among the Grand Duke's masters," wrote M.

de Corberon, "I see Teplov, very clever, it is true, and well versed in politics and history, but a man whose principles render him even more degraded than the exceptionally low condition from which he rose. Being a strong admirer of Machiavelli, and familiar with all the great crimes to which the latter lent his aid, it was of necessity that he should lead his pupil to look upon an uncivilised policy such as he inculcated as indispensable; accustoming him to the idea that it was necessary to kill with the sword those that he had deceived by his subtlety, and showing him daggers, poison and chains as the only sure and useful instruments for those crowned assassins, those illustrious monsters of history, whom our fathers, dazzled by their splendour, transformed into heroes."[1]

With the change in the roll of his teachers came a change also in his daily society. He had now for his companions Prince Kourakin and Count Razoumovsky, who had been his playmate as a child.

No place had been given in the scheme for the Tsarevitsh's education to any military studies or exercises. When young the Grand Duke had amused himself by making his valets go daily through their musketry practice, but as soon as Panin came into authority this was put a stop to, or only rarely allowed. In 1770 nothing seemed to denote as yet his passion for military exercises, his *marotte militaire*, which manifested itself a few years later, and to such an extent influenced Paul's conduct during his short reign.[2]

[1] Cf. *La Cour de Russie*, p. 253, and Corberon, *Un Diplomate Français.*

[2] Cf. *La Cour de Russie*, p. 252.

Poroshin remarks how very little interest was taken in military affairs by those who formed Paul's household. Only once did he take part in any manœuvres; this was in June 1765, at Krasnoé-Sélo; they lasted for ten days, and the Grand Duke's stay ended in a fit of illness. His friends were not best pleased when Colonel, afterwards Field-Marshal, Kamensky presented the Grand Duke with a copy of the work he had edited on the celebrated manœuvres of Frederick the Great at Breslau.

It is evident that Paul himself, in his childhood, had no particular leaning towards a military calling, and, moreover, that the details of a soldier's life were not in any way to his taste.[1]

In spite of his feebleness of constitution, however, Paul was both lively and alert.

It is interesting to learn what contemporaries thought of Paul's character and temperament during his childhood and adolescence. In the first instance, the testimony of Poroshin is very valuable, as it is based upon daily observations.

"His Highness," writes Poroshin, "has that most detestable of habits of doing everything in haste. He is in a hurry to get up, in a hurry to eat, and in a hurry to go to bed. A good hour before it is time to sit down to dinner, he despatches his sergeant to Panin to ask if it is not time to send for the dishes, and invents all kinds of ruses so as to get a few extra minutes and to take his place at table sooner than usual. The same performance is gone through as soon as it nears the supper hour. Then he is perpetually urging the *valets de*

[1] *Cf.* however, Shilder, *l.c.*, p. 56, note.

chambre to eat as quickly as possible so that they may be able to get to bed earlier. His mind is occupied before going to sleep with the fear of not waking early enough to get up before the accustomed hour. And this goes on, over and over again, nearly every day of the week.

"His Highness has also another little failing, peculiar to those who have never been thwarted in their wishes and who have met with little opposition to their will. He always wants to have his own way. But it must be confessed that all our desires are not dictated by reason, nor that they are at all times of such a nature that those who watch over our safety and well-being can well see their way to accomplish them.

"The Grand Duke, being of a responsive and affectionate disposition, forms an attachment very quickly, but, as over-violent feelings are never lasting, the object of his sudden affection has to exert himself to retain it and to maintain the relations between them at the same level, otherwise the whole thing is very soon forgotten. In short, it is easier to make the Grand Duke immensely fond of you all at once than to remain on a permanent footing of ordinary friendship with him; and, as to the continuance of any lively affection, that is out of the question.

"Any remarks passed on an absent person in the presence of the Grand Duke make a great impression upon him. If any one is spoken well of before him, one may count on the Grand Duke giving him a cordial greeting the next time he comes across him; on the contrary, if he hears ill said of a person in conversation, he is certain at

the next interview to be cold and constrained in manner towards him.

"His Highness sees all things as clearly in his mind's eye as if they had actually taken place before him."

Paul retained all these marked traits of character to his life's end. Poroshin's verdict was undoubtedly correct, and he had himself become aware of the instability of his pupil's affection. So closely had he studied the latter's character, that, being displeased with him one day, he said, "With all the best intentions in the world, Monseigneur, you will yet make yourself hated." [1]

Aepinus, another of his tutors, said of him: "He has intelligence, but the mechanism of his head is only held together by a thread; if the thread should happen to break, the mechanism will all be out of gear, and then good-bye to reason and good sense." [2]

The Grand Duke was, in the opinion of another contemporary—the English Envoy—not without discernment; but the critical position in which he found himself had greatly increased his natural gift for dissimulation, which he had inherited from his mother.[3] Paul's power of dissimulation is also attested by Sabathier de Cabres, the French Ambassador.

"As far as I have been able to ascertain, it seems certain that the Grand Duke is naturally kindly and upright, generous and benevolent, and that he has a good intellect, and quickly understands and seizes the meaning of what he sees and hears;

[1] *Cf.* Poroshin, *l.c.*, p. 302.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 488.

[3] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xix, p. 300.

that he is fond of improving himself, and has profited by what his tutors have taught him. But I am greatly mistaken if his passions are not strong and deep. M. Panin's severity, the position he is in, his hatred of his mother, have combined to make him a deliberate dissembler; so much so, that he gives the impression of being naturally given to dissimulation. Occasionally his impetuous temper breaks through the restraint which he imposes upon himself; he is generally thought to be vindictive, and set and inflexible in his own opinions. He has often given signs of elevation of soul. It is to be feared that by dint of checking his aspirations certain traits of his character, which is an obstinate one, may become fixed, and that hypocrisy, brooding dislike, and perhaps even cowardice, may take the place of the higher qualities that might have been developed in him, and that these may be smothered by the premature habit of exercising this outward self-command, and by the terror with which his mother continually inspires him. This feeling dominates all others, and must, therefore, be a main influence in his future progress towards good or ill.

"As yet he has shown no sign of that overpowering love of military affairs which generally develops at an early age if it is likely to grow into an over-mastering passion. He is so backward for his age in physical constitution, and his impulses are so thwarted, that it is very difficult to have any definite idea of what he might be if in a different position."[1]

Asseburg, who had managed the Holstein affair,

[1] Cf. *La Cour de Russie*, pp. 252–254.

gives the following description of Paul's character: "This Prince, who possesses the gift of making every one of his words sound pleasant, added a few flattering remarks and made me regret the necessity of leaving him. Il est impossible de réunir plus d'esprit, plus de douceur et plus de charmes qu'il n'en fait connaître dans ses actions et dans sa figure."[1]

In 1768 Catherine induced the distinguished Englishman Dr. Th. Dimsdale, who had recently published a pamphlet on the inoculation for small-pox, to come to Russia. A small-pox epidemic had broken out in St. Petersburg, and Catherine decided to be inoculated herself and to submit the Grand Duke to the same operation. Dimsdale set out for Russia, and on his arrival in St. Petersburg was received by Count Panin. "You are now called, sir," said Panin, "to the most important employment that perhaps any gentleman was ever entrusted with. To your skill and integrity will probably be submitted nothing less than the precious lives of two of the greatest personages in the world; with whose safety the tranquillity and happiness of this great empire are so intimately connected that, should an accident deprive us of either, the blessings we now enjoy might be exchanged for the utmost state of misery and confusion."[2] But as the dangers of the small-pox were very great, and as Russian physicians had no skill in the practice of inoculation, the two precious lives "of the greatest personages in the world" were entrusted to the English doctor. On this occasion Dr. Dimsdale,

[1] *Cf.* Asseburg, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, Berlin, 1842, p. 174.

[2] *Cf.* Dimsdale, "Tracts on Inoculation," &c., London, 1781, p. 10.

in investigating the state of Paul's health, found him "well formed, active, and free from any natural infirmity"; he had, however, suffered much by improper treatment as a child, in consequence of which his constitution had been enfeebled.[1]

The operation on Catherine and Paul was successfully performed, and Dimsdale was very generously rewarded.[2]

The relations between mother and son, although outwardly often not without signs of affection on the part of Catherine, continued to be strained. According to some contemporaries they were of a glacial description, and the Empress took no trouble whatever to hide her feelings towards her son. We have seen that, as soon as Catherine was on the throne, Panin urged that Paul should be nominated as successor, but the Orlovs obstinately refused their consent to this.

Catherine was, moreover, perfectly aware that the majority of her Russian subjects would have preferred to see the son rather than the mother on the throne.

During her reign the idea of Paul's succeeding her gradually gained ground, and became the subject of popular discussion as well as giving rise to some party plots. Catherine knew that Panin himself had not abilities, resolution, or activity enough to attempt placing the crown on the head of Paul, even if the latter had had spirit enough to venture to wear it. It was this which, according to Robert Gunning, the English Ambassador, prompted her to confide so great a trust as the sole

[1] Dimsdale, *l.c.*, pp. 46–48.

[2] *Cf.* also Sbornik, vol. ii, pp. 295–322.

care and government of the Grand Duke to Panin. "It is, however, far from improbable," adds Robert Gunning, "that others of more desperate fortunes and a more enterprising turn of mind may gladly undertake a work of this kind, which upon a near view of things does not appear very difficult."[1]

The Empress had occasion, as has been pointed out above, to convince herself of the interest taken in the Prince by the population during his illness in Moscow. "The death of the Prince," wrote Lord Buckinghamshire in 1764, "would have been fatal for Catherine, for the population would never have been persuaded that it was natural. The popular anxiety regarding Paul's condition was equally as great a few years later (1771), when he was dangerously ill. The common people, as soon as it was known that Paul was ill and thought to be in danger, suspected he was poisoned. The Empress keenly felt at that time the danger of the consequences with which the death of the heir apparent would have been attended. The people would have been furious. It was also given out that he was a State prisoner."[2]

"The low people," wrote Lord Cathcart, "had no less in view than to dethrone the Empress, as having held the crown only for her son, and to set the Grand Duke in her place, and this they intended to have executed on St. Peter's Day."

All this preyed on Catherine's mind and awoke a feeling of distrust in her towards her son, although Paul himself was a perfectly innocent factor in the whole affair. Paul, when ten years of age, con-

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xxix, p. 298.
[2] *Ibid.* (Lord Cathcart's Despatch), vol. xix, p. 226.

fessed that nothing caused him so much distress and embarrassment as going to see the Empress, and that the unpleasantness of the visit was almost unbearable. Sabathier, the French Minister, writing on the 20th April 1770, says: "The Empress Catherine, who usually sacrifices everything to the proprieties, ignores these in her attitude towards her son. With him she never unbends, but preserves the haughty tone of the sovereign; her coldness and want of consideration towards him is wounding to the last degree to the Grand Duke. She has never lavished upon him any of the tender regard of a mother. When with her the Grand Duke is always submissive and respectful. It is plain that this hard-hearted, and, I may add, unbecoming, behaviour on the part of the Empress is due to the harshness of her character and not to any wish to give her son a rigorous upbringing. Outwardly she treats her heir with the most formal politeness, but this only because circumstances oblige her to do so. As for the Grand Duke, he might be a criminal before his judge; when not with her he is, on the contrary, perfectly easy in manner and has no appearance of timidity. He has no difficulty in expressing himself, and, moreover, is courteous and by no means backward in his efforts to render himself agreeable and entertaining to those with whom he is in company. He is by nature observant of what is going on around him; he is blamed, however, for being indiscreet and inquisitive to the last degree."[1]

The Grand Duke's studies were interrupted during the summer of 1771 by his alarming illness,

[1] Cf. *La Cour de Russie*, p. 251.

which proved to be typhus. Catherine endeavoured to calm her fears by persuading herself that the illness was only due to her son being at the transition age between youth and manhood, recalling the proverb that "the beard does not grow without suffering." The symptoms, however, became such as to disturb her tranquillity of mind, and, although passionately devoted to a country life, she left Peterhof and returned to St. Petersburg, where she remained for two months, paying visits almost daily to her son. The latter happily recovered, and on September 8 a solemn Te Deum was said in thanksgiving for his restoration to health. The fever, however, left the Grand Duke permanently weaker, and his constitution never recovered its former vigour.

This illness seems to have awakened Catherine even more to the consciousness of the state of her own dependence upon her son. Her behaviour, therefore, became more cordial and affectionate; and in a letter, addressed to Madame Byelke, she expressed the exuberance of her motherly affection and tenderness: "We never had a more enjoyable time than during the nine weeks we spent with our son at Tsarskoé-Sélo. He is growing a charming lad. We began the day with breakfasting in a delightful room, built close to the side of the lake, and we never separated before we had both laughed till we cried. After breakfast we each followed our own pursuits until it was time for dinner; at six o'clock we walked or went to the theatre; an uproarious evening followed, quite to the taste of the noisy guests, of whom we have a goodly number about us. My

son is never a foot's space away from me, and so diverting does he find my company that he changes the numbers of the places at supper so that he may sit beside me. I doubt if there has ever been an instance of such complete harmony and such compatibility of temper as in our case."[1]

That Catherine's sudden affection was only feigned is equally attested by Solms, the Prussian Minister, as by Robert Gunning. Catherine's change of behaviour towards her son was certainly not wholly free from hypocrisy, but it was also greatly due to the absence of Orlov and his influence.

[1] Sbornik, vol. xiii, pp. 259–261, 265–266.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARRIAGE OF HAMLET

"And the lad grew up; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of——"

Paul's first liaison—Semeon Velikij—Asseburg, the matrimonial agent—Princess Wilhelmina of Darmstadt—The bride is coming—Paul falls in love with his fiancée—The nuptial ceremony—The appointment of General Soltykov as personal attendant on the Prince—Conspiracy to put Paul on the throne—The revolt of Pougatshev—Catherine's visit to Moscow—Popularity of Paul—Catherine mistrusts her daughter-in-law—The Empress's pilgrimage to the Convent of Saint Sergius—The death of the Grand Duchess—André Razoumovsky—Various rumours.

THE time had now arrived when Paul should marry, and Catherine consequently became anxious to find a suitable daughter-in-law among the German princesses. Her son's marriage had, for some time past, been a matter of consideration with Catherine. As far back as 1768 she had thought of commissioning Asseburg to find a suitable wife for her son, a princess who would offer no danger to Catherine's ambition; but, as Paul was of a delicate constitution, it was thought that he was not in a condition to be the father of the heirs to the throne. Some of Catherine's intimates, however, did their best to dissipate these fears. They decided upon a widow, Sophia Ossipovna Czartoriskaya, the daughter of a former Governor of Novgorod—an elegant and affected woman—and she was invited to try her charms on the Grand Duke. The result of this

liaison was a son, who was named Semeon Velikij. C'est dans les habitudes des maisons Impériales.

Semeon Velikij was reared in the Empress's apartments. When, in 1770, he was eight years of age, he was placed in the school of Peter and Paul, with directions that he should be given the most careful education. His education being finished, Semeon Velikij expressed a wish to join the Navy; he was given a lieutenancy, went to England to perfect himself in his naval studies, and died while in the English service at the Antilles in 1794.

Paul's education having thus been thoroughly carried out in all respects, his marriage was decided upon. Asseburg had, in the meantime, been entrusted with the mission of finding a wife for the Grand Duke. Asseburg's acquaintance with the different foreign Courts made him a suitable person, Catherine thought, to undertake the task of finding out which princesses were of an age to be chosen from for her son's wife. Asseburg left Russia in March 1768; his choice fell on the Princesses of Hesse-Darmstadt, on the Princess of Saxe-Gotha, and on the Princess Sophia-Dorothea of Würtemberg. The one finally preferred by Catherine was Wilhelmina, daughter of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt.

At first the reports concerning this Princess did not impress Catherine very favourably. To Asseburg, with whom she was in constant correspondence, she wrote:—

"She has been represented to me as a model of all that is good and kind, but, apart from this perfection, in the possibility of which in this world I do not believe, I hear that she is volatile and inclined

to be contradictory. This, taken in conjunction with the celebrated mental capacities of the papa, and with the not inconsiderable number of sisters, some already established, some waiting to be so, obliges me to be extremely circumspect."

Asseburg sent the Empress a portrait of the Princess Wilhelmina. Catherine acknowledged it, saying that it disposed her most favourably towards the Princess, who certainly had a face with which it would be difficult to find fault in any particular.

"The features are regular; I have compared this portrait with the one you sent before, and have read over again your description of those particular points in the face which you say escaped the artist's notice. My examination has led me to the conclusion that the face has lost its liveliness, and with it the pleasantness of expression which always accompanies it—owing, I doubt not, to an over-strictness in the bringing up and to a life of too little freedom. The expression would very quickly change if this young person could be led to understand that a starched and haughty bearing is not the best help towards attaining that at which her ambition aims. When you are next with her, I advise you to let fall a word or two, as if by chance, to let her know how highly cheerfulness, amiability, and graciousness of disposition are prized at the Russian Court.

"Tell her that I, as well as my son, are both very lively. It is quite possible, if vanity is the chief motive of her behaviour, that a transformation may take place in her that very same evening or the following morning, for the generality of young people—I may say, the half of humanity—act in this

kind of way. By degrees she will lose those stiff and affected manners of which you speak. All you tell me of her moral disposition is entirely in her favour; she is capable of becoming strong and dignified in character. Some inquiry, however, ought to be made concerning the reputation she has of being fond of quarrelling. Do your best to find out the cause of these rumours, and to determine yourself, impartially, whether they may not be mere conjectures without any foundation."

Catherine sent her instructions to Asseburg, either directly in writing or through the medium of Panin.[1] Paul himself had hardly a voice in the matter. He could not, of course, be ignorant that negotiations were going on in order to procure him a wife, for, as far back as January 1772, his marriage was being talked about in St. Petersburg. He was allowed to admire the portraits of the German princesses sent by Asseburg, but it is to be doubted if any liberty of choice was vouchsafed him.

Throughout all these transactions Asseburg proved himself an accomplished diplomatist. He was the faithful and zealous servant of Catherine, while at the same time acting in the service of the King of Prussia, who favoured this marriage, and being equally anxious to further the interests of the Hesse-Darmstadt family.

Finally, in October 1772, Catherine decided to invite the Landgravine and her three daughters to St. Petersburg.

This invitation caused the Landgrave a certain amount of embarrassment. Pecuniary resources were, above all things, necessary for such a journey,

[1] *Cf.* Asseburg, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 258.

and just then financial conditions at the Darmstadt Court were not very brilliant. "With an income of a million florins," wrote Asseburg, "the family of the Landgrave is often in great want."[1] Catherine settled this primary difficulty by undertaking all the expenses of the journey.[2] The Landgrave was further troubled at the thought of the talk there would be if, after all, the visit did not end successfully. But here Frederick II came to his aid. It was quite natural that the Landgravine should pay a visit to Berlin to see her daughter, who had married a Prussian prince, and once at Berlin it would be easy to find a pretext which would explain the extended journey to St. Petersburg.

The formal invitation from Catherine to the Landgravine was written in a letter dated (April 28, 1773, O.S.) May 9.[3] A flotilla, composed of three vessels—the *Saint Marc*, the *Faulcon*, and the *Rapid*—under command of Admiral Knowles, was sent to Lübeck. The last-named vessel had as second captain Count André Razoumovsky.[4]

The Landgravine arrived at Reval on the 17th June 1773, but the *Rapid*, which carried her suite and luggage, was delayed by stress of weather.

The Grand Duke Paul had arranged a plan of behaviour for himself on the arrival of the Princess. His intention was to become as friendly as possible with the Landgravine, and to win her confidence so as to secure her against all intrigues that might crop up around her, and to have some one to fall back upon in case there should be an endeavour to thwart his wishes. This plan received Count Panin's

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 259.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 259.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 263.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

sanction, to whom Paul confided everything that he considered doubtful or suspicious.[1]

The Landgravine had started for Russia in the full assurance that, by her marriage with the Grand Duke, her daughter's happiness would be secured, and Paul knew how to show himself worthy of all the praises that had been bestowed upon him. "It would not be difficult for any girl to fall in love with the Grand Duke," Solms wrote to Asseburg. "Although not tall, his figure is well set and his face attractive. He is pleasant in his speech and manners, unassuming, polite, and of a lively disposition."[2]

In order to enlighten the Grand Duke's future wife regarding what would be required of her when in Russia, the Empress wrote her a sort of outline of directions as to her conduct.

"The Princess must not only do her best to avoid, but must not even give ear to those who endeavour by their evil and calumniating talk to destroy the harmony of the Imperial family. The Princess, whose part it is to draw closer the ties of that family of which she is to become a member, must look upon it as her duty to denounce to the Empress or to the Grand Duke any one who shall be guilty, through malice or indiscretion, of trying to instil into her feelings contrary to those which she should rightly bear towards her mother-in-law and her husband.

"The Princess may be assured that she will find every kind of diversion and pleasure awaiting her

[1] *Cf.* Vasilchikov, A. A., *Les Razoumovsky*, ed. Brueckner, 1893, ii, pp. 19–20.

[2] *Cf.* Asseburg, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 266–267.

at the Court. She must, nevertheless, always bear in mind the position she holds, and, whether dancing, walking, or conversing, must never forget that familiarity quickly leads to a want of respect, and that there is but a step from this to contempt.

"The Princess must avoid all gossip with foreign Courts. Although the Princess will be surrounded by every appearance of abundance, she must still remember that order and economy are the true sources of riches; the administration of her personal income must therefore be carefully regulated; there should be no useless expenditure, but at the same time there must be no palpable economy. One may be generous on occasions, but never wasteful. This is the secret of avoiding debts."[1]

The frigate *Saint-Marc* cast anchor at Reval on June 17, 1773. The Landgravine rested at Reval for five days, and then continued her journey, reaching Gatshina on the 25th of June.[2]

Prince Orlov, who owned Gatshina, met the Landgravine and invited her to dinner, telling her that she would meet another lady at table. This proved to be no other than Catherine herself, who wished to spare the Princesses a formal reception.[3] Her Majesty had only a few attendants with her, having come simply to make the acquaintance of the mother and daughters. After dinner the Empress started with her guests for Tsarskoé-Sélo. The Grand Duke Paul met them half-way. It was with undisturbed mind, but with some secret

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xiii, pp. 332–336.

[2] For the marriage of Paul, *cf.* also Walther, Ph. A. F., *Die Grosse Landgräfin*, 1873, pp. 35–46.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

emotion and a slight timidity, that he had prepared himself for this meeting. The Landgravine confessed that she felt more nervous than her daughters.[1]

On the 29th June Catherine made a formal request for the hand of the Landgrave's daughter Wilhelmina. Both mother and daughter were willing, and a courier was despatched to the Princess's father to obtain his consent.

The Landgravine was favourably impressed with the Grand Duke. According to her description, although not tall, there was nothing mean about his appearance; he was amiable, very polite, a good talker, and apparently cheerful. She found it, however, impossible, after having become thoroughly acquainted with him, to follow Asseburg's advice, and to put herself on a footing of any serious intimacy with her future son-in-law. She even went so far at times as jokingly to call him *ein Kindskopf*.

The Princess Wilhelmina began to study the Russian language, and the Archimandrite Platon was charged with her conversion. On being received into the Greek Church she took the name of Nathalie Alexeevna. The betrothal took place on the following day, the 17th August. The Archimandrite Platon having duly instructed the Princess in all the mysteries of the Mass, she received the Communion at his hands, the ceremony being followed by a short and eloquent address. From that day he became her confessor.

While the preliminary arrangements had been going on at Darmstadt, Asseburg had hinted at

[1] *Ibid.*



GRAND DUCHESS NATALIA ALEXEEVNA.

After a portrait in the Romanov Gallery in the Winter Palace.

the possibility of the Princess being allowed to retain her faith. The future showed that the diplomatist was in this case entirely mistaken. During her first interview with the Landgravine, Catherine made it plain that the conversion was an absolute necessity. According to her, the Russian people would never have given the new Grand Duchess any confidence or affection if she had not adopted the orthodox religion.

The Grand Duke meanwhile became more and more enamoured with his betrothed, and hurried forward the preparations for the marriage. Catherine had given him three days to make his choice, but he had at once fallen in love with Wilhelmina. "My son," wrote Catherine to Madame Byelke, "fell in love with the Princess as soon as he saw her."[1]

In spite of his youth and gaiety it seemed as if, from the moment he entered upon his new life, a feeling of isolation took possession of the Grand Duke and as if some secret sadness entered into his soul. He began to reflect seriously about his position. "Our friendship," he wrote to Count Razoumovsky, "has worked a miracle in me. I am beginning to lose my mistrust, but you are making war against habits that have been deeply rooted in me for a score of years or more, and you will end by overcoming feelings that are due in me to cowardice and an habitual nervousness."[2]

"I have imposed it as a duty on myself to live in as cordial relations with every one as is possible. Away with fancies! away with cares! To regulate my life and accommodate myself to circumstances, that is my rule for the future. I am forcing myself

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xiii, pp. 347–348. [2] *Les Razoumovsky*, p. 9.

to keep under my natural vivacity. I endeavour every day to enlarge my ideas and to make my mind active by improving it with choice readings."[1]

Catherine, now the Duke was engaged, availed herself of the opportunity to dismiss Panin from his post as Grand Master of the Grand Duke's household. At the time of her doing so Catherine expressed her gratitude to him and loaded him with presents. Now that the Grand Duke was twenty years of age, and that his marriage had naturally put an end to his studies, she felt it her duty, she said, to let his tutor know how grateful she felt for all the care he had taken in his education.

"My house is now swept and clean, or very nearly so," she wrote on October 16, 1773. "There was a show of feeling, but this I expected," she added; "the will of God has, however, been fulfilled, for which I was equally prepared."[2]

Paul, on his part, never forgot any one to whom he felt himself indebted. In 1787, before taking the field at the beginning of the Swedish War, he made a will in which he left a legacy to all those of his former teachers who were still alive. He did not forget his Grand Master, although at that time he was already dead; he left injunctions to his eldest son, and to all his descendants, to guard the memory of the debt which he owed to the whole family of the deceased Count Panin.[3]

The marriage of the Grand Duke Paul Petrovitsh with the Grand Duchess Nathalie Alexeevna was celebrated on October 10 (the 29th September, O.S.) 1773.

[1] *Les Razoumovsky.* [2] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xiii, p. 361.
[3] *Cf.* "Russian Archives" (*Rousky Archiv*), 1887, vol. ii, p. 33.

The nuptial ceremony, which was of exceptional magnificence, was followed by a series of fêtes. The Landgravine and her daughters waited upon Her Majesty towards eleven o'clock, and the procession then started for the Cathedral of Kazan. At four o'clock in the afternoon, after congratulations had been offered to the Empress, the company sat down to table. The banquet was served in the throne-room. Catherine took her place in the middle of the table with the Grand Duke and his wife on either side of her. The Princes of Darmstadt and Holstein were seated beside the Grand Duchess, and the Landgravine and her daughters beside the Grand Duke. Tables for the other guests were prepared in three other rooms. Healths were drunk to the sound of cannon. Immediately after dinner the wedding-party made their way to the gallery, where the ball was opened without delay. The Grand Duchess, oppressed with the weight of a dress made of cloth of silver and covered with diamonds, looked tired and could only dance a minuet or two. At nine o'clock the Empress conducted her to the apartments which had been prepared for her reception. The ladies-in-waiting undressed her, and the Grand Duke put on a dressing-gown made of cloth of silver similar to his wife's dress, only that his garment was trimmed with lace. "It was not as ridiculous as you would have thought," wrote the Landgravine. Then the Empress withdrew, but the Landgravine, Count Panin, and the Countess Roumyanzev remained to supper with the newly married pair. The Grand Duke was extremely lively.

The Empress gave her daughter-in-law some diamond clasps on her wedding day, and the following day presented her with a set of emeralds and diamonds; the Grand Duke gave her a set of rubies worth twenty-five thousand roubles. The Landgravine received a ring with a magnificent single diamond of the first water, and an enamelled snuff-box, with a miniature of Catherine upon it, and studded with diamonds; and the Princesses Amelie and Louise had each a set of diamonds, with which they were delighted. A further gift of over a hundred thousand roubles was also made to the Landgravine, and to each of the girls fifty thousand roubles. The whole of their suite was also loaded with presents. The Grand Duchess received a yearly sum of fifty thousand roubles. "I had only thirty thousand when I was Grand Duchess," wrote Catherine to Madame Byelke, "but I was always in debt."[1]

No separate establishment was assigned to the Grand Duke after his marriage. The General-in-Chief, Nicholas Soltykov, was in November 1773 appointed to take Panin's place as personal attendant on His Imperial Highness.

Catherine, when announcing this fact to her son, wrote :—

"I know that all you do is in itself perfectly innocent—of this I am fully assured—but you are still very young, all eyes are rivetted on you, and you know the public judges without much mercy. The bulk of the people in all countries see no difference between a young man of no particular class and a Grand Duke, and, more often than not,

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xiii, p. 353.

the conduct of the one helps to tarnish the honour of the other. Your education came to an end with your marriage. It was impossible for you then to continue in the position of a child, or to remain under tutelage at twenty years of age. From to-day, therefore, public opinion will hold you responsible to yourself alone for all your actions. Every movement of yours will be watched with hungry eyes. The world spies upon and notices everything, and do not imagine that you, and even I, can ever escape its criticism. Of me they will say: She left her young son to the guidance of his own will before he had any experience of the world; she has allowed him to be surrounded by frivolous young friends and flattering courtiers; they will turn his head and ruin him in mind and soul. They will pass their verdict on you according to whether your acts are thoughtless or judicious, but, believe me, it will be I who will have to come to your help, to appease all these sycophants and tattlers, who want you to be a veritable Cato at twenty years of age, and would be dissatisfied as soon as you became one. Come to me whenever you are in need of advice; I shall give it you as frankly as I am able, and if you will but listen to me you will have no cause to regret it. In order to satisfy public opinion, and to furnish you with more occupation, I will allow you to come and listen, for two or three hours a week, while my Ministers are transacting business. You will thereby become acquainted by degrees with the progress of affairs, and with the laws of the country and the policy of my government." [1]

[1] *Cf.* "Russian Archives," 1864, p. 485.

The Grand Duke did not seem to be very pleased at the appointment of General Soltykov. One of the Imperial Chamberlains, Matoushkin, called his attention to the fact that Soltykov had been attached to him in the quality of a spy. Paul, "with his accustomed warmth," went immediately to his mother, and not only acquainted her with the information but with the author of it. The Empress convinced her son of the falsehood of the information, and then ordered a letter to be written to this Chamberlain, in which she told him that "in a late reign, such a behaviour would have been rewarded with the knout; but as she attributed it more to his absurdity than to ill design, and out of regard to his family, she would not proceed to that extremity."[1]

Among other instructions which Catherine gave to Soltykov, she impressed upon him to make himself agreeable to the Grand Duke, to show him as much consideration as possible, and to try and win his confidence. The Grand Duke's more innocent escapades, which were natural at his age, he was to look over, and to reserve the exercise of his authority for such cases as more gravely demanded it, showing firmness where this was called for. If necessary, Soltykov was authorised to appeal to Catherine to support his decision.[2]

Paul's honeymoon passed off very happily. The Empress was full of praise for her daughter-in-law.

"Your daughter is well," wrote Catherine to the Landgravine on November 21, 1773. "She

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xix, pp. 393-394.
[2] *Cf.* "Russian Archives," 1864, p. 482.

continues modest and amiable, such as you knew her of old. Her husband worships her; he is never tired of boasting of her merits and singing her praises. I listen to him, and at times cannot help laughing. As far as I am concerned, his recommendation is superfluous, for she has already won her way to my heart, and I love her; she deserves all that can be said of her, and I am in every way pleased with her. And, indeed, one would have to look about for an excuse for dissatisfaction and be a regular shrew one's self not to be contented with the Grand Duchess, as I am to the full. In short, we all live happily together. Our children are delighted at having come to Tsarskoé with me."

"The Grand Duchess is in excellent health," the Empress writes in another letter; "we are becoming more and more attached to one another, and all get on happily together. I like her character, and it suits mine."[1]

"My son has set up house," Catherine wrote to Madame Byelke, "and intends to live in a homely way, never losing sight of his wife. Heaven grant that their attachment be of long duration. I acknowledge with pleasure and thanks your kindness in wishing me to see a little Grand Duke at the end of the year; a little Grand Duchess would be equally welcome."[2] In another letter the Empress again praised the excellent qualities of the Grand Duchess. "The Landgravine has left me a treasure in the person of her daughter."

[1] *Cf.* Walther, *Briefwechsel der grossen Landgrafin*, vol. i, pp. 340–342, and Sbornik.

[2] Sbornik, vol. xiii, p. 400.

Sir Robert Gunning, the English Chargé d'Affaires, also testified to the excellent relations that existed between the Empress and the Grand Duchess. "The Grand Duchess has a heart of gold (*est une femme d'or*), and possesses sterling qualities. I am in all respects pleased with her. Her husband adores her, and those about her are extremely attached to her." [1]

Whatever policy the Empress may have adopted of late, it was certain that no part of it was based upon the conduct of the Grand Duke, with whom she had every reason to be satisfied. Catherine had also declared that it was the Grand Duchess to whom she was indebted for having restored her son to her, and that it should be the study of her life to repay this obligation. Catherine omitted no opportunity of caressing her daughter-in-law, who had obtained a very great ascendency over Paul.

"Her society," wrote Sir Robert Gunning, "is the only one the Grand Duke seems to have any relish for at present, nor does he partake of any other whatever except young Count Razoumovsky's. That desire of becoming popular which appeared for some time in His Imperial Highness seems to have entirely subsided, and to be succeeded by the other extreme of a want of common attention to those who approach him. This change in his conduct, which cannot but be agreeable to the Empress, may possibly be affected; but I own, from what I have lately seen and heard of His Imperial Highness, I am not inclined to attribute it to so political a motive. Circumstanced as he is, it is indeed

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xiii, p. 388.

difficult to determine his character from any of his actions; but at present he may rather be said to be without any, easily receiving impressions and allowing them to be as easily effaced."[1]

The friendly relations existing between the Empress and the young couple were, however, of no long duration. Dark clouds soon gathered on the family horizon. Not only was the Grand Duke allowed no further share in the affairs of government, but Catherine kept jealous watch to prevent anybody appealing to him. Some one, on a certain occasion having written to the Grand Duke to ask for his patronage, received a severe reprimand from the Empress.

There were reasons which accounted, however, for this mistrust on the part of the Empress towards her son's advisers, and for her refusing to entrust him with any branch of the administration. Rumours had reached her early in 1774 of certain proposals tending to upset the established government that had been submitted to the Grand Duke by Panin, and to which Paul had, moreover, put his signature, at the same time taking an oath to allow them to remain unaltered when he mounted the throne. The moving spirit in this conspiracy was the Grand Duchess Nathalie.

It was not long before the whole matter came to Catherine's ears. She sent for her son, and violently reproached him with his conduct. Paul lost his head, grew frightened, and gave his mother the list of the conspirators. The Empress was seated by the fire; she took the list without looking at it and threw it in the flames, saying that

[1] Sbornik, vol. xix, pp. 409-410.

she had no wish to know the names of the wretched men.[1]

The Grand Duke, however, although taking no active part in the government, kept himself well informed of the position of Russia and of her relations with other nations, and more particularly took pains to learn all about her home policy and the condition of the army. In 1774 Paul submitted to the Empress a memorandum, in which he not only expressed his views on the general policy of the government, but ventured to make various suggestions. Catherine recognised in this memorandum of the Grand Duke the influence of Panin's political wisdom. The result was that Paul was henceforth carefully excluded from any participation in the government of the country. In the meantime Potemkin had become the favourite—in the place of Vassiltshikov—and soon gained the entire confidence of the Empress. The Grand Duke was condemned to inactivity. All this could not but increase Paul's feeling of anger and annoyance. He could not so easily forget the fact that Soltykov had been attached to him in order to spy on all his movements and to report to the Empress. From time to time he had fits of irritability.

"One evening at supper," relates Sir Robert Gunning, "a plate of sausages, of which he was very fond, was put before him; while eating he came across some splinters of glass. Extremely incensed, he rose from table, carried the plate to the Empress, and angrily declared that here was proof of the wish to poison him. Catherine was greatly upset, and carried her son off to Tsarskoé, in order to

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xix, p. 389.

watch and find out if this accusation was only the result of a temporary irritation, or of a fixed idea which had grown up in his mind owing to his want of confidence in her." [1]

Another circumstance, which again convinced Catherine of the attachment of the people for Paul, made her more jealous of him and increased the strain already existing in the relations between mother and son. A Cossack of the Don, named Pougatshev, suddenly raised the banner of revolution against the Tsaritza. The rumour that Peter III was still alive had long been current among the people, and Pougatshev, availing himself of the popular belief, gave himself out as the dethroned Emperor. From the first, Pougatshev made it known that his intention was to put Paul on the throne. "I do not wish to reign myself," he kept on saying, "but I wish to wipe Catherine's name out of the public prayers, and if God allows me to get as far as St. Petersburg, I shall shut the Empress up in a convent, there to expiate her crimes with prayer. My son is quite a young man, and therefore not able to recognise me." Pougatshev used to kneel before the images, and in a loud voice entreat God to enable him to reach St. Petersburg, and to grant that he might find his son in good health. A citizen, Dolgopolov, who had betrayed the cause of the government, went to Pougatshev, pretending to be sent by Paul and to be bringing him presents from the latter. This step added greatly to the credit of the impostor. The crowd every moment expected to see Paul himself, and at last a rumour was spread that he was at Kazan, on his

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xix, p. 389.

way to meet Pougatshev. Wherever he halted, Pougatshev found fresh adherents; so that notwithstanding that his party was always defeated whenever it met with any detachments of the military, he had no difficulty in raising forces again as formidable as ever.[1] Pougatshev was finally arrested by some of his accomplices, but he threatened the Cossacks who put him in irons with the anger of the Grand Duke. The insurgents showed deep respect for the name of the heir, but Paul himself looked with extreme severity on the whole affair. The Empress herself was most painfully affected by the fact that the rising had been against her, there being no question of assailing her son's rights. Furthermore, a banner with the Holstein arms had been noticed among the rebels, in all probability a stolen one; but this detail seemed of particular importance to Catherine, who made searching inquiry to try to discover how the enemy had got possession of it.

The execution of Pougatshev, on January 21, 1775, put an end to the whole matter. On the 5th of the next month Catherine, accompanied by the Grand Duke and Duchess, made a solemn entry into Moscow to celebrate the conclusion of the treaty of Koutshouk Kainardji.

Catherine met with an exceedingly cold reception at Moscow, whilst the Grand Duke was evidently a popular favourite. Referring to her entry into Moscow, Sir Robert Gunning informed his Government that "the whole passed with scarce any acclamations amongst the populace, or their manifesting the least degree of satisfaction."[2] Paul,

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xix, p. 433.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 448.

on the contrary, won great popularity, and when he rode at the head of his regiment through Moscow, he allowed the common people to crowd round his person and conversed with them. Such marks of condescension are well calculated to win the favour of any crowd, much more that of Russian moujiks in 1774. But the satisfaction of the people gave Catherine much displeasure.[1] André Razoumovsky is supposed to have said to the Grand Duke on this occasion: "You see, sir, how much you are beloved, if you only wished to—" to which Paul, however, gave no reply.[2]

But if one is to believe the diplomatic despatches of the French Ambassador, Catherine really met with a genuinely enthusiastic reception and won all hearts with her charm of manner, whilst the Grand Duke and his wife were rather unpopular, on account of their somewhat haughty attitude.[3]

Catherine, in one of her letters to Grimm, also expressed her pleasure at her reception in Moscow; everybody was delighted to see her.[4] It seems, however, that the statement of the English Ambassador was nearer the real state of things. For, in a subsequent despatch, the French Ambassador too mentions the fact that the Empress was very greatly annoyed at the lack of enthusiasm with which her birthday was celebrated.[5] Certain it is that the relations between Catherine and Paul, and especially between mother and daughter-in-law, became more strained.

[1] Sbornik, vol. xix, p. 451.

[2] *Cf.* Castéra, *Histoire de Catherine II*, 1800, vol. ii, p. 201.

[3] Cf. *Archives de la Bibliothèque Nationale* and *Les Razoumovsky*, p. 35.

[4] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 15.

[5] *La Cour de Russie*, p. 292.

Catherine's policy went so far as to make her do her best to awaken anger and suspicion in her son, in order to isolate him, for she knew well that he was quite incapable of himself of rebelling against her, or indeed of offering her the slightest opposition. Even before leaving for Moscow Catherine thought it incumbent on her to warn the Grand Duke that Razoumovsky was abusing his confidence and kindness and acquiring influence over the Grand Duchess. This painful disclosure caused great trouble to Paul Petrovitsh, but he made every effort to hide his feelings. He believed his wife's assurances; grieved at her tears, he only loved her for them the more, convinced that she was the victim of his mother's hatred towards her, and his mistrust of the Empress only became stronger.[1]

The relations between Catherine and the Grand Duchess had been growing more and more unpleasant since the journey to Moscow. The character of each of the two women was sufficient to account for the change of feeling towards one another. Catherine had become convinced that it was for ambitious reasons alone that the Princess Wilhelmina had so eagerly desired to marry the Tsarevitsh. "A person who never amuses herself with anything, and who takes an interest in nothing, must be consumed with ambition; it is an axiom which always holds true." Such were Catherine's words. But there was no room for Nathalie to exercise her ambition on the ground where the Empress chose to display hers, and it was impos-

[1] Cf. *Archives de la Bibliothèque Nationale* and *Les Razoumovsky*, p. 36.

sible for them to sympathise with one another. A crisis that was bound to end in an open quarrel seemed to be at hand, when an event which the Empress had been eagerly expecting occurred. The Grand Duchess began to complain greatly of her health. Phthisis was feared. "The Grand Duchess is constantly ill, but how is it possible for her not to be ill!" wrote Catherine to Grimm. "It is a lady who knows only of extremes in all that she does. If we go out for a walk we must do twenty versts at least. If we dance, it must be at least twenty quadrilles, as many minuets, without enumerating the German dances. To avoid being too hot in our rooms we do not have them warmed at all. When we are advised to rub our face with ice we must needs rub the whole body with it; in short, all moderation in our actions is far from us. For fear of those who are evil-minded we no longer put trust in any one; we refuse to follow either good or bad advice. In a word, up to the present moment we are neither amiable, prudent, or sensible; God knows how it is all going to end, for we will listen to no one, whoever it may be, and decide everything according to our own ideas. After being a year and a half in Russia, we cannot yet speak a word of Russian; we are anxious to be taught, but are not willing to give up an hour in the day for this purpose. Our head is all in a fume and fuss; we cannot bear this person or that; we have debts amounting to double the amount of our property, and it is doubtful if anybody in Europe has more of them."[1]

While at Moscow, Catherine made a pilgrimage

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 12.

to the Convent of Saint Sergius, which took her from the 29th of May to the 17th of June. On September 7th she wrote to Grimm: "You hoped that my devotion at Saint Sergius' would bring about a miracle. No sooner said than done. You hoped that heaven would do for the Grand Duchess what it formerly did for Sarah and Elizabeth. Your prayers are heard, my daughter-in-law is enceinte, and she seems to be stronger in health."[1] This event hastened the return of the Court to St. Petersburg. Paul and the Grand Duchess left Moscow for Tsarskoé-Sélo on the 18th December, Catherine following on the 31st of the same month. On the 17th April 1887, Low Sunday, the Grand Duke rose at four o'clock in the morning to fetch his mother, the Grand Duchess having been in pain since midnight. The Empress rose at once, and remained with her daughter-in-law till ten o'clock in the morning. Everything apparently going on well, the Empress went away to dress herself, and returned at noon. Towards evening the pains became so violent that the birth of the child was expected every minute. The Empress, the Grand Duke, Countess Razoumovsky, the best midwife in the city, and the head lady's-maid were the only persons admitted into the room. The doctor and his assistant waited outside in the vestibule. The night passed, the Grand Duchess, still in great suffering, slumbering at intervals, and rising and lying down again as she felt inclined. The following day brought no change, and Doctors Kruze and Tode were sent for. The midwife carried out the doctors' orders, but there seemed little hope now of

[1] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xxiii, pp. 16, 33.

the child being safely born. On Tuesday Rogerson and Lindemann were sent for, the midwife finding the delivery impossible. On Wednesday Tode returned, but without success. The child was dead, but everything that was possible was done to save the life of the mother. On Thursday, Prince Henry of Prussia, who had lately arrived, offered the assistance of his doctor. A fresh consultation was held, but the doctors all declared that their science was of no avail. Death was rapidly approaching. The Grand Duchess's friend and confessor, the Archbishop Platon, came to bring her the succours of religion, and while he was thus ministering to her, she breathed her last.[1]

Various reports, however, were circulated concerning the death of the Great Duchess, and were very injurious to Catherine's reputation. Sir Nathaniel Wraxall heard these reports from two Princes of Hesse-Philipstahl, relatives of the deceased Duchess. The medical men attending the Grand Duchess had declared that she would never be able to give birth to another child, on account of an operation which she underwent in her early youth. As Catherine was particularly anxious that an heir to the throne should be forthcoming, it was decided to sacrifice the young Duchess in the interest of the State. It is doubtful whether Paul's consent was first asked. The midwife, however, suddenly became very wealthy, and was on very familiar terms with the Empress.[2]

In one of her letters to Madame Byelke, Cathe-

[1] *Cf.* Shilder, "The Emperor Paul," p. 103.

[2] *Cf.* Golovkin, *La Cour*, &c., p. 106, and Sir N. Wraxall, "Memoirs," 1884, p. 142.

rine practically seems to admit the fact that the Grand Duchess had been sacrificed.[1] "I have been here with my son and Prince Henry since the death of the Grand Duchess," writes Catherine. "No human power could have saved the Princess; she was unfortunately so formed that she could not give birth to her child; hers is perhaps an unique case. For three days she was in the pangs of labour, and when the midwife declared that she could do nothing for her, we sent for accoucheurs; but, imagine, even these were unable to do anything, nor was any instrument of avail; the passage was completely obstructed, and the post-mortem revealed that it was only four fingers wide, while the child's shoulders were eight. Only two years ago she was telling us that, showing an inclination as a child to grow crooked, the Landgrave sent for a quack, who knocked her about with his fists and knees. It was now also discovered that the bottom of the spine was in the shape of an S, and that at the base, where the bone ought to have curved outwards, it curved inwards. So this also proved that it was no haughtiness on her part, but an impossibility to her to bend forwards. The quack's blows, it seems, hastened her transit to another world. I felt the death of this Princess very deeply, and I did all I could to save her; for five days and nights I never left her; however, as it is now ascertained that she could never have had a living child, or rather have given birth to one, it is as well not to think about it any more."[2]

Asseburg, informed of the fact that on account

[1] *Cf.* Golovkin, *l.c.*, pp. 105-106.
[2] *Cf.* Sbornik, vol. xxvii, p. 79.

of the operation which the Grand Duchess underwent when young it was impossible for her to give birth to a child, was greatly concerned. Asseburg, therefore, thought it best to excuse himself in a letter to Count Panin, and solemnly to declare that he had been perfectly ignorant of the operation in question. Catherine, however, exculpated him, assuring him that no blame whatever was attached to him, as he had done all he could. When, eight years later, Paul travelled through Europe in company with his second wife, he ordered his chamberlain, Prince Kourakin, to pay a visit to Asseburg, and to assure the latter of his Imperial goodwill.

On the very day of the Grand Duchess's death, the Empress, with the Tsarevitsh and Prince Henry of Prussia, left for Tsarskoé. The following day Catherine sent Betzky orders, as soon as the body of the Grand Duchess had been removed, to take away the hangings from all the four rooms occupied by Her Highness, namely, the green hangings from the bedroom, the striped hangings from one of the boudoirs, and the silk hangings from the other one, and those from the rose-coloured room. She further ordered that the hangings, couches, chairs, and carpets were to be given to the Archbishop Platon; that the wooden partitions were to be broken up and taken away, especially the panels lined with silk damask in the boudoir, and to have this done quickly, as the atmosphere of the rooms had become unbearable and a source of danger to the survivors.

CHAPTER V

LOVE IN A PALACE; OR, THE LOVE LETTERS OF A PRINCESS

"And the king has brought me into his apartments."

Paul's second marriage—The guilt of his late wife. Une liaison très innocente—Princess Sophia Dorothea of Würtemberg—Her delight at the splendid prospect—Paul journeys to Berlin—Description of the bride by Madame d'Oberkirch—Paul falls in love with the bride-elect—Love letters of a Princess—The character of the new Grand Duchess—Catherine jealous of her—The birth of Alexander.

THE death of his wife produced a deep impression upon Paul. He was inconsolable at first, but his mother and Prince Henry of Prussia succeeded in eradicating the image of the dead from his heart by revealing the reprehensible conduct of the Duchess. She had been unworthy, so they said, of his love and esteem. Catherine, however, clever woman though she was, was not such a deep psychologist as to understand that the operation was a dangerous one. Paul's faith in human nature was undermined. His wife, and his best friend, André Razoumovsky, had been, according to the testimony of his mother, untrue to him. This shock, although it stunned his grief for the moment, was undoubtedly instrumental in developing in later years that feeling of distrust and the lower passions which had lain dormant in Paul, and which became so prominent when he ascended the throne. We

shall have occasion to notice how in future the slightest cause was sufficient to make him distrust not only his friends but even his second wife and children.

But not only did Catherine endeavour to make Paul forget his first wife; she also set about to find him a new one. And here again she availed herself of the services of Prince Henry of Prussia. The latter then conceived the project of cementing the alliance between Russia and his brother, Frederick of Prussia, by the marriage of the Grand Duke Paul with the Princess Dorothea of Würtemberg-Montbéliard, grand-niece of the great Frederick. Catherine was pleased with the idea, and Prince Henry undertook to negotiate the marriage.[1] Catherine was anxious to see her son re-married.

"Seeing the vessel go down on one side," Catherine wrote to Grimm, "I made haste to throw it over on to the other; I lost no time in setting to work to repair the loss, and so succeeded in dissipating the gloom into which our trouble had plunged us. I began by suggesting trips, little journeys to and fro, and at last I said, the dead being dead we must now think of the living; because we have been disappointed of the happiness that we had expected, is there any reason for despairing ever to find it again? Let us look about for the other one; who? you ask. Oh! I have her all ready! How, so soon? Yes, and a treasure into the bargain, and then was not my gentleman's curiosity aroused. Who is it?

[1] *Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch*, Paris, 1853, vol. i, pp. 70–71.

What is she like? Is she dark, fair, short, tall, amiable, pretty, charming, a dear, a darling? The thought of such a treasure is cheering, and brings a smile to the face; so, from one thing to another, as a third move, a certain brisk traveller is sent forth, who leaves every one behind in a state of anxiety and expectation; before long he is on the spot, come, as it is understood of course, with the hope of bringing comfort and diversion; and there he is, installed as go-between, negotiator, now off as a messenger, now returning; and now we have the journey settled, the interview arranged, and all with the utmost celerity, and troubled hearts begin to expand; still sad, but forced to think about such arrangements for the journey as health and diversion demand. Meanwhile let us have a portrait. A portrait, there is no harm in that! There are very few, however, that are pleasing; a painting gives no true idea. The first messenger who arrives brings one; what is the good of it? It might produce an unfavourable impression. Better leave it unpacked in its box. There it remains a week untouched in the place where it was deposited on arriving, on my table beside my writing-desk. But is it pretty? Well, that is according to taste; I think so myself. Finally, it is looked at and immediately put into the pocket, then looked at again, and then some one busies himself with hastening forward the preparations for the journey."[1]

Paul offered no resistance to the proposal of a second marriage. The death of the Grand Duchess having brought to light secrets con-

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 49.

nected with her life, her husband's feelings towards her obviously became modified, and the Court, following suit, ceased to mourn the Princess.

That the late Grand Duchess had manifested an attachment for the handsome Razoumovsky, who was the darling of the aristocratic ladies of St. Petersburg, is beyond doubt. Harris, the English Ambassador, referring to the relations existing between the Grand Duke and his wife, wrote as follows :—

"It appeared soon after his marriage with the Princess of Darmstadt that she easily found the secret of governing him, and that so absolutely that he dismissed the few companions that seemed to have been of his own choice, and in his society his amusements and his sentiments was entirely directed by her. . . . She, in her turn, was governed by Count André Razoumovsky, her paramour, and he again received his lessons and the greater part of his income from the Ministers of the House of Bourbon." [1]

That intimate relations should have existed between the daughter-in-law of Catherine and the handsomest man in St. Petersburg is certainly no matter for surprise. Such things were *bon ton* at the Court of the Northern Cybele. There was no need for Catherine, after the death of her daughter-in-law, to forge love-letters, supposed to have passed between the late Grand Duchess and André Razoumovsky, so as to convince her son of his late wife's guilt. Such letters did undoubtedly exist. And if French diplomatists seem to be inclined to style the intimacy of the Grand

[1] "Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris," i, 1844, p. 212.

Duchess and the Count a "*liaison très innocente*," Frederick II thought that it was not so.[1]

There is, however, no reason to assume that the Grand Duchess and Count André had been mixed up in a political conspiracy of which Catherine was said to have proofs. Had it been so, the Empress would not have entrusted him afterwards with a diplomatic post.[2]

In any case, immediately after the burial of the Grand Duchess, Razoumovsky received orders to leave St. Petersburg and was exiled to Reval. Thanks to the influence of his friends and of his father, the hetman of the Ukraine, he was allowed to return to his father at Batourin. Catherine subsequently appointed him Russian diplomatic agent at Naples.[3]

Before long Paul amply consoled himself. The two months immediately following his wife's death were spent with his mother at Tsarskoé-Sélo. Their life went on just in the usual way. Pleasure-parties at Taitzi, Gatshina, Peterhof; christenings, marriages, as well as the regular performances given by the officers of the Mounted Guard, theatres and concerts—everything, in spite of the Court's mourning, resumed its usual course as soon as the Grand Duchess was buried.

The news now arrived from Berlin that the Princess of Würtemberg had given her consent to the marriage of her daughter, and on June 24th, 1776, Paul started for Berlin, accompanied by Count Roumyanzev. Prince Henry left Tsarskoé-Sélo the following day, so as to be at Riga to re-

[1] Works, vi, p. 120.
[2] Vasilchikov, *Les Razoumovsky*, i, p. 56.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

ceive the Princess Sophia-Dorothea. On the very day that the Grand Duke reached Berlin, Catherine, fully assured of the success of the affair, sent the Countess Roumyanzev to Mémel to meet Sophia-Dorothea. The object of the Countess's journey was kept a secret; it was pretended that she had gone to look after a property which her husband had given her.

Sophia-Dorothea, who was just entering her seventeenth year, spoke with childish delight of everything that was awaiting her in Russia; she had hopes of perfect happiness, and spoke of herself as the most favoured Princess in the world. Catherine's magnificence somewhat dismayed her.

"The Empress kissed me, that is true," she said afterwards, "but I am sure she thought me a simpleton. However," she added, not without a certain self-assurance in her own moral qualities, "if I manage to make myself agreeable to the Empress and the Grand Duke . . ."

Things were set on foot preparatory to the departure from Berlin. The Princess's father and her two brothers were to accompany her; her mother did not wish to come until after she had had her first interview with the Grand Duke Paul. The Princess reached Potsdam on 12th July 1776.

The Grand Duke arrived at Riga on July 1st and there awaited Prince Henry, who was to accompany him to Berlin, which place he reached on July 21st. Every place he passed through was given up to festivities, the people being mad with joy at the victories won by their King. The latter stood at the threshold of his apartments to greet his

august guest. Prince Henry presented the Grand Duke to his brother.

"Sire," said Paul to him, "the reasons which have induced me to travel from the extreme north to this fortunate country, were partly the wish I had to assure you of the friendship which will be a bond between the two countries for ever, and the impatient desire I had to see the Princess who is one day to ascend the Russian throne. In receiving her from your hands she will be doubly dear to me, as also to the people over whom she will reign. Finally, my aspiration is at last fulfilled, and I am able to look upon the greatest hero of the age, who is also the glory of his country and will be the wonder of posterity."

The Grand Duke and the Princess Sophia-Dorothea met for the first time at a supper given by the Queen Elizabeth-Christina. The next day they dined together with the King.

"The Princess Dorothea," writes Madame Oberkirch, "born in 1759, was then seventeen years of age. She was beautiful as Aurora; of that majestic stature which sculptors love to imitate, combining with a delicate regularity of features the most noble and imposing grace. Hers was indeed a regal beauty."[1]

The Tsarevitsh, as every one expected, dazzled by her beauty and grace, fell in love with the Princess who was his destined wife. He was delighted with the honour lavished upon him on all sides, not being accustomed to this at home. He confessed his feelings to Prince Henry, who communicated them to the Princess's father. As on her side Sophia-

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, i, p. 73.

Dorothea was greatly taken with the Grand Duke, Prince Henry, to whom the Empress had given full power to act, made a formal request for the hand of the Princess on July 23rd, and at the same time read a letter aloud that the Empress had written to him on the 22nd of the previous month. Prince Henry was able to carry back to the Grand Duke the favourable acceptance of his request, and the betrothal was celebrated the same day.

"Dear Friend," wrote Sophia-Dorothea to the Baroness d'Oberkirch, on the evening of her betrothal, "I am happy, more than happy—it would be impossible to be more so. No one could be more lovable than the Grand Duke. I may justly be proud of my charming betrothed and of his affection for me, which fills me with satisfaction and pleasure." [1]

Colonel, the Count Goertz, Frederick's aide-de-camp, was immediately despatched to St. Petersburg, to communicate the good news to Catherine. The King looked upon the conclusion of this marriage as a successful political move on the part of Prussia.

Rejoicings of every description took place—dinners, theatres, entertainments by day and night, at the royal residences of Charlottenburg, Mon-Bijou, and Sans-Souci, and the reviews at Potsdam went on without interruption up to the 4th of August. On that day, which was a Sunday, a grand dinner given by the Queen wound up the festivities, which had lasted for a fortnight. That evening, after the concert and supper were over, preparations were begun for the departure. The Princess made the

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, i, p. 74.

first move. She bid a respectful adieu to the King, and after supper drove off with her parents and Prince Ferdinand, in order to spend the first night of her journey at Rheinsberg, the residence of Prince Henry, who had gone before to make ready for their reception. Paul, at the summit of his happiness, left Berlin the following morning, so as to meet his betrothed again at Rheinsberg.

There they spent two days in each other's company. The Grand Duke then hastened back to St. Petersburg to prepare for the marriage. He left the Castle in company with Prince Henry, who went with him as far as Schwedt, and, as in going, he was accompanied all along his return route by the populace in crowds. On the 19th August he was at Riga, reaching Tsarskoé-Sélo on the evening of the 25th, happy as he only was but once in his life.

The following description of his betrothed has been found in a letter written to his mother :—

" I found my betrothed just as nice as I expected. Rather pretty, tall and graceful; not in the least shy, but quick and intelligent in answering when questions are put to her. That she is good and sensible at heart I had several opportunities of perceiving. The King spoke to me of her masculine power of mind; he has talked with her a great deal about her future duties, and has reported their conversations to me; he loses no opportunity of impressing upon her the duty which she owes to you. She has been highly educated, and surprised me one day, when we were talking of geometry, by saying that it was a science which led the mind to reflect. She is very simple in her habits and domestically inclined; she employs her leisure in

reading and playing. She is longing to begin the study of Russian, realising how necessary it is for her to understand it, and taking warning by the example of the one who preceded her." [1]

Sophia-Dorothea remained at Rheinsberg with her parents till the 12th of August; the owner of the Castle soon returned, delighted with his grand-niece and highly pleased with the result of his negotiations. He bid a tender farewell to Sophia-Dorothea, who reached the Castle of Schwedt with her parents and Prince Ferdinand and his wife on the same day. The Countess Roumyanzev and M. Semolin, Russian Minister at Mitau, accompanied them thither, having received orders to go with them as far as Riga. The Prince and Princess of Würtemberg did not part with their daughter until they had got to Memel. The Grand Duke met his betrothed at Iamburg, and together they entered Tsarskoé-Sélo on the 11th September. The Grand Duke was beaming with happiness.

The Empress was in love with her from the first. "Know," she wrote to Grimm, on the 12th of September 1776, "that my Princess arrived last night, and immediately won all hearts, for she is charming; after this what am I to say to you about your Laharpe and his crew, about their forebodings and other clumsy mistakes; my Princess is not clumsy. I should like very much to have one of Mengs' pictures in my gallery, but just now I am quite taken up with my Princess. The Psyche, by the mistaken name of Siriel, would also suit me very well if at this moment my head was not turned by my Princess, who is as pretty as Psyche. Your

[1] Shilder, "The Emperor Paul," p. 115.

young man did not know what he was about when he gave her up without regret."[1]

The Empress, too, had produced a very favourable impression upon the bride-elect, who was delighted with her future mother-in-law. The affectionate heart of the Princess was brimming over with joy, and her love for her betrothed knew no bounds. She did not hesitate to tell him so.

"I cannot go to bed," she wrote to Paul, "my dear and adorable Prince, before telling you once more that I love and adore you to distraction; my friendship for you has increased since the conversation we had this evening. God alone knows what pleasure it will be to me soon to belong to you entirely; all my future life will prove to you my sentiments; yes, dear, adorable, dearest Prince, all my life will I devote to you and give you constant proofs of my attachment and of the love with which my heart is beating for you. Good-night, adorable Prince; sleep well, banish all phantoms, but dream of one that adores you." There is certainly a note of passion in this epistle.

The Grand Duke's marriage was hastened forward. On September 13th Archbishop Platon began the religious instruction of the Princess; the baptism took place on the 25th, the Princess taking the name of Maria Féodorovna. On the 26th she and the Grand Duke were betrothed, and the marriage was celebrated on the 7th October in presence of the Duchess of Courland and the whole Court, who were all enthusiastic about the beauty and elegance of the new Grand Duchess, who was herself overwhelmed with happiness.

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 59, and vol. xxvii, pp. 117-119.



EMPRESS MARIA FEODOROVNA.
After a portrait by Lampy.

At the close of the first year of their married life she wrote to the friend of her childhood, Lanele, Baroness of Oberkirch :—

"The Grand Duke is the most adorable of husbands. . . . I am very glad that you do not know him, for you would certainly have fallen in love with him and then I should have been jealous. My dear husband is an angel, and I love him to distraction."[1]

At a Court, however, like that of Catherine's, full of intrigues and temptations, the young Duchess was exposed to many dangers ; and her very virtues and qualities, her character and beauty, were such as to make Catherine soon jealous of her. With her candour, innocency and chastity, the Grand Duchess Maria Féodorovna, who entered upon her marriage with the firm intention of fulfilling its duties and preserving its sanctity, could hardly have felt at home in the midst of a society of such different aspirations to her own.

"As the character of the present Grand Duchess differs entirely from that of the deceased," wrote Harris, "so the Grand Duke, on his side, appears under quite a new light. Maria Féodorovna is modest and kind, and has a strong sense of her wifely duties. The Grand Duke has grown talkative and cheerful as well as very tactful. She is attentive to his wishes and watchful to please, and he loves her with all his heart. So far they are as happy as they can be, but I tremble for the duration of this happiness in the midst of such a corrupt and ill-assorted Court. Paul manifests at times a kindliness to the ladies, and a certain frivolity of tone

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, vol. i, p. 81.

in conversing with them, which has something of affectation about it. The Grand Duchess will need much strength of character and a remarkably large share of virtue to avoid the countless temptations which beset her daily life. But she is thoroughly virtuous, and her conduct of the most upright."[1]

The morality which formed the basis of the Grand Duchess's character lent strength to it. She was an idealist in every acceptation of the word. Gentle, modest, loving, devoted to duty, easily satisfied, she had the faculty of finding something attractive in the simplest things and in the details of daily life; if anything, she was too sentimental, and united in her person all the characteristics of the German woman. It is very certain that from her first arrival in Russia she won the hearts of every one about the Court, not excepting the Empress.

"I have grown passionately fond of this delightful creature," wrote the latter to Madame Byelke, on September 16, 1776; "passionately is the only word. She is just such as I had hoped her to be. She has the figure of a nymph and a complexion of lilies and roses. Her skin is transparent; she is well proportioned, and walks with grace and elegance. She has an excellent heart, and is gentle and equable in temper, and her face is expressive of all the beautiful qualities of her soul. She wins everybody's love, and those who did not appreciate her would really be in the wrong, for she is worthy of universal affection."[2]

But in spite of her sense, her goodness, and all her moral qualities, Maria Féodorovna was still unable to bring her mother-in-law and husband

[1] Harris, "Diaries," pp. 212–213. [2] Sbornik, xxvii, pp. 117–119.

into better relations with each other. It was not long before a change came over Catherine's behaviour even to her daughter-in-law. At the bottom of this state of affairs was the unfortunate influence exercised by the Court favourites.

As in the days when Paul was young, Orlov still continued to do his best to increase the estrangement between Catherine and her son, and in the same way Potemkin, later on, kept the Empress in constant fear of the Grand Duke. He persuaded her, and got his friends and partisans—and these were numerous—to support his assertion, that he would be the only one in a position to protect her at any given moment from all the imaginable plots which Paul was devising against her.

"The estrangement between the Empress and her son becomes daily more noticeable," wrote Harris. "She treats him with perfect indifference, I might even say with contempt. He takes no pains to hide his dislike, and at times, when he has the courage to do it, gives voice to it in violent language. He has, however, no firmness nor decision of character, and he will never have the courage to put himself at the head of a party unless made to do so by force. Potemkin and his set treat the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess as persons of no importance. The Tsarevitsh feels it very much, and is weak enough to show that he suffers—it is all that he is capable of. Thanks to his natural timidity and his versatile humour, failings which do not grow less as he grows older, he is not able to give the lie to Potemkin, who fills Catherine's mind with apprehension concerning the character of her son. The

Grand Duchess behaves with the most perfect tact, and knows how to avoid all that might give offence either to the Empress or to the Grand Duke." [1]

"The tenderness and affection between their Imperial Highnesses were equal on either side. It would have been impossible for two to live in more perfect harmony. We were never tired of looking on at this state of conjugal happiness, which was a matter of rejoicing to all of us. This marriage exercised a considerable influence on the people of St. Petersburg, and augmented the devoted affection which the whole country lavished on its future sovereign."

Very shortly before the birth of their first son, Alexander, on the anniversary of the birth of Paul, Maria Féodorovna congratulated her husband in the following terms:—

"My soul is full of joy, of happiness and of satisfaction, on this day which gave the existence to the most adorable and dearest of husbands. Live happy and contented, live a thousand years to do good to millions of subjects. Such is the wish of your tender and faithful friend and wife. I adore you, I love you to distraction. You are my Idol, my supreme good, and I cherish you beyond expression."

On the 23rd of December (12th) 1777, Maria Féodorovna gave birth to a son, who was baptized under the name of Alexander. St. Petersburg gave vent to a burst of joy. The succession to the throne of Russia was now assured. Only the happiness of the parents of the Prince was marred. The Empress

[1] Harris, "Diaries and Correspondence," vol. i, p. 228.

had at once—like Elizabeth in the case of Paul—taken the infant to her own apartments, and decided to look after him herself. The Imperial parents were deprived of the pleasure and privileges granted to the meanest subject of Her Majesty. And when, in 1779, the Grand Duchess gave birth to another son, Constantine, the Empress again deprived the parents of the joy of taking care of their little one. This attitude did not lessen the tension already existing in the family relations. Paul became again morose, and his heart was full of a dissatisfaction with his mother which developed into a deep and violent hatred. Husband and wife, however, continued to love and trust each other.

At the close of 1777, on the birth of his eldest son, the Empress gave the Grand Duke a property situated about five versts from Tsarskoé-Sélo. Here the Grand Duke built a palace, which he called "Paul's Delight," and which was later known as Pavlovsk.

This palace became the favourite residence of the Grand Duchess Maria Féodorovna. She was passionately fond of flowers and herself undertook to arrange the gardens and the park; various buildings were erected about the latter, which were in later days to remind her of the happy years of her youth.

A few familiar friends made up the every-day society of Paul and his wife; these were Count Panin, Soltykov, Count Roumyanzev, Prince Kourakin, Lafermière, Nicolai, and, later, Wadkovski and Plestsheev. The reigning personality in this small circle of intimates was Maria Féodorovna.

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Paul had no longing for public amusements, much preferring the quiet pleasures of home life. He frequently gave balls and theatrical performances, and he did his best to introduce as much variety as possible at his little Court.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOURNEY OF THE COUNT AND COUNTESS DU NORD

Paul and his wife go abroad—Joseph II—Paul's letter to Archbishop Platon—Sir James Harris's despatches—Panin's intrigues—Paul and his wife met by King Stanislaus—The Austrian Emperor's letter to his brother—The Grand Duke and Duchess visit Italy—They proceed to France—Reception at Versailles—Marie Antoinette—The visit to Brussels—Paul's mysterious tale—The ghost of Peter I—The return home—Cold reception—Orders relating to the dresses of the ladies at Court—Catherine endeavours to annoy the Grand Duchess.

In 1780 Joseph II paid a visit to St. Petersburg, being desirous of becoming acquainted with the hereditary Grand Duke and his wife. He travelled under the name of Count Falkenstein. When acquainting her son and daughter-in-law of the Emperor's intention, Catherine assured them that they would find Count Falkenstein a very entertaining guest. "He is clever and very well informed, and will not, like the King of Sweden, prove himself a bore to you."

This visit is of special interest to us in the further information it affords concerning Paul himself. The Tsarevitsh and his consort produced a very favourable impression upon the Emperor. He wrote to his mother as follows:—

"The Grand Duke is far more entitled to consideration than is generally thought outside Russia. His wife is very beautiful and seems to have been

made for the position she holds. They understand one another perfectly; two sons are the happy addition to the family. The Empress concerns herself very much with these children. The latter are allowed all the liberty that is necessary for the development of the intellect and the establishment of their health.[1]

"The Grand Duke and Duchess, who may be looked upon as one, so entirely are they bound to each other by the ties of affection and mutual understanding, are a most interesting couple to study. They are clever and lively and extremely well educated, and are also, in all ways, exceedingly upright, frank, just; the happiness of their fellow-creatures is to them of higher worth than all the riches of the world. (It is difficult to believe that they are not sincere.) In their intercourse with the Empress they are ill at ease and constrained in manner, the Grand Duke especially; there is lacking that cordiality of relation between them without which I should find it impossible to live. The Grand Duchess is more natural; she has a great deal of power over her husband; she loves him, and she rules him; she is absolute mistress in her own house. She will, I feel sure, play a prominent part in affairs some future day. She is very affectionate towards me, but one has to be on one's guard with both of them; there might be disadvantages attached to a too close friendship between us. Of this I have already had proof; the occasions which afforded it me are best to be henceforth avoided. The Empress being indisposed yesterday, I dined out of

[1] Arneth, *Maria Theresa u. Joseph II*, Vienna, 1868, vol. iii, p. 266.

town with the Grand Duke. As usual, there was a theatrical performance given in the evening. On Monday I spent the day *tête-à-tête* with the Empress, and was invited to sup with the Tsarevitsh. After dining with the Grand Duke, or, more correctly, with the Grand Duchess, at their country house, they insisted on my being present at the inauguration of a temple dedicated to Friendship. I was forced to accept the invitation, which was accompanied with a thousand marks of politeness and an equal number of assurances of eternal friendship. Panin, Potemkin, and many others were present at this opening festival.[1]

"The Grand Duke said a few words to me about the false position he was in, and also spoke of an illegitimate son of the Empress. It was a proof of the confidence he places in me, but it is difficult to please two parties at once. The Grand Duke is endowed with a great number of qualities which entitle him to respect, but it is almost impossible to play second fiddle here when Catherine II plays the first.

"The Grand Duke appears quite at his ease with me, as does also the Grand Duchess. The more I become intimately acquainted with the latter the more I appreciate her character. She is a woman of rare mind and spirit; added to this her physique is charming and her behaviour irreproachable. If, ten years ago, I could have met a Princess like her, I should have been delighted to marry her. Her nature responds entirely to my own aspirations, and, as far as I am concerned, there is no higher praise that I could give her."[2]

[1] Arneth, *Maria Theresa u. Joseph II*, vol. iii, pp. 271–272.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 272, 275, 280.

After her interview with Joseph II, and still more after the death of Maria Theresa, Catherine was anxious to form a closer alliance with Austria.

The Emperor's visit had facilitated the carrying out of the great desire of the Grand Duchess to go and see her parents in Germany. This journey fitted in with the Empress's political projects, while the Grand Duke, always ready to fall in with his wife's wishes, was equally pleased at the prospect of getting away, if only for a short time, from the monotonous and aimless existence to which he was condemned, and looked forward to enlarging his intellectual horizon by a visit to the more cultured countries of Europe.

The Prince was sick of the tediousness of a life which was without any duty or occupation in connection with his position. The melancholy engendered in him by this inactivity was increased by the extreme susceptibility of his temperament and the high-strung state of his nerves. His mother having made it impossible for him to take any share in the government and to bring his personal views to bear upon it, he ended by taking no interest in public affairs. He began, however, on his own account, to write down his opinions concerning the different branches of the administration, and corresponded on these matters with two of his warmest adherents, Prince N. V. Repnin and Count P. I. Panin.

On June 30, 1781, the Grand Duke wrote to Platon from Pavlovsk as follows :—

"You have done me an honour by comparing me with Cyrus. I have done nothing as yet glorious and distinguished as he did; so far I have not

got beyond intentions; my occupations are of the most ordinary—I try to amuse myself, and that is about all. I am getting our new residence into order. The chief merit of the existence which we lead here is that it enables one to forget. My brow is wet with sweat—not from fatigue, but from boredom. You will see from this that there is not the slightest similarity between me and Cyrus. When Cyrus took his ease it was to rest after having performed great deeds and to fit himself for farther ones. But I—there is no reason why I should take my ease, seeing that I have done nothing; if I seek repose, it is from the fatigue of mental worries. The rustic life I lead will explain this which I tell you, and also be my excuse—but I need not, I feel, excuse myself to you—you who know all the enthusiasm of my heart and all my secret aspirations, and who, beyond this, have had affection for me."

The Archbishop Platon, touched by the melancholy tone of his august pupil's letters, did all he could to encourage him, begged him not to grow low-spirited but to make an effort to rouse himself.

Paul replied to him on the 27th of July 1781, just after he had received permission from Catherine to start on his travels:—

"I feel the truth of all that your Eminence says about my melancholy, and I will do my best to follow your good advice. Melancholy takes away all one's energy and paralyses one's powers; there is no better cure for it than occupation, according to one's station in life. Then, if work allows one some hours of leisure, there is the satisfaction of feeling that the rest of one's time has been usefully

employed. This should bring peace to the soul. But have we it always in our own power to find occupation? This is a question which requires consideration. It is possible, of course, if there is no obstacle to oppose us; but supposing we have all the best intentions in the world, and that, apart from any power of our own will to prevent it, all possibility of activity is taken away, what are we to do? I do not say that we are to give up in despair, but can we help feeling that we are not doing the work that we ought, and that we are not as useful as we might be. You understand, I am sure, that I fully appreciate your words, and, believe me, among the reasons for our undertaking this journey is the wish to waste no more time in melancholy, and to enlarge our knowledge by a further acquaintance with men and things. Give me your blessing, and ask God for peace of soul and health of body, that our steps may be directed in the right way."

This being the state of her husband's mind, the Grand Duchess had no difficulty in persuading him to ask Catherine's permission to extend their journey to Austria and Italy. Her consent was the more easily obtainable on account of the Emperor Joseph II's concurrence with Maria Féodorovna's wish, the change of policy in the home Cabinet also helping to facilitate the matter. However hard they felt it to part from their children, the longing of the young couple to get away was quite comprehensible, especially as it was an opportune moment for obtaining the Empress's consent. There was, however, a hidden purpose in Catherine's mind, which this journey was to help to accomplish. Harris, the

English diplomatic agent at St. Petersburg, relates that Catherine, wishing to send her son to Vienna, commissioned Repnin to suggest the idea of the journey to the Grand Duke and Duchess, giving them to understand that for persons in their high position it was not only useful but indispensable that they should study the different systems of government in other Courts of Europe.

"Catherine ended by promising Prince Repnin, if he succeeded, some very distinguished mark of her favour; and I should have premised that, previous to giving him this commission, she had, from a very trifling motive, affected to be extremely displeased with him, and the above-mentioned reward and a return to favour were the terms promised him in case of success. Prince Repnin executed his orders very ably. By talking continually of foreign countries, and of the many advantages to be acquired by visiting them, he raised in the Grand Duke an eager desire of travelling and a still stronger one in the Grand Duchess. It became the first object of their wishes, and they were perpetually lamenting the impossibility of its taking place. While they were in this disposition of mind they received letters from the Emperor, with a pressing invitation to come to Vienna; he wrote he would engage the Grand Duchess's mother and other relations to meet her there, and was certain that the Empress, if they would ask it, would not refuse them their request. Count Panin was consulted, and as Prince Repnin had faithfully kept the Empress's secret they met with no opposition in that quarter. In fact, Panin at once thought of turning the journey to the advantage of the King

of Prussia, and of making Berlin, not Vienna, the principal goal of the travellers. The Grand Duke and the Duchess waited on the Empress and made their request. She received it with a countenance of surprise, and told them that they had put her in an embarrassing situation, since 'either by granting what they asked, she must deprive herself for so long a time of their society, or, by declining it, check in them a thirst after knowledge and instruction she could not but approve.' At last the permission was given, on condition that Catherine should draw up the plan of the journey and name the attendants."[1]

It was Her Majesty's desire that the young couple should travel incognito, that they should, as far as possible, avoid public fêtes, and should only dine with princes and private persons where it was absolutely necessary to do so. The Empress further wished that one or other of the travellers should write to her once or twice a week, and fixed the sum of three hundred thousand roubles for the expenses of the journey. The suite was composed of the Court Marshal, Soltykov, and his wife, of Prince Goussoripov, a celebrated art connoisseur, and of Lieutenant-Colonel Benckendorff with his wife. They were to journey through Russia by the route that Catherine had taken on the occasion of her interview at Mohilev with the Emperor Joseph. On the programme of the voyage the "hours of departure" and "directions as to route" are written without alternative hours or ways being indicated, Catherine being evidently determined to settle all these matters beforehand for her children. As it

[1] James Harris, "Diaries," tom. i, pp. 462–463.

happened, however, the projected journey was finally extended, for the Grand Duke expressed a wish to visit France as well as Austria and Italy. On the 23rd July he wrote to Sacken:—

"It is settled about this journey of mine; I am only waiting until the children have been inoculated with the small-pox. I begin with Vienna—I intend to visit the whole of Italy, and on my way back to pass through Switzerland and the Netherlands. As to France, I can say nothing as yet about that, but it would be a shame, I think, to be so near and not to become acquainted with it. In returning I shall pass through the very heart of Germany."

Paul and his wife acquiesced in all the arrangements of the Empress, and asked only that Prince Kourakin might be added to their retinue, and Versailles to the Courts they were to visit. Berlin was also mentioned. The request concerning Kourakin was granted readily, but the Empress, though ready to allow her son to go to France, was extremely angry when he asked for permission to visit the Court at Berlin, and replied by a distinct refusal. No doubt it was due also to the Empress that they were not allowed to pass through Moscow, and that her daughter-in-law missed the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the ancient capital of the Empire; probably she recalled the ovation the Grand Duke and his first wife had met with there on the occasion of their visit in 1775, when all the inhabitants, high and low, vied with one another in their welcome. Everything else that Paul Petrovitsh asked for was granted him, and he was allowed to take his intimate friends with him.[1]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 463.

The Empress placed no obstacle to their speedy departure, and it was decided that their Imperial Highnesses should start in September.

The children having been inoculated, their Imperial Highnesses had nothing further to detain them; their last letter before starting was written on September 12, 1781, to the Archbishop Platon:—

"We are writing to bid you good-bye," wrote Paul, "and to ask for your prayers and blessings, not only for us who are going away, but also for the precious pledges we are leaving behind." "Country" first, and next to that "the children."

A few words about the latter were added by Maria Féodorovna. "The children are well at the present moment, thank God, may they continue so, and the time of our separation pass quickly. I cannot tell you how greatly I am suffering in heart and mind."

So that they might be able to start without anxiety, the departure was put off until the children had recovered from the inoculation, and all danger for them was over. Again, on September 21st, the Grand Duke wrote to Platon. "The inoculation has been a perfect success, particularly with the eldest of my boys; there has been no bad symptom, and if all continues to go on as well I shall be able to sing a Te Deum for their complete recovery before I start."

Finally, on September 30, 1781, their Imperial Highnesses left St. Petersburg, this being the eve of the Grand Duke's birthday, who was now twenty-seven years of age. When the English Ambassador, Harris, waited upon them to take leave, on

the evening before their departure, he found both the Grand Duke and the Duchess extremely agitated, and their eyes red and full of tears.[1] The Grand Duchess fainted the following morning when saying good-bye to her children, and had to be carried in a state of unconsciousness to her carriage. She and her husband had the appearance of people going into exile rather than on a journey of pleasure.

"There is not the smallest doubt," wrote Sir James Harris, "that this very uncommon sensibility of their Imperial Highnesses does not arise solely for quitting their children. Count Panin has filled their heads with apprehensions, and they are gone away under the strongest impressions of terror. He plays a very heavy stake; he may be assured that the Empress is not unacquainted with the part he has acted, and will not leave such conduct unnoticed."[2]

In bidding good-bye to her children the Empress addressed them as follows: "Go and travel and then come back to Russia—when you see your own country again you will be filled with entirely new ideas. I pray God to keep my son in health. May the Most High strengthen him in body and soul, and bring you both back safe and sound for the sake of my own happiness and that of others, and that both I and my subjects may have occasion to rejoice that you have been given the opportunity of improving yourselves by seeing people and things with your own eyes, a chance which all our equals do not enjoy. I trust you may reap such good from your travels, that you will both be enabled thereby

[1] Harris, "Diaries and Correspondence," i, p. 469.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 454.

to be of greater service to others, and that neither person or thing may ever have occasion to regret your going."[1]

In accordance with the Empress's wish that they should avoid the burden of etiquette, the Grand Duke and Duchess travelled under the name of the Count and Countess du Nord. Doctor Kruze and the priest, Sambovsky, were added to their suite. Plestsheev, as a rule, went ahead of the travellers to find rooms for them and to arrange the resting-places, while Soltykov and his wife brought up the rear.

Paul Petrovitsh and Maria Féodorovna both kept a diary, in which they wrote down everything which struck them as interesting or curious. Unfortunately, one of these diaries has been destroyed, and the other has disappeared no one knows where.

The Grand Duke and Duchess were absent from Russia a long time. Before leaving their own domains they followed the route which had been drawn up for them by the Empress.

At Vishnevza they were met by King Stanislaus, who was accompanied by the chief of the Polish magistrates. He was anxious to give a suitable reception to the children of the sovereign who had placed him on the throne. The Grand Duke and Grand Duchess on their side were so delightfully agreeable that they quite turned the heads of the King and his suite. At Brodi the Count and Countess du Nord entered Austrian territory and were there met by the suite sent by the Emperor Joseph. At Troppau, about two hundred versts from Vienna, Joseph himself was

[1] Sbornik, ix.

awaiting them. There they were entertained at a dinner, which was followed by a theatrical performance, the evening winding up with a ball; the following day the travellers continued their journey, travelling in the same carriage as the Emperor. Theatrical entertainments and balls were held in their honour at all the chief resting-places.

At last, on 21st November 1781, the Count and Countess du Nord arrived at Vienna. The parents of the Grand Duchess, travelling under the name of the Count and Countess of Greningen, were there already awaiting them. Paul Petrovitsh and Maria Féodorovna stayed at the Amalienhof Palace. After the family dinner, at which Joseph II, who had been really the one to arrange this meeting, presided, the royal party went to the National Theatre. Then followed a series of fêtes, and the Grand Duke and Duchess by degrees became thoroughly acquainted with Vienna, its society, and its chief buildings and institutions. The Emperor, when apprising his brother, Leopold of Tuscany, of the departure of his guests, wrote as follows :—

"The Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess, besides being endowed with natural gifts of no ordinary kind, have also a wide knowledge of things, and, moreover, are extremely desirous of seeing and understanding everything; at the same time, they are anxious that their visit shall be a success and produce a favourable impression on Europe generally. One may trust implicitly in their perfect frankness and in their extreme discretion. Nothing gives them so much pleasure as to arrange for them to see everything without preparation or adornment, to speak openly to them on matters

without hiding from them the drawbacks or defects which their own perspicacity could not fail to perceive, and to draw their attention to any good scheme, even when it has resulted in no appreciable advantage. Any kind of subterfuge or hypocrisy is to be avoided with them, and this particularly because they are suspicious of temperament, which is the result not so much of their natural character but of the surroundings amid which fate has placed them.

"Also, you must not lose any of the short time that they will spend with you in display or in any of the usual complimentary observances. But let them know at once that, having had word from me of their way of thinking, you wish to talk openly and naturally with them, and treat them in a friendly manner as if they were old acquaintances, so as to make good use of the short interval that you can be together, and, on your side, to make yourself known to them and so enjoy the pleasure of their society to the full. You can talk to them about everybody; but as you will be dealing with parents who are tenderly fond of their children and anxious for their welfare, it is most likely that they will be interested in hearing about the education of your daughters, whom you have looked after with what I know to be the liveliest affection.

"They lead a very regular kind of life, and as, moreover, the Grand Duke does not, unfortunately, enjoy very robust health, it is better to avoid too late hours and too repeated fatigue. You must arrange so that they may not have to go out before nine or ten o'clock in the morning, and may be able to retire towards ten or eleven o'clock at night, for they spend

the greater part of their mornings and evenings in writing. They are particularly interested in anything that is old or curious, and in buildings which are at all remarkable either for size or beauty. And that is why they must not be over-wearied by seeing too many things the same day, but have, if possible, the opportunity of examining all that is remarkable and interesting in detail.

"They have given extraordinary attention to public institutions, whether charitable or educational, and as they wish to derive practical benefits from these visits, you must have an account of these prepared for them with all such particulars as they are likely to wish to know about. It is even better to forestall their wishes and to propose that information of this kind should be furnished them beforehand. This can be the better done since institutions of this kind are not meant to be carried on in secrecy; and they are extremely pleased with marks of confidence and attention of this kind, for it shows that you are anxious to help in rendering their travels as productive of useful results and of pleasure as they themselves wish them to be.

"But, above all things, they are curious to become acquainted with those who are noted for their superior enlightenment or who are in any way remarkable; and as their chief desire is to be introduced to a select circle, and to profit by intercourse with its members, you must organise some dinners and evening entertainments which will give them the opportunity of knowing men and women of note in whatsoever way it may be, not only as regards the elegance of their manners, but as regards their intellect and their culture. On these

occasions their Imperial Highnesses can display their own knowledge; the fame of their refinement and culture, becoming thus known to those who are capable of appreciating it, will not fail to be spread abroad and to turn public opinion in their favour."[1]

On the 4th January their Imperial Highnesses left the Austrian capital, and were accompanied, during the first stage of their journey, as far as Wiener-Neustadt, by the Emperor, his brother Maximilian, and the Princess Frederick-Eugène, and Ferdinand of Würtemberg. But their departure from Vienna was not accompanied by favourable auspices. Just then an epidemic of influenza was raging in Vienna, as elsewhere throughout Europe. The Princess Dorothea's daughters were attacked by it just on the eve of starting from Vienna, and the Grand Duchess herself fell ill at Neustadt. The latter was ill for two days, and the journey had to be delayed. The Emperor remained with his guests, and did his utmost to make this enforced rest as pleasant as possible.

Reading and conversation of the most lively description made the time pass quickly during the necessary halts. "The Grand Duke read us extracts from his diary, which was remarkably well written. One day the Grand Duchess, who had been reading the bulletins, left off to relate to us some interesting details about her youth, her way of looking at things, and about her education, telling us that at ten years old, so quickly could she

[1] Arneth, *Joseph II u. Leopold von Toscana*, 1781–1785, Vienna, 1872, vol. i, pp. 333–335.

grasp what was taught her, she knew geometry. Before supper she read aloud to us some passages from Pliny's eulogium of Trajan. Both the choice of these passages, as well as the expression with which she read, spoke alike in favour of her heart and of her intellect."

Having said good-bye at Trieste to the dominions of the liberally-minded sovereign, who represented what the eighteenth century styled enlightened despotism, the Count and Countess du Nord finally reached Venice on January 18, 1782.

The week spent there was taken up with the festivities provided for the august guests by the Most Serene Republic. The Grand Duke and Duchess visited every spot of interest in this romantic city. At Venice they began their study of Italy.

"In passing through Italy," wrote the Grand Duchess, later on, "one experiences a feeling of profound regret at the want of harmony that exists between this beautiful country and its inhabitants. Nature is magnificent, life-giving, and productive—that is, wherever there has been the will to make it so, as, for example, in Lombardy and Tuscany—but sterile, and even hurtful, in the Pontifical States, on account of the carelessness and want of supervision on the part of the Government. The absence of individual security is a continual terror to the inhabitants and a disgrace to the age, which, in many respects enlightened, should fight against everything that engenders disorder and obscurantism. The condition even of the ancient monuments is deplorable. In some places they are

covered with rubbish and are threatened with complete ruin, all owing to the want of care bestowed on them by those in authority and to the greediness of the people."

"I should hardly know Rome again," wrote Maria Féodorovna, Empress at that time, to Laharpe, who, in 1819, was travelling with her son, the Grand Duke Michael, in Italy. "All the grand and beautiful things which I saw there must have undergone a complete change, and have become even more imposing now that they have been restored by the French. It is to be regretted that the present Government is not in a position to continue the work, but this is impossible until it receives assistance from the awakened enthusiasm of the nation . . . but one has to be happy before one can be enthusiastic. . . . I do not finish my sentence, for one cannot enlarge on thoughts of this kind, and, more than that, it is not safe to confide them to the post."

Their Imperial Highnesses stopped at Rome on their way to Naples, to which they were travelling by canal. So eager were they to see all the chief monuments and works of art, that they had no sooner disembarked, it being then the 5th February, than they ordered a post-chaise and drove at once to St. Peter's. They neither of them ever forgot the impression produced on them by this building; nevertheless, the Grand Duchess was even more struck by the Pantheon. "I must confess," she wrote, "that I have an enthusiastic admiration for St. Peter's, which I enter daily, but the Pantheon awakens in me yet stranger feelings of emotion. Its vault, open to the sky, here so blue, affects me

more deeply than the enclosed cupola of St. Peter's."

After resting for a while in their apartments their Royal Highnesses went to the theatre, and the following day they again visited St. Peter's, and, later on, the Capitol, the Colosseum, and other places. They returned a third time to St. Peter's after dinner, having declined an official reception; the Pope, Pius VII, was officiating in person, and they waited, we read in the bulletin of the day, to thank the Sovereign Pontiff for all the facilities he had accorded them in their journey through the Papal States, and especially for the relays of horses which they had found everywhere awaiting them.

Paul Petrovitsh and Maria Féodorovna spent over a fortnight at Naples, where they met with a cordial reception from the King and Queen. They were in time to take part in the Carnival; but at Naples, as elsewhere in Italy, they took less interest in their fellow-creatures than in the natural beauties and the objects of art.

In Naples the Duke met Count Razoumovsky, whose liaison with Queen Caroline was no longer a secret. The Grand Duke was naturally unable to feel well disposed to this former friend who had so cruelly betrayed him.[1] Count Roumyanzev, in his account to Catherine, wrote as follows :—

"Last Wednesday His Majesty left for Persana, which is about seventy miles distant, to organise a boar-hunt in honour of his august guests. The distance, however, the bad weather, and, still more, the short interval of time at their disposal

[1] *Les Razoumovsky*, vol. iii, p. 62.

for this journey, obliged their Imperial Highnesses to refuse the King's invitation. As it was impossible during their brief sojourn at Naples, to fit in many different styles of entertainment, they gave the choice to visiting places of interest. The King, having made great preparations for this boar-hunt, did not give it up; he went alone, but returned home the same day so as to accompany his guests to C. . . . Meanwhile, during his absence, the Queen, as far as she was able in her delicate state of health, did her utmost in lavishing attentions of every possible kind on their Imperial Highnesses. Prince Belmonte, Grand Marshal of the Royal Household, had orders to accompany the Grand Duke and Duchess wherever they went, and to carry out all their commands, so that nothing might hinder them from seeing everything which they wished."

The travellers left Naples on the 23rd February, and, returning to Rome, spent another three weeks there, devoting their time to the detailed study of the antiquities and works of art.

"The kind of life you are leading in Rome," wrote Catherine to them, "is quite in accordance with the aim you had in view in starting on your travels, but it must be very fatiguing to those who are not fond of walking."[1]

The Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany and his wife, Marie Louise, joined their Imperial Highnesses at Rome, and they all journeyed together to Florence, which they reached on the 18th March.

On the 27th March Maria Féodorovna wrote as follows to Catherine:—

[1] Sbornik, vol. ix, p. 131.

"Nothing could be more delightful than our visit here; I cannot tell you how the acquaintance with my future brother-in-law (the Archduke Francis, who is thirteen years of age) has pleased me. He looks nothing more than a child, but his mind and his manner of expressing himself are beyond his years. No expense or care is spared on his education, and it is truly a pleasure to see the way the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess of Tuscany behave to their children. I should say, on the whole, that urbanity was the most prominent feature of their characters. The Grand Duke is very easy of access, and does everything to make his subjects happy. We have visited several institutions in Florence; everything is carried on in the most orderly manner, in contrast to the neighbouring states, where order is unknown."

Having left Florence behind, their Imperial Highnesses continued their journey to Leghorn, where they reviewed the Russian squadron which was on the point of returning home. They then passed through Parma, Milan, and Turin on their way to France, stopping to view all that was of interest, and paying visits to the ruling Princes of the countries they traversed. They were especially pleased with their visit to Turin; there they made the acquaintance, which grew to friendship, of Victor-Amédée III, the Prince of Piedmont, the heir to the Sardinian throne, and of his wife, Marie-Clotilde, the sister of Louis XVI.

Having received notice that the Count and Countess du Nord were nearing the French frontiers, the King and Queen expressed to Bariatinsky their great wish to entertain them in Paris.

The Russian diplomatist, in a report he sent to the Empress, writes: "I know from the Queen herself how delighted she is at the thought of making the acquaintance of the Count and Countess du Nord, and that she is most anxious to give them as sincerely cordial a welcome as possible."

"I would do my very utmost to make their stay here a pleasant one to them," said the Queen.

After a week spent at Lyons, the Count and Countess du Nord bid farewell to their parents, and continuing their journey to Paris, reached the latter place on the 18th May. They alighted at Prince Bariatinsky's house, preserving the strictest incognito, having declined the formal entry which had been proposed by the French Court. At Fontainebleau, the last halt before reaching Paris, Madame d'Oberkirch, who had been her friend as a child, came to meet the Grand Duchess. They were mutually overjoyed at seeing each other again, and from this moment till the Grand Duchess again entered Russian territory, Madame d'Oberkirch accompanied the latter in her travels. She has left us a detailed account of these journeys. "When we got to Paris," she writes, "I went with their Imperial Highnesses to their residence, where I found my adorable Princess Dorothea, just as I had known her at Montbéliard, simple, good, and confiding."[1]

The Grand Duchess begged the Grand Duke, out of his love for her, to love the companion of her childhood; the Grand Duke lifted Madame d'Oberkirch's hand and kissed it. Maria Féodorovna opened her heart to her dear Lane (the pet

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, i, p. 184.

name which the Grand Duchess gave to Madame d'Oberkirch), and told her how she suffered at being so far away from her children. "Although I am continually receiving detailed accounts of my dear children, I suffer very much at this prolonged separation. My heart is divided into many parts; it is a sad necessity attendant upon us Princesses that we can never have around us at one time all those whom we love."[1]

The Count and Countess du Nord rested during the first day of their sojourn in Paris. The people came flocking at all hours round the Russian Legation, filling the air with their huzzas. At last the Grand Duke could stand it no longer, and on May 19th slipped away quietly without escort to Versailles to watch the procession of the Knights of the Holy Ghost. He was much struck by the magnificence of the castle, although accustomed to the splendour of Catherine II's Court. On May 20th he and the Grand Duchess were presented to the King. The Queen kept her word, and every imaginable entertainment, accompanied by the display and elegance peculiar to that epoch, was devised in honour of the Imperial guests. Other members of the royal family vied with the King and Queen in hospitality, and friendships were formed between several members of the Bourbon house and the Grand Duke and Duchess.

Paul Petrovitsh had a lively sympathy for France and its royal house. Going in one day to see the infant Dauphin, "Be so kind, Madame," he said to the lady in attendance, "as to tell him of this visit I have paid him, and let him know that I

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, i, p. 185.

swear friendship to him from his infancy; and may it serve to unite our two countries." [1]

Louis XVI, encouraged by the plain unassuming appearance of Paul, was soon at ease with his guest, and conversed openly and cheerfully with him. The Countess du Nord, however, was somewhat stiff—in her German fashion—and made the Queen rather nervous. Before the latter went in to dine with her guests she asked for a glass of water, and confessed that "She had now experienced how much more difficult it was to play the part of a Queen in the presence of other sovereigns, or of Princes born to become so, than before courtiers." [2]

Marie Antoinette, anxious to afford as much pleasure as possible to Maria Féodorovna, put aside the rules of etiquette, and invited all the Russian ladies who happened to be in Paris—among them Madame d'Oberkirch—to her private evenings. "Madame," said the Queen to the Countess du Nord, "it would have been a strange oversight in me to have separated you from your friend at the very moment that I was seeking to surround you with everything that could give you pleasure." [3]

Their Imperial Highnesses, however, still kept in view the more educational purpose of their travels. Paris at this time was the intellectual centre of Europe, and, having been kept in touch with the literary movement of the day by their correspondents, Laharpe and Blaise de Saint-Maure, they were prepared to enter thoroughly into many ques-

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, i, p. 197.

[2] "Memoirs of Marie Antoinette," ed. Mme. de Campan, 1904, vol. i, p. 278.

[3] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, i, p. 201.

tions of interest. Their sympathies were not entirely with the Encyclopædists, to whose doctrines they thought much of the immorality of society was owing. They suffered a certain disillusionment as regards some of the works of art.

"One can see that you have been in Italy," writes Catherine II; "you are not impressed with the big bell of Notre-Dame, you do not admire the pictures of the French school; and then, my dear daughter-in-law laughs at French music—another heresy of the Italians, and strengthened by the recent visit to their country. How is it that in Paris, where the people are so passionately fond of the theatre, there are no better performances than ours? But I think I can guess at the cause: it is the bad taste of the public that is at the bottom of it; the public prefers bad pieces to good; instead of fine tragedies being performed, only worthless ones are put upon the stage; and the comedies, instead of making one laugh, cause one rather to weep, for nothing is in its right place."[1]

Paul and his wife were a great success in France. Everybody raved about them, and everything they said or did was reported and met with appreciative admiration. The Grand Duke's enthusiasm for the good King Henry won the hearts of the Parisians. Being present one day at a representation of *La Chasse du roi Henri*, the Grand Duke was moved to tears, and asked for the piece to be performed again. An ovation, which had been prepared for the Grand Duke and Duchess, and which lasted through the whole performance, took place on the 26th May at the Comédie

[1] Sbornik, vol. ix, p. 156.

Française; their Highnesses were accompanied home at its close by the cheers of the multitude.

"On June 14th," wrote Prince Bariatinsky, "their Imperial Highnesses went to the opera at Versailles; the Queen had preceded them. On their arrival they were met by Her Majesty's Equerry, who conducted them to the royal box. They no sooner appeared than the whole house rose, cheering loudly."

"His Imperial Highness," writes Madame d'Oberkirch, "has great tact and perfect self-command; he never shows himself offended by the most disagreeable truth, but conducts himself in a manner that adds additional lustre to his character. One day he heard a person near him in the crowd say that he was very ugly, which, however, is not the case; he turned to the Russian Ambassador and said: 'Though the French may be very polite, it cannot be denied that they are also very candid.'"[1]

Their Imperial Highnesses being anxious to continue their travels the King and Queen advised them to choose the route through Choisy, whither they wished to accompany them before saying good-bye. Speaking to Bariatinsky about their departure, the King said: "I cannot deprive myself of the pleasure of seeing them before they leave. I confess I am delighted at having made their acquaintance. I beg you to make known my feelings to Her Majesty the Empress, and to assure her of my affection; tell her also that I look upon her permission to the Grand Duke to visit France as a true mark of friendship. I shall recall with

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch*, i, p. 306.

genuine pleasure the moments that I have spent with their Imperial Highnesses."

One day the King asked the Grand Duke if it was true that there was not a single person of his suite in whom he could place entire confidence. Paul Petrovitsh, who was irritated at the thought of Kourakin's recall, which he was daily expecting, answered: "I should have been sorry even for a poodle that had grown attached to me, for my mother would certainly have had it thrown in the Seine before we left Paris." [1]

The Count and Countess du Nord left Paris well pleased with the reception they had been given, but troubled with the misgiving of a storm brooding in Russia. They had received a letter from the Empress in the middle of May telling them that letters between the aide-de-camp Bibikov and Prince Kourakin, one of their suite, had been seized, and that they contained insulting remarks about Prince Potemkin and even about Her Majesty. The Grand Duke's feelings may be imagined; his affection for Kourakin was well known, and he was trembling for the fate of the latter, who had apparently made a party with Bibikov.[2]

Their Imperial Highnesses passed on now to the Austrian Netherlands, travelling by Brest and Lille, where they were met on the frontier by the Emperor's sister, Marie-Christine, and her husband, the Stadtholder, Prince Albert of Saxe-Teschen. A special meeting was held by the Academy of Science at Brussels in their honour, the Grand

[1] Madame de Campan, *Mémoires*, tom. i, p. 241.
[2] Sbornik, vol. ix, pp. 157–159.

Duchess choosing from among the addresses that were presented one on the progress of science to be read aloud.

During supper one evening in Brussels, after the theatre, the conversation turned upon dreams, presentiments, &c., and everybody told some mysterious tale. The Grand Duke was silent. The Prince de Ligne, addressing His Imperial Highness, asked: "And you, Monseigneur, have you nothing to tell us? Is Russia without the marvellous? Have devils and sorcerers failed to cast their spells around you?"

"Kourakin knows," replied the Grand Duke, "that I could tell a strange tale, and, if you promise me secrecy, I shall relate it to you."

And Paul continued as follows:—

"I happened one evening," so his tale runs, "or, more correctly, one night, to be walking with Kourakin in the streets of St. Petersburg. We were attended by two grooms. We had passed the evening at home, chatting and smoking, and we thought it would refresh us to go out incognito and have a turn in the moonlight. It was not cold at all, for we had reached the most beautiful period of spring. Our conversation turned neither on religion nor on any other serious subject; on the contrary, we had been joking, Kourakin making continual remarks of a facetious character on the people whom we met. One of the grooms was a few paces ahead of me, the other was behind Kourakin. The light from the moon was so brilliant that we might have read by it; the shadows were proportionately dark. Suddenly, at a turn in the street, I caught sight of a tall figure standing in

the gateway of a house; it was that of an exceedingly thin man, his cloak wrapped round him in Spanish style; his eyes were partly hidden by a military cap. He appeared to be waiting for some one. I had no sooner reached the gateway than he came to my left side, and began walking with me, without speaking a word. I was still unable to distinguish his features.

"It struck me that his feet, as they fell on the pavement, made a curious sound; it was like stones knocking together. I was very much astonished, and my surprise turned to stupefaction as I felt an icy coldness creeping towards me from my unknown companion. I shuddered, and said to Kourakin:—

"'We have chanced upon a strange companion.'

"'To whom do you refer?' asked Kourakin.

"'Why, to the figure walking beside me; the noise he makes as he walks along must surely be sufficient alone to make any one aware of his presence.' Kourakin stared at me, and assured me that there was no one near me. 'What? Do you mean that you cannot see the man to my left, walking between me and the house?'

"'You are walking so close to the wall that it would be physically impossible for any living person to squeeze himself into the space between it and you.'

"I put out my arm and it touched the wall. Nevertheless, the stranger was still there, keeping step with me, while the noise of his feet on the pavement was like the blows of a hammer. I looked at him more closely, and, all at once, beneath

the brim of his cap, I saw a pair of glittering eyes, unlike any I had ever seen before or have seen since. These eyes fixed themselves upon me and seemed to hold me in a spell.

"'My God!' I said to Kourakin; 'I cannot explain to you how I feel; there is something about it I cannot understand.'

"I was trembling from head to foot, not with fear, but with cold, which seemed to penetrate my every limb, and my blood was freezing in my veins. Suddenly I heard the mysterious figure, in a low, sad voice, pronounce the word, 'Paul!'

"Some unseen power seemed to have me in its grasp, and I replied mechanically, 'What do you want?'

"'Paul!' said the figure again; there was a note of sympathy in the voice, which, if possible, was sadder than before.

"I felt incapable of speaking a word. Again, a third time, the voice called me; the figure stood still, and I was forced, involuntarily, to do the same. 'Paul! poor Paul! poor Prince!'

"'Do you hear that?' I asked Kourakin, who had also stopped.

"'I hear nothing, absolutely nothing.'"

"Again I thought I heard the voice. Then I made a desperate effort, and asked the unknown figure his name and what he wanted.

"'Who am I, poor Paul? I am one who takes a lively interest in your fate, and who is anxious that you should not become too much attached to the things of this earth, on which you have not long to remain. Be just and upright and your end will be a peaceful one. Fear the remorse of

conscience; there is no worse punishment for an upright soul.'"

"He then went on walking, still keeping his piercing eyes fixed on me. And, as some unseen force had obliged me to stand still, so now I walked on against my will. He spoke no more, and I had no desire to converse with him. I followed him, feeling that he was guiding my footsteps. This went on for an hour. I have not the slightest idea in what direction we were walking.

"At last we reached a square between the Neva bridge and the Senate House. He went straight to a spot where there were works in preparation for the erection of a statue to Peter the Great. I, of course, followed him. Suddenly he paused. 'Good-bye, Paul,' he said; 'you will see me again here, and elsewhere as well.'

"At that moment his cap was lifted, as if of its own accord, and I saw the eagle-like glance, the sun-burnt forehead, and the cold smile of my grandfather, Peter the Great.

"When I recovered from my surprise and terror, the vision had disappeared." [1]

While in Holland the Grand Duke and Duchess visited Saardam, and the house in which Peter the Great had lived as a simple carpenter, as well as the University of Leyden. Here Paul addressed the assembled professors, and assured them that many young Russians owed to their teaching the ability they now possessed of serving their country. They proceeded to Spa and Frankfort, where they were visited by several Princes, all more or less

[1] *Mémoires de Madame d'Oberkirch,* vol. i, pp. 356–362, and Russian Archives, p. 517. 1869.

closely related to them. Among them was Prince Louis of Darmstadt, who had formerly been engaged to the Grand Duchess.

"They have just brought me your last letters," writes Catherine to her children, "enumerating in detail all the illustrious and agreeable acquaintances which you have made in Frankfort. The discreet way in which you both suited your courtesies to the respective ranks of the Princes leaves me in no doubt as to their position. Do you not find that it would be difficult to remember their names unless the services they had rendered came to your help in recalling them? I seem, even from here, to see how vexed and sorry my dear daughter is about not having noticed her whilom *fiancé*."[1]

The Grand Duchess, however, was longing in her heart to get to Etupe, which she did not reach before August 1st. Her numerous family relations were all at Montbéliard to greet her.

At the beginning of September the Grand Duke and Duchess left Etupe for Switzerland. Soon after they had started Prince Frederick and his wife, Princess Augusta, set out for St. Petersburg.

The Grand Duke and Duchess again joined their parents, as well as Prince Ferdinand and Princess Elizabeth, at Strasburg, and together they began their return journey to Russia, passing through Baden, where they made the acquaintance of the Margrave, and through Stuttgart, where Duke Charles received them with open arms, and treated them to such sumptuous entertainments as suited his taste for luxury. His favourite, Countess of Hohenstein, did the honours of the house.

[1] Sbornik, vol. ix, p. 174.

Besides the family, many Princes had repaired to Stuttgart in order to be present at the festivities.

The Grand Duke and Duchess, tired with their prolonged travels, were not sorry to see them drawing to a close. The Duke exerted himself to the utmost to entertain his niece in as magnificent a style as possible, but she was too much affected by the thought of the coming parting with her family to enjoy them.

"In the midst of this whirlwind of festivities," wrote the Grand Duchess to the Empress, "my sister and I cannot but be sad, troubled as we are at the prospect of having so shortly to bid farewell to each other. But, again, the anticipation of being ere long at your feet, I venture to say in your arms, makes me forget my sorrow, and I can think of nothing but of the happiness which is nowhere mine but in Russia, that blessed country into which you were willing to welcome me as a daughter, and where I have known the joys of maternity. I am counting the days and hours which still separate me from you, and each of them sees me more impatient than the last. May the minutes which hold me back from that happy moment pass like the wind. I no longer want to write to you about anything but the delight of seeing you again. You will see that day what our affection is for you, and will confess to yourself that no more devoted children have ever existed."

On her side, also, the Empress frequently made plain her great wish to see her children back in Russia.

The Tsarevitsh and his wife returned from their

travels on the 1st December 1782. Immediately upon their arrival they had an interview, which only lasted a few minutes, quite alone with the Empress. That same day the Empress conferred on her son the Order of Saint Vladimir, which she had instituted during his absence. Their Imperial Highnesses took up their residence at the Kamenny-Ostrov Palace, and the following day held a reception. According to a report by the English Minister, the Grand Duke and Duchess were as dissatisfied with the reception they had met with as the Empress was little pleased at their return. This mutual discontent was likely to bring about disagreeable scenes.

If the return of their Highnesses did not seem to disperse the clouds on the family horizon, it was, however, generally thought that the tour through Europe had been of great advantage to the Grand Duke.

Joseph II, when sending word to the Empress of the departure of his guests, ended his letter with the following words: "Their travels will, I am sure, have been of great benefit to their Imperial Highnesses; I think I am not mistaken in promising your Majesty that they will return much more amiably disposed, and will have got rid of their mistrust, of their everlasting suspicions, and their pre-occupation with trifles—that is to say, as far as long-established habit, and, above all, the influence of those about them, leave them free to do so, for their friends alone are responsible for these faults, which are not natural to them. It seems to me that a better choice as regards their immediate associates and the removal of pernicious acquaintances is an

absolute necessity in order to secure the peace and quiet on which depends the happiness of three persons who are dear to me."[1]

As for the Grand Duke he felt that, personally, he had derived benefit from his travels. "It is not in the ordinary routine of life," he wrote to Platon, "that the qualities of the soul—more especially our valour of heart—can make themselves known, but in those hours of trial when they are put to the proof and one is enabled to appreciate what they are worth. If my travels have taught me anything, it is to seek for comfort in patience, which includes all those essential things without which the soul cannot exist."[2]

The joy of the Grand Duchess on seeing her children again was indescribable. "I found my children so grown," she said, "that I should certainly not have known them again, if the impulse of my heart had not told me it was they. You can picture my happiness, which grows greater every day as I see what progress they have made, thanks to the Empress, who has cared for them like the tenderest of mothers."[3]

The Grand Duke was no sooner back in St. Petersburg than he was forced to separate from his friend Prince Kourakin, who had been his companion throughout his travels.

The latter had, while away, received letters from the Empress's aide-de-camp, Bibikov, giving him the latest news from St. Petersburg, and finding fault with the conduct of Prince Potemkin.

[1] Arneth, "Joseph II and Katherina II," p. 162.
[2] Russian Archives, 1887, vol. ii, p. 28.
[3] Sbornik, vol. xx.

One of these letters had been seized and submitted to Her Majesty, who, on the 6th May 1782, wrote as follows to her son and daughter-in-law, who were still abroad :—

"Within the last few days I have given orders for the arrest of my aide-de-camp, Bibikov, on account of his impertinences. Such intemperate language as he uses is a menace to any kind of discipline or loyalty. You can learn all the details of this affair to which I allude if you read the letter he wrote to Prince Kourakin. I cannot but feel that he is a most ungrateful liar, and, what is more, a man entirely ignorant of all matters connected with military regulations and discipline, although these are the real foundations of the army. I am sure that you will feel as much contempt for his conduct as the wretch deserves ; to convince yourself of the truth of what I say, you need only to read his letter, which is full of calumnies and written in terms of unparalleled insolence."[1]

In a later letter she adds : "I ought to tell you, referring to this affair of Bibikov, that the latter, on whom and on whose family I have showered so many favours, has proved himself an ungrateful traitor ; he is full of ill-feeling towards your mother. Being convicted of lying and ingratitude, he has done the only thing left him to do—repented. He has begged for forgiveness, and throughout the affair has shown no more sense or strength of character than a child who has deserved whipping. I have, in accordance with my principles, dragged this young man up by the roots of his hair from the depths into which he had fallen. I have not the

[1] Sbornik, vol. ix, p. 145.

tragic instinct of my predecessors. I tell you all this, my dear children, that you may profit by my words and be guided by them now and in the future."[1]

Kourakin, on his return to St. Petersburg, was ordered to retire to his estate in Saratov. Later on, Paul obtained permission to receive him once every two years in one of his suburban residences. Bibikov was tried and banished to Astrakhan. These events embittered the first days of Paul's return to Russia.

Another ordinance of the Empress was aimed more directly at the Grand Duchess. A notice was sent round to all the ladies of the Court with orders forbidding the use of embroidery on their dresses and regulating the breadth of other trimmings; head-dresses were not to be above a certain height, and only on festive occasions or at official receptions was permission given for the wearing of silk, with embroidery and trimmings to taste, subject, however, to the regulation mentioned above. The wives of gentlemen about the Court were to wear dresses of the same colour. The ukase further stated that these orders were given in view of preserving the fortunes of the nobility and of leaving their money free to be spent for better purposes.[2] The real aim of this prescription was to annoy the Grand Duchess. While in Paris she had gone to the famous Court dressmaker of that period, Mademoiselle Bertin, and she continued to employ her and other fashionable Parisian tradespeople. She had also brought

[1] Sbornik, vol. ix, pp. 157–159.
[2] Harris, *l.c.*, vol. ii, p. 8.

back with her two hundred boxes filled with gauzes, ribbons, and other knick-knacks of feminine toilette, as well as head-dresses of all the newest designs.[1]

The Empress could have found no more pettily cruel way of attacking the Grand Duchess than by these prohibitions regarding dress.

[1] Harris, *l.c.*, vol. ii, p. 9.

CHAPTER VII

THE SWEDISH CAMPAIGN

The death of Panin—Paul grows sullen—Catherine's oration over the grave of Panin—The education of the Princes Alexander and Constantine—Laharpe—The Grand Duke's desire to join the army—The Empress makes him a present of the estate of Gatshina—Paul's isolation—His amusements—Maria Féodorovna and Mamonov, Catherine's favourite—The jealousy of an old woman—Catherine's journey to Tauris—Paul's views on the Russian military forces—His departure for the army—His pathetic letter to his wife.

SINCE their return from abroad, the report had been persistently and universally circulated that the Empress intended to put aside the Grand Duke and to settle the succession to the throne upon her eldest grandson; she was so prejudiced against her children that nothing they did could please her, though their conduct was in every way meritorious. Her son, she said, had grown sullen and irritable; the new friends they had made abroad had spoilt him and the Grand Duchess, and they could not fall back into their right places again. "In short," writes Sir James Harris, "the Empress having in her own mind previously resolved to be displeased, it is not in the power of their Highnesses to please her." [1]

The Grand Duke found his position the more difficult as he no longer had Panin to advise him. The Count had been in bad health since 1782.

[1] Harris, *l.c.*, vol. ii, pp. 18–19.

The Grand Duke and Duchess called upon him the day after their return, and then for a whole month not only never went near his house, but did not even send to ask after him. Panin and his whole family were deeply hurt at this treatment. It was generally reported that the Grand Duchess had, while with her mother, frequently spoken of Panin, and that the Princess of Würtemberg, probably with a view to pleasing the Empress, had urged her son-in-law to detach himself from Panin. Shortly before Panin's death the Grand Duke went again to see his old tutor, and an explanation took place between them. The Count died on April 11, 1783. The Grand Duke writes as follows on the severe loss he had sustained :—

"We have just lost Count Panin. You will understand all that I am feeling. We were talking together about him two days before he died, and our conversation so upset us that we made up our minds to go and see him. He was brighter and livelier than I have known him for the last three years. I hear that he was in the same cheerful disposition the following day, and that he did not wish to go to sleep. Feeling very lively myself as I was playing cards at home, I remarked to those who were with me that I had noticed I always felt like this when trouble was coming upon me, and I asked them to remember my words. The first thing I heard on awaking on Friday morning was that the Count was worse. We hurried over our dressing, but he was already unconscious when we reached him. When going to bed at four o'clock he had complained of nausea, and almost immediately after became insensible.

He continued, however, to breathe for another two hours; no remedy was of any avail to restore him. He is followed to the grave with the regrets of all who knew him. Even his enemies are silent, ashamed to stand apart in the midst of the general mourning. On the day of his funeral, at which I was present, I met people whom I had never seen in his house before in my life." [1]

Two weeks after Panin's death his rival, Prince Gregory Orlov, died in a fit of apoplexy.

Over the newly-made grave of these, her two supporters during her reign, Catherine pronounced the following singular oration :—

"Many years of my life have been passed with these two councillors of mine, each of whom had opinions differing from those of his colleague, and yet everything went on very well. At times it was necessary to act as Alexander did with the Gordian knot : my two friends became immediately reconciled. The temerity of the one was tempered by the extreme prudence of the other; I placed myself between the two opposed forces, and our three temperaments combined succeeded in carrying through matters of the highest importance with wonderful facility. You will ask me what is to be done now? And I shall make answer: We must manage as best we can. There is no country that is unable to furnish the men necessary for the administration of its affairs. As everything in this base world is brought about by the efforts of men, I have no doubt that ours will be equal to the occasion and fitted to serve our ends." [2]

[1] Shilder, *l.c.*, p. 182, quoted from P. Svypyin.
[2] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 274. Catherine's letter to Grimm.

But Paul had lost more than a guide and adviser, he had lost a man whom he looked upon as his most faithful and devoted friend.

The two first children of Paul and the Grand Duchess were their sons, Alexander and Constantine; three daughters, Alexandrina, Helena, and Marie, were born respectively in 1783, 1784, and 1786.

Alexander and Constantine were carried to the grandmother the instant they were born, the Empress undertaking the sole care of their upbringing. Their parents were completely separated from them. Madame Sophie de Benckendorff was charged with the care of the two young Princes, under the immediate and daily supervision of their grandmother.[1] When Alexander was six years old and Constantine scarcely four, Madame de Benckendorff died, and the Empress chose this opportunity for taking the children away from female governance. Their education was now entrusted to Soltykov. The Grand Duke was annoyed at having the grand-master of his household taken away, and the more so that Moussin-Poushkin, who was appointed to fill the vacant office, had, it was said, been recommended by Potemkin, and was, moreover, an entire stranger to Paul.

"Happening to be with Her Majesty about two days previous to Panin's death," wrote Paul to Soltykov, "she began praising you in high terms, and confided to me her intention of transferring you to the children's household. You will have no difficulty in guessing what I replied to this. Then she went on to speak of who was to take your place with

[1] Archives Prince Voronzov, vol. xx, p. 242.

me. No words can express my surprise when she mentioned Count Valentin : I was certainly unprepared for that. Seeing my surprise, she asked the reason of it ; I answered that I had no acquaintance at all with this proposed candidate, but that I had heard him spoken of as an upright man. I confess that it is a great trouble to me to have to part with you. I am told, as a consolation, that it is not a complete separation, as you will still remain in regular correspondence with me. This does not alter the fact, however, that you are going to leave me. Four days later, Moussin-Poushkin waited upon me with a note from the Empress, to which I replied without delay that I accepted everything at her hands, knowing that she only desired my welfare ; but I added that I hoped she would not fail to make you acquainted with this change, as otherwise you would have good reason to feel aggrieved. I was reassured on this point, being told that a letter would be sent you and that Poushkin was only nominated *ad interim.* He has undertaken the direction of the household and is giving us satisfaction. God alone knows what is reserved for us in the future. My friendship for you obliges me to write as I do, and let me tell you that this affair has only confirmed my affection for you. These last two days have been very melancholy ones for me, and, shall I own it, have not passed without tears. I am sorry for myself."

As regards the personal relationship between Soltykov and the Grand Duke, it is asserted that the former served as an intermediary when unpleasantness arose between the Empress and her son. He was admirably suited by his sober-mindedness

and coolness of temperament for the carrying out of these delicate duties.

Soltykov was seconded in the education of the young Princes by the assistance of Protassov—a good-hearted, narrow-minded man of no character—for Alexander, and of Sacken for Constantine. Laharpe, however, had the larger share in their education. He arrived in Russia in 1783, having been recommended to Catherine by her correspondent Grimm.[1] Further, it may be added, Catherine herself kept daily watch over the studies and behaviour of her grandchildren. In one of her letters to Grimm she tells him of the progress made by the elder of these, and adds: "He will grow up a person of very exceptional character, provided that his parents do not interfere and interrupt its development."

In relieving her son of the care of the education of his own children, Catherine had no wish to allow him more leisure for the affairs of State. He had been assiduously kept apart from these, and had only been allowed to attend the reading of despatches. Furthermore, she never even conversed with him on matters connected with the Government. On May 23rd, 1783, Catherine happened to say something to him about the occupation of the Crimea and of Polish affairs. The Grand Duke's surprise was such that he immediately wrote on his tablets: "This mark of confidence is the more precious to me that it is the first of the kind and the most surprising."[2]

Being, therefore, perfectly at liberty, the Grand

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 320.

[2] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1873, vol. viii, pp. 652–653.

Duke Paul decided in 1783 to join the army in the field. Difficulties in connection with the annexation of the Crimea had arisen with Turkey, and it was feared that hostilities would recommence. Affairs, however, were amicably settled, and the Grand Duke's intention was therefore frustrated. He now turned the whole of his attention to the arrangement of his private affairs. He found an intelligent assistant in his wife.

In 1783, on the occasion of the birth of his daughter Alexandrina, Catherine made Paul a present of the estate of Gatshina, which she had bought from Orlov's heirs. Paul at once retired to this, his new estate, and, far from the brilliant Court of his mother, devoted his time and energy to the establishment of his own small Court and to a Russia of his own liking. It was the Russia of Gatshina which, on his accession, was to become the model for the vast Empire. The gulf between the Court of the Grand Duke at Gatshina and that of his mother at St. Petersburg widened more and more. It was in Gatshina that Paul passed the last thirteen years of his mother's reign, years which had an immense influence upon his character, and hence proved so momentous for the future of the Empire. Here he brooded over the past, the present, and the future, awaiting in feverish expectation the moment of his accession, and trembling lest this moment should never come. It was here that he began to develop his passion for military parade, drilling the soldiers of his guards, and whilst Potemkin was introducing changes in the army and doing away with Prussian uniforms, Paul was endeavouring to make his regiments at Gatshina resemble in every possible way

those in the service of Frederick. This was a genuine stroke of policy. Paul, fearing—and rightly so—that his mother would exclude him from the succession, had decided to impress Russia with the fact that he was the legitimate and rightful heir, being the son of Peter III. He thus ardently adopted the policy and imitated the eccentricities and favourite pursuits of Peter III, and as the latter had been such a staunch admirer of everything Prussian and of the Prussian "King, his master," and had passed his time—when not drinking—in military drill, Paul thought it wise to manifest similar inclinations.

During the first years of their residence at Gatshina, the Grand Duke and Duchess gave frequent entertainments, and the guests invited often stayed for several days in enjoyment of the Grand Duke's kindly hospitality. No one who was invited to these evenings was ever allowed to feel ill at ease, for the host and hostess were always thoughtful and agreeable. Nevertheless, many people avoided these invitations.

One of the favourite amusements of the Russian aristocracy of the eighteenth century was the theatre. Catherine took a great interest in her theatre at the Hermitage, for which she wrote some pieces herself. Theatrical performances were also frequently given at the lesser Court, with the sole difference that they were mostly given by amateurs, which made them even more attractive, and gave an additional liveliness to the gatherings at Gatshina. The chief organiser of these last-named performances was Count Gregory Ivanovitsh Tshernitshev.

Besides theatrical entertainments a great deal of

reading was indulged in at Gatshina. The literary correspondents of the Grand Duke were Laharpe, and, later on, Blaise de Saint-Maure. These two writers sent him all the new books which were published in France. Ere long literature became one of the chief interests at the youthful Court. The Empress, speaking of her daughter-in-law, remarked: "She reads a great deal; it is very possible that she does not understand all that she reads." The Grand Duchess had a well-developed taste for the arts; she was very fond of music, drew wonderfully well, made engravings on precious stones under the direction of Leberecht, and learnt to carve and turn ivory. Many works of art executed by her are preserved to testify to the talent which she unquestionably possessed, and her name is not the last to be mentioned in enumerating Russian artists. The accomplishments, however, of the Grand Duchess made Catherine dislike her. The great Empress was woman enough—in spite of her masculine mind—not to be above petty jealousy.

Maria Féodorovna had often to suffer from such accesses of jealousy on the part of the aged Empress. Thus, after the dismissal of Yermolov, Mamonov was appointed favourite. This gentleman, who afterwards asked his sovereign's permission to discharge him from his duties and to allow him to marry Princess Sherbatov, was evidently not insensible to the charms of Maria Féodorovna and he preferred her conversation to that of his Imperial mistress of sixty. But Catherine not only loved Mamonov, she also hated her daughter-in-law, and was jealous.

Thus it happened that, towards the close of the year 1786, Mamonov offered the Empress a pair of earrings, for which he had given thirty thousand roubles; he presented them to her as she was conversing with her son and his wife. The Empress, taking the earrings from Mamonov, showed them to the Grand Duchess, and asked her: "How do you like them, Madam?"

The Grand Duchess expressing her admiration of them, the Empress immediately made them a present to her. The Grand Duchess was delighted and thanked Her Majesty effusively for them; then, taking out the earrings she was wearing, she put in the new ones. This was on a Sunday before dinner. After dinner the Grand Duchess gave orders that Mamonov was to be invited for the following day. The latter asked Catherine for permission to accept this invitation, but the Empress was exceedingly displeased at this and exclaimed:—

"What, *you* go to the Grand Duchess's apartments, and for what purpose? On no account shall you accept. I do not know how the Grand Duchess dared to invite you!"

Whereupon the Empress sent for Count Moussin-Poushkin, and ordered him to go at once to the Grand Duchess and ask her how she dared invite Alexander Matveyevitsh; and then she went on exclaiming: "Mamonov invited to the Grand Duchess's apartments! and why? for what purpose? See that this never happens again!"

The Grand Duchess was so upset by this fuss that she burst into tears and became quite ill. The Grand Duke sent Mamonov a very beautiful snuff-

box, inlaid with diamonds, which the favourite showed to the Empress. Her Majesty, after looking at the present, told Mamonov that he might go and thank the Grand Duke, but only on condition that Count Moussin-Poushkin went with him; he was on no account to go alone. The Grand Duke, however, refused to receive him.

On another occasion, on the Feast of St. Catherine, 1788, the Empress, contrary to her usual custom, appeared in bad spirits when she came from her apartments to greet the people who were awaiting her; it appears that she had surprised Count Mamonov talking with her daughter-in-law in her dressing-room. Catherine's face was quite distorted with jealousy and displeasure, but, happily, this incident passed off without any disastrous results.

Paul and Maria Féodorovna were also very much troubled in December of 1786, at the conjugal differences between Prince Frederick and his wife. From this date until New Year's Day 1787 they did not leave their apartments, and no one was admitted to see them except such intimate friends as Count Moussin-Poushkin and Madame de Benckendorff.

The Empress, meanwhile, was making preparations for her grand and famous journey to the Tauris. A numerous suite was to accompany her, and Catherine also decided to take her two grandsons with her. Their tutor, Soltykov, began to get everything ready for their departure, and these preparations were the first indications that Paul and Maria Féodorovna received of their children's intended journey. Catherine had said nothing to them on the matter.

Paul Petrovitsh and his wife addressed the Empress by letter, begging her to leave the children behind. They besought her to consider the fatigue for them of such a long journey in winter; they had not yet got over all their childish maladies, and they further reminded her that their studies would suffer greatly from the interruptions and distractions of travelling. But the Empress was deaf to their entreaties.

Then Paul and Maria Féodorovna asked for permission to go with their children, even if only as far as Kiev. To this request Catherine not only replied by an ungracious refusal, but, at the same time, expressed her displeasure with them. Only one other alternative was left to the parents; painful as the necessity was to the heir to the throne, he and his wife felt that the only way to influence the Empress was to get the all-powerful Prince Potemkin to intercede for them. Their parental love overcame all other feelings and they did not hesitate to employ this means of help. Unfortunately their letter, dated December 27, was delayed. Prince Potemkin, who was then at Simféropol, answered, on the 18th January 1787, that he would do his best when they got to Kiev to turn the Empress from her purpose, but that he must proceed with caution, so as not to bring down her resentment on the Tsarevitsh.

But meanwhile the young Grand Dukes fell ill, and Catherine was obliged to leave them. On the 17th January 1787, the eve of her departure, Catherine appeared unusually silent and thoughtful; she

[1] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1873, vol. viii, p. 666, and Shilder, *l.c.*, pp 556–559.

was unhappy at not being able to take her grandsons with her.

In the middle of April the Tsarevitsh with his wife, accompanied by their sons and their two eldest daughters, removed to Tsarskoé. Their daughter Marie was left for a while at St. Petersburg under the care of the governess and of the Court physician, so as to keep her apart from her sisters who had just been inoculated with small-pox. For this it had been necessary to obtain the consent of the Empress, who was not favourably inclined towards this precautionary measure. She considered that the Grand Duke and Duchess had acted unwisely in allowing the inoculation of their children to take place in the Grand Marshal's house at Tsarskoé, seeing that it had only been built the previous year, and that the walls could not, therefore, be yet thoroughly dry, and she further thought they might just as well have lodged the younger girl outside the town. The Empress equally disapproved of receiving letters from her grand-daughters which had been dictated to them by their mother. "Full of nothing but the Grand Duchess's tittle-tattle," she remarked, concerning them, to Khrapovitsky, her Secretary of State; "she makes them write things which they do not understand, and lately they have begun to complain of my not answering them. What have I got to talk about with little children of that age?"

The Empress, however, did not forget the journey she proposed for her grandsons. They started to join her on the 2nd June, and, after a month's travel, met her at Kolomna, and they then proceeded together to Moscow. Their parents,

delighted at having been allowed to have their sons with them for nearly six months, made no demur to this separation.

Catherine II returned to Tsarskoé on the 22nd July 1787. Her son and daughter-in-law were awaiting her on the steps of the castle, the high dignitaries of the Court being also assembled for her reception.

On her return from travelling through the Tauris, Catherine set herself again to study the question concerning the succession to the throne.

"On the 30th August 1787," writes Khrapovitsky in his "Diary," "in presence of the Empress, I read the introduction to the Maritime Code. It was sought to prove therefrom the inconvenience of the present arrangement regarding the succession, due to the partition of the inheritance left by Vladimir.

"On the 31st August the Empress condescended to read me a passage on the Right of the Sovereign's Will, in which, in the course of Catherine I's Manifesto, it is stated that the cause of the unhappy fate which befell Alexis Petrovitsh was the erroneous opinion then held that the Crown must descend to the eldest son.

"On the 6th September I was asked to produce the ukases on the nomination of the different heirs who had been called to the throne. The explanations to which these gave rise have occasioned a certain discontent in high places." [1]

In the meantime the Tsarevitsh, in the peaceful retirement of his life at Gatshina or Pavlovsk, was continually thinking over the condition of affairs in

[1] Khrapovitsky, "Diary, 1782–1793," published 1874, pp. 46, 47.

Russia, and considering what measures would be best suited to secure its prosperity. Paul's travels through Europe had enlarged the scope of his mind, and his relations with statesmen, such as the two Counts Panin, Counts Tshernitshev and Roumyanzev, and with Prince Repnin, had fitted him to profit by the knowledge and experience of the men of various types whom he numbered among his acquaintances.

The relations between Russia and Turkey having become more and more complicated, the second war between the two countries finally broke out in September 1787. The Grand Duke immediately asked for permission to join the forces as a volunteer, but the Empress brought forward many excuses for refusing his demand, the chief being that, as the autumn was already so far advanced, the campaign could not last very long. The Grand Duke repeated his request, but with no better success. The Empress assured every one that the Grand Duke was really delighted to stay at home and only wished to make a show of patriotic zeal, but it is to be doubted if this was true. On the contrary, the refusal to his request seems to have painfully affected the Grand Duke.[1] Yielding, however, at last to the Grand Duke's entreaties and to the representations of Marshal Potemkin himself, the Empress, in November of this year, gave her son permission to join the army on condition that the Grand Duchess, who wished to accompany her husband, should remain at St. Petersburg.

"While I am ready to do justice to your feelings," wrote Catherine to her daughter-in-law on December

[1] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1873, vol. viii, p. 860.

10, 1787, "I feel bound to add that no duty, no obligation whatever, compels your husband to join the army; his request to me to be allowed to go as a volunteer was entirely of his own suggesting. I, on my side, consented under no necessity or obligation, simply from a willingness to indulge him; and if, in the end, he does not go, or if he no longer shows any desire to do so, he will only be acting like thousands of other persons placed by birth in the same circumstances as himself. I will go farther and add: I do not know one who would go in search of a friend, when it was a question of facing an enemy, whether the latter was Turk or Tartar. I have already advised you not to think of this journey; I do so again to-day. I can only add, that if you find it so difficult to part, the simplest course to take is for you both to remain here; in this way you will at once satisfy your own wishes and mine, as well as those of the whole nation. I, myself, see no reason for my son's departure, and I believe that there will be more danger than advantage in his sojourn with the army. As whatever happens the blame will fall on me, I take the chance of this on condition of being permitted to say that it was I who opposed your going."[1]

And to Grimm she wrote: "For the last three days the Grand Duke and Duchess have been particularly insistent in their attacks, urging me with unheard-of persistence to give them permission to join the army. I have given him the required authorisation, but how can I possibly do the like for her? It really is not feasible. The truth is, the good lady is one who refuses to be guided by

[1] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1873, vol. viii, pp. 861–864.

the dictates of common sense, and this is extremely annoying. All this fume and fuss has prevented me giving attention to-day to the long despatch which I enclose. However, in the end it cannot fail but she must listen to reason."[1]

When making arrangements for entering into active service, the Grand Duke prepared certain documents, dated January 1788, as a precautionary measure in view of what might happen during his absence. These comprised his will, three letters to his wife, one to his children, and another in which he set forth his views concerning the government of the country. He also, with the full acquiescence of the Grand Duchess, drew up an act regarding the heredity of the throne. The ideas here expressed were in a great measure put into execution by him later on, which shows how necessary it is to study the history of Paul's life side by side with that of the legislative enactments which were put into force during his reign.

In the course of this Memorandum he wrote: "The Empire should never be left without an heir, and the heir should be nominated by law, so as to avoid any uncertainty in the matter; the right of succession should continue without intermission in the direct line, no interference with natural rights being at any time allowed, so that one generation may not be permitted to be passed over in favour of another."

This act, which was only promulgated on the day of Paul's coronation, April 16th, 1797, was drawn up by him and the Grand Duchess on the 15th of January 1788.

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 449.

Meanwhile the Grand Duke began to make preparations for his departure. It had been decided to give him an allowance of ten thousand roubles a month while he was with the army. He asked permission to have the three officers Vadkovsky, De Benckendorff, and Markov with him, as well as Count Moussin-Poushkin. His horses and carriages had already been despatched, when an unforeseen event happened to delay his journey. The Grand Duchess gave signs of being pregnant, and the Empress advised the Grand Duke to wait to join the army until after his wife's confinement.[1] The Tsarevitsh agreed to this, but when, in January, he ascertained that the Empress had given orders for his carriages to be brought back, he interpreted her commands as a determined move to put a stop to his departure.

None the less, however, he continued persistently to demand the Empress's leave to start, begging her to remember that the whole of Europe had been aware of his preparations. Catherine answered: "As to the question you put to me—what sort of a figure shall I cut in the eyes of Europe?—I have no difficulty in answering it. You will appear to them like a man who bends to my will, who fulfils my wishes, and who does what I ask him without a moment's hesitation." There was nothing left to do but to obey. Instead of starting to join the army, Paul went to St. Petersburg in January 1788, and the whole matter ended with obedience on the one side and indulgence on the other.

The Grand Duke and his wife moved from

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 429.

Pavlovsk to Tsarskoé, and on the 21st of May the Grand Duchess gave birth to a daughter, who was named Catherine.[1] The Empress was with her daughter-in-law at the time, and it was due to the energetic measures which were undertaken under her direction that the Grand Duchess was brought safely through her confinement, during which her life was in danger.

There was no longer any obstacle to the departure of the Grand Duke, and he at last obtained the permission for which he had waited so long. Meanwhile Moussin-Poushkin had been nominated commander-in-chief of the forces which were required for the fresh hostilities which had broken out with Sweden, and the Grand Duke was desirous of joining the army which was being organised under this general. But again Catherine begged him to wait, this time until military operations had really begun. It was but a short delay, however. The capital itself was being menaced, and it was settled that the Grand Duke should start at once with Count Moussin-Poushkin for the front. As the Grand Duke's regiment marched past the Winter Palace the Grand Duchess was unable to restrain her tears, and even the Empress had difficulty in hiding her emotion.

On the 11th July 1788, Catherine signed the ultimatum declaring war against Sweden, and that evening bid good-bye to her son. Before starting the Grand Duke made his will and left a letter for his wife. The terms in which these are couched convey the impression of love and respect, of gratitude and gentle melancholy. "You are well

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 449.

aware of the love I bear you, and how greatly I am attached to you. Pure in soul before God and man, you have merited not only the affection and devotion I have given you, but the respect of every one beside. You have been the greatest joy of my life and you have never ceased to guide me with the best of counsel. By this avowal the whole world may be certified of your wisdom and good sense. Your affection for your children is a pledge of the love you have had for me. In a word, I cannot sufficiently thank you for all that you have done for me, and, above all, for the patience with which you have borne all that I have made you suffer in the midst of our worries and anxieties, for which I beg you on my knees to pardon me." After giving his wife certain advice and directions, he ends his letter with the following words: "May God bless you to your life's end. Forgive me, dear friend; do not forget me, but do not weep for me. Resign yourself to the will of Him, by whom all things are ordered for the best. Accept my gratitude."[1]

Paul was accompanied by his friend Count Vadkovsky. Count Moussin-Poushkin, however, who was in command of the Russian armies in the Swedish campaign, seems to have offended Paul's susceptibilities. The Grand Duke returned home —before the war was over—highly dissatisfied.[2]

[1] Khrapovitsky, "Diary, 1782–1793," published 1874, p. 96.
[2] *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. iii, p. 412. Moscow, 1869.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HAMLET OF GATSHINA

Count de Ségur visits the Grand Duke—Interesting conversation—Change in Paul's character—His *marotte militaire*—Rostoptshin's letters—Paul is working out his programme—The Grand Duke's pecuniary troubles—The affection existing between Paul and his wife is lessened—Mlle. Nélidov—The French Revolution—Impression on Paul—Catherine's plan to exclude her son from the throne.

On his return from the Swedish campaign, disheartened and disillusioned, the Grand Duke Paul again retired to his favourite residence at Gatshina, where he lived in greater self-absorption and isolation even than before. He was extremely pleased at the nomination, in 1789, of his friend Vadkovsky to the office of Chamberlain in his household, but, at the same time, expressed his fear that his friend's wife would grow weary of the monotonous existence which every one led at his Court. It was in March 1790 that the more intimate friends of the Grand Duke first noticed how their master was buried for long intervals in silent thought. He also began to be haunted with ideas of death.

Count de Ségur, who had been recently accredited as the French Minister in Russia, arrived at St. Petersburg in 1785 and met with a friendly reception from the Grand Duke and his wife. He mentions the admirable qualities displayed by both and speaks of the general respect which they inspired. Except on grand occasions they and their Court

circle, which was by no means a small one, lived together like a united family, especially when in residence outside the capital. Nothing could exceed the courtesy, simplicity and ease with which they dispensed their hospitality. But Count de Ségur was quick to perceive in the Grand Duke's manner of behaviour and in the remarks he made concerning his own position that he was suspicious and irritable; it was only natural that he should be so, seeing that he was deprived of a share not only in the affairs of government, but even in the education of his children; while his suspiciousness was encouraged by living apart from the Empress's Court in his residences at Gatshina and at Pavlovsk. On his second visit to St. Petersburg in 1789 the Count again visited Paul, and has left a minute description of the state of the Prince's mind.

"With much wit and information," wrote Count Ségur in his "Memoirs," "the Grand Duke is possessed of the most restless and suspicious temper, the most changeable character; he was often affable to the extreme of familiarity; oftener harsh, despotic, and haughty; never, perhaps, did there exist a man more uncertain, timid, or capricious, less calculated for imparting happiness to others or to himself."[1] Paul in his conversation with Count Ségur complained of his mother and Prince Potemkin, and incessantly inveighed against the Ministers and all those who were honoured with the confidence of the Empress. "Can you explain, in short," asked Paul of Ségur, "why, in the European monarchies, sovereigns quietly reign and succeed each other, whilst the throne of Russia is so often

[1] *Cf. Mémoires,* Comte L. Ph. Ségur, Paris, 1827, vol. iii, p. 532.

stained with blood?" Ségur replied that whilst everywhere the peace of nations was secured by the inheritance of the throne in the male line, in Russia, as in the ancient Asiatic, Greek, Roman and barbarian monarchies, there was nothing fixed on the subject; as the sovereign has a right to select the successor he pleases, this prerogative becomes a perpetual source of ambitious hopes, of intrigues and conspiracies.[1] Acting on the advice received from Ségur, Paul, immediately after ascending the throne, established as a fundamental law the hereditary succession to the throne in the male line and in the order of primogeniture.

Altogether a noticeable deterioration took place in Paul's character during the last years of Catherine's reign. Suspicion and irritability were now his prevailing characteristics; the least opposition to his wishes threw him into a passion; there were forewarnings of the deeds of violence and folly which marked the course of his reign. After an interview which he had with the Grand Duke, the renowned Commander-in-chief, Souvarov, spoke of him as "an adorable Prince and an implacable despot." Rostoptshin, who was one of Paul's favourites, writing to Voronzov in 1793, says: "The Grand Duke has made up his mind to a system of despotism; he intends to rule with a rod of iron, and is already putting his ideas into practice. One hears daily of acts of violence and of pettiness that a man in private life would blush to be guilty of," and Rostoptshin further laments over "the pitiable way" in which Paul conducts affairs.

In another of his letters in 1793 we read, "It

[1] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 535.

is not without a feeling of sorrow and disgust that one is forced to look on at the Grand Duke's behaviour; it is as if he was trying all he could to make himself hated.[1] Every day he attends parade, and is present at all the executions. At the least word of contradiction, he is beside himself with anger."

Again in another letter he writes: "The Grand Duke acts in a way which is almost past belief; he is walking straight to his own ruin, and makes himself more detested every day." Endless anecdotes which are current of his brutal outbursts of rage towards his attendants and towards the men in the army, are sufficient to prove the truth of this verdict upon him by his favourite. At one of the Court balls, given shortly before his accession, he behaved in such an unheard-of way towards the King of Sweden, who was one of the guests, that "everybody felt ready to fall through the floor," as Catherine's domestic physician, Rogerson, wrote to his friend, Count Voronzov, in London.[2] It was during that period that the future autocrat prepared his plans for all the cruel and eccentric deeds which were soon to astonish the world and lead to his assassination. He had drawn up his programme, and was impatiently waiting for the moment when he would be able to carry it out. He was bursting with impatience, said Rostoptshin, and thinking of nothing but ascending the throne. It was while living in obscurity at Gatshina, ignored and slighted as he was by his mother and her friends, that he began to imagine everybody despised him, and that there was an inclination, even on the part of his friends, to disobey him; he availed

[1] *Cf.* Archives Voronzov, viii, pp. 67, 76. [2] *Ibid.*, viii, p. 145.

himself of the slightest pretext to mete out punishments without any distinction. He never admitted his mistake, but, on the contrary, continued to be angry with those against whom he had acted unjustly.[1] That Catherine did her very best to make her son uncomfortable, and thus to increase his ill-humour and make him unpopular, is unfortunately a fact which can scarcely be denied. She, otherwise so generous and even lavish, refused the requests of her son and heir for necessary sums of which he and his wife stood in need.

The keeping up of these royal residences, the entertainments given by the Grand Duke and Duchess during the first years of their life at Pavlovsk and Gatshina, and finally the maintenance of the contingent of the household troops, small in number though it might be, necessitated a large expenditure, and, in spite of the order and economy practised by both the Grand Duke and his wife, their resources were not sufficient. "*Kommt Zeit, kommt Rath*," the Grand Duke would say at times when affairs were pressing, but unfortunately the time for which the Tsarevitsh hoped never came and the expenses grew greater. The Grand Duke and Duchess naturally applied to the Empress in their pecuniary difficulties, but Catherine did not see her way to meet their demands. "You will understand, I am sure," she wrote to them, "that it is grievous to me to know that you are in want. I can only think that you are being incessantly robbed, for otherwise I cannot understand why you should be in such continual need of money, when by rights you ought to have enough

[1] *Cf.* Archives Voronzov, viii, p. 76.

for everything." Maria Féodorovna then turned to her father and begged him for a loan, and her request met to some extent with success, but she did not obtain sufficient to prevent the Grand Duke being forced to borrow from private individuals. Vadkovsky advanced him some money; Prince Kourakin mortgaged one of his estates, so as to enable him to give the Grand Duke the sum he required, and, if report is to be trusted, Potemkin himself paid the Grand Duke's debts.

But pecuniary difficulties did not constitute Paul's only trouble. Catherine, jealous of her daughter-in-law, did not hesitate—she was sufficient woman for that—to create mischief between her son and his wife.

The affection which the Grand Duke and Duchess bore each other and the harmony of their domestic relations, won for them the love of the general public at St. Petersburg but were the cause of a certain uneasy jealousy at the Empress's Court. An intrigue was set on foot to disturb their conjugal peace, and Sacken was instructed to wean the Grand Duke from his dependence on his wife's advice. To accomplish this Paul was led to believe that his wife was completely under the thumb of Mesdames de Benckendorff and Lafermière, two of their most devoted friends, and, as it was further pointed out to Paul, he indirectly was equally under their influence and unable to act on his own initiative. Rendered sensitive to such insinuations by the false position he was in, the Grand Duke angrily determined to show his wife that he was not in any way guided by her counsels, the result of these evil machinations being that the sacred

ties which had hitherto bound him to his wife were broken. Mademoiselle Nélidov, one of the Grand Duchess's maids of honour, was singled out by him as the recipient of his particular attentions, his wife was subjected to indignities, and Mesdames de Benckendorff and Lafermière retired from his Court. All praise is due to the manner in which Mademoiselle Nélidov conducted herself at this time, apparently doing her best to spare the Grand Duchess's feelings. The latter, deprived of the affection and support of her husband, was forced to alter her behaviour and to be more careful and reserved in her intercourse with others. To her credit be it said that no woman could have shown more patience and indulgence, and the persistent kindness of her attitude towards her husband so far triumphed in the end that she won back, if not his love, at least his affectionate regard, and he never ceased to treat her with attention.

The change which had come over Paul's character reached a crisis with the marriage of his son, Alexander. He isolated himself more and more, shunning the society even of those who still showed him some signs of affection, and, shut up in his residences at Pavlovsk and Gatshina, he grew continually more morose, suspicious and violent. All kinds of wild ideas took possession of him, and the least contradiction aroused his anger. His fancy detected a revolutionary spirit and a lack of respect in everything and everybody around him. Catherine's designs may, to a great extent, have been responsible for this alteration of character, but it was due to other causes besides.

The sanguinary results of the French revolution,

and, more especially, the terrible fate of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, who, but a few years previously, had given such a joyous reception to him and his wife at Paris, produced an ineradicable impression on the Grand Duke's mind. Numbers of French refugees had sought shelter in Russia, with loud voice lamenting over the revolution and preaching the reactionary doctrine of absolutism. Chief among these was the Count Esterhazy, who arrived in St. Petersburg in September 1791. A man of shrewd intelligence, who knew how to secure a footing in the Russian capital, he unhesitatingly advocated the necessity of despotism and of a rule of iron—views which the Tsarevitsh readily adopted, and according to which he at once began to regulate his own conduct.

The Grand Duke interpreted all he came across as a consequence of the revolution; he believed everybody to be a Jacobin, and even had four officers of his battalion arrested for wearing the pigtails of their wigs too short—to him this seemed a sure sign of a revolutionary spirit.

Those who were now enjoying the Empress Catherine's favour allowed themselves to treat the heir to the throne with less respect than was due to him. The accounts of contemporaries are full of anecdotes of the continual friction going on between the Grand Duke and the members of Catherine's Court, and of the repeated complaints made by the Tsarevitsh in reference to this matter.

Catherine herself grew more and more displeased with Paul. She wrote as follows to Grimm on the 20th April 1795: "What are they saying in Germany about Paul Petrovitsh? Here, there is

still a considerable amount of evil speaking concerning him, and the fact is that he makes a great many enemies."

The Grand Duke's position was the more difficult that he had no one near him to give him good advice. His former mentor and friend, Count Panin, as also the latter's brother, Count Peter Ivanovitsh, had both long been dead. Prince Repnin was at Vilna, where he was acting as Governor-General, Count Tshernitshev was ill and undergoing treatment abroad, and Field-Marshal Count Roumyanzev was spending his last years on his estates in Little Russia. The Grand Duke occasionally wrote to Count Roumyanzev, but the precautions necessitated by this correspondence would hardly be believed!

The life which the Grand Duke led was the necessary result of his surrounding circumstances. Prince Galytzin tells us that when he and other knights of the Court were summoned to attend upon their Imperial Highnesses at Pavlovsk, they had to be very careful, although received with every show of kindness. He speaks highly of the Grand Duchess, of her virtue and charity, and, above all, of her exemplary patience. She was never idle, each hour of the day being allotted to an appointed task. Her favourite amusement was the engraving of precious stones, in which art she finally attained a high perfection. The Grand Duke was equally exact in the performance of his duties and exceptionally punctual. If he gave the order to be ready to accompany him on horseback at four o'clock in the morning, he would, without fail, appear at the very moment the clock

struck the hour. The Duke's two residences were ornamented and furnished with the most perfect taste, and the gardens were superb. Court life there was, in many ways, very agreeable. The Grand Duchess exerted herself to the utmost to make it as cheerful as possible. She herself superintended the choice of pieces for the stage and the preparations for their performance; these she was careful not to allow to be too long, choosing by preference short operettas, the tableaux vivants which the Duke did not care for being omitted. The Grand Duchess remained as devoted as ever to her husband. She never let him out of her sight. Even on the bitterest days of midwinter she would accompany him on his long rides and assisted with her presence at his military manœuvres.

On January 18, 1795, she gave birth to another daughter, whom she named Anna, and on the 6th July 1796 to a son, who was called Nicholas. She was not, however, spared domestic troubles, for on January 26th, 1795, she lost her little daughter Olga at three years of age. Her children were often away from her, the Empress liking to have them constantly near her, for Catherine sought to amuse herself and rejuvenate her spirits by joining in the youthful games of her grandchildren, her natural gaiety being in nowise diminished by her increasing age.

"Think how old I am," wrote Catherine to Grimm, "and yet I am as much amused as a child of five at watching the children playing at blind-man's buff and other games. The young ones, my grandsons and granddaughters, assure



CATHERINE II IN OLD AGE.

An aquarelle by S. S. Solomko, the original of the portrait by Outkin.

me that when I am present they doubly enjoy their games, and are able to enter into them with greater spirit and with less restraint; I am looked upon consequently as quite a merry companion."

But Paul Petrovitsh and Maria Féodorovna took no part in these amusements; they were the "heavy luggage," as the Empress nicknamed them. "I am just going to dress," she wrote to Grimm, on the 17th of April 1795, "for I have to be present this evening at an amateur concert. The Grand Duke Alexander and Count Platon Zoubov are to play the violin, the Grand Duchesses Hélène, Elizabeth and Alexandrina, will sing, and Marie, who is only nine years old, but who has completed her study of counterpoint with Professor Sarti, so passionately fond of music is she, is to accompany them on the harpsichord. Sarti considers her quite a phenomenon in the way of music. She is a most intelligent child and is able to learn anything; she will, I am sure, be a most accomplished girl. She is very fond of reading; General Lieven tells me that she spends hours over her books, which does not, however, prevent her being full of good spirits and gaiety, nor from dancing like an angel. Take them altogether, they are, on the whole, a pretty family. The 'heavy luggage' went back three days ago to Gatshina; when the cats are away the mice dance and jump over the tables, they are so pleased and happy."

It seemed that Catherine had decided to get rid of the "heavy luggage." There were ominous rumours abroad in the capital that her grandson Alexander would, on January 12, 1797, be declared

presumptive heir to the throne, and that Paul himself would be shut up in the castle at Lode. But fate had decided otherwise. The hour was near when the wretched Prince of Gatshina was to become Autocrat of all the Russias.

CHAPTER IX

L'IMPÉRATRICE EST MORTE, VIVE L'EMPÉREUR

The death of Catherine—Paul's feeling of joy—Hamlet among the grave-diggers—The funeral of Peter III—The son reconciles his parents—Follies and wise laws—*La guerre au chapeau rond*—The men of Gatshina.

CATHERINE is dying! Catherine is dead! Catherine, the great Northern ruler, is no more!

A great event had taken place in European history, the political importance of which could only be foreshadowed. And yet Catherine's death, which came as a sudden blow to the inmates of the Winter Palace, took place almost imperceptibly. The shriek of agony uttered by the aged Empress was lost in the midst of the battle-cries with which Europe was re-echoing at that very moment, for the continent of the old world was trembling in the grip of the Corsican giant, who had put his foot on the neck of Europe. Napoleon—who was soon to dictate his laws to European monarchs, who was soon to crush old kingdoms and create new ones—was in the ascendant, and the European world was too busy watching him to devote much time to the changes in the Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva. But the death-cry of Catherine was the announcement of the accession of her son, Paul, and of a new reign in Russia. The throne of Peter the Great, occupied by the German Princess for thirty-four years, was now vacant again. Paul's hour

had come at last. Had Catherine been able to speak a few words before she breathed her last, it is more than probable that Paul would never have been Tsar. But death came suddenly upon the aged Empress. She had supped gaily the night before and had risen at her accustomed hour on the following morning. She talked to her favourite, Platon Zoubov, transacted business for a short while with her secretaries, and then retired for a few minutes into her bedroom. Here she was stricken with apoplexy and was found prostrate by her valet. Courtiers and physicians were summoned, but all in vain. Platon Zoubov, her last favourite, whom Catherine had treated more as a child than as a lover, bent over his motherly mistress, but she could only moan, deprived of speech and consciousness. Confusion reigned in the Palace, and a febrile tension took hold of the courtiers in the expectancy of great changes. The fact of the Empress's illness was kept secret for some time, and even when it did at last transpire and the news spread in the Palace, it was mentioned with caution.

Did Paul know that his hour had come? The hour he had been so impatiently awaiting? He was inspecting a mill at Gatshina when a soldier rushed up to inform him that a courier had arrived from St. Petersburg. Platon Zoubov, trembling for his future and anxious to gain the good graces of the new autocrat, had despatched his brother to inform Paul of what had occurred. But Paul, who had secret misgivings that his mother wished to put him aside, imagined that he was going to be arrested. "We are lost," he exclaimed to his wife.[1] Great was his

[1] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1882, tom. xxxvi, p. 469.

relief, therefore, when he heard the truth, and the sudden transition from a feeling of fear to that of intense satisfaction so unnerved him that he was unable to hide his feelings. "He was beside himself, but whether with grief or joy heaven only knows," naïvely remarked his valet, Koutayssov.

Paul, accompanied by his wife, at once proceeded to St. Petersburg. On his way he met his friend, Rostoptshin. "Ah, Sir, what a moment for you," exclaimed the latter. "Wait, my dear, wait," replied Paul; "I have lived forty-two years, and God has lent me His support; let us hope that He will give me strength and power for the present state for which He has destined me. Let us have faith in His goodness." [1]

On his way from Gatshina to the capital Paul was met by about twenty more couriers, all despatched to inform the heir of the great event. Everybody was eager to show his attachment for the new ruler. Among those who despatched couriers were not only the Grand Duke Alexander and Count Soltykov, but also a cook at the Court and a fish merchant.

Arrived in St. Petersburg, Paul, accompanied by his family, visited the chamber where his mother lay in the throes of death. She gave no sign of recognition. What was passing in Paul's mind? Whilst his children and his wife burst into tears, he watched, sullen and with dry eye, the prostrate form of his dying mother. His grief was not—could not have been—overwhelming. Hope and fear strove together in his heart, and although the Empress was

[1] Rostoptshin in Archives of Voronzov, tom. viii, and Ségur, Comte de, *Vie de Rostopchine*, 1873, p. 37.

still breathing he gave directions and prepared everything for his accession. He called Besborodko, Catherine's chief secretary, and ordered him to unlock secret drawers as he wished to examine his mother's papers. Besborodko pointed to a packet tied with a black ribbon, and bearing the instruction that it should be opened in the Council after her death. Paul looked at Besborodko, who silently pointed to the fire. It is supposed that this secret document contained the nomination of Alexander as heir to the throne. Paul destroyed the packet, and afterwards expressed his great gratitude to Besborodko.[1] In the meantime the officers of Paul's regiments at Gatshina, dressed in Prussian uniform, had arrived and filled the Palace. Paul felt more at ease among his faithful friends and servants than among the courtiers of his mother. After an agony which lasted thirty-seven hours, Catherine uttered one long shriek, and died—to the utter grief of her friends and favourites and to the intense relief of her son. Paul was now autocrat of all the Russias. Maria Féodorovna was the first to kneel before the new sovereign and to take the oath of allegiance. The other members of the family and the courtiers followed her example.

"You are now our Emperor," said Maria Féodorovna, "and our happiness lies in your hands; do not deprive us of your kindness, which we shall endeavour to deserve." Paul raised his wife and kissed her tenderly, assuring her and his children of his paternal and Imperial benevolence and love. The courtiers present, moved to tears, followed the

[1] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1882, tom. xxxvii, pp. 471–472.

example of the Imperial family and swore the oath of allegiance. So did the officers and soldiers that had arrived from Gatshina, and so also did the guards and the heads of the various colleges and departments. The next day Paul was proclaimed Emperor, and his eldest son, Alexander, Tsarevitsh or heir apparent. "The first steps," says Masson, "which Paul took seemed to contradict the reports of his stern and capricious disposition. He had long suffered from the abuses and disorders of the Court; bred in the school of misfortune—the crucible in which great minds are refined and little ones evaporate—a distant spectator of affairs, scrutinising the plans and conduct of his mother, he had had thirty years' leisure to regulate his own. Accordingly, it appeared that he had in his pocket a multitude of regulations ready drawn up, which he had nothing to do but to unfold and put in execution with astonishing rapidity."[1] Not only did the Tsar allow the sun of his Imperial favour to shine upon his family, his wife and his children, to whom he assigned considerable revenues, but he also treated generously and loaded with favours the Ministers and friends of his mother. Platon Zoubov, who had mourned his misfortune and was ready to retire into obscurity, to which the death of his Imperial mistress seemed to have doomed him, was confirmed in his offices by the new sovereign. Handing him the baton of command borne by the general aide-de camp, Paul said: "I hope you will serve me as faithfully as you have served my mother." It seemed as if Paul was determined to accomplish in a few days that for which other monarchs require a lifetime. Everybody was

[1] Masson, *Mémoires Secrets*, Paris, 1859, p. 113.

surprised. It literally hailed ukases and regulations. There was scarcely time to think over one before another appeared. "Every hour, every moment announced some wise change, some punishment, or some merited favour." Many who had been expecting to lose their employs and positions saw themselves suddenly promoted; many who had been expecting to be sent to Siberia in chains were the recipients of orders and decorations. Paul seemed to be acting of his own accord, not influenced by any of his advisers. He was an autocrat, but a benevolent autocrat. The wise and beneficent regulations of his mother were confirmed, whilst ukases which caused discontent among the people were annulled. Politicians in Russia and abroad who had been full of misgivings had to admit their mistake. They "began to imagine that his character had been mistaken, and that his long and melancholy pupilage had not entirely depraved it. All the world saw itself happily deceived in its expectations, and the conduct of the Grand Duke was forgotten in that of the Emperor."[1]

Stedingk, the Swedish Envoy in St. Petersburg, was full of praise, and informed his King that the "Emperor is employing every moment of his reign for some act of justice, order and benevolence." "The events of the new reign," wrote the same Ambassador, "are all calculated to do honour to the Emperor."[2] The communications sent to the Russian ambassadors abroad, such as Count Kotshoubey in Constantinople and Count Voronzov in London, were such as to make them augur

[1] Masson, *l.c.*, p. 114.

[2] Stockholm Archives, 1797, January 2.

БОЖІЕЮ МИЛОСТІЮ

МЫ ПАВЕЛЪ ПЕРВЫЙ

Императоръ и Самодержецъ

ВСЕРОССІЙСКІЙ,

и прочая, и прочая, и прочая.

Объявляемъ всѣмъ вѣрнымъ НАШИМЪ подданнымъ, что по волѣ Всевышняго НАША Любезнѣйшая Государыня, Родительница, Императрица и Самодержица Всероссійская ЕКАТЕРИНА ВТОРАЯ по тридцати-четырехлѣтнемъ Царствованіи въ шестый день Ноября, къ крайнему прискорбію НАШЕМУ и всего ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО Дома НАШЕГО отъ сея временныя жизни въ вѣчную преставилась. Вступая нынѣ на НАШЪ Прародительскій наслѣдственный ИМПЕРАТОРСКІЙ Всероссійскій Престолъ, и повелѣвая вѣрнымъ НАШИМЪ подданнымъ учинить НАМЪ въ вѣрности присягу, Бога Всемогущаго призываемъ, да поможетъ НАМЪ благодатію Своею Святою, бремя отъ Него на НАСЪ возложенное подъяти на пользу ИМПЕРІИ, и ко благополучію вѣрноподданныхъ НАШИХЪ. Данъ въ Санктпетербургѣ Ноября 6 дня 1796 года.

Подлинный подписанъ собственною ЕГО ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО ВЕЛИЧЕСТВА рукою тако:

ПАВЕЛЪ.



Печатанъ въ Санктпетербургѣ при Сенатѣ Ноября 6 дня 1796 года.

МАНИФЕСТЪ О ВОСШЕСТВІИ НА ПРЕСТОЛЪ ИМПЕРАТОРА ПАВЛА ПЕРВАГО.

MANIFESTO OF PAUL I ON HIS ACCESSION TO THE THRONE.

good things for the future from this promising beginning.[1]

Catherine had decided to support the armed powers attacking France, and a levy of recruits had been ordered. Paul broke off Catherine's treaty against France, annulled the command to levy recruits, sent a courier to finish the war in Persia and announced to the diplomatic corps in St. Petersburg that he "had not inherited his mother's quarrels." Paul also, very soon after his accession, visited the famous Polish hero, Kosciuszko, who was being detained as a State prisoner in St. Petersburg. Paul in a fit of generosity liberated not only Kosciuszko but all the other imprisoned Poles. He handed over a sum of money to the gallant Polish patriot and enabled him to go to America.[2] All these measures produced a very favourable impression, and great hopes were centred in the new and coming reign. The sun of a reign of justice seemed to have risen on the horizon of Russia. But in spite of his just and generous measures, which succeeded each other with astonishing rapidity, in spite of the favours showered upon his friends and his magnanimity shown to those who expected to feel his wrath, it was easy to perceive his bitter feeling towards everything that concerned the late Empress, his mother.

His new regulations and measures were interrupted by the funeral of his mother. To the astonishment of the capital, to the dismay of the Court, Paul issued an ukase ordering the removal of the ashes of Peter III. Husband and wife were to be

[1] Archives of Prince Voronzov, xviii, 126 ; xx, 351 ; xxii, 490.
[2] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1882, vol. xxxvi, pp. 482–483.



EMPEROR PAUL LIBERATES KOSCIUSZKO AND THE POLISH PRISONERS.
From an engraving by Orlowsky.

buried together and the funeral honours paid to them alike. It was an ingenious stroke, almost Machiavellian in its conception, on the part of Paul. That this measure was really dictated by his love and affection for his father is out of the question. Paul in his heart of hearts never considered himself the son of Peter III, nor did he have occasion, as we have pointed out above, to cherish the memory of the victim of Ropsha. Hate against his mother on the one hand, and the desire thus to impress the world with the fact that he was a real Romanov on the other, were his sole motives. Some historians have seen in this act of Paul a touch of Hamlet wandering among the grave-diggers. We doubt whether Paul's action was dictated by filial love and duty for him whom he afterwards called a drunkard and an imbecile, but the idea was original. Did ever Catherine imagine that, after more than three decades, her assassinated husband would return to lie by her side in the last sleep? The son had reconciled the parents in their death.[1]

Thirty-five years before, the remains of Peter III had been deposited in the convent of Alexander Nevsky, at the extremity of St. Petersburg. An old monk conducted Paul to the exact spot where Peter had been buried. The grave and the coffin were opened, and Paul was in the presence of a handful of ashes, a few buttons, a piece of stuff and the sole of a boot. It was all that remained of the unhappy grandson of Peter the Great. The new Tsar kissed the glove of his alleged father and shed tears in abundance. He then ordered the coffin to be placed in the church, and thence it

[1] *Rousskaya Starina*, 1882, vol. xxxvi, p. 482.

was transferred to the Winter Palace and placed by the side of that which contained the remains of the Empress. As Peter had never been crowned, the coffin containing the remains was crowned with due solemnity. It seemed as if, with the return of the remains of Peter III, an atmosphere of ancient long-forgotten times had been wafted into the Winter Palace and into St. Petersburg. The dead seemed to awaken and the living were compelled to make room for them. The edifice, constructed during the long reign of Catherine, seemed suddenly to be crumbling down. All those who had faithfully served the assassinated Emperor, and who were now still alive but unknown and in disgrace, were found out and invited to appear at Court. Among them were Goudovitsh and Baron Ungern Sternberg, a venerable old man. Paul sent for him, embraced him, and made him general-in-chief. All other officers who had been attached to Peter III were loaded with honours. The name of Catherine's murdered husband was now on everybody's lips, the ancient uniforms worn in his time suddenly reappeared, and his portrait was everywhere to be seen. Paul's revenge, too, which he took on the murderers of his father was subtly cruel in its apparent sublimity. Passick, Prince Bariatinsky and Alexis Orlov, who had been the prominent actors in the drama of Ropsha, were ordered to follow the remains of their victim. Passick disappeared, but Orlov and Bariatinsky were compelled to undergo the ordeal. When Orlov, the hero of Tsheshme, aged and broken, ventured to say that he wished to be excused, Paul, handing him the heavy golden Imperial crown, said

harshly: "Take it and march on." During the funeral Paul did everything to humiliate his mother's ashes. Madame Vigée Lebrun, who saw the funeral procession from her window, "as one sees a play from a box in the theatre," relates in her Memoirs, that whilst the horseman of the guard, riding before the Emperor's coffin, was clad in golden armour, the one in front of that of Catherine wore steel armour.[1]

Immediately after the funeral Orlov received the order to travel abroad, whilst Bariatinsky was exiled. There was still another person alive who had played a prominent part in the events of 1762. It was the famous Princess Dashkov. Catherine had said to her in 1793: "If it is a crime to occupy the place which I am at present occupying, then you share this crime with me." The Princess Dashkov was ordered by Paul—in remembrance of the events of 1762—to quit Moscow and to take up her residence on one of her estates in the province of Novgorod.

But soon the hopes which had crept into the hearts of many were shattered. The benevolent measures of the new Tsar were soon followed by restrictions and punishments. As Paul seemed to fear the guards who had dethroned his father, he decided to make them less dangerous. He consequently incorporated them with his own battalions that had arrived from Gatshina, putting at the head of each company, as officers, the simple lieutenants from his Gatshina regiments.

It seems that Paul, from the very moment of his accession, dreaded a Palace revolution—the constant curse of the Romanovs. He, therefore, surrounded

[1] Mme. Vigée Lebrun, Souvenirs, Paris, 1867, vol. ii, p. 22.

himself with servants on whom he could entirely rely. Persons incapable of performing their duties, insignificant and obscure, were raised to the highest positions. The result was disastrous. "He erred," writes Prince Adam Czartorysky, "not only in his selection but also in the extent of the means which he constantly employed to save his life and his throne; he only precipitated his deplorable end." This constant fear made him exaggerated in everything he did; his punishments, as well as his favours, were excessive and bore the mark of the same extravagance which characterised the actions of the Roman Cæsars. He was terrible in his severity, while his liberality knew no bounds when he was once stirred to generosity. There was no certainty in any of his actions. His endeavour to secure the fidelity of his Ministers and servants by loading them with presents only made them ungrateful. Moreover, they never relied on his whims of favour. "A single word uttered intentionally or accidentally, the slightest shadow of suspicion, was sufficient reason to make him persecute those whom he had only a short while ago protected."[1]

Paul had not been on the throne many weeks when those who had been ready to give him praise began to find cause of complaint. The Swedish Ambassador, Stedingk, was dumbfounded at the arbitrary manner with which the police regulations concerning dress had been carried out. The Sardinian Ambassador, Rossi, had orders to leave the country before twenty-four hours were over, on account of having dared to pass an opinion on the Emperor's conduct; it was thought fortunate for Rossi that he

[1] Prince A. F. Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1887, vol. i, chap. ix.

went off quietly without appealing to the diplomatic corps for its intervention. The ridiculous way in which large properties were made over as presents by the Emperor also struck the more reasonably minded with surprise. A still more incomprehensible act was the sudden prohibition of the entry of any foreigner into Russian territory, and so vigorously was this carried out that Paul, it seemed, wished entirely to isolate Russia from the rest of the world.

There was dismay among the higher officials at the way in which Paul dealt, according to the whim of the moment, with questions of the highest importance in connection with foreign politics. We have an insight into the kind of way in which things were carried on in a crazy document which was drawn up by Rostoptshin, and which Paul furnished with side-notes that betray as much want of taste as they do ignorance and uncontrolled temper. It dealt with nothing of less importance than the division of Turkey, the occupation of Constantinople, and such like matters. The Court physician, Rogerson, had reason for his assertion that the Emperor was capable only of understanding the details of military services, and had not sufficient intellect to enter into other affairs of higher importance, whether political or other.[1] Kotshoubey speaks of the inconsiderate manner in which Paul discharged his most serious political duties, upsetting established regulations, insisting on the carrying out of ill-digested ideas, and issuing important decrees, which he had prepared by his private secretary, without any previous notice to the chief government authorities.[2]

[1] Archives Prince Voronzov, vol. xxx, p. 97.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. xviii, pp. 132, 142.

CHAPTER X

A MODERN CALIGULA

Campaign against round hats — Paul's *marotte militaire* — Tourgenev's Memoirs—The men of Gatshina—Changes and reforms—Ill-treatment of courtiers and officers—Paul's helpers—His love for pomp and ceremony—Coronation solemnities—The Tsar mistrusts his wife and best friends—Mlle. Nélidov—Paul's foreign policy—Souvarov's campaign in Italy—Paul's admiration for Napoleon.

THE madness once characteristic of the Roman Cæsars soon became manifest in the Russian Tsar. He mistrusted his wife, his children, and his best friends; he brutalised his generals and officers. The French Revolution had been a great shock to Paul's imperious character. Already, as Grand Duke, he had seen Jacobins everywhere, and from that period must be dated his hatred against the round hats introduced into Russia by the French.

The first heroic action of the new reign was a virulent and pitiless attack on the worst enemies of the Russian State—the round hat, the dress-coat, and waistcoat. The Emperor was no sooner on the throne than two hundred police and dragoons were scouring the streets, with special orders to tear the round hat from the head of anybody who happened to be wearing it, and to destroy it immediately; frock-coats had their collars cut away; the fate of waistcoats was left to the discretion of the corporal and sub-officers. The campaign was not prolonged. By twelve o'clock not a single round hat was visible in the streets, dress-coats and waistcoats

had been put beyond the power of doing harm, and thousands of inhabitants were seen hastening to their homes with uncovered heads, torn clothes, and in a state of semi-nakedness, while such as had sought to defend themselves bore the marks of blows from fists and sticks. Wailings and prayers, however, were unheeded; there was no exception, no respect of persons. The executioners having been strictly enjoined to carry out their work with as little consideration as possible, and soldiers who showed the least indulgence threatened with the bastinado, these wretched men performed their miserable task with unexampled zeal.[1]

During one of the earlier days of his reign, Paul happened to ride past a wooden theatre that had been erected by Catherine. "This must be pulled down," cried the Tsar to a general who was among his suite. A few hours later, relates Tourgenev, who was an eye-witness, not a vestige of the huge building remained. Five hundred workmen, who continued their work by lantern-light, were employed to clear the site. "This proceeding gave me the opportunity of realising how far-reaching is the power of the Russian Government."

A young Englishman was stopped in the street and his round hat snatched off. Enraged at such a liberty, he leaped out of his sledge, knocked down the soldier, and called for the police. A police officer arrived, and the impetuous Englishman was bound and carried off to prison. Luckily he met on his way the coach of the English Ambassador, Sir Charles Whitworth, and claimed

[1] A. M. Tourgenev, Memoirs, in *Rousskaya Starina*, 1885, vol. xlvii, p. 381.

his protection. The British Ambassador complained to the Emperor, who replied that his order had been misunderstood. An Imperial ukase was consequently published the next day, in which it was made known that strangers not in the Emperor's service were not subject to the prohibition. A man wearing a round hat was in future to be taken to the police station, where he would have to prove that he was not a Russian. Frenchmen, however, wearing round hats were condemned as Jacobins. The Envoy of the King of Sardinia, having allowed himself to laugh at the ridiculous regulation, was ordered to quit the Russian capital within twenty-four hours.

Like that Imperial madman, Caligula, Paul, the first days of whose reign seemed to be so full of promise, soon astonished Russia and Europe with his conduct and his whims. He had confirmed the old servants and Ministers of his mother in their employment, but their happiness was short-lived. Paul soon took the reins of government into his own hand. He did everything himself, and brooked no contradiction. The Russian people and especially the peasants who, like the Romans under Caligula, had applauded the Emperor's decision to restrict the power of the masters over their slaves, were soon undeceived, for the chains of the unhappy peasants became even more closely riveted.

The regulations upon which Paul spent most of his energy, and in which he chiefly displayed his eccentricities, were connected with his military mania. To these he devoted all his attention, introducing the most ridiculous and frivolous changes into the dress of the soldiers,

and attaching the highest importance to trifles. On his accession to the throne he was able fully to satisfy the tastes which he had developed in Gatshina. The regulations which he had laid down as Grand Duke were applied to the whole Empire. "The men of Gatshina," mostly people of low origin, who had enjoyed his confidence when Grand Duke, were to serve as models for the entire Russian army. Paul had long been an admirer of everything Prussian—in this, as in many other eccentricities, imitating Peter III. The Prussian uniforms, so much admired by the late Emperor but abolished by Catherine and her favourite, Potemkin, had been introduced for his regiments at Gatshina, and were now made obligatory, to the general discontent of the entire army. To play with soldiers became a passion with Paul, and in this he again resembled Caligula and another Emperor of modern times. Paul, who had started the play at Gatshina, continued it as Emperor with increased zeal and ardour. In 1793 —when he was still Grand Duke—Rostoptshin wrote of him: "He has 1600 soldiers and horsemen, and he imagines himself to be the late King of Prussia."[1] With the whole Russian army at his disposal, he was now able to indulge in parades and manœuvres to his heart's content.

The *Wacht parade* became his daily occupation. Every day, no matter how cold, braving temperatures of fifteen or twenty degrees Réaumur without furs, clad in a plain, deep-green uniform and a large hat, he manœuvred his soldiers for three or four hours. None of the officers dared

[1] Archives Voronzov, viii, p. 76.

to appear in pelisses, and Paul had no pity for the old generals tormented with gout, rheumatism, and coughs. His officers and generals were treated with abominable cruelty. The most trifling mistakes were severely punished. An entire regiment, having on one occasion misunderstood his word of command, was ordered off to Siberia. Only a couple of days later a countermand recalled the exiles to the capital.

"The course of a few hours," writes Tourgenev, "put the whole machinery of State and jurisdiction out of gear; the springs that worked it were wrenched away or pushed out of place; everything was topsy-turvy, what was under was now uppermost, and so matters remained for a good four years. The highest posts were conferred on men who could hardly read, or on such as, though not wholly uneducated, had enjoyed no sort of opportunity of knowing what the general well-being of the nation demanded. They were acquainted with nothing beyond Gatshina and its barracks, had never done anything beyond exercising themselves on the parade ground, or ever heard anything but the drum and fife call. Kleinmichel, one of General Apraxin's lackeys, was set to teach field-marshals the art of war. Six or seven field-marshals, who were at that time in St. Petersburg, sat to be instructed by this former lackey, who, in bad Russian, attempted to impart to men who had grown grey in command and had seen many campaigns what he was pleased to call tactics! His knowledge consisted merely in the duties of a sentinel, in sword-hilts, and such like trifles."[1]

[1] Tourgenev, *Kousskaya Starina*, p. 380.

In the importance that he attached to all these minutiæ of parade, in the almost exclusive attention which was paid by him to external observances of the army, the incredible narrowness of the sovereign's mental horizon was only too apparent. Tourgenev's Memoirs call attention to this feature in the Emperor's character, and he had every opportunity of forming a correct judgment on the point. Having served much with the Emperor as a young officer, he had then become aware of Paul's one-sided and perverted leaning to military life. The regiment of Cuirassiers, to which Tourgenev belonged, was the peculiar object of the Emperor's persecution and cruelty. On some festive occasion, when General Prince Volkonsky, the commander of the regiment, and his adjutant Tourgenev, appeared in uniform which was not exactly according to regulation, Paul ordered his chamberlain to remove the "two blockheads." Several officers of the regiment were cashiered in the most arbitrary and unjust manner, their orders being wrested from them, and they themselves driven from the capital. All the officers of the regiment were greatly offended in that they were not allowed to take part in the processions and other ceremonies which took place on the occasion of the coronation. On another festive occasion two hundred and thirty-one officers of this regiment were shut up in a tower of the Kremlin during the entire two hours of the ceremony. Not a single parade passed, at which the Emperor was present, without the arrest and punishment of some of the officers of this regiment.

The ill-will of the Emperor towards this par-

ticular body of troops is explained by Tourgenev in the following manner:—

"One day all the staff officers and adjutants received orders to assemble in the saloon next to the Emperor's study, and duly obeyed the command. Paul walked into the room, and called out in a loud, hoarse voice: 'Let the adjutant of the Yekaterinoslav Regiment stand forth.' I, being the one named, stepped out in front of the Emperor. He came right up to me and began pinching me. To the right was the Grand Duke Alexander, who had turned pale, and to the left Araktsheev. The pinching continued until the pain brought tears to my eyes. Paul Petrovitsh's eyes were all the while gleaming with anger. At last he spoke: 'Go and tell your regiment, and then it will be further known, that I intend to exterminate the spirit of Potemkin in every one of you, and to send you all where the ravens would not otherwise have carried your bones.' Again and again he pinched me, five or six times, repeating the same words, and then ordered me to be gone."[1] The cause of this extraordinary behaviour was that the Yekaterinoslav Regiment had formerly been known as the Potemkin!

The Emperor's mania for parades and manœuvres and for useless mobilisations was an expense both for army and nation. Senseless orders were issued which caused the most frightful confusion. Thus the so-called Regiment of Siberian Dragoons, which had just returned from the Persian campaign and was at that time stationed at Derbent, was ordered to move on to Tobolsk. The march thither—a distance of four thousand kilometres—

[1] Tourgenev, *ibid.*, vol. xlviii, pp. 70–71.

lasted two years, cost the loss of all the horses, and involved the troops in unspeakable suffering. The manœuvres, to which endless human lives fell a sacrifice, were, according to Tourgenev's description, meaningless spectacles, as "miserable as a display of strategy and tactics as they were useless for practical purposes." This crazy administration of military affairs is not to be explained entirely on the score of Paul's mental incapacity, but was, in a measure, due to the influence of the "men of Gatshina," whom Count Panin described as the offscouring of the populace, upstarts belonging to the lower classes. The Swedish Ambassador, Stedingk, who at first praised the stricter discipline introduced by Paul, describes the demoralising effect of the brutal way in which the army was treated, and, writing to King Gustavus IV., says: "Paul is in the habit of dismissing his officers as if they were so many lackeys. The last remnant of *esprit de corps* is fast dying out under such treatment. No one who retains any feeling of self-respect will stay at Court or in the army. The present universal tension must some day have results of which Paul's unfortunate successors will know the full meaning." [1]

Sablukov relates that Paul's petulance of disposition, added to his extravagant strictness and severity towards officers, rendered the Service very unpleasant. For trifling faults and ridiculous mistakes officers were sent off from the parade-ground to other regiments at a great distance, and this was such a frequent occurrence that officers, when mounting guard, used to put a few hundred roubles,

[1] Stockholm Archiv.

in bank-notes, into their pockets so as not to be penniless when thus suddenly banished. On three occasions, says Sablukov, did he lend money to brother officers who had neglected this precaution.[1]

Paul even forgot himself so far as to strike three officers on parade with his cane.[2] Thereupon a great many officers left the Service and retired to their estates.

The following instance will show how everything was at the mercy of Paul's temper of the moment. On the occasion of some manœuvres at Moscow he had given the minutest orders concerning the movements of the troops. Everything proceeded exactly as he wished, and he could not detect the smallest deviation from his orders. When, however, the Tsar was some 172 versts from Moscow on his return to St. Petersburg, possessed by a passing paroxysm of anger, he cashiered thirty-two staff and chief officers as a punishment for having fallen ill during the manœuvres, and consequently failed to take part in them during the last two days. "What can one say to such behaviour as this?" asks Tourgenev, who relates the anecdote. We can only answer with a question as to the extent of the Emperor's responsibility for his actions.

As we learn further from Tourgenev, the men in the army were those who stood in most danger of being banished to Siberia or of being lost sight of for the remainder of their lives, hidden away somewhere in prison. The slightest oversight during drill was likely to entail the most frightful consequences. "They all, from general down to

[1] *Fraser's Magazine*, 1865, p. 237. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

ensign," writes Tourgenev, "march out every day to the parade ground as if on their way to the scaffold. Not one of them knows what fate is going to overtake him." Tourgenev estimates the number of military and civil officers sacrificed to this severity of discipline at 12,000 persons, all of whom were sent to Siberia; as soon as Alexander I came to the throne they were allowed to return. Tourgenev adds: "The number of victims was, therefore, calculated at 3000 every year, or 250 a month, and eight per day. Nine hundred prisoners were in the fortress of Peter and Paul alone; these, also, were released as soon as Alexander replaced Paul on the throne." It was not without good cause that Tourgenev's chief, Field-Marshal Soltykov, usually a man of few words, remarked that "Such a hideous state of things cannot last long." A few weeks before the final catastrophe, the Field-Marshal received a paper written in the Emperor's own hand, which ran: "Field-Marshal General; I send you notice of the last proscription." Few and meaning words. Ominous indeed was the designation of this proscription as the "last."[1]

Paul's changes, reforms, and laws affected the civil as well as the military population. St. Petersburg, which—with the exception of Paris and London—had, during the reign of Catherine II, become the most fashionable city in Europe, soon ceased to look like a modern town, "but like a German town of two or three centuries back." A complete metamorphosis had taken place. Equipages, coats, hats, boots, and the style of wearing the

[1] Tourgenev, *Rousskaya Starina*, vol. xlviii, pp. 265–266, 268.

hair were altered. Pressure and despotism fell on the most trifling circumstances, and made life unbearable. No officer was allowed to drive in a close carriage, but was forced either to ride on horseback or in a sledge. Carriages and foot-passengers were ordered to stop in the streets when they met the Imperial family, and those seated inside the carriages must step out and stand to make their bow.[1] Madame Vigée Lebrun relates in her Memoirs that this queer ordinance was one of those obedience to which was very troublesome. Paul was frequently to be met in the streets, either on horseback or in a sledge, and as he had no escort, recognition was not always easy. But woe to those who met him, men or women, who did not jump out immediately into the snow and stand and bow.[2] His Imperial will, no matter whether his decisions were the result of reflection or impulse, had to be obeyed, and his commands executed. Women, with their children trembling with fright, had often to alight in the snow or in the mud to salute their sovereign. Naturally, therefore, when going out on foot or driving in carriages, people tried to avoid meeting the Tsar. No one was spared. Courtiers and officers were treated with equal severity. Being always under the impression that people wished to slight him, as they had been used to do when he was Grand Duke, Paul was particular as to the manner in which courtiers approached him. Like recruits, the great ones of the realm were drilled by the Grand Master of the Ceremonies, who taught them the number and

[1] *Fraser's Magazine*, pp. 228, 230.
[2] Madame Vigée Lebrun, Souvenirs, Paris, vol. ii, p. 27.

kind of salutations to be made when in the presence of His Majesty. The Russian Autocrat had to be approached on the knees and "a sounding kiss" applied to his hand. On one occasion a foreign Ambassador, having arrived too late at Court, excused himself on the ground that the arrival in St. Petersburg of a distinguished visitor from his own country had caused his delay. Paul replied: "You must know, sir, that no one is distinguished in Russia except the person to whom I am talking, and he only during the interval of our conversation."[1] The highest dignitaries of the Empire were treated like schoolboys; they had to submit to the worst humiliations without appearing to be offended or sensitive in any way.[2] Count Panin, the Vice-Chancellor, having once granted a passport to a courier of the Austrian Ambassador without previously asking the permission of the Emperor, the latter sent his aide-de-camp to the Vice-Chancellor to inform him that "he was nothing more nor less than a fool."[3] Such episodes were of daily occurrence.

Letters were opened and read, and woe unto the writer if his expressions were such as to raise suspicion and to be communicated to the Tsar of all the Russias. The culprits were severely punished—sent to Siberia if they were Russian subjects, to the frontier in the case of foreigners. The hereditary Prince of Hessen-Rheinfels was thus expelled from St. Petersburg, his father having expressed dissatisfaction at the cold reception with which his

[1] Golovkin, p. 133, according to whom these words were addressed to Prince Repnin.

[2] *Les Razoumovsky*, ii, p. 314.

[3] Archives Voronzov, xxx, p. 16.

son had met in the Russian capital.[1] Sir Charles Whitworth, the English Ambassador, was ordered to leave St. Petersburg because the English Envoy in Stockholm had omitted, before his departure, to pay a visit to the Russian Envoy, Budberg, and had thus offended His Russian Majesty in the person of his representative.[2] Not only were Russian subjects forbidden to go abroad, but the Russian Ambassador in London, Voronzov, received the order to grant no passports to foreigners wishing to visit Russia.[3] The importation of books in any language and on any subject, as well as musical compositions, with or without words, was prohibited.[4]

It must, however, be pointed out, by way of excuse—if excuse it is—and in justice to Paul, that he easily found helpers who aided and abetted him in his mad pranks, his whims, and eccentricities. It is one of the unfortunate facts in history that whenever a ruler is inclined to be unjust and even cruel, there are always men in the immediate vicinity of the throne ready, not only to excuse the actions of the sovereign, to prove the necessity and even wisdom of his commands, but even to help him in his pursuits. Thus the responsibility for their cruelties falls not only upon the Cæsars and the Tsars, but also upon their advisers and helpers. Such was the case of Nero, of Ivan Grozny, and of Paul I., as, in fact, of all the mighty monarchs of whom we read in the blood-stained pages of their history. The brutal and insane commands of the

[1] Stedingk, *Stockholm Archiv*, March 1829.
[2] Panin Papers, ed. A. Brueckner, 1888–92, v, p. 160
[3] Archives Voronzov, x, p. 56.
[4] *Ibid.*, xxxii, p. 273.

Russian Tsar found ready executioners in men who delighted in the performance of savage acts. In this respect circumstances in Russia have not changed in the course of a century. And, just as in the times of Paul, so in those of his great grandson, Nicholas—Cæsar II, those appointed to carry out the Imperial ukases do their best or their worst to out-herod Herod in cruelty and brutality.

Persons like Rostoptshin, Araktsheev, and Koutayssov had much to answer for as regards the crazy acts of violence which took place during this reign. "Rostoptshin," wrote Count N. P. Panin, "had simply lent himself to the *métier de bourreau.*"[1] There were several officers who had been for many years among Paul's associates, and these now constituted themselves as keepers to the insane tyrant, and share with him the responsibility of many of his acts. The gruesome deeds of Ivan IV in the sixteenth century cannot be accounted as individual crimes committed by a single person, but must be looked upon as resulting from the degraded tone of the society with which he was surrounded. That he was able to find so many ready to execute his commands is in itself an extenuating circumstance in his favour. In like manner many of the horrors which occurred during the reign which immediately followed that of Catherine must be reckoned as the combined deeds of many among Paul's subjects, who were as despotic, narrow-minded, violent-tempered, and, perhaps, as irresponsible as the Emperor himself.[2]

Paul's love for pomp and ceremony was exces-

[1] Panin Papers, vol. vii, p. 180.
[2] Tourgenev *ibid.*

sive. This is and has been a trait noticeable in many sovereigns, from the Roman emperors down to modern monarchs—crowned and uncrowned. Caligula displayed this mania in a very marked degree, on the occasion of his feasts and banquets, in his dress, and in his apartments. His palaces, villas, and yachts, the famous bridge of Caligula on the Palatine, all bore testimony to his excessive delight in show and pompous extravagance. Paul in this respect greatly resembled the Roman Cæsar. Inflated with his own dignity, desirous of making himself conspicuous, of inspiring the world with his greatness and of attracting attention to himself and to everything around him, he not only attached importance to every minute detail of Court ceremonies but ordered that these should be carried out with all the gorgeous splendour imaginable. His coronation, which took place in Moscow in 1797, gave him ample opportunity to display his love of magnificence. His entry into the ancient capital was very impressive. The ceremony of coronation, which lasted several days, was preceded by dress rehearsals, so that it should pass off without a hitch. "The Emperor," writes Count Fedor Golovkin, "took part in all the rehearsals and comported himself like a child, showing a childish delight at all the pleasure prepared for him."[1] During one afternoon a second rehearsal, for the instruction of the Empress, took place in the throne-room. Maria Féodorovna—whether in ignorance or modesty—ascended the lateral steps leading to the throne, but Paul rudely called her back. "That is not the way to mount a throne,

[1] Golovkin, *La Cour de Paul I*, p. 144.

madame," he exclaimed; "please to come down and ascend the front steps." He was so fond of ceremonies that he took pleasure in inventing new ones, in which endeavour he was supported by the Master of the Ceremonies, to the great discontent of the courtiers, who were exhausted with fatigue. Paul himself was "as active as a stage manager in looking after all the details of decoration and costume."[1] Paul was very short, but tried to appear tall and majestic, and the effort was not an easy one. The coronation took place in the ancient palace of the Tsars, the Kremlin, where Bonaparte, the Corsican corporal, was soon to dictate his decrees. The following incident, which occurred during the coronation, is interesting, as evidencing Paul's pettiness in the exaction of ceremonial observances. Soon after his accession, the son of Catherine had invited Stanislaus Poniatovsky, the dethroned King of Poland and former lover of his mother, who was living as a prisoner in Grodno, to come to St. Petersburg. Paul not only took a great liking to the dethroned monarch, but grew very intimate with him. The intimacy went so far as to become embarrassing for Stanislaus. One day, with tears in his eyes, the Tsar implored him to inform him whether he really was his father, and when the Polish king endeavoured to prove that he could not claim this honour, Paul was very disappointed.[2] The King of Poland was ordered to follow the Emperor to Moscow and to be present at the coronation. Now, during one of the numerous ceremonies, the King, either tired out or forgetful,

[1] Prince Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1887, vol. i, p. 147.
[2] Golovkin, *l.c.*, p. 138, and above, p. 29.

sat down in the tribune assigned to him behind the estrade where Paul was being crowned. The Tsar remarked this, and at once sent a messenger to tell him to stand up as long as the ceremony lasted.[1]

The coronation was followed by banquets, feasts, parades, and a distribution of gifts. Decorations, titles, diamonds, estates and peasants, were given to favourites and courtiers. Count Besborodko and Prince Kourakin received gifts amounting to millions of roubles. The gorgeous ritual of the Byzantine Church so appealed to Paul's taste that he one day took it into his head to officiate himself. "I am the head of the clergy, why should I not be permitted to do everything that they do?" It was the same desire for display which also manifested itself in his mania for building. Immediately after his return to St. Petersburg he ordered the erection of St. Michael's Palace, which was built at an immense cost. As he was already troubled with the idea of falling a victim to the fate of the Romanovs and of being dethroned or assassinated, this Palace was in part intended to afford the Autocrat a safe habitation.

The mistrust which Paul felt towards every one around him, however worthy of his confidence, ended by inducing him to banish his trusty friends, Rostoptshin and Araktsheev, who would have been a protection to him against Pahlen's attacks. Utterly without reason also he fancied that his wife was plotting against his life, and caused bolts to be put upon those very doors of her apartments through which he might, in his last hours, have found a means of escape.

[1] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 147, and Golovkin, p. 145.

And through all the strange mingling of these contradictory characteristics, there still shone forth in the eccentric sovereign a natural harmlessness of disposition as well as an inclination to fun and a readiness of wit. Sablukov relates many instances of these. On one occasion, having been told that the latter, who was a good draughtsman, had drawn a portrait of him, he asked for the drawing, and then, looking at himself in the mirror, said, laughing, "Not a bad-looking phiz," and, giving the amateur artist a friendly slap on the back, left the room.[1] Sablukov also speaks of the Emperor as having a very strong feeling for justice, and, according to this writer, he exerted himself to put things right when any injustice had taken place; others, on the contrary, report of Paul that he never felt any compunction about his wrong-doing.[2] As already recorded, his mistrust extended from his friends to his wife and children. Paul had lived happily with his wife for ten years, but towards the end of Catherine's reign he had already begun to neglect her. Because Boukh, the gardener at Tsarskoé-Sélo, had presented Maria Féodorovna with fruit, he was caned. Paul did everything to annoy his wife, who was devotedly attached to him. Lafermière, the librarian, was dismissed because he was a friend of Maria Féodorovna.[3] Count N. P. Panin, having once refused to show respect for Paul's mistress, Mademoiselle Nélidov, and contempt for Maria Féodorovna, was threatened in the following words: "The path you have

[1] *Fraser's Magazine*, pp. 304, 305.
[2] Archives Voronzov, vol. viii, p. 76.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. xv, p. 83.

chosen will lead you either to the door or to the window."[1] But if Maria Féodorovna's influence had already diminished during the last years at Gatshina—since 1783, when her friends and adherents were punished on the slightest occasion—her lot became almost unbearable after Paul's accession.[2] She suffered greatly, but resigned herself and found consolation in her children. On one occasion, being furious at something the Empress had said or done, he exclaimed: "Madame, you are perhaps preparing to play the part of Catherine, but be warned that in me you will not find a Peter III." He at once ordered Rostoptshin to prepare an ukase by which Maria Féodorovna was to be detained in the convent of Solovetsk, and the two Princes Nicholas and Michael declared illegitimate. Only with much difficulty was Rostoptshin able to persuade the enraged Autocrat to abandon his idea. Rostoptshin's influence, however, was on the wane.

Thus the Swedish Envoy, Stedingk, writing between the 20th and 31st of August 1798, says: "The disgrace which fell upon so many who held posts about the Court, or were otherwise in high positions, most of whom were attached to the Empress or had in some way been patronised by her, is being shared by many of those who were believed to be in the highest favour of the Emperor, but whom he is now sending away or depriving of office. The Empress is the more unhappy at this seeing that it is partly attributed to her jealousy of a young girl, the daughter of the Attorney to the

[1] Panin Papers, vol. i, p. 106.

[2] Archives Voronzov, vol. viii, p. 67; vol. xxiv, p. 257.

Crown, to whom the Emperor has shown attention."[1] In another despatch of the 1–12th October 1798, he writes further: "As long as the Empress held any power over the mind of the Emperor, or any influence in affairs, she did all she could to avert danger from her family and from the State. The statesmen and officials chosen from among her friends or *protégés* participated in her sentiments, and their conduct was regulated by the consideration of their own peace and their own fortune, neither of which was it possible to maintain amid the expense and anxiety involved in the management of the larger affairs of State. But those times are past. Every day now gives birth to some fresh disgrace which falls on the head of those who are known to be the Empress's friends or to have obtained their posts through her intervention. The Emperor is embittered against her and against everything in any way associated with her. Among those who have suffered are mutual friends of both the Emperor and Empress; Mademoiselle Nélidov, the Kourakins, Nicholas Roumyanzev, Prince Repnin are among many who have been exiled or banished from Court. Fresh actors on the stage have brought about a change of scene, and the good understanding in the department of the Ministry being thus interrupted, the Emperor seeks means of diversion and has become more open to foreign influence. What the result of these changes will be it is not easy to predict; but as sentiments of virtue and religion have been deeply implanted in the hearts of the Emperor and his family, it is to be hoped that there will be a return

[1] Stedingk, August 20, 1798.

to better things, and with it a relief from the anxiety into which society in general has been plunged by so many unforeseen losses of favour and the fear as to his individual fate in which every one is living."

Paul's mistrust, as mentioned above, went so far as to make him issue an order to the architect Brenna, who had constructed the St. Michael's Palace, to build up the door leading from the Emperor's apartments into those of his wife.[1] As a natural consequence of his conduct to them—his rough and often cruel behaviour—his children, who had been spoiled by the kind treatment of their grandmother, did not feel an overwhelming love for their father. If we are to believe contemporaries, they even hated him. "The Grand Duke Alexander," wrote Rostoptshin, "hates his father, the Grand Duke Constantine fears him, whilst the daughter, under the influence of her mother, dislikes him. They all meet him with smiling faces, but, in reality, they would like to see him turned into dust."[2] The dislike was mutual. Paul suddenly developed a great and passionate love for Prince Eugene of Würtemberg, whom he intended to declare heir to the throne. "Very shortly," he once said, "I shall be compelled to cut down heads that were once dear to me."[3] And it seems that he intended to send his wife to Kholmogory, not far from Archangel, where the family of the former Emperor, Ivan of Brunswick, had been detained. Alexander was to be imprisoned in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, and Constantine in the citadel at St. Petersburg.[4]

[1] *Fraser's Magazine*, p. 318.
[2] Archives Voronzov, vol. xxiv, p. 274.
[3] *Historische Zeitschrift*, Munich, 1859, &c., vol. iii, pp. 152–153.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

But if the Empress had lost her former influence over her husband, it was, perhaps, not so much on account of Paul's violence of temper, as in consequence of the Emperor having become attached to Mademoiselle Nélidov. Although Paul—as was to be expected from a man of his temperament—was furious when informed of a gossips' rumour that his wife and Mademoiselle Nélidov governed the Empire in his name, he was nevertheless for a period deeply under the influence of the latter.

The eighteenth century in Russia was pre-eminently a century of women. Russia's destinies were ruled, with the exception of a short interval (Peter II, Peter III), by Catherine I, Anna Ivanovna, Anna Leopoldovna, Elizabeth Petrovna, and Catherine II. Paul was the first male sovereign after a long line of female rulers. But, even under him, the influence of the women had not diminished, and whilst he reigned Mademoiselle Nélidov ruled. For a considerable time, at least, she exercised a great influence over Paul, who looked upon her as his guardian angel. This somewhat remarkable woman was born on the 12th of December 1756, and was chosen as a Maid of Honour to the Grand Duchess in 1777. According to general report she was not pretty, but she was slender and graceful, could dance delightfully as well as sing, and, moreover, her conversation was charming and extremely witty. Being daily in her company the Grand Duke had grown accustomed to her society, and evil tongues soon began to put a false interpretation on their intimacy. The Grand Duke had at first taken a dislike to her, on account of what he thought her malicious tongue, but she



MADEMOISELLE CATHARINE IVANOVNA NELIDOV (IN 1776)
After a portrait at the Court of Peterhof.

had insensibly won him over, and she knew how to divert his mind and to humour his capricious temper. The Empress at last began to notice the friendly relations between them, and they were the subject of several articles in the *Moniteur Français*, under the heading of "News from St. Petersburg."

Mademoiselle Nélidov, however, was clever enough to see her way to put an end to this gossip about herself. According to her biographer her relations with Paul were of a platonic nature, and she has, therefore, been unjustly compared to Mademoiselle La Vallière, Madame de Pompadour, and Madame Dubarry. Paul affirmed the purity of his relationship with her in a letter addressed to his mother. On his return from Finland in 1790, when very ill and seriously thinking that he might die, he wrote to Catherine, conjuring her not to abandon his friend for whose fate he entertained serious misgivings. "In this solemn moment of my life," he wrote, "I have to fulfil a duty towards my God and my conscience—I must justify an innocent person against accusations which have been levelled at her on my account. I have noticed how much human malevolence has been busy misinterpreting the spiritual bond which unites me to Mademoiselle Nélidov. I swear before the divine tribunal, from which none of us can escape, that both of us can appear before it without any reproach. Why could not I seal my oath with my blood? But, in bidding good-bye to life, I solemnly declare that our connection has been pure, holy, and without blemish." The feeling which he experienced for Mademoiselle

Nélidov cannot be described as passion; it amused him to make court to her, but, according to Golytzin, on the evenings when she happened to be absent from the Palace the Grand Duke was in even better spirits than usual. Mademoiselle Moukhanov, another Maid of Honour, asserts that the good understanding between the Grand Duke and his wife was never interrupted during the whole time that he was paying court to Mademoiselle Nélidov. Maria Féodorovna herself seems to have been convinced of the platonic nature of her husband's friendship for her Maid of Honour. Yet, in a moment of depression, the Grand Duchess once complained to Catherine of her trouble. For all reply the latter is reported to have led her up to a mirror, and to have said: "See how beautiful you are; your rival is an ugly little thing; leave off fretting and rest assured of your charms."[1] Judging, however, from Catherine's attitude towards her daughter-in-law it is permissible to doubt this episode. Maria Féodorovna continued to be jealous, and in one of her letters (1792) to Sergius Plestsheev, a friend of Paul, who was attached to her, she accused Mademoiselle Nélidov of wishing to play the part of Madame de Maintenon as soon as she, the Grand Duchess, was dead, and she always feared that her death might occur while giving birth to a child. In 1792, however, Mademoiselle Nélidov retired to the convent of Smolna, as she was publicly accused of being Paul's mistress and of causing the quarrel between the Grand Duke and his wife. Paul had begged her to remain and she had at

[1] Russian Archives, 1878, vol. i, p. 308.

first given way to him. A little later, however, she carried out her decision, but again returned in 1794 to Pavlovsk. It was then that Maria Féodorovna sought the friendship of Mademoiselle Nélidov, and the two women for some time acted in common to save Paul from his new friends and from his own eccentricities. Both were attached to him, each in her way, but Maria Féodorovna was less unselfish than her rival in her love for Paul.

It was at this period that Paul's character underwent a change for the worse and that he became more and more suspicious and irritable on the slightest occasion. Excited by the events which had occurred in France since 1789, he saw revolution and Jacobins everywhere. He kept away from his mother and scarcely ever went to St. Petersburg. Maria Féodorovna was rightly afraid that Catherine would declare Alexander her heir and exclude Paul from the succession. She was intelligent enough to avail herself of Mademoiselle Nélidov's influence over Paul to save her husband and herself from such a catastrophe. "For," she wrote to one of her friends, "if such a calamity should happen he would not be the only one to suffer, I should suffer too."[1] But the efforts of Mademoiselle Nélidov to reconcile Paul with his mother irritated him against her, and a breach was the result. Maria Féodorovna, who had not considered it beneath her dignity to gain the friendship of the favourite for her own purposes, was not slow in abetting the rupture between Paul and his friend. Mademoiselle Nélidov left the Court and again retired to the convent

[1] *Cf.* Shoumigorsky, *La Favorite d'un Tsar*, p. 96.

of Smolna. She accused Paul, in a letter addressed to Kourakin, of baseness and treachery. Paul asked her to return in October 1796, but "his protestations," she wrote to Kourakin, "only disgusted her"; she could only feel sympathy for a noble heart, and even his remorse could not excuse the baseness of which he was capable.[1] After he became Emperor, however, Nélidov, with whom the Empress Maria Féodorovna had concluded a pact, which this time lasted all their lives, and is attested by the correspondence exchanged between them,[2] regained her influence over Paul until her place was taken by the Princess Gagarina. This lady, who was exceedingly beautiful, was introduced to the Tsar by the enemies of her predecessor in favour, whose power over Paul they feared. The Princess Gagarina was a Mademoiselle Lapoukhin, daughter of Lapoukhin, Director of Police at Moscow. She became Paul's mistress, and her father was created a prince in return for his complaisance. All her friends came into power and were appointed to high and influential posts. It is interesting to notice that, even in the case of this pretty woman, it was maintained that her relation to Paul was purely platonic. Stedingk, the Swedish Envoy, wrote in his despatches that "he was sure, as Paul was very religious, there was nothing of a sensual character in his liaison with Mademoiselle Lapoukhin." Sablukov's[3] tale, however, is very different; in his eyes, she

[1] *l.c.*, p. 120.

[2] *Correspondance de Marie Féodorovna avec Mademoiselle Nélidov*, Paris, 1896.

[3] *Fraser's Magazine*, p. 308.



PRINCESS ANNA PETROVNA GAGARENA.

After a portrait in the possession of Prince P. A. Goltzin.

was the *maîtresse en titre*. Married to Prince Gagarin, she left her husband in order to belong entirely to the Emperor. Three houses were bought on the quay of the Neva and united into one palace for the Prince Gagarin, "the indulgent husband of the favoured brunette." Koutayssov, Paul's former barber, now Count and Grand Master of the Horse, hired a house near the palace of Prince Gagarin, where he established his own mistress, Madame Chevalier, a French actress. "I have frequently," says Sablukov, "seen the Emperor leave him there and fetch him away again on his return from his own mistress." Voronzov, when referring to the Princess and her father, wrote: "We have seen a father infamous enough to prostitute his own daughter."[1] The Princess Gagarina was so influential that even Count Panin sought her protection. It is worthy of note that the St. Michael's Palace was painted in rose, after the colour of the Princess's gloves. The palace thus received the name of the Archangel, and the colours of the Imperial mistress.

The impetuosity and hastiness characteristic of all Paul's actions equally manifested themselves in his foreign policy. The most important affairs of State were treated in a capricious, passionate, and haphazard fashion on the impulse of the moment. Edicts and decrees were issued in an autocratic manner without the knowledge of the Government.[2] Although he was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, Rostoptshin complained that he could have no system of policy as the Tsar wished to do every-

[1] Panin Papers, vi, pp. 476–477.
[2] Archives Voronzov, xxx, p. 97.

thing himself, suffered no delay, and brooked no contradiction.[1] Foreign affairs were decided by the passing whim of the Emperor, who had a decided, almost furious will, which "all the wheels of the Government machine must at once obey."[2] Paul's favourites and aides-de-camp exercised more influence than the Vice-Chancellor and the oldest members of the Government.

That Catherine had made frequent wars was sufficient reason for Paul to be peacefully inclined. Paul's early policy had, therefore, been one of peace. He withdrew his forces from Persia, and, leaving Georgia to her own levies, discontinued the recruiting ordained by his mother's regulations —that is, three men to every five hundred souls. In a circular dictated to Ostermann for communication to the foreign Powers, the Tsar declared that humanity did not allow him to refuse his beloved subjects the peace for which they sighed, and which was a necessity for the country after the constant warfare which had lasted forty years. But, even if the Russian armies took no part in the war with France, the Emperor, so the circular declared, would nevertheless remain as closely united with his allies as before, and would endeavour strenuously to oppose the progress of the mad French Republic. Paul was, however, gradually drawn into a war with France. Indeed, considering his hasty temperament, uncontrollable temper, and hatred for France, the Tsar's peaceful policy was bound to be of very short duration.

The crimes of the Reign of Terror and the

[1] Archives Voronzov, p. 276.

[2] Czartorysky, *ibid.*, also Panin Papers, v, p. 170.



COUNT IVAN TAVTOVITSH KOUTAYS OV
Aide-de-camp to Alexander I.

misfortunes of the Bourbons had increased the Tsar's abhorrence of the Revolution and his hatred of France. He offered hospitality to Louis XVIII in Mitau, and resolved to join the coalition against revolutionary France. The French having taken possession of Malta, a few knights of the Maltese Order conceived the idea of offering the Grand Mastership of the Order to the Emperor; Paul, fond of ceremonies and wishing to pose as a hero of chivalry before the Princess Gagarina, accepted with joy this title so famous in history. "This title—the Grand Master of so many knights-errant," says Sablukov, "at the very moment when a romantic love for the Princess Gagarina was inflaming his tender heart, set the poor man quite beside himself." It was somewhat strange to see the Russian Emperor, the head and defender of the Greek Orthodox Church, thus recognising, as Grand Master of a Roman Catholic Order, the Pope as his Chief. Count Litta arranged a solemn ceremony, in accordance with the ancient rites of the Order, when Paul entered upon his new dignity.

The idea of conquering Malta, his jealousy of Bonaparte's successes in the East, were so many factors instrumental in making Paul abandon his peaceful policy and join Turkey, England, Austria, and Naples in a coalition against Bonaparte. The Emperor of Austria availed himself of this change in Paul's sentiments and asked for Russia's assistance against the French armies in Italy. To flatter Paul's vanity the Austrian Emperor offered the chief command of the armies of the Coalition to a Russian General. Paul acquiesced and at once appointed the famous general, Souvarov, to this post.

Souvarov at that moment lived in retirement on his estates, having incurred the Emperor's disfavour by an epigram and by some unseemly jokes on the new organisation and uniforms of the army. But as soon as Paul wanted this veteran soldier he loaded him with honours and compliments. Souvarov took the command of the army and achieved victories on the banks of the river Adda, the river Trebbia, and at Novi. He crossed the Alps by the St. Gothard and entered Switzerland, but here the second Russian general, Korsakov, had been defeated by the French, under Massena, at Zurich, and Souvarov was compelled to retreat into the Glarus, and to lead the remains of his army back to Russia.

On his return to St. Petersburg, the Emperor refused to see Souvarov, and the latter retired in disgrace to his estates, where he shortly afterwards died in 1800. The capricious Tsar was disgusted with the treatment which he had received from Austria and England. Paul, as Souvarov himself had done, accused Austria of treason in the Italian campaign. Bonaparte, therefore, whose despotic principles now reassured the autocratic Tsar, and whose glory dazzled him, availed himself of Paul's indignation against Austria and managed to win him over to his cause. Taking advantage of the change in Paul's attitude and sentiments, Napoleon began by sending back to Paul all the Russian prisoners clothed in new uniforms and well provisioned. This clever move on the part of the First Consul at once gained him the Tsar's heart, and Paul was the more touched by his action since Austria and England had refused to exchange the Russian soldiers for the



COUNT GENERAL ALEXANDER VASSILIEVITSH SOUVAROV.

French prisoners. Paul, with his usual impetuosity, was now seized with an increasing passion for Bonaparte. He spoke of the First Consul's noble conduct, he surrounded himself with his portraits, he drank his health in public, and ordered Louis XVIII to quit Mitau. Napoleon, said Paul, had suppressed anarchy and revolution, and there was no reason why Russia should not come to an understanding with him. Annoyed at, and disturbed by the maritime tyranny of Great Britain, which had declared the ports of France and her allies in a state of siege, Paul renewed the famous act of armed neutrality, and sought the support of Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark. The First Consul hastened to declare his assent to the Russian principles. The Tsar of Russia and the First Consul then entered into an alliance. A plan was formed to invade India and to overthrow the English rule, and the vanguard of a great Cossack army had already, amid great difficulties, reached the left bank of the Volga in March 1801, when the Chief of the Cossacks suddenly received the news of Paul's death, and with it the order to return. The Tsar's sudden death broke up the coalition, to the great satisfaction of the British Government, to whom the League of Neutrality had caused a considerable amount of uneasiness.

CHAPTER XI

L'EMPÉREUR EST FOU. THE DEED IS DONE

Period of terrorism—Paul is mad—Opinions of Russian statesmen—The mad captain—Conspiracy to depose Paul—Panin and Pahlen—Alexander's consent—Paul's suspicion—Whitworth accused of conspiring against Paul—Maria Féodorovna is aware of the conspiracy—Paul's last days—The night of the assassination—*Il est achevé*—Paul's character.

THINGS now grew perceptibly worse and worse. More particularly during the year 1799, the records of official violence, of brutal sentences and repressive punishments increased beyond reckoning. Notice to leave the capital within twenty-four hours was scattered broadcast; and even women were treated in this summary fashion. One young woman of position, who ventured to marry against the wish of the Emperor, was banished, together with her whole family. The Princess Dashkov relates in her Memoirs that, as the result of a mere passing fit of temper on the part of the Emperor, she had to remain exiled on one of her poorest estates during the greater part of his reign. Again, Kotzebue tells us that as he was on his way to pay a visit to his wife's relations in Esthonia, he was seized in the most barbarous manner at Mitau and packed off to Siberia. The only reason for this—so he learnt from Koutayssov after his "pardon"—was the fact that he was an author. Madame Sagrjashski, having failed in some act of politeness toward the Princess Lapoukhin, mother of the Emperor's mistress,



PAUL I, EMPEROR OF RUSSIA IN 1798.

A mezzotint engraving by Dunkerton, after the portrait by Stchoukin.

straightway received the usual orders to leave St. Petersburg. She, however, was able to secure some degree of clemency, and was graciously conceded a few months in which to set her affairs in order.[1] Noblemen were deprived of their estates for the smallest breach of discipline, and even put in chains and condemned to hard labour. An almost grimly comic episode was the banishment from St. Petersburg of all cab-drivers, because one of them was found with a pair of pistols and a dagger upon him during parade.

During this whole period the administration of justice naturally remained the most uncertain factor in the situation. There was absolutely nothing to check the police or the officers of the custom-house; they were free to make whatever arbitrary exactions they chose.[2] As correspondence was usually opened, most people had recourse to chemical inks, and many letters of the period concluded with the request of the writer that his missive should at once be burned.[3] The first dignitaries of the Empire had to listen silently to the most insulting language on the part of the Tsar, and Rostoptshin, Panin, and the famous general Souvarov were no exceptions in this respect. Besborodko died in consequence of the annoyance caused to him by Paul's uncourteous behaviour.

Even Rostoptshin, who had hoped for good things during Paul's government, wrote to Voronzov in March 1800: "Know once for all that the Emperor talks with no one, either about himself

[1] *Les Razoumovsky*, iii, pp. 119, 120.
[2] Archives Voronzov, xxxii, pp. 255 and f.
[3] *Les Razoumovsky*, ii, p. 389.

or about affairs; he suffers no one to speak to him; he gives orders, and insists on their execution without suffering a word of question. He can hardly conceal from himself that he is far from being beloved. He calls me a Minister; I am in reality nothing but a secretary."[1] When even such men as Rostoptshin, Goudovitsh, Nicolai, and others, who enjoyed Paul's confidence and were in close relations with the Court, for no apparent reason suddenly found themselves treated with coldness and suspicion by the Emperor, and in danger of disgrace or banishment, it is easy to understand that Voronzov, the Russian Ambassador in London, unhesitatingly refused to return to Russia when Paul offered him the post of Chancellor, and that others, such as Arkadij Morkov and Alexander Voronzov, thought themselves fortunate to be enjoying the peace of private life, far from the royal residence and the arbitrary decrees of the central power.[2]

The Russian statesmen were now all convinced that the Tsar of all the Russias was a raging madman, not only unfit to reign but dangerous to his family, to his surroundings, and to the Empire; the more dangerous in view of the unlimited power of his despotic sway.

The physician Rogerson wrote to Voronzov: "I cannot help pitying our master for the evil he is causing; there is an evolution of the *tout ensemble* in him; born with the passion of doing good, he is unable to distinguish between good and evil, but allows himself to be swayed by his weaknesses or the violence of false ideas."[3] Voronzov replied that

[1] Archives Voronzov, viii, p. 276.
[2] *Ibid.*, xiv, p. 266.
[3] *Ibid.*, xxx, p. 116.

Paul was mad, and had taken the Emperors of Morocco and the Shahs of Persia as his prototypes.[1] Under his detestable government men of honour and dignity retired from military service. Insults, humiliation and exile were the order of the day, and State officers were always prepared to be dismissed or to take to flight.[2] His actions and conduct towards foreign countries could only be explained by utter mental aberration.[3] He was as irresponsible as a child that wounds itself and others with a razor, because it has never seen that instrument before.[4]

In February 1801, only a few days before Paul's death, Count S. R. Voronzov, who was at Southampton, wrote sympathisingly as follows to Novosylzov, who was also just then in England: "You say that we ought not to judge a certain person, in whom you and I are greatly interested, too harshly, since the strain under which he has been forced to live has spoilt his character; you mean, one must not lose hope because the said person is steeling us to the endurance of misery. There might be a certain truth in this if one could fix a time at which the change was to take place; such change, you say, is inevitable and natural. But if, in spite of its necessity and feasibility, the change still does not take place, there must then be some radical evil which prevents it. As regards the strain upon him which has spoilt his character, let me say, dear friend, that the strength or weakness of the soul may be compared to that of the

[1] Panin Papers, vi, p. 434.
[2] Archives Voronzov, xvii, pp. 29, 69, 106.
[3] *Ibid.*, xx, 108; xxii, p. 532.
[4] *Ibid.*, x, pp. 110, 280.

physical body. There are soft bodies without elasticity, such as paper, wax, lead, tin, &c., which remain in the form into which they have been squeezed; ivory and steel either break under pressure, or, when released, fly back into their former position. The elastic power of the air and of steam, as you know better than I do, causes them both to deal destruction to whatsoever exercises too great a pressure upon them. This is unfortunately the case in this instance. We have had opportunity of seeing what wax and tin are like. All is lost therefore. Try all I can, I am unable to find any comfort in the thought of the future. It is as if you and I were on a vessel of which the crew spoke a language that was unintelligible to us. I am sea-sick and cannot rise from my berth. You tell me that a storm has risen and that there is no hope for the ship, and that the Captain has gone mad, and is showering blows on the crew. The crew, numbering over thirty men, are afraid to offer any opposition, because the Captain has already thrown one sailor overboard and killed a second. And so the only thing is to wait for the ship to go down. You say, however, that there is still some hope of deliverance, for the second officer is a more reasonable, younger, and milder-tempered man, and enjoys the confidence of the crew. And so I beg you to return to the upper deck, and to represent to the young man and the crew, that they ought to save the ship, which, together with the cargo, in part belongs to the former; they are thirty men to one, and it is absurd to be afraid of being killed by the mad Captain; while, otherwise, in a short

time all the sailors, and the young man, will have been drowned by him. Then you tell me, that you do not understand their speech and so cannot speak to the crew, but that you will go up and see what is going on. You come back to inform me that the danger is growing greater, and that the madman remains at the helm; you still, however, do not give up hope. Farewell, dear friend! you are in a happier condition of mind than I am; I have lost all hope."[1]

And even Paul's friend Rostoptshin admitted, like Rogerson, not without a pang of pity, that the Autocrat was mad: "Heaven only knows to what all this will lead."[2]

But although all dignitaries of the State, and even members of the Imperial family, were convinced that Paul was mad, to breathe such a statement was dangerous. Who could dare to do it? The Tsar is infallible, and he who dared to doubt the soundness of his mind deserved to die. There was only one way to save the Empire from the extravagances of this modern Caligula — a conspiracy, and swift and sure assassination. *Aux grands maux les grands remèdes.* And so it happened. At first a plan was devised to dethrone the Emperor and to proclaim his son Alexander. Count N. P. Panin played the principal part in this plan. It had been suggested by two analogous cases in the history of European monarchs, that of George III and of King Christian VII. Panin thought that just as in England and in Denmark, so in Russia, the heir-apparent could be invested

[1] Archives Voronzov, xi, pp. 380–381.
[2] *Ibid.*, xi, pp. 328–381.

with the supreme power without being compelled to employ extreme measures. But the temperament of the Russian ruler, the host of spies that were watching everywhere, made secrecy and conspiracy a necessity. The above-mentioned Count Panin, the nephew of the Count Panin who had been the tutor of Paul, had the reputation of being a man not only of talent and energy, but also of honesty of purpose, and he decided to initiate Alexander into his plans. "It would not have been wise," writes Czartorysky,[1] "to attempt to do anything without first being assured of the consent of the heir-apparent." Czartorysky, in spite of his many disillusions concerning the Emperor, who had failed to fulfil the promises he had made as Grand Duke to Poland, had remained devotedly attached to Alexander, and greatly regretted the fact that the Grand Duke was implicated in the dethronement of his father. Panin himself wrote, later on, to the Empress Maria Féodorovna, who always considered him as the chief party responsible for Paul's death, that he was in possession of a note which proved beyond any possible doubt that Alexander had sanctioned all his plans, and had been a party to the conspiracy with a view to dethrone his father,[2] and that he had had interviews with himself and Pahlen.

"The truth is," writes Bernhardi, "that the plot was first set on foot by a man of distinction—namely, the Vice-Chancellor, Count Panin. His first confederate was Admiral Ribas. Panin, from the time

[1] *Mémoires*, p. 234.

[2] Panin's letter was published by Schiemann in *Die Ermordung Paul's*, 1902, p. 55.

he was a youth, had been brought into close touch with the Emperor. Indeed, it was only a man who had been for a long time on an intimate footing with the Imperial family that could have projected such a plan; for it was indispensable to its success that the Grand Duke Alexander should be won over, and who else could have ventured to make such open confession to the young Prince? Panin certainly made it one of his first considerations to seek means of revealing the matter to the Grand Duke, and, as it appears, he did it himself before he had entered into any compact or understanding with Pahlen. He sought to win over the Grand Duke by representing to him that the welfare of the State and nation demanded that he should be made co-regent with his father, that it was the entire wish of the nation to see him in that position, and that the Senate and he himself would force the Emperor, without any assistance from the Grand Duke, to acknowledge him as co-regent. The Grand Duke, who met with daily ill-treatment from his father and was hardly less than any of his subjects in a continual state of fear and suspense, would not at first hear anything of the matter; but though he put aside the question he did not do so in a way which forbade a recurrence to the subject, and after repeated conversations he came round to the view that a change was required, and his final co-operation was now to be depended upon." [1]

And in his later historical work, Bernhardi expresses himself to the following effect with regard to the share that Panin and Pahlen had in the

[1] *Historische Zeitschrift*, Munich, 1859, &c., iii, pp. 146–147.

plot. He writes: "When with Alexander, Panin naturally could speak of nothing but of depriving the mad Emperor of his control over the government, and of forcing him to give up the crown, or else to nominate the Prince as co-regent, and in this way abdicate his power. As the body of conspirators—for such they must now soon be called—grew in numbers, Alexander insisted on their repeated promise that no harm should be done to his father. . . . Count Panin had rightly judged that, before any effort was made to induce other confederates to join the plot, it was above all things necessary to gain Count Pahlen, the Minister of the Police and General Governor of St. Petersburg, over to the cause. . . . Under his protection the conspirators would be in comparative safety and might prepare for action. That Panin believed that Pahlen might be safely reckoned upon is especially indicative of the condition of things in Russia at that epoch. For Pahlen had been given his title by Paul and had been enriched with many earthly blessings, and at that time was being treated with the highest favour and confidence by the Emperor. But for that very reason he felt his situation was subject to daily perils, for he was directly at the mercy of the Emperor's caprices. He has been frequently looked upon as the original instigator of the plot against Paul; but this was not so; nor would it have been possible for him to undertake such a *rôle*, seeing that he was not in the intimate relations with the Grand Duke Alexander, which, as already stated, alone would have made it feasible for him.

"Panin, however, had not been mistaken about him. Pahlen without delay joined in the projected



COUNT PETER ALEXEEVITSH PAHLEN.

From an engraving by Walker, after a portrait by Kugelchen.

undertaking, and as he far outran the other conspirators in energy and intellect, and as, moreover, in the position he held, the success of the affair or the ruin of the conspirators depended upon him, he eventually slid into taking the lead in the whole business. Even Panin had to retire into the background, while the others of the party were merely, it seemed, tools in his hands."[1]

Pahlen, who was Governor of St. Petersburg and thus had easy access to the Palace and to the Grand Duke, arranged the first interview between Alexander and Panin. The latter represented to the heir-apparent of Russia that it was his sacred duty to save his country. If Paul continued to reign, millions of people were exposed to the follies and eccentricities of a single individual of unsound intellect; the liberty and even the life of his mother and of the Imperial family were threatened at any moment.

The fate of Russia was in Alexander's hand. If he consented to depose his father, he would prevent the latter from inflicting greater calamities on Russia. "Although," says Czartorysky, "Russia really suffered much under the maniacal government of Paul, and there were no means in that country of restraining or confining a mad sovereign, it was a thousand pities that a Prince so anxious and so well qualified to be a benefactor to his country did not hold entirely aloof from a conspiracy which resulted almost inevitably in his father's assassination. All his life Alexander felt in his own mind the sombre reflection of the crime against the person of his father which had re-

[1] Bernhardi, *Geschichte Russland's*, ii, 2, pp. 424–425.

bounded on himself, and the thought of which he could never annihilate."[1]

The following account, given by Pahlen in conversation with Langeron (1804), also throws a side-light on the kind of secret relations which Panin had with the Grand Duke Alexander:—

"Some one had awakened the Emperor's suspicion concerning my intimacy with the Grand Duke Alexander. We both grew aware of this, and I did not dare allow myself be seen in company with the young Prince, nor did we venture to speak to each other for any length of time, although our official duties gave us the opportunity of doing so. We were forced, therefore, to communicate to each other our ideas concerning necessary regulations in writing. It was, I confess, an imprudent and dangerous way of going to work, but the only one possible. Count Panin undertook to carry the notes from one to the other; we (Pahlen and Panin) read the Grand Duke's when they were brought, answered them, and then burnt them on the spot. One day, while I was waiting in the Emperor's ante-room, Panin thrust a note into my hand; I was on the point of entering the Emperor's room. I thought I had time to read the note, to answer and burn it, but Paul suddenly and unexpectedly came out of his bedroom, and seeing me, he called me to follow him into his boudoir, the door of which he closed behind us. I had scarcely time to hide the note in my right-hand coat-pocket. The Emperor spoke of indifferent things; he was in a good temper that morning. Quite in a joking way, he suddenly tried

[1] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 236.

to thrust his hands into my pockets, saying: 'I am going to see what you have there, perhaps a *billet doux*.' 'Well, dear Langeron,' continued Pahlen, as he went on with his tale, 'you know me, and are aware that I am not timid, nor easily put out of countenance; but I confess, that if at that moment any one had opened my veins, they would not have found a drop of blood in them.'

"'How did you manage to save yourself?' asked Langeron, who was eagerly listening.

"'Quite easily,' replied Pahlen, 'I said to the Emperor, "Sire, what are you doing! leave my pockets alone! You hate snuff, and I am a great snuff-taker; my handkerchief is full of it. You will soil your hands, and make them smell in a way you do not like." He took his hands away, and exclaimed, 'Phew! how disgusting! You are right!'

"And so I got out of the fix I was in."[1]

Alexander at last gave his consent. It is not without interest to notice that, soon after the assassination of Paul, rumours were current that the English Ambassador, Whitworth, instigated by his Government, had first conceived the idea of the conspiracy. "I know," wrote Count A. N. Welyaminov Sernov, "that the idea of assassinating Paul first emanated from Whitworth and Olga Alexandrovna Gerebzov, a sister of the Zoubovs, with whom the English Ambassador maintained an intimate relationship."[2] Napoleon, too, plainly accused the English Government of having been a party to the death of Paul. But Prince Adam Czar-

[1] *Revue Britannique*, July 1895, pp. 62–63.
[2] Schiemann, *Die Ermordung Paul's*, p. 16.

torysky repudiates this accusation. "I utterly disbelieve the story that English money contributed to this event. For even supposing—and I am sincerely convinced there is no foundation for such a belief—that the English Government of that day was devoid of all feelings of morality, such an expenditure would have been totally unnecessary."[1] It must also be borne in mind that Whitworth received the intimation to leave St. Petersburg on the 27th of May, 1800. Panin, too, was exiled from St. Petersburg on the 15th of December of the same year. It is more than probable that had Panin remained in the capital Paul might have been spared, but Panin was exiled from St. Petersburg, and other men had to be entrusted with the execution of the plan.

The chief part naturally now fell to Pahlen, Chief of the Police, and the adoption of the violent measures which led to the assassination was decided upon. Paul, to his own detriment, also exiled his best friend, Rostoptshin. Pahlen was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, and from his own relation of the events which led to the death of Paul it is evident that he took the initiative in the last phase of the conspiracy. In an account which he gave in 1804 to Count Langeron he makes this fact clear. His account runs as follows: "Having been exalted to very high and responsible posts, I was one of those who were most exposed to the threatening outbursts of disfavour; I had, therefore, to be on my guard, not only to avert this danger from myself, but to save Russia—it might be Europe—from the horror of a destruc-

[1] A. Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 238.

tive and unavoidable conflagration. For six whole months I had been considering the necessity of deposing Paul from the throne; at the same time it seemed, and indeed was, impossible to attain this end without the consent, or rather without the co-operation of the Grand Duke Alexander. At least, it would be necessary to inform him of the design. I took an opportunity of sounding him on the matter, at first approaching it casually and in vague terms, merely making passing remarks about his father's character. Alexander listened, sighed, and said nothing. This was not, however, what I wanted. So I determined to break the ice, and told him in plain terms what I considered had now become an unavoidable necessity. At first he seemed indignant at my proposition, and said, he was not blind to the danger which threatened both himself and the realm, but that he had determined to bear everything, and not to take any action against his father. I did not allow myself, however, to be frightened out of my intentions, and I continued, at intervals, urgently to represent to him the absolute need of a change. Each day some fresh act of madness made the necessity more evident. I endeavoured to work on Alexander's love for his own person, by showing him that, if he refused the crown, the alternative was either imprisonment, or even death. And so at last I succeeded in overcoming his filial piety, and in inducing him to talk over with us the best way of bringing about this change, the pressing necessity for which he could not hide from himself."[1]

Maria Féodorovna, too, knew what was being

[1] *Revue Britannique*, July, 1895, pp. 63–64.

plotted, and had her own little party of intriguers, who, however, were powerless to accomplish much against the larger schemes of the main conspiracy. The Kourakin family, who were close allies of the Empress, played the chief part in this side-plot; they flattered their noble patroness by holding before her the vision of the Imperial Power, of the unique Autocracy of Russia. She saw herself playing the part of Catherine over again. They put it to her that the Grand Duke Alexander was obviously too young, inexperienced, weak and easily led—he would, himself, shrink from accepting the burden of the crown: whereas the brilliant reign of the Empress Catherine was still fresh in the minds of the people; older people could also recall the reign of the Empress Elizabeth as a period of happiness and prosperity; in short, Russia was accustomed to female rule, and had always found itself best off when under it—and the nation was longing for the return of the milder sway of an Empress. And, furthermore, they argued, she herself was beyond measure beloved; and the love of the nation, combined with all these delightful remembrances, was, in itself, sufficient to place her on that exalted pinnacle.

It was natural that the Empress should lend a willing ear to such words; she was the more easily convinced of their truth because she knew herself to be greatly beloved—indeed, her entire previous and after life had for motive an almost feverish hankering after popularity. She had placed herself at the head of many benevolent institutions and had undertaken their direction, with little experience, it is true, of what was required, but with

unmitigated zeal and not a little ostentation. She never took a walk without thinking of how she might bring about some slight incident which should give rise to an anecdote, showing her forth to the people as full of kindness of heart and of dignified condescension. She never forgot the part she wished to play before them, and consequently, in later life, her whole manner had about it something decidedly theatrical and artificial.[1]

In the meantime Paul's tyrannical cruelties had made his deposition inevitable. The Emperor had left the old palace and was now residing at that of St. Michael, which was built like a fortress, surrounded with canals and drawbridges, full of secret staircases and underground passages.[2] Princess Gagarina was also lodged in the Palace under the Emperor's cabinet, a private staircase leading to her apartment. Rumours of the conspiracy gradually spread through all circles of St. Petersburg society. The Zoubovs, who had been banished to their estates, had returned to St. Petersburg, and among them the Madame Gerebzov who had had a liaison with Whitworth. The word went about that several generals, Talysin and others, were frequently holding secret parties, "*des petits soupers fins*," which lasted far into the night, and to which great significance attached.

Considerable agitation also prevailed at this moment in the diplomatic circles. Paul had broken off from the coalition, and had declared war against England. "The whole appearance of society," says Sablukov, "showed clearly that something

[1] Bernhardi, *Historische Zeitschrift*, iii, p. 149.
[2] *Fraser's Magazine*, p. 311.

extraordinary was going on; the freedom with which the Emperor was blamed, his extravagances ridiculed, and his severities recorded, were evident proofs that some plot was hatching against him."[1] Everybody knew that something was in the wind, and yet the conspirators still hesitated. The rumour of the conspiracy at last came to Paul's ears. One morning he called Pahlen into his room and abruptly asked him: "Do you know what happened in '62?"

"Yes, your Majesty, I know it," replied Pahlen.

"Do you know that there is a conspiracy, and that they wish to renew '62?"

Pahlen trembled, but coolly replied: "Yes, your Majesty, I am aware of it; I am one of the conspirators myself."

"What! you dare to tell me that?"

"How else could I manage to know what is going on, and take the necessary steps in my capacity as Military Governor of St. Petersburg? But you need not be alarmed, Sire," added Pahlen.

"Arrest them all, put them in chains, send them to fortresses and to casemates, to Siberia and to the mines," cried Paul in great excitement.

"This is impossible," replied Pahlen; "here is a list of the conspirators. Your Majesty will see that the Empress and the two Grand Dukes are among them. I cannot arrest these august personages without a special ukase."

Paul signed an ukase, ordering the arrest of the Imperial family. The Empress and the Grand Duchesses were to be sent to a convent; Alexander and Constantine were to be detained in a fortress;

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

the other conspirators were to be heavily punished.[1] Pahlen made it, however, a condition that he should be allowed to abide his time, and to proceed only when he judged the moment propitious. Paul seemed reassured. His suspicions, however, had been aroused, and he secretly recalled from exile his two former favourites, Araktsheev and Rostoptshin. They arrived too late.[2] Pahlen in the meantime went with Paul's ukase to Alexander, thus proving to him that the lives of all the members of the Imperial family were in danger, and obtained the Tsarevitsh's permission to depose his father. Alexander, however, insisted that his father's life should be spared. This promise was naturally given, "but the Grand Duke ought to have known," says Welyaminov Sernov,[3] "that it would be impossible to keep this promise."

The night of the 11th of March was fixed as the date on which the deed should be done. It is said that, during the last weeks and days of his life, Paul was in constant fear of being either strangled or poisoned. Four or five days before his death Paul was riding in one of the alleys of the Palace when he suddenly stopped his horse, and, turning to the Grand Master of the Horse, Moukhanov, said in a tone of great alarm: "I feel quite suffocated; I feel as if I was going to die! Will they strangle me?"

General Koutousov relates, however, that on the night of the catastrophe he dined with the Emperor, and found the latter very well disposed and joking

[1] Welyaminov Sernov, Schiemann, *l.c.*, pp. 23–24, and *Revue Britannique*, 1895, July, pp. 62–69.

[2] *Revue Britannique*, *ibid.*, and Ségur, A. de, *Vie du Comte Rostopchine*, 1871, p. 86.

[3] *Revue Britannique*, p. 24. [4] Sablukov, *l.c.*, pp. 312–313.

pleasantly with Koutousov's eldest daughter, who was also present. After dinner Paul was conversing with the General, when he suddenly turned to a looking-glass which had a flaw, and observed laughingly: "What a strange mirror! my neck looks as if it were twisted."[1]

The conspirators, having now decided that delay or vacillation was dangerous, acted swiftly. The blow was to be struck on the 11th of March. Platon Zoubov gave a supper on that evening, and all the generals and officers who were in the conspiracy were invited. Champagne was drunk freely, and great excitement prevailed. At 11.30 Pahlen returned and asked whether everything was ready. Yes, was the reply. At midnight the conspirators, divided into two groups, marched towards the Palace. The first band was headed by the two Zoubovs and General Bennigsen, whilst the other was under the command of Pahlen. Arrived at the Palace the first band marched towards the Emperor's dressing-room, adjoining his bedroom, whilst Pahlen went to the apartments of the Empress, and rousing the lady-in-waiting, told her what was in progress, and arranged with her how best to inform Maria Féodorovna. Meanwhile, the conspirators were confronted at the Emperor's room by a young hussar, who wished to bar their entry. A struggle ensued, and the hussar was wounded and put out of the way. The noise, however, awoke the Emperor. He jumped out of bed and made for a secret door which communicated with the Empress's apartments. But he himself had previously ordered this door to

[1] *Revue Britannique*, pp. 77–78.

be locked, and whether it was that the key was not in the lock, or that he could not find it in his excitement, he was caught like a mouse in a trap. The Emperor of all the Russias who, only a few hours before, had terrorised a vast Empire and held millions in trembling sway, crept into the chimney to hide himself. Entering the room and finding the bed empty the conspirators thought that the Emperor had escaped. Some, like Zoubov, lost courage and wished to retire, but General Bennigsen checked him, and, searching the room, discovered Paul in the chimney. They dragged him down by his leg; he was shivering and speechless.

"You are my prisoner," said Bennigsen; "sign at once a deed of abdication in favour of your son Alexander."

"What have I done?" asked Paul, trembling.

"Four years ago," said one officer, "we ought to have made an end of you."[1]

Paul fell on his knees; begged and prayed; promised great reformations in the future.

In the meantime the Empress, informed of what was going on, was hammering at the door.

"Drag that woman away," said Zoubov, who, as the former lover of Empress Catherine, had lost his sense of the exalted position of the lady and saw in her the mere woman.

Alexius Tatarinov, a strong, powerfully-built man, walked out, and seizing the Empress, who was only dressed in her nightgown, carried her back into her bedroom.[2]

At that moment Bibikov, commanding a section

[1] Schiemann, *l.c.*, p. 79. [2] *l.c.*, p. 30.

of the soldiers of the Semeonovsky regiment, arrived in the ante-room. The conspirators on hearing the noise were again frightened, and Bennigsen rushed out to see what was happening. Paul was now loudly shouting for help and trying to escape. The conspirators, maddened by their furious hatred of the tyrant and by their fear of danger, struggled to hold him back. Zoubov struck Paul with his *tabatière*, several officers threw themselves on the desperate Emperor, and one of them removed his scarf and tied it round the Autocrat's throat. Paul still resisted for a while, but they tightened the knot, and when Bennigsen returned he was met with the words, "*Il est achevé.*" Paul had breathed his last.[1] The officers whom he had tortured for four years had taken their revenge.

Pahlen, who had evidently delayed his arrival designedly, now appeared on the scene, just in time to give the necessary orders in the general confusion which ensued. "The murderers," writes Czartorysky, "wandered tumultuously about the corridors and rooms of the Palace boasting of their deed; they added to the intoxication of the supper by breaking into the wine-cellars and drinking to the Emperor's death."[2]

The news of Paul's death quickly spread through the Palace; it was announced that he had died of apoplexy, and that Alexander had ascended the throne as Emperor of Russia. The report was everywhere received with a sense of relief and satisfaction. No heed was taken to hide the universal joy which broke out in St. Petersburg.

[1] *Revue Britannique*, p. 73, and Schiemann, p. 80.
[2] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 250.



GENERAL BENNIGSEN.
After a drawing by Cook.

"The event of March," Count Voronzov wrote afterwards from London, "resembled the ides of March which Cicero so much extolled." And two days after the death of Paul, Tatitshev wrote that Russian society had now awoke to a new life. The horrible and constant fear of prison, torture and exile, which had haunted everybody during the reign of Paul, had now vanished like the phantom of a dream, giving way to new hopes for a happier life. The whole nation fell to celebrating the event, which had delivered it from a tyrant, with a great jubilation.

As Admiral Tshitshagov wrote to Voronzov, Russia had become in four years as uncivilised as if she had swung back four centuries.[1] And Kotshoubey later on, after the Emperor's assassination: "No one who has not lived through the last four years of Paul's reign, and witnessed the disorder, disorganisation, and chaos, could realise the labour involved in remedying matters. I confess that, when I reflect on it, I feel sure that any other nation would infallibly have been ruined thereby."[2]

About the same time Baron von Grimm wrote to Voronzov, that every one must try to forget the terrible years of Paul's reign. They clung to the memory like a bad dream, like a terrifying nightmare; not a day passed but some fresh misery was added to that which was being already endured. Apart from the incalculable evil resulting from the perverted system of politics, which threatened the ruin of the State, the continual persecution of private individuals exercised a depressing influence on the onlookers; it was enough to drive anybody

[1] Archives Voronzov, xix, 63. [2] *l.c.*, xviii, pp. 235, 241.

mad, &c.[1] Buturlin, in a letter to his uncle, Count Voronzov, writes: "The uninterrupted series of blunders and follies, committed in the name of the government which is now ended, has so deeply affected the nation that I do not know how long we may not go on having relapses. . . . Public spirit is still in a corrupt state. The people who during Paul's reign were always living in a tremor of suspense between the prison and the Order of St. Anne, between Siberia and a present of so many thousand serfs, must be given time to fall back by degrees into peaceful and orderly ways." And in 1803 he writes again: "The late government so entirely undermined the foundations of the State, that there are hardly ten persons to be found who might possibly be fitted to fill one of the higher posts."

Thus another blood-stained page had been added to the history of the Romanovs, another victim had fallen under the curse to which the family seems to be doomed. Paul died, just as he had feared he would die—by assassination. His character has been considered a psychological riddle, which historians and biographers have vainly endeavoured to solve. Some maintain that he deserves pity more than hate. His vagaries and eccentricities are to be attributed to the restricted and almost intolerable position in which he was kept during the life and reign of his mother. Paul never wished to be a tyrant. He had been slighted by his mother and by her favourites. As the heir-apparent he had to endure insults and suffering. It was this state, in which he lived for forty-two years, which

[1] Archives Voronzov, xx, pp. 386–387.

embittered his character and led to his attitude when Emperor. But he had a warm, kind and feeling heart, say his apologists, adducing his youth and the early weeks of his reign; at the threshold of manhood he was endowed with noble sentiments, with a passionate love for justice, and with a high sense of chivalry.[1]

Other contemporaries, however, came to the conclusion that Paul fully merited his reputation of lunacy. Whitworth, the English Ambassador, did not hesitate to inform Lord Granville that "the Emperor is literally not in his senses." And Napoleon told his surgeon, Barry E. O'Meara, on St. Helena, that he was sure Paul had lost his reason towards the end of his reign.

Probably the real truth is that Paul from his birth bore in him the hereditary germs which, aided by his restricted position when Tsarevitsh and by the sudden change which made him absolute master of the Empire, were bound to develop into a state of insanity. Had he been a simple individual he would have undoubtedly manifested signs of mental aberration, but they would have taken a milder form. Catherine was a woman of genius and of an ardent temperament. Her offspring was a neuropath. The son paid the penalty for the mother. His blood was tainted, and his exalted position more than his ill-treatment helped to develop the taint. Mistrust was the chief trait of Paul's character. "His hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him." He was subject to the mania of persecution. Even as a young man, and previous to the worst of his

[1] De Sanglen in *Rousskaya Starina*, 1883, vol. xxxvii.

unhappy experiences, he confessed to his friend, André Razoumovsky, that the feeling of suspicion was deeply rooted in him. Already as a child he was melancholy and often agitated, and went through all the phases accompanying neuropathic *vesania.* Thus heredity had doomed him, education did the rest, and autocracy brought about its full development. He may have often meant to be just and even generous, but his hasty and violent temper made him turn into the spirit, "*der das Gute will und das Böse schafft.*"

I have compared Paul in some respects to Caligula. Like Caligula, Paul suffered from intense megalomania. There was an intense desire in both these rulers to achieve something grandiose, to be handed down to posterity as the most imperial of monarchs. Paul's jealousy of Napoleon's successes may have served as a stimulus, intensifying the hastiness and contradictoriness which characterised all his actions, as they did those of Caligula. Like Caligula, too, Paul brooked no contradiction, he even suffered no advice; and, like Caligula, Paul fell a victim to the hand of the assassin—an instrument in the hands of fate.

PART II

ALEXANDER I



ALEXANDER I.
From Houdon's Bust

CHAPTER XII

THE BIRTH OF ALEXANDER

Catherine's joy at the birth of her grandson—Her letters to Grimm—Alexander's early education—Grandmamma's A B C—Catherine's grand-children—The Imperial babies—Alexander's teachers—Laharpe, the Republican—Lessons in history—Catherine's instructions.

THE discharge of two hundred and one cannon, from the fortress of Peter and Paul and from the Admiralty, on the 23rd of December (12th) 1777, announced to the inhabitants of the Russian capital the birth of Alexander, the son of Paul, and the grandson of the Empress Catherine. Courtiers and clergy on their knees offered thanks to Providence in the Court Chapel. Congratulations were also eagerly offered to the Empress herself and to her son the Tsarevitsh. The Russian poet Derzhavin composed an ode on the birth of the Northern Prince. Catherine's joy knew no bounds. The idea of excluding Paul from the throne must already have occurred to the Empress at that time, and the birth of a grandson settling the question of succession may be considered as one of the causes of her exuberant joy.

As Elizabeth had done in the case of Paul, Catherine, as soon as her grandson was born, took him away from his parents and herself superintended his education. She wished to form the character of the future ruler according to her own ideas, and she feared, as it seems, the influence of

his father. She set down the nervousness and irritability of Paul to the fussy, exaggerated solicitudes of Elizabeth, and she made it, therefore, her first business to strengthen the child's constitution and to make him physically fit to stand all sorts of hardships.

During his first years the Imperial baby was entrusted to the care of Madame Benkendorff, wife of General Benkendorff, and to the nurse Mlle. Gessler, who was of English extraction. This lady had a great influence upon the early physical and moral development of the future Tsar. Catherine said in 1793: "Should Alexander have a son and have him educated by this same Englishwoman, the succession of the Russian throne will be consolidated for a hundred years. What a difference between his upbringing and that of his father. In the case of Paul I had no voice at first, and after the political change I hesitated to take him away from Panin. They all thought that without Panin he would be lost." [1]

In 1779 Maria Féodorovna gave birth to another boy, Constantine. Catherine, in one of her letters to Grimm, explains why this boy was so christened.[2] The whole of these letters to Grimm bear testimony of the care she took of her elder grandson and the love she bore him. In fact, Alexander was the only great and noble passion of the Northern Semiramis. Her passion, as has already been seen, was not entirely unrelated to dynastic designs and political ambitions, but in the main it was sincere and noble.

[1] Khrapovitzky, Diary, 1874, p. 434.
[2] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 136.

The following extracts from her correspondence will show how great her joy was at the birth of Alexander, and how passionately fond of him she grew afterwards.

"I warrant, however," she writes to Grimm, "that you know nothing about Monsieur Alexander, at least of the one of whom I am about to tell you. It is not Alexander the Great, do not imagine it, but a very small Alexander, who was only born on the 12th of this month at a quarter to eleven in the morning. From which you will understand that the Grand Duchess has just given birth to a son, who, in honour of St. Alexander Nevsky, has received the magnificent name of Alexander, and whom I style Monsieur Alexander, because if he takes it into his head to live, his tradespeople will, without fail, in course of time have other tradespeople. You see how shrewd and prophetic grandmothers can be. Have I not given proof of astonishing perspicacity? '*Aber, mein Gott, was wird denn aus dem Jungen werden?*' (But, my God, what will become of the child?). I console myself, as did Bayle and Tristram Shandy's father, who were of opinion that a name exercised an influence on life; well—this one is illustrious enough—there have been matadors of the name—let us hope that the die has not been cast for him in that direction.[1]

"You must know that when you speak of Monsieur Alexander you touch a weak spot in me. I have already told you of his health and strength, and he is now beginning to show a remarkable intelligence for a child of his age; I dote upon him, and I intend, if possible, to have him always with

[1] *l.c.*, pp. 71–72.

me. He has the pleasant temper of a child in good health, is full of high spirits, ingratiating in manner, afraid of nothing, and as beautiful as a little god of love. Everybody is fond of him, I more than others, and I can do anything I like with him. He can walk alone now, and even when his teeth are giving him pain he is just as good-tempered as ever, and laughs and frolics while he makes us understand he is suffering; he understands everything that is said to him, and has a wonderful language of his own of signs and sounds. Gay music pleases him best; he will get the band to play the tunes he likes and then thank them in his own manner.[1]

"As for M. Alexander, just leave him to himself. Why should you wish him to think exactly as everybody else has thought, or to know what everybody else has known. It is not difficult to learn, but my idea is that a child's mind and powers should be developed before his head is confused with all kinds of stale trash—and from this trash a very careful selection should be made as to what is fitted for it. What nature cannot do, learning never will, but learning often stifles mother-wit, and, according to the late Mme. Geoffrin, there is nothing worse than to have a veneer of learning and science.[2]

"I have no time just now to attend to all that fine rubbish; the early morning is occupied with the usual routine of affairs; at half-past ten M. Alexander arrives and is with me while I am dressing; a queer little fish, just as merry and pleasant as a child of that age can be. His father and

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 143. [2] *l.c.*, p. 147.

mother cannot manage him and he gets spoiled when away from me."[1]

And then Catherine again speaks of her devotion to the child, and describes how they play together, rivalling each other in the ingenuity with which they make the same plaything do duty for ten or twelve others. After dinner the child was allowed to go into her room as often as he liked, and seems to have been as fond of her as she was of him.

"You will never guess what my chief amusement is now!" writes Catherine again. "Teaching M. Alexander his A B C, who cannot yet talk, by-the-bye, and is only a year and a half old. He found an A on a bow-wow, and since then he picks it out wherever he sees it; and we are now going on to the other vowels. He is a delightful little monkey, and loves to imitate everything he sees me do.

"Another child was baptized yesterday with M. Alexander, who, hearing the former cry, made us understand, in his monosyllabic language, that he was to be given to his nurse, and as, according to Sancho Panza's proverb, 'a seller of onions is a good judge of a shallot,' I had M. Alexander's orders executed, and the child did in truth leave off crying.[2]

"M. Alexander will not be very pleased to see me depart—when he leaves me he does it of his own accord, and with tears, but when I leave him he begins to scream. He writes me letters from his own room, sends for me if he is ill, and really seems to get better as soon as I appear. Those who do not watch him as closely

[1] *l.c.*, p. 148. [2] *l.c.*, p. 152.

as I, do not know how much understanding or what quick instincts he has; he is as advanced in all ways as a child of four or five years old. He comes to me whenever he wants anything explained, and as I have always told him the truth and talked sensibly to him, he does not consider he knows a thing properly unless he has learnt it from me." [1]

In another letter, Catherine, after enumerating the various papers she has before her to get through, begs Grimm to allow her to turn for a while to a more pleasing subject, that she may gain courage to begin her task. The subject, of course, was M. Alexander, for whom she was just then preparing an A B C of maxims. This little book, according to her description, began by informing M. Alexander that he was only a naked little infant when he came into the world, that all men were born so, and that, as regards their birth, all men were equal, but that afterwards they differed widely from one another according to their education—and so from maxim to maxim "strung together like a string of beads," she taught her grandson one wholesome truth after another. She had, she said, but two aims in view, one to awaken the child's intelligence, the other to elevate his mind and feelings. "My A B C is full of illustrations, and every one, even Papa and Mamma, agrees that it is an excellent book. As for the child, it is just another game for him. At times he makes very curious answers; for instance, I am having his portrait painted by Brompton, a good English artist, but I could not get him to keep still the other day during the sitting, and when I asked him if he

[1] *l.c.*, pp. 273, 274.

knew how badly he was behaving, he said, 'I cannot see myself.' I was struck with the depth of thought in the child, and more so, that, finding the sitting irksome, he gave me a rap over the knuckles."[1]

Later on Catherine again extols her grandson.

"May God bless M. Alexander," she writes, "who is and always will be the first-born in everything—in mind and will." She enlarges on his desire for knowledge, and says that he did not even care to play with those who knew less than he did himself, as they were unable to answer his questions satisfactorily; what his grandmother said, however, was gospel to him. She again speaks of his charming disposition: "If he does not get on in the world," she adds, "I do not know who would. I am mistaken if the beauty of mind and soul will not equal that of his body; if it is not so, then white can become black, and he will not be the same personality that he is now. All this is very mystical, fanatical, prophetic."[2]

In another letter, Grimm having referred to M. Alexander's train-bearer, Catherine sends him a drawing of the garment which, she says, the child had worn ever since he was six months old. She describes it as all made of a piece, trimmed with a fringe, and fastened at the back with four or five little hooks, in which dress M. Alexander appears fully apparelled. "The King of Sweden, the Prince of Prussia, have both sent to ask for a pattern of his costume." Catherine had herself invented the dress, and wished Grimm to know of this "work of genius," into which the child's arms and legs could be thrust simultaneously, so that he was hardly conscious of

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 176. [2] *l.c.*, p. 184.

being dressed. Alexander was now becoming even more accomplished—he could spell, draw, dig, play at being a soldier, ride, and make twenty toys out of one; he still continued to ask endless questions, such as: "How was it that there were men on the earth, and what had he been born to do in the world?" He was of a profoundly thoughtful disposition, although extremely cheerful and light-hearted. His grandmother would not allow him to apply himself closely to any particular study, but preferred he should occupy himself as he pleased, provided he did no harm to himself or others.[1]

"Brompton is an English painter settled in Russia; he is a pupil of Mengs, and shows great talent; he has painted my two grandsons and made a charming picture of them; the elder one is amusing himself with cutting the Gordian knot, and the younger has arrogantly thrown the standard of the Emperor Constantine over his shoulders."[2]

Referring again to her grandsons in one of her letters, Catherine returns to the subject of M. Alexander's avidity for knowledge; young as he was he could amuse himself for an hour or two with a book of engravings, and he appears to have picked up a great deal of general information. He was clever with his fingers, and the Empress tells of his turning the stick of a cane into the figure of a man by fastening on a wax head, legs and arms; other things underwent transformation at his hands according as his fancy led him. The elder grandson is described by Catherine as being of an extremely restless disposition, and with a face like a young Bacchus, although the eyes were intelligent; a great

[1] *l.c.*, p. 205. [2] *l.c.*, p. 206.

contrast in appearance to his brother, who might have stood to a sculptor for a model of Cupid.[1]

Catherine did her best to satisfy M. Alexander's curiosity on all subjects. On one occasion he began, as she relates, by making inquiries about the carpet in her room, and finally arrived at questions concerning the shape of the earth, whereupon his grandmother was obliged to have the globe brought from the library of the Hermitage. Once in possession of this, he travelled at full gallop over the whole of the terrestrial globe, and "If I am not mistaken, in less than half-an-hour he knew nearly as much about it as the late M. Wagner, who for years went twaddling on to me, repeating the same thing over and over again."[2] M. Alexander believed nothing on hearsay, and, having begun to learn arithmetic, would not be convinced that two and two made four until he had counted the numbers himself. At the date of Catherine's letter, 1781, her grandson already understood German and was well advanced in French and English; he chattered incessantly, like a parrot, was very fond of telling stories as well as of hearing them, and his memory was so good that it was seldom he could be caught in a mistake. Apart, however, from his unusual intelligence, he was in nowise precocious, but just as much of a child as others of his age.

"The Venetian fêtes, given in honour of the Comte du Nord," writes Catherine, "were most beautiful in all ways. They have now been away six months, and they will be astonished on their return at the progress which will have been made by

[1] *l.c.*, p. 214. [2] *l.c.*, p. 222.

M. Alexander. His nurse has to scold him to get him away from his book, as other children have to be scolded to leave their play, and, as he is only four years old, I have been obliged to have a book prepared which is suitable to his comprehension, and this volume is his chief delight. A third of the kind is already in course of composition for him—he is a regular glutton as regards learning. You will say, a well-bred dog needs no training; nothing is learnt from books."[1]

In another letter to Grimm, written in April 1782, Catherine gives an account of her day's work. Matters of state occupied her from six o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock; then the usual affairs of the day till eleven, when M. Alexander and M. Constantine arrived; for half-an-hour before and for an hour after dinner she was occupied with the A B C of these gentlemen and with telling them tales; this was followed by a rest of two hours, and then came letter-writing, &c., which occupied another hour and a half. The above-named gentlemen were then allowed to return and they set up the usual racket until eight o'clock, when Catherine was free until ten to see any one who liked to attend upon her. "I think I may justly say," she adds, "that this is a well-occupied day, and that it would be a clever person who could find time to make any further comments upon it."[2]

"If you could only see Alexander the shopman, Alexander the cook, Alexander undertaking in turns every class of work, hairdressing, papering, mixing colours, chopping wood, cleaning the furniture, acting as coachman or groom, copying mathe-

[1] *l.c.*, p. 231. [2] *l.c.*, p. 231.

matical figures, teaching himself to read, write, draw, and count, picking up information in all sorts of ways, and with an infinitely larger number of acquaintances than any other child of his years, none of his acquaintance being above him in age, as it is not they who seek him, but he who seeks them; and if, moreover, you could see how light-hearted this queer little creature always is, for he does not know what it is to be ill-tempered, and how obedient, how fond of giving, especially to those who are in want, how grateful to those about him, how ready to do good, never doing harm to a single thing on earth, and yet never idle or unoccupied for a single moment, I wonder what you would say? I do not know how M. de Falkenstein can have got possession of M. Alexander's large A B C, since it has never left my portfolio, and he for whom it is prepared has at present only the ordinary one, printed for the infant schools."[1]

We are also told that if in the course of his reading he came across the name of a town or country, he never rested until he had found it on the globe. The moment his eyes were open in the morning, and the instant he had finished his dinner, he ran to his book. "I must begin to read at once," he would say as he jumped out of bed, "as presently I may like to take a walk instead, and so, if I don't read now, I shall waste my day." No one had ever given him any orders about reading or studying, but both were to him a pleasure, and he read his books over and over again, until he knew them by heart.

[1] *l.c.*, p. 233.

Catherine repeatedly speaks of his kind-heartedness and ready obedience, and indeed he practically brought himself up. One autumn the fancy took him that he would like to go over the china works and the arsenal, on which occasions his intelligent questions and his politeness equally astonished and pleased the officers and the men at work. At this time he was not quite five years old, but, as the Empress writes, he had a power of consecutive thinking which is rare in childhood. His brother, although intelligent, was far from his equal in mind. Catherine attributed Alexander's superior intelligence to his physical strength and beauty—"beautiful as an angel," she describes him in one letter. She relates that Alexander told her one day that Quarenghi spoke too loudly, and asked her the reason, when she explained that it was because he had not been taught to modulate his voice as a child. Constantine thought his nose too large, and decided that it was because he had scratched it with his fingers when little.[1]

"I don't know if it will rain Catherines in Russia, but I am certain of one thing, that if there were no statues but mine along this riverside I should care very little about it, and would willingly make place for M. Alexander, who says to his attendants when he is afraid: 'I am afraid, but that does not matter.' He will put energy and intrepidity into all that he undertakes, and I do not think he will ever undertake what is unserviceable to his fellow-creatures, for the tears rise to his eyes at once at any harm that happens, or that he thinks may happen, to others. M. Alexander does

[1] *l.c.*, p. 250.

not yet own a regiment of cuirassiers; he is learning to read and write, in the hopes of receiving a scarf and a round collar as a reward, these being two things of which he has a great ambition to become possessor: this is the reason that for the last two years he has been so indefatigable with his studies."[1]

On December 29th Catherine writes: "The powers above seem to have taken pleasure for the last four months in sending me one trouble after another; and now M. Alexander and his brother are both ill. I found the former yesterday standing in front of his door with a cloak over him; I asked him what the meaning of this ceremony was: his answer was, 'It is a sentinel, dying of cold.' He was feverish, and while the attack was upon him he thought to amuse himself and make me laugh by standing sentinel with his cloak on. This is certainly a lively invalid who takes his illness with much courage, as I am sure you will agree with me."[2]

In one of Catherine's letters, after discussing the history of Russia and stating her opinion that Christianity was more readily embraced by those of good disposition and open minds than by the fools and the evil-minded, she begs Grimm to send a hand printing-machine without delay for M. Alexander, who was ransacking the shops for one. She also reminds him of the statue of Voltaire which he is to forward as soon as he can, and she would like, she adds, to have the Diana, but was afraid of asking for this in case it should be doing an injury to the Duke of Saxe-Gotha. Further, she desired to obtain a plaster cast of the Farnese Hercules for

[1] *l.c.*, pp. 264–265. [2] *l.c.*, p. 266.

Alexander, but did not know how it could be forwarded.[1]

Writing on April 30th Catherine tells Grimm that she is sending him a German translation of the first period of Russian history—that is, from the Creation to the year 862. This, she adds, is part of the Alexander-Constantine library: "Do you not pity these poor little wretches having to digest such heavy morsels as this?" In the same letter she tells an anecdote of her grandson, who, taking one of her ladies-in-waiting into a corner one day, asked her to tell him who he was like. On her answering that he had his mother's features, "That is not what I want to know," he said; "whom am I like in character and manners?" "In those you are certainly more like your grandmother than any one else." "Ah!" he exclaimed, "that is what I wished you to tell me," and thereupon he threw his arms round the lady's neck and kissed her.[2]

A further account of Alexander's industry and intelligence is given in a later letter, in which his grandmother describes how he digs and sows peas and cabbages, pushes the plough and drives the harrow, and then, perspiring from his hard work, goes and washes himself in a stream, after which he and his brother start fishing. They carefully separate the pikes from the perch, because the former eat up the other fish. To rest himself Alexander then goes in search of his writing master or his drawing master; and all this industry is quite voluntary, and everything, Catherine continues, is done with perfect cheerfulness and good temper, without a sign of grumbling, ill-humour, or obsti-

[1] *l.c.*, p. 269. [2] *l.c.*, p. 274.

nacy, without tears or cries. Alexander took up a book to read much in the same tone of spirit as he would jump into a boat. Alexander was also astonishingly strong and agile. It appears that some one brought a suit of armour to show Catherine, which she could hardly lift, but which the child caught up and ran off with so quickly that they had a difficulty in overtaking him.[1]

"Another girl, named Alexandrine, in honour of her eldest brother, has been added to my grandchildren," wrote Catherine on August 27, 1783; "to speak the truth, I am infinitely fonder of boys than girls." Then she goes on to speak of her two grandsons as usual, describing their agility and courage, their cleverness in managing their boats, and again referring to their delight in study. She had taken them with her a few days before to Peterhof, where they lodged at Mon Plaisir, and where, as she writes, there was not a spot they did not visit which was accessible either by hands or feet. "It made no difference whether they went in and out by the doors or the windows; if you could only see the break-neck performances they go through in the coolest manner, and they rarely come to grief!"[2]

"October 8th. Alexandrine Pavlovna is an ugly little thing, especially as compared to her brothers. Her eldest brother was to have been her godfather, but the heat prevented him." In this same letter Catherine tells an anecdote of Alexander which shows the courage and determination of his character. It appears that he had been seized with certain violent dislikes to particular people and things,

[1] *l.c.*, p. 279. [2] *l.c.*, pp. 281–282.

among them to the singer Marchetti and his grimaces. Some of these dislikes were interpreted as fears, and those about him tried to reason with him and shame him out of them. Catherine, however, gave orders that he was to be let alone. She was right, for one day Alexander began to reason with himself and told his friends that he was going to examine closely everything of which he was afraid; this resolution he carried out for a week, at the end of which time he had regained his courage and was as gay and happy as ever.[1]

In March 1784 we learn from Catherine that her young grandsons were learning carpentry under a German, Mayer, and spent the best part of the day over this new occupation. She asks Grimm what he thinks of this as part of the education of embryo sovereigns, but, as she wisely adds, Alexander no longer cared for toys, and therefore the cutting and sawing kept him out of idleness. By this time Alexander could speak English, and Catherine had just appointed Laharpe to converse with him in French, and another tutor for German. The Empress again expresses her belief that Alexander will grow into an excellent man in every way if certain others do not put a bar to his progress; although, as she adds, there was that in his character which would brook no turning from the course prompted by its own instincts.

"I am afraid to send you specimens of his writing, or his drawing and arithmetic, as you would find it difficult to believe they were done by a child of six. His physical strength promises to equal his mental capacity, as you would know

[1] *l.c.*, p. 288.

if you saw him running and leaping." Then she finishes with a characteristic anecdote of the child. His brother, having a cold, had been told not to go near a particular window through which the wind blew: as he, however, kept thoughtlessly running near it, somebody drew a line on the floor beyond which he was not to pass; but this was equally ineffectual in keeping him away from the window. Whereupon his elder brother said to him, "Brother, when I am told not to go beyond a certain point, I draw an imaginary line behind the one that has been made, and when, by accident, I go beyond the one I have drawn for myself, I remember that I am not to go beyond the other one."[1]

Alexander was Catherine's great passion, but the Empress conceived a deep affection for all her grandchildren. She sent Grimm an engraving containing the portraits of the Imperial babies, accompanied by the following description: "M. Alexander is remarkable for his physical beauty as well as for his intellectual and moral qualities. He is lively and reflective, quick and intelligent; he thinks deeply and has such extraordinary agility in all bodily exercises that one would think these had been his sole occupation ever since birth. He is very tall and very vigorous for his age, very adroit and very active. The boy's character is a mingling of the most diverse qualities, which is the reason of his being such a favourite with every one. Friends of his own age adopt his views without hesitation, and cheerfully follow him as their leader. One thing alone causes me anxiety, the danger he incurs with regard to women. They

[1] *l.c.*, pp. 297-298.

all run after him, which is natural, for everybody is attracted by his fascinating appearance. What is more, he is unaware of his good looks, and seems so far to care very little about his appearance. It does not enter into any one's head, you may be sure, to make a coxcomb of him. He is well advanced for his years, speaks four languages, is thoroughly conversant with the history of the world, is fond of reading, is never lazy, and enters with zest and pleasure into the amusements of his age. When I speak seriously to him on any subject, he listens attentively and makes me charming answers; when I insist on his playing blind-man's buff, he is equally ready to do what I wish. His teachers, as well as myself, are in general fully satisfied with his behaviour. His tutor, Laharpe, speaks of him as an accomplished young man; just now he is teaching him mathematics, for which he shows as much facility as for other subjects. In short, I here introduce to you M. Alexander, who is to be distinguished from others of his age and class. If he does not make a success of life, well! I can only say I do not know on whom here below we have a right to base our hopes. Notice also that if M. Alexander is not well, which happily does not often happen, or feels tired in the evening, he likes to be surrounded with artistic works, and amuses himself in studying engravings, coins, and engraved stones.

"The second portrait given in the engraving is M. Constantine. His petulance almost amounts to insolence; he has a kind heart and good brains, but does everything by fits and starts, and entirely lacks the perseverance which is one of the chief

virtues of his elder brother; but he will make himself renowned some day, as you will see. He can also chatter in four languages, but while his brother is a perfect English scholar, this one knows every turn of the Greek language, and says to his brother at times, 'Why do you read all those wretched French translations? I read my Greek authors in the original.'

"Being in my room one day studying his Plutarch, he informed me that such and such a passage was badly translated. 'I flatter myself that I can translate them more correctly, and am now going to prove it to you,' which he did. He read out some passages according to his own version, and under these he wrote 'translated by Constantine.' I thoroughly enjoy his conversation; he is of a very bellicose nature and takes a lively interest in the navy. At the beginning of the present war with Turkey, Captain Sacken, being surrounded by the enemy, set fire to his brig and blew it up. This Sacken has become my grandson's great hero; I have on several occasions noticed that when Constantine heard of any splendid action he was filled with the desire to go and do likewise; his enthusiasm is very quickly aroused. In a word, his personality is a pleasing one.

"The third represents Mademoiselle Alexandrine. For six years there was nothing particular about her to call for remark, but during the last year and a half she has made surprising progress. Not only has she grown very pretty in face, but she has now quite a good figure; she is taller and slighter than most children of her age; she speaks four languages, writes and draws with care, plays

the harpsichord, sings, dances, and learns with ease; she has much sweetness of disposition, and, if you would like to know what her ruling passion is—believe me when I tell you it is myself. She would throw herself into the fire for her grandmother; she does everything in the desire to please me, or in order to draw my attention to her, if only for a moment.

"The fourth head is that of Hélène. I think she will be a beauty in every sense of the word. Her features are extremely regular; she is slight of figure, adroit and agile, and naturally graceful in all her movements; full of fun and mischief, and kind-hearted, while her excessive liveliness renders her dear to her sisters. This is all that I have to say about her.

"The fifth head is Marie. She ought to have been a boy. The smallpox has completely disfigured her; her features are thickened, and she looks just like a dragon; she is afraid of nothing and has all the tastes of a boy. I do not know how she will turn out. Her favourite attitude is to stand with her hands on her hips, and she walks with them held in the same fashion.

"The sixth, who is not yet two years old, is as yet too small for me to be able to say anything about her, but I think she is not as advanced as her brothers and sisters were at that age. She is a fat, chubby little thing, very fair, with pretty eyes, who squats herself down in a corner, surrounds herself with toys, and chatters the whole day without uttering a single word worthy of remark."[1]

[1] *l.c.*, pp. 497–500.

"The birth of the two Princes," says Masson, "had filled the Empress with joy. Her vast projects and hopes expanded over a wider field, of which the very names of the Princes gave intimation. She had the infants painted, one cutting the Gordian knot, the other bearing the cross of Constantine; for them she was desirous of renewing the division of the world into two Empires. Their education seemed at first to be merely the development of these grand ideas. Constantine had Greek nurses, and was surrounded by Greeks; in his infancy he spoke no other language, but he forgot it as soon as masters were appointed to teach it him in a better manner. The persons about Alexander were Englishmen, and endeavours were made to inspire him with a predilection for that nation."[1]

Imperial children are supposed to be made of different clay from others. They are superbabies; so the staunch supporters of autocracy and absolute monarchy maintain. Catherine, as has been seen from her letters, had great ambitions for Mons. Alexander. Alexander himself said that he was only a happy accident. But in reality Alexander, like other Imperial babies, with very rare exceptions, was nothing else but what heredity, circumstances, and education had made him. Like other Imperial children, he was to become a ladies' man, with a thousand and one love affairs, a *coureur*, not always particular in his choice, and continuously unfaithful to the young wife who, herself—rumours to the contrary notwithstanding—never deviated from the path of duty and virtue. It was the

[1] C. F. P. Masson, *Mémoires Secrets*, Paris, 1859, p. 218.

hereditary instinct, too, that was to make the pupil of Laharpe, the dreamer of Republics, finish as an Autocrat. His education was exposed to conflicting influences. On the one hand, the corrupt atmosphere that reigned at the court of his grandmother; on the other, the teaching of Laharpe, making him despise the court life. He was surrounded by atheists or deists on the one side, and by staunch supporters of the church on the other. The result was that with his receptivity he ended as a mystic.

Alexander's character, the gentleness and sensibility, the very curiosity and dreaminess, that led to his ultimate mysticism, are already noticeable in his early childhood and plainly contrasted with the obstinacy and violence of his brother, Constantine.

In 1783 Madame Benkendorff died. Alexander was six years old. Catherine thought that it was time to replace feminine tutorship by masculine. General Nicholas Soltykov was accordingly appointed as governor to Prince Alexander and his brother Constantine. The principal functions of this gentleman lay in protecting the young Princes from currents of air and "in keeping their systems in good order."

Gribowsky, Catherine's Secretary of State, describes the new tutor as follows: "Soltykov was very short, very thin, and had a short pointed nose, and two somewhat intelligent brown eyes; his face was clean shaven, and his hair done up in a very high greased and powdered top-knot, quite in the fashion of the day. He had an open wound in one of his legs, which caused him to

limp. When he stood upright he had a nervous trick of hitching up his trousers. He wore a green military uniform with a waistcoat of the same colour; his clothes were always unbuttoned. Instead of boots he wore gaiters, and walked leaning on a large stick. He was very pious and said long prayers every morning. He was reputed to be a man of intellect and penetration, which is to say that he had the grand manners of the Court; as to affairs of government, he had but a superficial knowledge of these. Nevertheless, for the space of four years, all the affairs of the Empire were submitted to him for his approval. I cannot remember that he ever once uttered an opinion contrary to that which had been suggested to him. As to the duties which were more particularly assigned to him, he relied for the performance of these on his secretary; at home, he submitted, without murmur, to the rule of his wife. His style in writing was confused, as was the fashion then, nor did he write without difficulty. He was too feeble of character for any reliance to be placed upon him; he often humbled himself to the great, and avoided those who were in disgrace." [1]

Among the other masters and governors were Von Sacken, Professor Krafft, who gave the Princes lessons in experimental philosophy, and Pallas, who taught them botany. The course of botany, however, had soon to be given up. Masson gives the following explanation: "As Linnæus's system of the sexes gave the children the first ideas of

[1] Gribovsky, A. M., Diary and Reminiscences, Moscow, 1899, pp. 3-4.

those of human nature, the Princes were putting a number of questions which greatly embarrassed their governors. Pallas was therefore requested to avoid entering into particulars, and then to break off the course of botany altogether. Catherine had particularly enjoined that her pupils should be kept in the most perfect ignorance in everything that related to the intercourse of the sexes."[1]

Russian literature and history were taught by Michael Mouraviev, and mathematics by Colonel Masson. The chief preceptorship, however, had to be entrusted to a man of superior talents, and, at the recommendation of Grimm, Catherine's choice fell upon Frederick Cæsar Laharpe. This Russian Aristotle was a disciple of Rousseau and Voltaire, and openly professed republican sentiments. Catherine, though well aquainted with his sentiments, thought highly of him, and entrusted him with the education of her grandchildren.[2]

An interesting letter has come down to us, written by Laharpe to his friend Jean-Marc-Louis Faure. It is dated from Tsarskoé-Sélo, August 8, 1785. It gives us an insight into the philosophical and political views of the Prince's tutor, who evidently did his utmost to instil republican ideas into his pupil. After having explained his method of teaching French, he goes on to speak of that employed by him in teaching geography and history, as follows: "As regards Turkey, I thought it well to explain to them (the Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine) that the first Empires had arisen in the Asiatic provinces, and this led me on to

[1] Masson, *l.c.*, p. 217.

[2] *Mémoires de F. C. Laharpe*, Bern, 1864, p. 76.



F. C. DE LA HARPE.
From an engraving.

speak of the first inhabitants of the globe, of their manner of living, customs, &c. I dwelt, like a true republican, on the fact of the perfect equality which then reigned among them, and after having drawn a picture of the primitive chiefs clothed in the skins of lion or tiger, seated on a stone which served them for throne, and dwelling in huts roofed with the branches of trees, I then showed them these same beings after they had given up thinking that other men were their equals, and had been installed as kings, not by virtue of any human mandate, but by the grace of God, who has so made men, that the strongest, the most skilled, the best gifted and cleverest among them, believes he has a perfect right to usurp power over his fellow-men, and takes advantage of his superiority whenever the negligence or the patience of the latter allows him to do so without interference. I urged this doctrine, which is a difficult one to digest, on my pupil, and exerted myself to bring him to the thorough understanding and conviction that all men are born equal, the power which is inherited by some being a matter of pure accident. Here are a few of the detached clauses of my lecture:—'At that time there were no such distinctions known as those of magistrate, prince, subject, rich and poor, for all men were brothers and equals. Not one of them had as yet imagined that he alone was to be allowed to indulge all his whims and to do exactly what he wished, every one else being born to serve and obey him, and do his work for him. . . . A cave, the hollow of a tree, a hut covered with branches or with skins of beasts, was equally the first dwelling-place of the ancestors of the miserable peasant who now works for others,

and of the monarch who has so many under his command. These early chiefs were not surrounded or ornamented with any special signs of magnificence. A good-sized hut was the first royal residence, a stone or a rough block of wood the first throne, the knotty branch of a tree the first sceptre, and the skin of a wild beast the first royal mantle—you see there was nothing in all that of which to be particularly proud!'"[1] . . .

The Empress of all the Russias, the correspondent of Grimm and Voltaire, does not seem to have been shocked at these ideas. She told Laharpe that she considered the maxims he instilled into his pupil as well fitted to strengthen his character, that she herself read them with great pleasure, and that she was exceedingly pleased with his method of instruction.[2]

Rostoptshin too wrote as follows to Count Voronzov: "The Grand Duke has the best heart in the world, but he hears so many platitudes and so much conversation about matters which are unworthy of his attention, that it would be surprising if he did not succumb. Those about him, moreover, forget the important position they hold, as well as the regard one ought to feel for the character of a young prince, and their sole aim is to amuse him. Up to the present time he rather likes people to tell him the truth about himself, and tries to correct his faults. I took the liberty of letting him know what I thought about the puns in which he was fond of indulging, and apparently he has cured himself of them, for

[1] *Revue historique vaudoise*, 1896, p. 302.
[2] Masson, *l.c.*, p. 215.

I have not heard any from him lately. He is extremely fond of Kotshoubey. The two Princes have an excellent tutor named Laharpe, a Swiss, but, for some reason or other, MM. the Prince of Nassau and Esterhazy slandered him to the Empress, basing their accusations on certain letters written from his own country during the disturbances in the Vaud province. The poor man has been very badly treated; when rewards were given to the Grand Duke Alexander's suite he was left out. He wished to leave the country, which would have been a great loss, for the Princes owe their education to him. The Empress, however, sent for him twice, and the Swiss explained matters to her, disclosing the underhand behaviour of M. Esterhazy, and finally came out victorious."[1]

Laharpe considered that history should take the first place in the studies of his pupils, and he explained his views on this subject to the Empress as follows: "There is no necessity for the future sovereign to be a physician, a naturalist, a mathematician, a geographer, a grammarian, a metaphysician, a logician, a doctor of law, &c. But it is very necessary that he should be an upright man and an enlightened citizen, and that he should know so much of these branches of knowledge as will enable him to understand their true value, and prevent him from ignoring the duties which devolve upon the prince of a realm throughout which the happiness or misery of millions of human beings depends upon his absolute will. Every citizen

[1] Archives Voronzov, vol. viii, p. 75.

who is desirous of being of use to his country by his management of public affairs ought to study history. Much more is this duty incumbent on a prince, but in the case of the latter the study should be so directed that the possibility of imbibing dangerous principles may be avoided. It should be continually borne in mind that Alexander, who was naturally gifted with a fine genius and qualities of the highest kind, nevertheless ravaged Asia and committed innumerable horrors, simply because he wished to imitate the Homeric heroes; that Julius Cæsar, in emulation of this same Alexander, was induced to commit the crime of destroying the liberty of his country; and that, in our own times, a king of the North, born of an heroic spirit, became a tyrant over his subjects and a scourge to many millions of human beings, as the result of the unfortunate perusal of *Quintus Curtius*."[1]

Laharpe took every opportunity of instilling into his pupils the fundamental principle that the people have a right to defend themselves against oppression. Referring to the sanguinary war carried on by the Romans in Sicily, he remarked to them that there was a lesson to the Romans showing them that oppression had its limits, and that humanity possessed the right to exercise lawful resistance, and that it was equally incontestable that *it was always dangerous to reduce men to despair*. Laharpe often came back to the same theme; the revolt of the Gladiators

[1] M. T. Soukhomlinov, St. Petersburg, 1871. (I quote this passage from Shilder's "Alexander I," vol. i, pp. 36-37), and *Le Gouverneur d'un Prince*, Paris, Appendix, p. 235.

gave him the opportunity of expressing similar sentiments. "No living creature is subject to evil treatment without endeavouring to defend itself. The bee stings the hand that clutches it, the ant the heel that treads upon it—why should man alone, therefore, have the right to injure his neighbour with impunity. . . . It is absurd to preach that the oppressed should bear their troubles without complaining; it is cruel to shut their mouths, to stifle their cries, and, finally, it is immensely imprudent to reduce men to despair, for it results in terrible and incalculable disaster." Laharpe brought forward three modern instances to corroborate his words: the revolt of the Swiss against the House of Austria, of the Low Countries against Spain, and that of the Genoese against the House of Austria. "No one," he added, "denies the right of legitimate resistance except tyrants, to whose interest it is to proclaim all resistance to their will, and all opposition to their cruelties and oppression, as a crime."

In like manner the "right of conquest" had no existence for Laharpe. He set forth his views on this matter as follows: "The difference between you and me, said a robber to a certain conqueror, is that I do my robbing alone and because of my necessity, and you pillage at the head of some thousands of men, and do it simply for your pleasure and to be extolled for it by flatterers."

Laharpe naturally took occasion also, while giving instruction in Roman history, to dwell on princes and their conduct. Remembering

that his pupils were princes, and that one of them would one day wield the sceptre, he showed them where the difference lay between good and bad rulers. "Princes could not be so insolent and proud, if they would pause to ask themselves who am I? What do I know? What meritorious act have I performed? Am I the only person in the world who has intellect, talents, and ability? The insolence of private individuals meets with scorn and dislike, and it is happy for them that this is all the punishment they receive, but insolence and pride in a prince is never forgiven, and a long list of arrogant and overbearing princes could be drawn up, who have received punishment at the hands of those they had insulted and despised." Caligula who made his horse Consul, Charles XII of Sweden who threatened to send one of his boots to represent him in the Senate, and the retribution that fell upon both of them, were brought forward as examples. On the other hand, there was Titus mourning over a day passing without having made some one happy; there was Trajan, handing his sword to the Prefect with the words, "Use it for me if I do well, and against me if I do evil;" and there were Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Julian, regretting the hours they had to waste in sleep, and regarding their subjects as fellow-creatures who looked to him for their happiness. Again, Laharpe pointed out to his pupils that the sacred rights of the people were only an offence to bad rulers, but, on the contrary, a protection to the wise and good. He also gave them excellent precepts concerning their

behaviour towards their subjects. "Princes," he said, "are so placed that they are prevented from obtaining the experience of the ordinary individual, and cannot gain understanding of men and things by direct intercourse with them; they are forced to depend for their guidance on others who may deceive them. Does a prince recognise his state of captivity, and does he wish to break away from it? It takes courage and perseverance to succeed in this. If he is weak, he will only become more entangled in the meshes that surround him, and his position will be worse than it was before. If his courage is evanescent he may partly struggle out of his toils, but ere the outer boundary is broken through he will succumb. But has he a stern, persistent courage? Has he learnt in good time not to be disheartened by failure and opposition? Has he learned to make a good use of his strength and intellect? Has he, in a word, learnt to depend upon himself rather than upon others? Then, and only then, may he hope to recover his liberty, and there can be no question but that he will come across many things beyond the walls of his prison which will fill him with astonishment."

Such views as these can seldom have been preached with greater eloquence and sincerity than by the Princes' Vaudois tutor, but the latter reached a climax of plain speaking when he came to dwell upon the sovereigns "who held themselves to be such by the grace of God."

"Usurpers, tyrants, ill-governing princes have at all times striven to have their persons regarded as sacred, and in every century there have been

men foolish and cowardly enough to consent to this doctrine. The upright man, on the contrary, needs only to examine himself to understand that those who can maintain their rights only by the sword deserve to perish by it. It is right that these insolent men who play with the lives and fortunes of others should be taught that nature has not rendered them invulnerable, and that every man who is bold enough to wish it can make himself master of their life. Thrones were founded by force, but to uphold them, it is law, order and justice which are required, and the sovereign who treads these under foot calls in question that which had seemed settled, by reminding the world of the impure source from which he inherited his power.

"In vain sovereigns and their ministers have endeavoured to represent their authority to be of divine origin; in vain sovereigns have called themselves such by the grace of God; in vain held that they owed no one any account of their actions; they have not succeeded in deceiving either themselves or others, and when a rupture has at last been declared between sovereign and subjects, the latter have not hesitated to show the contempt in which they held all such pretensions. Would it not be absurd to suppose that the creator of those innumerable suns which shine above us should have given certain individuals, often weaker than their fellow-men, the right to dispose according to their will of all the rest of the world, and how is it possible to imagine that such monsters as Caligula, Nero, the Borgias, Philip II, Tshengis Khan, Louis XI, born to be the scourge of humanity,

can have been sent as the agents and representatives of the divine being."[1]

Laharpe went on to impress upon the Princes that the only sure guarantee of maintaining sovereign power was by a scrupulous observance of laws, by the maintenance of established government, and consideration for subjects. History would show them that the throne which rested on these foundations remained firmly established, but that, on the contrary, where might was right, as was the case with the sovereignties of Asia and Africa, there were continual revolutions, as the result of which thrones were thrown down and those who sat upon them crushed beneath their ruins.

The history of England afforded Laharpe two examples of the disastrous consequences arising from the violation of the people's rights—Charles I and his son James II, one meeting his death on the scaffold, the other deposed by the unanimous voice of the nation.

"Such are the fruits of those evil counsels with which flatterers poison the minds of weak and credulous princes, such the consequences of those base and dangerous principles which would lead a sovereign to believe that he is above all law, that he is not responsible for his actions towards his subjects, and that the latter are born only to work and obey without murmuring."

We have other details of Alexander's education; for example, he had to keep a weekly journal, and if he had committed a fault of any

[1] *Cf.* Russian Archives, 1866, pp. 75-94, and *Le Gouverneur*, &c., Appendix.

kind he was bound to give his tutor a detailed account of his bad conduct. The following are a few examples of his confessions: "Instead of urging myself to redouble my efforts so as to profit by the years of study which still remain to me, I am becoming daily more indifferent, lazier, and less apt at my lessons, and am growing more and more like those of my equals, who *foolishly imagine themselves to be perfect merely because they are princes.* I am as childish now at thirteen as I was at eight, and the older I grow the more good-for-nothing I become. What sort of man am I going to be? A nonentity, it seems, and men of sense will shrug their shoulders when they salute me, and will perhaps laugh at me behind my back, seeing that I am fool enough to imagine that the marks of respect they show to me are due to my distinguished merits. So men burnt incense to the idols while mocking at the senseless comedy."[1]

On another occasion the Prince confesses having told a lie to prevent himself getting into trouble for his laziness, as he had left a task undone for two whole days, having spent his time in trifling and gossiping; in short, he had behaved, he says, like a person entirely without ambition and insensible to shame. His consolation is, he adds, that he is persuaded he will know as much as other persons of his rank, whom he should be sorry to offend by knowing too much.[2]

Similarly he accuses himself another time of being entirely without a desire to learn, and provided he has enough to eat and drink, and is

[1] Sbornik, vol. v, p. 7.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

allowed to play like a child of six, and chatter like a parrot, nothing gives him any trouble. "I shall always be clever enough," he writes; "why therefore should I give myself the trouble of becoming so? Princes, like myself, know everything without having to be taught."[1]

Catherine herself composed a memorandum, in which the system of education of the Princes was laid down. The following are some of the instructions drawn up by Catherine for the guidance of Nicholas Soltykov.[2]

"*Dress.*—At no time of the year must the dress of their Highnesses be too warm or too heavy; above all, care must be taken that nothing they wear is made tight across the chest. The dress must be as light and simple as possible.

"*Food.*—The quality and quantity of their food must be regulated by circumstances. Their food and drink must be simple, dressed without spice or anything heating to the blood, and without much salt. If their Highnesses wish for food between meals, a piece of bread is to be given to them. Wine is forbidden unless ordered by the doctor. In summer they may have cherries, strawberries, currants, and ripe apples and pears, either for breakfast or between dinner and supper. Their Highnesses are not to be allowed to eat when they are not hungry, nor drink when they are not thirsty. They are not to drink cold water when they are heated. If they are perspiring, they must not drink until they have first eaten a piece of bread.

"*Air.*—In winter their Highnesses' apartments

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxvii, pp. 301–330. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

are to be aired twice a day by opening the small casements.

"Their Highnesses must be out of doors, winter and summer, as much as possible, except at times when it would be prejudicial to their health.

"Their Highnesses are, as far as possible, to be kept away from the fire in winter, and their rooms are not to be heated above thirty or forty degrees Réaumur. In summer they are to play exposed to the full sun and wind. It does not matter if they get sunburnt. They are not to be allowed to lie on the grass when they are heated.

"*Bathing.*—Their Highnesses are accustomed, winter and summer, to bathing in cold water. Every four or five weeks they are to be taken to the Russian bath, as experience has shown the beneficial effects of this régime. The bath should be prepared according to Doctor Sanhesse's directions, namely, the cold water is to be thrown on to the hot bricks before their Highnesses enter the bath, so that they may not inhale a dry heat.

"Their Highnesses must, by all means, learn to swim.

"They should be accustomed to washing their feet frequently in cold water, as a preventive of chills and corns; they are to be taught not to fear wetting their feet. In summer their Highnesses' baths can be arranged as seems best.

"*Bed and Sleep.*—Their Highnesses are to sleep on mattresses, not on feather beds, and the covering should be light. A plain chintz cover, with a sheet under for summer and a wadded one in winter. They are to sleep with their heads uncovered, and as long as they wish, as sleep is good

for children; but as it is healthful to rise early, their Highnesses must make it a habit to go to bed in good time. After they have passed their seventh year, eight to nine hours of sleep ought to be enough for them.

"When it is time to awaken their Highnesses, they are to be called by name in a low voice, so as not to startle them.

"*Games and Good Spirits.*—Their Highnesses are not to be checked in their love of play and liveliness of disposition, but, on the contrary, they are to be encouraged to enter into all kinds of games, so long as they only exercise themselves in a manner conformable to their age and sex. Exercise develops the intellect as well as the physique of a child. They are to be allowed to play as long as they like, provided they do themselves and any other living creature no harm, and preserve their good behaviour to those about them.

"Trifling faults are to be passed over. Those who have the superintendence of them are not to join in their games unless invited to do so by their Highnesses. The children are to choose their own games, as their choice in this matter is an index to their characters. Children, as a rule, do not like to be idle, and games to them are serious occupations!

"Variety and liberty in their occupations keep children cheerful and good-tempered. And to this end care must be taken to keep from their sight and hearing all painful objects, and all tales of sorrow, cowardice, or moral evil. No flattery must be allowed to come near them.

"Their Highnesses must never be allowed to

remain idle, and, if not playing or studying, some amusement must be provided for them suitable to their age and intelligence, and of an instructive kind. All children like to be taught if they are not forced to learn, and no pressure must be put upon them, as this is injurious to their health as well as to their intelligence.

"*Sickness and Remedies.*—Those who are born healthy in mind and body have no need of especial care, and as their Highnesses have, God be thanked, been born with good constitutions, the only thing necessary is to see that this precious gift of health is not impaired. Therefore, all remedies and specifics are to be avoided, except in cases of extreme need. The use of these more often causes disease than cures it.

"The children often have slight attacks of shivering, of heat, or of pains in their limbs: these are signs of growing, and cure themselves without the help of remedies; physicking in these cases absorbs the strength that is required by the organism. Should real illness intervene, and mild remedies do not avail to relieve it, then medical advice may be of use. When the children are not well, they should be taught to carry through their illness with patience, sleep, and abstinence. All persons, at some time or another, suffer from disease, wounds, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, somnolence, or fatigue, but this is no reason why any one should grow impatient. In many cases it is necessary to send for assistance, but this should not be called for in a hurry."[1]

Laharpe inculcated his Imperial pupil with ideas

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxvii, pp. 301–330.

of liberty and fraternity. This Swiss Republican, who was fated to become the head of the Helvetic Directory, was proud of the idea that he was instilling useful truths into the mind of a Prince called upon to decide the fate of many millions. He taught his pupil to detest despotism, no matter how it was exercised, and to love liberty, which was the appanage of all men, and justice, to which all had an equal right. Alexander's opinions were so extreme, even in 1796, that his friend Adam Czartorysky had to moderate them. The grandson of Catherine, who, it was thought, would have carried on her system of government, considered a hereditary monarchy an unjust and absurd institution.[1] In spite of the many enemies which Laharpe had at the Russian Court, he remained the principal instructor of the future Tsar until the latter was married, when his education came to an end. To counterbalance the liberal influence of Laharpe, A. Y. Protassov, for whose devoted attachment the Grand Duke was heartily grateful, was a staunch supporter of the old régime of Church and State.

[1] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 103.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MARRIAGE OF ADONIS

"Go to Canaan and bring a wife for my son."

Roumyanzev sent to Carlsruhe—The two Princesses—Princess Louisa (Elizabeth)—Catherine delighted—The Imperial Don Juan—Plan to exclude Paul from the throne—Laharpe's views—Adam Czartorysky and Alexander meet in the gardens of the Taurida Palace—Alexander's dreams and aspirations.

EVERY woman is by nature a match-maker. She enjoys the subtle and diplomatic game of bringing together two suitable beings of opposite sex. Mothers are more eager than fathers to marry their daughters and sons. Imperial mothers make no exception to the rule. Catherine, who displayed such eagerness in marrying her son Paul, seemed to have impatiently awaited the moment when she could give a spouse to her darling grandson Alexander. The Prince was scarcely more than a youth when grandmamma, who had been watching the approach of the age of puberty—*elle s'y connaissait*—decided to marry him.

In 1791 Protassov, the tutor of the Prince, mentions in his reports that "The Grand Duke is growing lazy" and that "physical desires are manifesting themselves, which are constantly increasing in a measure as the Prince often converses with good-looking women."[1] Alexander was exceedingly good-looking, and he knew it. It was

[1] Shilder, The Emperor Alexander, 1897, vol. i, p. 56.

his beauty which won him the hearts of all the women, and which made him a Don Juan on the throne. Napoleon was jealous of him, and during his stay in Vilna he once said to the Lithuanian ladies: "The Emperor Alexander is exceedingly amiable; he has turned all your heads and gained your hearts." Rostoptshin, with a great deal of insight, wrote: "They have put it into his head that his beauty will conquer all the women for him. He will find enough adventuresses to make him forget his duties." And so it happened. It is only the exceptional woman who does not prefer physical beauty to mental superiority, and it is a fact, worthy of notice, that all the contemporary memoirs written by ladies are full of praise for Alexander and of scorn for Napoleon. His grandmother too was proud of his beauty, and said: "He will be run after." She was, however, a prudent woman, and, in order to put a curb on his passions, she decided, when he was a lad of sixteen, "to submit him to the sacred tie of marriage." The choice fell upon the Princesses of Baden.

Count Roumyanzev was ordered by Catherine to go to Germany, the Canaan whence Russian empresses are to be fetched by faithful Eliezers, and bring a wife for her grandson, for Alexander. Negotiations were entered upon with the Court of Carlsruhe, and in 1792 the two Princesses, Louisa and Fredericka, were brought to St. Petersburg to be submitted to the critical scrutiny of Catherine. Louisa was thirteen and Fredericka eleven years old. "Do not imagine," wrote Catherine to Grimm,[1] "that we marry children of that age in our country.

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 577.

The Princesses have been brought here not for the present moment, but for the future; in the meantime they will get accustomed to our manners and mode of life. As for the young man, he is quite ignorant of all that is going on in his innocence of heart. It is a diabolical trick I am playing him."

Princess Louisa had the good fortune to please the Empress. Beautiful as Psyche, and proud not only of her beauty, but also of the historical traditions of her country, Princess Louisa shrank at the idea of submitting her future to the caprices of a young barbarian. At the moment of leaving her home, she precipitated herself towards the carriage door, and, full of despair, stretching her arms towards the beautiful mountains of her native land, she bade them a heartrending farewell. Her tears produced no impression upon her mother, who accompanied her on the journey.[1] Such is the sad lot of princesses who are compelled to accede to the tempting offer of a throne and an empire.

Catherine found Princess Louisa charming. Her younger sister had a nice, intelligent face, but she was still only a child. When Princess Louisa was introduced to Prince Alexander she turned pale and began to tremble, whilst the latter only looked at her and said nothing. But Louisa—or Elizabeth Alexeevna, as she was soon to be called in the Greek Church—won all hearts, and could not fail to inspire a boyish passion, which, however, never became deep, in the heart of a lad of sixteen years. The grandmother rejoiced

[1] Mme. Edling, *Mémoires*, Moscow, 1888, pp. 33–34.



EMPRESS ELIZABETH ALEXEEVNA.

From the engraving by Turner, after the portrait by Monier.

to see her darling boy growing more and more attached to the girl whom she had chosen as his consort. "She is very smart," wrote Catherine, "and is nubile at thirteen." "This Princess," said Maria Féodorovna, "is not only beautiful, but from her whole figure there emanates a charm which wins the heart of the most indifferent; she captivates with her amenity and her candour." As soon as the official consent of the parents arrived, the Princess Louisa began to study the Russian language and the dogmas of the Greek orthodox faith. She received the name of Elizabeth Alexeevna. The engagement was announced with great solemnity, and accompanied by feasts and banquets. "Two angels," wrote the Empress, "have been engaged to each other; there is nothing so beautiful as this fiancé of fifteen and his fiancée of fourteen; besides, they are in love with each other."[1]

The Prussian Ambassador wrote that since his sojourn in St. Petersburg he had never seen the Empress in such good spirits as on the day of her grandson's betrothal. With due pomp the marriage was celebrated.[2]

It had been intended that the Grand Duke, although married, should continue his studies, but it was natural that he should no longer be inclined to give them much attention; he had, moreover, been led to understand that his time was to be now at his own disposal. During his short engagement he had already begun, little by little, to neglect his books, and, once married, he gave himself up to all

[1] Sbornik, vol. xxiii, p. 583.
[2] Berlin Archives, vol. ii, 1793, xi, No. 40.

kinds of childish follies and military amusements, while, in imitation of his brother, he indulged in games with his servants which were hardly becoming to his dignity. His wife seems to have found him boyish also in his relations with her—affectionate but somewhat rough. His tutor, Protassov, unable to get him to attend to his work, was also concerned at his comradeship with gentlemen of the household, who enlightened him in many undesirable ways.[1] He tried to get opportunities of private conversation with his pupil, who, however, always managed to escape, taking refuge sometimes in the Grand Duchess's dressing-room, whither his tutor could not follow him.

By the end of 1793 Alexander made no further pretence of studying, his whole time being taken up with hunting and playing pranks with his hairdresser and other attendants. No improvement took place in 1794, although Laharpe and other professors were there to instruct him. As was the custom of the time, a small theatre was erected in his apartment, and from this moment the young Prince began also to neglect his wife.

It is interesting to notice how readily ladies are disposed to excuse the amiable frailties of men—except those of their own husbands—and will attribute the blame to the wife, who did not know how to rivet her husband's affection. If the Don Juan is a crowned head, then, of course, a veil of romance, and even martyrdom, is woven over his amatory transgressions by delicate female fancy. The contemporary memoirs written by ladies, who were well acquainted with the intimate history of the

[1] Archives Voronzov, vol. xv, p. 13.

Russian Court, are full either of pity and of admiration for Alexander or of blame—even if gently administered—for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth did not know how to capture and retain her boy-husband's affections. "Married so young," writes one lady author, "and naturally endowed with lively passions, friendship alone was not enough to fill the heart of Alexander, which was only too susceptible to the dangerous impressions of love. Elizabeth, wounded in her dearest affections, did not, in the pride of her more constant heart, allow herself to employ any means to bring back the love of her husband. And, while affecting perfect indifference, she was often to be seen bathed in tears, contemplating the portrait of her lovable but unfaithful husband."[1]

Madame Gouffier may be right, but what she overlooks, or does not care to admit, is the considerable probability that, had Alexander been more faithful, Elizabeth might have loved him less. Such is the nature of woman, beggar-woman or duchess. But Madame Gouffier hastens to turn away her eyes from the sorrows of Elizabeth. She is anxious to plead for Alexander, the prodigal husband. "Ah! to find him less guilty let us turn our regards from the sorrows of the angelic Elizabeth! As a man, Alexander had all the weaknesses of a man. Perfection without blemish is not compatible with human nature. And if a man like Alexander failed to attain to it in all its respects in his private life, what other mortal will dare hope to attain to it."[2] She finishes her *plaidoyer* with the

[1] Madame Choiseul-Gouffier, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1829, p. 50.
[2] *Ibid.*

following naïve remarks: "In any case, no one will accuse Alexander of having seduced innocence. He always knew how to respect and honour merit and virtue; and, moreover, he was careful to avoid scandal. Never did he in mad profligacy squander the revenues of the State, nor did he allow his favourites to gain a dangerous influence over his mind. Alexander too renounced his errors at an age when Louis XIV was still under the influence of Madame de Montespan and beautiful Fontanges, and he was younger than Henri IV, when that king, disguised as a lackey, was running after the carriage of the Princess of Condé."[1] "Alexander," writes another lady, proud of the friendly relations that existed between herself and the Emperor, "loved the society of ladies; he took an interest in them and manifested a chivalrous respect towards them, full of grace and kindness. This sentiment was so pure that—whatever may have been said in a corrupt society—it never altered even when age had subdued the fire of passion. He was gallant to all women, but he only loved one."[2] The Grand Duchess Elizabeth was unhappy. But with a little less pride and a little more amiability, she would have gained his heart. Accustomed as she was to being extolled and admired, she scorned the idea of studying the means for regaining her husband's love. She would have accepted the homage of his tenderness, but she would not stoop to court it.[3]

[1] Choiseul-Gouffier, *l.c.*, p. 61.

[2] This was Madame Narishkin, of whom we shall say more in a subsequent chapter.

[3] Madame la Comtesse Edling, *Mémoires*, pp. 60-61.

In 1793 it was already rumoured that the Empress intended to alter the settlement of her previous will in favour of her grandson Alexander, and belief in the truth of this report became general when the Baden Princesses actually arrived at St. Petersburg, and the Grand Duke's approaching marriage was made public.

Paul had made himself universally detested, and everybody was pleased at the prospect of Alexander ascending the throne in his stead. As was stated above, the French refugees, with Choiseul-Gouffier, the former French Ambassador at the Court of Constantinople, Count Esterhazy, and the Prince of Nassau-Siegen at their head, had instilled ideas into the Grand Duke which had rendered him[1] even more suspicious of every one about him than formerly, and had inclined him to look upon all those who did not share their views as his enemies. Catherine's advisers, aware of Laharpe's advanced liberalism, were now scheming together to draw the latter into a plot which should, if successful, rid Russia without delay of a modern Tiberius. If they failed, it would be easy, they thought, to throw all the onus of the affair on the shoulders of this unfortunate foreigner, who would be decried as a confessed Jacobin, and sent into exile on Paul's accession as an accomplice in a plot from which he would have recoiled in horror and indignation. The most difficult part of their task was the necessity of preparing the Grand Duke Alexander for a possible catastrophe, and as Laharpe was the only person who had the required influence over

[1] Archives Voronzov, vol. viii, p. 67.

him, the conspirators decided that, on this ground alone, his co-operation was indispensable.

Catherine, with this object in view, sent for her grandson's tutor. The summons was a hasty one, and Laharpe arrived without delay on the 18th October 1791. Count Soltykov, who appears to have been in the Empress's confidence, replied to Laharpe's interrogation as to the cause of his summons that the Empress alone could make it known to him. Then followed an interview, which lasted two hours, between the Empress and Laharpe, during which the former endeavoured by every possible insinuation to make Laharpe understand why she had sent for him, but the latter, who had no difficulty in perceiving the drift of her conversation or in interpreting her hints, exerted himself with equal skill on the other side to prevent her actually disclosing her designs to him, and to lead her to believe that she had failed to make him comprehend her intentions. He was fortunately successful in both these efforts, but to the end of his days he suffered from the recollection of these two hours of mental torture, and the remainder of his stay in Russia was thereby rendered especially painful to him.

Fearful that he might not a second time be able to fence successfully with such nerve-shattering manœuvres, he withdrew more and more from general society; and the Empress, seeing that he studiously avoided appearing at Court except during the hours of lessons, made up her mind that he suspected the part he was required to play and was determined not to undertake it. Indeed, Laharpe,

in opposition to Catherine's designs, endeavoured to bring Paul and his sons into more cordial relations with one another. The children complained to their tutor of their father's rough and violent outbursts of temper, and Laharpe had difficulty in trying to represent Paul's conduct in as favourable a light as possible. Although himself suspected of Cartonarism, he was not the less indignant at the violent measures which were being concerted against Paul, and he sought an opportunity to warn the latter of the danger that threatened him. The Tsarevitsh, prejudiced against Laharpe, had not spoken to him for three years; it was difficult, therefore, for Laharpe to obtain an interview with him, but at last he achieved his purpose. Without betraying all his apprehensions to the Grand Duke, he succeeded in persuading him to alter his conduct towards his children and in dispelling his doubts as to their affection for him; beseeching him, at the same time, to treat them with greater confidence, to be their friend, and, above all, not to communicate with them through a third person.[1]

Paul rightly interpreted Laharpe's intentions, and thanked him warmly for his kindly counsel, promising to lay it to heart. Seeing this change of attitude, the public naturally began to look upon the Grand Duke's tutor as an obstacle which must at all risks be removed, and Laharpe suddenly received notice that his services as tutor would not be required after May of the following year. Laharpe left Russia at the close of 1794. There can be no doubt as to the veracity of Laharpe's statements. In a letter to the Emperor Paul, written

[1] Soukhomlinov, *l.c.*, p. 51.

from abroad, he says: "I address myself to you, Sire, as one to whom you are probably indebted for your life, which was seriously threatened during the years 1793 and 1794."

It may be safely asserted that if the proposal, of which Laharpe speaks, had been submitted to the Grand Duke Alexander, he would have indignantly rejected it. At the moment when Catherine was thinking of settling the succession upon him, Alexander was beginning to ponder on the vanity of earthly things. Three years later he gave his opinion of matters in general as follows: "My position is to me far from being a happy one. It is too conspicuous and restless to suit a nature which cares only for peace and quietness. I am not suited for a Court life. I never come upon its scene without a feeling of suffering, and I am revolted at the sight of the infamies that are committed on all sides in order to obtain distinctions, which, to my idea, are not worth a farthing. It is a misery to me to be obliged to mingle with people whom I would not have by choice for my valets, and who yet hold some of the highest offices, such as Prince Z. P. B., the two Counts S. M., and many others who are not worth the trouble of mentioning, and who, arrogant as they are in their behaviour to lesser men, yet cringe before those they fear. In a word, I am not made for the high position I now hold, and still less for that which is reserved for me in the future and from which I have sworn to myself to escape in some way or another. I have studied the question on all sides and have no hesitation in coming to this decision. Our affairs are now in a state of incredible disorder.

There is pilfering going on in every direction, all departments of State are badly administered, and order seems banished from one and all of them, and yet the Empire continues to increase. With things in this state, how is it possible to govern the country single-handed, or for one person to uproot so many abuses? It would be a task, not only above the power of a man endowed like myself with ordinary faculties, but above that of a genius. It has always been my conviction that it is far better to refuse to undertake a task than to perform it badly; and, according to this principle, I have decided to act as I stated above. My plan is, when the time comes, to make known my intention of renouncing a career beset with such difficulties (I have not yet fixed the date for this), to retire with my wife to the shores of the Rhine, there to lead the quiet life of a private individual, enjoying the pleasure of my friends' society and of the contemplation of nature."[1]

That the lessons of Laharpe had not been without influence upon the young Prince, and that, for a time at least, he was inspired by liberal and even democratic ideas, may be easily gathered from the *Mémoires* of Prince Adam Czartorysky, whom Alexander met in the gardens of the Taurida Palace, and for whom he conceived a lively attachment. Laharpe, however, had not succeeded in developing an independent spirit in Alexander, and he remained vacillating and undecided most of his life up to the period of his mysticism; but the Swiss patriot had at least

[1] Sbornik, vol. v, pp. 23–24.

inspired his Imperial disciple with an abhorrence of evil and a respect for the dignity of man.

Catherine had invited the two Princes, Adam and Constantine Czartorysky, to come to St. Petersburg, and here they became acquainted and soon intimate with the Imperial Princes of Russia. Rostoptshin did not like the growing intimacy of the Polish magnate with the future Tsar, and maintained that Prince Adam was encouraging Alexander's weakness for the fair sex.[1] Catherine, however, looked favourably upon the friendship between her grandson and the scions of an old Polish aristocratic family. "With her old ideas concerning the splendour of the Polish aristocracy," writes Prince Adam in his *Mémoires*,[2] "the Empress of Russia probably thought that it would be useful to attach an influential family to her grandson. And her approval of this friendship soon silenced all objectors." It was during their walks in the gardens of the Taurida Palace that the grandson of Catherine, who had crushed Poland's liberty and independence, confided his ideas and thoughts to the Polish exile. Alexander told Czartorysky that he neither approved the policy and conduct of his grandmother, nor did he share the ideas and doctrines of Court and Cabinet. He, the future Tsar of Russia, had deplored the fall of Poland, and his sympathies had been with Kosciuszko, who, in his glorious struggle for liberty, had fought not only for his country but for justice and humanity. He had also taken a great interest in the French Revolution, and

[1] Archives Voronzov, vol. viii, p. 155.
[2] *l.c.*, p. 101.



PRINCE ADAM CZARTORYSKY.
After an engraving by Soliman.

rejoiced at the establishment of the French Republic and wished it success. The ideas and opinions of Alexander were those of 1789. He wished to see republics everywhere, and looked upon that form of government as the only one in conformity with the wishes and rights of humanity.

Although Prince Adam Czartorysky was naturally very enthusiastically liberal himself, born and bred as he had been in a Republic where the principles of the French Revolution had been eagerly accepted, he had constantly to moderate his friend's views. "He held," writes Czartorysky, "that hereditary monarchy was an absurd and unjust institution, and that the supreme authority should not be granted through the accident of birth, but by the votes of the nation, which best knew who was most capable of governing it." Czartorysky had to prove to Alexander that Russia was neither prepared nor adapted for such an election.[1] Whether Czartorysky had failed to convince his Imperial friend, or whether Alexander, when Emperor, wished to impress the son of the Revolution, it is a fact that, even as late as 1807, at Tilsit, Napoleon had to use all his logic to prove to the Autocrat of all the Russias that hereditary monarchy was the sole guarantee of the peace and happiness of nations. The Tsar of Russia still maintained that it was an abuse of sovereignty.

The Grand Duke, the heir-apparent to the Russian throne—most probably in consequence of the influence of Laharpe—thought not, in those early days of his friendship for Adam Czartorysky, of thrones and empires, but of farms and smiling

[1] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 103.

landscapes. The dream he yearned to realise was to retire from the Court and from the burden of government, and to lead an irresponsible life according to his own pleasure. Gardens and fields, flowers, village girls, fascinated him more than palaces and the ladies of the Court; agriculture interested him more even than politics. The difficulties of the position which awaited him frightened him.[1] Alexander was in this respect not only unlike his father, but also unlike his grandmother, who, to judge from her letters to Grimm, did not understand the true character of her grandson nor the real state of his mind. Alexander had no self-confidence and no will-power. His lack of these became more manifest later when his mysticism at last declared itself, and he fell under the influence of Madame Kruedener. Czartorysky in his *Mémoires* admits that he had been deceived in Alexander, and that he had been blamed by his countrymen for having placed too much confidence in his assurances. But even in later years the Polish Prince never doubted the sincerity of the opinions and sentiments expressed by Alexander in the gardens of the Taurida Palace.

In spite of all the influence she had exerted, in spite of the particular care she had taken of her grandson, Catherine was now forced to admit, not without a certain amount of displeasure, that there was an understanding between Alexander and Paul, and that the Prince, even in spite of Paul's continual scoldings, was attached to his father. Alexander appeared to like holding a command under Paul at Gatshina, and the army—his pastoral instincts not-

[1] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 104.

withstanding—became his hobby. In the meantime his education, which had not so far enriched him with wisdom, was utterly neglected. He was no longer advised to work, and, what is more, he felt no inclination to do so. Czartorysky indeed counselled the future Tsar to read various books on politics, on history and legislation, but although Alexander made up his mind to do so, he was not endowed with a sufficient passion for knowledge, and his will failed to carry out his design. "He only read by fits and starts, without ardour or zeal." "He never read to the end a single serious book, and when he came to his rooms it was not to work, but for the purpose of reposing." [1]

[1] Czartorysky, *l.c.*, p. 114.

CHAPTER XIV

"SIRE, VENEZ RÉGNER"

Alexander awaiting the result of the conspiracy against his father—His grief and remorse—Attitude of Maria Féodorovna—First years of Alexander's reign—Coronation—Universal joy—Reforms and benevolent administration—The Secret Council—New code of laws—Educational establishments and universities—The Coalition—Ill-feeling towards France.

In one of the rooms of the Michael Palace, Alexander, undressed, lay on his bed, awaiting in feverish anxiety the result of the final great conspiracy against his father. He knew that at that very moment Paul was being compelled to abdicate, but perhaps shut his eyes to the possibility of the last grim scene of the tragedy which had been enacted. The tumult and the noise came nearer.

Suddenly there is a knock at his door, Valerian Zoubov[1] enters and informs him that "all is over." "What is over?" "Your father is dead, and you are Emperor Alexander."

Whether moved by remorse or grief, Alexander at once exclaimed, "I will not accept a crown stained with the blood of my father." Possibly Alexander had hugged to himself the delusion that Paul would be compelled to abdicate bloodlessly. But, however it may have been, Alexander, face to face with the accomplished deed, was undoubtedly overwhelmed with horror.

Historians have endeavoured to exonerate Alex-

[1] Czartorysky says it was Nicholas Zoubov.

ander from any moral guilt. He had been compelled to sanction the conspiracy in order to protect his mother's life, which, owing to Paul's violent temper, was in constant danger; but, so the apologists maintain, he had never given his consent to the assassination. This hair-splitting apology appears somewhat absurd. Was there any necessity for Alexander formally to consent to such a deed? Tacitly he did so. He had intelligence enough to understand that if the slightest danger arose for themselves the conspirators would not hesitate to do away with Paul, whom they all hated. Alexander knew how the revolution of '62 had ended, and that, considering Paul's temper—so much more violent than that of Peter III—it was almost a certainty that the issue of the conspiracy of 1801 would be similar to that of '62. The very fact that he did not punish the conspirators is in itself of sufficient significance.

Alexander himself had also attached very great importance to the assistance of the troops. When Pahlen insisted on having the plan carried out on the 7th of March, Alexander compelled him to wait till the 11th, because then the Semeonovsky regiment, on which he could rely, would be mounting guard. It is absurd to imagine that Alexander, availing himself of such a dangerous instrument as a band of turbulent young officers, could have reasonably expected that everything would pass off decently and without bloodshed. That the conspirators were officers, that the whole undertaking had a military character, is sufficient proof that the actors in this play were prepared for the tragic ending. Certain it is that Alexander's remorse

and his fits of despair never left him. These facts show that—tacitly at least—he had agreed not only to the deposition, but also to the assassination.

"His grief and the remorse," writes Czartorysky,[1] "which he was continually reviving in his heart were inexpressibly deep and touching. He continually saw in his imagination the mutilated body of his father, and his mental tortures never ceased." For hours he remained alone sitting in silence, with fixed and haggard looks.[2] When Pahlen and the other conspirators appeared on the morning following the murder, urging him to show himself to the immense crowd of people and to the detachments of soldiers who had assembled under the walls of the Palace, he still persisted in refusing. Then at last Pahlen approached and, taking Alexander rudely by the arm, said: "*Sire, c'est assez faire l'enfant: allez régner, venez-vous montrer aux gardes.*"[3] Pale and exhausted the new Autocrat was half carried into the presence of the soldiers, where he received the oath of allegiance. Constantine was fast asleep while the catastrophe was taking place—so he afterwards told Count Langeron—and was suddenly awakened by Platon Zoubov, who brutally told him that Paul was dead and that the new Emperor Alexander had commanded his presence. "I dressed quickly," says Constantine, "and followed the Count into the presence of my brother, whom I found crying bitterly." Alexander, now accompanied by his brother, left for the Winter Palace.

The Grand Duchess Elizabeth, now Empress,

[1] Czartorysky, *l.c.*, pp. 236–237. [2] Comtesse Edling, *l.c.*, p. 38.
[3] *Revue Britannique*, 1865, July, pp. 76–77.

mounted to the Dowager Empress, to whom Alexander had despatched Pahlen to inform her of what had occurred. (According to various eye-witnesses, it was the Countess Lieven whom Pahlen commissioned to execute this order.) She gave vent to cries of despair and rage. "As your Emperor has died a victim of treason," she cried, "then I am your Empress." Bennigsen and Pahlen, who now appeared, tried to calm her. Elizabeth joined her prayers to their entreaties. She was the only member of the family who retained her presence of mind.[1] Bennigsen asked Maria Féodorovna to proceed to the Winter Palace and to acknowledge her son as Emperor. "Who is Emperor?" cried Maria Féodorovna; "who calls Alexander Emperor?" "The voice of the nation," replied Bennigsen. "Tell him," replied the widow of Paul, "that I shall never acknowledge him for my sovereign, until he has given me an account of his conduct in this affair." Her daughter-in-law again entreated her to obey and to accompany her to the Winter Palace. Maria Féodorovna replied passionately: "*Ce n'est pas à moi à obéir; allez obéissez si vous voulez!*"[2] She again vehemently seized Bennigsen's arm and commanded him to obey her as his Empress. He rudely exclaimed: "*Madame, on ne joue pas la comédie.*" Alexander, informed of his mother's intention to seize the reins of government, exclaimed: "*Mon Dieu, encore ce surcroit d'embarras.*" But as his mother emphatically refused to leave the Michael's Palace until she had seen her husband dead with her own eyes,

[1] *Politische Correspondenz Karl Fridrich's v. Baden*, 1896, vol. iv, p. 141.

[2] Bennigsen in Schiemann, *l.c.*, p. 80.

permission was at last granted to take her to the room where Paul, who had in the meantime been dressed up and painted by the various artists, was laid out in his coffin. Maria Féodorovna's conduct was somewhat theatrical. Approaching the corpse, the Dowager Empress paused in dead silence, and fixed her eyes on it steadily without shedding a tear. According to the account given by Princess Darya Lieven[1] the Empress was then conveyed to the Winter Palace, where the first interview took place between mother and son. Sablukov, however, to whom the whole scene was afterwards related by Moukhanov, who was in attendance on Maria Féodorovna, says that Alexander and Elizabeth accompanied the Dowager Empress to the fatal apartment. Alexander, who now saw his father's mangled face, was horrified and stood transfixed. His mother then turned to him and, with a grave and dignified air, said: "Now I wish you joy, you are an Emperor." At these words Alexander, overcome with grief, fell to the ground. Maria Féodorovna gazed on her son without emotion, and, taking Moukhanov's arm, retired to her apartment. On recovering his senses Alexander immediately rejoined his mother, and they poured out their grief in a flood of tears.[2]

Thus Alexander ascended the throne of Russia. "Russia will now breathe freely after an oppression which has lasted four years," wrote Empress Elizabeth, "but the sensitive soul of her new Emperor will for ever remain torn. Only the idea that he will be able to give back to his country

[1] And by Bennigsen, *cf.* Schiemann, *l.c.*, p. 82.
[2] *Fraser's Magazine*, *ibid.*, p. 324.

well-being and prosperity will lend him support and strength."[1]

The new Emperor issued the following Manifesto on his accession to the throne.

"It has pleased the Almighty to cut short the life of our beloved father the Emperor Paul Petrovitsh, who died suddenly from an apoplectic stroke, at night, between the 11th and 12th days of this month.

"On receiving the Imperial hereditary throne of all the Russias, we do also receive at the same time the obligation to rule over the people committed to our care by the Almighty according to the laws and the benevolence of her who rests in God, our august grandmother, Catherine the Great, whose memory will for ever be dear to us and to the whole country.[2]

"In accordance with her wise intention, we hope to be able to carry Russia to the summit of glory, to procure peace and uninterrupted happiness to all our faithful subjects, whom we hereby invite to take the oath of fidelity to us before the face of God. May He lend us His assistance and grant us power to support the weight now laid upon us. ALEXANDER."

The spirit of Catherine seemed to have revived in Alexander. Trained, as he had been, by the great Empress from the cradle, he gave promise of following in her footsteps.

He was only twenty-four years of age when he ascended the throne, surrounded by the late

[1] *Politische Correspondenz Karl Fridrich's v. Baden*, p. 140.
[2] Shilder, *l.c.*, vol. ii, p. 6.

conspirators and the murderers of his father, who no doubt hoped to control him and to rule in his name. He was not strong enough to punish the conspirators,[1] even if he had wished to do so; and now that he was actually in possession of the sceptre, perhaps in a way he felt he owed some gratitude towards those who had braved the danger. But, in order to satisfy his mother and to calm his own conscience, Von Pahlen was exiled to his estates, and Zoubov and the other conspirators to various provinces of the Empire. Count Panin, who was recalled to St. Petersburg and honoured with the Emperor's confidence, fell —not long afterwards—a victim to the Dowager Empress's implacable hatred and vengeance. He was advised to send in his resignation. "I could not," said Alexander to Kotshoubey, "refuse to accept his resignation; he would have thought himself so absolutely necessary to the Empire that it would have been impossible to deal with him."[2] Panin was succeeded as Minister for Foreign Affairs by Count Kotshoubey.

As a pupil of Laharpe, Alexander acknowledged the grandeur of a prince of peace more than that of a triumphant warrior; he preferred the ambition of a wise and peaceful rule to that of conquest. None of his friends, with the exception of Paul Strogonov, were in St. Petersburg when Alexander ascended the throne. Adam Czartorysky, Count Kotshoubey and Novosyltsov were sent for without delay. "Leave your present post," wrote Alexander to Czartorysky, "and come at once to St.

[1] *Cf.* Czartorysky, *l.c.*, p. 257.
[2] Archives Voronzov, vol. xviii, p. 245.

Petersburg. I am awaiting you with the greatest impatience. I enclose a passport for you to show on your arrival at the frontier."[1] This quartette rallied round the young Emperor, ready to support him in his reforms. There was now no question of extreme liberalism, of abdicating the throne, and other dreams such as Alexander had cherished in the gardens of the Taurida Palace. But he was still determined to bring about great reforms and to establish Liberal institutions. The public, however, was not yet ready to appreciate such a policy; and while, therefore, the Ministers and the Senate continued to govern in the old manner, Alexander formed the Secret Council which was composed of his most intimate friends, wherein the plans of reforms were debated. "Although," says Czartorysky, "the discussions at the meetings of the Secret Council had, for a long time, no practical result, yet no useful reform was tried or carried out during the reign of Alexander which did not originate in them."[2]

On the 27th (15th) of September 1801, Alexander, followed by the Court, proceeded to Moscow, where the Metropolitan Platon crowned the young Tsar. "Near the angels of light," said the Metropolitan in his address, "your eye will discover the spirits of darkness. Flattery, calumny and cunning, with all their wretched brood, will surround your throne. You will be besieged by the riotous band of luxury and dissipation, of perilous joys and voluptuous charms that will endeavour to lead you astray from the path of virtue and justice. Monarch of

[1] *Alexander I et le Prince Czartorysky*, 1865, p. 4.
[2] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, p. 269.

Russia! a struggle awaits you. Gird on your sword for the contest. Draw it with valour, young hero. Fight, conquer, and govern; the omnipotent arm of the Almighty will protect you. And though the decree of the Eternal Being has appointed for you an exalted rank among men, you are nevertheless a man like any one of us."[1] Solemnities of all kinds followed the ceremony of coronation; fêtes were given to the people and the joy was universal. But in the midst of all the brilliant and sumptuous festivals, in the midst of all the happy figures crowding round the newly-crowned Emperor, the gloom of the past tragedy lay heavily on the royal pair. The very ceremony of coronation increased Alexander's sadness; set his conscience working with an ever-increasing and unbearable remorse. Czartorysky succeeded so far in exhorting him to exercise self-command, that he at least did not too openly betray his despair in public.[2]

The accession of Alexander was greeted with genuine and universal acclamation. The Ode of Klopstock, the new German Pindar, was not the only congratulation the Tsar received from abroad in which he was enthusiastically proclaimed as the Guardian Angel of mankind. Within the realm of Russia itself there were no limits to the rejoicings, which were renewed with undiminished heartiness, when, in 1802, the Emperor was passing through the Baltic provinces on his way to visit Frederick William III, who was then at Memel. Nor had enthusiasm died out in St. Petersburg, and his journey from the Palace to the frontier was a verit-

[1] Bogdanovitsh, M. T., "History of Alexander," 1869, vol. i, Add., pp. 30-31.

[2] Czartorysky, *l.c.*, pp. 291-292.

able triumphal progress. At Riga, in spite of the Emperor's protest, the inhabitants insisted on unharnessing the horses and dragging the carriage themselves, and he was thus drawn, amid the huzzas of the populace, to his destination, which was the former Archbishop's Palace.

Strangers also shared in the general delight, and a sea captain from Lübeck forced his way through the crowds to the Emperor's carriage, crying out, "Make room! Make room! I must see the Emperor of Peace with my own eyes!"[1] For even such had Alexander declared himself to be, and as such men looked for him to fulfil his promise.

The war which, shortly before his accession, had been declared against England, had scarcely been seriously intended by Paul, and Alexander hastened to put a stop to it. Friendly relations were re-established between the two countries, and the whole condition of affairs became transformed as by magic as soon as Alexander mounted the throne. Commercial relations were re-established, and the second treaty of "armed neutrality" was renounced in less than twelve months after it had been concluded under a maritime convention with Great Britain, by which the principle of the treaty of 1780, "that the neutral flag protected merchandise," was entirely abandoned. (Convention of St. Petersburg, June 19, 1801.)

Russia was still on the most friendly footing with France, and Paul's son, having been brought up by a Republican, incurred none of the hate and suspicion which his father had drawn upon himself.

[1] J. H. Schnitzler, *Histoire intime de la Russie*, Paris, 1847, vol. i, p. 43.

Free from all prejudice as regards a country to which the throes of revolution had given a new birth, Alexander signed an agreement of peace, the duration of which depended solely on the First Consul. A commercial treaty was entered into with Sweden; the incorporation of Georgia and Imeritia with the Russian Empire was completed in 1801, under Alexander, and Persia agreed to abstain from the renewal of war. Relations with the Porte had been established on amicable grounds at the Convention of Constantinople in 1800, and the permission to establish a fort in the Republic of the seven Ionian Isles, which were acknowledged to be under Turkish dominion, was an advance favourable to the possible renewal of the old designs on Morea. Being thus at peace with the foreign powers, Alexander was able to give his whole strength and thought to the internal conditions of his realm, in which he found much to reform of greater importance than the shape of caps or beards. During this early peaceful period of his reign, he devoted himself to carrying out the plans and intentions of Peter the Great and Catherine II. And Alexander—upright, generous, and philanthropic, and capable of noble enthusiasm—was well fitted for a work of this kind. And yet he allowed himself to be led astray; he fell into error, and ambition, even in his case, became a stumbling-block. He aimed at playing a conspicuous rôle in European affairs, and at carrying out his favourite theories on the world's stage. He was encouraged in these high-flown designs by the young friends with whom he was in close comradeship, most of whom were animated by noble and unselfish aims.

From other quarters, however, there were obstacles, such as might have been expected, to the practical carrying out of his schemes, since the general good of the community is seldom in harmony with the interests of private individuals, and to overcome these would have required a firmness, patience, and strength of purpose which were not present in the gentle character of the Emperor Alexander. The truth remains that Alexander fell into exactly the same mistakes as his predecessors. Ere long, Court intrigues and external affairs were occupying the new Emperor more than the inner conditions of Russia, and in agreement with his father's policy he frequently showed himself more of a European than a Russian, and interested himself in anything rather than in the matter which stood nearest to hand, namely, the deliverance of his country from the uncivilised condition which in itself was a chief source of danger. To the latter half of his reign belongs the period of warlike and higher political activity.

During the earlier years of his government Alexander endeavoured to follow in the footsteps of his statesmanlike grandmother; he was ambitious of enlarging the borders of Russia, his motives not being entirely without a touch of egoism. Led on by the Russian traditional policy of acquisition, the philanthropic Emperor added thirty thousand square miles of territory to his dominions. He further extended his sovereignty, at the cost of Sweden, over the whole of Finland, which was treacherously seized from the King Gustavus Adolphus IV, who had stood Russia's firm ally against Napoleon. He took the greater part of Armenia from Persia, conquered other states on the farther side of the Cau-

casus, and finally incorporated under his sovereignty the greater part of the duchy of Warsaw, which was traversed by the Vistula, the lower courses of this river belonging to another power.

These conquests had not, it is true, been all premeditated, but when opportunity offered, Alexander's ambition could not withstand the temptation of territorial aggrandisement. Full of good intentions at his accession, kind of heart, possessed of a glowing, almost Eastern imagination, and of unusual powers of mind, and, moreover, gifted with diplomatic clearness and fineness of judgment, the young Emperor, who had been encouraged in all these characteristics by the careful training he had received, was unfortunately also of a weak and wavering disposition and wholly lacking in endurance and patience; he was consequently guilty of much of which, in the depths of his heart, he was ashamed. Thus alone can the contradictions presented by the history of his reign be accounted for, a reign which was nevertheless one of the best which Russia has known.

Reform succeeded reform at the commencement of his reign, and Europe applauded the young monarch. The system of terror which had existed under Paul was immediately brought to an end by Alexander. "I acknowledge no power as just, save that which is supported by the laws," were his words, and he did not delay in removing all such instruments as had served his father to carry out his capricious cruelties, while he did his best to atone for the crying injustice of which so many of his subjects had been victims.[1]

[1] *l.c.*, p. 47.

He abolished the secret tribunal, instituted in 1801, before which political prisoners were brought and forced to confession by subjection to hunger, thirst, and such-like sufferings, actual torture being avoided. General Procurator Obulyaminov had presided over this northern inquisition like a Turkish grand vizier. Alexander selected certain members to form a permanent council, and undertook the entire reorganisation of the central government, and with the same liberal-mindedness that led him to abolish the secret police, he granted freedom to the press and permission for foreign books to enter the country. He lowered the taxes, enabling himself to do this by lessening the expenditure of the Court, and he abstained, for the first year of his reign, from all conscription—the institution which, of all others, was most hated throughout Russia.

Like Peter the Great, he was in the habit of rising at five o'clock in the morning; and, as a rule, devoted three hours to his people before his Ministers were admitted. Alexander did not spare his own person. He desired all heads of departments to render full accounts, and, what was an unheard-of thing at that time, he ordered them to be printed and submitted to public investigation. He abolished all torture, which he considered a disgrace to the Russian nation and to humanity in general, and he forbade the seizure of hereditary property as a punishment for any kind of misdemeanour or crime, being unwilling, he said, to take back what had been often given in the past in return for service done to the crown. The advertising of serfs for sale was also forbidden,

and so an end was put to the existing scandal of human traffic.

He hastened to amend the general code of laws, a work which Catherine had begun, a special commission having been appointed by her for this purpose. Even more actively did Alexander interest himself in matters of manufacture and commerce; he instituted certain regulations concerning shipment, and helped towards the furtherance of inland communication by the construction of new roads and canals. Banks and a sinking fund were established as an assistance to finance; the system of tolls was improved and concessions made as regards open harbours. In the further interest of commerce he organised voyages round the world, embassies to Persia, Cochin China, and Khiva, made treaties with the United States, Brazil, Spain, and the Porte, and settled colonies on the west coast of North America. His foreign travel, his constant visitation of his own provinces, and his intercourse with enlightened men and women, as well as his careful consideration of everything that might be of service to his people, and his readiness to adopt all just and large ideas, fitted him to be the ruler of the mighty realm over which he held sway.

He was an advocate of general education, and founded fresh universities, as well as two hundred and four gymnasiums and two thousand normal schools, introducing in part the Bell-Lancaster system, which had been studied in Paris by his private physician Hamel. He also took a lively interest in the higher development of

the Russian language and literature, giving large sums towards the publication of important works, and rewarding in an imperial manner the scientific services of his own countrymen, as well as of foreigners. He bought costly collections, and thus laid the foundation of the school of oriental languages of which Russia can boast. Talented young noblemen were assisted by him in their education and were given means to travel. Religion also received his attention, and no sovereign ever did more to propagate a knowledge of the Scriptures, Bible societies being established by him in the various provinces; at the same time he forbade proselytism, and gave free permission for the exercise of religion by the various sects and by Jews. The Jesuits were expelled from St. Petersburg and Moscow, and finally from the whole of Russia, simply because they meddled in State affairs, and disturbed the domestic peace of families.

In the same spirit Alexander endeavoured to relieve his subjects from the oppression of the nobles, the Boyars and Starosts, without, however, interfering with, or injuring the rights of possession owned by the latter. He gave the nobles permission to enfranchise their serfs, and dedicated a part of the inheritance of the former Chancellor Romanzov to enable the serfs to buy their freedom from their masters, and finally granted them unconditional possession of the property transferred to them, thus laying the foundation of an agricultural and artisan class. Permission, which previously had been restricted, was now given to all his subjects to visit foreign parts, as

well as freedom to start any business or manufacture they chose, irrespective of birth. The stupendous plan of founding military colonies was carried out with a view to mingling the peasant and soldier class, and to building up the pillars of the State, while the less populated portions of the realm were colonised with German immigrants. Under Alexander the army reached a higher pitch of excellence than it had previously known.

The widowed Empress, with the help of her son, laid the foundation of all the hospitals and educational establishments which have won a just tribute of honour for her name.[1]

In order to assure himself of the obedience of his agents, and in order to make himself acquainted with the wants of his subjects, Alexander frequently journeyed to various parts of his Empire. Every subject, no matter to what class he belonged, was admitted to his presence, and all petitions were received. The monarch appeared everywhere as "an amiable and benevolent prince," as a man amongst men.

The Emperor's zeal for the good of his people, and his determination to look into everything himself, met with opposition on many sides, and many of his wise schemes fell through. As has been said, he had not the strength to hold his own against Court intrigue and calumny. The immense size of his realm made the control of the more distant spots a matter of enormous difficulty, and Alexander, moreover, allowed himself to be led away by the idea that he was the chosen umpire of his division of the world, and that Russia was the centre of the whole organisation of Europe,

[1] *Cf.* Czartorysky, *l.c.*, p. 275.

and in part also of Asia. The question of alliances, the overstepping of the terms of treaties and such-like matters, led him to declare wars, during the course of which the old system again had free play throughout his realm. At last, tired out and disillusioned, the dreams of his youth dispelled, he more and more became a prey to indifference and sloth, while a restlessness took possession of him which led him to undertake useless journeys to one place or another. He saw himself confronted by an invincible and immeasurable evil—the evil of corruption—and as soon as he ceased to combat with this evil, he allowed the guardianship of affairs also to pass out of his own hands.

And into whose hands did the guidance of the ship of the State fall? Into those of General Araktsheev, a man of undoubtedly good intentions and loyal to the Emperor, but a Russian of the old school, who set himself in opposition to all progressive measures however reasonable they might appear. Under him the press was again subjected to the severest censure, and foreign books forbidden to be imported. A tyrannous inquisition was exercised over many of the Professors at the new universities, and they were ordered to organise the courses of teaching according to a programme drawn up by the State; freemasonry was forbidden all over the kingdom, and every kind of difficulty was again placed in the way of those who wished to travel abroad. Araktsheev exercised the authority that had been placed in his hands by a master whose gentleness had at length dwindled into weakness with an ever-increasing severity. And yet

the Emperor still loved to discuss philosophical problems concerning the rights of man, and sympathised like a true Christian with the sufferings of his fellow-creatures.[1] What a strange and contradictory picture! And this contradiction of character was displayed in private as well as in public life. There was neither stability nor reason in his disposition strong enough to overcome the self-love that passionately sought for satisfaction. When the fascination of his early ideas had died out, he became a prey to the passing impression of the moment, until it came to pass that this all-powerful Autocrat was guided in his decisions solely by transitory impulses and external influences.

By the part he had taken in the Coalition of 1798, his father Paul had involved Russia in the affairs of Europe, and Souvarov's victory on the Trebbia and near Novi had made Russia a chief weight in the scale in which many rival interests were weighed. At the Diet of Regensburg, which was dominated by the First Consul, it was decided that the only possible counter-weight to the latter's power was the protectorate of the Russian Autocrat, and haste was made to secure the re-organisation of Germany. "All the reigning princes of Germany are looking to Alexander as to their deliverer," are the words found in an official document issued by the Russian cabinet. On his side the Russian Autocrat looked upon it as a mission confided to him to take Germany under his protection, and his self-love was delighted to have Germany, as he already had Naples and Sardinia, dependent upon his power.

[1] Schnitzler, *l.c.*, pp. 54–55.



COUNT ALEXIUS ANDREEVITSH ARAKTSHEEV.
After a drawing by Outkin.

Alexander acted at first with great precaution and foresight, and both his love of peace and his religious turn of character were very palpable in his foreign relations. He remained faithful to his father's policy, and on October 11, 1801, he concluded a treaty with Napoleon, in which it was agreed that Russia and France should share the honour of bringing into order the affairs of Germany and Italy, which had been in a disastrous state of confusion since the unfortunate conclusion of peace at Lunéville. The nominal sovereign, the German Emperor, was entirely powerless, and each separate member of the Holy Roman Empire carried out his own ideas of policy with no consideration at all for the general good. After the unhappy war with France it became an immediate necessity to redistribute the countries, so that the princes who had lost or resigned their possessions to France should be compensated; those who enjoyed the goodwill of France and England also expected to receive further grants of dominion. The good understanding, however, between Alexander and Napoleon did not last long. The former admired the warlike qualities of Napoleon, but he considered himself as capable as the latter to be the rightful leader of European affairs, and, finding that Napoleon wished to prescribe laws to him and that he was expected to play only a secondary rôle, a certain ill-feeling towards the French potentate grew up in him, which soon led to a coolness between the two, and finally put an end to the friendliness of their relations.

CHAPTER XV

THE SON OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE FIRST GENTLEMAN OF EUROPE

Napoleon's victories—The meeting of the two Emperors—The raft on the Niemen—Tilsit and Erfurt—Plans for the partition of the world—War between France and Russia—Napoleon at Dresden—The burning of Moscow—Alexander's appeal to the European nations—The entry of the Allies into Paris—The Congress of Vienna—Second entry of the Allies into Paris.

THE demand made to France by Russia to vacate the territories in Italy and Germany which were occupied by her troops, and the special Russian protection of Hanover, the English possession in Germany, led to the first misunderstanding. All might have been peaceably arranged, however, had it not been for the hostile attitude assumed by the Russian Ambassador at Paris towards the French Government. Von Markov was apparently desirous of playing the same rôle in France that Stackelberg and others had formerly played in Stockholm and Stamboul. Owing to his intrigues he was at last forced to leave the country, and it awakened surprise and anger in the French that the Emperor should reward the man, who had done his best to arouse enmity between the two nations, with a pension of twelve thousand roubles and a post in the Foreign Office.

An open breach between the two nations was hastened by Napoleon's unjustifiable murder of the Duc d'Enghien, which aroused Alexander's tenderer and more chivalric spirit, and he no

longer hesitated to join the coalition between England, Austria, and Sweden, further engaging himself to support the Austrian army in Italy, or in Germany, with a supply of one hundred and eighty thousand men. The main purpose in hand was to deliver Germany and Italy from the French troops, to re-establish the King of Sardinia, and to deprive France of her allies. Unfortunately, Alexander sent less than a hundred thousand men into the field, and, what was more, ordered them to advance into Austria in three divisions, widely separated from one another. The first of these, under Koutousov, marched so slowly that it had not even crossed the boundary of Austria by the time the Austrians themselves were in full flight. Under such circumstances Austria's brave efforts against Napoleon were bound to meet with failure, especially as the latter had disposed his troops with admirable skill and foresight.

The first blow to Austria's power was the capitulation of General Mack at Ulm; the French, meeting with no opposition, marched on to Vienna, which they entered in November. Napoleon himself, with praiseworthy consideration, would not appear in Vienna as its conqueror, but remained at Schönbrunn. The Emperor Francis was inclined for peace, and would have certainly come to favourable terms with Napoleon if the arrogance of Russia had not intervened to spoil everything. Napoleon feared that the Russians would not be satisfied without coming to a pitched battle with him, and therefore sent Savary, a skilled diplomatist, to Olmütz, with the ostensible intent of

greeting Alexander, but in reality to ascertain the tone of mind of those who were about the Emperor. Savary became aware that the Russian generals nursed the fond idea that Napoleon stood in awe of them and the Emperor. It must be further remembered that Napoleon's position, notwithstanding his victories, was an uncertain one. Meanwhile, Koutousov, his army being still intact, began marching towards Moravia, where he was to join Baxhöfden with whose forces the Emperor was in person. The third army, under Bennigsen, was already on the march. The Archdukes Karl and Johann were hastening south with considerable forces and had already got within reach of Vienna. The Archduke Ferdinand, who had fought his way through from Ulm into Bohemia, was at the head of 24,000 men, and Hungary could offer considerable support, for there an armed force could be quickly raised by means of an insurrection. Moreover, Prussia, offended at the interference with her neutrality by the invasion of the Anspach territory, began to mobilise her army, and had posted forces in Silesia, whence, if they had been able to make use of their full power, they might easily have paved the way for Napoleon's downfall. The latter, however, was perfectly aware with whom he had to deal in the persons of the men then controlling State affairs in Prussia, and troubled himself very little about its army. It was of far more importance, as he saw, to force the Russians and Austrians to meet him in battle before their expected auxiliaries could reach them.

Not until Napoleon had entered Berlin in triumph after the decisive battles of Jena and

Auerstadt, and had driven the remains of Frederick William's army back on the Russian frontier, did Alexander rouse himself. He now declared Napoleon to be the enemy of Europe, and ordered his army to march against him in Prussia. His forces, after many sanguinary engagements, were driven back, and the Russians for the first time for a hundred years saw themselves threatened on their own territory. They came to a halt, however, on the banks of the Niemen, and Alexander prepared for a fresh attack, proudly declaring that he would not lay down his arms until Prussia had recovered all her possessions, and had received a full indemnity in men and land. When, however, in this same month of June his armies were again beaten at Friedland, he concluded an armistice with France, glad at this price to keep the enemy beyond the borders of his dominions.

Alexander was now desirous of having an interview with Napoleon, in order, as he expressed it in writing his request, that he might see the greatest man of the century in person and exchange views openly with him. Napoleon arranged to receive him the following day, being flattered on his side at the thought of the representative of the oldest monarchy in Europe coming to offer homage to a son of the Revolution.

It was a most imposing spectacle, this meeting of the two greatest sovereigns between the armies which were drawn up on either side of the Niemen. Their intention was to discuss the fate of the nations, and to consider how best peace might be restored to their portion of the globe and humanity comforted after the succession of disasters it had gone through.

Napoleon had done his utmost to make the ceremony as magnificent and striking as possible. The interview between the two sovereigns took place at Tilsit on a raft on the Niemen. The French soldiers had constructed "a tent, beautifully furnished," consisting of two rooms.[1] Alexander arrived accompanied by his brother, by Generals Bennigsen and Ouvarov, Prince Lobanov and several aides-de-camp. The armies were ranged one on either side of the Niemen, watching Alexander and Napoleon embark at the same instant and approach the raft. A loud hurrah greeted the two sovereigns as they mounted the raft, and, clasping hands, embraced each other. The two armies, which had been hating each other for more than eight months, now united their shouts of applause. They were weary of war, and in the persons of the monarchs they greeted the hope for peace which made their hearts beat faster. The mutual embrace of the Autocrat of Russia and the Son of the French Revolution in the presence of the two armies meant peace and security for the universe.[2] The two sovereigns disappeared in the little tent erected on the raft and their conversation lasted nearly two hours. The King of Prussia was not admitted to a conference on which depended the fate of his dynasty. On horseback on the shore he pushed his steed into the stream, or sat with his eyes fixed on the fatal raft.[3] In the meantime, what were the two sovereigns saying to each other in that tent? Alexander's first words are

[1] Archives of St. Petersburg, 1807, June 16–28.
[2] Vandal, A., *Napoléon et Alexandre*, 1891, i, p. 57.
[3] Tatistcheff, Serge, *Alexandre I et Napoléon*, Paris, p. 154.

supposed to have been: "I hate the English as much as you do, and I shall assist in everything you intend to undertake against them." "In that case," replied Napoleon, "everything can be settled and peace shall be concluded."[1] Alexander, with his charming manner and kindly smile, and his fascinating, almost feminine grace produced a very favourable impression upon Napoleon. Their liking was, in fact, mutual. But every alliance arises out of a hatred shared by two parties for a third. It did not take Napoleon long to become aware that the sentiment uppermost in Alexander's mind was hatred, not only against England, but also against Austria. It was easy for the French Emperor to persuade the Russian Tsar to accept the secret conditions of the treaty and to divide the world with France. "*J'ai souvent couché à deux*," said Napoleon, "*jamais à trois.*" By the third party he meant Austria.[2] Napoleon further heaped extravagant praises on the Russian soldiers, adding, that if the French and Russian armies were to combine, something really great might at last be achieved, further pointing out that Russia would only bring ruin on her forces if she continued to fight France; whereas if they were to join hands, she would share the fame and fortune which France would acquire.

Alexander made answer that he had a certain duty to perform towards Prussia and that his honour forbade him to leave the latter in the lurch.

Napoleon assured him that he would give back

[1] Vandal, *l.c.*, p. 58; Tatistcheff, *l.c.*, p. 152; Lefebvre, A., *Histoire des Cabinets de l'Europe*, Paris, 1847, vol. iii, p. 102.

[2] Vandal, *l.c.*, p. 59, and Archives de St. Petersburg.

as much of Prussia's territories as was necessary to satisfy Russia's interest and honour, and Alexander was partly won over by the thought of the advantage to himself. Napoleon, however, wished to carry out his aims without reserve, and to that end he first flattered the sovereign and then flattered the man.

"We shall understand each other better," he said, "if we can transact business directly with each other, instead of through our Ministers, who so often misunderstand us, and we should get further with our negotiations in an hour than those under us would in several days."

Napoleon proposed to Alexander that he should take up his abode at Tilsit, which was declared neutral ground, as there they could personally discuss matters.

This proposal was acceded to, and Lobanov was despatched the same day to make the necessary preparations. The two sovereigns then left the tent. Napoleon said a few pleasant words to the Grand Duke Constantine and to General Bennigsen, and Alexander wished Murat and Berthier good fortune, telling them that they were the worthiest followers of the greatest commander of modern times. There were further exchanges of friendly words before the final farewell, and Alexander and Napoleon parted from each other amid the universal acclamation of the numerous onlookers.

Towards evening Prince Lobanov arrived at the headquarters of the Russian army to order the transfer of such things as would be required by Alexander at Tilsit. It was arranged that Alex-

ander should occupy one-half of the town, and Napoleon the other, that the Russian Imperial Guards should be transferred to the left bank, so as no longer to act as guard to their sovereign, and that the removal should take place the following day after Napoleon had received the King of Prussia, who was also invited to Tilsit.

The following day Alexander crossed the Niemen; Napoleon was awaiting him on the opposite shore, and conducted him to the house prepared for him. He also invited him to dinner, and as Alexander had no Court equipage with him it was agreed that he should take all his meals with Napoleon. They spent the evening together in amicable and confidential conversation.

The French Guards were paraded before Alexander, and these old soldiers of the Revolution were proud to display themselves in sight of the sovereign whom they had beaten. The men composing the Guard were not of such high stature, nor did they march with the same machine-like regularity as the northern soldiers to whom Alexander was accustomed, but the ease of their movements, the firmness of their bearing, the quick intelligence of their eyes, were sufficient explanation of their victories and of their superiority over all the other armies of Europe. They greeted Alexander's flattering praises with the repeated cry, "Long live Alexander! Long live Napoleon!" These two, though only personally known to each other for so short a time, were already sworn friends. Napoleon now declared to the astonished Alexander the stupendous plan for which he desired his co-operation.

Contemporary writers have left us some interesting particulars concerning this *entente cordiale* between the two sovereigns. At the time of their second meeting at Erfurt, in September 1808, Napoleon having sent for his actors from Paris, the two Emperors sat together in the stalls reserved for Royalties and engaged in confidential conversation. When the renowned Talma uttered Corneille's line, "*L'amitié d'un grand homme est un présent des Dieux*," Alexander bowed to the Emperor beside him, repeating these words.[1] On another occasion, when conversing of their several states and their administration, Alexander explained the method of government in Russia, and complained to Napoleon of the opposition he met with from his Senate whenever he endeavoured to introduce any kind of reform. Napoleon in response seized his hand and, pressing it, said: "However large a realm may be, it is never large enough to hold two masters." Alexander, however, had only intended to convey the fact that, notwithstanding his unlimited power, he could not always carry through the good and useful measures which he desired to bring into effect.

The result of this friendship between Napoleon and Alexander was that Prussia became the sacrifice, in spite of the last-named Emperor's sworn protestations of friendship and of his former relations with the good Queen Louisa. Forgotten was the night in which she with two others had, by torch-light, visited the vault at Potsdam, where the ashes of Frederick the Great reposed; forgotten also was the oath of friendship and loyalty sworn by the

[1] Vandal, *l.c.*, i, p. 441.

two monarchs to each other as they knelt within the vault. The fall of Prussia was consummated. Napoleon deprived her of all her possessions between the Rhine and the Elbe, together with Magdeburg, and confiscated the whole of Poland. He broke the two wings of the Prussian Eagle, and Alexander made little resistance to save his former ally. Even the personal graces of the Queen of Prussia were of no avail.[1] Napoleon invited this unhappy Queen to dinner. Before sitting down to table Napoleon, approaching a vase, took a very beautiful rose and offered it to her Majesty. Her first movement was that of refusal, but she soon thought better of it, and, looking at Napoleon, said: "Yes, Sire, but I wish Magdeburg with it." "I must call your Majesty's attention to the fact," replied the hero of Jena, "that I am the giver, and that your Majesty is the receiver of the rose."[2]

When the King of Prussia, whom Napoleon invariably treated with the utmost contempt, afterwards tried to make some representation as to the necessity of retaining Magdeburg, Napoleon answered with a sneer: "You forget, Sire, that you are no longer in a position to negotiate. I must keep Magdeburg so as to be able to enter Berlin, whenever I choose to do so."[3]

Prussia and Sweden, who had fought for the common cause, were sacrificed without a thought, and both were left inconsiderately in the lurch. The King of Prussia was to withdraw from the

[1] Lefebvre, *l.c.*, pp. 105–106. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[3] *Cf.* Sir George Jackson, "Diaries and Letters," London, 1872, vol. ii, p. 166.

"Bialystock" frontier, in favour of his august northern neighbour, in order, as it was said, to "settle the natural boundaries on the Polish side."

Alexander, who, like his predecessors, had a longing after Finland, also undertook to force the King of Sweden, Napoleon's most obstinate enemy, not only to lay down his arms, but also to submit himself to the continental programme, to which Alexander, much to the disadvantage of his realm, had himself given his adherence. This alone was of more ruinous consequences to Russia than a lost campaign, for commerce with England was indispensable for its welfare, and the Tsar must have had very weighty reasons to induce him to put a stop to it.[1]

Vain by nature, and flattered by Napoleon's behaviour and promises towards him, Alexander eagerly consented to all the secret conditions imposed in their treaty of friendship; these, however, embraced no less vast a scheme than the division of Europe between France and Russia. While at Tilsit Alexander gave his consent to everything to which his position did not absolutely forbid him to accede. Was his own state then in such a perilous position? He had as yet seen no enemy within the borders of his realm, and the campaign of 1812 had shown the danger of attacking it. The general interpretation of his action is, therefore, that in this treaty with Napoleon the Tsar only sought a means of getting Swedish Finland under his protection, this being a necessary step for the rounding off of Russia, and for the better protection of the

[1] *Cf.* Choiseul-Gouffier, *Mémoires.*

towns on the frontier. It was also his intention to remain no longer at enmity with England.[1]

The Treaty of Tilsit, which was concluded the 7th of July, 1807, and which put an end to the war between France and Russia, was followed by a compact between the two Empires, and a secret treaty which was tantamount to a division of the world between the two Emperors. "I often saw the two sovereigns," writes M. de Méneval, "bending over a map of European Turkey, and after examining it attentively, walk on again, continuing their conversation. In their plans of partition Constantinople was a point upon which they could evidently not agree. "Constantinople," said Napoleon, "means the dominion of the world."[2]

The peace of the world had been concluded, and Alexander—who in signing the Treaty of Tilsit was actuated by selfish motives, and gave an open denial to all the noble sentiments which he had formerly professed—expected great advantages for Russia. Everything, however, depended upon the mutual fidelity and loyalty of the two Emperors who had sworn friendship at Tilsit.[3]

But Alexander's private intentions were no more actually loyal towards Napoleon than Napoleon's were to Alexander; each was intent on deceiving the other, until a breach between them became inevitable. While lavishing amiabilities, they were both at the same time making colossal preparations for war. Those immediately around Alexander

[1] Schnitzler, J. H., *Histoire intime de la Russie*, 1847, vol. i, pp. 60–61.

[2] Baron de Méneval, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1894, vol. ii, p. 105.

[3] *Cf.* Tatistcheff, *l.c.*, p. 183.

clamoured for a fresh declaration of hostilities against France; Napoleon was equally ready for warfare, dissatisfied that there should be one realm, one capital, into which he had not yet made a triumphal entry. "Sincere as a man in all that concerned humanity," said a contemporary, "Alexander was cunning as a demi-Greek in all that related to politics." Alexander's friendship began to cool after the meeting at Erfurt. During the previous period of their intimate relations with each other it was with difficulty that the Dowager Empress had been able to prevent Alexander giving his sister, the Grand Duchess Catherine, in marriage to the French Emperor. Alexander's sister, Catherine Pavlovna, was very beautiful, and Joseph de Maistre wrote of her: "If I were a painter I would have sent you one of her eyes, that you might see how much intelligence dame Nature has enclosed in it. This princess is spoken of as the future Empress of France."[1] It was not until the Erfurt Conference that each of the rival monarchs began to doubt the sincerity of the other.

Napoleon was quick in discovering Alexander's growing suspicions; he found him "different from what he was at Tilsit."[2] One of Napoleon's ministers, in whom he placed the greatest confidence, openly declared that the Russian potentate among other demands had urged the partition of the Ottoman Empire. "I must," he said to the Duke of Vicenza, "have the key which opens the door of my house." He had already gained possession of a key to the Baltic, having, with Napo-

[1] *Cf.* Vandal, *l.c.*, p. 463; Tatistcheff, *l.c.*, i, p. 520.
[2] Vandal, *l.c.*, i, p. 424.

leon's consent, seized, in the most disloyal manner, his own brother-in-law's realm of Finland.

Alexander's plan as regarded Turkey had to wait for realisation; Napoleon continued, however, to carry his own into effect. Disappointed in his resolve to drive England out of the Continent, he gradually extended the boundaries of his own dominions as far as Trave in Mecklenburg, without sparing the duchy of Oldenburg, the sovereign house of which was closely allied to that of Russia. On the other hand, he enormously enlarged the boundaries of the dukedom of Warsaw, maintained a large garrison at Dantzig, and finally intended to reinstate the ancient Polish kingdom. This last possibility was a constantly threatening spectre before Alexander's eyes.[1] The Tsar demanded the solemn promise that France would never make any attempt at this re-establishment. But Napoleon absolutely refused to ratify the Polish Convention.

In the meantime, perceiving the opposition which Maria Féodorovna evinced to an alliance between her daughter and the crowned son of Lætitia Ramolini, the French Emperor decided to marry the daughter of Francis, Emperor of Austria. The simultaneous news of Napoleon's marriage with the Austrian Princess and his refusal to ratify the Polish Convention was considered in St. Petersburg as a double insult.[2] All these facts hastened to bring about a coolness between the allies of Tilsit and Erfurt. Alexander's patience was tired out and his pride was hurt. He altered his line of policy and found the moment the more

[1] Méneval, *l.c.*, p. 500.
[2] Tatistcheff, *l.c.*, pp. 524–528.

opportune for a rupture with France since the heroic resistance of Spain was holding her arms in check. The customs-tariff of December 31, 1810, which fell heavily on the French goods imported, was the herald of the coming change in Russian diplomacy. Moreover, Napoleon began to complain of the privileges accorded to English vessels in the Russian harbours, these sailing at first under Portuguese flags, but soon throwing off their disguise. All these circumstances combined made a rupture unavoidable, and the Russian Ambassador, Prince Alexander Kourakin, left Paris, although Napoleon had refused for some time to grant him his passports.[1]

The two giants, France and Russia, were now to measure their strength against each other, and the whole of 1811 was devoted to the preparations for the coming Titanic conflict. Russia suggested to Austria and Prussia an alliance with herself in case of attack, and she obtained immediate help from England in the shape of money. Napoleon was able by promises, however, to win Austria and Prussia over to his side, and to keep them from forming a coalition with Russia. Poland also stood by Napoleon, in hopes of recovering through him her old regal power. Everything indicated that the object of France was to regenerate Poland.[2] But Poland's hopes were never fulfilled. The sons of Poland shed their life's blood on Napoleon's fields of battle, only to

[1] *Cf.* Vandal, *l.c.*, iii, pp. 399 and 411; Méneval, *l.c.*, p. 533, also *Archives des Affaires Étrangères, Russie*, p. 154.

[2] *Cf.* "Memoirs of the Duke of Rovigo" (M. Savary), vol. iii, Pt. I, p. 140.

be left by him unsupported in their struggle for freedom. Meanwhile the Russian Ambassador, through the agency of one of Marshal Berthier's secretaries, had obtained possession of all the particulars concerning the campaign against Russia, and when he started for St. Petersburg he carried with him the whole plan of operation.

On May 9th Napoleon started to join his army. At Dresden he called an assembly of all the Princes of the Rhine Confederacy, and for the first and last time set this machine of his own construction in motion.[1] At an entertainment given in the castle of this city, Napoleon walked in front of the other sovereigns with his hat on; he was followed by the Emperor of Austria, with uncovered head, the latter being accompanied by his daughters and the Empress Maria-Louisa; behind these came a crowd of kings and princes walking in awe-stricken silence. The Empress of Austria had excused herself from being present, under the pretext of indisposition; she was not ill, however, but only determined to avoid the necessity of taking the arm of Napoleon, whom she hated.[2]

Napoleon left Dresden on May 4th, 1812, and marched on to Posen and Thorn, stopping at various places to review his troops. The appearance of Napoleon on Polish soil was the signal for a display of enthusiasm which spread throughout the country, giving it the semblance of a resuscitated fatherland. The Emperor of France was greeted by the entire population of Posen as

[1] Vandal, vol. iii, p. 405. [2] *l.c.*, p. 415.

the liberator of Poland.[1] He talked with his old soldiers of the Pyramids, of Marengo, of Austerlitz, of Jena, and Friedland; with the young he inquired into their clothing, their pay, and their officers. When in the neighbourhood of the Russian frontier Napoleon made a last diplomatic move and sent Count Lauriston, the former Ambassador at St. Petersburg, to the Emperor Alexander. But things had gone too far now for war to be avoided, and Napoleon remarked in his usual manner, "The conquered assume the tone of victors. Fate draws them on. Let their doom be fulfilled."

On June 24th, 1812, Napoleon crossed the Niemen; at that time half Europe was at his feet, and his enormous army surpassed in numbers the combined armies of western Europe.

On June 22nd, Napoleon, then at his head-quarters at Wilkowiski, addressed his soldiers in the following words: "Soldiers! the second Polish war is about to begin. The first was closed at Tilsit; Russia wishes for her own ruin; let her have it."

"The close of Napoleon's career, however," says Madame Choiseul-Gouffier, "had already been decreed; it was in the wilds of Russia, it was by the light from the flames of Moscow, in the midst of the snows and frosts of the North, that misfortune was to seize its illustrious prey, to pour upon his own head the evils which his selfish ambition had inflicted upon the world, and to force to submit to a slow and cruel death upon a rock in the midst of the ocean, the man who had complained *that he suffocated in old Europe.*"[2]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 415.

[2] Madame Choiseul-Gouffier, *Mémoires*, p. 53.

After the terrible fate which befell Napoleon in Russia, the Emperor Alexander undertook to act as sovereign over the rich inheritance of the French Emperor, so far as it was agreeable to those concerned. On March 25th, 1813, he sent out, in his own name and that of his allies, a proclamation from Kalish to the Germans, as their liberator, promising them freedom, security, and well-being. He was hailed with acclamations, the princes gathered round him, and the Russians overspread the fields of Germany with a view to reorganising the world of Europe.

Alexander entered upon an entirely new phase of life after the burning of Moscow, which appears to have been due as much to a half-fanatical as to a patriotic enthusiasm among the people; the deed brought little honour to any one; the richer inhabitants shamefully forsook the poorer ones, only giving up their houses because it was impossible to carry them away. The Russian Emperor assumed an attitude of modest discretion, when, having been assisted in his victory by the northern winter, he decided to follow a policy which was little agreeable to the interests of his own country, feeling that he had had a more suitable personal rôle assigned to him than that of the Autocrat of Russia. He became the soul of the princely coalition which hurled Napoleon from his height; his presence electrified the exhausted men in camp and in council, and sent indifference and private ill-will into banishment.

This period was unquestionably the most brilliant of Alexander's reign, and Russia at no time reached a higher pitch of glory and renown, so that

many might justly have subscribed to the haughty proclamation published in one of the official journals of St. Petersburg: "Russia has done what it desired for the well-being of Europe; it has procured universal freedom, and delivered the Continental powers from their dependent position; it has restored the integrity of the German realm and re-established its rightful powers."

Napoleon's legions having been scattered or destroyed by cold and want, and the remnant of them driven out of Russia, Alexander seized this favourable opportunity to conclude a separate peace. His policy now partook of a higher and more religious character, and included the whole of Europe, for he wished the other nations, most of whom were still groaning under the oppression of the foreign tyrant, to have their share in his triumph. He proclaimed himself their avenger, promising to deliver them from bondage; he urged them to throw off their yoke, and even reproached them for their abased condition. He understood the spirit of the age and knew the right way to address the people—openly, clearly, and firmly; and, mingling his European and Christian ideas with the lofty style of the East, he even went so far as to exhort the people to rebel against their governments, a proceeding which was likely later on to prove but little agreeable to himself, and which his successors seem to have forgotten.

For the first time Germany, too, now turned her eyes in the direction of Alexander, whose figure stood out conspicuously amid all others. His history had been a sad one. The crime-stained circumstances of his accession, the continual expiation

at the foot of the altar in order to appease the anger of Heaven, the exalted piety which led him to join the names of church and empire in his invocations, the ancient crown of the Tsars, and the sapphire cross of the priest, the mystic mildness of his speech and the energy with which he carried out his resolves, everything combined to shed a halo round Alexander. The Tsar had his approach heralded by proclamations which were of a nature to please the religious spirit of Germany. "The ills of the human race have reached a climax," were his words; "we have but to look around to see the miseries of war and the cruelties of ambition in their full horror, but we are ready to face these on behalf of the cause of liberty and in the interests of mankind. We shall enjoy the consciousness of having performed a good deed, and immortal honour will be the reward of that nation, which, submitting to the sufferings of a cruel war and patiently and unflinchingly offering resistance to the one who is carrying it into every quarter, shall finally obtain lasting peace not only for itself but for the other unfortunate nations who have been forced by the tyrant to fight on his side. It is a noble thing and worthy of a great people to return good for evil. O all-powerful God! is not the cause for which we fight a just one? Look down in Thy mercy on Thy holy Church! strengthen this people in their courage and constancy! Give them victory over their enemy and Thine! Let them be the instrument in Thy hand of his destruction, and, in delivering themselves, grant that they may restore liberty and independence to nations and kings!"

Having thus addressed his subjects, Alexander now sent out proclamations to the different German states that he wished to draw into his system. "Austrians, for what advantage do you look from your alliance with France? You are giving your finest provinces in pay for the prospect of some day meeting your death from Spanish swords, while fighting for an unjust and unholy cause. Your commerce destroyed, your honour sullied, your ensigns, formerly decorated with victory, lowered in homage to the French eagle—these are the trophies you may hope to win by this alliance which can never be anything else than shameful! Flattery and intrigue are the weapons of weakness, as such we disdain to employ them; but rather by reminding rulers of their faults, and subjects of their pusillanimity, we desire to recall both to their allegiance to a system which will enable Europe to recover her glory and her peace. Need we remind Prussia of the terrible misfortunes which have befallen her? Such a recollection may well add to her anger, but not to her courage; men are flying to arms on all sides; the spirit of Frederick is alive again throughout the towns and villages of his realm, promising success worthy of their devotion. Hessians, you still remember the prince who was your father; the campaign of 1809, when the exploit of the Duke of Brunswick compelled you to leave your families and follow in the train of this modern Arminius, sufficed to show with what impatience you bore your shackles."

With consummate skill, Alexander stirred the hearts of the Germans by flattering reminders of the past. "Saxons, Dutch, Bavarians, what we

say to one we say to all; think of our words, and it will not be long before the numbers of your legions will be swelled by all those who, in the midst of the degradation of your present corruption, have preserved some shadow of honour and manhood; fear may be holding the memory of your past in its bonds, but let not a fatal subjection to it hold you back; as unhappy as yourselves, the Russians too loathe the power of which they stand in dread, and your generous efforts, that will unfailingly be crowned with honour and liberty, will meet with their applause. Our victorious troops will continue their march to the very frontiers of the enemy—then, if you prove yourselves worthy to march side by side with the heroic Russians, if your hearts are touched with the misery of your own country, if the North will follow the lofty example set it by the proud Castilians, the world will cease to mourn; our brave battalions will enter into possession of the Empire, of which the pride and power have been crushed by a single victory."

In a declaration issued on the 22nd (10th) February 1813, to the people of Europe, Alexander expressed himself as follows: "Your rulers may even still be held back by fear, but do not let that hinder you! They are in as miserable a condition as yourselves, they equally abhor the power of which they stand in dread, and, finally, they will not fail to acknowledge with gratitude all the noble efforts you make for their welfare as well as for your own!

"If, through a pitiable pusillanimity, your rulers continue to submit to their disastrous condition of subjection, then it will be time for their subjects to

make themselves heard, and the princes who are holding their subjects in the degrading thralls of servitude must be forced by the latter to give them back their freedom and honour."[1]

It was the first time that any one had dared to pronounce such words or to preach such a doctrine. But in this proud moment Alexander, conscious of the importance of the part he was playing, knew neither hesitation or circumlocution; he had a high aim in view and was determined to reach it at all costs; the idea to him was everything, the external conditions nothing. In this lofty tone of spirit, and in order to forestall all jealousy, he conferred the highest commands, to which he might with justice have laid claim himself, on other men. He had won Sweden over to the coalition, and he now offered the command of the allied armies of Russia, Prussia, and Sweden, to the Crown Prince of Sweden. Nevertheless, the Tsar himself was always to be found in the front ranks of the combatants; he did not shrink from exposing his own person to danger, and wherever fighting was going on, before Dresden, near Leipsic, or elsewhere, he encouraged the men by his own brave daring. Moreau was shot down as he was fighting side by side with Alexander, thus ending the pleasant intercourse which had been established between the former and the chivalrous-hearted, simple-minded, and benevolent Emperor.[2]

Alexander's personality was undoubtedly an influential factor in directing the course of the war in France. His candour won for him the

[1] Schnitzler, *l.c.*

[2] Crusenstolpe, *l.c.*, vol. iv, p. 85.

confidence of the French people as a whole. One party within the walls, tired of Napoleon's tyranny, left Paris and made their way to Alexander in order to represent to him that the leading tone of the city was inimical to Napoleon, and that it could easily be mastered. Baron de Vitrolles, the agent of Talleyrand, visited Alexander at Troyes and had a long conversation with him. De Vitrolles was a staunch supporter of the Bourbons and pleaded their cause. To his utter dismay, however, he found the Tsar unsympathetic towards the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty; the Autocrat of all the Russias was of opinion that, in the case of Napoleon's deposition, a republican government would be more in accordance with the French spirit.[1] "If you knew the Bourbons," said the former pupil of Laharpe, "you would understand that the burden of such a crown will be too heavy for them; it is not in vain that the revolutionary ideas have germinated for a considerable time in a country like yours."[2] De Vitrolles was amazed. "What have we come to!" he exclaimed; "the Tsar of Tsars, the Emperor Alexander is talking of Republics."[3]

When a little later the alternative of either attacking Napoleon or marching upon Paris was being discussed, General Diebitsh observed to Alexander: "If your Majesty wishes to reinstate the Bourbons, it will naturally be advisable to march at once upon Paris." "There is no question of the Bourbons," replied the Tsar, "but of the deposition of Napoleon."

[1] Baron de Vitrolles, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1884, vol. i, p. 118.
[2] *l.c.*, p. 119. [3] *Ibid.*

He decided to march upon the capital of France. France, according to the dictum of his teacher Laharpe, could only be conquered in Paris.[1] When Schwarzenberg was still hesitating to march on the capital, to which step he was urged by the Corsican Pozzo di Borgo, who bore an invincible hatred towards his crowned compatriot,[2] it was Alexander who pointed out to him not only the possibility, but the necessity of the step. In short, it was the Tsar who finally determined him to make the attack. To the success of his persuasions was due the termination of the war. The generosity with which Alexander treated Paris and Parisians greatly mitigated the feeling of humiliation which the latter must have experienced on being conquered by the Allies. "A motley crowd," writes Count Nesselrode, "thronged the boulevards, but the population of Paris seemed to have come out to enjoy a holiday rather than to witness the entry of the conquering enemy." Alexander declared that he was determined to depose Napoleon; but as for the future government of France, this question he would only solve in conjunction with representatives of the French.

"I have only one enemy in France," said Alexander; "it is the man who has deceived me in a most treacherous manner, who has abused my confidence, broken his oath of friendship and waged war upon me in a most odious fashion. Any reconciliation between him and myself is henceforth impossible. But, apart from this my sole enemy,

[1] Schneider, L., *Aus dem Leben Kaiser Wilhelms III*, p. 225.

[2] Pasquier, *Mémoires du Chancelier*, Paris, 1893, vol. ii, p. 246, also Metternich, *Mémoires*, vol. i, p. 191.

I feel nothing but sympathy for France and the French, whose courage and valour I greatly admire. Tell the Parisians that I am entering Paris as a friend and not as an enemy, and that it will only depend upon them to make me their constant ally."[1] Alexander was received with enthusiastic acclamations by the population of the French capital. One Frenchman having exclaimed, "We expected you long ago, Sire," Alexander's graceful reply was: "If I arrive late, accuse only French valour and the courage of your troops."[2] This reply, flattering as it was to the French nation, electrified the crowd. The conquered were not only grateful for the moderation of the conqueror in the moment of victory, they marvelled to find in the sovereign of a barbarous people such a finished education combined with such rare native qualities. "Our entry into Paris," the Tsar told Prince Golytzin, "was magnificent; the people were anxious to embrace my knees, to kiss my hands and feet."[3]

Having at last convinced himself that no one but Louis XVIII could take the place of Napoleon, and that the wishes of the majority of the French nation tended in that direction, he employed his influence with the Allies to have the Bourbons recalled. The Tsar nevertheless treated the deposed Emperor with every mark of respect.

Alexander also visited the ex-Empress Josephine and dined with her in Malmaison. His triumph, he said, consisted in having brought peace to Europe, happiness to France, and in having

[1] Pasquier, *l.c.*, p. 246, and Choiseul-Gouffier, *l.c.*, p. 185.
[2] *Cf.* Henry Houssaye, 1814, Paris, 1889, pp. 555–557.
[3] Russian Archives, 1886, vol. ii, pp. 97–100.

gained the friendship of the French nation. It was the brightest epoch in his reign.

The Court of the Tuileries looked askance at these visits of Alexander, which took place very frequently. The Tsar did not hesitate to speak unceremoniously of the Bourbons. In the presence of Josephine and Queen Hortense he is reported to have referred to the Bourbons in the following words: "*Ces gens-là ne se soutiendront jamais.*"[1] Louis XVIII was also jealous of the Tsar's popularity, and on one occasion, having invited Alexander and the King of Prussia to dinner, he sat down himself in the place of honour. A servant having offered a dish first to the Emperor of Russia, Louis XVIII angrily cried: "*A moi, s'il vous plaît.*" "We northern barbarians," said Alexander afterwards, "are much more polite to our guests. Louis XIV on the pinnacle of power would have received me otherwise in Versailles; one would have thought that it was Louis XVIII who was reinstating me on my lost throne; his conduct had the effect of a cold douche on my head."[2]

On the 1st June 1814, Alexander left France for England; here he met with an enthusiastic reception, but does not seem to have carried away an entirely agreeable impression of the latter country. The national pride of old England was flattered by the Emperor, who, at the banquet given in his honour at the Guildhall, rose from his seat on hearing "Rule Britannia" struck up by the musicians. The University of Oxford offered him the degree of Doctor of

[1] Pasquier, *l.c.*, p. 433.

[2] Villèle, Count de, *Mémoires*, Paris, 1888, vol. i, p. 234.

Law. "How can I accept the diploma?" asked Alexander; "I have passed no examination." "Your Majesty has brilliantly won a case against the oppressor of nations, a test which is more than any jurisconsult has ever achieved."

He left England on the 28th June and entered St. Petersburg on the 25th July, where he declined the title of "the Blessed," offered him by the Senate, saying that to God alone was honour due.

Alexander was present in person at the brilliant assemblage of sovereigns and ministers which took place in Vienna on November 1, 1814. The power of the Revolution was broken by the fall of its great champion, and every one was wishing, as far as it was possible, to bring back the old régime. The first diplomatists of Europe were busy over this matter, but, however much one may respect their good intentions, it is allowable to doubt if they were fitted by their abilities for the task. The whole tone of the nation had undergone a radical change since the French Revolution; it was still, however, held possible in Vienna to eliminate from the memory of the people the terrible trials and bitter experiences which they had undergone during the course of a quarter of a century. The liberal-minded Emperor of Russia played an exceptional part, therefore, at the Vienna Congress. With his imposing stature, his knightly and cultured bearing, he was the central figure among the imperial and royal guests whom the Emperor Francis hospitably entertained within the walls of his capital. At the public festivities all eyes

were turned to Alexander, and he was the object of universal admiration, while to the ladies he was to a high degree interesting on account of the melancholy that was a prominent feature of his whole being. It has seldom been the fate of any man to receive such universal homage, and he cleverly made use of this circumstance to persuade the people that there was promise of peace in the future.

In the meantime, Napoleon left Elba and marched on Paris. Louis XVIII fled from the capital, and the Son of the Revolution entered the Tuileries. All the endeavours of Napoleon to bring about a reconciliation between himself and Alexander proved futile. At his request Queen Hortense wrote a letter to the Tsar in which she expressed the hope that he would now conclude peace with France and Napoleon, who, tired of war and taught by experience, was determined to enter upon a peaceful policy.[1] Her entreaties were in vain. A new Coalition was formed and war was declared against Napoleon, "*le tracassier universal de l'Europe.*"[2] The Emperor of France was declared the common enemy of Europe and placed outside the civil and social law. It does not speak very favourably for Alexander's generosity that, notwithstanding the friendship that had existed between himself and Napoleon, he not only wished to eliminate Napoleon, but also to exclude his son from the French succession, and this in spite of his scant sympathy with the Bourbons.

[1] Shilder, *l.c.*, vol. iii, pp. 549–550.

[2] *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 1895, No. 4.

Thus actuated by hostile sentiment, Alexander, shortly after his second entry into Paris, relying on the Proscription of the 13th March 1815, and on the renewed alliance between Austria, Russia, Great Britain, and Prussia, proclaimed Napoleon and his whole family, as well as the daughter of the Emperor of Austria and her son, to have forfeited all right to the French throne. The Declaration to this effect only received the signatures of Alexander and of his Chancellor, Count Nesselrode. Europe, as a whole, was so far undisguisedly in agreement with Alexander, that none of the Powers wished to have anything more to do with Napoleon, but that Alexander was not entirely assured of the Emperor of Austria's readiness to agree to his arbitrary declaration may be gathered from words which passed between Nesselrode and Talleyrand on the morning of the entry :—

"The Emperor Alexander is of opinion that a Regency would simply mean an Empire with the Emperor behind the curtain. We must, therefore, seize the opportunity, when Maria Louisa's father is away, to reinstate the Bourbon family on the throne."

The battle of Waterloo decided the fate of the Corsican giant, and it was owing to Alexander's influence that the right of the grandson of the Emperor of Austria to the French throne was put aside in favour of the Bourbons. That the Tsar did not reduce France to a political nullity was perhaps not so much due to his friendship for the French nation as to his interest in establishing a counterpoise to the power of Austria and, even more, to that of England.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MYSTICISM OF CÆSAR

The Holy Alliance—Alexander's conversation with Dr. Eylert—Laharpe's apology of the Holy Alliance—Madame Kruedener—Meeting between Alexander and Madame Kruedener—Text of treaty of the Holy Alliance.

THE re-establishment of European peace ought to have given the Tsar great satisfaction. But the melancholy spirit of Alexander gave birth to terrorising phantoms and directed his attention to the irreligiosity of the nations as the source of many evils. He, therefore, conceived the idea of reviving religious fervour in the peoples and thus re-establishing a patriarchal régime, purity of family life, and obedience to law and authority. But the rulers should give the example and serve as models to their subjects. The sovereigns of Europe must carry out their mission as rulers of empires and kingdoms in the spirit of the Founder of Christianity. Christianity should be the link uniting the sovereigns to their peoples and among themselves.

The great events of the two last years had produced an exalted enthusiasm in the impressionable, sentimental mind of the Tsar, with its natural inclination to mysticism. He felt sure that if he had triumphed over the man, whose superior genius seemed invincible, it was because he had never gloried in his success. Henceforward the

sovereigns of Europe, said the former pupil of Laharpe, must place their confidence not in the strength of their armies, but in the strength of faith and religion. But besides this external spiritual policy, the melancholy and sadness which had drawn their veil over the Tsar ever since the terrible night of his father's assassination, made him likewise turn to religion for personal consolation. The growing power of remorse weighed heavily on him, awakening in him a deep anxiety to make his peace with God.[1] Alexander, therefore, placing himself at the head of the European sovereigns, concluded a treaty by which the rulers solemnly vowed to govern their subjects in the spirit of Christianity, and to be guided solely by the principles of justice, love, and peace. This treaty, signed on the 26th of September 1815, by Alexander, the King• of Prussia, and Francis I, Emperor of Austria, is known as the Holy Alliance.

In a conversation with Dr. Eylert, evangelical bishop of Prussia, in 1818, Alexander gave the following explanation of the origin of the Holy Alliance.

"In the days of Lutzen, Dresden, and Bautzen, after so many useless efforts, when, in spite of the heroism of our soldiers, your king and I were obliged to retreat, we were unable to rid ourselves of the conviction that the power of man could achieve but little, and that without the assistance and special blessing of Providence, Germany was lost. Your king and I rode together unattended. We were both serious, deep

[1] Capefigue, *Histoire de la Restauration*, ii, p. 300.

in thought; not a word passed between us. At length my dearest of friends broke the silence and said: 'Things cannot go on so; we must pray and fight, and with the help of God we shall conquer, and if, as I trust, God will bless our united efforts, then we will proclaim in the face of the whole world our conviction that to Him alone the honour is due.' We both sincerely promised to do so, clasping hands in witness. Then came the victories of Kulm, of Hotzbach, Grosbieren, Dennewitz, and Leipsic; and when we arrived in Paris, your king reminded me of our holy resolution, and the Emperor Francis I of Austria, who shared our views and sentiments, willingly became a third in our Alliance. The first idea of the Holy Alliance thus originated in a moment of melancholy and misfortune; it was realised in a moment of gratitude and happiness. The Holy Alliance is not our work, but that of God. Christ Himself has inspired us with every thought comprised in the Alliance, and with every principle it announces. Whoever does not feel and recognise this, whoever, confounding sacred and profane things, views the Alliance as a mask for hidden thoughts and secret political designs, cannot join our association or have a voice in our deliberations."[1]

Laharpe, the tutor of the Tsar, wrote an apology of the Holy Alliance—and explained the act of his pupil in the following words:—

"Although intrepid in the midst of danger, Alexander had a horror of war and a hope that

[1] Eylert, *Characterzüge und historische Fragmente aus dem Leben Fridrich Wilhelm III*, vol. ii, pp. 246-248.

during a lengthened peace the governments of Europe, recognising the necessity of introducing such reforms as were called for by the age, would seriously apply themselves to that work. A state of profound tranquillity was indispensable for this purpose; and as the confusion of the past thirty years had greatly weakened the old ideas of order and subordination, Alexander thought he should be able to remedy that by making a solemn appeal to religion. So far at least as this monarch is concerned, no doubt such an appeal was an emanation proceeding from his own noble heart; but the genius of evil took possession of these philanthropic conceptions, and turned them against himself."[1]

In any case—whatever the explanation—the Holy Alliance was a manifestation of Alexander's mystic propensities and the beginning of his endeavour to find peace and consolation in religion. Christianity always produced in his heart a certain warmth, and imparted a wholesome tension to his nerves. In his early days the Bishop Platon had been his instructor, but it was a Protestant woman who, in later days, impressed him more deeply, more convincingly with the sentiments of Christianity. This Protestant woman was Madame Kruedener.[2] Juliane de Vietinghoff, Baroness Kruedener, born in 1764, belonged to a noble Livonian family and was the daughter of a Russian Privy Councillor and Senator. She was carefully educated in the house of her father and afterwards in Paris. She was of a singularly romantic character, and was early remarkable as much for her intelligence as for a tendency to

[1] *The Globe*, July 25, 1829. [2] *Cf.* Schnitzler, *l.c.*

reverie and melancholy. Before she was eighteen she was married to Baron Kruedener, a diplomatist, who died in 1802. The marriage was not a happy one. Her unbridled imagination and her romantic character led her to commit indiscretions which compelled her husband to send her back to her family. From that time Baroness Kruedener led a wandering life. In 1803 she published a romance called "Valeria," which created a sensation in Paris. Long occupied with the allurements and pleasures of the world, she gradually began to listen to the voice of religion, and, obeying her tendency to mysticism, decided to change her manner of life and devote herself to the conversion of sinners and the consolation of the wretched. At Carlsruhe in 1813 she met Jung Stilling, the celebrated visionary, who completed her conversion. From that time Baroness Kruedener believed that she had a mission to preach the Gospel to the poor. Her spiritual exaltation gradually assumed the character of prophesying, and in a letter addressed to Mademoiselle Stourdza, in 1814, she foretold in vague terms the escape and return of Napoleon from Elba. This letter was communicated to the Tsar, and inspired him with a wish to see the Baroness. She met him at Heilbron in June 1815, accompanied him to Heidelberg, and after Waterloo to Paris. Madame Kruedener had predicted the defeat of the Black Eagle in the northern snows and the triumph of the White Eagle; the Black Eagle was Napoleon, the White was Alexander. After Napoleon's disaster Madame Kruedener's prophecies gained great credence in Germany, and all eyes were turned towards Alexander.

He had been hailed as the liberator of Germany by the chiefs of the *illuminati.* Mme. de Kruedener, who as a native of Courland was among his subjects, had a cordial reception given her by the Emperor in the castle of Potsdam. The latter was struck and deeply impressed by her expression of inspired ecstasy, as that of one wandering on this earth awhile on her way to the celestial regions; he had heard of her passionate prayers, of her devotions in mysterious chapels on behalf of the success of his arms, and his nature was in sympathy with hers. Those who were intimately acquainted with the Tsar could tell how he would occasionally, in the midst of a brilliant reception, suddenly absent himself, in order to retire to his private oratory, there to pray and weep. This condition of soul rendered him an easy victim to the influence of the Baroness de Kruedener.

The campaign in Germany of 1813 may be especially noted as securing the triumph of the mystics; in the patriotic songs sung by the students could be detected the spirit of profound faith in the final victory of what Mme. de Kruedener styled the great and holy cause.

Events had followed each other in quick succession; Napoleon's genius struggled in vain against his evil fortune. Mme. de Kruedener had, for some time past, been prophesying the fall of the dark angel of battles, and the advent of the fair angel destined by God to be the saviour of the world, and every one knew to whom she alluded. Alexander was unquestionably an ambitious man; the will of Peter I, that patrician of the world, was a family tradition with the Romanovs; but the Tsar had

shown himself extremely generous during this campaign between Germany and France; all his proclamations had been full of a religious spirit, and might have been pages torn from Mme. de Kruedener's books. Alexander, in common with many great minds, believed in the possibility of strange, remorseless happenings—in a word, in destiny. Of a gentle and melancholy character, he loved the occult sciences which revealed to him a future apart from the misery of this world. Napoleon, in the might of his Cæsarian temper, believed in his star; he would point it out to the incredulous to convince them that he was forced to walk in the ways that were appointed for him by destiny: might not Alexander also be providentially guided by destiny to restore peace and happiness to the world? At least so Mme. de Kruedener reasoned out in her preaching to her followers, as she sat surrounded by ancient tomes of divination, full of the wood engravings of the fifteenth century.[1]

In the meantime the sadness and melancholy of Alexander increased, and the once ardent champion of republics began to fear the spirit of revolution, which was everywhere undermining authority and religion. The new spirit developed in the nations by the wars of 1813 and 1815, must, Mme. de Kruedener urged, be taken into consideration. Bergasse wrote pointing out the danger of an inactive peace, and the necessity for opening out some new road for human activity. The tendencies, at that time uppermost, which inclined to unlimited independence, must, he said, be

[1] *Cf.* Capefigue, M., *La Baronne de Kruedener*, Paris, 1866, pp. 63–69.

opposed by an association of rulers, founded on the eternal laws of religion and morality, as a strong defence against the fresh dangers with which society was threatened. It was no longer one man, a single conqueror, who had to be feared, but a disorganised force of ardent-minded men, who were beginning to trouble the peace of social life. Alexander, according to Mme. de Kruedener, was the man appointed by God to form this Holy Alliance, based on evangelistic principles, which should aid the oppressed and secure the triumph of the Cross. Bergasse's plan was developed by Mme. de Kruedener in words full of fascination and with peculiar tenderness of expression.

To draw up an actual alliance on such grounds as these was impossible; such reveries were more fitted for the subject of the homilies of the *illuminati* than for that of diplomatic treaties. The Emperor Alexander, however, fully concurred in the ideas of Mme. de Kruedener and of Bergasse, and he of his own accord developed them in a kind of declaration which he sent to the King of Prussia and to the Emperor of Austria, who were then both under the spell of the gentle and dreamy Tsar. Surely he who had given so much help towards delivering Europe had a right to be heard!

The King of Prussia was, in any case, too intimately allied with Russia to be indifferent to the Tsar's influence; more than any other monarch, he had need to keep an eye on the growing tendencies of his universities. Prince Metternich, however, looked at the matter in a more practical light, and gravely considered what could be the meaning of this proposed treaty. He himself con-

sidered it less as a whim of the Emperor than a deep-laid political undertaking to prepare the way for the presidency of Russia and to secure the protectorate of the East. In this proposed proclamation of the sovereignty of Christ and the Cross, was there not also in view the emancipation of Greece and the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire?

But Austria had come off too well in the treaties of 1815 to refuse her signature to a convention of so vague a sort that it would be easy to retreat from it.

The preamble to this declaration or treaty, which was drawn up by Mme. de Kruedener and Bergasse and revised by the Emperor, is too curious a document to be left unquoted:

"In the name of the All-holy and indivisible Trinity, Their Majesties the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia, in consideration of the great events which have taken place in Europe during the last three years, and more especially of the benefits which it has pleased divine Providence to shower upon those States that have placed their confidence and hope in it alone, having come to the conviction that the policy which the powers shall in future pursue with regard to their mutual relations must be founded on those sublime truths which are taught us by the eternal religion of our God and Saviour, here declare solemnly that by this act, they desire only to make known to the whole world their steadfast determination to take for their sole guidance, both in the administration of their own government and in the matter of their political relations with other nations,

the precepts of holy religion, precepts of justice, of charity, and of peace; for, far from these being fitted merely for application to private life, it is they which should directly influence the decisions of princes and should be their guide in every proceeding; hereby alone can a sure foundation be secured for human institutions, or a remedy found for their imperfections."

But how was this policy, which based itself on the fraternity of kings and the teaching of the Gospel, to be put into practice? It presupposed a state of perpetual peace, but experience had taught that every thirty years some concern touching the self-interest of one or more nations brought war and desolation into the states of Europe. Nevertheless Alexander set forth his ideas on the subject in the form of a treaty. The declaration went on to state as follows:—

"Their Majesties have therefore agreed to the following Articles:—

"*Article I.* Agreeably to the words of Holy Scripture, which commands all men to look upon their fellow-creatures as brothers, the three contracting monarchs will henceforth be closely united by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity, and, each considering the others as his compatriots, they will on all occasions and in all places afford one another help and succour; as regards their subjects and their armies, they will hold towards these the position of a father, and in their treatment of the same will be animated by the same spirit of brotherhood, whereby they are inspired to be the protectors of religion, peace and justice.

"*Article II.* Their sole guiding principle, therefore, whether as regards their relationship with each other or with their subjects, will be that of rendering reciprocal service, of testifying to their mutual affection by an unfailing goodwill, of looking upon themselves as members of the same Christian nation, and as the delegates of a higher power, who has given into their hands the government of three branches of one family, namely: Austria, Prussia, and Russia. At the same time they will be prepared to acknowledge that the whole Christian nation, of which they and their subjects form part, has one true and only Sovereign, to whom alone all power by right belongs, since in Him alone are to be found all the treasures of love, of science and of infinite wisdom, namely, God, our divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Word of the Most High, the Word of Life. Their Majesties, therefore, full of solicitude towards their subjects, earnestly recommend them, as the only means of obtaining the peace which is born of a good conscience, and alone is lasting, to exercise themselves daily more and more in those duties and according to those principles which have been taught by the divine Saviour to man.

"*Article III.* All those powers, who are willing solemnly to confess the divine principles which have prompted the present act, and to acknowledge how important it is, as bearing on the happiness of the nations which have long been distracted with warfare, that these truths should henceforth be allowed to exercise all the power inherent in them on the destiny of Mankind, will be admitted with readiness and affection into this Holy Alliance.

"Made triple and signed at Paris, in the year of Grace 1815, the 26 (14) September.

"FRANCIS, FREDERICK WILLIAM, ALEXANDER."[1]

This vague statement of principle was the outcome of a reaction against the spirit of egoism which had so seriously compromised the crowned heads during the French Revolution. This Holy Alliance was not only an exhortation to sovereigns to exercise their power with mildness and in conformity with Gospel teaching, but also a menace of firm repression. At the least sign of disturbance the kings were to rise in a body in defence of the community at large, to form, as it were, a *league for the public weal.* When there is a danger continually threatening, a law of repression becomes indispensable for the general peace.

The declaration was not communicated to the Powers through the ordinary medium of diplomatic agents, but by autograph letters from the three sovereigns. The treaties of 1815 having placed France under obligations to Alexander, Louis XVIII found it difficult to criticise from his point of view the exact aim and sense of the Holy Alliance; he therefore put his signature to it in remembrance of the service rendered him by Alexander at the time of the Treaty of Paris. Matters were, however, on a different footing in London, and when the Tsar wrote to the Prince Regent inviting him to join the Alliance, Lord Castlereagh sent a somewhat brusque answer, stating that "he could not advise his Royal Highness to consent

[1] Empaytaz, H. L., *Notice sur Alexandre*, Genève, 1840, pp. 42–46.

to an act which was opposed to all the constitutional laws of England; according to which the responsibility of signing treaties rested with the Ministry, and no diplomatic treaty could be entered into unless for some precise and explicit purpose." The chief diplomatists in England, moreover, detected, as they thought, a subtle project on Alexender's part for obtaining the supreme power and becoming a king of kings. This invocation to God—was there not an encouragement in it to the Greeks, who were meditating an insurrection against the Porte? The Count Capo d'Istria, who held a strong influence over the Tsar, being impressed with the idea of the regeneration of Greece, and being, moreover, a fervent follower of the mystics, was in the habit of comparing Turkey to a blood-sucking vampire. The Hellenic spirit was deeply imbued with the belief in a living God; Alexander's brother was named Constantine, and the marvellous cross was to appear in the sky, as of old, with its promise of victory.

It has been maintained by some that the idea of the Holy Alliance had not been suggested by Madame Kruedener to the Tsar. It cannot, however, be denied that this remarkable woman of sensibility, formerly given up to sin, who had gained a great ascendency over the mind of Alexander, had a share in drawing up the body as well as the preamble of the act, which was to enshrine the idea of the Holy Alliance. In fact, before submitting the act of the Holy Alliance to the sovereigns, Alexander addressed himself as follows to Madame Kruedener: "I am about to

quit France; but before my departure, I wish to render a public act of thanksgiving to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the protection He has accorded us, and to invite the people to act in obedience to the Gospel. I bring you a draft of the act, and wish you to examine it attentively, and if there be any expression you disapprove of, be pleased to let me know it. I wish the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia to join me in this act of adoration, that the people may see us, like the wise men of the East, acknowledging the superior authority of God the Saviour. Join me in prayer to God that He may dispose my allies to sign it." [1]

After the departure of the allies from Paris, Madame Kruedener, who had ceased to attract attention, also left France. She preached publicly in Switzerland, and her doctrines created a great sensation. At last, however, the clergy denounced her from their pulpits, and magistrates desired her to leave. No government would in the end tolerate her presence. She returned to Russia in 1818, where Alexander still continued to take an interest in her views. But he, too, forbade her to preach publicly. It seems that the enthusiasm with which she had pleaded the cause of the Greeks had displeased Alexander. Madame Kruedener eventually retired to her estates in Livonia, where she led an obscure life. She died in 1824 on her way to the Crimea, whither she was accompanying her friend, the Princess Golytzin.

[1] Empaytaz, *Notice sur Alexandre I*, p. 40.

CHAPTER XVII

FINITA LA COMMEDIA—THE MYSTERIOUS END

Alexander's friends—Michael Speransky—Araktsheev, the Pobiedonostzev of the beginning of the nineteenth century—Alexander's reactionary tendencies—Spread of liberalism in Russia—Secret societies—The assassination of Kotzebue—Mutiny of the Semeonovsky regiment—Magnitzky—Alexander's private life—His world-weariness—Domestic life—The Empress Elizabeth—Madame Narishkin—Alexander's daughter Sophia—Illness of Empress Elizabeth—Journey to Taganrog—Illness of Alexander and death—Letter of Elizabeth to Maria Féodorovna—Rumour relating to Alexander's death—Feodor Kousmitsh—Alexander's character: "a lucky accident."

We have seen that the early years of Alexander's reign had been a period of liberal reforms and generous ideas. The pupil of Laharpe had surrounded himself with the ministers of his grandmother, and with young men like Prince Adam Czartorysky, Novsyltzov, Strogonov, and Kotshoubey. They were full of hopes and schemes for regeneration. And, in fact, not only were the tyrannical laws of the preceding reign abolished, but a constitutional scheme was actually brought into discussion. The privileges and obligations of the supreme power and the rights of the subject were defined. The emancipation of the serfs was taken into serious consideration. On one occasion, during his stay in Paris, the Tsar visited Madame de Staël; the slavery of the negroes was being discussed, and Alexander emphatically denounced it. "But there are serfs in your own country, Sire," some one observed. Alexander looked embarrassed,

but he immediately replied, "I know, but it is my firm intention to bring about their emancipation."[1]

The ideal of these young men, under whose influence Alexander for a time remained, was to establish a national and representative government. The Senate was, therefore, to be deprived of its executive powers, and, having left to it only those of a Supreme Court of Justice, was to be gradually converted into a sort of Upper Chamber. But these plans were never carried out, and autocracy abdicated none of its rights.[2] After 1806 the circle of friends with whom Alexander had shared his plans and hopes was gradually dissolved. Prince Adam Czartorysky, who was Minister for Foreign Affairs, resigned his post. In a memorandum addressed to the Tsar he pointed out that the unity among the various departments of the government was not sufficiently established. "I have been greatly surprised," writes Czartorysky, "to see that you assume the sole responsibility not only of every measure, but of every detail in its execution; while the object of the establishment of your Ministry was to guarantee you against such responsibility.[3] Alexander, however, did not abandon his dreams and aspirations of reform and of a more liberal constitution. They occupied the Tsar till the very end of his reign,[4] and it is due to his fickle and weak character that his theories were never put into practice.

From 1806 to 1812 the man who exercised the most preponderating influence over Alexander

[1] *Cf.* Capefigue, *l.c.* [2] *Cf.* Czartorysky, *l.c.*, vol. i.
[3] Czartorysky, *Mémoires*, vol. ii.
[4] *Cf.* Puipin, *Die gestigen Bewegungen in Russland*, Berlin, 1894, p. 164.

was Michael Speransky. This son of a village priest was educated at a seminary, became professor of mathematics and philosophy at the school of Alexander Nevsky, and later secretary to Trokhtshinsky, Chancellor of the Imperial Council. Speransky, having succeeded to the post of Secretary of State, enjoyed the absolute confidence of the Emperor, who was still planning the realisation of the ideas which had inspired the measures of the first years of his reign.[1] Speransky presented to the Tsar a plan of reforms extending to the legislative, administrative, and judicial powers of Russia. Whilst, however, the friends of Alexander during the earlier part of his reign were imbued with ideas borrowed from England, Speransky had a decided preference for French institutions.[2] But his reforms were not understood, and his enemies succeeded in denouncing him as a traitor. His admiration for French institutions furnished his opponents with an opportunity to accuse him of complicity with France, at a moment when Russia was on the eve of a war with that country. He was, therefore, suddenly arrested in March 1812 and sent to Nizhny-Novgorod. In 1816 he was, however, reinstated in favour and appointed Governor of Pensa, and in 1819 Governor-General of Siberia. He returned to St. Petersburg in 1821, and was nominated member of the Imperial Council, without, however, recovering his former position. The fall of Speransky on the one hand, and the war with Napoleon on the other, put a stop to all endeavours of reform. The enemies of Speransky were in power; Karamzin, the great historian,

[1] Puipin, *ibid.*

[2] *Cf.* Puipin, *l.c.*, pp. 170, 171.



MICHAEL MICHAELOVITSH SPERANSKY.
After an engraving by Wright.

made himself the champion of autocracy, of ancient institutions and serfdom.[1] Araktsheev, who had played such an important rôle under Paul I, became for the moment the Tsar's favourite. He was the Pobiedonostzev of the beginning of the nineteenth century. He was a sworn enemy of all reforms and new ideas, a champion of absolutism and passive obedience. It has been pointed out above that, thanks to the influence of Araktsheev, many rigorous regulations long abandoned and forgotten were again revived. After the return of the Emperor from France, Araktsheev advised him to try the experiment of the military colonies. It consisted in the settlement of soldiers among the peasants in a certain number of districts. If the soldiers were married their wives were also brought to the village ; if they were not, they were married to the daughters of the peasants, and their children were destined for military service. This system was borrowed from Austria, where similar establishments had existed for a century. It secured, Araktsheev said, regular recruits, lightened the burden on the rest of the population, restored to agriculture the labour of which the army had deprived it, and also raised the morals of the soldier by keeping him with his family. But as the peasants did not understand the advantages of Araktsheev's ingenious idea, revolts broke out, which were repressed with unmitigated severity.

In the meantime, the Emperor's character underwent a sad change. He grew gloomy and suspicious. The following episode shows the extent of Alexander's sensitiveness. One day his

[1] *Cf.* Puipin, *l.c.*, p. 306.

general adjutants, Kisselev, Orlov, and Koutousov, were standing at one of the palace windows telling anecdotes and laughing heartily, when suddenly the Emperor appeared. They grew silent, but he caught the signs of their recent mirth. A few minutes afterwards the Tsar sent for Kisselev. The latter found the Emperor standing in front of a looking-glass and examining himself most attentively. "Tell me," said Alexander to his adjutant, "what is it that you and your comrades found so laughable in my appearance? I am sure you were laughing at me." Only with difficulty did the adjutant succeed in convincing his sovereign that the merry stories they had been telling one another were the sole cause of their amusement.[1]

Some attributed the Emperor's behaviour to his deafness, which increased as years advanced. But there were deeper causes for his sensitiveness, and especially for his feeling of melancholy and world-weariness. They were his sense of remorse at the events of March 1801, which had never left him, and his growing conviction that he had failed in his internal policy. In Europe he had been greeted as the "liberator of nations," as the "restorer of peace," but his liberal ideas were now dissipated and his illusions were flown. Napoleon, and afterwards Metternich, had endeavoured to convince him of the futility of his generous ideas, and had shaken his belief in their possible realisation. It is of course questionable whether Alexander himself ever really was so sincerely liberal as he pretended to be. It is

[1] Shilder, *l.c.*, vol. iv, p. 219.

certain that he was never consistent, that none of his plans and ideas were durable, that he was in a continual state of fluctuation, and that he was always governed by others and by suggestions made to him.[1] "Alexander's taste for constitutional governments," says Bogdanovitsh, "resembled that of a dilettante who goes into ecstasies over a beautiful picture." In any case, after his second visit to Paris, his reactionary policy became more and more manifest. Even when planning the Holy Alliance, Alexander's mind was not quite free from dynastic and autocratic designs. The Holy Alliance was concluded, as Laharpe had pointed out, to defend the kings against secret societies. In Russia the number and influence of such associations increased very rapidly, and Alexander's autocratic instincts were alarmed. Not only did Freemasonry, forbidden under Catherine and Paul, organise itself and spread all over Russia, but secret societies were formed with a view to discussing and devising plans of regeneration. The seed of liberal ideas sown by the Emperor himself had taken root. People at first, and especially the young officers and members of the *intelligentia*, felt sure that they would please the Emperor and act in a manner agreeable to him by taking the direction of liberalism. They were so convinced of it that when first establishing the secret societies for the discussion and realisation of the ideas of reform the organisers intended to ask the support of the Government.[2] The officers especially had become

[1] *Cf.* Schnitzler, *l.c.*, p. 78.

[2] Tourgenev, *La Russie et les Russes*, vol. i, pp. 94, 95.

more closely acquainted with liberal ideas and institutions during their long residence on German and French soil from 1813–15. "The march of the Russian army through Germany and on Paris," said Alexander himself, when still liberally inclined, "will be profitable to all Russia. There is a new epoch in history about to commence for us also, and my projects are multifarious."[1] A fever of liberalism seized young Russia; the revolutionary and liberal principles realised in the West attracted the Russian youth. A transformation took place. "Since the return of the Russian armies from the West," writes Nicholas Tourgenev, "liberal ideas are beginning to propagate themselves in Russia very rapidly."[2]

The great events of 1812, the expulsion from Russia of the hitherto invincible Emperor of the French, the campaigns of 1813 and 1814, and the entry of the Russian army into Paris, where it had been so active and so glorious, could not fail to raise the enthusiasm of the officers. In the course of three years they had also grown accustomed to dangers and excitement; and strong sensations—as opposed to the usual apathy of the Slav—became a necessity to them. The majority of the officers of the guards and of the general staff returned to St. Petersburg full of love for their fatherland and with a high sense of their own personal dignity. They had made acquaintance with European civilisation, and they compared all they had seen abroad with the state of affairs at home. Here they found an absolute despotism

[1] Eylert, *l.c.*, ii, p. 255.
[2] *Cf.* Tourgenev, *ibid.*

holding its sway through all the classes of Russian society. Instead of politeness, of the spirit of justice, and of respect of person, they saw only severity of conduct in the relations of the government with the nation, of the officials with the citizens, and of the officers with the soldiers. The majority of the Russian people was still dishonoured by the yoke of serfdom; legislation was in a state of chaos, the law devoid of sanction, and its exact application compromised by the arbitrariness and venality of the functionaries.[1]

"The officers and other militiamen," says Tourgenev, "who had visited foreign places, related what they had seen abroad—and attracted public attention by their freedom of manner in speech and behaviour."[2] But not only the officers, even the ordinary soldiers had come into contact with other troops who were used to a different kind of discipline—and they also began to feel that reforms were required in Russia. And thus it happened that in measure as the propaganda of liberalism spread and liberal ideas began to ferment in every youthful brain, the government more and more supported the policy of reaction. As Russia, still intoxicated with victory, grew enthusiastic for those very liberal ideas which Alexander had advocated during the early years of his reign, the Tsar himself became indifferent and even cold. The Liberals, therefore, gathered to discuss plans for reforms and devise means how to carry them out. In Germany the officers had made the acquaintance of secret societies. But not only in Germany, in the West

[1] Cf. *Rousskaya Starina*, 1884, vol. xlii, p. 31, &c.

[2] Tourgenev, *l.c.*, i, pp. 81–84.

generally, liberal ideas, whether in religion or in politics, remained for a long time confined to a circle of adepts who were in the habit of meeting in secret, and thus were able to prepare their plans without being exposed to the vulgar contempt of a populace too ignorant to comprehend them. The example was imitated in Russia, and secret societies were established. In Russia, where progress was so slow, where the gulf between the few intellectuals and the populace was so wide, the need for such associations was even greater than in any other country. The societies became very numerous, but the majority were at first very inoffensive. They were secret only in name, since they were not hostile to the supreme authority.[1] But soon the leading spirits saw themselves disappointed in their hopes of support from the government, and, irritated at the backsliding spirit shown thereby, they formed new organisations of a more warlike character.[2] A few men of more defined and determined views now assembled together. They were decidedly republican in their tendencies, and ultimately the extermination of the Romanov dynasty was decided upon by one of their leaders, Colonel Pestel. The most noteworthy of these secret associations were the Society of Virtue, an imitation of the German Tugendbund, the Society of the North, and the Society of the South. And thus whilst the patriarchal principles and mystic tendencies of the Holy Alliance, which —it was feared—would readily lead to reaction and despotism, had given rise to discontent, the Holy

[1] *Cf.* Puipin, *l.c.*, pp. 511–514.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 511.

Alliance itself soon became a league of the rulers against the nations.[1]

The Tsar was now not only influenced by Araktsheev, by Austria and Metternich, but also by the general spirit of reaction which at that time was animating the governments of Europe. In Europe, especially in Germany, an agitation was observable which raised the alarm of the sovereigns, anxious to preserve their former power. Their uneasiness was communicated to the Tsar. It was Austria especially which initiated the re-establishment of the ancient régime of absolute monarchy. The aristocratic reactionaries, planning and scheming how to crush the hydra-head of democracy, had established their headquarters in Vienna. Metternich and Gentz, his right hand, were elaborating a theory of reaction, and the house of the Russian ambassador, Razoumovsky, was the meeting-place of the partisans of autocratic principles.[2] Alexander now opposed every effort made towards the propagation of liberalism, and even treated as criminal those enterprises which he himself had suggested. It was evident that his liberalism had only been superficial. It was the result of a half-sentimental education, his instincts being autocratic. These manifested themselves under the influence of his reactionary entourage, as soon as the friends of liberty began to clamour in good earnest for reforms. He abandoned his former policy and principles, and appeared as the champion of absolute monarchy and autocracy. Forgotten were his promises, forgotten were the dreams of his youth. He had granted a constitution to Poland, but the

[1] Puipin, p. 543. [2] *Ibid*, *l.c.*, pp. 618-619.

Poles soon perceived that they could not rely on the promises of the Autocrat of Russia, who readily assented to the oppressive mode of government established by his brother Constantine, as Viceroy of Poland. In the European congresses at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818, at Troppau, Laybach, and Verona, the growing reactionary tendencies of the former pupil of Laharpe were noticeable to all. He hesitated between the freedom of Greece and the legitimate right of the Sultan, and ultimately, to please European diplomacy, abandoned the cause of Greece.[1] "It was expected," writes Alexander's admirer, Madame Choiseul-Gouffier, "that the Emperor, as the head of the Greek Church in Russia, would declare himself the protector of his brothers in religion, and that he would not resist the appeal to succour them and expel the Turks from Europe." But, adds the authoress, the European governments saw in the effort of the Greeks to recover independence a dangerous revolutionary spirit—a spirit which, for forty years, had been working to undermine the thrones of Europe and "to overthrow the powers established by law and by divine sanction."[2] Alexander, who had formerly considered hereditary sovereignty an injustice, sacrificed the independence of Greece for the sake of that divine sanction.

"I cannot and will not favour the insurrection of the Greeks," said Alexander, "because such a step would be contrary to the system I have adopted, and it would certainly destroy that peace which I have tried so hard to establish, a peace so necessary to Europe."[3] He became the leader of European

[1] Puipin, *l.c.*, p. 625.
[2] Choiseul-Gouffier, *l.c.*, pp. 300, 301, 307, 308.
[3] *Ibid.*

reaction, and not only did he show himself the enemy of the liberal aspirations of the Italians and Spaniards, but Russian troops played the rôle of gendarmes in the service of the absolute monarchies of Europe.[1]

Two events seemed to have hastened the reactionary evolution in the mind of the Tsar. His agent Kotzebue was assassinated by Maurice Sand, and his favourite regiment of the Semeonovsky guard was driven to mutiny by the cruel treatment it met at the hands of its colonel, a German named Schwartz. The Tsar was at Troppau at the moment, and Metternich, who had received information of the mutiny, announced the news to him, and cleverly availed himself of this incident to shake Alexander's liberalism, proving to him that he was continually the dupe of his generous ideas. The reaction and repression already inaugurated by Araktsheev was continued with more vigour. Magnitzky, the rector (*popetshitel*) of the University of Kazan, organised the teaching there in accordance with the "act of the Holy Alliance." Eleven professors were dismissed, independent thought was stifled, and suspicious books excluded from the library. The science of medicine was almost suppressed; it was to be a Christian science, and dissection was forbidden.[2] Thus the dreamer of republics, the man who had considered hereditary sovereignty a gross injustice, had turned a leader of reaction, an upholder of autocracy, and an enemy of free and independent thought.

To say, however, that Alexander felt quite convinced of the justice and necessity of his reactionary

[1] Puipin, *ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, *l.c.*, pp. 623, 626.

policy would be wrong. That dualism which was noticeable in his character and caused nothing about him to appear durable, never left him. "People may say of me what they like," he declared in 1825, "but I have lived and shall die a republican." This wavering state of mind increased his melancholy. His policy was marked by weakness, inconsistency, and sadness, more than by severity, and his tone of mind was reflected in the inhabitants of St. Petersburg.[1] A change had also taken place in the Tsar's private life, and troubles of a more intimate nature tended to increase his mysticism and his feeling of boredom and world-weariness, all of which could not escape the vigilant eyes of his friends. "Russia has had sufficient glory abroad," said the Tsar to Lobyanovsky, Governor of Pensa, in 1824, "but when I think how little has been done in the interior of the country, I feel a heavy load on my breast. It makes me tired."[2] He felt the heavy burden of his vocation and maintained that he had given up all terrestrial joys and had found consolation in religion only. "It is only by calling religion to my aid that I have gained that tranquillity of soul and that peace of mind which are more valuable than all the fleeting happiness of our terrestrial life. Were it not for this religion, so holy, so simple, and so pure, I should scarcely have had the force to carry the burden of my position. And how plain are the precepts of this sublime religion, appealing alike to the most simple and the most enlightened spirits. Only restless minds will endeavour to discover and dwell on

[1] Vigel, "Reminiscences," Moscow, vol. vi, p. 66.
[2] Lobyanovsky, *Zapiski*, Moscow, 1872, p. 297.

subtleties which they scarcely understand themselves. Thus, for instance, Madame Kruedener has perhaps good intentions, but she has caused irreparable evil."[1]

His life became that of a man weary of the world, yearning for solitude and shunning gaiety and pleasure. In a conversation with Madame Choiseul-Gouffier in 1822, the Tsar expressed his astonishment at the partiality of the King of France for a certain lady at his Court, Zoé Victoire Talon, Countess of Cayla. "How can Louis XVIII care for mistresses at the age of sixty-seven?" asked the Tsar. And when Madame Gouffier observed that it was only a Platonic affection, Alexander replied: "I do not admit even that; I am forty-five, while Louis XVIII is sixty-seven, and I have long given up that sort of thing."[2] "The Tsar's private life during the past few years," writes a contemporary author, "has undergone a great change; it differs in every respect from that led by him during the early years of his reign, and this alteration shows him to be naturally of a deeply melancholy temperament. While still under middle age, and in possession of full life and strength, he withdrew himself from companionship, and entered into a sad and lonely manner of living. At all times of the year he rises at six o'clock in the morning, and works till eight o'clock; he then takes a short walk, and on his return has a light breakfast. At noon, accompanied only by a few attendants, he starts in his carriage to drive from Tsarskoé-Sélo, where as a rule he resides, to Pavlovski, a charming

[1] Russian Archives, 1867, p. 1037.
[2] Madame Choiseul-Gouffier, *l.c.*, p. 308.

country residence in the neighbourhood, in order to visit the dowager-empress and the grand duchesses. On his return home he either drives alone or with the Empress, after which he takes another walk of an hour; he then retires to his private rooms, from which he frequently does not emerge during the whole evening. The time which others in his position give to familiar intercourse with their families, or spend among their intimate friends or with distinguished personages, he devotes entirely to serious work, and to the contemplation of visionary realms in which his spirit loves to wander. This is the usual routine of his life at Tsarskoé-Sélo, where he spends the summer; and there is little more variety in the daily round of occupation during his sojourn in the Winter Palace. The courtyard of the latter has been turned into a drilling ground, and thither punctually at nine o'clock in the morning, he repairs to see the guard appointed for the day parade before him. He seems to have originally imposed this upon himself as a duty, but it has become a source of pleasure to him, although it must be an exceedingly monotonous kind of amusement. According to the weather, he either drives out towards midday in an open carriage, or in a one-horse sleigh, for his usual visit to the grand duchesses; not infrequently he goes on foot, and under any circumstances he is unaccompanied by attendants. He returns between two and three o'clock, dines, everything being ordered in the same way as at Tsarskoé-Sélo, and here as there the day now practically comes to an end."[1]

[1] *Cf.* Dupré de Saint-Maure, *L'Hermite en Russie.*

In former years Alexander was fond of attending the public theatres, but he entirely gave up this amusement in later days and also abolished the performances which had, since Catherine's time, been given at the Hermitage.

M. Dupré de St. Maure tells us further that Alexander was extremely particular as to the cleanliness of any table or writing-desk at which he worked; he could not bear the least untidiness, or the least speck of dust, or the least little piece of paper that was not necessary for his work; he dusted everything himself a second time before using it, and then carefully put it back in the right place. On each of his tables and writing-desks were regularly to be seen a folded duster and ten newly-cut quill pens; not one of the pens was ever used more than once, even if it had only served to sign a name. One of the Court attendants was charged with the duty of supplying the pens, and for this he received an annual payment of 3000 roubles. This love of order, even in the smallest matters, is a trait of character which must not be overlooked.

The change which came over Alexander subsequent to the great period of political commotion was most remarkable. He appeared to enter on an entirely new phase of existence, and, according to his own words, the event which led to this transformation was the burning of Moscow, his mind being thereby more alienated from earthly affairs. "Certain men," says M. Dupré de St. Maure, "exhibit no striking change in character between their youthful days and those of riper

age. Alexander in his youth was noted for the simplicity of his tastes and love of quiet amusements, but from the moment he mounted the throne he seemed possessed with a perpetual desire to relieve the strain entailed upon him by the duties of his high position, by seeking distraction in society. Above all, he took delight in the French theatre, and found pleasure also in the company of the French actors. He treated them with a kindness which they occasionally abused by an unbecoming familiarity of address, and which would certainly have offended a less kindly disposed and indulgent sovereign. "Now," continues this author, "he never exchanges a word with any actor, nor does he ever enter a theatre. A complete revolution has taken place both in his tastes and in his manner of behaviour."

In his domestic life Alexander was not happy. His grandmother married him off very young. Catherine had chosen a wife for her darling grandson, and was sure that the union between the boy of seventeen and the girl of fifteen could not fail to be a happy one. But she was mistaken. In spite of all her qualities the Grand Duchess Elizabeth was unable to rivet her boy-husband's real affections. It has been pointed out above that Alexander was a ladies' man, and Elizabeth, who not only possessed all the German domestic virtues, but was elegant, beautiful, talented, gentle, and amiable, lacked that brilliant frivolity, that *beauté du diable* which attracted Alexander. It was that *âme de demi-mondaine* which the Grand Duchess lacked, and

which alone could make the affections of an inconstant temperament, such as that of Alexander, somewhat durable. In spite, therefore, of all her attainments she failed to complete Alexander's happiness. "She was lacking in the responsiveness which his own excitable nature required, and perhaps even in that touch of coquetry and of gay frivolity which in Russia—a country where, above all others, appearance counted for more than actual character—were so highly prized. Moreover, Catherine had spoilt the young couple by her exaggerated motherly precautions. The Grand Duke was so young when she married him, and she herself had so little respect for the bond which she had hastened to impose upon her grandson, that she allowed herself to encroach upon and to place restrictions on the inviolable and mysterious freedom of marriage. The two daughters who were born during the first years of this marriage died in infancy, and thus a link, more lasting than that of passion, was severed between the parents. The want of stability in his character and his longing for love led Alexander into liaisons with other women, and among them one held him in her thrall for eleven years. The secrecy maintained in connection with this attachment lent it an additional charm; three children were the fruit of this union, of whom two died young. Elizabeth possibly was mistaken in allowing herself to listen to her wounded pride; she made no effort to win back her husband's affection, but, on the contrary, refused any further meeting with him. She sought consolation in study, which she pursued with even greater ardour

than formerly, and found pleasure only in doing good."[1]

Nevertheless Elizabeth, with that truly feminine nature which makes a woman cling to a man the more passionately the less he cares for her, continued at heart to love her faithless husband; she could never look at the portrait of the fickle Alexander without shedding a flood of tears. But it was only during the last year of his reign that the Tsar grew really attached to his wife. The two daughters, as stated above, that his wife had borne him died early, and of his three illegitimate children one alone was alive, a girl beautiful as her mother and of a charming disposition. She was the pride and joy of her father; but Sophia N——'s health was delicate, and Alexander was forced to send her away to the south of France. His illicit connection with the girl's mother had by this time been brought to a close. The latter, a married woman, was as faithless to her lover as she had been to her husband, and nothing remained to Alexander of their short period of bliss together but the one beloved child, on whom he lavished the tenderest affection, suffering doubtless certain gnawings of conscience from which a man of his spiritual outlook could hardly escape. He sought to fill the void in his heart, made by his daughter's absence, by frequenting private houses and joining in the family circle round the hearth, choosing by preference the homes of cultured German housewives, —who excel in all domestic virtues,—where he passed many a pleasant evening in free and lively converse. Alexander desired to be received only

[1] Dupré de St. Maure.

as a friend and ordinary guest, and forbade all approach to ceremony; he looked with delight on the order, cleanliness, and quiet peace which reigned in many of these households, where, by the help of simple means and often of very limited funds, they obtained results which, as he asserted, he failed to achieve even with the help of a legion of servants and of immense sums of money. The pleasure he enjoyed in these homely circles was, however, spoilt for him when he became aware that many worthy men, old friends of these houses, abstained from coming, fearing that their presence might be irksome to him, while a crew of flatterers and parasites insinuated themselves into his company, anxious for intimacy with the Emperor (who was always ready to be friendly), in order to serve their own selfish and ambitious plans. Distressed in the end at this invasion, since his one wish was to be nothing more than a man among men, he shut himself up more closely than ever in his palace, and the longing, which dated from the burning of Moscow and the indecisive campaign of the early months of 1813, to detach himself from earthly affairs and to seek healing for his troubled spirit by entering upon a religious life, gradually took a stronger hold upon him.

Meanwhile the young daughter of the Emperor, although still in delicate health and showing signs of consumption, had, contrary to the doctor's advice, left Paris and started on her long journey back to St. Petersburg and the cruel climate of the North. She was now seventeen years of age, and had already won the love — which she returned — of the grandson of a man whose whole life had been

devoted to the service of the State. Alexander willingly gave his consent to their betrothal, and everything was being prepared for the forthcoming marriage; but his young daughter was doomed never to enjoy the magnificent trousseau which had been ordered from the leading artistes in Paris, for she arrived in St. Petersburg only to die. The direful news of her death was brought to the Emperor while reviewing his Guards; one of the adjutant-generals approached him and asked to speak with him in private. Hardly were the first words out of his mouth before the Emperor began to tremble violently while a deathlike pallor overspread his face. He had, however, sufficient self-control to allow his Guards to continue their parade, but he was overheard to exclaim, "The punishment of my sins has now fallen upon me."

Sophia N—— was buried in the churchyard of the Convent of the Holy Trinity, not far from Strelna on the highroad between Riga and the Gulf of Finland. Here reposed the remains of many members of the more noted families, among them Count Zoubov, who gained notoriety through his connection with Paul's tragic end; another of the chief monuments commemorated a Princess Golytzin.

The words uttered by Alexander on receiving the news of his daughter's death are noteworthy, as an indication of the condition of his mind at that time. The cruel blow which had fallen upon him appeared to Alexander as the judgment of God. It brought home to his conscience the sin he had committed against his wife, and he now recognised the fact that only a genuine repentance and an

entire change of conduct could ever lead to their reconciliation. The generosity and natural gratitude of his disposition helped forward the work of religion, for Elizabeth herself had wept tears for her rival's daughter, and no one had shown more sympathy with the sorrow of the father. Now at last his eyes were opened to the angelic goodness and patience of his wife. He sought her forgiveness, which was quickly and freely given, and from this time onward they were inseparable, the Emperor endeavouring by the tenderness of his care, by his consideration and respect, to erase the past from her memory. Sorrow and anxiety had, however, for long past been undermining the health of the Empress, and a slight chest affection had by degrees become a chronic disease. At last her doctors, seeing that their skill was of no avail to check the progress of the evil, decided that she must seek a warmer climate, and advised her to go to Baden, her native place. But Elizabeth refused to listen to their advice, and could not be induced to leave Russia. "The wife of an Emperor of Russia should die nowhere but in Russia," she declared. She was allowed to follow her own will, but as it was then thought that she might suffer less in the southern provinces, it was suggested that she should go to the Crimea. Alexander, however, finally decided upon Taganrog.

The Empress Elizabeth's health having grown steadily worse, it became necessary for her to leave St. Petersburg without delay. Alexander was anxious to accompany her, that he might himself superintend all the preparations for her comfort, and make the journey as easy for her as possible.

A journey of nineteen hundred versts was no light undertaking, and Alexander had already, early in this same year, travelled over the same distance; he had, however, so accustomed himself to seek distraction in these endless journeys, that a thousand versts or so, more or less, did not make much difference to him, and, in this case, it was a matter which concerned his peace of mind, for by fulfilling this duty to his wife he sought to quiet his conscience. It had been his custom, when setting out on one of his long journeys, to make the Church of Our Lady of Kazan, which had been built and consecrated during his reign, his starting-point. Alexander had fixed the 13th September as the day for his departure. The day previous was a Feast Day in the Russian Church, held in honour of the hero, Alexander Nevsky, whose remains had been brought that day from Vladimir to the banks of the Neva. On this occasion the clergy, high and low, passed in lordly procession from the above-named Church of Our Lady of Kazan to the Convent of St. Alexander Nevsky; the latter had been erected by Peter the Great, and thither he had had the relics of the saint conveyed, in order to consecrate the ground, which for long had been in the possession of a neighbouring heretical race. According to a time-honoured custom the whole Imperial family attended High Mass that day in the convent church, and Alexander did not fail to perform his devotions here on this particular Feast Day. Before leaving the church he informed the Metropolitan and the Archimandrite that he should return there the following day, which was the one arranged for starting on his journey. This

announcement was unexpected, for, as stated above, Alexander's usual custom was to make the Church of Our Lady of Kazan his starting-point, but the prelates were even more surprised when the Emperor begged them and the whole brotherhood to be there to receive him at four o'clock the following morning, in order to celebrate a Te Deum service—at least, so ran the official report, but it was generally asserted that a funeral service was performed. At any rate, Alexander gave the Metropolitan to understand that it was not necessary for any one to be informed of his visit.

Alexander's mind was at that time much occupied with thoughts of death, and he had chosen the Convent of Saint Alexander Nevsky as his burial-place. No crowned head had hitherto been interred there; Catherine had deposited the body of her unfortunate husband in the vaults of this convent merely for the purpose of having it secretly conveyed away, as she refused him an Imperial funeral, and the body had remained there until removed by his son Paul I. By whatever reason he may have been urged to this departure from his established habit, Alexander, on the appointed day and at the fixed hour, arrived at the convent where the Priest Seraphim stood awaiting him at the head of his monks, who were all in mourning garments; as the aged prince of the Church had not thought it becoming that they should put on festal robes on the day when they were to bid farewell to their sovereign.

The Emperor drove up in his travelling carriage, accompanied only by his faithful coachman. He was clad in a plain military overcoat

with an ordinary field-cap, known as a "Furazhka," on his head, and his officer's cloak over his shoulders. On reaching the gates of the convent he leaped from the carriage and fervently kissed the cross held out to him by the Metropolitan; the latter, after blessing him, led him across the convent square to the Cathedral, the monks following, as they sang the hymn "May the Lord deliver thee and thy people." As soon as the Emperor had crossed the threshold of the Cathedral the outer gates were carefully relocked. The procession made its way through the lofty vaults till it reached the splendid monument to the hero saint, in front of which was the reliquary containing his remains. Here the Metropolitan paused and offered up the usual prayer for travellers which it was customary to address to this saint. Mass was then served, and, while the Gospel was being read, Alexander walked up to the open doors of the Ikonostas (a partition painted with figures of saints which conceals the altar from the unconsecrated worshippers) and, kneeling in front of the altar, commanded the Metropolitan to rest the volumes of the Holy Scriptures on his head. At the close of the service the Metropolitan presented Alexander with a picture of the Saviour, which he was to carry with him on his journey. The Emperor kissed the sacred talisman, and after performing further devotions before the saint's reliquary, he returned to his carriage, accompanied by the monks singing as before.[1]

Alexander started a few days before the Em-

[1] *Cf.* Zaikin, T., "The Last Days of Alexander I," St. Petersburg, 1827, pp. 5–9.

press, who left St. Petersburg on the 15th September 1825, and, accompanied by Prince Volkonsky, reached Taganrog after travelling for twenty days. The Tsar met her at the last station before reaching the town, which they entered together on the 5th October. They drove to the Castle, where he had personally superintended the arrangement of her rooms, and in which, in spite of the limited space it afforded, he also took up his abode. Alexander, who was now trying to make up for the neglect of his wife in the past, was unceasingly occupied in providing for her comfort, and devoted all his time to her after her arrival. Her health visibly improved. Alexander left her for a short time, visited the shores of the Sea of Azov, and repaired to Novo-Tsherkask, the capital of the Don Cossacks. On the 20th of October he went to the Crimea, a journey of seventeen days, at the invitation of Count Voronzov, Governor-General of New Russia, to visit his magnificent castle at Aloupka on the sea coast of the south. Having visited the domain of Orianda, which he had bought from Count Koushelev-Besborodko, he went to the estate of Princess Golytzin, where an epidemic fever was then raging. Altogether he exposed himself to great fatigues, rode thirty-five versts on horseback in one day, walked a great deal and ate much of many kinds of fruit that were offered to him, with the result that a disorder of the stomach was produced. In spite of his indisposition he continued his excursions. He wished to see everything, and mingled with Christians, Moslems, and Jews. At Balaclava he reviewed the Greek battalion with Diebitsh. He visited Bakhtshi-Sarai, the ancient

residence of the Khans of the Crimea, and repaired to the colony of the Caraite Jews at Djoufout Kalek, where he inspected the Synagogue.[1] He went to Eupatoria and thence to Mariopol. His illness had in the meantime increased; he was a prey to fever, and either slept much in his carriage or was for hours sunk in abstraction.[2] He returned to Taganrog in a poor state of health. But, in spite of the settled character of his illness, he refused to listen to medical advice, and could only with difficulty be prevailed upon to take some medicine.[3] He remained for long intervals silent and apparently unconscious. He now learned of the existence of a conspiracy which had been formed for the purpose of assassinating him, and painful recollections of the violent death of his father came back to him.

Many incidents occurring about this time betrayed the condition of the Emperor's mind. On the 26th, being in an excited state bordering on delirium, he called out to his doctor, Sir James Wylie, his face contorted with distress, "Oh, my friend! what a hideous and disloyal thing to have done! What monsters, what ungrateful wretches! And I did so genuinely desire their welfare!" Conscious of his own benevolent intentions, it was doubly wounding to him to feel that he was misunderstood. "It was a cruel fate," writes Schnitzler, "which ordained that his last hours should have been so embittered, and that he was prevented from yielding up his soul to God in peace." The Emperor's illness, which was declared to be

[1] Zaikin, *l.c.*, p. 20.

[2] *l.c.*, p. 17.

[3] *l.c.*, p. 21.

of a typhoid character, grew rapidly worse, and the doctors, having no further hope of saving his life, made known the danger of Alexander's condition to Prince Peter Volkonsky. Meanwhile the Emperor, tired of the various remedies to which he had been submitted, obstinately refused to follow any further advice from his doctors. Prince Volkonsky, in the belief that religious persuasion would have more effect on the Emperor than that of the doctors, begged the Empress to speak with her husband and remind him of the last duties which he owed as a Christian. Much troubled at heart at being forced to perform this painful office, but convinced that it was the only means of saving her husband, the Empress accordingly went to him, and, taking him by the hand, gently and kindly spoke to him as desired.

"Am I, then, so very ill?" asked Alexander.

"No, dear friend," answered Elizabeth; "but you refuse all earthly means, therefore I beg you to try a divine cure."

"Willingly!" replied the Emperor, and ordered Wylie to come to him. He looked keenly and inquiringly at the latter, and said: "They are talking to me about confession and the last sacrament. Has it gone as far as that?"

"Yes, Sire," answered the faithful attendant, his voice choked with tears. "Your Majesty has given a deaf ear to all my advice, and I now speak to you, not as a physician, but simply as one plain man to another. It is my duty to tell you that you have not a moment to lose."

The Emperor seized the doctor's hands, and pressed them in his own with what little strength

remained to him.[1] The increase of the Emperor's fever necessitated the postponement of the religious service, but early the following morning, the 27th, his condition had become so alarming that the Empress sent in haste for his confessor. At six o'clock the Court chaplain, Feodotov, arrived. Alexander, raising himself with difficulty, told the Empress he would like to be alone with him, and then said to Feodotov: "Forget who I am, and speak to me as you would to an ordinary sinner." His confession did not take long, and Alexander then sent for his wife that he might receive the sacrament in her presence. She and his confessor then joined in their petitions to him to follow the doctors' instructions, and to allow leeches to be applied. All opposition on Alexander's part now ceased, and from this time forth he willingly acceded to everything that was proposed. Turning to Elizabeth he said: "I have never experienced such a sense of inward peace as I feel at this moment; I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Noting that the red swelling on his leg had disappeared, he exclaimed: "I shall die like my sister," referring to the Grand Duchess Catherine, Queen of Würtemberg, who died in 1819. This Princess, who was originally engaged to the Prince of Oldenburg, had the opportunity, during the Congress at Erfurt, of becoming the Empress of France, but her mother, less dazzled than Alexander by Napoleon's state and position, resolutely set her face against this alliance.

During the 28th the Emperor lay nearly the whole day in a state of unconsciousness, his lethargy

[1] Zaikin, *l.c.*, pp. 27-28.



THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER I.

Facsimile of the engraving by T. Kondakov (in 1827).

only being momentarily interrupted by nervous convulsions. Though the pulse was abnormally high, he hardly gave a sign of life, and in this desperate condition he continued until the following morning. At nine o'clock of the 29th, however, a visible change for the better occurred; by aid of the strongest restoratives he had been awakened from his stupor; he opened his eyes, looked towards his wife, and, taking hold of her hands, he pressed them to his lips and heart. He recognised Prince Peter Volkonsky, and greeted him with a faint smile; the latter, deeply moved, seized Alexander's hand preparatory to kissing it, but the Emperor prevented him by a sign, for this mark of slavish homage, which had become customary under Ivan the Third for those who had received special tokens of favour from him, was unbearable to Alexander. He had extracted a promise from Volkonsky not to leave the Empress until he had seen her safely given back to her own family. The dying man gathered his forces together sufficiently to stammer out the words: "What a beautiful day!" and as he felt his wife's arms flung round him, he added almost in a loud voice: "Ah, how tired you must be!" At that moment the doctor whispered to her: "Take courage, all hope is not yet over!" Beside herself with joy, she immediately sent a messenger to St. Petersburg, where, as she said, "A mother was waiting in anxious suspense for news of her son." The message had no sooner reached St. Petersburg than the whole town became aware of the better news, and the people went wild with delight.

The sick man had sunk into a quiet and re-

freshing slumber, and his wife trusted that the crisis was now past, and that Alexander's good constitution would help him to recover. But her hopes were unhappily ill-founded.

The Emperor fell again into the same lethargic condition as before, with intervals of nervous convulsions, and continued in this state till noon the following day, when an interval of quiet ensued. It was feared that in the exhausted condition of the patient a sudden paroxysm might bring about the end. During the previous night Prince Volkonsky had tried to persuade the Empress to leave her husband, but her only answer was, "I am sure that you sympathise with me in my great trouble. I beseech you not to separate me from my husband as long as he breathes." And her faithful attendant did not repeat his persuasions. Further remedies were tried, but nothing proved of avail to rouse the dying man. On the 1st of December, however, he again opened his eyes, and although unable to speak he appeared to recognise those who were standing around his bed. Later in the morning he made an almost imperceptible sign to the Empress to draw nearer. He kissed her hand as if in everlasting farewell, again sank back into unconsciousness; two deep sighs escaped him, and a few minutes later he breathed his last. Elizabeth, after performing the last tender offices for her dead husband and giving a farewell embrace to the lifeless body, retired to her own apartments, but only to return again and again to kneel in prayer for her husband's soul, until at last she was persuaded to leave the house and remove to the one which had been prepared for her by Prince Volkonsky. The

letter which she wrote shortly after her husband's death to the Empress Maria Féodorovna has become famous:—

"DEAREST MOTHER,— Our angel is in heaven! —and I remain on earth! Who could have believed that I, weak and sickly as I am, would have been the one to survive? Do not forsake me, mother, for now I stand alone in the world of sorrows. Our beloved one has regained his charm of face in death; his smile tells me that he is happy and that he is now looking on things of more beauty than those of earth. . . . Since my terrible loss one thought alone has had power to comfort me, and that is that I cannot long outlive him. I cherish the hope of being ere long reunited to him."[1]

And Elizabeth's hope was fulfilled, for Alexander had only been dead five months when she too was laid to rest.

A post-mortem examination was made three days after Alexander's death, when it was discovered that there was water on the brain. The body was embalmed, and laid out in state in a temporary chapel which had been erected in the large hall of the house in which the Emperor had died. On the 23rd December the body was conveyed in pomp to the Church of St. Alexander-Nevsky, there to await further orders from St. Petersburg. A regiment of Cossacks together with the garrison of the town lined the streets, which were crowded with mourners; some of the officers walked ahead of the bier, carrying the orders

[1] Shilder, *l.c.*, p. 386.

worn by the deceased on cushions, others helped to bear the pall, and the procession was headed by the Bishops of Yekaterinoslav, of Kherson, and of the Tauris. On arriving at the church the coffin was deposited on a raised stage, surrounded by lighted candles, under a catafalque of purple velvet, above which was placed the Imperial crown, and the funeral service was then celebrated.[1]

News having been received in St. Petersburg of the possible recovery of the Emperor, all St. Petersburg went in crowds to the churches to offer a thanksgiving prayer. The Empress-mother, Maria Féodorovna, was also in church. The Te Deum had not yet been finished, however, when the Grand-Duke Nicholas received the last and fatal news. Not wishing to strike his mother's heart with such a terrible blow, he first informed the priest of the catastrophe. The latter, covering the crucifix with a black veil, slowly and solemnly approached the mother, who thus knew that her son was dead.[2]

When the intelligence of Alexander's somewhat sudden death reached Europe, people refused to believe the official accounts. Some maintained that the Autocrat of all the Russias had been poisoned, and, in fact, when the coffin containing the mortal remains of Alexander was brought to St. Petersburg, no one, with the exception of the Imperial family, was allowed to see the face of the deceased.

"At 11.30 P.M.," writes Tarosov, "the clergy-

[1] Russian Archives, 1880, vol. iii, pp. 280–282.
[2] Madame Choiseul-Gouffier, *l.c.*, p. 379.



GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS PAVLOVITSH.

From an engraving by Jonnot, after a portrait by Benner.

man and all officers on duty in the chapel at Tsarskoé-Sélo, where the body of the Emperor was deposited, were all sent away, and only the members of the Imperial family were allowed to kiss the face and hands. The Empress-mother, Maria Féodorovna, exclaimed: '*Oui, c'est mon cher fils, mon cher Alexandre, ah! comme il a maigri!*'"[1]

The closed coffin was exposed in the Kazan Cathedral for seven days, but when the inhabitants requested that the coffin should be opened and the face of the Emperor shown to the public, Nicholas I, the new Emperor, refused to grant the necessary permission. "The reason for this refusal," writes a contemporary author, "was the change in the face of the deceased, which had turned black already in Taganrog. That was also the reason why the funeral rites, performed over the body before the coffin is closed, were celebrated in Taganrog, as it had been decided not to open the coffin on its arrival in the capital.[2]

The funeral took place on March 25th, and at 2 P.M. cannon-shots announced to the inhabitants of St. Petersburg that Alexander I had been laid to his last sleep in the fortress of Peter and Paul.

All these incidents gave rise to various rumours: Alexander had been assassinated, said some; he was not dead at all, but had disappeared, and some one else had been buried in his place. "The death of the Emperor Alexander," wrote Lord Augustus

[1] Russian Archives, 1867, p. 1322; *Rousskaya Starina*, 1872, vol. vi; *Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben, Leopold von Gerlach's*, Berlin, 1891, i, p. 20.

[2] *Rousskaya Starina*, *l.c.*

Loftus,[1] "has always been a mystery which has never been explained, and has given rise to many false reports of his having been poisoned, of his self-destruction, and of assassination." Sir C. Wylie, the Emperor's physician, told Lord Loftus, "that nothing could induce the Emperor to follow the advice and course recommended by his physician, and that it seemed as if he courted death, and would take no means to avert it."[2] In the second half of the last century these rumours found again currency. On the 20th January 1864 there died in Tomsk, at the age of eighty-seven, a hermit of the name of Feodor Kousmitsh. He had been surrounded by the aureole of saintliness. He was of a tall stature and imposing demeanour. His manner was very gentle, but often his glance became severe and commanding. Eye-witnesses, who had known Alexander I, maintained that the saintly hermit was none other than the Autocrat of Russia, and photographs of the celebrated hermit standing in his cell, clad in a long white garment, showed a striking resemblance to the late Emperor.

The mystic attitude of Alexander towards the end of his reign, the melancholy that had never left him since the night of his father's assassination, and which received a fresh impetus from the death of his daughter, are so many factors speaking in favour of Alexander's abdication. "I felt the void in my heart," he said to Bishop Eylert in 1818,[3] "accompanied by a strange presentiment. I went, I came, I sought diversions: the burning of Moscow at last

[1] "Diplomatic Reminiscences," London, 1892, vol. i, p. 68.

[2] *Ibid.*, and James Webster, "Travels through Crimea," 1830, vol. ii, p. 338.

[3] Eylert, *l.c.*

illumined my spirit, and the judgment of God on the frozen field of battle filled me with a warmth of faith I had never felt before. The resolution to devote to God alone my glory, my person, and my reign, has been matured and strengthened within me. From that time I became another man, and to the deliverance of Europe from ruin I owe my own safety and deliverance. It is only since Christianity has become the important subject of my life, since faith in my Redeemer has manifested in me its strength, that the peace of God —and I thank Him for it!—has entered my soul." Is it astonishing that the man who spoke such words should a few years afterwards, when his melancholy had increased, retire from the frivolous Court life and devote himself to the service of God?

The idea which Alexander had cherished as Tsarevitsh, namely, to retire from the throne into private life, took hold of him in the end with greater force. The influence of Madame de Kruedener on the one hand had stirred his religious fervour, while it confirmed his mysticism and his desire of expiating the sins of his youth, whilst the conspiracy which had been formed with a view to taking his life made him fear the fate of his father. The curse of the Romanovs, death by the hand of the assassin, stared him in the face, and in order to avoid it, and to expiate his participation in the death of his father, he probably fled from the throne to lead a life of abnegation and prayer.

Alexander had accepted the Imperial crown as a temporary burden, and the idea of one day

throwing it off, never left him. The thought of abdication often occupied him, and he communicated it sometimes to his most intimate friends. During the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle he took the King of Prussia apart and informed him of his firm intention to abdicate and retire into a cloister. "He was tired of the world," he said, "and had lost all illusions and belief in the gratitude and affections of humanity."[1] In 1819 he also informed his brother Nicholas that he would soon have to ascend the Imperial throne of Russia. "He felt," said Alexander, "that his power of thought was growing feeble, and he foresaw the moment when he would be unable to fulfil the duties of his Imperial office. He was firmly resolved to lay down the sceptre as soon as he judged the moment propitious."[2] The Princess Golytzin, whom Alexander visited during his journey in the Crimea, must also have strengthened his idea of abdication. She was passing her life in seclusion, devoting herself to the practices of a mystic religion. Alexander remained closeted in conversation with the Princess for several hours. They evidently talked of Madame Kruedener. Alexander then visited the tomb of his former friend, and remained for over an hour in the church where Madame de Kruedener had been buried, praying and meditating over her grave.[3]

But whatever his death, Alexander's life was in any case a tragedy. Even his good intentions and liberalism ended in utter failure. It could not have been otherwise. So long as Autocracy will

[1] Lacroix, P., *Histoire de Nicholas I*, Paris, 1864, vol. i, pp. 217–218.
[2] *l.c.*, p. 220.
[3] Lacroix, *l.c.*, p. 309.

jealously guard its prerogatives, its pretended liberalism will remain either a farce or a tragi-comedy. There is a deep gulf separating Autocracy from the national spirit. Its destiny is not to work hand in hand with but against the nation. All pretences of Autocracy to be liberal are a contradiction in themselves and must end in failure.

> "Das aber ist der Fluch der bösen That
> Dass sie fortzeugend Böses muss gebären."

Alexander wished to grant his country a constitution without, however, abdicating his autocratic prerogatives.

That he did not carry his liberal intentions out consistently was due to his character, "where weakness was more conspicuous than strength, and where borrowed ideas successively glided over a radiant superficies."[1] "The character of the Emperor Alexander," wrote the French Ambassador, Viscount de la Ferronnays, to M. de Chateaubriand, "becomes daily more of an enigma to me. It would not be possible to find a man more open and loyal in speech; a pleasant and favourable impression is left behind after an interview with him; one leaves his presence in the conviction that he combines in his own person all the best qualities of a truly chivalric and noble-minded monarch with those of a man of deep feeling, and that added to these he is endowed with extraordinary energy. He sets forth his arguments with admirable clearness, and has a charming choice of language at command; he expresses himself with great fluency,

[1] Rabbe, A., *Histoire d'Alexander I*, vol. i, p. 4.

and with the warmth of enthusiastic conviction. And yet the whole history of his life, and what we all daily see and hear, make it impossible and even dangerous to put any trust in him or his words. The weakness betrayed in so many of his actions shows clearly that the strength and energy which he puts into his speech have never found a place in his character. Owing to this weakness of character he is quickly excited and roused to sudden energy, and then he comes to violent decisions, of which the results cannot be calculated. Moreover, he is jealous of France; he is displeased that Paris should continue to be the capital of Europe, while St. Petersburg is, and will remain, nothing, as if it were but a large factory in the middle of a swamp which nobody visits and from which everybody escapes whenever the opportunity offers. The Emperor is also extremely suspicious—also a proof of his weakness, and this weakness is so much the more to be deplored, inasmuch as this Prince (at least so it seems to me) is, in the full acceptation of the word, one of the most estimable men I know. Evil is mingled with the good in his deeds, but his will and intentions are always on the side of the latter."

Napoleon, whose words are quoted by Las Cases in his "Memoirs," spoke of Alexander as lacking in sincerity and frankness. "The King of Prussia," said the exile of St. Helena, "considered in the light of his character as a private individual, is a loyal, kind, and honourable man; but, regarded from a political point of view, he is an individual completely under the control of the law of necessity; as long as a man's hand

is lifted against him, that man is his master. In the Russian Emperor we have a different personality to deal with; of exceeding loftiness of character, he possesses both intellect and charm, and is highly accomplished; easily led astray, it is necessary notwithstanding to mistrust his ingratiating manners; he is lacking in frankness, and, in short, he is '*un vrai grec du Bas-Empire.*' Moreover, he is a genuine idealist, or he plays his part well; but this is due solely to his upbringing and the doctrines instilled into him by his teachers. It will hardly be believed that I once had to argue with him on the subject of the hereditariness of sovereignty, which he asserted was an abuse, and it took an hour of my best eloquence and logic to prove to him that the peace and welfare of a nation was dependent on this very hereditariness. Perhaps he was only trying to mystify me, for he is subtle, clever and cunning, and quite an adept at this sort of thing. If I die here (St. Helena) he will probably be my successor in Europe. I alone had the power to keep him and his hordes of Tartars in check. It will mean a crisis in the affairs of the European continent, and will, above all, be a decisive one for Constantinople; he strove eagerly to persuade and flatter me into furthering his aim in that quarter, but I took care to remain deaf. However decrepit the Ottoman Empire may appear to be, it must continue to be the point of separation between Western Europe and the Russian Colossus. With Greece it is quite another matter!"

The severity of Napoleon's verdict, however, may have been caused by the state of mind in

which the Prometheus chained on St. Helena found himself. Alexander was not so much lacking in frankness as in strength of character; which fact, added to his ardour of imagination, keenness of sensibility, and, as already amplified, the dual influence exercised over him by education and environment, rendered him an easy sport of every impression. Like all enthusiasts, Alexander was genuinely religious, since an enthusiasm for the ideal is at the root of all religions. Brought up as he had been by a philosophically-minded grandmother and an enlightened tutor, he was yet not free from the superstition which keeps such a strong hold over the Russian people, even those of high degree, although with the latter it is partially glossed over by civilisation. Moreover, unhappiness frequently induces superstition, of which truth Alexander was a striking example; he was beset by gloomy forebodings, and anything out of the common which happened during the journey to Taganrog was interpreted by him as a presage of death. Alexander had been confirmed in his religious tendencies by his acquaintance with the Baroness Kruedener, as well as by his Bible reading and lonely hours of contemplation. An orthodox Christian, he personally took no interest in the doctrines of the various sects, as he held that the fundamental principles of the Catholic, the Protestant, and the Greek Church were one and the same; but as head of the Greek Church in Russia, he considered it incumbent upon him to remain faithful to it and to set an example to his people of childlike submission to its commands.

"I am a lucky accident," Alexander once said to Madame de Staël. This statement was only partially true. His amiable character was an accident on the Autocratic throne of Russia, but it brought little luck either to himself or to the Empire over which he ruled.

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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
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