Diary of an Austrian secretary of legation at the court of Czar Peter the Great

Korb Johann Georg
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DIARY

OF

AN AUSTRIAN SECRETARY OF LEGATION

AT THE

COURT OF CZAR PETER THE GREAT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN

AND EDITED BY

THE COUNT MAC DONnell,

K. S. J. J., &c., &c., &c.

IN TWO VOLS.—VOL. I.

LONDON:
BRADBURY & EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET
1863.
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

"Of all the life of the Czar, his early years are those concerning which we have the least light. I am indebted to a learned person, of a celebrated German University, for those which I have had myself. He had the kindness to lend me a Latin relation of the Embassy which the Emperor Leopold sent into Muscovy in the person of M. de Guarient. The Secretary of that Embassy, on his return to Germany, published a book, which he had printed at his own expense, and which he dedicated to Count de Kaunitz, Vice-Chancellor of the Empire. That work has become very rare, and I cannot tell what a help it has been to me for the early years of Peter the Great, being full of Anecdotes which are not to be found anywhere else."

* "De toute la vie du Czar les premières années sont celles sur quoi on a le moins de lumières. Je suis redevable à un
Thus in his preface speaks a biographer of Czar Peter I., writing within fifteen years after that sovereign's death, under the patronage of Count Brühl, Prime Minister of Augustus III., King of Poland, and Elector of Saxony: so valuable as a historical source, and such a literary rarity had the Diary, now for the first time translated, become within forty years after its publication.

To its importance and its extreme scarcity we have also among other witnesses a distinguished Russian savant of the present day, Friedrich von Adelung. After having been employed by the Russian Government to collect, in various libraries and archives throughout Europe, materials
connected with the history of Russia, Von Adelung drew up a critical and literary review of all travellers in Russia, from the earliest period down to the year 1700, whose narratives are known, a work in two volumes octavo, published simultaneously in St. Petersburg and Leipsic in 1846, which won the great Demidoff prize.* After noticing the envoy, Ignaz Christoph Edler Herr von Guarient und Rall, whom he characterises as a distinguished State-man (ein ausgezeichnete Staatsmann), and of whose official reports to the Imperial Government, during the period of this mission in Russia, Von Adelung appears to have obtained copies from the Archives in Vienna, he proceeds in the following terms to give an account of Korb and this Diary which he has left:

"Johann-Georg Korb† accompanied the


† Information about Korb may be found also in Beckmann's
above-mentioned Ignaz-Christoph von Guarient und Rall, as Secretary of his Legation to Russia. Korb has left us a work of the greatest value, and excessively rare, which bears the title* :—


"Both the title-page and the author’s dedication to Count von Kaunitz are undated; but as

Lit. der Aeltern Reisen, T. II., p. 377 et seq.; and in Berge

gmann’s Peter der Große als Mensch und Regent. Mittau, 1823—1830. Svo. tom. i. 360.

the Imperial licence to print bears date the 8th of October, 1700, we may conclude that Korb’s narrative appeared in that or, at latest, in the following year.

“Doubts have been not unfrequently expressed whether Korb was the real compiler of the Diarium, and conjectures made that the Envoy himself wrote it, and that Korb’s mere name was prefixed to it.” But there are many good reasons for concluding that Korb was really the compiler.

“The scarceness of this work is commonly explained by the circumstance of Peter the Great’s having had his displeasure at it expressed to the Court of Vienna, especially on account of the circumstantial information about the tragic execution of the Strelitz, and that that Court allowed the unfolded copies to be destroyed.”

So far Von Adelung with reference to the scarcity of the Diarium: in hunting up and

* See Beckmann’s Lit. d. Aeltern Reissen, tom. ii. 377 et seq. Also Schmeizeli Orat. de titulo Imperatoris quem Czaarus Rufforum sibi dari prætendit, 57. Aretin’s Beiträge zur Geschichte der Literatur. 1804, Januar, 62. Meiner’s Vergleichung des ältern und neurn Rufflands, &c., tom. i. 32. Ebert’s Bibliogr. Lexikon, tom. i. 947, u. a. m.
destroying stray copies, of which the most persevering efforts must have been employed by the agents of Peter abroad, for only two copies are believed to exist at present in Germany—one in the Imperial Library in Vienna, and the other in the Public Library at Wolfenbüttel, where it is esteemed such a curiosity as to be shown under glass. The British Museum possesses a copy. Four or five other copies are extant in public or private collections.

Some few summers ago the translator happened to pass a villeggiatura at Frascati, in the neighbourhood of Rome, a solitary bird of passage left behind after the season of the great flight northwards. Henry, Cardinal of York, the last Prince of the Royal Stuarts, who had struck medals upon Charles Edward's death with the Royal titles of "Henry IX., by the Grace of God, but not by the will of men, King of England, France, Scotland, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith," was at one time Bishop of Frascati, and Frascati was his favourite residence even after he was translated to another see. At his death he bequeathed his library to the College in that town, directing that it should