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LONDON: SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO., LIM.

ELISABETH, EMPRESS OF AUSTRIA.

ELIZABETH, EMPRESS OF AUSTRIA

AND

QUEEN OF HUNGARY

BY

CLARA TSCHUDI

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

E. M. COPE

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & CO

1901

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE kind reception accorded to my previous translations of Clara Tschudi's biographies has encouraged me to undertake her last work which was published in Copenhagen in December, 1900.

The sketch of the chequered career of Elizabeth of Austria-Hungary cannot fail to interest, and to the many who know but little beyond the details of her tragic death, the accidents of heredity, environment and sorrow, so accurately treated by the authoress, must prove acceptable.

It is but "the foreground of human life we can examine with any exactness," and even a profounder study of the Empress-Queen than this claims to be, would fail to give more than an "outline" of events with which she was connected.

There are some singular points of similarity in the lives of this trio of Empresses of the nineteenth century, for Eugénie of France, Augusta of Germany and Elizabeth of Austria-Hungary were all

acquainted with the horrors of war, and inspired by noble self-denial to aid personally in tending the sick and wounded, as well as to organise substantial relief during disastrous outbreaks of cholera and other epidemics.

Each had to bear the poignant anguish of losing an only son, and to experience in countless ways the powerlessness of an Imperial crown to confer happiness on the wearer.

The present monograph, however, is not all tragedy, and many amusing episodes are related which arose out of the incognito of the Empress during her travels.

The occasional German and Norwegian quotations which appear in the original work have been rendered, somewhat freely I must allow, into English, for the benefit of such of my readers who may not be conversant with these languages.

E. M. Cope.

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(*The Duchess Ludovica to her daughter, the Empress Elizabeth.*)

"All I ask of humanity is that it should not interfere with me."

(*The Empress Elizabeth.*)

THE

EMPRESS ELIZABETH

OF

AUSTRIA.

CHAPTER I

"You have excellent natural abilities and a noble disposition; but you are deficient in one respect: you cannot sink yourself to the level of your associates, nor accommodate yourself to circumstances; you belong to another period than ours.

(*The Duchess Ludovica to her daughter, the Empress Elizabeth.*)

"All I ask of humanity is that it should not interfere with me."

(*The Empress Elizabeth.*)

DIAMOND WEDDING IN POSSENHOFEN—DUKE MAX OF BAVARIA AS A POPULAR ZITHER-PLAYER—THE DUCHESS LUDOVICA

ON September 9th, 1888, an unusual ceremony was performed in the princely house of Wittelsbach, when Maximilian Joseph, the head of the ducal Vorpfalz-Zweibrücken-Birkenfeld branch of the family, and his wife, Ludovica (Louise) daughter of King Maximilian I. of Bavaria and his second wife, Caroline of Baden, celebrated their diamond wedding, both bride and bridegroom having been about twenty years of age at the time of their marriage.

It is rare to meet with a princely couple so closely united to so many of the reigning dynasties of Europe.

The eldest son of Maximilian and Ludovica, Ludwig Wilhelm, had renounced his hereditary right in order to contract a marriage unsuited to his rank, with the actress Henriette Mendel, who was created Countess Wallersee. But their eldest daughter, Helene, became the wife of the Hereditary Duke of Thurn and Taxis, and her daughter Louise, by her union with Frederick of Hohenzollern, formed a fresh link between the Wittelsbachs and the royal house of Prussia. Their second daughter was Elizabeth of Austria-Hungary, whose son became the husband of Stephanie, daughter of the King of the Belgians.

The child born after Elizabeth was Charles Theodore, the celebrated oculist, who became head of the ducal house of Wittelsbach on the death of his father; his first wife was his cousin Sophie, daughter of King John of Saxony, after whose death he married Marie Josepha, a Princess of Portugal.

Two other daughters of the aged couple, Marie and Mathilde, had married into the younger branch of the house of Bourbon, the former having become the wife of Francis II. of Naples, and the

latter that of his half brother, Count Louis de Trani.*

The youngest daughter, Sophie, was at one time engaged to her cousin, Louis II. of Bavaria, but she married the grandson of Louis Philippe of France, the Duc d' Alençon, while the youngest son, Max Emanuel, became the husband of Amalia of Saxe Coburg and Gotha, and brother-in-law to Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

Eccentricity, coupled with insanity, has always been a prominent feature in the house of Wittelsbach, and in the course of a single century, between twenty and thirty members of the race have become victims to madness.

But in spite of their peculiarities and eccentricities, they have always enjoyed the love of their subjects, on account of their attractive personal qualities, and the fact that they sought their own honour in the happiness and well-being of their people, while many members of the family have gained lasting renown by their striking amiability, their beauty, or their deep interest in the arts and sciences. The historical annals of Bavaria have little to note about conspiracies or attempts on the lives of reigning princes, but they are full of in-

* An old sea port in the south of Italy; one of the points of embarcation of the Crusaders.

cidents of sacrifice of goods and life on the side of the people, coupled with fidelity and devotion that have remained firm and unshaken during the "changes and chances" of Time.

Duke Maximilian Joseph was born in Bamberg, December 4th, 1808, the son of Duke Pius Augustus of Bavaria, whose intellect was overclouded, and Amalia Louise, Princess of Arenberg.

Maximilian—"the good Duke Max," as he was usually called by the people—was the sole descendant of his father and grandfather; his wife, on the contrary, was the youngest of a large family, and of her five sisters, two became queens in Saxony, one in Prussia, and another was the mother of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary. Louis I. of Bavaria was her half-brother, and of her two half sisters, one had first married the King of Würtemberg, and later on, the Emperor Francis I. of Austria-Hungary, while the second, by her marriage with Napoleon's step-son, Eugène Beauharnais,* became the grandmother of Charles XV. and Oscar II., Kings of Norway and Sweden.

The festivities in honour of the aged couple affected in a more or less degree nearly every

* One of his daughters married Oscar I., son of Bernadotte.

reigning house in Europe, not one of whom omitted to send congratulations; and though the event of their diamond wedding was quietly observed by the family on the lake of Starnberg, the people of Bavaria gave touching proofs of their esteem and devotion.

Maximilian Joseph was one of the most eccentric, as well as one of the most popular, members of the house of Wittelsbach. He spent his childhood and early youth in Bamberg and Munich, under the supervision of his grandfather, and matriculated in the University of the latter city at the age of eighteen, when he threw himself heart and soul into the study of history, natural science, and social economy. On attaining his majority, he took his seat as a member of the Council, in accordance with the provisions of the Bavarian Constitution. But he had no taste for statesmanship and was no orator; neither did he care to strive for distinction as a soldier, although from the age of thirty he had commanded a cavalry regiment. His innate love for science, literature, and art, caused him to prefer the simple costume of a civilian to the uniform of an officer.

In his youth the Duke had been greatly attracted by a musician named Johann Petzmacher, the son of an innkeeper in Vienna, born

in 1803, who, when he was about eighteen, learned to play the simple "mountain zither," with which the inhabitants of the Bavarian Highlands accompany their national songs. He became so entranced by the charm and sweetness of the instrument, that he resolved to devote all his energies to make himself an accomplished performer. His renown soon spread far and wide, and he was summoned to play in the most select circles at Vienna, even at Court. He then undertook a musical tour through Germany, where he was welcomed with unbounded enthusiasm, and it was in 1837 that Duke Maximilian first heard him at a concert in Bamberg, and immediately resolved to learn the zither under the direction of the master. Petzmacher was at once appointed director of chamber music at the little Court, and remained with his art-loving benefactor until his death.

In 1838 the Duke entered upon his remote travels in Asia and Africa, accompanied by Petzmacher, who fascinated countless tribes by his zither playing, and while his friend sat by the pyramids of Egypt, or encamped on the burning sands of the desert, these homeborn melodies transported them in thought to their

dear ones in Europe, and made them forget the dangers and difficulties of their travels.

The Duke himself composed several pieces, which were published and played after his return. Under the pseudonym of "Phantasus," he also wrote a collection of poems and tales which shew no ordinary talent, though his "Wanderings in the East," in which he describes his travels in lands unfamiliar at that date, are of far greater literary value, and are still consulted.

On his return to Bavaria, he had a circus built behind the castle in the Ludwigstrasse in Munich, which excited the most intense curiosity and surprise, especially when the Duke himself appeared as director, and ladies and gentlemen of the nobility were among the performers.

But it was only in the winter months that he resided in Munich, for he spent the whole summer and autumn with his family in the Castle of Possenhofen, picturesquely situated close to the Lake of Starnberg. This lovely spot, with its circle of lofty Alps, is as it were created to cause every poetical chord to vibrate, which has perhaps induced so many different members of the æsthetic princely house of

Bavaria to build their summer villas in the vicinity of the lake.

Max Joseph was an ardent sportsman, and spent whole days in the woods and hills round Possenhofen, even in winter, when he frequently left the city for the study and enjoyment of Nature, which was an absolute necessity of his life. On these occasions he wore the simple dress of a peasant, short grey jacket with braces visible over the white shirt front, a feather in his hat, knee breeches, long stockings and thick-soled shoes. He was generally on foot, unless he made use of a mail coach, the usual conveyance of the time, when the passengers rarely surmised that the genial sportsman, ready for a chat with each one, was a Duke and brother-in-law to their King. He was overwhelmed with petitions, few approached the comparatively poor, but warm-hearted prince, in vain, and this daily beneficence was one main cause of his great popularity in Munich, though the country folk loved and admired him most as a good zither player, who lived among them as one of themselves.

With his instrument under his arm, he would enter the house of a peasant and play dance music for the young people, who were never tired of stepping it to his merry tunes.

Innumerable stories are told of the Duke, who sometimes allowed himself to be hired as a musician by the peasants on their fête days, and of their intense enthusiasm when he came forward as an *improvisatore*, or surpassed the best peasant singer in the so-called "Schnaderhüpfel," a popular song in dialogue.

His wife was very unlike him, without a trace of his impulsive, artistic temperament, and consequently perhaps without the universal, open-hearted appreciation which her husband enjoyed each day among the people. And then she clung to the prerogatives of her position and of those of her family, before her marriage with Maximilian Joseph.

On account of her more formal manner, and her much slighter intercourse with the people, she never enjoyed the unstinted love bestowed upon her husband, though her numerous solid qualities earned for her a high degree of respect and good-will from the many who came in contact with her during her sixty years' residence at Possenhofen. She had naturally good abilities, and had received an excellent education. Rectitude and truthfulness were her main characteristics, and throughout her life she never swerved from the path which her calm

clear judgment, after mature consideration, had decided upon as the right one. She shared the preference of her husband for the retirement of the country, rather than the turmoil of life in a town, and by the side of her popular, but erratic consort, with whom she lived most happily, her mind never lost its even balance, and she exercised a judicious influence over her children, who loved and respected her.

Her eyes shone with goodness and quickness, a pleasant smile animated her face, and there was a dignity in her carriage which had its root in the natural nobility of her character. Those who knew her had the instinctive feeling that she was created to give the support to others, which she herself did not need, on account of she unusual strength of mind with which she was naturally endowed.

She was by no means wanting in ambition for her children, but the bitter trials she had to endure on their account, gradually taught her to set a lower value on outward brilliancy. For herself she never wished to court attention, but only to live her life in the peace and tranquillity of retirement.

CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF ELIZABETH OF BAVARIA

It was Christmas Eve 1837, while all the bells in Munich were ringing in the holy season, that Maximilian Joseph in his rambles through the very poorest parts of the city, met a woman so bowed beneath a heavy load that she had difficulty in dragging herself along; but still she greeted the passer-by according to Christmas usage in Bavaria.

"Praise be to Jesus Christ."

"To all eternity, Amen!" replied the Duke, when he added:

"Why are you carrying such a load this blessed Christmas Eve?"

"I will tell your Grace," answered the woman. "As my poor children will have no Christmas gifts, I have been gathering sticks for them in the wood, that they may at least have a good warm room."

"Quite right," said the Duke. "I have already had my gift in the shape of a bonny little daughter

just born, who is to be called Lise, and I am so rejoiced that I should like you to have a share in my happy Christmas."

Then he wrote the name and address of the woman in his pocket-book, and that same evening two of his servants knocked at her door, carrying big heavy baskets filled with substantial food and stood them on the table. Then, as the happy woman gradually emptied them, she came upon two envelopes containing a welcome gift of money.

The child who this day saw the light was Elizabeth, the future Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary.

There is a superstition in some countries that it is unlucky to be born on Christmas Eve, * but the bright and careless childhood of the little princess was certainly no training for the sorrows of her after life.

She spent most of her early days in the fascinating neighbourhood of Possenhofen which her father had purchased a few years before her birth, and the extensive parks and woods around formed the first playground for this "outdoor child,"

* It has been generally stated that the Empress Elizabeth was born at Possenhofen. But the Court Calendar ("Almanach de Gotha") maintains that her birth occurred at Munich, which is more probable, as the ducal family nearly always spent the winter n town.

whose physical development was so graceful, and whose receptive mind so keenly responded to the power of God and nature.

The Duchess Ludovica was mainly occupied with the education of her eldest daughter Helene, some four years older than Elizabeth, who was her mother's darling, and the most like her in character and appearance. Her talents, clear intellect, and ease in learning gave great hopes for the future. In the mean time, eclipsed by her sister's apparently superior gifts, without the least interest in book learning, and understanding nothing of court life, Elizabeth, or "Sissi," as she was called in the family circle, grew up for a time almost unobserved. She loved Helene with the admiration of a younger sister and the innocent respect for one more gifted than herself. The love of the little girl was accepted, but Elizabeth always felt herself in closer companionship with her father and brother than with her mother and sisters.

The Duke was devoted to the child who had inherited his love of nature and enjoyed sharing in his mountain rambles, as well as visiting the huts of the peasants, when she learnt to know men and life through the medium of his views, a proof that she was never trained for the exalted position which she afterwards filled.

When she was five years old she was entrusted to the care of a governess, but "Sissi" in an amiable and loving manner, soon learnt to twist her teacher round her little finger, and to ignore her books whenever it suited her. As Empress she declared that she was the most ignorant princess in Europe, for she knew nothing but the first principles of some half dozen languages, in addition to the knowledge she had acquired while sitting on her father's knee.

But backward as she might be in book learning there were other points which certainly suffered no neglect. The Duke insisted on bodily exercise for all his children, and the best masters of the period were summoned to Possenhofen to teach her and her brothers and sisters both dancing and deportment. Elizabeth was an excellent walker to the end of her life, and was noted for her light elastic step. As Empress, she observed to one of her readers :

"I am never tired of walking, and I thank my father for it. He was an ardent sportsman, and expected my sisters and myself to skip and spring about like chamois."

Then she learnt to swim and ride, and it was her choice delight to feel the wind rushing through her hair as she rode round the lake of Starnberg

on her little pony. And when winter compelled her to remain in Munich, she was constantly to be found in her father's large riding-school, where she rode the most unmanageable, restive horses that were there.

One day when she was playing at circus, her favourite game, she was thrown by an untrained thorough-bred, and her governess screamed with terror, but Elizabeth quickly got up, neither hurt nor frightened, and smilingly begged to be allowed to remount, which the terrified governess emphatically refused to permit.

The real festive period of her childhood was each spring, when the family again removed to Possenhofen, where she could rejoice in almost unbounded liberty. She was passionately fond of flowers, and the story is still told among the Alpine dwellers of Bavaria how "Lise from Possenhofen" used to clamber about the rugged mountain paths and appear again after a while with her arms full of "edelweiss."

Her father had taught her the zither and she frequently accompanied him on his longer excursions in the Alps, where they would rest and eat their food in some châlet, and afterwards not infrequently play dance-music together on the instruments they had brought with them, or bor-

rowed from the peasants. It happened once that they played in a remote district where nobody knew either the strange sportsman or the child, and the peasants gave the charming little girl a few silver coins as her reward. Elizabeth accepted them with glee, and one day observed to some acquaintances to whom she was shewing them, as Empress.

"This is the only money I have earned in my life."

As she had very little pocket-money when a child, she often used to knit or sew in the evenings that she might have some useful gift to offer to her friends on the hills, by whom little Lise was simply adored. And when the autumn storms were beginning, or she was overtaken by a shower, she would go quite alone into any hut to seek shelter from the weather, seat herself by the hearth, and chat at her ease with old or young. Her parents saw no harm in this, and it was the greatest of pleasures to the Duke to share in the life of the people. When the Duchess was told that her daughter was scouring the country with her brothers and playing the zither in the huts of the peasants while they danced, she smiled indulgently and said: "She is a child; I will take her in hand myself someday."

During this free outdoor life in Possenhofen,

the woods and mountains were as a second home to the girl and the large handsome rooms of the city palace seemed narrow and oppressive in comparison with the wide world of God.

Her singular childhood must certainly have exercised an important influence on her later development, and perhaps affords the key to many incidents in her life as Empress of Austria.

Her innate longing for independence, and her remarkable sympathy with all that is great, pure and unsullied by men in nature, met with encouragement beyond all proportion in her unusual position at home, and her unrestrained wanderings in woods and hills. It is undeniable that her unfettered childhood was the last thing calculated to fit her for the sphere to which she was so early to be called.

CHAPTER III

BETROTHAL OF THE EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH TO THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH AT ISCHL

ONE of the first journeys that the Princess took with her parents, brothers, and sisters was to the picturesquely situated Ischl, where the parents of the Emperor Francis Joseph were accustomed to spend the summer months, and where the two sisters, the Archduchess Sophia and the Duchess Ludovica, had arranged to meet in 1853.

The five years which had elapsed since the accession of the Emperor to the throne * had been filled with ceaseless toil, trouble and anxiety; and it was still but a few months since the dagger wound inflicted by the assassin Libenyi had threatened his life. In spite of disturbances in the land, there were many courtiers who had formed their own little plans and coupled their sovereign's name, now with one and now with another of the European Princesses, solely for the furtherance of different political schemes. But

* On the abdication of his uncle, Ferdinand.

at that moment not a sound was heard, and Francis Joseph's mother, equally strong in mind and will, who completely ruled her son, had resolved that a Princess of her own race should share his dual crown.

The Wittelsbachs and the Habsburg Lorraines both belong to the oldest ruling houses in Europe, and both are staunch members of the Roman Catholic Church, while for six hundred years intermarriages have been common between them.

The fourth wife of Francis I.* and the Archduchess Sophia were both Princesses of Bavaria, what could therefore be more natural than for the young Emperor to seek his bride in the same house?

The Emperor's mother had heard that her sister's daughter, Helene, was amiable, as well as gifted, she was on the best of terms with her sister Ludovica, and during their close correspondence, her plans had been unfolded to the Duchess who agreed with her to consider the marriage of Francis Joseph with the Princess Helene a settled thing.

It now became necessary that the young people

* Grandfather of Francis Joseph, styled Emperor of Austria in 1804.

should make each other's acquaintance—and take to each other. This second point was a cause of disquietude to the Emperor, who, though a model of filial obedience, was a passionate admirer of the fair sex.

It is quite certain that mutual attachment united Francis Joseph and Elizabeth, in spite of many different accounts that are current respecting the manner of their engagement.

The following is in all probability the most truthful statement:

The Emperor was to arrive at Ischl, August 16th, to meet his parents and the family of Maximilian Joseph, and as the carriage was rolling along the dusty highway, his adjutant exclaimed in a tone of admiration.

"Look there, Sire!"

Francis Joseph took up his glass and caught just a glimpse of a wonderfully beautiful child, amusing herself with a flock of goats in an adjacent meadow. A second later, the carriage turned a corner and drove into the town. About an hour afterwards, as he was sitting with his mother, a young girl rushed unannounced into the room with a bunch of wild roses in her hand, and wearing a short white frock, while a perfect wealth of chestnut brown hair fell in waves all down her

youthful figure. It was she whose beauty he had admired from the carriage.

She met him for the first time, though she recognised him immediately from his likeness, and without the least hesitation or bashfulness, she went up to him and said cheerily :

"Grüss Gott Vetter!"

"Who are you?" asked the Emperor, who was half afraid that the lovely vision would vanish.

"I am Elizabeth," and the warm glance of her expressive blue eyes captivated his heart as she spoke.

A few hours later, the Princess Helene was introduced to him ; by no means a pretty girl, but intelligent and aristocratic looking, so that if Francis Joseph had not already seen Elizabeth, her sister would probably have become Empress of Austria.

The Emperor was invited to dine with his Uncle and Aunt the following day, and as he was nearing the ducal suite of rooms in the hotel, he heard two female voices in altercation behind a half open door.

"I entreat you, Princess," said one, "Do not go out! You know that you have been forbidden to do so."

"And for that very reason I want to go," replied

the second voice, which he recognised; it was young and very soft, and the next moment Elizabeth was in front of him, blushing and smiling.

"Why may you not go out?" asked the Emperor.

"Because I am the child of the family and must remain so until my eldest sister is married," she replied. "Thanks to you I am to be a prisoner this afternoon, and I have had to have my dinner all by myself."

"Princess, what are you thinking of?" shrieked the governess, who now appeared on the scene, crimson with annoyance. "Pardon me, your Majesty," she continued, turning to the Emperor, "but my instructions are imperative."

Without paying the least attention to her words, Francis Joseph offered his arm to the young girl, and said:

"Let us go together."

"No, I dare not," exclaimed the terrified princess. "Papa would be furious!"

"Come back!" screamed the governess, who utilised this momentary hesitation on the part of her pupil to drag her into a side-room, and bolt the door, after making a profound curtsey before the Emperor who said to Duke Max when dinner was over:

"I have a favour to ask of my amiable host. Is it not the custom in Bavaria for the children to come down to dessert? I should like to improve my acquaintance with your second daughter, whom I saw just for a moment at my mother's this morning."

Every eye turned towards him, and perfect silence reigned for a second, till the Duke observed:

"Your Majesty's wishes shall be attended to."

The Duchess had only time to realise the utter hopelessness of her ambitious schemes for Helene, before Elizabeth entered the room blushing, and evidently somewhat alarmed.

Francis Joseph had on the whole no very high opinion of women, and young as he was, he had bought his experience. But after he had looked upon this pure, innocent child, his views became suddenly changed, and through the political clouds that had obscured the first years of his reign, love now penetrated like lightning into the depths of his heart.

That same evening the Archduchess gave a ball at which both of her nieces were present, and the Court, well aware that important events were in the air, contemplated the Bavarian sisters with lively curiosity. The Emperor's mother singled

out Princess Helene, while her son divided his favours between the two cousins; but when he presented a lovely bouquet of roses to Elizabeth in one of the figures of the cotillon, excitement went up to fever heat. It was evident that the mother wanted Helene for a daughter-in-law and that the Emperor preferred Elizabeth; but it still seemed doubtful how far the mother would submit to her son, or whether he might wholly yield his wishes to hers.

But his choice was already made, and at the close of the ball, he announced that Elizabeth and none other should become his wife.

The surprise of the Archduchess was boundless, but in spite of the failure of her original plans, she was determined that no hindrance on her part should interfere with his attachment. She had wished for a niece as a daughter-in-law, because she hoped to be able to govern her as easily as she did the young Emperor, and if it was to be an undeveloped child, under sixteen, of her own race, who was to share her son's throne, instead of her intelligent sister of twenty, she only thought that it would be undoubtedly easier to bring her under her own control.

At 9 o'clock the following morning, the Imperial carriage was to be seen standing at the door of

the hotel where Max Joseph was residing, and Francis Joseph hastening up the stairs to inquire of the lady's maid :

"Is Sissi awake?"

"Yes, your Majesty! She is dressing."

"That is well; I will go and see her parents." He begged for a private interview with the Duke and Duchess, and there and then made a formal proposal for the hand of the Princess Elizabeth.

It was an insult to Helene, which neither Max nor Ludovica could easily accept, but the suitor was determined, and declared moreover that if he could not have the girl he loved, he would not marry.

The parents were forced to consent, and in accordance with the wishes of the Emperor, Elizabeth was to be told that very day of his proposal, though at the same time she was not to be forced to reply at once.

Her mother sent for the girl, a mere child in appearance, and an infant in heart and soul. She clasped her hands in utter amazement, and exclaimed :

"It is impossible! I am only a child!"

The deep feelings of her heart were still slumbering, though she was responsive to

affection, and this rapid wooing suited her resolute natural character. She was attracted by the appearance and manners of her cousin, and without a second's further thought, joyfully consented to be his wife.

The day happened to be his twenty-third birthday, August 18th. On their arrival at church the following morning, the Emperor's mother stood aside and motioned to her young niece to precede her on their entrance into the house of God, and on the conclusion of Mass, Francis Joseph took his *fiancée* by the hand, led her up to the altar, and said to the priest :

"Reverend Father, this is my future consort, give us your blessing!"

The "Wiener Zeitung" of August 24th had the following announcement :

"His Imperial, Royal and Apostolic Majesty, our most gracious sovereign and Emperor, Francis Joseph I., has during his stay at Ischl, after receiving the full consent of his Majesty, King Maximilian II., as well as that of the ducal parents of the bride, become engaged to the Princess Elizabeth Amalie Eugénie, Duchess of Bavaria, daughter of their Highnesses Duke Maximilian Joseph, and the Duchess Ludovica, *née* Royal Princess of Bavaria. May the blessing

of the Almighty rest upon this auspicious event, so fraught with joy and gladness for our august Imperial House and land."

The enthusiasm of the people was boundless, and the tinge of romance that hovered over the engagement, appealed to the Viennese, who were ready to rave about the child that their young Emperor had selected for his wife. Her likeness was to be seen in every hut and home of the Habsburg Empire, and not a voice tired of recounting the charms of her beauty, and the details of the simple family life in the home of her childhood.

The engaged couple and their parents spent a month together at Ischl, and a lady of the Court wrote to her son at the time.*

"Happiness shone on the faces of the youthful pair, the weather was bewitching, and life seemed to lie before them as one long summer's day."

Crowds from the immediate neighbourhood of Ischl daily poured in to catch a glimpse of their Emperor's bride, and then return enraptured with her loveliness. Poems and songs were written in her praise, and the whole Empire resounded with the couplet:

* Arneth's Memoirs.

"Rose aus Bayerland
Lieblich und traut,
Nun grüsst dich ganz Oest'reich
Als hehre Braut!"

Bavarian Rose transplanted,
All Austria bends to greet
Thee as a lofty royal bride,
A flower most grateful sweet.

Elizabeth was a perfect child in the face of all this homage, and kept herself out of sight, as far as it was possible; indeed, it frequently happened, that with or without her consent, she was forced to occupy a conspicuous position, in order to satisfy the craving of the Austrians to look at their future Empress.

CHAPTER IV

"THE ROSE OF BAVARIA"— BRIDAL PROGRESS TO THE CITY ON THE DANUBE

APRIL 20th, 1854, Elizabeth began her bridal journey to Vienna, accompanied by her parents and her elder brother and sister. Every street of her native town was thronged with citizens and peasants from the neighbourhood, who with their wives and daughters had come to wish her God-speed.

In spite of the painful rush of feeling that almost overwhelmed her, she rose again and again in the carriage to return the greetings of the crowd, and bid them a tearful good-bye.

The steamer "Die Stadt Regensburg" conveyed the family by the Danube from Straubing to Linz, and all work had been suspended to mark the happy event, and allow thousands upon thousands to turn their thoughts solely to the arrival of the expected Princess. At Passau, a deputation came on board who welcomed her on the frontier of the Empire, in the following words :

"Friendly as our plains, stable as our hills, such are the feelings of the Austrian nation for their Emperor's bride, and the welcome we offer to your Highness springs in all sincerity from the very depths of our hearts."

The party landed at Linz in order to continue their voyage in a smaller steamer, and were received by Francis Joseph who had come on purpose to meet them, but who hastened to return to Vienna, that he might receive his bride there too.

A magnificent triumphal arch had been erected, the whole of Linz looked like one immense flower-garden, and bonfires were blazing on the surrounding heights; while plays at the theatres, torch-light processions and serenades in front of the house where the bride of sixteen was to pass the night, concluded the day's ovation.

The following morning, April 22nd, she and her companions, escorted on board by the city authorities and cheered at every step, entered on their further progress down the Danube, from Linz to Nussdorf, by the steamer "Franz Joseph," which was decorated with roses from stem to stern. The ducal cabins were hung with purple velvet, and the deck was a perfect garden of flowers. It was a lovely spring morning, and

the banks on either side the river were crowded with spectators, flags floated from church towers and house roofs, and singers grouped at every available interval sang :—

"Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser," or

" Ein Königskind in die Ferne zieht,
Geführt von innerem Drang,
Dem hängt eine Thrän' am Augenlied,
Dem ist so bang, so bang !

O Königskind, erbange nicht,
Wie fremd auch Flur und Strand !
Wo dich die Lieb' wie hier umflicht,
Da ist dein Heimathland !"

(A royal child goes forth
In foreign lands to dwell ;
Tears dim her eyes and haunt her heart,
Tears that she cannot quell.

O fear not royal child,
Though strange may be the strand ;
Where love doth clasp thee closely round
Lies thy true Fatherland.)

On board a graceful figure flitted from one side to the other, unweariedly and unceasingly acknowledging the eager cheering of the multitude. In the meantime, extensive preparations had been made for a suitable reception at Nussdorf, the landing place for Vienna, whence the inhabitants had been pouring in since early dawn, and were patiently waiting or struggling

to retain the places they had conquered with so much trouble and difficulty.

Near to the bridge a large tent supported by pillars had been erected, surmounted by a gilded dome and towers that shone afar off, and this was filled towards twelve o'clock by the highest nobles of the Empire, officers, clergy and the representatives of every civil and official administration. A raised platform to the right was occupied by foreign ambassadors and their ladies, one to the left by the members of the Municipal Council in Vienna, and those towns in other provinces under the sceptre of the Habsburgs.

The space in front of which the steamer would actually lay to, was carpeted, and on either side tiers of seats had been erected for the Imperial Court. The weather round Vienna had been dull since early morning, but by mid-day a brisk wind had driven every cloud away, and the sky was bright with the purest blue when the signals announced in the afternoon that the steamer was in sight. At half-past five it neared the quay amid the thunder of cannon, the pealing of bells, and the loud strains of music. Francis Joseph, who had just appeared on the scene, hastened on board to embrace his bride, followed immediately by his parents the Archduke Francis

Charles and the Archduchess Sophie. The long-awaited moment had arrived, and Elizabeth was at last in the capital, leaning on the arm of the Emperor, while thousands of voices simultaneously shouted:

"Long live the Emperor's bride!"

The vivas and hurrahs of the Viennese were so overwhelming in their heartiness that Elizabeth stood for some minutes as though rooted to the spot by the side of her fiancé, while tears of joy welled up into her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. Then she looked steadily at the dense crowds who were welcoming her in true southern enthusiasm, bowed repeatedly on all sides, and waved her handkerchief with many a pleasant smile towards the excited spectators.

Years have passed since that day, misfortune and sorrow have as it were inundated Austria and the house of Habsburg, but there are eye-witnesses still living, who can recall this moment and tell of the ravishing picture presented by the the young Princess, as she stood in her perfect ideal loveliness.

The drive from Nussdorf to the old Imperial Castle of Schönbruun, which was reached at half past six, was one triumphant procession and here the Emperor once more bade his bride be

welcome, as he conducted her up the grand staircase, which was perfectly decorated with exotic shrubs and flowers.

In the meantime the Castle-grounds had become one dense mass of people who shouted their welcome, in the warm, hearty manner of the Austrians, each time that Elizabeth shewed herself on the balcony by the side of the Emperor. Their enthusiasm seemed endless and boundless, and again and again she had to gratify their longing to see her.

Her ceremonial entry into the city took place the following day, and in accordance with ancient usage, the drive from Schönbruun to the *Theresianische Pitter-Akademie* * was in all stillness and simplicity, which made the magnificent display along the bride's path from the *Akademie* to the Hofburg all the more striking.

While the procession was forming, Elizabeth and her mother rested in the inner apartments of the *Theresianum.*

Every house in Vienna and the suburbs had been decorated by loyal hands, and the streets through which the bride was to drive, were like so many gardens. The Elizabeth Bridge, which unites the capital with Wieden, one of the

* An Institution for the training of officers.

municipal districts of the city, was opened this same day, and received the name of the future Empress.* The burgomaster and councillors were all assembled waiting to bid her welcome, and round statues of six celebrated men which adorned the bridge, 16,000 shrubs and giant bouquets from the conservatories of the Prince Lichtenstein and Schwarzenberg had been most effectively grouped, while their scent penetrated into every quarter of the city.

The distance to the Kärntnerthor was bordered by 9000 citizens standing three deep, while innumerable groups of young girls strewed roses by the way. The moment the procession began to move, the cannon thundered forth again, and every church of the suburbs vibrated with "the swinging and the ringing of the bells."

The firing ceased as Elizabeth's carriage passed the ramparts, while the bells in the heart of the city foretold that she had actually entered the precincts of the ancient capital.

Her gilt coach was drawn by eight milk white horses, decorated with high white nodding plumes; the reins and harness were gilt, and the coachman, outriders, and footmen, wore white wigs.

* It was destroyed in 1898, a few months before Elizabeth's death.

The bride and her mother were the occupants of the coach, the young Princess wearing a pale pink satin gown embroidered in silver, and a white mantle covered with garlands of roses. On her magnificent hair sparkled a coronet of diamonds, intertwined with a wreath of pink and white roses, and never before had she so completely merited her name of "The Rose of Bavaria."

CHAPTER V

WEDDING FESTIVITIES

EARLY on the morning of April 24th, 1854, a special service with Te Deum was held in every church in Vienna, while the bridal pair was present at high mass in the Court chapel.

From three o'clock in the afternoon, the crowd was so dense round the Hofburg and the Augustiner Kirche, that the streets had to be closed in order to form space for the carriages from the Castle.

There were guests from every corner of the Empire, as well as from most of the countries of Europe, and the list of the strangers who had arrived in Vienna during the preceding days, amounted to nearly 7000, which at that period was considered a most remarkable number, including deputies from the East—Alexandria, Smyrna, and Saloniki—who had come to share in the festivities.

The celebrated old Augustiner Kirche, in

which the ceremony was to take place, was magnificently decorated, and over the high altar a lofty canopy had been raised of white velvet and gold, under which stood the *prie-Dieu* of the bridal pair, likewise of white velvet. A second canopy covered the velvet brocade seats set apart for the other princely personages.

The pillars of the church were hung with damask and costly gobelin tapestry, and the floor was covered with carpeting, while hundreds of larger and smaller coronas and candelabra, with thousands of wax tapers, shed a sea of light on the whole. The passage leading from the inner apartments of the Hofburg were decorated and illuminated in a similar manner. The ceremony was fixed for seven o'clock in the evening, and by six o'clock all the invited guests had taken their seats. The varied uniforms of the officers, the brilliant picturesque costumes of the Hungarian and Polish nobility, the sparkling jewels of the ladies, the gold-embroidered coats of the ambassadors and high court officials, the red capes of the cardinals, the fantastic appearance of several of the Oriental deputies—all united to form a picture of magical effect.

Before the hour appointed, the ladies and

gentlemen of the Court, in full gala dress, had assembled at the Hofburg to be in readiness to take their places in the bridal procession. The ceremony may be said to have begun when the Prince-Archbishop Rauscher, formerly tutor to the Emperor, and over seventy archbishops and bishops in their gold-embroidered vestments had assembled in the sacristy, and the Master of the Ceremonies had announced to his Majesty that all was ready.

The procession passed through the rooms and corridors in the following order: Heralds, pages, chamberlains, privy councillors, the highest court functionaries, the Archdukes, accompanied by their Stewards of the Household, and finally the Emperor himself. The Archdukes and courtiers all wore the chains of their respective orders, and the Field Marshal uniform of the bridegroom was adorned with the collective emblems of the Imperial State of Austria.

Immediately after the Emperor came his mother leading the bride by the left hand, her own mother, the Duchess Ludovica, walked on her left, and the procession was closed by the ladies of the Court accompanied by the Steward of the Household.

The bride (exactly sixteen and four months)

shone in the full beauty of youth and happiness. Her wedding gown was of rich white silk with a *garniture* of heavy gold and silver embroidery, and her mantle, likewise embroidered in gold, formed the long train. Her veil of Brussels lace was held by a diamond clasp, while her wreath of fresh myrtle and orange blossoms was secured by a magnificent diamond coronet which her mother-in-law had worn on her wedding day, and had presented to Elizabeth as a bridal gift. A diamond necklace encircled her throat, and clasps richly set with brilliants fastened her mantle. She wore the Bavarian order of Theresa, as well as the Austrian Star of the Cross and carried a bouquet of white roses.

The bridal pair was met at the door of the church by the Prince-Archbishop, who sprinkled them with holy water, and the pages, who had been bearing the train of the Princess, now placed it in the hands of her ladies in waiting. The Emperor and his bride advanced to their *prie-Dieu*, while the remaining members of the royal family took their places, and after a few moments spent in private prayer, Elizabeth and Francis Joseph proceeded to the high altar, where they responded to the usual questions, exchanged rings and clasped each other's hands,

As soon as the Archbishop has concluded the ritual, the first salvo of artillery was heard re-echoing from the Joseph-Platz, to be followed in a second by the thunder of guns from every fort to announce the accomplished fact that Austria had now an Empress and Hungary a Queen. Cheers from outside and the loud reverberation of the guns continued all through the address, when the Archbishop said to the young couple:

"If man and wife are united by the bonds of love and confidence, happiness must be theirs. You, exalted Princess, who are now to occupy your place on the throne of Austria, will find in your husband a friend who has joined himself to you by indissoluble ties; he will feel your joys and sorrows as his own, and you may open your heart to him, relying in all faith on his steadfast devotion amid all the events of this changeable earthly life; he will be at your side with never-failing sympathy, he will prove your protector and your strength, your joy and your hope, your pride and your honour!

His Majesty the Emperor has been entrusted with a serious task. From the Lake of Constance to the distant boundary of Transylvania, from the Italian river Po to the banks of the Vistula, thirty-eight million men look to him to protect

and help them by his power and wisdom. But the burden which rests upon his shoulders is heavy, as well as honourable, and has cost him many an act of self-denial. His Majesty has already given his youth as a sacrifice for his people,—you, Princess, are called upon to make up to him for the joys of youth which he has had to renounce! St. Augustine says: If a wife loves her husband because he is rich, her thoughts are unworthy, for then she does not love him, but his money. If she really loves him, it is for himself, however poor he may be. This is the devotion you will have for your husband, and while he is overwhelmed with the cares of state, you will be to him as a peaceful island in the midst of stormy billows where roses and violets exhale their perfume. May all that is pure, lovely and honest meet with protection and furtherance from your Majesty, and may we have a life's example in our Empress Elizabeth! By the side of Francis Joseph, the hero and safeguard of Austria, his Imperial Consort will hold the first place among women, not alone by virtue of the crown that rests upon her brow, but still more by the influence of her goodness, which will shed its gentle light from the steps of the throne down to the lowest rank of her people."

On the day of his marriage, the Emperor

pardoned nearly every case of high treason, as well as offences against the public peace, and at the same time commanded that the legal proceedings which had been set on foot concerning similar misdemeanours should be suspended.

The satisfaction caused by the marriage of their Monarch was proved by the vast number of philanthropic plans that were organised in every corner of the Empire which were all named after the Imperial couple. The gifts of the citizens of Vienna formed a fund from which 500 gulden were given to forty needy couples who were married in different churches of the city in the same hour as the Emperor. A widespread beneficence was exercised in totally different ways: poor children were clothed, sick people were nursed, necessitous families were assisted, and manufacturers arranged entertainments for their work-people.

Francis Joseph himself gave 200,000 gulden for the relief of the indigent, while the Empress resolved to devote to charitable purposes the 60,000 gulden which had been presented to her as a wedding gift.

She did not think only of the Viennese on this occasion, but expressed the wish that every province of the Empire should derive benefit from her offering.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY DIFFICULTIES OF THE NEW POSITION

On the occasion of her marriage it was said with truth that Elizabeth was the youngest and also the most lovely Empress that had ever grasped the sceptre of the Habsburgs. She was tall and slight, with delicately formed hands and feet, and her childlike features were regular and refined. A sweet smile was frequently on her lips in her happier days, her eyes were of a deep blue, her complexion fair and rosy, and a wonderful effect of beauty was produced by her abundant hair, which when down fell round her like a thick long cloak. Sometimes she let it hang over her shoulders divided into eight heavy plaits; but she often wore it coiled high up on her head like a diadem. This wealth of hair was in itself sufficient to make her carry herself erect and produce a naturally regal bearing.

Utterly without experience and knowledge of the world as she was, and filled with the confiding

warm-heartedness of early youth, she thought life would be one long day of enjoyment, that faithful devotion would always encircle her, that loyal hearts would beat in unison with hers, and that in no common measure she would become the good genius of her people at large, as well as of her immediate surroundings.

But sharp and bitter disappointment followed hard on the last outburst of joy and gladness. The middle classes had begun by being perfectly satisfied with their Empress, but this was far from being the case with those of higher rank. The Austrian aristocracy is the most exclusive in Europe, and in their circle it was considered that the Princess of a side branch of the Bavarian royal house was far too young, and above all not sufficiently distinguished to be their Empress. She became the object of reserve where she had looked for open hearts, and found herself entrenched behind a barrier of coolness, ill-will and intrigue. She who had thought to be the centre of homage and interest, felt herself hurt and disappointed as she experienced how jealously she was excluded from the influence and honour that were her prerogative.

It was unfortunate that she had so early been called upon to occupy a position which required

an exceptional knowledge of mankind, tact, and adaptability, of all of which she had learnt nothing. Hers was a true-hearted simple nature, and she was now just a poor bird that had left its parents' nest before it could fly.

All who had known her in Bavaria were devoted to her, and in her own home there was a contagious joyousness about her that reminded one of the woods and fields she loved so dearly, and her happy roguish presence always brought a breath of health. The very pose of her head with its profusion of lovely hair showed confidence, while her dark blue eyes looked at her fellow-creatures with an open expression, as free from coquetry as embarrassment.

She was doubly a Wittelsbach by birth, and possessed their distinctive traits in a remarkable manner: she was proud and independent, truthful and courageous. In themselves frankness and veracity are inestimable virtues, but they proved so many pitfalls for her who could not adapt them to the requirements of court-life, and the spring-like freshness of her nature was totally unsuited to Schonbruun and the Hofburg.

I have already noticed that her education was still very defective when she became Empress, in fact it had hardly begun, for work and reflec-

tion had found no niche in her daily life. The Viennese court was quick to perceive this, and therefore thought she could be amused with vain toys and led by flattery to do what others chose.

But their mistake soon became apparent. She was certainly young, but in addition to their peculiarities, she had also inherited a large share of the rich, many-sided gifts of the Wittelsbachs. Her mind was quick to grasp anything that interested her, to choose or reject with rapid decision, and her strong personality revolted against allowing her will to be moulded and fashioned by mere court routine.

Life in the Hofburg with each day precisely like its fellows, was wearisome to her eager mind, and she made it evident from the first that she abhorred pomp and ceremony; while little as she resembled Marie Antoinette in other respects, her dislike to etiquette was quite as pronounced as that of the unfortunate queen.

The courtiers of Vienna, who had lived under the régime of etiquette from the hour of their birth, considered it natural and indispensable; it formed the framework of their outer lives and almost the guiding thread of their inner sentiments. But to the open air bird from the Bavarian Alps, these Austrian court rules seemed

petty and ridiculous, she could not breathe in such a sultry atmosphere, her wings were clipped.

It was a difficult matter to fight against old customs amid new surroundings, and a storm gathered immediately when the Empress refused to be present at the daily official luncheon served with various hot dishes, etc., and called for bread and sausage, with a glass of Munich beer.

The domestics were incensed against her because she wore her boots and shoes a month, instead of taking a new pair each day, they considered it their prescriptive right to share these things among themselves, and gave no thought to the strict economy to which Elizabeth had been accustomed.

When presiding at one of her early court receptions, she removed her gloves in the face of all etiquette and usage, when one of the elder ladies observed to her in alarm that she was offending against their customs.

"Why should this not be allowed?" asked the Empress.

"Because it is a departure from the rule," was the reply.

"In that case, from to-day, we will that the departure become the rule," said Elizabeth.

No young man could be more deeply in love

than Francis Joseph was with the wife whom he had discovered without the help of either relations or envoys.

"I am as much in love as a lieutenant, and as happy as a god," he wrote to a friend, on the conclusion of his marriage.

And it needed all his devotion to reconcile this child who had hitherto followed her own bent, with the fetters inevitable to her position as Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary. Conflicts were frequent between the old ladies of the Court and the young Empress, and it often happened that his Majesty had to interfere and restore peace. He permitted her to relax some of the stringent rules that dated from ancient times, but he dared not allow her to introduce new customs, and her craving for more freedom was often a severe tax on the patience of the young husband.

The Empress really loved him, but still not with the same absolute affection that he felt for her, for in spite of her hasty temper which was especially evident in after life, there was an innate tinge of coolness in her nature which contrasted with his passionate feelings towards her.

Her mother-in-law had hitherto been the absolute ruler of the court and had exercised her

power with considerable discretion, for during the early turbulent years of her son's reign, it was she, the Archduchess Sophie, who had proved herself a valuable support.

She was a woman of no ordinary intelligence, but at the same time she had managed to exercise a baneful influence over the impressionable Emperor, and as long as there seemed the faintest chance that she could regulate his public, as well as his private life, she had no intention of foregoing one tittle of her power. She had appropriated the first place by her son's side, and never for one moment did she dream of retiring in favour of her niece of seventeen.

It would be difficult to find two women less capable of understanding each other than this mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and yet they were of the same race. The Archduchess was filled with a craving for power and a desire to rule, neither of which ever attracted Elizabeth in the least. She was moreover a woman of the world, of which the Empress as yet knew nothing. Sophie ruled the Emperor, but the priests directed her. Elizabeth worshipped God in nature, ignored most of the festivals of the Church, and hated priestcraft. The elder woman clung to all ceremonies in which she could hold

the first place, Elizabeth withdrew as far as possible from everything of the kind, and her mother-in-law made the fatal mistake of believing that this child, who had so unexpectedly been raised to an Imperial throne, could be ruled and dictated to, if only she were kept amused. But Elizabeth was absolutely devoid of vanity, she had never longed to be Empress or Queen for the sake of a brilliant position, and did not even care to live in a town. She would probably have preferred it, if Francis Joseph had been the son of a simple prince, so that she might have continued to follow her taste for the joys of nature which she had so thoroughly enjoyed in her childhood.

To begin with, the behaviour of the Archduchess was only depressing to her niece, but later on it roused in her a strong feeling of opposition. We know that the young bride had come to Vienna with her heart filled with hopes and dreams; but at the same time with the conviction that she, and she alone, would occupy the first place by the side of her husband. Her mother-in-law quietly pushed her into the background each time that she exercised her right as Empress to come forward. She deliberately crushed all her hopes, blighted every longing,

and overlooked her on every occasion with evident disregard of her feelings.

"Madame Mère," as Sophie was called, though she in no wise resembled the modest mother of Napoleon, was a person of influence, whose friendship it was prudent to preserve. It was well known that Francis Joseph had proved himself impressionable and fickle in his affections, and it was surmised that he would soon tire of his wife. Elizabeth's inexperience made her powerless to withstand the intrigues of a court, and it was therefore the universal opinion that the mother-in-law would conquer in any dispute between her son and his wife.

The Empress was still the delight of the middle classes and when she rode in The Prater, or large public park of Vienna, by her husband's side, she irresistibly won each heart by her beauty and her affability.

On the other hand, the coolness and scorn which she met with from the narrow-minded courtiers would have crushed a woman with less strength of character, and the daughter of a poor Duke had to submit to constant allusions to her unworthiness to occupy her exalted position. Her proud heart revolted against this daily belittling and persecution. It is difficult to speak

amiably with sobs in one's throat, to laugh when tears are very near, to put on one's prettiest and brightest appearance, when a dark corner in which to give vent to one's pain is all that one craves for.

Elizabeth was naturally nervous, and though in after life there were critical moments in which her self-sacrifice was great, the innumerable little daily yieldings seemed impossible to one of her temperament. She felt herself misunderstood in her best thoughts and intentions, and gradually became a lonely woman at her own court.

The Emperor continued to treat her with attention, but misunderstandings arose between husband and wife which were fostered on the one hand by the wounded pride of Elizabeth, and on the other by the strenuous efforts of her mother-in-law to lower her in the eyes of her son, and much as the Empress loved her husband, she kept aloof from him, she would be no "troublesome child," as the Archduchess called her. She was crushed and acquired a look of melancholy and sorrow which was perfectly new to her.

But in this truth-loving, powerful character, which was still immature, were moments of violent intolerance, which were not calculated to make or retain friends. She felt at variance

with the cold world in which she lived, a world full of selfishness and striving for mastery and power. Nervous, ignorant of life as she was, she thought to defend herself by similar persecution, treating the ladies who took her mother-in-law's side with marked coolness, and shewing favour to others who disappointed and betrayed her.

CHAPTER VII

TRAVELLING IN THE PROVINCES—MATERNAL CARES

FROM the very first nothing was further from the wishes of the young Empress than to occupy her throne in lonely majesty, surrounded by select members of the highest ranks of the aristocracy. She longed to be in the midst of the people, to make the acquaintance of her subjects and their lands.

In her early married days she was frequently to be seen in the streets of the capital, when a crowd would be collected in an instant, and people jostled and hustled each other, almost clinging to the carriage in their intense eagerness to see her as close as possible.

One day, without announcing her intention, and accompanied only by a single lady-in-waiting, she went for a walk in the city, and entered a shop in one of the most frequented thoroughfares, where some object had attracted her attention. But it was no pleasant surprise for her to see

hundreds of people tightly packed in front of the shop, when she emerged, and it was only by the exertions of the police that a way could be forced for her and her companion.

This walk caused the deepest displeasure at Court, where it was whispered from one to another,

"Her Majesty appears to be under the delusion that she is still among her Bavarian mountains. She forgets that she is Empress of Austria, and what is due to her position."

Alarmed at the result of this first attempt to mix with the people, she avoided shewing herself in crowded streets as far as possible, and restricted her walks to the secluded parts of the Castle garden, or to the extensive grounds of Schönbruun. But this was wrong in the eyes of the Court, and the very same persons who had lately blamed her for walking in the streets, complained of her because she did not do so! It was now:

"The Empress forgets the demands of her position, and that she is in duty bound to shew herself to the people as frequently as possible."

The uncharitable judgment passed upon Elizabeth, whatever she did, or did not, forced her to withdraw more and more into herself, and these ill-natured members of the Court were the cause of harm that could never be undone, for as the

Empress grew older, more matured and independent, the wish to shew herself in the capital had vanished. She had inherited a disposition to lead a retired life, if possible, that of a spectator only, and once she had tasted the delights of solitude, she appreciated it too keenly to be willing to renounce it.

In the meantime the inhabitants of the more distant parts of the Empire, Bohemia, Moravia, Galicia and Hungary were eager to bid her welcome, and a few months after their marriage, Francis Joseph and his consort paid their first visit to Moravia and Bohemia. In September, 1856, they travelled in the Austrian Alps where their stay is kept in remembrance until now by pictures and ballads treasured by the inhabitants of the lonely "sœterhytter," or dwellings in the high mountain pasture lands which are so completely isolated from the outer world.

From Heiligenblut,* where they passed the night at the priest's house, the Emperor and Empress ascended the Grossglockner, after hearing mass at 4 A.M. in the little chapel, and ac-

* "The loftiest village in Carinthia, derives its name from a phial of the "Holy Blood" said to have been brought from Constantinople by St. Briccius, and now preserved in the church here, an edifice of the 15th century."—*Baedeker.*

companied by a couple of the most experienced guides. Elizabeth rode part of the way, but the Emperor was on foot. About 1800 meters above the level of the sea he gathered some edelweiss in a steep declivity which he gave to his wife, observing:

"This is the first edelweiss I have ever picked." At the so-called Wallner-hütte, the Empress remained behind to rest, while Francis Joseph ascended the Glockner-Sattel,* and in memory of the ascent the Wallner-hütte was renamed "Elizabethruhe."

From here they proceeded to Styria, Marburg being their first stopping-place, and in the evening of September 11th, they arrived at Gratz, picturesquely situated and basking in a perfect sea of light. Here they were received with enthusiasm, as indeed they had been all through their travels.

On November 17th, of this same year, the Emperor and Empress started for Italy, which at that time was still under Imperial rule, and crossed in the man-of-war "Elizabeth" from Trieste to Venice. There had been some anxiety lest the strained political relations, and the opposition of the Italians to the Austrian rule should be ex-

* 2,400 meters above the sea level.

pressed in a somewhat cool reception. But the "Queen of the Adriatic," as lovely Venice has been styled, had clothed herself in her best to welcome the young Empress. The Piazza San Marco was brilliantly illuminated and fêtes and masquerades were in preparation.

Elizabeth won all hearts by her amiability and beauty, women even falling on their knees to kiss her hands, and Francis Joseph one day observed to her :

"Your charm has done more to win over these people than all my soldiers with bayonets and cannon could possibly effect."

And the welcome in Milan was so hearty, that the Emperor exclaimed :

"I have forgotten all former affronts." On the first anniversary of her birthday that Elizabeth spent in Austria, the Diet in Buda-Pesth sent a deputation to congratulate her and to beg her to visit Hungary as soon as possible, to which she replied :

"Ever since I have been connected with the Kingdom of Hungary by such dear and indissoluble bonds, I have taken the keenest interest in its welfare ; but, if it is possible, my feelings have been intensified by the hearty good wishes I have received to-day, and which have been so

enthusiastically interpreted in your speech. Accept my sincere thanks, and offer my warmest greetings to the members of your Dich, whose kind wish to see me in Hungary, will, I trust, be fulfilled at no distant date."

It will be remembered that Francis Joseph was but a youth when his uncle, the Emperor Ferdinand abdicated in his favour, December 2nd, 1848, and withdrew to Prague, where he died June 29th, 1875. "Der Blutjunge," as his enemies derisively styled the eighteen-year old sovereign over the dominions of the Habsburgs, was called upon to take the field against the revolutionary Hungarians, almost from the day of his coronation.

He was unable to quell the disturbances alone and appealed for assistance to the Tsar Nicholas I. of Russia, who placed 100,000 of his soldiers at his service, with whose help and the most drastic measures, he subdued the turbulent land. Innumerable towns, villages, and country-seats, were reduced to ashes, the land reeked with blood, and the sores of the people seemed almost incurable.

The nation submitted to its hard fate with smothered resentment, and when the Emperor visited Hungary again and again before his marriage, it was only to experience a rancorous

temper that nothing could soften, or to encounter the stubborn passive resistance of the people. This hatred was still smouldering at the time of his marriage five years later, when as we have seen he granted a general pardon to political offenders in all his dominions, and this act of lenity on his part was at last met by a conciliatory response from the other side, though the first glimmer of friendship shone upon the Queen, not upon him. It was her smile that melted the ice round the hearts of the Hungarians, her goodness and beauty which laid the first foundation of a better relation between them and the royal house.

It became known that Elizabeth had zealously occupied herself with the study of the Hungarian language, one of the most difficult in Europe, that she patronised Hungarian art, and that she was deeply interested in the manners and customs of the country generally. Besides which it was observed that the weal or woe of the Hungarians was one of the few causes for which she tried to exert the least political influence, and it is said that she shed tears on the occasion when her husband refused to accede to the wishes of the people.

The question most naturally arises as to what

could have been the reason that a princess born far away from Hungary, who in her childhood never heard a sound of its language, and never had the faintest suspicion that she would ever be connected with the country—could have become so rapidly and so warmly attached to it?

The enigma can only be psychologically solved. When she entered the Hofburg, within whose walls was now her home, she became conscious of a prevailing feeling of ill-will against the people of Hungary. Every liberal movement was an abomination to the Archduchess Sophie, the ruling spirit of the Court, as well as to the priests and statesmen who were her coadjutors. They were still under the influence of the attempt of the Hungarians to "break their bands and cast away their cords," so that the young Empress heard many a hard word and unfavourable judgment on her subjects on the other side of the Leitha.

Hers was a combative nature, and with her decided independent character, she longed to study the case for herself, to become convinced how far the Court party was right or not. In this way she quickly acquired a perfectly opposite impression to the one she was intended to have. She felt herself attracted by the open-hearted,

knightly bearing of the Hungarians, as well as by qualities in them which responded to her own. She hoped by intercourse in their own language to gain a more intimate knowledge of their character, and it was this that stimulated her to study with a seriousness and zeal that feared no difficulties, and made her not only a proficient in understanding the language, but capable of speaking it like a native, in which she far surpassed any former member of the ruling house of Habsburg.

"Queen Elizabeth spoke our tongue free from the least trace of a foreign accent," says the Hungarian author Maurus Jokai, "she pronounced it like a true countrywoman, not so affectedly as most of the ladies of our aristocracy, and the clear silvery tones of her voice still linger in my ear." Her first Hungarian master was an old Professor named Homoky, whose method was painfully wearisome; but not even this was sufficient to make her swerve from the goal she had appointed for herself.

Many years later, she enquired of a gentleman, a former pupil of Homoky's :

"Had you to write as much? I wrote till my fingers ached," she added.

Homoky had taught her grammar and made

her understand quite easy Hungarian books, but this was far from enough, she wished to improve and polish her composition, as well as gain a thorough knowledge of Hungarian literature.

Dr. Max Falk, a journalist in Vienna, was her next teacher,* and adopted quite another plan. With his help and encouragement, Elizabeth began to read the best Hungarian authors, as well as listen to his lectures on the people, in which he dwelt with emphasis on more recent times. Then he gave her real work full of interest and amusement, the translation into Hungarian of the French correspondence between Joseph II. of Austria and Catherine II. of Russia published by Arneth.

Max Falk was enthusiastic over her diligence and the almost pedantic regularity with which she fulfilled her duties as his pupil, both in and out of lesson hours. One morning she handed to him her translation into Hungarian, and observed :

" I was engaged the whole of yesterday with receptions, and in the evening there was a state concert, after which I was so tired that I went to bed. Then I suddenly remembered that I had

* Dr. Max Falk, the present editor of the " Pesther Lloyd " and a member of the Hungarian Diet, has described the time when he was teaching the Empress in his " Memoirs," which belong to the most fascinating that have been written concerning Elizabeth.

not written my Hungarian composition, so I tore a leaf out of an almanac on a table by my bedside, and translated a tale. Pardon me that it is written in pencil!"

It was not until May, 1857, that Francis Joseph was able to take the Empress to Hungary, where they had a splendid reception, and the young Queen was heartily cheered. A considerable tour in the country had been planned which had suddenly to be relinquished.

By this time there were two little girls, the Archduchesses Sophie and Gisela, and hardly had the Court been installed in the royal castle of Buda, than news was received of the illness of the elder child now two years old. Then came reassuring accounts from the physicians, but on the arrival of their Majesties at Debreczin May 28th, they found letters announcing that the child was worse. The parents hastened back to Buda-Pesth, but their little Sophie died the following evening.

Elizabeth left Hungary with tears in her eyes. One of her first heavy troubles had overtaken her during this visit to the Magyars, and it is possible that sorrow brought her still nearer to the people whom in after life she would learn to love so dearly, and who in return adored and honoured her as a mother, and a guardian angel.

CHAPTER VIII

BIRTH OF THE CROWN PRINCE RUDOLPH—WAR OF 1859

We have seen in the last chapter that the young Empress and Queen lost her eldest child during her visit to Hungary, and we have also learnt how keen were the disappointments that crushed her bright expectations when she began life in Vienna. But the fact that she hoped to become a mother encouraged her to be patient in the face of annoyances, and while the Emperor and his family hoped and longed for an heir to the throne, the Empress only craved for a child that would fill the void in her life.

On March 5th, 1855, a daughter was born and called after the Emperor's mother. From early morning the roads leading to the Imperial Castle of Laxenburg, where the Empress was staying, had been thronged with people, while the nobility, the highest officials in the civil service, and the army had assembled in the Hofburg.

The disappointment was keen when it was

announced that the child was only a daughter, scarcity prevailed in the land, and not a fête of any kind celebrated the birth and christening of the little one.

Elizabeth was too young and inexperienced to grasp the significance of the universal displeasure that she had not presented a Crown Prince to the Empire, though she was not slow to read the the vexation in the faces around her, including that of the Emperor himself.

The dissatisfaction became still more intensified on the birth of the second daughter July 12th, 1856.*

The Empress took serious views of her duties as a mother, and at that time would have wished for nothing better than to employ her time, and sacrifice herself for her children. But the Archduchess Sophie insisted on taking them away from her, on limiting her to the state rooms in the Hofburg, where the poor mother felt like a visitor, and on isolating the little ones in a side wing of the huge old castle.

Elizabeth involuntarily contrasted her lot with that of her own mother, the mistress of Possenhofen, whose full busy life was passed in work and noble

*Gisela, married in 1873 to Prince Leopold of Bavaria, the second son of the present Prince Regent.

self-denial for her children, the mere thought of which made her daughter smart under present circumstances. She was forced to lead "a butterfly life," in virtue of her exalted position to exist solely to cultivate her beauty and exhibit her finery, while her motherly instincts were only allowed expression at rare intervals when she feebly tried to play with her little ones.

The necessity of providing an heir to the throne was so frequently and so urgently pressed upon her that she became anxious and excited, and it is said, that she one day asked her mother:

"Do you think that Francis will follow Napoleon's example and annul our marriage, if I do not have a son."

"You must not worry about such things, my child, you know that Francis loves you devotedly," was the reply, but the prudent mother is said to have added: "There are two classes of women, those who obtain all that they wish for, and those whose wishes are never fulfilled. You seem to me to be one of the latter; you have excellent abilities and a noble disposition, but you are deficient in one respect: you cannot sink yourself to the level of your associates, nor accustom yourself to circumstances, you belong to another period than ours, that in which saints and martyrs

existed. Do not attract notice by being too obviously the former, nor break your own heart by fancying yourself to be the latter."*

Elizabeth longed with ever increasing fervour that she might become the mother of a son, in which case she hoped that life would shine more brightly for her than it had done in these first years of her marriage.

Her wishes were to be partly fulfilled, when a fine, though not strong boy, was born in the evening of August 21st, 1858, and the overjoyed father, dispensing with all ceremonies, placed the order of the Golden Fleece in the cradle of his son. The news was telegraphed the following morning to the utmost corners of the earth, and a salvo of 101 guns reverberated from every fortress in Austria and Hungary. The event was hailed with joy by millions of inhabitants and the churches of the vast Empire became thronged with worshippers to pray for the safety of mother and child.

The Emperor drove about the capital with almost dangerous rapidity, and was greeted with hearty cheering at every turn. A perfect sea of light shone around in honour of the new-born

* The above quotation and a few details in Chapter XIV. are taken from "The Martyrdom of an Empress."

baby transparencies with glowing words of homage to the Imperial couple and their child were placed in every available spot, and the National Hymn, to which the following verse had been added, was vociferously sung :—

"An des Kaisers Seite waltet
Shm verwandt durch Stamm und Sinn,
Reich an Reiz, der nie veraltet,
Unsere holde Kaiserin.
Was das Glück zuhöchst gepriesen,
Ström' auf sie der Himmel aus !
Heil Franz Joseph, Heil Elisen,
Segen Habsburgs ganzem Haus !"

(Crowned at our gracious Kaiser's side,
His consort shares the throne,
Rich in unfading charms; one race,
One will, one heart they own.
Hail to our gracious Emperor then !
Hail to his royal bride !
All blessings to the lordly house
Of Habsburg's line betide).

The universal enthusiasm rose still higher when the Crown Prince was baptized by the name of the great founder of the house of Austria, Rudolph von Habsburg.*

On receiving the congratulations of the different

* Hapsburg, Habsburg or Habichtsburg, was an ancient castle on a lofty eminence near Brugg, Aargau, Switzerland. Rudolph, Count of Habsburg, became Archduke of Austria and Emperor of Germany, 1273.

municipal bodies of Vienna, the Emperor replied:

"Heaven has sent me a son who will one day see a new, larger and more beautiful city. But whatever changes there may be in the capital, the Prince will always find the old loyal hearts, who, if it should ever prove necessary, will devote themselves to his cause, under all circumstances."

In the character of the historical Muse, the celebrated actress of the Hofburg Theatre, Frau Rettich, declaimed an adulatory prologue from the stage on the evening of August 22nd, composed by Friedrich Halm,* and beginning:

"Hier steht das Jahr, der Tag hier eingegraben,
Der Rest der Tafel aber bleibe leer,
Denn ich muss Raum für seine Thaten haben;
Und Grosses, ahn 'ich, schreib' ich noch hieher. . . "

(The day and the year of his birth are writ,
The rest of the page stands white;
For I must have space his deeds to tell,
And I feel and I know in my heart right well
Their tale will indeed be bright.)

Famous and minor poets all foretold the greatness and glory of this new scion of the house of Habsburg in stirring verse, but one only struck a serious note in the jubilant chorus of song. This

* Born in Cracow 1806, and at this date (1858) Custodian of the Imperial Library in Vienna.

was Ludwig Anzengruber, who afterwards became famous, and ventured to hope that the child might never experience how painfully heavy a crown can be.

For a moment Rudolph's mother was popular, her enemies were silenced, her mother-in-law was satisfied, and she herself was happy, though she observed:

"Nobody seems to have wanted me hitherto, not even my little girl, who is kept away from me. But I will never allow my boy to leave me, to grow up among strangers; he must cling to me, and we will make each other happy."

Again she was mistaken. Rudolph was at once dismissed to the nursery in that far distant wing of the castle, and it was in vain that his mother appealed against the arrangement. Her mother-in-law was in authority, and the imperious Archduchess would not allow that the heir to one of the most powerful states of Europe should be brought up by the young Empress who, according to her opinion, did not even know how to conduct herself.

When Elizabeth entreated for permission to undertake her maternal duties, and added what a comfort it would be to have the child under her own protection, the Archduchess became angry,

maintained that she had every reason to be perfectly happy, and would not admit that she had any need of comfort.

The mother-in-law was *apparently* right, for to the ignorant eye, Elizabeth had gained by her marriage all that the world had to offer. But hers was no superficial nature, and material splendour was no compensation for disappointed hopes, or the void of her own heart.

Her position became still more painful when the Emperor's brother, Ferdinand Maximilian, in the summer of 1857 married Charlotte, the ambitious daughter of the King of the Belgians, who immediately attached herself to the court party, which was opposed to the Empress. She became a great favourite with the Archduchess, and the fact that she herself had no children, increased her jealousy of her sister-in-law.

In the meantime, dark clouds were forming on the political horizon, discontent was seething among the Italian subjects of the Emperor, and a general spirit of dissatisfaction with the government was apparent in every part of the Habsburg dominions.

It was no secret that the threads of home and foreign policy were in the powerful hands of the Archduchess, and the Austrians did not scruple

to affirm that it was she who declared war or made peace.*

This power naturally provoked resistance in many circles, and the army and civil service united with the citizens in expressing their strong disapprobation of this "petticoat government."

When the war broke out between France and Sardinia in 1859, the indisputable interests of the Empire and its dependencies were of far inferior importance to Sophie than the maintenance of the power of the Jesuits. Elizabeth saw clearly the fatal error her husband was making in allowing himself to be ruled even in political matters by his mother, and she had a feverish longing to come forward and interfere, but she was utterly powerless. Her counsel was never asked, it was not even wished that she should have an opinion, much less express one.

While Francis Joseph was fighting at Solferino, and his mother was writing letters to the Courts of Europe, or holding lengthy conferences with statesmen and diplomatists, the Empress had to limit her activity by visiting the sick and wounded officers, and men from the battle-fields of Italy. She went like an angel of mercy from one hospital to another, from one bed to another, enquiring

* Bernhardi's Memoirs.

about the food, distributing both money and cigars, and speaking many an encouraging word that "fell upon good ground," because it came unmistakably from the heart, and was free from the current cant of the day.

The hypocrisy which clothed so many of the actions of the Archduchess Sophie was intensely objectionable to Elizabeth, who did not disguise her displeasure at the superior influence of the clerical party.

It happened once that the Papal Nuncio was standing near her on the occasion of a Court ball, when his feet became entangled in her long train, which the Empress wrenched away with a wrathful glance, accompanied by such force that the unfortunate messenger from the Holy Father was nearly thrown to the ground.

The scene caused amusement in those circles that were convinced that she would with equal pleasure have thrown him down in the ball-room, as crushed his influence in the castle.

CHAPTER IX

CONJUGAL DIFFERENCES—ELIZABETH'S ILL-HEALTH—HER STAY IN MADEIRA

AFFAIRS of State, the pleasures of the chase, the allurements of society, as well as his tendency to revert to the gay life of his bachelor days, surely tended to deepen the gulf that already existed between the young couple.

Francis Joseph was of an amiable character, but he had many weak points, and on a closer acquaintance, he certainly did not come up to the ideal which Elizabeth had formed of him.

She was too proud either to coax, to flatter, or to fight for the possession of his affection. On the other hand, her growing disinclination to frequent the society of the Court drove her husband to leave her again and again; he became wearied of her silence and reserve which operated as a perpetual reproach to him. When she did appear in the full splendour of her dignified womanhood, her expressive eyes had a look of distrust and scorn, so that her former bright open countenance

began to show features that were sharp and haggard. But she was persecuted unmercifully by her enemies at the Court, who spied upon her and watched for the veriest trifle that might be turned to her disadvantage, and retailed to her husband, who simply neglected her the more. Elizabeth had married in ignorance, and from the first had never requited the passionate devotion of the Emperor. She had been brought up in the strictest principles of virtue and morality, and also as a child had witnessed the happy union of her parents, so that she naturally counted on the love of her husband to create her own life-long bliss. Her lonely position in Vienna in the midst of hostile elements had given her a longing to be doubly near to him, but reality had dispelled every illusion. It was not that she had lost her influence over him, and possibly not that she was afraid of having forfeited his love, but she felt crushed, because she had no confidence in him.

The proud daughter of the Wittelsbachs looked upon pity as the worst of insults, an alms that branded her as a beggar, and she hid her disappointment as closely as possible from the eyes of men, to lead an inner life of bitter self-consciousness, opposed to the world around that found its pleasure in her torment.

The levity that prevailed at the Court could not tolerate perfect virtue, and sought for some blot in the irreproachable life of their Empress.

Small wonder that her health began to suffer, though she struggled courageously against physical weakness.

Some little time after the birth of the Crown Prince, she became ill of a sickness that puzzled her physicians, who, after many consultations, finally agreed that her lungs were affected. She was enjoined to take the greatest care to maintain what strength she had, and the injunctions not unnaturally increased her depression. She grew more ailing from day to day, from month to month, when it was suggested that she should try a visit to Madeira, which at that time was considered the best resort for consumptive patients. But in spite of the ravages of some disease that was aging her countenance and attenuating her frame, she persisted in her aversion to undertake the voyage until early in 1861.

It was a sad departure and there were many who doubted that she would reach the island alive, while she herself possibly least of all, expected restoration to health; but she accepted

her lot with a patience that inspired her suite with respect, not unmixed with pain.

Europe was then enveloped in fog and frost, but when she reached Madeira after a week's voyage, she was met by summer, tropical vegetation, brilliant sunshine, and a clear blue sky.

Her residence was charmingly situated, surrounded by a wide verandah, and containing spacious apartments for herself, connected with wide folding-doors and handsomely furnished; but the rooms occupied by her ladies and gentlemen were poor.

Immediately behind the house was a chain of mountains with heights from 4-5000 feet, and from the entrance a path led through the grounds to a broad terrace overlooking the sea. Early in March the whole island was a beautiful flower-garden, the cutting of the sugar-canes was just beginning, and the Empress enjoyed almost daily excursions in the balmy spring weather.

The sickness which had pressed so hard upon her was a deliverer. It had freed her from the crushing life of the Court, and the long solitude in Madeira was to strengthen her in patience and prepare her for the heavy trials which

Providence had in store, while during her wanderings by the sea she had both time and calm in which to contemplate her position in Vienna and the conflicts of her youth. She thought of all those in Bavaria whom she had left, and the recollection of the peaceful castle of her home, of the adventures and romances she had heard on her father's knee appeared vividly before her. She wrote daily letters to her husband, her parents or her brothers and sisters; and Helene, who in the mean time had married the Prince of Thurn and Taxis, visited her on the island.

Few vessels touched at Madeira then, and life was very monotonous. It was happy for Elizabeth that she had always been an admirer of nature, and now it became doubly dear to her. She rose early and studied languages or cultivated her musical talent, though this was far from sufficient to satisfy her activity, and it was during this sojourn that she first experienced the new rich pleasure of poetry, which became a solace to her in pain or loneliness. Her books were her friends with whom she conversed in her many solitary hours, they soothed the tumultuous longings of her heart and raised her above the pettinesses of life.

In the mean time Vienna was awaiting the news of the Empress's death, but heard instead that her fits of coughing were becoming less frequent and less acute, till eventually the message arrived that the mild genial climate had brought about such a wonderful improvement in her general health, that after an absence of four months she was returning home.

On the voyage she was overtaken by a violent storm, when her vessel—Queen Victoria's yacht, "Victoria and Albert"—was tossed like a nutshell on the foaming sea. The Empress remained on deck nearly the whole time, although the towering waves broke over her, and threatened to engulf her. It was in vain that the Master of her Household entreated her to take refuge in her cabin, she even insisted on being lashed to the mast in order to contemplate the fearful storm in all its magnificence.

May 8th she landed at Trieste, where the Emperor and his suite had arrived the preceding evening to receive her. Early in the morning they embarked on the Imperial yacht "Fantasia," accompanied by fine gaily decked steamers with the aristocracy of Trieste and bands of music on board. The vessels met outside "Porte Rose," and Francis Joseph joined his wife on

the "Victoria and Albert," when, about 10 o'clock the first gun from the citadel announced the near approach of the little flotilla to the landing-place, for the handsome and sumptuously furnished château of Miramare, formerly the property of Maximilian, afterwards Emperor of Mexico, where the official reception was to take place.

A celebrated painting depicts the moment when the youthful, happy Archduchess Charlotte embraced the beautiful Empress on the grand marble steps that lead down to the sea.

It was in Baden, about sixteen miles from Vienna that Elizabeth saw her mother-in-law and the children, and five days later the Imperial pair arrived at the capital where the railway station was gaily decorated with flowers, while the road to the Hofburg was crowded, and the Empress bowed repeatedly from her open carriage.

The sincere thankfulness of the people for her recovery was shewn in their hearty reception, as well as during the thanksgiving services that were held the following day.

CHAPTER X

IN CORFU—RETURN HOME—FLIGHT FROM VIENNA—THE EMPRESS DURING THE WAR OF 1866

THE long stay in Madeira had not brought the permanent improvement that was expected, and the Empress had not been many weeks in Austria before her cough returned, and she again felt weak and ill. It was feared that the physician had mistaken the nature of her malady, and in order to allay her alarm, it was decided that she should consult her parents' doctor, the same who had attended her in her childhood, and he discovered that she was not suffering from consumption, but from a serious internal complaint. Both physicians agreed that she must leave home again as quickly as possible, not for the distant island of Madeira, but for the nearer one of Corfu, which she reached after a voyage of three days, just a month after her return.

It was confidently affirmed in Vienna that it was impossible for her to recover, and that moreover her days on earth were already numbered.

The residence assigned to her, surrounded by a park and garden, lay about half an hour's walk from Corfu the capital. Every precaution was taken to ensure perfect quiet for the invalid, even the morning and evening firing of the cannon from the fort being discontinued.

She became attached to the island and it was soon apparent that the climate was far more favourable to her condition than that of Madeira, while she speedily felt an improvement in her health.

Not far from the house she occupied lies the hill Aya Kyriahi, on the summit of which is a tiny lonely chapel surrounded by a cypress grove, to which Elizabeth climbed every morning before sunrise, and many years afterwards, on her visits to the island, she never failed to return to the spot.

"I love it," she used to say, "I could renounce all desire to travel farther and remain here for ever."

Her sister Helene of Thurn and Taxis joined her and remained the whole time, while the Emperor went several times to see her. After a couple of months, the good news arrived from the physician who had accompanied her that the cure was nearly completed, and towards the

close of October, the Empress left for Venice where she intended to hold her court during the winter. We have already seen how she captivated all hearts on the occasion of her first visit to the city, and in spite of political tension, which had not diminished of late years, she fully experienced all her former pleasure in the love and sympathy of the people. After a stay in this transition climate, she visited Ischl and Kissingen, in order to gain further strength.

A still more festive reception was prepared for her than on her return to Trieste from Madeira, on the occasion of her entry into Vienna in 1862, when the whole capital was illuminated, and "God preserve the mother of our country," "Welcome Elizabeth," and similar greetings appeared at every turn. The choral societies united to do her homage, and 16,000 torches waved before her, while the burgomaster Zelinka, expressed the joy and delight of the Viennese on her return in a fervid speech, to which the Empress replied:

"In close harmony with my own pleasure in being once again in Vienna is my gratitude for the magnificent welcome prepared for me. Vienna and Austria are if possible, still dearer to me as I realise the sympathy which my

Imperial consort and I have met with in so many touching forms from every quarter of our dominions during my protracted illness. I beg you to express my thanks to all who have taken part in this reception. I trust that the happiness I feel in being again in your midst may continue unalloyed by any cloud."

The reception had been nearly as jubilant as that accorded to the Empress as a bride, the sympathy more touching.

Was there perhaps a presentiment of some evil which induced her, when speaking, to express the hope that her stay in Vienna might not be interrupted, and that her happiness might not be clouded? It is a fact that her residence there was again but of short duration, for unexpectedly, without communicating her intention to anybody, she left the capital after a few weeks' stay. It must have been that, in spite of their cordial meeting, former disputes and difficulties had again arisen between husband and wife. The Emperor followed her to try and bring about a reconciliation, but Elizabeth pursued her journey, and did her utmost to avoid him, so that, weary and despondent, he had to return.

It was just because her theories about love were stronger and deeper than most, that

Elizabeth suffered more than the majority under her disappointment; if her feelings had not been so acute, her pride so intense, she would never have been so utterly crushed. But as an additional cause for her leaving home, we may venture to assume that she had again encountered opposition from her mother-in-law and the Court, as well as experienced deep pain on finding that the Archduchess had utilised her absence to estrange the children still further from their mother.

Months went by and still she did not return. There was pity for the Emperor, but many began to take the part of his young, inexperienced wife, and when the Archduchess Sophie spoke disparagingly of her daughter-in-law, several were of opinion that Elizabeth might never have gone if her mother-in-law had not increased her difficulties, and plotted how to prejudice and annoy her.

The estrangement between husband and wife lasted for years, until after repeated requests from the Austrian Court, as well as from her own family, Elizabeth allowed herself to visit Vienna now and again, though only to return to some foreign home, immediately after she had fulfilled the most urgent representative duties.

The oppression of a Court was more hateful

than ever to her, after having experienced the freedom and pleasures of a life of travel. She had become interested in foreign nations, their language, manners, and customs, and distant journeys grew to be more and more a necessity as well as an enjoyment to her.

The situation at last became almost unbearable to the Emperor, and in addition, the health of the Crown Prince gave cause for anxiety. He was advised to make peace with the mother of his children, and he at last saw that he must do so.

It was no easy matter to move Elizabeth, but one of the few people who in any degree could influence her was her mother, for whom she had the highest respect, and on her representations, it at last became clear to her that it was an imperative duty to return to her children. Time, too, had softened her bitter resentment, and a feeling of loneliness on both sides created a longing for some sort of reconciliation, though it is probable that it might still have been delayed, if outward circumstances had not contributed their influence.

Austria was passing through a serious crisis, and in June, 1866, war was declared by Italy and Prussia. The old hereditary enemy from the days of Maria Theresa was again victorious in the

States of the Empire, and the Habsburgs were expelled from Italy. These were the events that roused the energy of the Empress, and the singular wearied indifference about home affairs which had hung over her like a cloud the last few years gave way to compassion for the Emperor and his land. She returned home fully convinced that her true place was in the midst of the people, by the side of her husband.

She was still only in the twenties, but her youth was past; she had left home with despair gnawing at her heart, but had come back a strong-minded woman, with fully developed powers.

Her place at Court had no attractions for her, but she devoted herself to unwearied work in the hospitals, where she earned the name of "the Angel of the wounded," and only once, at the time of Rudolph's death, was her character more admired than at this period.

She visited every military hospital, and inspired the wounded soldiers with fresh hope and courage, speaking to them in their mother tongue, enquiring about their relations and personal circumstances, proving herself ever ready to carry out their wishes, when practicable.

A soldier named Joseph Feher, the son of an old blind gipsy woman from Topio-Szelo, had re-

refused to allow his arm to be amputated, but the Empress entreated him so earnestly to submit that he at last consented, when she wrote to his mother, sent her money, and promised to have her son taken to the Imperial Castle at Laxenburg, as well as provided for in the future.

Another day she went up to a soldier whose head had been so severely crushed that the doctor had given up all hope of saving him. She seated herself by his bedside and asked if he had any wishes that she could carry out, to which he replied with failing breath :

"I have had the happiness to see my Empress by my death-bed, and there is nothing else to wish for in this world ; now I am content to die."

It was she who distributed the Imperial gifts to the wounded, when even the weakest tried to raise themselves and stretch out their hands to-towards her, as she entered the wards, while on leaving, it was touching to hear, "God bless Elizabeth !" echoed with deep emotion from these wounded men.

CHAPTER XI

ELIZABETH AND POLITICS—CORONATION IN HUNGARY

SILENTLY the Empress resumed her position at the Austrian Court, and the heavy days of adversity that were at hand gradually taught her husband the value of her presence. The plans of the Archduchess Sophie had once again proved fatal to the house of Habsburg, and the eyes of the Emperor were at length opened to the fact that her influence had been baneful for his realm, as well as for his family life.

Elizabeth became her husband's friend, and in the later years of their married life, he consulted her on many points of political importance, while there is no doubt that she would have materially assisted him by her advice, if he would have allowed it.

But she had no desire to take any part in politics, and had in abhorrence the underhand paths to which they lead so easily. On the rare occasions in which she came forward from her voluntary

retirement, it was always in the cause of peace. "I have too little interest in politics and consider them of no paramount importance," she used to say. "Politicians think that it is they who guide events, but on the contrary, they themselves become overwhelmed by the current of circumstances. Each ministry totters to its fall from the moment of its creation, and all that diplomacy can do is to wrest in turn some advantage from the other side. Whatever happens is of necessity, because the time is come." *

But although she did not care to guide the threads of policy, on the other hand she kept herself perfectly informed of all that was going on.

It is characteristic that she read with the keenest interest pamphlets that blamed the Emperor's policy, and also expressed her admiration for books the sale of which was prohibited all over the Empire. †

But when one political subject was under discussion, she frequently threw her influence into the scale, and this was the weal or woe of

* The above and several following remarks made by the Empress are taken from the diary of her Greek teacher, Dr. Christomanos.

† Among these may be cited: "Der Zerfall Oesterreichs," and Horváth's: "Ungarns Unabhängigkeitskrieg."

Hungary, to which she felt herself so deeply attached.

It was counted as one of her virtues in Austria, that she so rarely identified herself with politics, while the Hungarians appreciated the efforts of their Queen to speak forcibly when their affairs were under consideration.

With reference to the sanguinary events in Hungary, 1849, she observed to the historian Michael Horvath, to whom she granted an audience immediately after his return from his exile of many years :

"Believe me! If it were in the power of my husband and myself, we would be the first to recall to life all those who were condemned and killed at that unhappy time."

When Austria, in consequence of the events of 1866, was on the point of losing Italy, she observed to Count Julius Andrássy :

"When things are not straight with Italy, I am sorry, but if misfortune were to happen in Hungary, it would kill me."

Wherever she might be she felt herself Queen of Hungary, and during a summer residence at the watering-place Gastein in Salzburg, she and a lady-in-waiting made an excursion to a hill in the neighbourhood, on the summit of which is a

hut, into which they entered and found lying on a table a visitor's book. The lady wrote "Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, " but when her Majesty had seen it, she took the pen and wrote underneath : " Erzsébet, Magyar Kyralynö " (Elizabeth, Hungarian Queen).

This mutual attachment between the Queen and the Hungarians proved a real support to the throne.

During the war of 1866 the Prussians threatened to march on Vienna, when it was decided that Elizabeth and the little Crown Prince would find their surest place of refuge in Buda-Pesth. They went and were met at the frontier by Franz Déak, Andrássy, and other eminent men, who assured the Queen of the courteous protection of the Hungarians. The capital welcomed her with cheers, and the scene was near becoming a repetition of the historical Maria Theresa episode.

It is an undoubted fact that the devotion of the people to their Queen was a very strong factor in furthering the reconciliation between Austria and Hungary. brought about by the efforts of Count Beust in 1867.

There is no documentary evidence to prove that her influence helped to smooth differences, but the Hungarians were fully appreciative of her kindly interference.

Rumours of the long continued misunderstanding between the Emperor and his consort had reached their ears, and on the occasion of his visit to Buda-Pesth in 1865, Franz Déak said to the King: "As peace and goodwill are to reign in your States, may your Majesty seek and obtain reconciliation in the midst of your own family."

The following day Francis Joseph sent a telegram to the Empress to announce the hearty welcome he had received at Buda-Pesth, and it was an additional attention to his wife that the Diet, which recognised the new relation between his two States, was summoned for St. Elizabeth's Day, November 14th, 1865. The enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds, especially when Elizabeth with her own hands repaired the cloak * of St. Stephen † and embroidered the colours for the first militia battalions.

Even her enemies have recognised that she

* "In the library of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Martinsberg, on a spur of the Bakonyer Wald, is preserved the cloak of St. Stephen (died 1028). It is made of a material resembling crape, adorned with drawings and bearing a long Latin inscription." *Baedeker.*

† "St. Stephen, Duke of Hungary, established the Roman Catholic religion and received from the Pope the title of Apostolic King, still borne by the Emperor of Austria as King of Hungary." *Haydn's Dictionary of Dates.*

was perfectly free from coquetry, although she exercised an involuntary charm on every man with whom she came in contact, and it was but natural that she should feel proud of the admiring devotion accorded to her by the magnates of Hungary, the descendants of the eminent men who had befriended their Queen Maria Theresa.

Francis Joseph had not been crowned in Hungary, and as the people desired that the ceremony should take place, their wish was fulfilled in the summer of 1867.* It was the first time in their history that a Queen had been crowned with a King, and the expression of their desire that this should be the case was a signal proof of their respect and devotion for the Empress.

A deputation had been sent to Vienna many months previously to treat with the Emperor on the subject, and from him they went immediately to Elizabeth to beg her to allow her Hungarian subjects to do homage to their Queen in the same manner.

"I will joyfully fulfil the wish expressed by the

* "The coronation at Buda may be looked upon as an event of European importance. It implies a reconciliation not only of Magyars with the Empire, but of all Hungary with all Austria, of all Austria with all Germany."—*Times.*

people," she replied. "It coincides with the desire of my own heart, and I thank God who has permitted me to live to see this auspicious moment. Convey my hearty thanks and greetings to your people."

Presburg had been the old coronation city of Hungary, but since 1848 Buda-Pesth had been chosen as the seat of the Diet, and was now for the first time to witness a coronation within its own walls.

The situation is one of the most beautiful in Europe, and the fortress, with the handsome royal castle stands on the summit of a lofty hill, around which the city of Buda is built. On the left side of the Danube is the perfectly flat city of Pesth, beyond which are interminable stretches of heathland. Both cities were in holiday garb on the arrival of the royal pair, when weapons, symbols, pictures, flags and streamers were to be seen, wherever the eye rested, and the tower of the Town Hall of Pesth was surmounted by a gigantic St. Stephen's crown.

The ceremony was to take place in the Cathedral, which had been decorated for the occasion in a truly princely style, which the King and Queen inspected the previous evening, and during their drive, the people who had assembled

in crowds, cheered them with enthusiasm which seemed to know no end.

As they were leaving the Cathedral, an old man fell down from some steps on to which he had climbed in order, for once in his life, to catch a glimpse of the "Good Queen of Hungary," for which he had travelled from a remote corner of the country. Elizabeth saw him fall, hastened to him, raised him, and enquired with solicitude if he was much hurt. When it became known that she had personally helped the old man the shouts rose to a perfect storm of:

"Eljen Erzsébet!"

The city and environs were thronged with Magyars from the extensive Bakonyer Forest, Swabians from the mountainous districts to the west, Slovaks from northern Hungary, south-east of Moravia, Servians and Croats from the southern provinces, and Germans from Transylvania. 60,000 soldiers lined the streets from the railway station to the royal Castle, a distance of six kilometers (about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles).

The coronation took place June 8th, 1867, and presented a scene of Oriental splendour, which was alluded to by the statesmen and journalists who had arrived from England, France and America, as the most picturesque and magnificent

sight that had been witnessed in any country for ages.

The effect was striking when the King and Queen with their suite reached the suspension bridge from the Castle at Buda and proceeded to cross the Danube. Francis Joseph, wearing his coronation mantle and crown, rode a magnificent grey horse, and had perhaps never looked more stately and commanding. But the impression made by the majestic, beautiful appearance of Elizabeth is still less likely ever to be forgotten. All eyes were directed towards her as she approached in the grand old coronation coach drawn by eight Spanish greys whose flowing manes and tails were plaited with a gold cord.

The coach was gilt and a huge crown rested

* "We almost see the pale and careworn look of the Imperial and Royal candidate, as faint with his "thirty hours' fast," he kneels at Mass in the old parish Church of Buda; we almost feel the "three to four pounds' weight" of the holy and precious diadem which must press his brow during the whole of a ten hours' solemnity; we interpret the deep colour mantling the lovely countenance of the Empress, as her neck and shoulder are bared to allow of her being anointed, not on the forehead, like the King, but according to inexorable prescription, "under the right armpit;" and we hear the roar of the ordinance, the peal of the bells, the clatter of the splendid cavalcade, in which one of the magnates is to appear in a complete suit of solid silver plate armour; another is to wear jewelry on his coat to the amount of £6,500, while the mere caparisons on the charger of a third are valued at £8,000." *Times.*

on the dome-shaped roof, while the immense plate glass windows made it easy to catch sight of her Majesty on all sides. She was still only in her thirtieth year, and was considered the loveliest princess in the whole civilised world.

Cheers and deafening shouts of "Hail!" greeted her the whole distance, the cannon thundered, and young girls in white strewed flowers before her. She responded to the vivas with hearty greetings, with the friendly kindling of her deep sapphire blue eyes, and with the winsome smile which at that time was renowned all over Europe.

The Queen's coach was followed by an escort of 200 of the youngest and most aristocratic among the magnates of Hungary, wearing gorgeous uniforms, brilliant with gold embroidery and precious stones, and a tiger skin thrown over the left shoulder.

The King and his suite had already taken their places when the Queen entered the Cathedral, wearing a robe of white silk brocade with a black velvet bodice sparkling with brilliants, and a Hungarian diamond ornament round her neck. Her coronation mantle was of black velvet lined with white satin, and she wore the coronet of the Habsburgs, originally provided for Maria

Theresa, valued at three million gulden, and literally one mass of pearls and diamonds.

During the coronation of the King, she sat with folded hands, evidently in deep meditation, and as soon as the ceremony was ended, the Steward of the Household removed the coronet from her head, while the King called upon the Primate of Hungary to crown the Queen, and then returned to his throne. Elizabeth knelt on the lowest step before the high altar, and kissed the cross that was presented to her, during which the Prime Minister had removed St. Stephen's Crown from the King's head, and placed it upon the altar.

The Queen was anointed on her arm and shoulder, and then conducted by the Steward of the Household, the Bishops and the ladies of her suite into the sacristy to remove all traces of the anointing oil.

The Primate of Hungary awaited her at the altar, when she again knelt before him, and he replaced the coronet on her head, while the Prime Minister lifted the heavy Hungarian regal crown from the altar and handed it to the Primate, who placed it on the Queen's shoulder and held it while he recited a prayer; after which he removed it and returned it to the Prime Minister,

who, with the assistance of the Steward of the Household, finally placed it on the head of the King. Meanwhile the Primate gave the sceptre into the right, and the orb into the left hand of the Queen, and conducted her back to the throne, where she resumed her place by the side of his Majesty. It was at this moment that the first strains of the Te Deum burst forth from the vast multitude and rolled in majestic solemnity through the vaults of the old Cathedral, the cannon thundered forth again, and every bell of Hungary sent forth a joyous peal. Medals were struck to commemorate the event, with a likeness of Francis Joseph on one side and of Elizabeth on the other, with the words round her portrait: "May the star of happiness ever shine over her."

According to ancient Hungarian usage, the King and Queen received a coronation gift of 50,000 ducats, which were placed in two caskets of valuable wrought silver. Francis Joseph's was embossed with figures representing the most renowned Hungarian kings of all ages. The Queen's was of the same size and form, but decorated with silver statuettes of St. Elizabeth, and the Queens Adelaide, Marie, and Maria Theresa. Two angels on the lid held a regal crown.

The royal pair presented their gift to found an institution for the widows and children of those who had fallen in 1848-9 while fighting against Francis Joseph, and the perfect reconciliation that existed between the people and their ruler is proved by the circumstance that Julius Andrássy, who had been sentenced to death as a rebel in 1849, was the present Prime Minister with the title of Count. As Elizabeth was leaving Buda-Pesth after the coronation, she remarked to one of the Hungarian gentleman of her suite :

"I am already looking forward to the time when I can come to stay with you again."

The saying was repeated, and rapidly spread among the people, to the still further increase of her popularity.

The solemnities in connection with the coronation, the magnificent festivities and the extraordinary enthusiasm and devotion which accompanied her every step in Hungary, made such a deep impression upon the Empress that even in after life she could never speak of those days without emotion, and always cherished the memory of them among the brightest of her whole life.

CHAPTER XII

THE EMPRESS AS MOTHER—THE ARCHDUCHESS MARIE VALERIE

THE years that immediately followed the coronation were undoubtedly among the happiest in the life of the Empress Elizabeth. She watched with carefulness over every detail that affected her children, became kind and considerate towards the members of her Court, as well as the servants of the household, friendly towards the people, and above all full of interest and sympathy in the troubles and anxieties of her husband.

Her position was radically changed, and life was easier to bear, not only because she herself had matured and was no longer a girl, but also because the power of the Archduchess Sophie was crushed.

Contrary to the wishes of Francis Joseph, and influenced mainly by his ambitious consort, the Emperor's brother Maximilian, Archduke of

Austria, accepted the unstable crown of Mexico in 1864, to be sentenced and shot at Queretaro by his own subjects June 19th, 1867. His wife lost her reason, and the tragic event acted painfully on the physical and mental health of his mother.* It therefore became Elizabeth's sad duty to comfort her husband in his sorrow at his brother's fate, as well as to support and help her imbecile mother-in-law and her sister-in-law, who had irrecoverably sunk into the gloom of complete madness.†

The year following the coronation in Hungary, and ten years after the birth of the Crown Prince, a little girl was born, the Archduchess Marie

* She died May 28th, 1872.

† "Señor Porfirio Diaz, the President of the Mexican Republic, has invited Prince Khevenhüller-Metsch, with whom he is acquainted, and who served under the Emperor Maximilian in Mexico, to attend the opening of a memorial chapel, erected by the munificence of an Austrian subject in that Republic at the spot at Queretaro, where the Emperor was shot on June 19, 1867. The Prince, who is a Privy Councillor, had to obtain permission from the Emperor Francis Joseph to accept the invitation. His Majesty has not only accorded it, but is sending through Prince Khevenhüller an altar picture for the chapel.

Relations between Mexico and Austria were naturally suspended after the tragedy of Queretaro, but the first step towards reconciliation has now been made. Most probably the initiative came from the Mexican side, and I should not be surprised were it to lead to a resumption of diplomatic relations. The Prince will be accompanied by his nephew, Prince Charles Eugen of Fürstenberg." —*Standard, Feb., 1901.*

Valerie, in the royal castle at Buda, April 22nd, 1868.

The joyful event was announced to the populace by the firing of cannon from every fortress at six o'clock in the morning. It was the first time for a century that a royal child had been born in Hungary, and the delight of the Magyars was unbounded. As night approached, the whole city was illuminated, and crowds filled the streets, hundreds of them on their way to the castle to send up a ceaseless cheer and "eljen" for the King, for the new-born Princess, but especially for the Queen.

Valerie was the youngest and most cherished of Elizabeth's children, not that she did not love Gisela and Rudolph, but her mother-in-law, aided by governesses and tutors, had alienated them from her, and she had not been serious enough in her efforts to have them with her. Her maternal devotion had been lacking in the firmness and quiet self-sacrifice that would have commanded respect for her rights as a mother, and this had led her to relinquish all, and forsake her children.

But this time her motherly love was there in all its intensity, and the recollection of past sorrow was obliterated by the unspeakable tenderness she felt for the fragile little being that nestled in

her arms, and from the moment of the child's birth she resolved to superintend her bringing up and development herself.

The Hungarian author, Maurus Jókai relates the following incident :—

"In 1869 the Queen most kindly allowed me to dedicate one of my novels to her, and as the Royal Court was at that time in Buda, I was able to present a copy to her in person, and to enjoy a long detailed conversation on the literature of Hungary. As I was on the point of leaving, she said: 'Wait a moment! I will show you my daughter.'

She opened a side door and signed to a nurse, who brought the child into the room. The Queen took the little one in her arms and pressed her to her heart; I shall never forget the pretty sight."

Marie Valerie was very delicate as a child, and her mother was the first by her bedside in the morning, even after listening at the door more than once in the night to ascertain if she was asleep; and if the little one was ill her mother refused to leave her, and could with difficulty be persuaded to take needful rest."

She recognised with contrition that in consequence of the disagreement with her husband, she

had neglected her children, and she was resolved to atone for her mistake as far as possible. She never entirely gained the affection of her elder daughter Gisela, and the early marriage of the Archduchess kept mother and daughter still further apart.

Then Rudolph had been absent from her so long that it was an effort for him to conquer his shyness and embarrassment in the presence of his mother, though by degrees he overcame his reserve and grew exceedingly fond of her.

The Crown Prince was an attractive child, and by the time he was ten years old, he was already the darling of the Court and the Viennese. But, under his grandmother's influence, he had developed obstinacy, vanity, and pride, faults that were a source of great grief to his mother, who strenuously set herself to eradicate these consequences of the obsequiousness and servile flattery with which his surroundings had gratified his caprices ; and as he was warm-hearted and frankly acknowledged his failings, she was encouraged in her efforts. Whenever it was possible, she was present during the children's lessons, and if she was hindered from attending, she asked the teachers and their pupils to explain to her what she had missed. She repeatedly urged upon

all who were concerned in the education of her children not to allow them to be spoilt, while she herself was careful that all their instructions were carried out; she never failed to express her appreciation of the teachers' work, and to encourage her children to become attached to them.

She taught her daughters to dance, and the first real figure that little Valerie learnt was a Hungarian "czardas." In fact, she took pains to instil in both Rudolph and Valerie her own ardent feelings for Hungary, and it is significant that she remarked to one of their teachers:

"Make my children as little German as possible!"

On Easter Sunday, 1872, she sent for Bishop Ronay, in order to consult with him about the education of Marie Valerie, and among other remarks, she said:

"I do not wish to entrust my child to the care of many. I want her to have but one teacher, but that one I should prefer to be *you*. Later on, she shall have German, English and French, ladies about her, but you alone must undertake her education. Let us fix upon the Hungarian language as the medium of instruction, especially for religious knowledge. I pray with my children each day in Hungarian, and you need not teach

them to be orthodox, but rather to be religious; we all need the comfort of faith in our daily lives."

Christmas Eve was the first of festivals in the Imperial family, being the birthday of the Empress, as well as the beginning of a sacred season.

Two Christmas trees were placed in Elizabeth's own drawing-room, and the smaller one for the children, was decorated entirely by her own hands. It entailed severe mental strain to find suitable gifts for her husband and children, as well as for the Imperial household, for she always tried to gratify the special wishes of those about her.

One day shortly before Christmas, Marie Valerie went to her mother with a pleading look, and begged that a party of poor children might have a Christmas tree at the Castle, and that it should be her parents' present to herself. The Empress was much touched by her request, and from that day for many years, she always dressed an extra tree with gifts for poor little ones.

Elizabeth was devoted to flowers, and never returned empty-handed from a country walk; even when riding, she would alight to gather field flowers, which she fastened to the pommel of her

saddle. She inspected the freshly filled vases in her rooms every day, selected the loveliest and placed them on the Emperor's bureau in his private room.

"Mutzerl," as Marie Valerie was called, had inherited her mother's love of flowers, and as soon as she could toddle, she had her own little garden in the grounds of the different castles visited by the Imperial Court, and when mother and daughter were absent from each other, they exchanged flowers gathered during their several excursions.

These two were closely united by ties of heart and mind, and they were rarely apart in Vienna, in Buda-Pesth, or when travelling. "Valerie is more than a daughter to me," her mother said, "she is my intimate friend."

The Empress could not be called old, though suffering had made her feel older than her years, but as Valerie grew up, she imparted to her mother some of her own spring feelings, and this youngest child became the sunshine of her later life, by her goodness of heart and unceasing devotion, in addition to extreme simplicity and absence of all exactingness and pretension.

Elizabeth believed firmly in active exercise to maintain health and strength, and she wished to see her daughter as ardent a horsewoman as her-

self. But Valerie had not wholly inherited her mother's devotion to Nature, and found it impossible to share her enthusiasm for long excursions on foot, or for violent rides.

But, on the other hand, she possessed the innate love of the Wittelsbachs for literature and art; as a child she wrote pretty poetry, and when older, her delight was to study the chief authors of each age.

Her mother had not forgotten the pin-pricks which wounded the Empress of seventeen on account of her faulty education, but she had long since made good many deficiencies, and was ready to join her daughter in the study of languages and literature. She would sit for hours engrossed in Greek or Latin writers, and as her memory was remarkable, she had no difficulty in learning choice passages by heart. It was she alone who gave the final decision upon Valerie's poetical efforts, which fill many thick volumes, and from whom nothing was a secret that touched upon her daughter's inner life, and one word of praise from the Empress was of untold value to the youthful writer.

Valerie's devotion to her mother found warm expression in many of her poems. Over Francis Joseph's bed in the hunting-lodge of Mürzsteg is

a poem written in her fifteenth year, in which she describes Elizabeth's early home, her birth on Christmas Eve, and her parent's happy marriage. She sings of her mother :

"Und wenn auf des Kaisers Haupte,
Manchmal drückt die Kron,
Ist für seine Müh' und Sorgen,
Sie der schönste Lohn."

(When the crown lies hard and heavy
Upon the Emperor's brow,
He finds for his care a requital rare
In her smile's irradiant glow.)

It is probable that she afterwards discovered that the rapturous idyll which she had sung had vanished as a dream, and that the union of the Imperial pair had been far less ideal than she had depicted it. She loved both her parents, but as years passed on, she became more and more devoted to the Empress: it seemed as though she longed to give her some recompense for the lonely life she had led, and to bestow upon her some of the tenderness she had missed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EMPRESS AS A HORSEWOMAN

A FEW years after their marriage, the Emperor and Empress paid a visit to an exhibition of pictures in Vienna, where they wished to make some purchases, but the Emperor left the choice of the pictures to his wife, who returned to the gallery in a few days' time in order to execute the commission, when she selected twenty-four paintings, all representing different breeds of horses in a variety of attitudes.

The Imperial stables in the Hofburg and Schönbruun were a source of the greatest pleasure to the Empress, who spent most of her morning hours in the Riding School, galopping round on different horses in turn, and in the after part of the day, she rode in the private grounds of the park.

Her especial delight was in violent exercise, mountain-climbing, fencing and hunting, and

although she was quite twenty before she learnt to ride thoroughly, she became one of the most courageous and renowned horsewomen in Europe. Disregarding the rules of etiquette, she was on friendly terms with all the famous riders of the different circuses that frequented Vienna, and if she had not been Empress, she would certainly have become the first of professional riders, and the most renowned of teachers. Those competent to give an opinion have said that she possessed an exceptional power of keeping herself in direct, almost magnetic connection with her horse. Her delicate womanly hand guided with astonishing accuracy the most unmanageable animals, and on many alarming occasions she never lost her control, while the most vicious submitted with satisfaction to her caress.

She either did not understand fatigue, or would not betray that she felt it, even in her later years the strain of constant travelling never seemed to affect her, and in her youth her contempt for danger, her endurance of physical exertion aroused both astonishment and admiration. She took the highest gate without a sign of fear, and in the hunting-field frequently surmounted obstacles that deterred experienced men, besides terrifying the director of the Riding School in Vienna, by

commanding him to send her the most restive animals in his stable.

She had several serious falls, but they were powerless to quench her passion for riding.

In the neighbourhood of the Imperial hunting-lodge at Mürzteg, a path leads through the wood over a waterfall, which at one time could only be crossed by means of a narrow wooden bridge. Early in the eighties, Elizabeth was on the point of riding over the bridge, when she discovered that it was rotten and giving way under the horse's feet; but the courageous rider did not lose her self-possession, and thanks to her calm, and the timely assistance of some wood-cutters, who hastened to the rescue, her life was spared. In memory of her deliverance, a figure of St. George, the patron of riders, has been sculptured on an adjoining rock, with the following lines by Marie Valerie:

"Heiliger Georg! Reitersmann,
Der vor Gefahr uns schützen Rann!
Der Meine Mutter oft beschützt,
Wo Reines Menschen Hilfe nützt!
Ich bitte dich mit Zuversicht
Verweiger' mir die Bitte nicht:
Beschütze stets das theure Leben,
Das mir das Licht der Welt gegeben."

(Holy George, thou saintly Horseman,
Who art sure in danger's hour,
Who hath oft my mother shielded
When no mortal arm had power;
Thee I pray in sure confiding
Thou wilt grant the boon I crave,
Guard, preserve that life so precious,
Which my life unto me gave.)

It is hardly credible that Francis Joseph distinctly allowed the Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary to spend many hours of the day in the Riding School, and to associate with jockeys and professional riders on an equal footing, and it is said that a cavalry officer once observed to the Emperor that he could not conceive how he could permit this wild riding and hunting.

"Ah, my young friend," replied the Emperor, "you do not yet understand women; they do what they like, without asking our permission."

Those who have seen the Empress on horseback are unanimous that she presented a remarkably pretty picture. She nearly always wore a dark blue habit trimmed with fur that fitted her slender figure to perfection, a low hat and thick gloves. She did not care for a flower or ribbon, and the only thing that could be considered superfluous in her costume was a black fan, which she either held in her hand, or kept strapped to her

saddle. But she frequently used it, and those who did not know her, thought it was to protect her beautiful complexion; but those who understood her more perfectly were well aware that it was a protection against painters and photographers, who were an annoyance to her, and continually on her track in order to take her likeness.

"I strongly object to being photographed," she used to say, "for every single time that I have permitted it, some misfortune has happened to me."

The Viennese considered her passion for horse-exercise extravagant, and called her in derision "the circus-rider," but the Hungarians, who admired her on horseback, surnamed her "the Queen of the Amazons." She was well aware that her devotion to riding was displeasing to many, but she had been fond of it from a child, and as her long continued illness had forced her physician to debar her from it for some years, she resumed it with perfect indifference to hostile criticism.

She loved her horses and never failed to have carrots and sugar in her pocket for their enjoyment, while each morning found her in the stable to pat them, see that they were well groomed, or

on occasion, to brush and rub a favourite steed with her own hands.

She had a room at Schönbruun, the walls of which were simply covered with pictures of horses. "Look," she said to her Greek reader, to whom she was showing this room, "I have lost all these friends; many of them have met their death for me, which no human being would ever do. Men would prefer to kill me!"

It gave her intense pleasure to rush through the Austrian woods, or over the Hungarian plains on horseback, but her motive was also to try and conquer the gloomy moods that were beginning to overcloud her mind. There were relations, both on her father's and on her mother's side, who had drifted steadily through life, nearer and nearer to the abyss of madness, and some of the members of her family were even then on that dismal border-land between the dusk of a fixed idea and the night of lunacy. As years went by, she noticed more and more frequently that her nervous system exhibited several of the symptoms of the hereditary complaint, and there is hardly a doubt that during the last twenty years of her life she was conscious of the germs of that mental malady peculiar to the members of the Bavarian Royal house.

She sought for physical exertion to dispel her gloomy forebodings and rode at a gallop for miles in the twilight of early dawn, or in the star-light night, mainly to escape from people and surroundings that wearied and worried her. Or she would spend half-days on horseback, and rush like a stormy wind past the peaceful labourers who stood and gazed at her. These rides numbed her fears, and quieted her over-wrought nerves. Wind or rain, warmth or cold had no meaning for her, and again and again she would remain in the saddle wet through, but no harm came of it. She seemed to be absolutely proof against physical discomfort or inconvenience during these excursions, and never drew rein till her horse was literally quivering with exhaustion.

CHAPTER XIV

THE COUNTRY HOUSE AT GÖDÖLLÖ—ELIZABETH AS QUEEN OF HUNGARY

IMMEDIATELY after the coronation in Buda-Pesth, the Hungarians presented to their Queen the summer residence of Gödöllö not very far from the capital, and situated in a thickly wooded park. In the absence of the royal family the deep solitude here is very striking, and the silence of nature is broken only by the now hilarious, now wailing notes of the violins of passing gipsies.

For many years Gödöllö proved the favourite residence of the Queen, where she passed peaceful days, without a care, enjoying her large hunting parties and being mistress in her own house.

A great part of the seventies was spent in this home, and when here it was her custom to rise at four o'clock, to be in the saddle by five, and to ride till eleven, when she would return to breakfast.

These rides over the plains frequently led her

to a "Cziko encampment," when she never failed to stop for a chat with these Hungarian Bedouins of the *pusztas* (vast moors), half wild tribes who fascinated her, and whose horses attracted the keen eye of such an experienced horsewoman. She was generous in her gifts, and shouts of welcome never failed to greet her when she was seen in full gallop nearing one of their camps. She was devoted to these extensive Hungarian plains, the paradise of a rider, and at home in the saddle, she scoured the district from corner to corner, till she knew every path and turn. These were cheerful times, for her hunting parties were renowned all over Europe, and every apartment was filled with trophies of the chase.

Francis Joseph, the Crown Prince, Princess Valerie and invited guests used to drive to welcome the Queen on her return, for she was nearly always the first to arrive, often three or four minutes before her companions.

She was frequently to be seen in the oat-fields near the house, wearing a short skirt, and armed with a sickle, cutting food for her favourite animals.

"I have a tree in Gödöllö which is my best friend," she observed some years before her death

to one of her readers. "When I arrive and when I leave, I go to it, and we gaze at each other in silence for some minutes. The old tree knows my thoughts, and I confide to it all that has happened to me in the interval that we have been absent one from the other."

When in Austria, she was continually longing for Hungary, where she felt far more at home, because her heart beat in unison with its impulsive romantic inhabitants.

She sometimes spent the whole winter among them, and everyone, the nobility, the middle class, the artizans, and not least, the poorest of the people in Buda-Pesth, simply worshipped their beautiful Queen, who was enchanted to be in their midst, and even adopted their national dress.

There were many traits in her character that drew her towards them, and she did not fear to visit the lowest quarters of the city, not as a passing spectator, but as a Sister of Mercy, who looks for human misery in order to alleviate it. Her benevolence was exercised as far as possible in private, and when she read in police reports, or in the columns of the newspapers of wretched beings whom poverty had driven to some awful crime, she never failed to help them. Her heart

grew faint many a time as she climbed dark narrow backstairs to enter some miserable garret, so low that she could not hold herself upright, but the sense of fear was unknown to her. During her residence in Buda-Pesth, she used to slip out from the castle quite early in the morning on her charitable errands, generally accompanied by one lady, though frequently alone. She wore the very plainest clothes, and went her way in perfect confidence to the poorest part of the city, among the lowest dregs of the people, comparatively few of whom knew who she really was, though her gentleness and generosity made her little short of an angelic visitant in their eyes. Episodes in her life which testify to her charity and presence of mind are kept in memory by the Hungarians.

One November day she was riding to a meet at Magyarod, and her way led by a deep cliff in the hills, when she suddenly perceived a woman in front of her approaching nearer and nearer to the chasm; she was old and blind, as well as apparently alone. Elizabeth at once sprang from her horse and helped her to a place of safety, and but for this prompt action the woman would undoubtedly have fallen into the abyss. A few moments later, a little girl, who ought to have been guiding the woman, appeared

on the scene, and the Queen, whose anger was roused, punished her with some severity for her negligence. Some of her adventures in Hungary had a ludicrous side. It happened that she was riding one evening through the suburbs of Buda-Pesth, accompanied by a lady-in-waiting, when they passed a lonely hut in the outskirts, at a little distance from the high road, from which fearful screams were heard interspersed with cries for help in the voice of a woman, who was apparently in the greatest danger. Acting on the impulse of the moment, Elizabeth sprang from her horse and hastened to the door of the hut, followed by her companion. They burst open the door and found themselves in a low, dirty room, where a gigantic, brigand-like fellow was dragging a female over the floor by her long filthy hair, and administering at intervals a series of violent blows. The Queen struck him across the face with her riding-whip, and the man was so utterly astonished by her sudden appearance and her vigorous attack, that he instantly let go his victim to stare in amazement at the intruder. But the next moment the astonishment of Elizabeth was greater still, when the woman under punishment sprang up and rushed upon her with the fury of a tigress, while she overwhelmed the

stranger with a torrent of abuse couched in the coarsest language of the slums, because she had dared to strike her husband. The Queen laughed, took a gold piece from her pocket and handed it to the man as she observed : " Beat her, my friend, give her the tale of blows she deserves, she ought to have them, if only for her fidelity to you."

In the summer of 1886 Buda-Pesth was visited by a terrible epidemic of cholera, when the " Hungarians' mother," as Elizabeth was called, was staying at Ischl. She at once expressed the wish to go to the capital and inspect the hospitals, but the Prime Minister, at that time—Coloman von Tisza—would not hear of it. On the one hand, the danger was not so great as to cause a panic among the people, which might have justified such a step as the sudden arrival of her Majesty, and on the other hand, it would be by no means safe for her to reside in Buda-Pesth. His sense of responsibility therefore compelled him to dissuade her from undertaking the journey.

She submitted to the Minister for the time being; but when, in spite of cholera and an outbreak of smallpox, the Emperor left for the Hungarian capital in order to open Parliament, it became no longer possible to induce her to remain in Ischl.

"In the time of danger my place is by my husband's side," was her only rejoinder.

Quite unexpectedly she arrived at Gödöllö, and from there accompanied the King each time that he had to visit the city.

Her devotion to Hungary was apparent in her behaviour towards Franz Déak, to whom the country was indebted for a large share of its recovered freedom, though he persistently refused every offer of money that had been made to him in gratitude for his services.

The Queen took many opportunities of shewing kindness and friendship to the statesman, who became seriously ill in 1875. January 25th, 1876, she arrived at Buda from Munich, and her first question was addressed in the entrance hall to Bishop Rónay:

"How is Déak going on?"

The reply was that he had evidently not long to live, when Elizabeth at once resolved to visit the sick man; though, with her usual tact and consideration, she waited to learn if she might be allowed to do so.

Crowds had gathered at the house of the great patriot when she arrived, who wanted to see for themselves her recognition of his services, and her present sympathy with him. Their silent

greeting on this occasion was in its way not one whit less hearty than the "eljen" which usually welcomed her presence.

He died January 28th, and Elizabeth wept when the news was brought to her. His body lay in state in the great hall of the Academy, which had been converted into a *chapelle ardente*, and here Elizabeth came in one of the simplest court carriages, and dressed in deep mourning.

The deputies and ministers of Hungary were standing round the coffin when the Queen approached, carrying a wreath of laurel and white camellias, tied with a broad satin ribbon bearing the inscription :

"Erzsébet kyralynö Déak Ferencznek."
("From Queen Elizabeth to Franz Déak").

She stood for a few minutes in tearful silence by the lifeless body, and then turned to leave, when she suddenly went back, knelt on the lowest step, and prayed fervently.

The Hungarian painters, Munkacsy and Ziczy, have represented this scene, and a Hungarian author has written :

"The memory of Déak is still glorified among us, but the tears of the Queen are the highest marks of honour that the dead hero could possibly receive."

CHAPTER XV

THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION AT VIENNA—ELIZABETH AMONG OTHER ROYAL LADIES—ELIZABETH AND THE VIENNESE

THE year 1873 was for many reasons an eventful one to both Elizabeth and the Emperor.

The marriage of their eldest daughter with Prince Leopold of Bavaria took place on April 20th in the Augustiner Kirche, where the Imperial pair had been united just nineteen years previously, and the same afternoon the bride and bridegroom left for Munich. The Viennese overwhelmed the Archduchess with farewell gifts and festivities, while the entire city seemed to be astir to witness the departure of the young couple.

A few days subsequently—May 1st—the great International Exhibition at Vienna was opened by the Emperor and Empress. It was an imposing sight, and the Imperial rulers might well be proud of the gigantic work that had been accomplished in a comparatively short space of time by the intelligence and mechanical skill of their subjects.

Francis Joseph and Elizabeth invited the sovereigns of Europe to the Austrian capital, and in the course of the next six months, the Emperor William I. and his clever consort, Augusta, were guests at the Hofburg and at Schönbrunn, in addition to Alexander II. of Russia and several members of his family, Victor Emmanuel King of Italy, the Prince of Wales, the Shah of Persia, and many other princes.

It was no pleasure to Elizabeth to associate with emperors and kings, and she used to say: "Titles and honourable posts mean nothing, they are variegated rags worn to cover nakedness; but they do not affect our real selves."

Little as she really cared for court ceremonies, she never failed to take her share in them, when needful, with admirable charm and grace, and when she was in company with other empresses or queens, she was unfailingly the loveliest, the most admired, and the most thoroughly interesting.

A few years before the downfall of the second French Empire, the Austrian sovereigns met Napoleon III. and Eugénie at Salzburg, when the Empress of the French was still in the zenith of her beauty and popularity. But, with her dark brilliant eyes, her magnificent hair and the charm of her whole personality, the daughter of the

Wittelsbachs, eleven years younger than Eugénie, had no need to enter into competition with the Spaniard, and in fact it was always she who bore the palm, even in the presence of far younger princesses.

Some years subsequently, in October, 1881, King Humbert and Queen Margherita of Italy were guests at the Imperial Court, when comparisons between the two ladies were frequently overheard. Margherita recalled the freshness of spring, though the journalists of the day maintained that Elizabeth was by far the lovelier of the two, the "Habsburg Autumn."

In the same year at the Exhibition (1873) Francis Joseph celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession, when the crowning effect of all the public rejoicings was the progress of the Imperial rulers and the Crown Prince through the streets of the city, which were decorated and illuminated to represent broad daylight, in which thronged a cheering multitude, eager to do homage to their sovereigns.

It was on this occasion that it became distinctly evident that it exhausted the Empress to take part in public functions, and that she sought to withdraw herself as far as possible from noise and excitement. Her frequent ill-health had made

her appreciate solitude, in fact it had become an absolute necessity to her to be a good deal alone. She felt herself excited in the society of others, and when her Imperial duties forced her to mix with her fellows, her features often wore a melancholy suffering expression.

It would probably have caused her no difficulty to maintain the popularity which the more liberal-minded had been ready to accord to her in the early part of her reign, if she had not belonged to a race afflicted with eccentricity and nerve-irritability for centuries.

Everywhere her likeness was to be seen, at the Universities, in the schools, the hotels and the booksellers' windows. Ladies wore Elizabeth hats, Elizabeth veils, Elizabeth cloaks and bows; while visitors to Vienna will still recall the Elizabeth-view, the Elizabeth Avenue, the Elizabeth Bridge, and many other objects that bear her name.

It was a tradition in Austria that no one could compete with the Empress as regards beauty, though, apart from the members of the Court and the guests who were present at the couple of balls that their Majesties gave each winter, from the close of the seventies to the death of the Empress, there were singularly few who could boast

of ever having seen her. She was far too deeply imbued with the feeling of her own innate dignity, to permit herself to be contemplated as a pure ornament to the throne; but this abhorrence of vain display, and of being made the object of curious eyes, alienated many a heart from her.

Curiosity is a marked trait in the character of the Viennese, especially concerning the Imperial house, and the fact that they so rarely caught a glimpse of their Empress was a source of annoyance to them.

In comparison with the capital of Austria, Munich is a small town, but Elizabeth had not been long in Vienna before she discovered that the weeds of slander had taken far deeper root there than in the home-like city of her birth. She never shewed herself without exciting uncharitable remarks. Her erect dignified carriage was construed into pride, her delicate complexion was due to cosmetics, her simple style of dress was unsuited to her position, while she was censured for the meanness of her purchases in the shops of the capital.

The Roman Catholic Church enjoins upon the Imperial house the duty of accompanying the solemn procession on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, an imposing spectacle, to which the

Viennese looked forward year by year, when the Empress headed the procession, with the ladies of her court, and pages who bore her train.

But a few days before Easter, it became a regular occurrence to announce that the Empress had suddenly become indisposed and had left town for change of air.

The light-hearted Viennese would possibly have condoned a stain on the character of the Empress, but they did not forgive her for disappointing them of the enjoyment of an interesting pageant, and gradually began to treat her with marked coolness on the few occasions when she appeared in public. They called her proud and cold, and it cannot be denied that Elizabeth certainly tried the patience of the Viennese by the indifference with which she treated them.

How little suited was this most cheerful of the capitals of Europe for an Empress who as years passed by grew more and more melancholy and retiring!

It was probably she herself who was the first to perceive that she was no longer acceptable, either to the middle classes or to the aristocracy, a fact which would naturally increase her own preference for seclusion.

"The people do not know what to make of me,"

she used to say, "I do not suit their pre-conceived notions, and they do not like me to dispel their illusions. In this way I am thrown back entirely upon myself. Neither am I in touch with the higher classes, who do not care to seek me in my solitude; they appear to have something better to do."

And she added, "My long isolation has taught me that the burden of existence becomes heaviest in the presence of our fellow beings."*

At the close of the Exhibition, she had taken into her service a little negro named Mahmoud, who had been a messenger in the Cairo house which the Khedive had built in the Prater, and had presented to Elizabeth. Mahmoud did his mistress's bidding and was happy to be near her, while the Empress treated him with the greatest kindness, and nursed him during an attack of inflammation of the lungs induced by the cold of Vienna. Both people and aristocracy were incensed against her, when they discovered that the Archduchess Valerie was allowed to play with the negro, and the Empress is said to have observed:

"It is just as much a necessity for people to speak ill of one another, as it is for a cypress to mourn."

* Dr. Christomanos's "Diary."

On another occasion, it is reported that she said: "Beware of court intrigues, you never know what traps are laid for your feet, and it is an utter impossibility for folk at court to live an hour without maligning their neighbours."

"I ought to thank my God," she continued, "that I am Empress, or it would go ill with me. They just tolerate an Empress, because she is more or less of use to them."

There were times when life at court almost alarmed her, and the vain, short-sighted society of Vienna was always on the alert to spread libellous reports about her, which were taken up and passed on by the middle classes, so that in the course of years, her name became so besmirched in the Austrian capital, that it would have needed more than a little equanimity to put up with it. This was a quality that Elizabeth did not possess, and patience is not one of the Wittelsbach virtues. She was naturally of an irritable disposition, and as she advanced in years, physical infirmities tended to develop still more forcibly the passionate and impatient traits in her character, while she experienced an almost savage resentment in face of the scandal to which she was exposed.

When she became aware that her kindness to Mahmoud was a cause of offence, she had her

daughter Valerie and the negro photographed together, and ordered that the likeness should be exhibited. It was hardly without cause that this step aggravated the zeal of evil tongues to wound their Empress, and there were many who maintained that from this time the restlessness which became daily more apparent and her repeated singular caprices were all signs of incipient insanity.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EMPRESS AND BENEFICENCE—IMPERIAL SILVER WEDDING FESTIVITIES

In the previous chapter we learnt a few of the main causes that tended to render Elizabeth unpopular in the Austrian capital; but there were still others. When the Germans in Austria began to attach themselves to Prussia and the Hohenzollerns, she ceased to feel herself a German, while the German inhabitants of her husband's dominions instinctively felt that she disapproved of many of their proceedings.

Then her marked preference for Hungary was unpardonable in the eyes of many who secretly whispered that her considerable Austrian appanage was devoted to distressed Magyars, and the unpopularity of the good, warm-hearted Empress was undoubtedly enhanced by her predilection for her trans-Leitha subjects.

With reference to her gifts, the aspersion was manifestly unjust, for there is not to be found in

the whole Habsburg empire, in Austria as well as in Hungary, hardly a single benevolent institution or endowment which she has not patronised and supported.

It is said that as she was driving by some barracks in Vienna soon after her marriage, a soldier was running the gauntlet for some minor offence. She heard his shrieks, stopped the carriage, and enquired the cause. A few days afterwards, at her request, the Emperor commanded that the antiquated military penal laws of Austria should be abolished and replaced by more modern punishment. She never heard of a misfortune without trying to bring comfort or alleviation.

We have already seen how she visited the sick and wounded in the wars of 1859 and 1866, but it was a far greater proof of heroism and self-sacrifice, when she went the round of the hospitals during several epidemics of typhus and cholera, without a thought of the deadly danger to which she was exposing herself.

When the Austrians occupied Bosnia* and Herzegovina, they were vigorously resisted by the inhabitants, and lost some 5000 men, "killed, wounded, or missing." The need for help was

* In conformity with the Treaty of Berlin, July 13th, 1878.

imperative; the sick had to be tended, and provision made for the survivors of those who had fallen, and the Empress was again ready to strengthen the hands of the National Union of Women Workers, whose mission is to assist needy soldiers and their widows and orphans, and to nurse the wounded.

A ready response was given in every town of Austria-Hungary to her appeal for co-operation in this good work. It may be urged that to take the lead in all works of benevolence and to visit general and military hospitals belong so to speak, to the duties of an Empress, but as Elizabeth's preference for a retired life became more and more pronounced, her inclination to take a prominent share in good works would naturally diminish. In later years she only visited the public institutions of Austria under pressure from the Emperor, and was far too wanting in perseverance to do so with any regularity. She carried out her more official beneficence under a characteristic mask of indifference and haste, as though she were pressed for time; and on her rare visits to the philanthropic institutions of Vienna, she drove up without warning like a veritable hurricane. On one occasion, in the course of a few hours, she paid from eight to ten

such visits, in the four quarters of the capital, as though she would overtake what she had neglected, and accomplish all her benevolent duties in one rapid ride.

And yet she was good, for she assisted innumerable cases of sickness and suffering up to the day of her death, and in Vienna she visited many a den of misery, though certainly not so frequently as she did in Buda-Pesth.

But the Viennese in general knew nothing about the charity which she exercised in private; it never occurred to them that the kind-hearted lady who cared so bountifully for their needs, was the proud Empress who was stigmatised by high and low as heartless and indifferent to the woes of others.

In 1879, Francis Joseph and Elizabeth celebrated their silver wedding, and the approach of the day (April 24th) filled them with sadness.

Their married life had been more subject than that of most couples to change and disappointment with regard to their mutual feelings; but, though on a different basis, a fresh and in its way a hearty relation had sprung up between them, in which the Empress had learnt not to expect that which she fully believed to be her right.

The Imperial "silver bridal pair" expressed

the wish that no public festivities should take place in the land, and that the money which the cities and country districts might think of spending for that purpose should be applied to charitable objects.

The capital was to be the sole exception; for in memory of the happy escape of Francis Joseph in 1853 from the murderous attack of the Hungarian Libenyi, a church had been built at the voluntary expense of the people, on the very spot where the attempt had been made, and it was solemnly consecrated in the presence of the Imperial couple during the bridal festivities.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of their wedding, Francis Joseph and Elizabeth again stood at the altar steps, and there were no outward traces of the storms that had ruffled the by-gone years of their union. The Emperor was in the full strength of manhood, and the Empress was called with perfect truth, "the loveliest of grandmothers."*

The whole city turned into the streets through which the Imperial pair must drive to the house of God, where young girls were standing to await them in the vestibule. They came forward as the Emperor and Empress returned after the

* Their eldest daughter Gisela had already several children.

ceremony, and summoned up courage, when Elizabeth kindly recognised them, one to recite a pretty speech, and another to present her with some flowers.

The poets of Austria and Hungary had tuned their lyres in honour of the "silver bridal pair," but their homage touched Elizabeth far less than the following greeting from one of the singers of her native land:

"Wie deiner Güte milder Sinn
Erhab'ne Kaiserin!
Wie Huld, die deine Stirne kräntzt
Hoch uber allen Festshmuck glanzt,
So blüh dir Macht and Segen
In Zukunft allerwegen.
O, nimm hiefür als Treuespfand
Den Herzensgruss vom Heimatland!"

(Be crowned, Imperial Lady,
By thy virtue's diadem,
That radiance which thy brow surrounds,
Outshining earthly gem:
All power, blessing, still be thine,
And take this greeting as a sign
And pledge from those who share with thee
One Fatherland, august and free)

The now historical pageant of Vienna in commemoration of the silver wedding closed the festivities. For months in advance, the cele-

brated historical painter Hans Makart (died October 3rd, 1884) had been busy preparing the plan, and even the detailed minutiæ of the processions which were ingeniously conceived and magnificently carried out.

An imposing number of representatives of all ranks, institutions and offices of every province in the Empire took part in the procession which walked from the Ring-Strasse* amid deafening applause, and all the different groups, on horseback, on foot, or in gorgeous coaches, were habited in splendid historical costumes.

Francis Joseph and the Empress, who were exposed for hours to this vociferous cheering of the defiling crowd, were naturally much overcome by the universal enthusiasm.

* It encircles the entire inner city and has been constructed on the site of the old ramparts and glacis. It averages 55 yards in width, and two miles in length.

CHAPTER XVII

MARRIAGE OF THE CROWN PRINCE RUDOLPH—THE EMPRESS AND HER CASTLES

THE only son of Francis Joseph and Elizabeth had grown up to be the pride of his parents, as well as remarkably popular among the people. He never attended a public school, but under competent private masters he acquired a thorough sound education on modern lines. He had inherited his mother's dislike to narrow-mindedness, as well as her literary and artistic tastes, and her enjoyment of an outdoor life.

According to the old traditions of the Austrian Imperial house, he had to learn a trade, and he chose that of a printer. He was a diligent student at the University of Vienna, and was constantly to be seen at the Hofburg Theatre, the training school for the artistic taste of the Viennese. Like his mother, he made his best friends outside his own sphere, and preferred the

society of authors and journalists. Every branch of natural history attracted his attention, and he found an enthusiastic friend and master in the celebrated naturalist Brehm.

He himself was a clever writer of travels, and several of his books have met with success, not because he was the Emperor's son, but because he was a reliable authority.*

The intercourse between himself and the Empress Elizabeth had gradually developed into that of an attached brother and sister. He went to her with his joys and sorrows, and devoted as his mother became to him, she was not blind to his faults, and knew but too well that he was just as impressionable and unsteady as his father had been.

Both parents agreed that it was necessary he

* "Rudolph was not a mere courtier, a mere soldier, or a mere sportsman, but a master of many useful acquirements and graceful accomplishments. Interested in all intellectual pursuits, he was not only the patron of science, literature and art, but was himself an active worker in those fields. His refined and educated tastes added to his social charm. He had, however, in addition to these, more solid advantages, which under favourable conditions, might have been of much political service. A fluent and agreeable orator, a linguist, capable as our correspondent affirms of writing and speaking most of the languages of the polyglot monarchy of the Habsburgs. An unwearied traveller, led by his keen interest in natural history to distant lands, he had it in his power to render valuable service in a composite State."

Times.

should marry, partly in the hope of securing the direct succession to the throne, and partly that matrimony might put a check on his restless dissipated life.

Francis Joseph was guided solely by political considerations in selecting a wife for his son, while Elizabeth naturally thought of his domestic happiness. There was no need to be in a great hurry, and she wished him to look for a bride who would combine external gifts with intellectual power, and thus be able to gain, and then retain his wavering affections.

At the time when Rudolph was approaching his twentieth year, there were singularly few marriageable Roman Catholic princesses in Europe. The Emperor's choice of a daughter-in-law, not that of the Empress, fell on the Belgian Princess Stéphanie, who was about seventeen, with mediocre abilities, and no especial outward attraction. Elizabeth had a strong aversion to the King of the Belgians; and his wife, an Austrian Archduchess, was likewise no favourite of hers. She did her utmost to dissuade from the match, but the sister to the Queen of the Belgians, the Austrian Archduchess Elizabeth,* an authority at court, to whom Francis

* Mother to Maria Christina, Queen Regent of Spain.

Joseph was warmly attached, interfered on behalf of her niece, and with the aid of some other counsellors, set aside all the objections that the Empress could bring forward.

The betrothal was made known, and in due course, the King and Queen of the Belgians, accompanied by their daughter, made their entry into Vienna, though the whole proceeding was a matter of complete indifference to the Crown Prince.

The marriage took place May 10th, 1881, and Elizabeth conscientiously performed all the duties connected with the ceremony that were incumbent upon her as the bridegroom's mother; though her coolness and reserve towards her daughter-in-law and the King and Queen of the Belgians, were patent to all present.

During a drive through the capital with Queen Henriette by her side, she bowed repeatedly in response to the cheering of the crowd, but the expression on her countenance showed that her thoughts were not with them, and during the whole long drive, she did not address one single remark to her companion. This cruel self-repression broke down during the marriage service and she burst into tears; it was the last time that the Empress was seen in public in Vienna.

The Viennese longed for a princess in their Imperial house to whom they could give their affections. Stéphanie represented youth with all its hopes and desires, and they welcomed the royal bride with rapturous delight; but when a little daughter was born, September 3rd, 1883, the enthusiasm of the people was an index to the popularity of both Rudolph and the Crown Princess.

It was only a natural sequence that the relation between mother and son should be a different one after his marriage, but Elizabeth felt it keenly, though it was not long before Rudolph returned to her with many of his troubles and she quickly discovered that he was far from happy in his marriage. She herself was less at home than ever in the Hofburg, and after the arrival of the Crown Princess, she never paid more than a short visit to the capital each winter, and it has been asserted that for years she was never there longer than three or four weeks at a time. Both she and Francis Joseph liked to spend a summer month at Ischl; it was full of important recollections for them, and the whole family were accustomed to assemble there for the Emperor's birthday, August 18th. Elizabeth found here ample opportunity for the mountain excursions she so

dearly loved, and in the neighbourhood of Ischl, there is hardly a hill-top or a mountain dairy ("sæterhytte") where the peasants have not met the Empress, one summer after another. It was her pleasure to talk to them, to enquire after the details of their daily life, and to pay with a liberal hand for every glass of milk that was offered to her. The children brought her posies of Alpine flowers, and their hearty :

"Küss die Hand, Frau Kaiserin!" always met with the friendly response :—

"Grüss Euch Gott, liebe Kinder!"

For several years after the death of her brother-in-law, the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, she regularly visited his castle of Miramare in the vicinity of Trieste. It is built of the purest, finest marble on a cliff overhanging the open sea, and close by is a villa, inhabited for some time by the Empress Charlotte, hopelessly mad.

There were several arrangements in the Hofburg, as well as at Schönbrunn, which did not suit the taste of the Empress, but which her respect for old traditions would not allow her to interfere with. The Emperor was accustomed to spend the spring months at Schönbrunn, and in the early years of her marriage, Elizabeth frequently accompanied him ; but she pined for something

different, though it was not till about the time of her son's marriage, that she resolved to build a castle of her own, "Waldesruhe," at the beautiful village of Hietzing, in the Imperial park of Lainz, to the west of Schönbrunn. This little castle, in the Renaissance style, was erected in the course of two years, under the immediate supervision of the Empress, and during the whole time no curious person was allowed to approach, nor even to look at it, if possible; and it even remained a profound secret from the outer world, until after Her Majesty's death. The park at Lainz, one of the oldest and most beautiful woody stretches in the neighbourhood of Vienna, is enclosed by a high stone wall, above which the mere tops of the trees are visible, and the gardens round the castle are rendered absolutely private by impenetrable hedges of thorn. None but the members of her household had access to the park and grounds, and no views of the castle or pictures of the works of art it concealed were allowed to be made public.

The façade is adorned with terraces and balconies, always brilliant with a wealth of flowers during the Empress's stay. A flight of broad marble steps, covered with crimson velvet, leads to the first floor on which were the apartments of their Majesties, as well as a large reception room,

There were four windows in Elizabeth's bedroom, two looking east, and two looking south, with doors from these latter opening on to a balcony. In one corner of the room was a statuette of the Virgin, with a costly antique rosary twined round the base. In another corner was a bronze figure of Niobe, backed by evergreens, which had rather a weird effect. In the other corners were green hanging lamps for electric light, which the Empress could turn on as she lay in bed, in such a way, that the only glimmer in the large room fell on Niobe, amid her mass of foliage. She always breakfasted on the balcony that adjoined her room where stood a favourite work of art, a smaller caste of the statue of Heine, which the Danish sculptor Hasselriis had executed in marble for her villa Achilleion, in Corfu. When she longed for solitude or felt ill, this breakfast balcony was always her retreat. From the opposite side of the room, a door opened into her dressing-room, with a gigantic revolving mirror, and countless toilet accessories in glass, painted porcelain and silver.

To the left of her bedroom in "Waldesruhe," or Lainz, as the castle was generally called, was the Empress's library, which also opened by folding doors on to a balcony, with a large writing-

table, on which were remembrances from her children and grandchildren, drawings or paintings, especially for herself.

The large table in the centre of the room was covered with innumerable costly books and portfolios collected during her travels, presided over, as it were, by a particularly good likeness of her cousin, Louis II. of Bavaria.

Bronze vases, Oriental china and precious works of art, with flowers in every available position, completed the decoration of this room, which in the evening was frequently made cheerful by an open fire, over which the Emperor and Empress would sit and chat.

The apartments below these belonged to the Archduchess Marie Valerie, and those beneath the Emperor's suite of rooms, connected with the Empress's by the large reception hall were for the use of guests.

Gymnastic exercises played an important role in the life of Elizabeth, and in every one of the castles in which she spent any time, there was a well-appointed gymnasium.

Her reader, Dr. Christomanos, relates that he once surprised her as she was in the act of reaching out her hands to the rings, wearing a trained black silk gown trimmed with ostrich

feathers. She at once came forward, jumping over a rope, stretched across the room.

"This is here," she said, "so that I shall not forget how to jump."

She was expecting some of the Archduchesses, which accounted for her elegant costume.

"If they knew that I practised in this dress they would fall backwards with horror," she continued. "I was only taking a turn as I passed by; morning or evening is my usual time. I am fully aware of the claims of Imperial dignity!" I am never tired of walking," she observed to me on another occasion. "My sisters, Alençon and the Queen of Naples, are renowned in Paris for their inimitable carriage, but we do not walk like queens: the Bourbons, who are rarely on foot, have acquired a style of their own, like proud geese, and walk as rulers of the land!"

CHAPTER XVIII

VISIT TO BAVARIA—ELIZABETH AND KING LOUIS II.

THROUGH all her cares and changes, Elizabeth never wavered in her affections for her native land, and on her return from those long, frequent journeys which became more and more a necessity of her existence, she never failed to spend a few weeks in the vicinity of Possenhofen, where she visited the well remembered spots in wood or field, and exchanged a greeting with her old peasant friends. The Bavarians used to call her "our Empress," without reflecting that the title belonged to the Queen of Prussia after 1870.

Of late years she did not stay with her parents, but at Strauch's hotel, in the village of Feldafing* where she occupied a suite of rooms for several consecutive summers. The hotel is renowned for its charming situation and the fresh, fragrant

* One of the most popular resorts on the Lake of Starnberg.

woods close at hand, undisturbed by a sound, except that of a forester or wood-cutter, seemed as it were created to satisfy the Empress's craving for solitude.

Time had not weakened her devotion to her father, her respectful confidence in her mother's counsel, or her friendship for her brothers and sisters, to whom, in the hope of giving them pleasure, she wrote long letters at regular intervals, frequently accompanied by acceptable and tasteful gifts.

Sorrow had pressed heavily on the aging couple. Their eldest son had married an actress of doubtful reputation, and their eldest daughter, Princess of Thurn and Taxis,* had recently lost her husband and her eldest son, which neces-

* "Thurn and Taxis, the name of a noble family of the German Empire, famous for its former possession of a monopoly of the postal service. It is descended from the della Torre, (whence the name Thurn, a German translation of Torre) one of whom took the name de Tassis, (Taxis) from the castle of Tasso. In 1516 Franz von Thurn established the first post between Vienna and Brussels, and in 1595 his descendant became Postmaster-General of the Empire, securing for himself and his heirs the right of carrying the mail throughout the Imperial dominions. A century later the princely rank became hereditary in the family, but the postal privileges were gradually curtailed by the different Governments, which granted extensive territories in compensation. The family has hereditary possessions in Austria, Bavaria, Belgium, Würtemberg and Prussia. The last of these States arranged with the family for the abolition of the monopoly in 1867."

Johnson's Universal Cyclopædia.

sitated the exercise of all her energy to direct the management of the considerable wealth of the family. Like Elizabeth, their third daughter, Marie, had been raised to a throne when only seventeen by her marriage with Francis II. King of the Two Sicilies, though within a year of their union, she and her husband were expelled by Garibaldi and his volunteers, since when she had lived a landless queen, by the side of a man totally unworthy of her.

An equally joyless life had fallen to the lot of their fourth daughter, Mathilde, who when eighteen had become the wife of Comte Louis de Trani, a broken-down roué, who finally committed suicide. Neither Marie nor Mathilde had ever seen their future husbands before the wedding day.

Sophie, who afterwards became Duchess of Alençon, was the youngest of the Wittelsbach sisters, who as a remarkably beautiful child had lived near the shore of the Lake of Starnberg In outward appearance, she resembled Elizabeth, but not in temperament, for all who knew her in her youth speak of her sparkling vivacity.

Louis II. had ascended the throne of Bavaria when only nineteen, and although he was handsome as an Adonis, and therefore adored,

especially by women, he soon conceived an aversion to his faithful people of Munich, and their more or less well-intentioned curiosity, which drove him to build castles in lonely mountain spots and to shew himself with less and less frequency among his subjects.

The year after his accession, by his own choice, without advice or persuasion, he became engaged to his cousin Sophie, who was just eighteen. The announcement produced universal satisfaction, and it was certainly one of the happiest and proudest moments in the lives of Maximilian Joseph and Ludovica, when they were allowed to publish the betrothal of their daughter to the young King.

Louis was deeply in love with his cousin, and commissioned the most renowned sculptors to execute her bust, which he placed in his winter garden and was never weary of contemplating.

While preparation for the bride's trousseau were progressing at Possenhofen, the King was anxious that his people should possess a worthy likeness of his future Queen, and sent for the best engraver in the kingdom to take the portrait of the beautiful princess, and to prepare hundreds of thousands of copies to be distributed among the multitude on the day of their marriage.

He was a constant visitor at the artist's studio while the work was in progress, and exclaimed with enthusiasm when he was shown the first impression :

"A truly royal bride!"

The hopes that filled all hearts were doomed to bitter disappointment in the future. October 11th, 1865, shortly before the wedding, the King quite unexpectedly broke off the engagement, on the plea that his cousin did not love him and was not faithful to him.

From the moment of his accession to the throne, all had flattered him, admired him, and grovelled in the dust before him. But the diseased mind of the King could not tolerate all this adulation, and yet he began to entertain the most inordinate ideas of what was due to his royal dignity.

The assumed unfaithfulness of his future Queen was a trial of indescribable bitterness to him, to his eyes she was no more than a despicable hypocrite. He destroyed with his own hands the entire issue of her portraits that were to have been scattered among the people, and threw her bust out of a window to hear it crash to atoms among the stones of the castle grounds.

Rumour has said that the Duchess Sophie was an innocent victim of intrigues in his own neighbourhood; be that as it may, a stain rested on her name which Louis never attempted to remove. The circumstances excited the greatest consternation, and the breach between the King and Max Joseph remained unhealed to the last.

A sharp observer would have detected from the first days of his reign that there were many signs of the unhealthy state of the King's mind, and after the breaking off of his engagement, he spent his life in complete solitude. He literally shunned the sight of his fellows, and hid himself behind a screen when he was compelled to interview his ministers. The disappointment which he believed he had suffered, filled his soul with bitterness and distrust, he declared he would not love another woman, and that he should never marry.

The only member of Sophie's immediate family that kept up any intercourse with him was the Empress Elizabeth, who was sincerely attached to him until his death. There was undoubtedly a strong mental similarity between these two, as well as a certain likeness in feature.

Kings, emperors, and distinguished statesmen visited his land, but did not see him, though

when his cousin Elizabeth paid her summer visit to Feldafing, he would receive her, even at those times when he would hardly tolerate a single human being in his presence.

Not far from Feldafing, in the Lake of Starnberg, lies the so-called "Rose Island," the interior of which is almost hidden even to those who row past it, by the thick bushes and high trees all along its shores. According to tradition, a heathen temple once stood on the island, which was converted into a chapel; it is certain that Roman coins and ornaments have been discovered in the neighbourhood at a modern date, as well as the remains of a lake village. The gardens were laid out by Maximilian II., and considerably improved by his son Louis. It is said that 16,000 of the loveliest kinds of roses in existence are to be seen on this island, the scent of which is wafted far away to the remotest shores of the lake.

The Hermitage, a little Italian villa, and a gardener's cottage are now the only dwellings on this island of flowers, which cluster so thickly that it is almost impossible to find the tiny quay at which the King landed from his steam yacht "Tristan." It was here that this mythical sovereign had collected the works of his favourite authors, here that he dreamt and ruminated, and

spent a few of his happiest days. Then it was here that he received his cousin Elizabeth, when the two talked without fear of interruption of the topics that most deeply interested them both.

Who will dare to lay his finger on the spot and say where reason ceased and madness took its rise in these two human beings?

"I am inclined to believe," the Empress remarked on one occasion, when Hamlet was under discussion, "that men who are considered mad are in reality the absolutely clever ones."

The whole of Europe was aware of the whims of King Louis, his debts, his repugnance to women, and his remarkable attachment to a few men. The universal verdict was that he was insane, which was adopted as the general opinion in his own country, and led to his deposition in 1886, when he was sent to the Castle of Berg, in charge of his physician, Dr. Gudden.

One evening in June, the two went out together, and as they did not return, they were sought for, when both bodies were eventually found in the waters of the lake.

It is reported that the Empress of Austria emphatically disapproved of her cousin being treated as insane, and that Francis Joseph had promised at her urgent request to do everything that lay in

his power to get his deposition as reigning sovereign converted into a temporary measure.

At the time of the awful catastrophe, Elizabeth was at Feldafing, as usual at this season of the year. The King's tragic end made an indelible impression upon her, and she hastened at once to the room where his body had been laid, with strict orders that she was to be left alone. When the door was at length opened from the outside, she was found on the floor in a faint, from which it was difficult to recall her to consciousness, and her mind for the first few minutes still remained completely clouded.

"Take the King out of the vault," she madly shrieked, "he is not dead, he only feigns death that he may be at peace, without tormentors."

"Have you never seen a corpse?" she asked one day of Dr. Christomanos. "The face of the dead always wears an expression of pain and scorn. It is the sign of conquest over life that has been so burdensome, and has at length been overcome!"

Louis II. lay in state in the Royal Castle at Munich; wreaths were literally piled up around him, but only one single flower rested on his breast, a spray of jessamine, the last gift of Elizabeth to her friend and relation.

There had been an understanding between them that they should both arrive at the Rose Island at the same appointed hour; but if anything intervened to prevent one of them from coming, the other was to write a note and place it in a drawer of the writing-table, of which they two alone had a key. When looking over the King's effects, a letter was found in this drawer with the inscription: "From the dove to the eagle," which were the names used by the Empress and the King in their romantic intercourse.

Elizabeth spent many weeks in lonely sorrow for her cousin's death, alternating between the hope that he had not been insane, and the fear lest the malady of her race should attack herself. This proved the last of her summer visits to Feldafing. Her brother the doctor, Duke Charles Theodore, endeavoured to persuade her to join him at Tegernsee,* where he had his general and ophthalmic hospitals, and she tried the plan one year, but only for a very short time. Her aged parents and her daughter Gisela saw very little of her after the death of Loius, but

* The imposing *Schloss*, formerly a Benedictine Abbey, founded in 719 and suppressed 1804, was erected in the eighteenth century. In the centre is the church. The south wing, fitted up by Max Joseph of Bavaria, now belongs to Duke Charles Theodore. The north wing contains an extensive brewery.

whenever she was in Munich, she never failed to go down into the royal vault and linger in silent prayer by the coffin of her unhappy cousin.

CHAPTER XIX

THE EMPRESS ON HER TRAVELS

ENDOWED with a keen appreciation of nature, with an ardent desire of knowledge, as well as impelled by innate nervous restlessness, the Empress Elizabeth spent the greater portion of her time in travelling from one place to another, frequently visiting strange distant spots without any imperial display, simply as an ordinary intelligent tourist.

"We ought to try and rescue a few minutes," she used to say, "in which we can each, according to individual taste, live our very own life. I feel myself as though born again, every time I can breathe an unknown air, and when I am quite by myself in a lonely spot, and realise that it has rarely been trodden by the foot of man, I feel that my relation to nature here is quite different from what it would be in the company of others. Life among men gives us all a uniform outer existence, combined with fellowship in our

lower instincts." "The goal of our journey is attractive, especially as we must travel in order to reach it," she observed on another occasion, "but if I knew that I could never leave a place I was in, it would be hell to *me;* though a perpetual paradise in itself, and the thought that I shall soon leave my temporary home touches me, and makes me love it the more. In that way I bury a dream each time I travel, it vanishes from my mind, and I sigh for a fresh one."

Nature exercised an extraordinary influence over her, and the consciousness of its own harmony raised her above the moods and conflicts of daily life. "The minimum of one's time ought to be spent indoors," she used to say, "and our homes ought to be so arranged that they can never dispel the illusions we bring into them."

She really preferred to contemplate foreign lands from the deck of her yacht, away from "the common herd." "I like to see Europe in profile," she is said to have remarked. The sea had a magnetic attraction for her. In her childhood she had wandered by the shore of the deep blue Lake of Starnberg and rowed upon its waters, and in her later years this devotion to

the lake was transferred into enthusiasm for the sea. When she was on her yacht, she would pace up and down the deck, hour after hour quite alone, when nobody was allowed to approach her, or in any way disturb the current of her thoughts.

"The sea is my father confessor," she said, "it restores my youth, for it removes from one all that is not myself; all that I know I have learnt from the sea." And on another occasion, she remarked: "The ocean is like a mighty mother, on whose breast one can forget everything else." She knew no fear at sea and remained on deck whatever the weather might be; so that while her companions were suffering the agonies of sea-sickness, she would sit reclining in her chair during the severest storms. She was rarely seen in the saloon, and only cared to enjoy the roar of the waves or the madness of a storm.

The yacht "Miramare," on which she sailed half round the world, was comfortable and elegant, though the furniture, even in the Empress's cabins, was covered with white linen over the silk upholstery, but flowers were always to be seen. Her bath-room was fitted up with every comfort, and a boat, provided with casks,

was sent off daily some distance from the yacht, which went on its way the while, to bring in clear sea water for Elizabeth's use.

On the deck stood a large circular glass apartment with windows on every side, provided with blue silk blinds, and a seat that went the whole way round. It was here that her hair was dressed each morning, while she wrote, read or listened to reading aloud, and during this time all the blinds were drawn down. Sometimes, if it rained, she occupied this glass room from which, with every blind drawn up, she had an uninterrupted view in every direction.

"I am a stormy petrel," she said. "I have my sails removed that I may not lose one glimpse of the angry billows, and every time a fresh wave bursts over the deck, I long to shout for joy." Her especial domain was the after-deck and the one bridge which she had had partitioned off with sailcloth, so that she could see nothing of the vessel, only the free expanse of the waves. She had her fixed hours for the bridge or the after-deck and spent the morning on the former, the afternoon on the latter, returning to the bridge in the evening when the sailcloth was removed, and the crew were bound to render themselves practically invisible.

"I want to enjoy life on board as fully and as long as possible," she said, "it is like being on an island from which all worries and fretting intercourse are banished. It is an ideal existence without desires and without the sense of time, which is always painful, because it proclaims the transitoriness of life."

In foreign lands the Empress usually travelled as the Countess of Hohenembs, the thirty-eighth of the forty-three titles to which, according to the Court Calendar, her Majesty was entitled. She preferred to stay in places sacred from the invasion of "globe-trotters;" she hated noise and disturbance, and possessed, in an eminent degree, the innate dislike of true gentlefolk to court attention.

It was in 1885 that she paid her visit to the East, when she was the first of the crowned heads of Europe to become acquainted with the site at Troy. Her endurance as a traveller has hardly its equal among women, for while most of her ladies accompanied her on horseback, in her repeated excursions to Troy, the Empress walked eight miles at a stretch in burning sunshine, over wretched roads with very little food, and yet without any apparent sign of fatigue. She frequently conversed with the peasants while

in the East, and without an interpreter, as most of them understood Greek, which she herself spoke with great fluency.

She also travelled in North Africa, and the Oriental towns she most enjoyed were Tunis, Algiers, Alexandria and Cairo. But she also visited Tlemczen, the ancient capital of Algiers, and made several excursions to the large monastery of the Trappists at Staüëli, where she carefully inspected the work of the monks, and never left these silent men without contributing a large sum of money for the benefit of the poor of their district.

"There are many people who do not like to travel in these countries, because the towns are so dirty," she said, "but, for my part, I love the East, and precisely in its present picturesque condition. I do not see the dust and dirt, and am only conscious of the inhabitants, who are a source of real pleasure to me." "I feel myself quite at home in Cairo," she remarked on another occasion, "in a crowd of porters and donkeys. I am far less oppressed than at a Court ball, and almost as happy as in a wood. Culture is to be found even in the deserts of Arabia, especially in the south and east, where civilisation has not yet intruded. Civilisation is suggestive

of tram-cars, culture of lovely open woods; civilisation tries to fetter every man, to imprison him in a cage."

No matter where she was staying, the needs of the poor were never forgotten, and her generosity is remembered in many a wretched hovel in Morocco, Egypt, and Tunis, as well as in Greece, France, Ireland, and Switzerland.

Her gifts were innumerable, and even the station-master of little unimportant places through which she passed, were surprised to receive as a souvenir a breast-pin, a ring, or some other valuable object.

She was a remarkable linguist, for in addition to German and Hungarian, she was perfectly fluent in French, English, and Greek, and had, moreover, a knowledge of Latin; but she did not speak Italian, and had no pronounced affection for Italy or its people.

"The Emperor still speaks Italian very correctly," she observed to Dr. Christomanos some years before her death, "it is the only thing that remains of our power in Italy; and it is more than we need! I was obliged to learn Italian at one time, but I could not endure the language, and my efforts were in vain.

Years before her murder by an Italian, she had been in danger of her life from one of his countrymen. It was early in the eighties, during an exhibition at Trieste, when an Italian threw a bomb into a citadel where she happened to be, and several persons were wounded, but Elizabeth escaped unhurt.

About a fortnight after the occurrence, Francis Joseph and the Crown Prince Rudolph intended to visit the exhibition, when the Empress decided to accompany them, but as there was every reason to fear several murderous assaults, both her husband and her son earnestly entreated her to remain in Vienna, but she absolutely refused to accede to their wishes.

"If you forsee rough usage, the need for me to accompany you becomes but the more imperative," she replied, "and if a misfortune should occur, my place is undoubtedly by the side of my husband and my son."

She was exposed to gross insult from the Italian people of the Lago di Garda a few years before her death, during a steamer excursion with a few ladies and gentlemen. When the party had landed at a small town on the southern end of the lake, the Austrian Empress was received with howls and hisses, and the behaviour of the mob

finally became so obnoxious, that she and her companions could only beat a hasty retreat to the shelter of the steamer, stone after stone being hurled at the Empress, even after the boat had left the shore.

Whenever the incident was referred to on her return to Austria, she always observed:

"That which occurred in Italy must be allowed to remain in Italy."

. . . . . .

On account of her preference for a retired life, most people were far better acquainted with the appearance of the Archdukes and Archduchesses than with that of the Empress herself.

It happened that she one day took the train at Mödling, accompanied only by a lacquey, whom she sent to the station-master to request him to arrange for the stoppage of the train at a little road-side station in the vicinity of Lainz. While the man was talking, the train was gently beginning to move, when Elizabeth shouted to the guard.

"Tell that man in a black coat that he must be quick."

"Be sharp, or your wife will be off without you!" said the guard, who apparently believed that the Empress was the better half of the lacquey.

She loved the surprises brought about by her incognito, and met with adventures on most of her travels. It was not always easy to wear the mask, in spite of her subtle precautions, though she frequently spent days, even weeks, in one of her residences, without a suspicion of her presence among the outer world. It was no rare occurrence for a crowd to stand round a station or a hotel in order to catch a glimpse of her, hours after her quiet arrival by quite another route than they had expected. During one of her visits to the south of Austria she made an excursion to see an old castle in the possession of a country nobleman.

A gentleman was standing in the doorway, who like so many others, did not know the Empress, of whom she asked if it was allowed to visit the castle, and on his answering in the affirmative, she entered with her companions. After the lapse of an hour her lady-in-waiting came out, leaving Elizabeth still in the house. The gentleman was the owner and was still standing as before, when he enquired if the ladies were staying in the neighbourhood, and where they came from.

"We belong to the court" was the reply. "What does the Empress look like?" he asked further.

The Empress had in the meanwhile arrived on the scene, and replied.

"She is not easy to describe; you must see her."

The nobleman rejoined that he had no opportunity of doing so.

Elizabeth smiled, and observed:

"Such a thing may happen as a sight of the Empress without being aware of it."

She took him for a butler, and offered him a coin, which he rejected, observing:

"You do not appear to know me."

"Do not be offended," begged the Empress, adding. "As you did not know *me*, I may be pardoned for not having recognized *you*."

In her younger days, she frequently stayed in Scotland and Ireland for the pleasure of fox-hunting, and it happened on one occasion when she was out with the hounds, that the fox fled for refuge into the grounds of the Roman Catholic College at Maynooth, where the students were just then enjoying a quarter of an hour's recreation. A high wall encloses the space, but they were suddenly startled by a fox springing into their midst, followed in a second by several hounds, and finally by an intrepid horsewoman.

The fox was caught, the lady alighted from her

horse, addressed herself to the young men, and begged for an interview with their President.

As soon as he appeared, she introduced herself as Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, and requested to be allowed a room where she could dry her habit, for in her eager chase after the fox, she had urged her horse over a brook and her skirts had become literally wet through.

Dr. Logue, the present Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, ordered a room to be prepared as quickly as possible, including a good fire.

It soon became evident that the Empress was far more thoroughly drenched than she had thought, and that it would be impossible to dry her habit in less than three or four hours.

No women live in the College, and consequently there is not a single feminine garment to be had, but Elizabeth begged the President to lend her one of his cassocks, in which she figured during the drying of her habit. She even invited her host and his masters to a cup of tea in her apartment, when they were all enraptured with her charms, as well as amused with her unique costume and the anecdotes she told them connected with her hunting and travelling experiences.

She was frequently in Amsterdam, where she underwent the massage treatment of the famous

Dr. Metzger. One day she went into a toyshop and purchased a doll, observing as she turned to her lady-in-waiting :

" I think my grand-daughter will be pleased to have it."

The shopman, who could not conceive that this slender, juvenile-looking lady could be a grandmother, made the remark :

" You are not speaking seriously ; you cannot have grandchildren."

" Yes, I have four grandchildren," replied the Empress, " and to prove the fact, I will come in again and buy some toys for the others, which you can send to my daughter, the Princess Gisela in Munich."

The man was abashed and begged pardon for his rudeness.

" You were not rude," answered the Empress, " on the contrary, very polite."

In Austria, she was looked upon as somewhat eccentric, because there, as elsewhere, she was rarely to be seen in the street without carrying an open fan before her face.

It happened one day that a *gamin* snatched the fan from her, and cried :

" Let me see your face."

In spite of the numerous uncomfortable inci-

dents that occurred through this incognito travelling, she could never be induced to give it up, and became annoyed if her wishes were not respected. In a hotel in Spain, she entered her name as "Madame Folna from Corfu," and to one of the waiters who addressed her as "Your Highness," she replied sharply:

"There are no Highnesses in my apartments."

She not infrequently took a journey in order to inspect some work of art that had been mentioned to her, but on these occasions, she never named to her companions the object of her excursion.

Her Greek teacher, Professor Rhousso Rhoussopoulos, relates that once during a visit to Wiesbaden, where the Empress was taking the waters for sciatica, she suddenly gave orders that he was to accompany her and her daughter Valerie. It was not till they reached the railway station that he learnt they were bound for Frankfort, where Elizabeth wished to see Thorwaldsen's reliefs, and Danecker's Ariadne belonging to Baron Rothschild.

Luncheon had been ordered in the restaurant at the Frankfort station. The Empress was in exuberant spirits, and taking her daughter's arm, she walked up and down the platform and derived

great amusement from watching the varied life of a station. She was happy to be quite unknown, took her seat cheerfully at table and enjoyed the first course; but unfortunately, the second was handed on a gilt service and by an increased staff of waiters. Her incognito had been discovered and betrayed, her good humour vanished in a moment, and her only thought was to be quick and leave as soon as possible. It angered her to be watched.

Once when Professor Rhoussopoulos was walking with her in some town of North Germany, she suddenly exclaimed:

"Notice that lady on the other side of the road, look, she is staring at us!"

The Professor looked, and the Empress repeated: "She is literally fixing her eyes upon me! What do you say to that?"

"I think, your Majesty, that it is a bad habit, which that lady possesses," replied the Professor.

That very minute the Empress ran across the road, and in a second the lady and she were locked in each other's arms. It was her sister, the Countess de Trani, who was almost as devoted to travelling as Elizabeth herself.

Wherever the Empress might be, she was in constant collision with the police authorities,

whose duty it was to watch over her safety. Sometimes she would go considerably out of her way in order to avoid them, or endeavour to slip away and mislead them with false details of her plans, when nothing pleased her better than to hear they were off on a wrong track.

An English journalist was one day standing in front of a second-hand bookseller's shop in Monza, and had been looking at the volumes displayed, some three or four minutes, when the owner came out and asked him to be good enough to pass on, as a lady in the shop objected to being watched. She had taken him for a policeman in plain clothes. The journalist, who naturally wished to know who the lady might be, took a hasty glance, recognised the Empress, and gave his card to the bookseller, that the august customer might be assured of her error.

An hour later, he was walking through the park, when he unexpectedly perceived the Empress on foot a few steps in advance. In order to avoid the former mistake of being looked upon as a policeman, he was on the point of turning down a side avenue, when she beckoned to him to approach nearer.

With great dignity, but very kindly, she explained that the exaggerated zeal of the police

was oppressive to her, and apologised for the recent occurrence outside the bookseller's shop.

The following day the journalist left Monza for Milan, and on taking his seat late in the evening at a little table in a well known restaurant, he saw to his intense astonishment the Empress of Austria quite alone at a side table, without a single companion, or the least protection.

One of the waiters went up to her and said :—

"You have not come for a meal, Signora? It is very late, and there is nothing nice left."

"But I am hungry," replied the Empress, "you must bring me something."

The man darted off into the kitchen, and returned after the lapse of a few minutes.

"There is just one thing left, Signora," he exclaimed, "the very best thing of all, you need not hesitate to enjoy it, if *I* recommend it, for I had some myself only an hour ago, but it's rather dear."

The Empress enquired :—

"What will this remarkable dish cost?"

"Eighty centesimi," replied the waiter, looking at her rather anxiously.

Elizabeth laughed merrily.

"You need not laugh, Signora," he continued, rather nettled. "There are a good many who

think it very dear and only take a half portion."

The Journalist had sat as still as a mouse, hidden behind a large newspaper, but the Empress had recognised him, and said with a smile :—

"Good-evening! But this must not be reported in your paper!"

In the summer of 1875 she rented, under an assumed name, a gentleman's residence in Normandy, and remained there for some months, enjoying daily long rides by the sea-shore, and astonishing the peasants by her intrepidity and the manner in which she overcame every obstacle.

One day a *gamin* ran after her horse and pelted it with stones till the animal shied. The case was reported by some eye-witnesses, and the Prefect of the district called upon the Empress to say that the boy would be punished.

"I thank you for your trouble," she replied, "but I lodged no complaint, and I do not wish that anyone should be punished on my account."

On the occasion of a misfortune at sea, in which many fishermen lost their lives, she was the foremost in assisting the widows and fatherless, when the lavishness of her gifts attracted universal comment, and it became impossible for her to maintain her incognito, or escape the re-

spectful demonstrations of the people. It annoyed her, and as soon as her true rank could no longer be concealed she left the place as quickly as possible.

She was exceedingly fond of Paris, and nearly always stayed there on her longer journeys in Europe, but only as the Countess of Hohenembs, never as Empress of Austria. After the meeting with Napoleon III. and Eugénie at Salzburg in 1867, she was expected to pay an official return visit at the Tuileries, but she allowed the Emperor to go alone.

She was however a frequent visitor to Paris under the Empire in order to meet her sisters, the ex-Queen of Naples, the Countess de Trani and the Duchess of Alençon, when she enjoyed riding in the Bois de Boulogne, as well as walking on the boulevards, where she could lose herself among the crowd when she chose.

It occurred to her one day that it would be nice to go in an omnibus. When she was asked for her fare, she gave the conductor two gold pieces, and her lavishness naturally roused the amazement of the thrifty Parisians. She was recognised, and the excitement of her fellow-travellers became so oppressive, that she left the vehicle as soon as she could, and rushed into the nearest house to

perfect strangers, to wait until the dispersion of the crowd which had gathered round her. After this she drove back to her hotel in a closed carriage with the blinds drawn down, and vowed that this should be the first and last time of travelling in an omnibus in a capital city.

She was an ardent admirer of Napoleon the Great, and often exclaimed:

"What a man! but such a pity that he aspired to an Imperial crown." Her interest even urged her to visit Ajaccio and the home of the Bonapartes.

She was a more frequent guest than ever in the French capital after the war in 1870, when she deeply deplored the destruction of many architectural master-pieces at the hands of the communists.

The office of the policeman whose duty it was to watch over her was no sinecure. She often rose at four o'clock and went off alone to the Bois de Boulogne, when the detectives who had been watching all night about her hotel, had to hurry after her as quickly as they could. In her personal intercourse with them she was amiability itself, but inconceivably imprudent and absolutely intractable with reference to every precaution for her safety. The Emperor and Empress once

spent a short time together at Mentone, and one day Elizabeth summoned the police inspector and told him that it was a great annoyance to her that his men were always at her heels when she went for a walk, and she demanded emphatically that this surveillance should cease. The inspector replied that he was compelled to fulfil his duty, and if this displeased her Majesty, there was no course left to him but to resign his office.

"I wish you to remain in Mentone," rejoined the Empress, "but direct all your attention to my husband, whose life is essential to his subjects. As for myself—what am I? A stranger who may pass unnoticed! I am willing to be the victim of a misfortune which your watchfulness cannot foresee. You cannot prevent a tile from falling and injuring me, nor a boulder from giving way on my mountain rambles."

CHAPTER XX

THE EMPRESS AND LITERATURE

ELIZABETH was extremely musical, she sang well, and we remember that her father had trained her to be a good performer on the zither. She became a pupil of Liszt after her marriage, and frequently took part in court concerts for charitable objects, either as a pianist or a zither-player.

Her favourite composers were Rubinstein, Chopin, and Wagner, and to this last she proved a true friend in need by sending him a substantial sum of money in a time of dire necessity; and after his death she attended the Wagner performances in Bayreuth, but in strict incognito.

She also evinced great interest in art, and placed herself on a friendly footing with Munkácsy and Makart, in whose studios she spent many happy hours.

In her younger days she derived pleasure from the performances in the Hofburg Theatre, but afterwards she wearied of them, and possibly like

her royal cousin of Bavaria, she would have preferred the acting to have been for herself alone. Her interest, however, in individual actors did not flag, and towards the close of the eighties she arrived one day unexpectedly at the lunatic asylum in Vienna to enquire after an actor whose mind had hopelessly given way. And the well-known tragedian, Ferdinand Bonn, who settled in Vienna a few years before the death of the Empress, has recently related the following: He had been exposed to unjust accusations with reference to both his artistic and his private life, and was leading a retired misanthropical sort of existence at Hietzing, on the remotest outskirts of Vienna, when his servant one morning announced that a Frau Elizabeth wished to see him.

Greatly annoyed, he shouted loud enough to be heard through the open window:

"There is no such person as Frau Elizabeth! I am not at home."

The servant left the room to convey his master's message, and at the same moment the actor took a cautious peep, when he saw a lady of slight figure, dressed in black, standing in the garden, with two companions. He rapidly descended the steps from the verandah, when the ladies came forward, and he stammered in painful

confusion: "Forgive me, are you really the Empress?"

It was the Empress Elizabeth, who then accompanied him indoors, sympathised with him in the persecution to which he had been subjected, contemplated his poorly furnished home, and stood for some minutes before a painting representing the actor in the character of Hamlet.

"What the Empress, who herself had suffered so keenly, said to me, seemed to reconcile me to the contumelous treatment to which I had been exposed," the actor explained, "I shall never forget her words, they will recur to my mind, even in the hour of death."

High-spirited and intelligent as she was, she had her own decided tastes in art and poetry, which were rarely in touch with those of the Court. Her admiraiton for all that is truly great, had become second nature to her, and commanded homage in whatever form it presented itself before her.

We noticed in a previous chapter that it was during her communing with Nature in Madeira and Corfu, that she first acquired a love of reading, and from that time, the companionship of great minds in the literature of the world became a refreshment that compensated for the daily trials

of her life, as well as a corrective against the depression in which sorrowful experiences and her hereditary tendency threatened to engulf her again and again.

Few people have better grasped the economy of time, in this respect, than the Empress Elizabeth. She was rarely to be seen without a book in her hand, and she would spend hours at a time, walking or sitting in park and garden, deeply engrossed in reading.

Clever men who made her acquaintance were amazed at her store of information, and the scholar Hasenauer remarked: "One needs a thorough knowledge of history, art and science to be able to converse with her, her learning is astonishing."

She has translated all the works of Schopenhauer with remarkable accuracy into modern Greek, and studied Voltaire and Rousseau with keen appreciation. She, who herself had acquired so much, and whose thirst for information never seemed quenched, often observed that she understood Rousseau's longing to return to Nature, and wished as he did, that all superfluous knowledge could be scattered to the winds. It is universally acknowledged that her strong primary admiration for literature was awakened by

Heinrich Heine, whose poetry was so dear to her. A volume of his works came into her hands in the early days of her married life, and simply fascinated her by the outpouring of suffering and disappointment which she herself had experienced; and as years went by, she must have read every poem from his pen. His "Reisebilder" had a permanent attraction for the Empress whose love of travel was so keen, and she turned to them again and again. What she especially admired in Heine, and that which secured her love for his works, was his intense sincerity.

"Heine is different from most other authors, because he despises hypocrisy," she once wrote; "he always shows himself as he *is*, with the inherent good and frailty of humanity."

She once remarked to a German writer who had discovered the manuscript of some satirical poems of his, which he hesitated to publish, on account of their political opinions:

"Heinrich Heine's readers are not confined to one nation, but belong to every race, who have a right to know all the works of a poet with whom no other can be compared."

She wished to see some public recognition of his worth, and a committee was at once formed with the object of erecting his statue in a German

town, and the plan seemed likely to be effectively carried out, especially as the Empress of Austria headed the list of subscribers with a strikingly large amount.

But in the meantime a note was received from the German Chancellor, addressed to the Cabinet in Vienna, in which Bismarck expressed his astonishment that the Empress of a friendly adjoining State should do homage to a poet who had calumniated the Hohenzollerns.

Francis Joseph and Elizabeth had lived for years as good comrades, who respected each other's tastes and sympathies without disagreement; but, in view of the Triple Alliance, * the Emperor was for once compelled to beg his consort to yield to the Iron Chancellor, and allow her name to be erased from the subscription list for the Heine memorial.

The Empress felt that she must submit, and thanks to the interference of Bismarck, the satisfaction of erecting a statue to Heine in Germany is still reserved for the future.

But Elizabeth was determined, and had her revenge. Having heard that the Danish sculptor. Hasselrüs had made a cast of her favourite poet,

*Between Germany, Austria, and Italy, adopted in 1883.

she commissioned him to execute it for her in marble, and had it placed in the grounds of her Castle at Corfu. The pleasant relations of the Hohenzollerns towards Austria were not disturbed by the incident, and the present Emperor of Germany, her son's intimate friend, always paid Elizabeth the most marked respect.

He never travelled through Austria, or visited any German watering-place where she might be, without calling upon her with the Empress, and showing her the attention which she valued; indeed William II. is said to have remarked that Elizabeth of Austria-Hungary was the most intellectual woman he had ever met.

The feeling was hardly reciprocal. It was Heine's cry of pain and his scoffs at the heart-rending illusions of life that had first struck a responsive chord in the heart of Elizabeth, though it was not until after the victory of the Prussians over the Austrians that the world at large had understood her admiration for the poet, whose undisguised hatred of the Prussians, biting sarcasms on their spiked helmets and desire to make the Prussian eagle a butt for the sharpshooters of the Rhine, undoubtedly found an echo in her mind.

She had acquired a personal interest in Heine, which she evinced in many ways, and she fre-

quently had wreaths placed on his grave, with broad streamers bearing the inscription: "From the Empress Elizabeth to her favourite poet."

During her constant visits to Paris, she never failed to make a pilgrimage to Montmartre and decorate his grave with her own hands.

She says in a poem, in which she recalls these visits to the cemetery:—

"I thought of *him* for whom I wept
Whom I had never seen,
'Twas but his dust o'er which I knelt,
His soul in realms serene,
Long since has dwelt with Him who bade
The weary and oppressed,
Lay down their burdens at His feet,
With Him for ever rest." *

In order to gain a closer acquaintance with the poet than is possible from any biography, she went to visit his sister Frau Charlotte von Embden in Hamburg, then in her ninety-first year.

"She did not sit with me like an Empress, but like a dear daughter," the old lady remarked, and added that these conversations with Elizabeth were the most interesting she had had in the whole course of her long life.

* Translated from the Norwegian version.

"No critic and no biographer has understood my brother half so accurately as the Empress Elizabeth," she used to say.

Prince Rudolph had set enquiries on foot as to where the manuscripts of Heine's "Buch der Lieder" could be obtained, and finally presented it to his mother; while, as an expression of her gratitude, Frau von Embden gave her a collection of letters from the deceased poet, of too intimate a nature to be offered to the general public.

It requires an unusually poetic temperament to be able to dwell with the intense interest of Elizabeth upon poets and their creations; and yet she did not care for a great number of books, but was content to read and ponder those that most deeply affected her.

Heine was undoubtedly the only German poet whom she understood and appreciated: neither Goethe nor Schiller could charm her, or appeal to either heart or intellect. Marie Valerie, who admired Victor Scheffel, drew the attention of her mother to his works, but he had a far greater fascination for the young Archduchess than for the Empress, who had had time for more reflection and experience in life's ways.

She took no pleasure in modern French poetry, though she thought highly of Lamartine; and

among English poets her especial favourites were Shakespeare and Byron. Her interest in Shakespeare fell but little short of her admiration for Heine, and it is said that she made some excellent translations of several of his dramas and learnt whole scenes by heart. Her favourites were Hamlet and The Midsummer Night's Dream. A picture of Titania and the ass's head was to be found in every one of her residences, and she used to say: "We are all given to caress the ass's head of our illusions."

During the incessant travelling which occupied the greatest part of her life, she never omitted to send long letters to her husband and children, at least once a week, sometimes oftener; but instead of descriptions of her mode of life or of her personal thoughts, the large square envelopes sometimes contained original poems, or perhaps the translation of a scene or two from Shakespeare. She wrote capital accounts of her travels and illustrated them with hundreds of sketches taken in the places that she visited. Her literary works, either in the form of diaries, which she kept for many years, or letters to her family, are preserved in the Hofburg.

She never thought of publishing any of her writings, and read or used her pen solely for

entertainment or enjoyment, without a spark of ambition for literary renown, so that very few of her poems have become known to the public. The following lines, inscribed under a Madonna in the vicinity of Ischl, are the best known, although they are read by the majority without a suspicion that they were written by the Empress Elizabeth.

"O, breite deine Arme aus,
Maria die wir grussen!
Leg' schützend sie auf dieses Haus,
Im Thal, zu deinen Fussen!
O, segne dieses kleine Nest,
Mag rings der Sturm auch wuthen!
In deinem Schutze steht es fest
Voll Gnaden wirst Du's hüten."

(Stretch out thy loving arms,
O Mary whom we greet,
Lay them in blessing on this home
Which nestles at thy feet;
This valley bless, this sheltered spot,
Though tempests rage elsewhere,
Tempest and storm can touch it not
Fenced by thy loving care)

A few years before her death she visited Mehadia, a small town in the south-east of Hungary,* for the use of the far-famed Baths of Hercules.

* About half an hour's railway journey from Orsova.

Here she found a shepherd's hut built on one of the lofty hills that overlook the Baths, and in one of her frequent visits to the solitude, she wrote in Hungarian, with her pencil on the table, lines that can only have a bare equivalent in the following :

All is fleeting here below,
  Life but means a journey on—
Eternal nature thou dost know
  Steadfast existence, changes none ;
Happy he who lives in thee,
  Thou wilt fill his soul with joy ;
Peace I pray thee grant to me
  That only peace without alloy.* *

* * Translated from the Norwegian version.

CHAPTER XXI

SICKNESS—DAILY LIFE OF THE EMPRESS—HER MANNER TOWARDS HER HOUSEHOLD AND THE LADIES OF HER COURT

We recall the severe illness of the Empress when quite a young woman, soon after the birth of her only son, when careful nursing and a repeated sojourn in genial southern air, saved her life and enabled her to return home after some years' travelling, strong in health and brilliant in beauty.

But towards the end of the seventies, she was attacked by the painful complaint known at the present day by the modern name of neurasthenia. It was the hereditary malady of the Wittelsbachs in an acute degree, and had manifested itself in one generation after another by a dislike to intercourse with mankind, in conjunction with the strangest caprices; and as it is a fact that where nerve trouble is inherited it is likely to increase in intensity, Elizabeth's craving for solitude, her repugnance to mix with others, her restlessness and continual change of residence, may certainly be looked upon as at least partially inherited.

She was far more suffering than was generally supposed, but organic disorders, neuritis and several serious illnesses had rendered her life a perfect martyrdom for years. Acute rheumatism in her knees in the early eighties had compelled her to give up riding, which was a grief to her, and as long as she lived she was troubled with sciatica, indeed, in the latter years of her life, her sufferings were at times so excruciating that her physician declared it needed almost superhuman patience to bear the attacks without shrieking. But Elizabeth had trained her body to submit, she bore pain heroically, and when possible sought for compensation in the loss of her rides by mountain climbing and ceaseless walking.

These exhausting excursions in wood and field conveyed a totally false impression of her physical powers to outsiders, as even experienced Alpine guides frequently found it difficult to follow her without fatigue. It is obvious that her light step carried her more easily over the ground than most, and besides, her exaggerated exertion was in a measure due to the excited condition of her nerves. She was a martyr to insomnia, and therefore sought for physical fatigue in the hope of obtaining the needed nightly rest for which she craved.

The Empress was accustomed to the simplest diet and had a very small appetite. The *pleasures* of the table were unknown to her, or at all events, she did not appeciate them. She rarely ate any but cold dishes, and even at state banquets she was satisfied with a couple of slices of wheaten bread, a cup of bouillon and some fruit.

In ordinary life as well as during her travels, she frequently went without real dinner, when her refreshment consisted mainly of a glass of milk, a piece of bread and a couple of biscuits. She was particularly fond of sweet things and was never without her box of bon-bons. She abhorred all stimulant, and never touched wine of any sort, even at gala dinners, and could hardly be persuaded to take it, when it had been prescribed as necessary.

She had but scant faith in the science of medicine and preferred to seek alleviation from pain through her own remedies. She would live for weeks and months at a time upon nothing but milk, or put herself on an orange diet and adhere to it most rigidly. She had a morbid fear of becoming stout, partly because she was proud of her slender figure, partly because she considered it better for her health to remain thin, and for

this reason she was weighed each day. If by chance she was a little heavier than usual, she at once took nothing but oranges, until she had become as slim as she desired.

The doctors were naturally annoyed that she paid so little heed to their advice, and maintained that it was unjustifiable on her part to restrict herself to such meagre fare, while the pronounced anæmia of her later years was the result of the self-chosen régime to which she had accustomed herself.

But little as Elizabeth personally cared for material enjoyment, she was extremely particular when with the Emperor, about the menu, and the chef had to read his list to her each morning while she criticised it, or even suggested an alteration.

No table could possibly be more tastefully ordered then that of the Austrian Court when the Empress was present, and it was she who provided the most costly services of gold, silver, and porcelain for all the Imperial Castles; and yet they were but rarely used, owing to her preference for a retired life.

Maria Theresa had sixteen children, and her son Leopold II. had had seventeen, which accounts for the numerous members of the

Austrian Imperial family; and in addition a great many other Princes were resident in Vienna, more or less connected with the house of Habsburg-Lorraine. But except on a few occasions in the course of the Winter, when the Archdukes and Archduchesses were invited, the more distant relatives never saw either Francis Joseph or Elizabeth.

Immersed in work, and in his elder years caring for no recreation beyond his hunting excursions, the Emperor led as retired a life as his solitude-loving consort.*

When he visited Elizabeth, or she stayed for a time in one of the Imperial residences in order to be with him and their children, she did all that lay in her power to make the meeting a happy

*"There is an article on 'Imperial Sportsmen' in *Pearson's Magazine* (October, 1900) and from it we take the following extract: "Among the royal sportsmen of to-day, the Emperor of Austria stands out a picturesque figure. He goes far afield to look for his game, his favourite sport being chamois shooting in the mountains of the Tyrol, near Ischl. His dress is entirely unpretentious, being little different from that of a peasant of the same locality, and it is very evident that he loves sport for its own sake. No man takes less heed of ceremony in the field. He is often alone, and, with an alpenstock in his hand and his rifle slung over his shoulders, the Emperor makes an early start, often as early as four o'clock in the morning. On one occasion at the end of a shoot got up in his honour at Compégne, and having fired fifteen hundred cartridges, he is credited with saying that he regretted he had not a second shoulder as well as a second gun.'"

one; she even seemed to be actuated by a longing to provide her husband with a fraction of that family life which he had been compelled to forego during her frequent travels. She nearly always spent her evenings in long intimate talks on the terrace, or by the fireside with him and their younger daughter, when they were occasionally joined by the Crown Prince.

If the Emperor was busy, she conversed with Marie Valerie and her ladies, but of these there were but few, for she kept her Court in general at a distance. Her bearing towards those whom she did not like seemed to indicate clearly: "No admittance except on business." And if her wishes were not respected, her nervousness could change into hot indignation. Indeed it happened on one occasion that she struck a gentleman-in-waiting on the grand staircase of the Imperial Palace at Vienna, who for some cause had incurred her displeasure. The box on the ear had been witnessed by far too many for him to be willing to overlook the insult and he therefore felt himself compelled to beg the Emperor to excuse him from all further service.

Francis Joseph was not annoyed, simply forbearing and indulgent when he heard of this display of energy on the part of Elizabeth, and

may have felt how often he himself was wanting in promptitude. He is said to have remarked that he had a good mind to take the man at his word and discharge him, but with his accustomed good nature he re-considered the matter, and in view of mollifying the indignant official, he presented him with an order the following day.

The episode of the nobleman who was decorated because his ears had been boxed by the Empress, was a source of intense amusement to the Viennese.

Little as Elizabeth was appreciated in her advancing years by the higher classes who hardly knew her, she was on the other hand, genuinely loved by the ladies of her court most in touch with her, and her servants adored her. All these were the objects of her care and ready sympathy, and no one could guide or comfort more sincerely than she. If one of her ladies was ill, the Empress hastened to her, and grudged no time spent by the bedside of the invalid.

An announcement appeared in the papers one morning that one of Her Majesty's maids of honour had died in the course of the night, and the Viennese who liked to slander their Empress, expressed many a bitter word about her indifference, because she had been seen riding in the

Prater the previous afternoon. Nobody knew that she had passed the whole of that night and several more, by the bedside of the dying woman, and that she had gone for a ride to gain refreshment from air and exercise after her painful watching.

One of her ladies wrote after her death :

"We, who loved her so well and knew her so intimately, just because we were so devoted to her, cannot speak of her, our voices are choked with tears. She was one of those exceptional characters, who are independent of the world, because they bear within themselves a life richer and better than that of ours. Every thought and instinct was on a higher level, she was innately a queen. And yet she was always modest, simple, thoroughly human and full of touching consideration towards all in attendance upon her. Indeed her thoughtfulness often distressed them, for she refrained from ringing in the night, though racked with pain, because she would not deprive others of their rest, a consideration which frequently—unknown to the Empress—induced some of her ladies to watch through the night outside the door of her room.

"We went to her with our deepest thoughts, as well as with our most worldly concerns, always

confident of her ever ready sympathy, her tender counsel, or prompt assistance in case of need." *

* The above letter has been kindly sent to me from the Imperial Library in Vienna.

CHAPTER XXII

ELIZABETH'S DRESS AND BEAUTIFUL HAIR

NATURE had endowed the Empress Elizabeth with beauty, a noble mind and considerable intellectual ability, while Providence had placed her in the highest position to which a woman can attain; she seemed created for happiness and deep attachment.

Her outward appearance was one of perfect harmony, but her character was full of contradictions. She loved solitude and the freedom of outdoor life, and yet no sovereign in Europe could bear herself with more grace than the Empress on any public occasion.

Simplicity in daily life was combined with boundless extravagance, and like her cousin Louis of Bavaria, she squandered enormous sums on building, and lavishly distributed money or costly gifts. She never submitted to the caprice of fashion, though her perfect figure was the ideal of every dressmaker. Her walk was light and

graceful, but she wore heavy, thick-soled boots. She hid her beauty behind a veil or a fan, and her gowns were plainer than those of her housemaids; but her innate dignity was always apparent, no matter what her dress might be. It was only with unwillingness that she appeared in the costly court robes that necessity imposed upon her, but even these bore the impress of her own individuality. Latterly she rarely wore anything but black and white, occasionally pale grey or lilac silk and velvet, but she never adopted pronounced colours. In spite of all she had gone through, time had hardly touched her features, and those who saw her at some court festivity. in full dress, sparkling with gold and precious stones, which seemed to enhance her incomparable beauty, have maintained that at fifty, she was quite as lovely as she had been twenty years previously.

Her hair remained as luxurious as in her youth, it still fell like a thick cloak below her knees, and it was not till she was nearing sixty that a few silver threads became apparent, a fact that was a source of distress to her. But this wealth of hair was also a trouble, and good and considerate as she was towards her dressers, she could not always restrain an impatient word

during the long morning hours needed to arrange it.

"I feel my hair," she observed to her Greek reader, Dr. Christomanos, as she let her fingers glide through its waves, "like a heavy foreign substance upon my head."

"Your Majesty's hair is like a crown, and needs no other," he replied.

"It is an easier matter to dispense with any other crown than with this," she rejoined with a sorrowful smile.

One day as she was climbing a mountain path with Dr. Christomanos, they met a lady with closely cropped hair, when the Empress exclaimed:

"That is a sensible woman, but if I were to have my hair cut short in order to get rid of an unnecessary weight, the people would fall upon me like wolves.

Another day, when Dr. Christomanos was reading aloud to her, while her hair was being dressed, she said:

"I am a slave to my hair—perhaps I shall cut every bit of it off!"

But outbreaks such as these had no serious meaning. Weariness and annoyance at the tedium her hair caused her, may have induced

her, for one short minute, to wish it away, though in reality she was proud of her abundant tresses; and this was one of the very few symptoms of vanity that she was ever known to evince.

CHAPTER XXIII

FRIENDSHIPS—THE CASTLE AT CORFU

DURING one of her walks in Madeira an aged man approached the Empress with a bouquet of camellias in his hand, which she accepted and ordered her companion to reward him with a few silver coins.

She continued her walk, when she was again accosted, but this time by a young girl who likewise offered her camellias, which Elizabeth repaid with a gold piece from her own hands.

Her companion enquired why she had given the healthy young girl so much more than the aged man.

"Because she was pretty," replied the Empress. The beauty of the young had an especial charm for her. She herself had enjoyed no youth, she had stepped, as it were, direct from childhood to a throne. But it was just because the pleasure of maidenhood had escaped her, that she felt an irresistible attraction to the first early bloom in a

woman, whether in real life or in some artistic representation.

Shakespeare's heroines of fifteen or sixteen, Miranda in "The Tempest," and Rosalind in "As you like it," counted among her literary favourites, and whenever she met with graceful young girls on her travels, she never failed to treat them with attention and generosity.

Deep and serious as her own inner life always was, she experienced a child-like gladness in the midst of innocent little ones, and possessed an extraordinary talent for gaining the confidence of the young of all ages, over whom, to the last, when she chose, she could exercise an irresistible fascination.

As we have seen she rarely had any intercourse with those ladies of her Court who were either mentally her inferiors, or with whose mode of thought she could not sympathise, and if in early days she ever became attached to anyone beneath her, it always aroused complaint and annoyance. There were many who maintained that she had never known real friendship; but impulsive as she was, she was capable of a warm, though passing affection for one or another, who had awakened her sympathy, and while this lasted, she would converse unreservedly with him or

her on every topic between heaven and earth. But she rapidly wearied of most acquaintances and allowed them to disappear from her horizon without a sigh, perhaps as a natural sequel to her peculiar restlessness.

The marriage of her eldest brother with the actress Henriette Mendel was mentioned in the first chapter, and their only child was the Countess Wallersee. The Empress, who ignored the difference in rank, sent for her niece, and during the seventies, her young relative was constantly with her.

But her aunt's kindness tended to give the young girl a far too exalted opinion of her own dignity, and it is even rumoured that she entertained hopes of becoming the consort of the Crown Prince. After his marriage she is said to have sown discord between the young couple, by acquainting the Crown Princess with circumstances that her husband had no intention of communicating to her.

The friendship between Elizabeth and her niece cooled in the course of years, and the latter never dared to appear before her aunt after the death of her cousin Rudolph.

In consequence of her own love for horsmanship, the Empress became deeply interested in

the riding-mistress Elisa Renz; but the mutual friendship gave rise to many malicious slanders. Eliza rode Her Majesty's horses in the Imperial Riding School, and on one occasion, after being profuse in her admiration of a favourite "Lord Byron," the animal was instantly presented to her by the Empress.

The circus rider Emilie Loisset could also boast of especial favours from Her Majesty.

But it is probable that no one, outside her own connections, ever enjoyed closer intimacy with Elizabeth than Ida von Ferenczy, a Hungarian who had entered her service when quite young and attended her up to the moment of her death. She had made her acquaintance at the time of her coronation in Hungary, when she had been completely captivated by the fresh attractive appearance, bright frank manner, clear intellect and refined tact of the young girl, who afterwards became her constant travelling companion. In fact Ida von Ferenczy grew grey in the service of Her Majesty, who treated her with unvarying kindness, and to whom she clung with unbounded admiration and devotion. In later years, she was nominally her reader, but in reality she had become her companion, friend and counsellor.

We recall that in the early sixties Elizabeth had recovered her health during a visit to Corfu, the beauties of which had left a permanent impression upon her mind, and it was in the course of repeated visits to Greece that her idea of building a villa for herself on the island had become matured. Not far from the picturesque village of Gasturi, and in accordance with her own directions, there gradually arose the architectural chef-d'œuvre of the "Achilleion," which became one of her favourite residences.

"I have arranged it all myself," she said, "and selected each article of furniture, which makes me far more at home here than in Vienna."

The façade is towards the sea, while the other sides are surrounded by terraces of flowers, and again by a belt of olive, laurel and lemon trees. It contained 128 rooms, all decorated with costly Greek and Pompeian works of art; and stabling for fifty horses.

Not far from the house, at the foot of Mount Aja Kyriahi, is the memorial statue of her favourite poet Heine. The figure is seated, and the hands which rest on his knees, hold a tablet, on which, at the request of the Empress, the sculptor has engraved his lines:

"Was will die einsame Thräne?
Sie trübt mir ja den Blick!
Sie blieb aus alten Zeiten
In meinen Augen zurück."

The Empress's private rooms were distinctly separate from any others in the building, she even had her own entrance by which she could come and go at pleasure at any hour of the day or night.

"I wish to live like a student," she used to say; and so she did, but like a very diligent one. She rose at five and went for a walk, generally alone and with a book under her arm. On her return she began her studies, with just a lead pencil and an exercise book in which she declined and conjugated with the keenest ardour, and wrote a daily composition for the inspection of her reader or teacher.

A tent had been erected on the terrace where she could have her hair dressed in full view of the open sea. Her actual dressing-room was furnished with a handsome marble bath, which she had purchased from the Villa Borghese in Rome. She was always in bed by nine o'clock, with a volume of Heine's "Buch der Lieder" under her pillow; but it was no infrequent occurrence for her to rise in the course of the

night and wander among the gloomy avenues of the grounds; or even, soon after the retirement of her court, she might occasionally be seen from their windows, dressed in black with a large black veil over her head, gliding along the terrace out towards the park.

She knew every part in the vicinity of the Achilleion, though she preferred the steepest and most dangerous mountain tracks, which she always climbed alone, for not one of her ladies had either nerve or endurance enough to follow her. The stillness of the mountain summits, the unearthly clearness of the air and the majestic beauty of nature seemed to impart a momentary peace to her restless spirit, and she returned from these excursions enriched with solemn impressions and precious recollections.

"Man never fails to bring destruction in his train," she used to say, "it is only when nature is alone that she can preserve her eternal beauty, and for that reason I will not allow a stranger to look upon my Achilleion. If I did, not a stone would be at peace in the course of even a few months, for men write their names and leave the mark of their utter insignificance even upon stones.

A high whitewashed wall and the thick foliage

of the olives effectually protect the castle from the gaze of the curious. "Englishmen are the most absurd," she observed, "they will stand for hours on the height opposite, though they can see nothing."

And yet she was by no means as misanthropical as she has been represented; she had an interest in her fellow beings, but she would only shew it, when she herself was not an object of curiosity.

"I wish for nothing from mankind, except to be left in peace" was her frequent exclamation, and where she was not recognised, she would occasionally mix with the people, and she was unfailingly kind towards the poor.

"When I am thrown with Nature's children," she used to say, "I experience something of the same peace which Nature herself always gives me."

She loved to sit on the sweet scented wild thyme or pale pink heather and chat with the peasants from Gasturi, while she refreshed herself with her favourite beverage, milk warm from the goat. She could talk to both men and women in language they could understand, and the country folk worshipped the "Queen of Gasturi," as they called her, kneeling in the dust before her, as she drew near.

"Charming queen," the young women cried after her, "God bless your steps," said the old ones, while they crossed themselves to give greater emphasis and significance to their simple words. The young men bent their heads and gazed upon her with admiring eyes, while the village children stood about in groups, or watched for her, half hidden behind the thick stems of the olive trees, from whence they would emerge with gifts of whole branches of oranges or almonds.

She frequently visited a monastery perched upon a height not far from the castle, and enjoyed conversing with these men who had voluntarily renounced all intercourse with their fellows. She enquired of one of them if he sometimes went down into the village.

"Somebody must go now and again to make our purchases," he replied. "We are human, and our bodies feel cold and hunger. But otherwise, what is there to do in the village? I do not deny that it may be very beautiful down there, but it is far *better* up here."

"And I tell you," said the Empress, "that you have chosen the *best* part."

CHAPTER XXIV

Death of the Crown Prince—Deep Melancholy

On January 31st, 1889 the Austrian Imperial couple were startled by that fearful calamity, almost unique in the annals of the nineteenth century.

"The tragedy in Mayerling" known to the world at large in outline, and even at the present day enveloped by an impenetrable veil, which suddenly and gruesomely terminated the life of their only son.

A thousand rumours were current about the circumstance, which we almost hope history may never be able to explain, if the words written by the King of the Belgians to the Comte de Flandre are true that "all reports are better than the knowledge of the real truth."

The following is the only account on which the least reliance can be placed.

The Crown Prince was found dead in his bed in the Imperial shooting box at Mayerling, near Baden in Lower Austria, where he had been spending a few days. He met his death through a terrible wound in the head, and in the same room was found the body of a young girl, the Baroness Vetsera, whom he had loved.

There was a general impression that they had both committed suicide, but there were also signs which pointed to the fact that Rudolph might have been murdered. *

He had been ardently loved by the people, and it was expected he would prove a thoroughly capable ruler in the light of modern ideas.

But side by side with brilliant gifts, the unfortunate prince possessed a large share of the reckless levity of conduct that characterised the Habsburgs, and members of his immediate circle had already begun to entertain anxious misgivings about his future.

But there was one who never lost confidence in him, and that one was his mother, who had carefully and judiciously, advised him on his entry into public life, and to whose counsel he

* "The idea of death had been haunting the Prince's mind for some time, as a few days ago he sent all his family papers and his will to Szoegyenyi—Marisch, the Minister."—*Times*, February 1889.

was partially indebted for the popularity he had enjoyed from his earliest youth.

And then a change came over him, though the few who were more intimately acquainted with the Empress, were still conscious of the mother's influence in the words and sentiments of her son.

Awe and terror seemed to paralyse the capital on the morning of that grey wintry day in January, when the news became current that he was dead. The general confusion was indescribable, and nobody seemed capable of giving any directions, until an elderly gentleman-in-waiting, in the ante-room of the Hofburg, suggested that the news ought first to be communicated to the Empress. And although it was feared that she would utterly break down under the terrible shock, it was agreed that this course was the best one to adopt.

It was evident on this occasion that her mind and nerves possessed greater powers of resistance than is the case with many a man, and though she did not speak for some minutes, and turned away from those who had brought the news, she asked at length :—

"Where is my son?"

And then her thoughts seemed to hurry from her

dead child to his father, who as yet knew nothing, for in the whole Hofburg, among officers and ministers, there was not one who had the courage to approach the Emperor with such sinister tidings.

While they were deliberating on their next step, the Empress suddenly joined the group. Sorrow had hardened her features, her voice had changed in tone, and she had become deadly pale in this short moment, the most exquisitely painful in her sorrowful life.

She told them that she herself would convey the crushing news to the Emperor, and heroically keeping under her own feelings, she did support her husband with her strong tender sympathy, and stood by his side through all the endless funeral ceremonies of their unhappy son, in whose tomb so many of their brightest hopes were buried.

These days of poignant grief served at least to make known her worth to the world at large, and when a deputation from the Imperial Diet arrived to express their sympathy with the mourners, Francis Joseph uttered the following memorable words in a voice choked with sobs :

" I cannot describe in adequate words my deep gratitude to my dearly loved Consort who has

proved herself a strong support during these sorrowful days, and I devoutly thank God for giving me such a helpmeet. Repeat my words, for the wider you spread them abroad, the more heartily thankful I shall feel."

The hope of a direct successor to the throne had been cruelly snatched from the elderly pair, and yet they found strength to write to the Pope, Leo XIII: "In all humility we give back to God, what the Lord in his mercy had sent to us."

Ten days later, accompanied by the Archduchess Marie Valerie they left for Hungary.

Rudolph had been the first prince of the ruling house who had been systematically trained to become a good, constitutional Hungarian king. He had been accustomed from his childhood to the language which he wrote and spoke like a native; and during his frequent visits to the country he had acquired a complete acquaintance with its different districts, including even the most remote. He knew all the renowned members of Hungarian society, and stood on a friendly footing with many of the aristocracy; thus by his removal, an inexorable fate had deprived the whole nation of a great hope.

Sorrow for his death was as keen and genuine in Buda-Pesth as in Vienna, and both the

Emperor and his Consort met with the truest condolence from every corner of the kingdom, expressed perhaps in the tenderest terms for the bereaved mother.

At the station in Buda-Pesth the royal family was met by members of both chambers, nobles, church dignitaries and municipal authorities, as well as by the University students, all wearing crape on the arm, while the people lined the road up to the royal castle at Buda.

Elizabeth observed a few years before she was murdered :—

"There is a moment in the life of each one when the spirit dies, and it by no means follows that this need be at the time of physical death."

This moment came to her when the news reached her that her son was dead, for she changed from that day, and it is said that she was never heard to laugh again, that it was even a rarity to see her smile. She had been heroic at the time of the shock, but the strong self-control of those early weeks was followed by heart-rending despair. Many were of opinion that she had been contradictory and eccentric for some time past. Now she herself remarked that she had no longer "either the strength to live, or the wish to die."

The Berlin papers reported that her mind was affected, but they were mistaken; though if it had been the case, after such a blow, the world could hardly have wondered. It was at this time that the doctors found the first trace of heart disease, from which she was a sufferer until the day of her death.

The sobs of the disconsolate mother were frequently heard by those on duty in the ante-room to the apartments of the Empress, whose aversion to allow the world to witness her grief became more and more pronounced, while her absences from Court were of more and more frequent occurence. She absolutely refused to see the Crown Princess Stéphanie, to whose imprudence she attributed the wild life and death of her son. She would not even suffer their daughter, the Archduchess Elizabeth to be near her; it pained her to look at the child who had inherited the manners of her father, and in a degree the features of her mother.

She became a stranger to the people, almost to the aristocracy, and on her rare visits to Vienna, she no longer occupied her former rooms in the so-called "Amaliehof" of the Burg, which carried with them the recollection of that day when she had volunteered to convey the message

to the Emperor that none other dared undertake. Her circle became more and more narrow, and the sight of her fellow-beings more and more painful to her, which led her to give the most stringent orders that no curious eyes should watch her movements.

This hankering after solitude was a cause of great grief to her husband and children ; not even her favourite castle at Lainz could attract her longer than a few weeks, she visited Hungary much less frequently, and never for more than a month at a time.

The roses at Godollo were allowed to bloom and fade, and the grass grew high on the paths where she had loved to ride.

Her passion for travelling had always been strong, but now it grew into a perfect fever that drove her without ceasing from one spot to another, and made her wander through the world like a restless bird that could find no repose.

Her husband visited her now and again during these perpetual travels, when his presence would rouse her for a short interval, to be followed invariably by fits of yet deeper melancholy. She always wore mourning and never ceased to grieve, while her whole appearance was that of a stricken lonely woman.

CHAPTER XXV

BETROTHAL OF THE ARCHDUCHESS MARIE VALERIE—DEATH OF THE DUCHESS LUDOVICA—RESIDENCE IN CORFU—LAST COURT FESTIVITIES, AND LAST VISIT TO HUNGARY

On the Christmas Eve after the death of the Crown Prince Rudolph, the fifty-second anniversary of her mother's birth, the Archduchess Marie Valerie became engaged to her cousin, the chivalrous and artistic Francis Salvator, Duke of Tuscany, when the Emperor placed his daughter's hand in that of the young man, as he said with deep emotion :

"I foresaw it long ago, may you be as happy as it is possible for mortals to be!"

Valerie hid her face on her father's breast, and then hastened to the Empress, whom she kissed again and again, as she exclaimed :—

"Mamma! how happy I feel that I need not go away when I am married, but that I may always live near you."

In the evening of the same day she expressed the wish to go as soon as possible to claim the

blessing of her aged grandmother in Bavaria, and the Empress agreed to start with her daughter and her future son-in-law the day after Christmas Day.

Duke Max had died in 1888, shortly after his diamond wedding, at Possenhofen, and the Duchess Ludovica had been very feeble, especially since the shock caused by the death of Prince Rudolph, but her mind was as clear as ever, and the meeting between herself, her daughter and her grandchild was a very hearty one.

The spring of 1890 was spent by Elizabeth at Wiesbaden and Heidelberg, in the company of Valerie and her fiancé. On the return journey to Vienna, the train ran off the line in the neighbourhood of Frankfort am Main, when several carriages, both in front and behind the saloon carriage of the Empress, were overturned and smashed, but she and her companions miraculously escaped unhurt.

Almost immediately after her arrival in the capital, a fresh grief awaited her in the unexpected death at Ratisbon of her eldest sister, Helene of Thurn and Taxis. The Empress attended her funeral, and then hastened to Munich to comfort her sorrowing mother.

The marriage of Marie Valerie and Francis

Salvator followed* shortly after her return to Austria, when for the first time since the death of her son, a smile was seen on the lips of the Empress, who for the wedding day exchanged her sombre mourning gown for one of grey silk.

But this glimmer of cheerfulness was of short duration. Valerie's devotion had certainly lessened the pressure of daily life for her, and the mother's heart grasped the fact, that although she had married a Prince of Austria and would have her home in the land, the relation between them must inevitably be changed. She would miss the constant companionship of her daughter, and she, who credited herself with an intense love of solitude, wept scalding tears at the thought that she must henceforth be really alone.

Her melancholy and seriousness became even more apparent and intensified by the illness and subsequent death of her mother, January 25, 1892, after which she withdrew to her castle Achilleion in Corfu, where she erected a monument to her unfortunate son, and seemed to exist on the recollections of her beloved dead.

On the summit of Mount Aja Kyriahi there stands a tiny church surrounded by cypresses, to

* At Ischl, July 31st, 1890.

which she ascended every morning before sunrise, when by her express command, no other worshipper was allowed to be present.

She wandered alone by the steepest and most dangerous mountain paths, when her deep mourning seemed to form a melancholy contrast with the bright spring colouring of the island.

"I can breathe with greater ease and freedom on these lonely heights, where others would feel themselves forsaken," she used to say. "I am perfectly satisfied on Aja Kyriahi, and could even renounce my passion for travelling if I could remain on its heights for ever." She has inscribed on the wall of the church:

"Elizabeth of Austria sat here. A mild west wind blew round her, and the crag which for her had decked itself with flowers, is glad to preserve her memory."

Her lady-in-waiting and her reader only saw her for a few hours each day; she was spending her life in a world of dreams, and yet in the most sorrowful days of this eventful period, her choicest recreation still consisted in a poem of Heine's or a scene of Shakespeare's. She did not exact so much that books should entertain her, as that they should people her loneliness with imaginary fanciful pictures, and she had so completely appro-

priated the characters of her favourite authors, that they stood before her almost in the garb of reality.

Her readers sometimes tried to arouse her interest in the writers of the day, but the far away look in her eyes that increased as they went on, and her utter inattention warned them of the fruitlessness of their efforts, and it was not till the author in hand was exchanged for Shakespeare or Heine, that she showed any interest, when it was no unusual occurrence for her to interrupt the reader and recite some lines that especially charmed her.

The only time that she appeared at a Court festivity after the death of her son, was on the occasion of the visit of the Tzar and Tzarina to Vienna, when her presence at the gala reception excited even more curiosity and interest than the sight of the Russian Imperial couple, and a sort of hushed reverence greeted her as she entered leaning on the arm of the Tzar. She was in deep mourning as usual, and bowed to all present with queenly dignity, looking at least twenty years younger than any of her contemporaries, in spite of the sorrows she had endured, which justified the title still due to her of "the loveliest woman of her Court."

But her thoughts were clearly far away from

the splendour that surrounded herself and her guests, and verified her remark about this time: "I feel as though I were closely veiled when I thus masquerade in the dress of an Empress," and on another occasion: "When I move about among my fellow-beings, I only need that part of myself which I have in common with others, and people are amazed that I am sufficiently like-minded with themselves to enquire the price of sweets, or make a remark upon the weather. It is like an old gown that one takes from one's wardrobe just to wear for a single day."

Hungary was celebrating her millenary in 1896, just when the Empress was even more suffering than usual, and unwilling to attend the fêtes; but a deputation waited upon her, and represented the gloom that would be cast over the Hungarian rejoicing, if she were not present, and in spite of physical pain and mental depression, she at length allowed herself to be persuaded. She occupied her seat on the throne by her husband's side, draped entirely in black lace, and wearing, in Hungarian fashion, a long black veil fastened to her hair, which had lost nothing in thickness and beauty. Her face was white and unspeakably sad, she apparently neither heard nor saw, but sat by the King as indifferent as a statue.

The moment the President of the Chamber of Deputies began to speak, Francis Joseph was all attention, and fixed his eyes on the speaker, but there was not a vestige of interest on the countenance of the Queen, which remained pallid and expressionless as before.

The speaker mentioned her name, but still not a muscle moved ; though at the sound of " Eljen Erzsébet," the air quivered with the cry so vociferously repeated, that the marble walls of the throne-room seemed to re-echo the voices, and in that " Eljen Erzsébet " were contained the most fervent prayers to Heaven, and the deepest devotion to herself.

The majestic head, hitherto so irresponsive, now slowly moved in graceful acknowledgment, and cheers burst forth afresh to last for minutes, when the great nobles of the land waved their plumed hats in honour of their Queen, whose ashy features at length became suffused with red, her glorious dark blue eyes shone in their old lustre, though glistening with tears, and all present felt assured that the attachment between Elizabeth and her people, was as mutually strong as it had ever been. The President continued his speech, the momentary colour faded from her cheeks, and she was again the "Mater Dolorosa."

It was the last time she was seen in Hungary, the last occasion on which she appeared in regal splendour.

CHAPTER XXVI

DEATH OF THE EMPRESS

THE thought of death, but not the fear, was constantly in the mind of the Empress, and we have seen how she took her life in her hands in time of war, and during fearful epidemics, besides ignoring the inevitable exposure to accident and death on her frequent travels. Two original poems in simple wooden frames hang on the walls of her bedroom in Corfu, of which the following is one :

" Gerüstet sein, wie für die letzte Reise,
Allstündlich, ohne sorgendes Bedenken,
Das ist vielleicht die einzig rechte Weise,
Der Götter Segen auf ein Hanpt zu lenken.
Was Du ersehnst, das wird Dich ewig fliehen,
Was Du beweinen kannst, verlierst Du auch ;
Die Huld des Schicksals wird nur frei verliehen,
Und suchst Du sie, verweht sie Dir, ein Hauch !
Es liegt ein Fluch auf allem ird'schen Trachten,
Und was er hält, das ringt sich nicht mehr los,
Doch lernst Du lächelnd Glück und Glanz verachten,
Dann sinkt Dir ihre Fülle in den Schosz."

Come the summons when it may,
Be thou ready for the way,
So shalt thou the gods' gifts obtain
And blessings from the all-seeing gain.
Joys thou seekest flee away,
Griefs and sorrows do not stay,
Unexpected comes Fate's boon,
Seek it, and it fades as soon
As the light breath—A curse attends
Human aims and human ends,
Which no power can charm or stay.
If with smiles thou canst despise
The joy which fades so soon away,
The bliss which all too quickly flies,
Well is it then indeed for thee,
Thy cup shall overflowing be.

In speaking of death, she was wont to say: "I am ready to die, my only wish is that I may be spared acute and lingering suffering."

"The thought of death purifies, as a gardener removes the ill weeds that disfigure his beds," she observed on one occasion to her Greek reader. "But this gardener insists on being alone, and is angry when the curious intrude upon him. It is for that reason that I shade my face with a fan or a parasol; in order that he may pursue his work in peace."

She seemed to have a secret presentiment that her life would end by some unnatural means, and

believed that she would be drowned in the sea. When walking on the shore, or pacing the deck of her yacht, she would frequently observe to her companions :—

"The sea is longing to have me and I know that I belong to it. When the waves run high, I let myself be strapped to my seat, for like Ulysses of old, I feel the attraction of the billows."

"I know that nothing can hinder me from acquiescing in my fate the day that I *must* meet it," she remarked a few years before her death, "for all men must submit at the appointed hour. We may seem to be overlooked, but we are claimed at last. What does it matter if I am drowned? People will say: 'Why did she go on the water? And why did she generally travel in the winter, she, who was moreover, an Empress? Why did she not remain in the Hofburg?' But the close of my life will probably be even more surprising—for an Empress! The assurance and pride of men are often punished by fate, and this may prove my retribution for many things!"

The wish of the Empress was fulfilled, for she died in a far more surprising manner than either she or the world could have dreamt of, and the life which had opened like a spring idyll, was closed in the gloom of tragedy.

On All Souls' Day, 1897, she and the Emperor visited the church of the Capuchins in Vienna, when they remained for some time in prayer by the coffin of their son, and it was soon after this date that the Empress left Austria for Biarritz, where she spent a couple of months. It was on this occasion that she caused some trouble to the French government by constantly crossing the boundary between France and Spain when, greatly to her annoyance, measures had been taken to protect her from the brigands of the frontier.

An occurrence of harrowing detail had recently deprived her of her youngest sister, the Duchess of Alençon, who with several other ladies had organised a Charity Bazaar in some newly erected barracks in Paris. At four o'clock in the afternoon of May 4th, a lamp that had been prepared for an exhibition of cinematographs suddenly exploded, drapery caught fire, and on the opening of a door for the exit of those present, the whole building rapidly became a prey to the flames. One hundred and thirty perished in this awful manner, amongst them, Sophie d'Alençon, the former fiancée of Louis II. of Bavaria. Her body was found and recognised later on, but the fact that she had succumbed to the flames was verified earlier by the discovery of her wedding-ring.

The Queen of Naples and the Countess Mathilde de Trani were now the only two left of the Empress's sisters, and of these the latter was her especial favourite, her counterpart in tastes and mental sympathies. Like Elizabeth, she shunned the world and was happiest when travelling in strict incognito, frequently under the modest name of "Miss Nellie Schmidt."

The Empress spent the last Christmas of her life with her sisters in Paris, but a violent attack of sciatica forced her to hasten her journey to the south, and on the evening of New Year's Day, she left for Marseilles to embark with the Countess de Trani on board her yacht "Miramare" for San Remo, where they remained until March 1st, 1898, when the sisters travelled together, viâ Turin to Territet, where they separated never to meet again.

Elizabeth had frequently visited the Lake of Geneva in former years and was fond of returning to favourite spots. Almost daily she took the train up to Glion, and then proceeded on foot to the still higher Mont de Caux, accompanied only by one lady-in-waiting and Mr. Frederick Barker, her reader.*

* "The last English novel that the Empress read with her permanent English reader, Mr. Barker, was Marion Crawford's 'Corleone'—she was strongly moved by the horrors of the book."

After a stay of six weeks in Switzerland, she went to Kissingen, where she was visited by the Emperor. Two months later she returned to Vienna, when her husband met her and accompained her to Lainz, where she only remained about a fortnight.

She had certainly never been nearer insanity than at this period, when the heavy veil of melancholy clung ever more and more closely around her. Her expression was restless, but unspeakably sad, and the lines of her mouth had become hard and sharp. Her whole body was a prey to neuralgia which robbed her of rest by day and night, and anyone conversing with her could notice her emaciated hands tremble and her sunken features turn deadly pale under the intense effort to control her physical agony. She could hardly bear to see anybody, and the presence even of her husband, children, and grandchildren was painful to her.

On July 2nd she went to Ischl, accompanied by the Emperor, her daughter Valerie, and the children in order to celebrate the birthday of her husband as usual, when the Imperial couple, on the 18th of the month, always attended a church service together, and this was the only day in the whole year on which the Empress did not wear

mourning. On this occasion the family party dispersed earlier than usual in accordance with the advice of the doctor that Elizabeth should go to Nanheim in Hesse. A week before this date, the leading papers in Austria and Hungary had contained the following account of her health:

"Her Majesty the Empress and Queen has been suffering for some long time past from anæmia, which became worse in consequence of severe neuritis in the course of last winter, following on insomnia of many weeks' standing, in addition to which there is enlargement of the heart. Under conditions of absolute rest, her illness need not give rise to serious apprehension, but the doctors earnestly advise her Majesty to submit to treatment at the baths in order to strengthen the muscles of the heart."

On her way to Nanheim the Empress passed through Munich, but without seeing her daughter or any of her connections, though she visited some of the public buildings and the "Hofbräuhaus," or "Court Brewery."

Although she still looked ill and suffering, her health certainly derived benefit from her stay in Nanheim, where a course of massage improved both her sleep and appetite. She passed several hours of the day in the adjacent woods, visited

the farms in the neighbourhood, and looked forward to more distant excursions, though not such as she had enjoyed in former days, on account of fatigue and shortness of breath. She left Nanheim for Switzerland August 29th, and went direct to Mont de Caux, where she could be more sure of quiet than in noisy Territet, where she had previously resided. She was apparently in fair health, rose early, and daily ascended one of the neighbouring heights. Those who met the sombrely clad, elegant stranger, in close conversation with one lady, apparently a friend, could hardly guess that this was the Empress of one of the most powerful states of Europe, containing some forty million inhabitants.

In the telegram in which she announced to Francis Joseph her safe arrival at Mont de Caux, she expresed her regret that he could not share with her the pleasures of this sojourn in Switzerland, where she counted upon remaining about four or five weeks. She also wrote to her husband shortly before her death, that she was feeling so much stronger that she hoped to be with him during the approaching jubilee festivities.

On September 9th she went to the Castle of Pregny, which had formerly been in the possession

of Joseph Bonaparte, but is now occupied by members of the Rothschild family, who had rendered valuable services to the King and Queen of Naples, and to whom Elizabeth was anxious to pay the honour of a visit.

On the previous evening she was walking in Territet with Mr. Barker, when they sat down on a moss-grown boulder near the Lake, while the Empress peeled a peach, and offered the half to her companion. At the very moment, a raven flew towards her and struck the fruit out of her hands by the force of its wings.

The Habsburgs have always looked upon the raven as a bird of ill-omen, while even her reader considered this sudden appearance portentous, and counselled the Empress to forego the proposed visit to Geneva and Pregny.

"Dear friend," Elizabeth answered, "I fear nothing. What is to be will be, and I am a fatalist!"

She went to Pregny accompanied by her lady-in-waiting, the Hungarian Countess Sztaray, perfectly cheerful and feeling remarkably well. She overwhelmed Baroness Rothschild by her friendship, and left for Geneva in the course of the afternoon to stay at the hotel Beaurivage, where she had previously been.

"Geneva is my favourite place," she observed

a few years before her death "I am safe there among cosmopolitans."

The landlady of the hotel was perfectly aware of the status of her visitor, who enquired if her incognito had been preserved.

"Yes," she replied, though it was just possible that the servants had remembered her from former visits.

On her arrival in Switzerland, orders had been issued by the chiefs of the Canton that the police were to watch over her safety; but, as usual, she had expressed the wish to remain unattended, preferring to travel alone.

Accompanied by the Countess Sztaray, she left the hotel about noon, September 10th, to go on board the steamer "Geneva," by which she intended to return to Mont de Caux.

The staff of the hotel had assembled to watch her from the door and admire her light rapid walk, while fearing that the ladies would not reach the boat in time. The Countess hastened on a step in front of the Empress, and during this one moment, a man, who had been sitting on a bench on the Quai Montblanc, stepped forward. It was the Italian Luigi Luccheni, a dangerous anarchist, who had been notified to the Swiss police authorities as a man to be strictly watched.

He rushed up to Elizabeth and stabbed her in the breast with a sharp weapon, when she sank to the ground, and the Countess, who knew nothing of what had occurred, threw her arm round the Empress, as she was in the act of falling and asked :

" Is your Majesty ill ? "

" I do not know," she replied.

" Will your Majesty take my arm ? "

" No thank you."

The Countess was prepared to support her, though it hardly seemed necessary, and they went on board.

"Am I pale ? " the Empress asked.

" Yes, your Majesty."

Then she fell a second time and fainted.

In the meantime, the steamer had began to move, while the Countess Sztaray and one or two other ladies were trying to restore consciousness. On loosening the Empress's clothes to give her air, traces of blood became visible, but in the strength of this momentary relief the sufferer asked in a loud clear voice :

" What has happened ? "

They were her last words. It was only now that the Countess became seriously alarmed, and told the captain that the sick lady was the Empress

of Austria, when he at once returned to Geneva. She was carried to the Hotel Beaurivage on a sailcloth stretcher, and immediately after the captain and his men had placed her in her room, she gave two deep sighs and was gone.

A few days previously she had observed to her reader :

" I should like to have a quick, painless death ;— not to die in my bed."

Two physicians obeyed a summons instantly, but only to declare, after careful examination, that she had passed gently and peacefully to her rest.

Death had peen produced by a murderous weapon that had penetrated the fourth rib and pierced the heart and lung.

This occurrence in broad daylight, in an open thoroughfare of a large town aroused the horror and dismay of the whole world, for seldom has there been perpetrated such a senseless, purposeless murder. Elizabeth of Austria had never exercised the faintest influence, either direct or indirect, upon politics, and was indeed perfectly ignorant of most of the plans and measures affecting her country. She had, as Francis Joseph expressed it, in the first moment of his poignant grief, " done good to many, but no harm to a single human being." She was less known to the

world as the wearer of an Imperial diadem, than as the lovely unhappy descendant of the Wittelsbachs, who went her solitary way through life, with an inward, upward gaze.

This murder of a noble-minded woman in a foreign land, far away from her own people, will always remain one of the most atrocious crimes of our day.

And yet the dagger of Luccheni was the instrument of a higher power, and death was but a friend to the victim; for Elizabeth had long been pining for rest and peace, which she found as she had wished, without protracted suffering, and in the heart of Nature. God alone who received her weary spirit in His fatherly embrace, knows whether her last sigh was not a sob of thankful deliverance.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION

THE chamber of death had been draped with black, and priests knelt in prayer round the coffin, which was covered with a purple pall, embroidered on the corners with the words "Repose en paix."

The mourning garb of life was retained in death, and her Majesty was shrouded in black silk. Her noble, lovely face had hardly changed, and her whole form seemed to have preserved its dignified repose; her beautiful hair was arranged as in life-time.

The deep sapphire eyes, which had never exhibited a tinge of malice or unkindness, were closed, and the hands which had turned so many a page of her favourite authors, were folded over an ivory cross and rosary.

The Empress had never wearied of travel, she died from home, and now that the spirit had

fled, her mortal remains had to be taken yet one more journey.

A special train left Geneva on the evening of September 11th. During her life she had deprecated any demonstration on her travels, but on this last occasion every head was bared in the presence of their departed Empress, and before the majesty of death.

The road from Switzerland to the Austrian capital passes through many places which she had visited forty-four years previously, during her bridal journey to Vienna. In Linz, where her vessel and her hotel had been decorated with roses, there was not a house without a black flag or drapery. There, where the muncipal authorities had appeared to welcome the young Princess, stood priests to bless her lifeless body.

When Francis Joseph received the news of the death of his consort, he exclaimed with sobs:

"Nobody can conceive the magnitude of the loss I have sustained—not one blow is spared me in this world."

A few days later he said to a deputation of Hungarians:

"Without her I should never have been able

to carry out the work which God has laid upon my shoulders."

Expressions of sympathy poured in from every quarter, and poems were written in honour of the departed, in Italian, French, English, and Greek, while Ireland, where she had been so deeply loved, especially by the poor, contributed her own lines of grief and condolence. Thousands of wreaths arrived from the lowly huts, as well as from the stately mansions of nearly every land she had visited, even from Smyrna, Johannesburg, and China, flowers were sent to deck her bier.

One wreath from Cairo was made of desert blossoms, hundreds of Jericho roses, symbols of the resurrection among the early Christians, and lotus flowers that speak of eternal life. The ribbon was intertwined with a branch of the fig-tree under which, according to tradition, the Virgin and Child had rested on their flight from Herod, under whose shade the Empress Elizabeth had frequently reposed during her flight from the turmoil of the world.

The Armenian women had embroidered the following inscription on a black band:

"*Flores etiam miseri desertorum te salutant!*"

It is characteristic of the far-travelled Empress that her decease created a deeper impression in many other capitals than in Vienna itself, where she had been so little seen, that her features had almost faded from the memories of her Austrian subjects. Her death was perhaps the occasion of less sorrow, than that of exasperation with the miscreant who had murdered a defenceless woman, a sorrowing mother.

But if the grief of the Austrians was really superficial and conventional, the wail of the Hungarians, on the contrary, was deep and true. Men and women shed tears as they went on their way, every flag was half mast high, the great autumn manœuvres were abandoned, the Diet was summoned for an extraordinary meeting, the Exchange was closed on the day of the funeral, while its members voted at once a sum of five thousand gulden towards the erection of a statue of their Queen.

The papers teemed with eloquent expressions of the nation's grief, and the intense appreciation of the Hungarians was manifested by the decision that the Queen's biography should be added to the national archives, and become incorporated with the history of their country.

Elizabeth possessed a considerable fortune, and

her personal jewels alone, gifts from Francis Joseph and other royal persons, were valued at four million gulden. She had made her will at Buda-Pesth in 1896, briefly, and in her own handwriting, by which she left the castle at Lainz to her daughter Valerie, and the Achilleion in Corfu to her daughter Gisela, with substantial legacies to her ladies-in-waiting and her personal domestics. She also remembered old friends and former teachers in Bavaria; but she was most generous to the lady reader whom we have already mentioned, Ida von Ferenczy, who had been her most intimate companion for thirty years. In addition to a large sum of money which the Empress had given her, she was to retain her yearly salary for life, as well as a suite of rooms in the Imperial Castle.

. . . . . .

In a former chapter, I quoted one of the two poems written by Elizabeth and hung up in her bedroom at Corfu, which reveal to us her views on life and death. The second proves her great humility, and the absence of any hope that her memory would linger among men:

"Ob gross, ob klein erscheint, was wir gethan,
Wenn wir beschlossen unsere Erdenbahn;
Wie schnell ist ausgefüllt die leere Stelle!
Wie viel macht's Unterschied im Ocean,
Ein Tropfen weinger oder eine Welle."

(Earthly deeds, or great or small,
Count but little when earth's light
Fades; our place is quickly filled
In the ever ceaseless fight.
Take from ocean's mighty store
Drop or wave, the waters still
Roll as full towards the shore,
Their appointed course fulfil.)

In early life she had expressed the wish to be buried under the big tree at Gödöllö which had been so dear to her; and then in later years she thought she would like to lie in Corfu close to the castle of Achilleion, and she had frequently been heard to say:

"I will be buried in Corfu, near the shore of the sea, where its waves can dash over my grave."

Dr. Christomanos relates that she one day remarked to him in the Achilleion:

"I desire to lie here, unless I die at sea. The stars will shine over me, and the moan of the cypresses will be deeper than that of my fellow-creatures, for I shall live longer in the

sighing of the trees, than in the memory of my subjects."

This wish to be laid to rest in the Achilleion was even expressed in her will, but it could not be respected.

On the receipt of the news of her death in Hungary, a deputation immediately set out for Vienna to entreat the Emperor to allow her remains to be interred at Gödöllö, according to the unanimous wish of the Hungarians, but this too was rejected.

On the west side of the New Market, in the inner city of Vienna, stands the unimportant-looking church of the Capuchins, with the words "Imperial Vault" inscribed on one of the side doors. A narrow stone staircase leads down into the dismal crypt where rest the earthly remains of the Imperial house of Habsburg.

It was here that the great Maria Theresa used to descend, accompanied by her bright young daughters, whom she forced to contemplate for themselves the transitoriness of all earthly splendour.

Elizabeth had adopted a singular position in life, but the Emperor would admit of no difference in death, and was determined that his consort should rest under the same roof as

former Empresses and the members of his own race.

The coffin of the murdered Empress stands at the end of a side vault, between that of her brother-in-law, the murdered Emperor of Mexico, and that of her son, the suicide or murdered Rudolph.

In life she shunned the ceremonials of the Church, and now in death masses are recited night and day for the repose of her soul. The door leading down to the vault is opened every day at noon, and she, who hated the mere contact with mankind, has become in death an object for the curiosity of multitudes.

How much more suitable for her would have been the Grecian island than the murky vault of the Habsburgs, or the old tree in Gödöllö—the murmur of the sea or the rustle of the leaves, rather than the re-iterated masses of the monks!

Achilleion has been sold for a "gaming establishment," and gamblers from all lands will soon be staking their money on the tables of the castle built by the Empress, whose one desire was to be left alone. But there will be many among the motley crowd of continuous tourists that will recall the erratic, sombrely-clad traveller, who so

persistently screened her face with a large black fan, and monuments have been erected to her memory in many of her favourite places, where the poor have not yet forgotten her ever open hand.

Opinions concerning her were by no means unanimous while she lived, though foreigners were certainly agreed as to her remarkable beauty, her courage, her devotion to literature, and her generosity.

In Austria her great mental capacity has been recognised, though even there, where she was misunderstood to the last hour of her life, she was harshly judged for her singularity and the inherited tendencies of the Wittelsbachs.

But the charity of death and the grave has reconciled many points that gave rise to bitterness, and the Austrians have neither forgotten her strength and self-denial on that gruesome, stormy January morning of 1889, nor that the last ten years of her life were spent in suffering, which she bore in addition to her other numerous trials, with noble resignation.

Her memory is adored in Hungary, whose women have erected a monument near her tomb, representing a "Mater Dolorosa," with folded hands resting on a cross, bearing a crown of

thorns, at the foot of which is a gigantic bronze wreath of carnations and roses, Elizabeth's favourite flowers, and a broad ribbon inscribed with loving words of homage.

An equestrian statue to her memory is to be raised in Buda-Pesth at the voluntary expense of the nation, a monument well-pleasing to the Magyars, who delighted to see her graceful form on horseback, scouring their vast plains.

On the hill occupied by the fortress in Buda there has long stood the so-called "Hentzi Monument," in memory of the Austrian general of that name famous in the war against Hungary, in 1848-9, which has naturally been a permanent eye-sore to the inhabitants. The Emperor has now consented to its removal, and ordered the erection of the statue to his wife on the vacant spot. The decision was received with enthusiasm, and Maurus Jokái wrote on the subject in the "Magyar Hirlap:"

"Our beloved Queen Elizabeth is working miracles for us from Paradise, and wiping away the last tear from the faces of her people. She is healing our last wound, of which we may say, that though it was still bleeding, its pain had disappeared."

The Hungarian priesthood have canonised her,

and the devoted people mean the late Empress when they speak of "Saint Elizabeth." They like to believe that their good Queen, who sympathised so warmly with them in their life, who shared their joys and their sorrows, is still even in death, their guardian angel.

THE END

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