

Scottish Influences in Russian History

CHAPTER VIII.

CATHERINE I. PETER II. MARSHAL KEITH. ANNA IVANOVNA. OTHER SCOTS. ELIZABETH

The short and tumultuous reign of Peter's widow, the Tsaritzza Catherine I., did nothing to attract foreigners. Short though it was, that of his grandson her successor, Peter II., brought at least one Scot of great distinction to Russia, in the person of General James Francis Edward Keith, now perhaps best known as the inventor of *Kriegspiel*. Born in Scotland in 1696, the younger son of the Earl Marischal of Scotland and Lady Mary Drummond, James Keith, 'having an elder brother (the last Earl Marischal, the friend of Frederick the Great), was intitled to no other designation but simply that of his name, as the family honours, in many estates of Europe, belong exclusively to the eldest son.' [A *Discourse on the Death of Marshal Keith*, kindly lent me by W. Keith Murray, Esq.] Of a fervent Jacobite stock, both he and his brother were 'out' in the '15, and, being attainted, lost their all and were forced to take service under other flags. At first he entered that of Spain, but, being a Protestant, advancement was impossible, so he fixed his eyes on Russia, and with a brevet of Major-General from the Emperor, arrived there in 1729, and 'immediately gained the good graces of the young sovereign, Peter II. (partly taught in military matters by the Scot, Captain Bruce, as we have seen), and who gave him a Lieutenant-Colonel's commission in a new regiment of guards, which was just levied, and of which Count Lowenwolde was Colonel. He rose rapidly, 'because he always did his duty as a brave officer, without intermeddling with any State intrigues' - and there were the Dolgoroukis, one of whom, Princess Catherine Aleksievna Dolgoroukaya, [Keith had a poor opinion of her brother, Prince Ivan, the Tsar's mentor, and pronounced him to be 'one much fitter to direct a pack of hounds (which had been his study the greatest part of his life), than such a vast empire.' - *Memoirs of Marshal Keith*, pp. 80-81.] became the Tsar's *fiancée*, against the Menschikoffs during the Tsar's short reign - till Peter II. died in 1730. Keith at once took the oath to the new Empress, Anna Ivanovna, Duchess of Courland (Peter the Great's niece), who was brought out of her obscurity at Mittau to please the oligarchic party, and was made Lieutenant-Colonel of her bodyguard, 'an emploiment looked on as one of the

Scottish Influences in Russian History

greatest trusts in the empire.' When the Polish war came on in 1733, he found himself serving under the Irish Catholic, General de Lacy. After the fall of Danzig in 1734, he was made Lieutenant-General. However successful, Keith did not like the task of coercing Poland, deeming the duty 'not a very honourable one.' His next service was the German war, and then against the Turks in the Ukraine. In this, successful though it was, Keith protested against the Russo-German General Münnich's waste of human life, and being wounded in the knee at Otchakoff, 2nd July, 1737, was incapacitated for the rest of the campaign. 'I had sooner,' said the Empress Anna, 'lose ten thousand of my best soldiers than Keith.' He was able, therefore, to visit Paris and London, where he was now viewed, not as a Jacobite exile, but as a great General. He returned to Russia and was made Governor of the Ukraine, and his humane rule made him considered one of the best Governors the unfortunate Ukraine had ever had.

On the death of [Alexander Gordon, a son of John Gordon, of Glenbucket, in the Russian Navy, was killed in 1740 fighting against the Turks.] the Empress Anna Ivanovna, 28th October, 1740, her grandnephew, Ivan Antonovitch (of Brunswick) was declared Emperor. For twenty-two days her favourite, Johann Ernst Biron, Duke of Courland, acted as Regent, and then, by a palace revolution, the boy Tsar's mother, Anna Leopoldovna, was declared Regent. Her rule was weak, and ended suddenly on 25th November, 1741, when her mother's cousin, Elizabeth, the younger daughter of Peter the Great, threw off her usual lassitude, put herself at the head of her Guards, assumed the title of Empress, and sent the deposed royal family packing to Kholmogory, in strict custody and into lifelong exile. We are told that 'Mr. Keith acknowledged the new Sovereign without hesitation; and after the example of his friend and countryman, Lascy (Lacy), took the oath of allegiance' again. Before her accession he fought against Sweden, and aided in the reduction of Willmannstrand. [It was here that he met an orphan prisoner, Eva Merthens, whom he educated. To her and her children by him he left all his money.] The Swedish campaign continued during Elizabeth's reign, and did not finish until the capture of Helsingfors and the Åland Islands forced the cession of Karelia to Russia. Service under Elizabeth was less agreeable to foreigners than that under Anna, and we find that Generals Keith, Lowendahl, Lieven, Douglas, all wished to retire. Keith was, to pacify him, offered the command in chief against the Persians

Scottish Influences in Russian History

and the Order of St. Andrew, but he only accepted the last. War with Sweden broke out again, and he was employed, always with success; and he was later both Commander-in-Chief of the Russian forces and Minister-plenipotentiary to Sweden, receiving swords of honour galore. He was in the Prussian campaign in 1745, and next year had his troops reviewed by the Empress at Narva. His position was, however, not comfortable, and his commands were removed one by one. It is said that the amorous Empress wished to marry him, and he feared Siberia if he refused. Be that as it may, he did not like the Russian service; his brother was forbidden, as a Jacobite, to visit him at Riga, and he eventually obtained his dismissal and slipped away, to die gloriously as Marshal Keith at the battle of Hochkirchen, 14th October, 1758, [A much fuller account of his career is given in Hill Burton's *Scot Abroad*. Some interesting letters showing his difficulties in the Russian service are given in the Report of Lord Elphinstone's MSS. (*Historical MSS. Commission, IXth Report*). A letter of his, written from the camp of Fascula, 1st Sept., 1741, mentions 'the Scots merchants who are settled at Petersburg receiving letters from Edinburgh every week.'] in the service of Frederick the Great. We are told that he spoke six languages, and had 'seen all the Courts of Europe, great and small, from that of Avignon to the residence of the Khan of Tartary, and accommodated himself to every place as if it had been his native country. General, minister, courtier, philosopher - all these characters, however different in themselves, were in him united.' Certainly a great man. With Marshal Keith in Russia was a cousin, Sir Robert Keith, 5th Bart. of Ludquhairn. He served there fifteen years, and was in most of the campaigns in Poland, Germany, Turkey and Sweden. After the General's death, he entered the Danish service. He married Margaret Albertina Conradina von Suchin, daughter of the Saxon envoy to Russia, and left a family. [Douglas's *Baronage of Scotland*, p. 75.]

Another of Elizabeth's Scottish Generals was General John Fullarton, of Dudwick. He remained (with General Brown, styled 'an Englishman') in the Empress's service after most of the other foreign officers. He died, surrounded by Russian servants, unmarried, in Scotland, at the end of the eighteenth century.

We get an account of part of the reigns of Anna Ivanovna and Elizaveta Petrovna in the writings of Dr. John Cook, [*Voyages and Travels through the Russian Empire, Tartary, and part of the Kingdom of Persia*, by John Cook, M.D. at Hamilton; Edinburgh, 1768.]

Scottish Influences in Russian History

who went to Russia in 1735. He mentions many Scottish doctors in St. Petersburg - Lewis Calderwood, who went to Russia in 1728, as surgeon to the Preobrajenski Guards, and was employed in Moscow and St. Petersburg hospitals until he died, in 1755 - and Dr. James Mounsey (from Lochmaben), who was afterwards made Physician to the Empress Elizabeth, and who later introduced rhubarb as a medicine into Great Britain; Mr. Selkirk, 'surgeon to the Guards,' and Mr. Malloch. Scots bristle through his volumes, from great 'Russian merchants' like Mungo Graeme, of Garvock, down to 'Peter Miln, who had been nine years keeping the books for "Mr. Demidoff" belonging to his great ironworks in Siberia.' [Allan Ramsay wrote a poem to Mr. Donald MacEwan, 'Jeweller at St. Petersburg,' which has the verses:

It is the mind that's not confin'd
To passions mean and vile,
That's never pin'd, while thoughts refin'd
Can gloomy cares beguile.
Then Donald may be e'en as gay
On Russia's distant shore,
As on the Tay, where usquebae
He us'd to drink before.]

In the wars with Turkey, in 1736-1739, he resided in 'Taverhoff,' and gives a pretty good account of the military operations. He mentions, in 1737, General Leslie, 'a gentleman of Scots extraction,' who with his troops refused to surrender to the Tartars, and died like men. A Mr. Innes, lieutenant in the Horse Guards, from Aberdeen, was a volunteer under Münnich, and helped to stop some cruelties. He rose, by bravery, to the rank of a Colonel of Dragoons during the war, but was killed before its end. He calls him 'The brave Innes, the soldiers' friend, and beloved of all good men.' A Colonel Johnston - 'old Johnston,' Cook familiarly names him - 'a Scotsman from Kenneil,' flits across his pages; and one Lieutenant Glassford, Commandant of the port of Earkee, is several times mentioned. Most interesting of all is his description of the Empress Elizabeth herself, whom the deluded Jacobites so fondly hoped Prince Charlie would marry. 'She was of a large stature, and inclineable to be fat, but extremely beautiful; and in her countenance I saw so much mildness and majesty, that I cannot in words express them. Her hair was black, and her skin white as "snow unsunn'd." . . . At this time Count Razumovski (Aleksi Gregorievitch Razumovski) was Attending her Majesty. It is really surprising that a fat, though young woman, could move so cleverly as the Empress did, in so

Scottish Influences in Russian History

much that I could scarce hear her feet upon the floor; but indeed her august presence had much disconcerted me.' [*Voyages and Travels through the Russian Empire, Tartary, and part of the Kingdom of Persia*, by John Cook, M.D. at Hamilton; ii. p 570; Edinburgh, 1768.]