



**Anecdotes,**  
*HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED,*  
**OF THE**  
**PRIVATE LIFE**  
**OF**  
**PETER THE GREAT.**

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*THE following Anecdotes are given on the authority of Monsieur Stehling, who, in 1784, was a member of the Council of State to the Empress Catherine, and who had collected them from ocular or auricular witnesses, contemporaries of Peter the First, and had carefully subjoined at the bottom of each anecdote the name of the person from whom it had been derived, and who had guaranteed its authenticity. Monsieur Stehling's manuscript having been perused by François-Louis*

ADVERTISEMENT.

Comte d'Escherny, *Chamberlain to the King of Wirtemberg, the contents of it were, subsequently, and from memory, committed to writing by that gentleman, and published in his work, printed at Paris in 1811, and which is entitled, "Melanges de Littérature, d'Histoire, de Morale, de Philosophie;" &c. Those who would examine the original of the ensuing translation, will find it in the First Volume of the Melanges, but they are warned that the incidents alone have been extracted without any attention to the reflections with which the Count d'Escherny has interspersed his narrative.*

*ANECDOTES*  
OF  
PETER THE GREAT.

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FIRST ANECDOTE.

**T**HE Czar Alexis Michailowistch was a widower; mild and affable in his manners, he lived in habits of familiarity with his nobles, and sometimes went without ceremony to dine with them. Happening, one day, to be at the house of a nobleman of the name of Matweof, he saw the cloth laid, and said to him, “Matweof, I will dine with you to-day, but upon

condition that no one shall be displaced on my account.” Shortly after, the wife of Matweof, a young man, and a young girl, entered the room, and seated themselves at the table. The Czar said little, and ate much, but looked still more at the young girl, with whom he was not acquainted. After dinner the following conversation took place.—“ Matweof, I knew your wife, I had seen your son, but I did not know you had a daughter ; you never mentioned her to me.”—“ It is because, sire, the young person whom you have seen is not my daughter ; she is the daughter of one of my friends.”—“ She is very pretty, and appears also very amiable.”—“ I can assure your

majesty that she is still more amiable than handsome; her temper is excellent; she is gentle, modest, and industrious.”—“ We must endeavour, Matweof, to marry her well; with her beauty, and such a character as you have given her, she deserves to have a good husband.”—“ I am endeavouring to find one for her, sire, but it is not an easy thing, for fortune is, in these times, an indispensable requisite, and she has none.”—“ I will myself think of a suitable match for her; do you, also, look out for one, and in a few days, we will see each other again.”

The Czar went away, leaving Matweof enchanted with his good nature

and benevolence. Soon after, the Czar again saw Matweof, and said to him : “ Well ! have you succeeded in finding a match for your pretty ward ? ” — “ Sire, I have thought of one or two that might suit her, but hitherto I have had no opportunity of making a direct proposal on her account, and, besides, I fear, as I have already told your majesty, that her want of fortune will be an obstacle.” — “ Then I have made a greater progress in this affair than you, Matweof, for I think I have found a suitable husband for her, and I hope she will not refuse him. He is rich enough for both, good-natured, virtuous, and is provided with a good post.”

Matweof, after pouring forth the

most lively expressions of gratitude, said, "Sire, may I venture to ask your majesty upon whom your choice has fallen?"—"You shall soon know it; in the meantime, conduct me to your fair protégée; I will sound her myself." The Czar was introduced to her, and made her some equivocal offers, but without discovering himself. When he had left her, he took Matweof by the hand—"My friend," said he to him, "I will keep you no longer in suspense, I am more and more charmed with Natalia (for that was her name): the husband whom I design for her is myself." Matweof immediately threw himself at the feet of his sovereign, and, after acknowledging the high

honour intended for his ward, said to him, "Sire, I have brought up Natalia ; she is in some degree related to me, and I rejoice in her good fortune, as much as if she were my own daughter, but as I may be accused of having employed art and seduction to induce your majesty to such an alliance, I beseech you not to make known your intention immediately. Let the most beautiful young women of the empire be assembled, according to custom : Natalia will be admitted into the number : you can then declare your choice ; and thus your majesty will obtain your wishes without exposing me to the hatred and jealousy of the nobles and the court." The Czar approved of

this expedient, and soon after proclaimed his intention of marrying again, and his desire of choosing a wife amongst the daughters of his nobles. Natalia was the object of his choice: he loved her; she returned his affection, and they lived in great harmony. He wished for a woman of simple and modest manners; he found one in Natalia. By her, he had Peter the First. She was called Natalia Kisilowna Narischkin.

SECOND ANECDOTE.

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PETER the First, during his childhood, was in great danger of losing, not only his succession to the crown, but his life. The Strelitz revolted; they besieged the palace, and committed the most cruel outrages: they massacred several of the nobles, but those belonging to the party of Peter and the Narischkins were the immediate objects of their vengeance. It is believed that this sedition was caused by the intrigues of the am-

bitious Sophia, sister of Peter. That prince, then a child, was withdrawn from the fury of the Strelitz, and carried to the monastery of the Trinity. The rebels, dispersed in every quarter, endeavoured to find him, in order to take away his life. A party of them went to the monastery, and, entering the church, discovered the young prince, who had taken refuge behind the altar. A Strelitz immediately ran up to him, with a knife in his hand, in order to kill him: the child looked stedfastly at him; already the furious soldier had seized him by the arm, and was about to strike him, when one of his companions called aloud to him, "Stop, stop, do not kill him at the

altar, wait till you get him to another place." They were proceeding to drag him from it, when they perceived galloping towards them a detachment of the guard on horseback, informed probably of the road which the Strelitz had taken, and of the precious life which they threatened. The Strelitz immediately escaped by another door, and fled. Twenty years after, as Peter the First was at Cronstadt, superintending the equipment of a fleet, he particularly remarked one of the sailors, looked attentively at him, and changed colour. The sailor, seeing that the Czar observed him, approached, and, falling on his knees, said to him, "Sire, I see you have discovered me,