

CATHERINE THE GREAT

by KATHARINE SCHERMAN

On January 1, 1744, a fat letter with an impressive seal was delivered to the mother of a fourteen-year-old German princess. It was from Empress Elizabeth of Russia, one of the most powerful monarchs of all Europe.

Suddenly the young princess was wildly excited. Her father and mother hid behind closed doors for days to discuss the royal message, but their lively daughter had no doubts. This was an invitation for her to become the bride of Grand Duke Peter, nephew of Elizabeth. What matter if Peter was only a pathetic, stupid boy while she was an intelligent, sparkling girl? He had great wealth and someday he would inherit the Russian throne from his scheming aunt!

To most Europeans of that day, Russia was a dangerous, forbidding, barbaric country. Its nobles were richer than most European kings, its people no better than slaves. To this fearsome, fairy-tale land went the little German princess, uncertain what the future would hold, but determined to acquire wealth and power.

Today we know her as Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, who became one of its greatest rulers and made herself the very spirit of the country over which she reigned. In *Catherine the Great*, Katharine Scherman tells the amazing story of the last great monarch of Russia, who brought to that country years of magnificent pageantry and its first breath of justice and equality.

Illustrated by PRANAS LAPÉ