



QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA.

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QUEEN LOUISA was the sixth child of Prince Charles, afterwards Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and was born in Hanover on the 10th of March, 1776. Her father was at that time in command of the Hanoverian army of George III. of Great Britain. Her mother was Princess Frederica of Hesse-Darmstadt, who died in May, 1782, after giving birth to her tenth child. Princess Louisa thus early experienced sorrow. "It was," says her biographer,* "as if her heart were to be thus early ploughed for the seed of grief that was afterwards brought to maturity in the much-afflicted Queen in the time of Napoleon and of Germany's subjection to him."

Prince Charles, on the death of his wife, withdrew to Herrenhausen—a Hanoverian Versailles, the creation of George II. The large fine garden of this place afforded the retirement desired by the widowed Prince, and the fresh strong air that was beneficial to the children. Fräulein von Wolzofen, a highly gifted lady, had been appointed governess to the young Princesses during their mother's lifetime. She continued in charge of them, carrying forward their education according to the ideas of their mother. Two years passed in this manner, varied only for Princess Louisa by a visit to her grandmother at Darmstadt. Then feeling the necessity of providing a mother for his children, Prince Charles married Princess Charlotte of Hesse in 1784. Princess Louisa was present at the marriage, and spent a happy winter at Darmstadt. During her residence at this Court the Duke Charles August of Weimar, the friend of Goethe, came on a visit.

Schiller, then living at Mannheim, wishing to become acquainted with the Duke, came to Darmstadt at Christmas. While there he read the last act of his "Don Carlos" in the presence of the Court. Princess Louisa was present and heard him. In 1808, when she was Queen and living in Königsberg, she wrote: "Ah, I have read my Schiller again and again! Why does he not come to Berlin?" In December, 1785, Prince Charles lost his second wife. In 1788 he placed his children in charge of Princess George William of Hesse-Darmstadt, a lady of deeply pious and patriotic spirit, a diligent reader of the Word of God. A remark made by Princess Louisa to her husband, after she became Crown Princess of Prussia, throws light on the character of Princess George William. The Crown Prince was reading the first edition of Goethe's "Hermann and Dorothea" to his wife. When he came to a passage to the effect that we must be guided in the education of children by the gifts bestowed on them by God, Princess Louisa said, "That is just as if grandmamma were speaking to our fault-finding governess, Agier."

As may be inferred from this remark that the governess—a French Swiss lady—was inclined to be too strict, a new and more genial governess, Salome de Gelieu, of Neuchatel, was procured, in whom Princess Louisa placed thorough confidence. She was a true helper to her orphaned pupils. In accordance with the prevailing custom of the time, French was the language in which the education of the children was carried on. In after-life Princess Louisa used very often to lament that German had not been more used. As Queen, she sought diligently to make up

for the deficiencies of her education in everything relating to knowledge of German affairs. She chose history as her chief subject of study. Herder's "Ideas Relating to the Philosophy of the History of Mankind" was one of her favourite books.

However much Princess Louisa lamented the neglect of German language and affairs in her education, she fully acknowledged that Fräulein de Gelieu early led her to recognition of the eternal in the temporal, and accustomed her to the childlike contemplation of God's working among men.

When Princess Louisa was twelve years old Princess George William



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* Luise, Königin von Preussen, von Friedrich Adami. Zehnte vermehrte Auflage. Berlin, 1832.

gave her a copy of Sturm's "Converse with God for the Morning Hours of Every Day of the Year." On the flyleaf the following inscription was written: "This book is for the joy of my dear granddaughter, Louisa of Mecklenburg, for her daily edification in true and joyous Christianity. 1788."

On the day of her confirmation, June 15, 1792, the Princess Louisa wrote in it the following verse and prayer:—

The future—will it dreadful be?
 Mine age—will it bring joy to me?
 How shall I in the future bear
 Life's load, perchance, of heavy care?
 My soul, cast all thy care away,
 The Lord Almighty is my stay.

"To-day, the day of my confirmation, is the most important of my life. May God, who was witness of all my solemn promises, give me strength to fulfil what I have vowed unto Him."

This book is preserved in the Hohenzollern Museum in Berlin.

The Princess early manifested a charitable disposition. The words of the Apostle, "to do good and communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," seemed to be written in her heart. It was her custom to visit the sick and poor, and to weep with those who wept. Her memory is cherished in the places which she was in the habit of visiting in her youth. She passed many a summer at Broich, in Westphalia, a castle inherited by her grandmother, the Princess George William of Hesse-Darmstadt; and instances of the Princess Louisa's kindness to the people were long remembered here. On one occasion, when she was thirteen years old, she pressed all the pocket-money she had into the hand of a poor widow in the village, who begged for bread for her hungry children, and then borrowed from the old servant of the Landgravine, in order to make other gifts. Her grandmother reproved her for contracting debts, scolded the old servant for taking it upon him to lend money to a minor, but privately granted an increase of pocket-money to her granddaughter, on the condition that Louisa herself should pay off the debt, in order that she might learn to manage her means as God's steward in a proper manner.

On another occasion her grandmother and governess lost sight of her. Search was instituted everywhere. At last she was found at the bedside of a sick daughter of one of the runners of the Castle, who was ill of scarlet fever, reading a story-book. Reminded by her grandmother of the risk she ran of infection, she replied that there was no fear of that, God would protect her from it, for she had performed some devotional acts on her way to make the visit.

On her return to Broich, in 1791, two years after this incident, the girls who had been her playmates held themselves timidly aloof from the Princess, who had grown so much since they had last seen her. Louisa smiled, and bade them come to her, held out her hand to them, and reminded them how happily they had played together when she was there last.

A new world was opened to the young Princess when she visited the old German Imperial city of Strassburg. The journey was extended to the Netherlands. There, on the shores of the German Ocean, she gathered a store of reminiscences which, at a later period, she poured forth with youthful enthusiasm when, as Queen, she read Schiller's "History of the Fall of the United Netherlands."

In view of the fact that the Empire of Germany has been revived and restored by the victorious armies of her son, the present Emperor William, it is interesting to know that Princess Louisa was present at the coro-

nation of two Emperors in Frankfort-on-the-Main—viz., of Leopold II., in September, 1792, and Francis, on July 7, 1792. She thus basked in the last rays of the fading glory of the German Empire.

On these visits to Frankfort she lived, with her sister Frederica and her brother George, in the house of Goethe's mother. One of the stories Madame Goethe told of the stay of their visit to her house was this: she allowed them to pump the water from the well in the courtyard, while she herself kept the governess from calling them into the house by locking her in her room. "I would rather," said Madame Goethe, "have brought any vexation on myself than permit them to be disturbed in the innocent pleasure that was permitted them nowhere else; but in my house the young people greatly enjoyed the liberty granted to them. When they left they said to me that they would never forget how happy they had been in my house."

These visits to Frankfort were followed by a long visit to Hildburghausen, to her eldest sister, wife of the reigning Duke. While Princess Louisa was there, the conflagration of the French revolution threatened to break out on the Rhine. The course of the war brought the Crown Prince of Prussia to Frankfort. From thence the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt wrote to Princess Louisa's grandmother at Hildburghausen, to come by Frankfort on their return journey with her granddaughter, in order that they might be introduced to their relative, the King of Prussia, whose wife was the sister of Princess Louisa's mother. The party from Hildburghausen arrived in Frankfort in March, 1793, and visited the King. Detained longer than they intended by an invitation to supper from the King, Louisa met and won the heart of the Crown Prince. The attachment was mutual. The betrothal took place in the Castle at Darmstadt on the 26th of April, 1793. The marriage took place at Christmas, 1793.

At her entry into Berlin, Princess Louisa was received with great rejoicings. A touching incident occurred on the occasion. At the gate of honour, before the city, a lovely little maiden recited a poem, of which the following were the closing words:—

Forget what thou hast lost; this festal day
 foretells a fairer, brighter life for thee.
 All hail! unto the future times thou kings
 shalt give, of happy grandsons mother be!

Yielding to the impulse of her heart, the Princess stooped down and embraced the child, and kissed her mouth, forehead and eyes. When it was proposed to have a general illumination of the capital on the day of the marriage, the Crown Prince said it would give him greater pleasure if the citizens would give the money that the illuminations would cost for the widows and orphans of those who had fallen in the war. The gifts of the Royal family, together with the offerings of the people, provided a very liberal sum for the unfortunate sufferers.

The newly-married pair lived only for each other. She was a true German housewife as Crown Princess. Afterwards, when her husband ascended the throne, she showed herself to be a true German Queen. It was at home, not at Court, that the Crown Prince and his wife felt most at ease. When the Princess had laid aside her State dress after any great festivity, the Crown Prince was wont to regard her as a pearl that had recovered its original purity. He would take her hand, look into her clear blue eyes and say, "Thank God, you are my wife again!"

"But am I not always that?" asked Louisa.
 "Ah, no," said he, with a jocular sigh; "you are obliged to be Crown Princess too often."

On the 10th of March, 1794, Princess Louisa

kept her first birthday in Berlin. On this occasion the King gave her the Castle of Oranienburg as a summer residence. He asked her whether she had any other wishes. She asked for a handful of gold for the poor of Berlin.

"How large a handful?" said the King, further.

"As large as the heart of the best of kings," she replied.

The poor of the capital received an abundant handful.

On the 15th of October, 1795, the Princess gave birth to a son, who afterwards became Frederic William IV. of Prussia.

The Crown Prince and Princess had occupied Oranienburg during the summer of that year. They did not find it very comfortable. The Castle, with its two wings, was too large for them. The gardens, with their many pavilions, were too grand. They longed for a simpler country seat. Hearing that the estate of Paretz, some miles north-west of Potsdam, was for sale, they bought it and the neighbouring village. At this seat they lived very simply, and mingled freely with the people in their festivities. When the Crown Prince became King, he said in jest that he, the King of Prussia, wished to be looked on at this place as the Mayor of Paretz. And when Louisa was once asked by a foreign princess if she did not find it tiresome to live for weeks upon weeks at this country hermitage, she replied, "Ah, no; I am quite happy as the gracious Frau von Paretz."

A story is told of the life of the Royal couple at Paretz. Frederic William was very fond of having the Adjutant-General, Colonel von Köckeritz, with him. Louisa noticed with displeasure that Köckeritz left the table immediately after dinner, and did not wait until coffee was served. She ascertained the reason, and as he was about to take his leave one day, she beckoned to a servant, who brought a pipe well filled, a burning taper, and a fidibus.

"No, dear Köckeritz," said the Queen, "you dare not desert us again to-day. To-day you shall drink coffee with us, and smoke your usual pipe here."

Whereupon she handed the pipe to her astonished guest. Then she told the King how she had found out why the Colonel always fled from the table so soon. The motive was that he might indulge his favourite habit, and smoke his pipe after dinner. In times of trouble as well as in times of joy, Louisa was always delighted to escape to the country. She agreed with Hippel in thinking that "delight in nature is a proof of a good conscience; that nature is a collection of fiery coals, a goad to one who has a depraved conscience." She was always refreshed by the contemplation of nature.

She needed to have some hours to herself every day in order to keep her spirit in the right tone.

"This object is best attained," she said, "in solitude: not, however, indoors, but in the calm shade—in the open air. If I omit this I feel myself quite out of tune, and I only become worse in the bustle of the world."

PART II.

In the year 1797, in the month of November, King Frederic William II. died, and the Crown Prince, Prince Frederic William, and Princess Louisa became King and Queen. How they were affected by the event we learn from the Countess von Voss, who resided for sixty-nine years at the Prussian Court.

"My Queen," the Countess wrote, "is much afflicted and stricken, and the King is so also. Both are, in fact, very sad, and the young King, according to his noble way of thinking, would willingly have done without

the crown, in order to keep his father longer here."

The first ten or twelve years of their married life fell in the years that followed the peace of Basle. Deeply did Queen Louisa feel it when, in the year 1805, Napoleon began to show an arrogant spirit towards Prussia. The violation of Prussian territory by the march of French troops through Anspach was the first indication that Napoleon would keep no peace with Prussia. Soon afterwards the Czar Alexander came to Potsdam, and, in the vault of Frederic the Great, at midnight, the Emperor and the King, in the presence of the Queen, vowed to fight for the deliverance of Germany.

In the struggle between the war and peace parties which took place at the Prussian Court in the course of 1806, the Queen played an influential part. Without intending to do so, she acted as a constant stimulus to the best men to work for the deliverance of the Fatherland. It was her character, more than anything she did, that made her name a watchword for the enemies of Napoleon. Napoleon felt that the Queen was a power, and, attributing her influence to direct political action, he began to calumniate her. His anger against her increased when she accompanied her husband to the field when war broke out. She could not bear to be separated from him. She was only glad to share and fan by her presence the enthusiasm with which the army marched against Napoleon.

The Battle of Jena had commenced before she yielded to the urgent entreaty to return to Berlin. At the gates of the capital she heard of the complete defeat of the Prussian army, and that the armies of Napoleon were overrunning the country. She prepared for her journey towards the East, and left Berlin with the children. In these days of national sorrow she addressed words to her eldest sons fitted to be the seeds of a better harvest in the future. She exhorted them to keep these days in remembrance, and labour for the deliverance of their people. She reminded them of the deeds of their forefathers. She warned them against the degeneracy of the age, and bade them quit themselves men.

The King and Queen met at Küstrin, and together they received blow after blow as the tidings came of the surrender of the divisions of the army and of the fortresses.

At Ortelsburg, on the 5th of December, 1806, the Queen wrote some despondent verses in her diary, but did not remain in that mood long. She dried her tears, went to the piano, and played and sung Paul Gerhardt's hymn—

"Commit thou all thy griefs," etc.

In Königsberg she met the newly-converted Madame Krüdener. The two ladies became very intimate, and visited the sick soldiers in the hospitals. The Queen herself took ill of nervous fever, and hardly had she recovered before it was necessary to fly to Memel. When the remainder of the Prussian army joined the Russians, she returned to Königsberg.

After the Battle of Friedland (June 14th, 1807) all seemed lost. The Queen had to return to Memel. "My faith ought not to waver, but I can hope no longer," she wrote to her father.

At the suggestion of the Czar Alexander she was summoned to the negotiations for peace that were going on at Hiktupponen, in order that she might meet Napoleon. "It is the most painful sacrifice that I have ever made

for my people," she said. The meeting was without result.

It was not the custom of those days for people to speak much of their religious feelings. Borowsky, the aged preacher in Königsberg, with whom the Queen had much intercourse, however, gives us an insight into her inner life.

"With the feeling and expression of fear she approaches the holy truths of religion, but also with the expression of hunger and thirst. She finds all her religious views and efforts upon the divinely revealed Word of God; she thus acquires steadfastness, certainty, and confidence. I take advantage of the gracious confidence with which she treats me to confirm her in these things. In her ordinary mood she sympathises, at present especially, with the Psalms; the holy enthusiasm that is found in them harmonises with her beautiful poetical nature, and gives wings to her devout feelings. The experiences through which she has passed open the sanctuary of Holy Scripture to her, and lead her into the depths and riches of its meaning. The old saying that 'affliction teaches to mark and understand the Word' is confirmed in the most glorious way in her; and her remarks, and questions, and answers, full alike of thought and feeling, often astonish me in the most agreeable manner. As I had the honour to wait upon her last Sunday, I found her alone in her room reading Holy Scripture. Rising quickly, and coming towards me in the most friendly manner, she began at once—

"I have just meditated on, and experienced, and made the 126th Psalm my own. The more I reflect on it, and seek to grasp it, the more it attracts me by its sublimity and loveliness, and I know nothing that so warms and soothes my heart, that is so elevating and consoling to me, as this Psalm. The soul-sorrow that finds such simple utterance in it is so deep, and yet so composed, quiet, and gentle. What it ought to accomplish, the fruit it ought to bring forth, is indicated in the beautiful image of the seed and the harvest. The hope that endures and overcomes sorrow of heart suffuses it like the dawn, and the songs of the victors are heard above the storms of misfortune. A spirit of sadness as well as of victory, of self-surrender as well as of joyful confidence, breathes through it—an elegy, and yet a hymn—a hallelujah with tears. I look at this Psalm as one looks at a beautiful flower on which a clear drop of dew glistens in the morning sunlight. Read again and again, it has imprinted itself on my memory."

"As I looked at the Queen, and heard her eloquent words, the text came into my mind, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'"

The visit paid by the King and Queen to the Court of St. Petersburg at New Year, 1809—a visit disapproved by some of the best advisers of the King—does not seem to have had a good effect on the mind of the monarch. The Queen said concerning it:—"I went and I returned. Nothing dazzles me now. I tell you again, 'My kingdom is not of this world.'"

In the same year she wrote concerning her birthday festivities:—

"My birthday was a terrible day to me. In the evening the city gave a great feast in my honour in the Castle; but it made me very sad. I smiled, made myself agreeable to everybody, and I did not know where to flee for wretchedness. To whom will Prussia belong next year? Where shall we all be? God, Almighty Father, pity thee!"

The deepest desire of her heart was for the moral and religious elevation of the people. The cross she had to bear taught her the vanity of the religion of so-called "enlightenment," and led her to search more deeply into the eternal foundations of the faith. An insipid rationalistic address delivered at the baptism of her son, born in October, 1809, at Königsberg, distressed her much.

For three years the Royal family lived far away from the capital in very narrow circumstances. The Queen longed to return, and the journey was undertaken in December, 1809.

It was a triumphal progress. On the 23rd of the month, on the anniversary of the day on which, sixteen years previously, she had entered Berlin as bride-elect of the Crown Prince, the King and Queen made their entry into the capital. Nothing could be more hearty than their reception. The tears of the Queen deeply touched the hearts of the best men among the onlookers. Fouqué, the poet, wrote:—

"Those eyes of angelic clearness were dimmed by tears on account of Bonaparte. They have wept on account of our gratitude. We must fight, and make them sparkle with joy on account of our victories."

She was not to live to see Prussia rise from the depths of her humiliation, and rejoice in the overthrow of the oppressor. Her end was not far off. Subject to frequent bodily attacks, forebodings of death passed through her mind. She longed once more to visit her old home in Mecklenburg. At the end of June she made the journey, and was overjoyed to be with her father and family.

One day she said to her brother, "Dear George, now for the first time I am perfectly happy." Then she went to her father's desk, and wrote the following words on a sheet of paper:—"My dear father, I am very happy to-day, as your daughter, and the wife of the best of husbands."

These were the last words she ever wrote. Her malady was very rapidly developed, and proved fatal. The King and the two eldest Princes were barely in time to see her in life. "Lord Jesus, cut it short," were her last words. She died on the 19th of July, 1810.

The whole nation shared the sorrow of the Royal family, and the feeling contributed not a little to the resuscitation of the Fatherland.

She was buried at Charlottenburg. It was to her grave that her son, then King William of Prussia, went for prayer on the sixtieth anniversary of her death, the 19th of July, 1870, the day on which war was proclaimed against France, from which war he returned as Emperor of Germany, thus fulfilling the dream and hope of Queen Louisa.

Her faith in God, her love of Fatherland, her admonitions to her sons, viewed in the light of the ultimate realisation of her most deeply-cherished aspirations and desires for German unity, impart an almost prophetic aspect to her character. She may be viewed as a martyr to her love for the Fatherland. Her death was doubtless accelerated by the humiliations to which Prussia was subjected, but she never altogether lost hope. "I believe firmly in God," she had said; "also in a moral government of the world"; and her consolation was, "those who sow in tears shall reap in joy."*

* *Geschichts und Lebensbilder aus den Befreiungskriegen.* Von Wilhelm Baur. Vierte sehr verbesserte Auflage. 1834.

