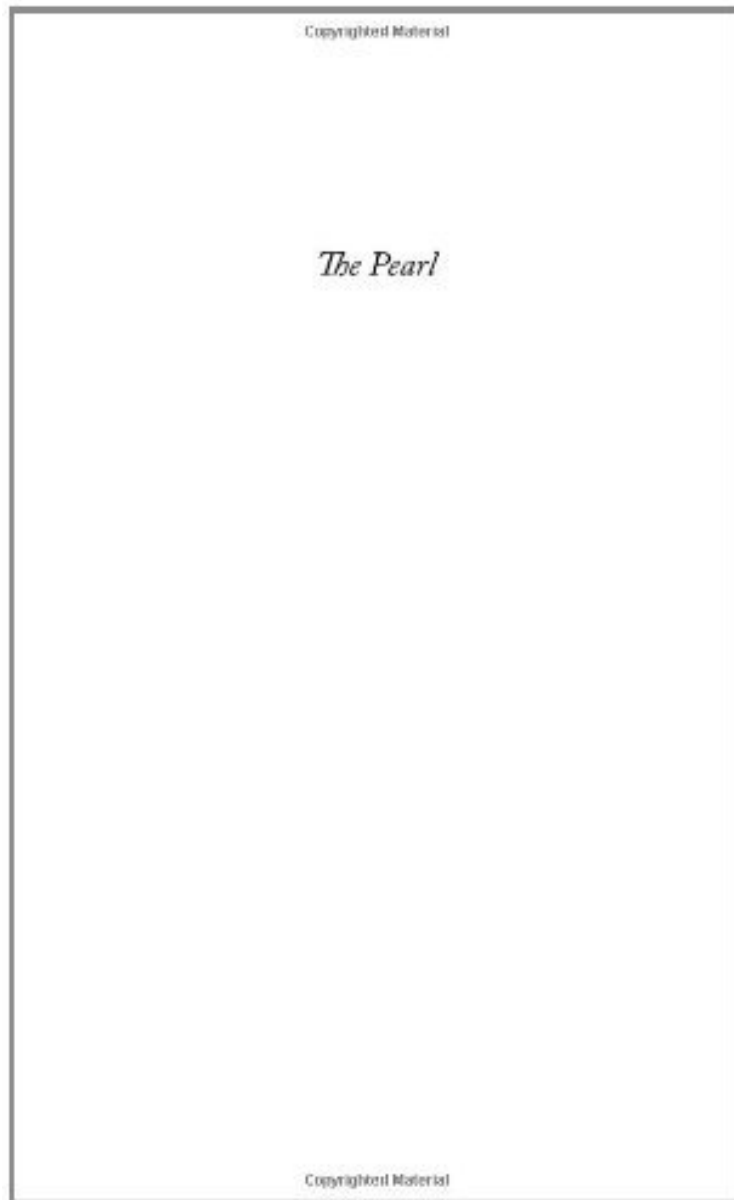


[Download] The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia

# The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia

*Douglas Smith*

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**Douglas Smith : The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Love and DeathBy William S JamisonSetting the stage by giving the contrasting lives prior to their first meeting, certainly prepares the ground for the thesis that this was not a match made in heaven. We have a member of the extreme top one percent (in today's jargon) and Friday (her name in Russian through the Greek) - his Gal Friday! - is bottom what? Ten percent? She is his property. This reminds me of the situation Thomas Jefferson had with his slave (and cousin) Sally Hemings - the mother of most of his surviving children. Upstairs / Downstairs merges. Granted the situation with serfs was much different in many ways from American slavery - though my understanding of how things ran with Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power estate were certainly better by far than the rule. And the same differences were there in Russia as well since it was up to the individual owner how people were treated. A fascinating part of the book concerns the Thieving Magpie - a serf singer much like Friday that was sold as part of the troupe on the death of the owner who was going to give them all their freedom. The new owner was a leech that was furious with rejection and the singer resigned herself to death. Contrast this with the presumption that Friday loved Nicholas. Or did she? Even Nicholas writes that she was more in love with Matrimony than with him. But this book describes an incredible economics. While in my book group one friend said it reminded her of War and Peace, I replied it reminded me more of Woody Allen's Love and Death! Picture hundreds of carriages taking all the servants, food, and a wagon full of clothes for them from one estate to another so they could attend the coronation. Seeing something like that would put me more in mind of a straight faced Woody Allen clearly communicating the hysterical behaviors of the rich while people were starving around them. Another thing this book reminded me of was Europe's Physician: The Various Life of Theodore de Mayerne - from a century earlier - and the fight among physicians to introduce chemicals as part of health. The health issues among the rich and how they were treated, with leeches, bloodletting, Spanish fly, milk baths, seem a horrid approach. Were things better in France? George Washington probably died from such care. All in all, this was a slow book to attract my interest but a fast read, so the interesting things came up pretty quickly once I got into it. Thanks to the Internet, and most of the sites in the book are still there and museums with web sites, you can follow along in the book while looking at what the places look like today. I am glad I read it, though I admit I was hesitant to get started.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. THE PEARL by Douglas SmithBy penThe book presents a fascinating aspect of Russian history and I would recommend it to those interested in such subject. It deals with the family history of Count Boris Sheremetev, General during the Thirty-Year War, who won the Poltava Battle for Peter the Great. The book centers on the romance of Nicholas Sheremetev (Boris' grandson) with one of his serf women, who he married later in life, and the scandal such a union caused in the circles of Imperial Russia during Catherine the Great, especially the stigma such a union caused to the future Sheremetev heirs. For obvious reasons, it is a sad story, but interesting nonetheless because of the impact the family had on developing the future of opera, ballet and theater in Russia, the precursors also of the Bolshoi Ballet in modern times. Nobody recommended this book to me ... I came across it by accident while browsing the internet in search of books on the Pushkin palaces and the Tretyakov Gallery. Highly recommended for those interested in a little-known piece of Russian history. The book was delivered in perfect condition and on time by seller, who I also recommend.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If you're interested in imperial RussiaBy Alice Kaderlan HalseyOne of the best nonfiction books I've ever read. Really makes the characters and the period come alive.If y

Filled with a remarkable cast of characters and set against the backdrop of imperial Russia, this tale of forbidden romance could be the stuff of a great historical novel. But in fact *The Pearl* tells a true tale, reconstructed in part from archival documents that have lain untouched for centuries. Douglas Smith presents the most complete and accurate account ever written of the illicit love between Count Nicholas Sheremetev (1751-1809), Russia's richest aristocrat, and Praskovia Kovalyova (1768-1803), his serf and the greatest opera diva of her time. Blessed with a beautiful voice, Praskovia began her training in Nicholas's operatic company as a young girl. Like all the members of Nicholas's troupe, Praskovia was one of his own serfs. But unlike the others, she utterly captured her master's heart. The book reconstructs Praskovia's stage career as "The Pearl" and the heartbreaking details of her romance with Nicholas—years of torment before their secret marriage, the outrage of the aristocracy when news of the marriage emerged, Praskovia's death only days after delivering a son, and the unyielding despair that followed Nicholas to the end of his life. Written with grace and style, *The Pearl* sheds light on the world of the Russian aristocracy, music history, and Russian attitudes toward serfdom. But above all, the book tells a haunting story of love against all odds.

"The Pearl is a bright, sparkling jewel of a book; a masterpiece that deserves as wide an audience as possible. Russia's greatest love story has never been properly told, until now." Amanda Foreman, author of *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* "An engaging narrative... Scrupulous research underlies this fascinating picture of life at Russia's top social echelon." George Loomis, *Moscow Times* "About the Author Douglas Smith is a resident scholar at the University of Washington and the author of the prize-winning books *Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* and *Love and Conquest: Personal Correspondence of Catherine the Great* and

Prince Grigory Potemkin.