



THE EMPRESS AUGUSTA:

A SKETCH OF HER LIFE AND WORK.

By THE COUNTESS A. VON BOTHMER.

THE Princess Marie Louise Augusta Catharine of Saxe-Weimar, born at Weimar on the 30th September, 1811, was the second daughter of the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, by his marriage with the Grand Duchess Marie Paulovna of Russia. She was the last link which connected the house of Hohenzollern with the days of its adversity and comparative obscurity. At the time of her birth, Germany was still groaning under the yoke of the first Napoleon, and it certainly could have never entered into her wildest girlish dreams that she could possibly one day be Empress of a united Germany. Her father, the Grand Duke, was one of the most cultured men of his day, and in consequence Weimar was, at that time, the centre of all that was refined and intellectual in Germany, and the resort of men of genius. It was no wonder that in such an atmosphere the young princess became a most talented woman, with strong literary and artistic tendencies. Amongst the earliest teachers of the princess and her sister Marie were Goethe and his friend, Karl August. Goethe took a great deal of interest in the development of their intellects, but his favourite was the Princess Augusta, of whom he said that her quickness in learning and comprehension, even as a child, of all that is noble and good, was perfectly wonderful. As she grew older, it was plainly seen that she had fully inherited her father's intellect and artistic tastes. She became a most accomplished musician and composer, and many of her compositions were very highly thought of. Those most known are a battle march, which is extremely popular in the Prussian Army; "The Masquerade," and an overture, besides numerous smaller pieces.

The Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar was a most affectionate and careful mother, and herself superintended the education of her daughters, who she was anxious should receive perfect moral as well as intellectual training, to enable them to pass through life with honour to themselves and others.

It was a very happy life that the young princesses had in their home in Weimar, full of interest and enjoyment. Goethe and Herder, Wieland and Schiller, had all, in their time, helped to make Weimar celebrated, and the rich dowry which the Russian Princess brought with her enabled the Grand Duke to



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make great improvements in his rather impoverished Court and town.

William von Humboldt, who visited Weimar when the Princess Augusta was in her sixteenth year, wrote the following about her to a friend:—

"The Princess Augusta has already left childhood behind her, and one can see plainly that her character is firm and reliable; her clear, penetrating spirit shines through her eyes, and her expression is most intelligent; if she does not become too tall she will be a most beautiful woman."

This expectation was fully realised, as can be seen by the paintings of her taken in the early days of her marriage.

The elder princess, Marie, married Prince Charles of Prussia, and not very long afterwards on the 11th of February, 1829, Princess Augusta became engaged to Prince William, the second son of Frederick William III. of Prussia, and they were married the following 11th of June.

It was in many ways a very sad marriage for the young princess, for her husband's heart was not hers, and although he treated her always with never-failing kindness and respect, she must have had many lonely and sorrowful hours, especially in the first part of her married life.

Their union was entirely one of dynastic interest, for, until it was seen that the Crown Prince was unlikely to leave issue, Prince William had expressed his determination to remain single.

At last, when it was evidently a necessity that he should marry, he gave a reluctant consent, and his betrothal to the Princess Augusta was shortly afterwards announced. He had been deeply in love with his cousin, the beautiful Princess Elise Radizwill, and for a long time he had hoped that the permission for their marriage might be given, but to his lasting sorrow it was, for State reasons,

withheld, the Princess Elise not being thought of sufficiently high birth to become the bride of the future heir to the throne.

It was a great change for the Princess William to come from Weimar, so famous for its intellectual life, to the somewhat humdrum Court of Berlin, where military matters were the chief subject of conversation. Her husband, although good and estimable in every way, was so thoroughly in heart and soul a soldier, that he had neither time nor inclination to interest himself in other matters, and so the young wife was obliged to live her intellectual life alone. She strove, however, to interest all around her in art, and to raise their ideal.

During her whole life she retained a great affection and sympathy for the home of her childhood, and for the liberal policy of her father. It was this which in later years caused Bismarck to fear her influence with her husband, and which led to their partial separation for a time.

Although she never willingly interfered in political matters, still a clever woman's influence is always more or less insensibly felt, even in Germany, where a woman's intellect and opinion are thought less of than in England. Baron von Sternberg, who visited Berlin in the early years of her marriage, said that the Princess appeared to him and to others as the brightest and most intelligent spirit in the otherwise dull Court of Frederick William III.

The birth of a son to the Prince and Princess William was a source of great happiness to them and of satisfaction to the nation; he was named Frederick William, and was born on the 18th of October, 1829; seven years later a daughter gladdened her mother's heart; the child received the name of Louise in remembrance of her grandmother, and is now the Grand Duchess of Baden.

After the accession of Frederick William IV. to the throne, the Princess William, who had very little in common with her brother-in-law, remained almost entirely at home with her children, and devoted herself to their education, and that her teaching has brought forth good fruit, has been clearly proved by the noble, unselfish lives of her son and daughter.

The Emperor Frederick had always great sympathy with his mother, and it was from her that he first learnt those broad, enlightened views which, had he been spared, would have brought so much good to Germany and all Europe; and there has also always been a close companionship and affection between the Grand Duchess of Baden and her mother during their whole lives.

The year 1848 was a time of great trouble for the Prince and Princess William. All Prussia, and especially Berlin, was in a state of revolt, and the chief fury of the populace was directed against Prince William, who, on account of his political opinions, had become exceedingly

unpopular. It was at last thought necessary, for the sake of public peace, that he should leave the country. He accordingly went, very unwillingly, at the King's command, to England, where he was most kindly received by Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. It was by his consistent holding to these same unpopular opinions during his whole life, without wavering through bad and good report, that he ultimately earned the respect of his people, and afterwards their affection.

Looking at him when he was King of Prussia, and afterwards Emperor of Germany, one of the most popular monarchs who ever lived, it is difficult to realise that, as Prince of Prussia and heir-apparent to the throne, he was compelled, on account of his unpopularity, to leave his country.

The Princess William, at the time of the riots, rendered a great service to Prussia. Prince William had some valuable State papers in his possession, which, had they fallen into the hands of the mob, might have done untold mischief. Princess William dared not trust them to anyone, and therefore dressed herself in the uniform of an officer of artillery, and so attired conveyed them to the King's palace. Fortunately the people soon became quieter, although for some time it was uncertain how things would end.

During her husband's absence the Princess William remained at Potsdam, and on his happy return on the 4th June she went with her son and daughter to meet him at Magdeburg. During all these years of her married life the Princess had been indefatigable in working for the good of her people. She did all in her power to encourage genius of every kind, and anyone who had done good work could obtain a free entrance to her presence. She never cared whether people belonged to the nobility or possessed riches, but only considered their intellectual and moral qualities, and to this end she held receptions every Thursday, at which lectures and readings by celebrated men were very often given.

In every way she endeavoured to raise the tone of the Court of Berlin, and she has certainly done more for the intellectual good of her people than any other princess of her time in Germany. On the 20th of September, 1856, the Princess Louise was married to the Grand Duke of Baden, and the following year, on the 9th of July, the Princess William held her first grandson in her arms.

In the year 1858 the marriage of her beloved son with the Princess Royal of England took place, a marriage which gave her and Prince William great satisfaction; and a year later, on the 27th of January, 1859, the present Kaiser was born.

In the year 1858 King Frederick William IV. became so ill mentally that Prince William was proclaimed Prince Regent, and in 1861 he succeeded to the throne on the death of his brother, and by this turn of circumstances a wider field was now open to Queen Augusta, who made a noble use of her influence, especially during the years 1864, '66, and '70, times of great anxiety to the Queen and her husband.

After the war of 1864, she saw that some new method of procuring nurses for the sick and wounded was very necessary in Germany, and she therefore used all her influence to form societies or guilds for the voluntary attendance on the sick. She at first met with considerable opposition, but with the King's help, who stood firmly by her, she at last attained her end, and before the war of 1866 broke out, the societies were in working order.

These guilds were formed under the Red Cross standard all over Prussia, the central organisation being at Berlin, and had for their common object the care of the sick and wounded in public hospitals and private



READING THE NEWS OF THE EMPRESS'S DEATH.

dwellings, the relief of families of absent soldiers, and the support of the widows and orphans.

The Empress saw clearly the necessity of placing these institutions on a firm and lasting foundation, so as to serve in times of peace as well as in war, during epidemics, calamities, inundations, or famines.

The badge of the order is a red cross on a white ground, with the motto "*In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*," or, "In essential things unity, in doubtful things liberty, in everything charity"; and these societies have proved a great blessing to Germany, and have increased immensely, so that in 1881 they numbered five hundred branch societies and fifty thousand members.

King William appointed the Queen patroness of the Guild, and at the same time instituted the Louisen Order, and made Count Eberhard von Stolberg Military Inspector of the hospitals, with voluntary attendants. During the war with Austria, and the epidemic of cholera which followed, the good results of these institutions were seen, and many poor sick and wounded men blessed the name of Queen Augusta; and again, later on, in the war with France in 1870, the Queen, helped by her daughter-in-law, undertook to superintend the sending out of nurses to the battle-fields. Her efforts on the part of humanity were crowned by the triumphant ending of this war, and the unanimous proclamation of her husband as German Emperor by the Princes of Germany.

When the Queen married Prince William, Prussia was not more than a third-rate power, the youngest kingdom in Germany; and now it had become the first military power in Europe, and its King ruler of a mighty empire, and all this owing to the consistent policy of her husband, and to the wisdom of his great ministers.

The following years were spent quietly and peacefully by the Empress Augusta, until 1878, when the Emperor's life was attempted. This gave her a great shock, and she at once went with her daughter to Berlin, and nursed him until he recovered his health.

In the year 1887, the anxiety about the Crown Prince's health became very grave.

The Empress Augusta, who had for some years suffered from an incurable disease, was very much upset by this; she had for a long time been obliged to live the life of a semi-invalid, and had passed her time at Berlin, Coblenz, and numerous German watering-places, Baden-Baden being an especially favourite resort of hers.

It was often reported in Germany that she wished to join the Church of Rome, but this was quite untrue, and the only thing which gave colour to it was, that as she spent a great deal of her time at Coblenz, and was considered a patroness of the Rhine provinces, she thought it only right to select some of her personal attendants from those districts where the Church of Rome is much more popular than in any other part of Prussia, which fact proves that although deeply religious, she was by no means a bigot.

The Empress's life was strictly regulated almost to monotony. When in Berlin she drove out every day for an hour, generally to the Bellevue Castle, and walked for a short time in the enclosed part of the park, which is laid out as a garden.

On her return she received people of rank and representatives of charitable institutions, and in the evening only had a few people with her, when there was either reading or music; at nine she invariably went to bed.

She had always very rigid ideas about etiquette, even concerning her son's children, and the following remark is recorded as having been made by one of the Emperor Frederick's daughters: "Grandmamma Victoria embraces us, but Grandmamma Augusta only allows us to kiss her hand."

This strict formality prevented her being so thoroughly understood by the people as might otherwise have been the case, but she was nevertheless very much beloved by all her personal attendants, and by those whom she knew intimately, as her manner was very kindly, and her habits of the most simple nature.

The year 1888 brought deep sorrow to her and to the whole German nation; the loss of her husband and son in rapid succession was overwhelming, and for some time it was thought she would sink under these terrible

blows, but in spite of all she lived on and endeavoured, by works of charity, to obtain relief from her deep grief.

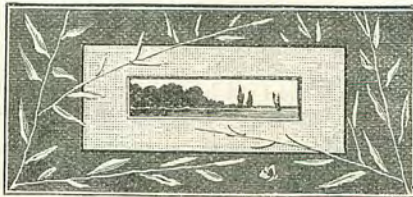
It is curious to note that she had constantly said that she would die in January, 1890; and remarked to one of her attendants, shortly before her last illness, "January always brings trouble to monarchies," and she was most uneasy during the slight illness of the Emperor's children. It was when she first became ill that she said to one of her ladies-in-waiting: "Did I not tell you so?—we are now in the month of January." That illness, which had already proved fatal to so many valuable lives, the influenza, seized her in the first week of January, and on Tuesday, the 7th, all hope was given up.

In the afternoon, at 4.29, she passed away unconsciously, her daughter's hand in hers, while the Emperor and Empress, the Grand Duke of Baden, and the Princess of Saxe-Meiningen stood around her bed; the Empress Frederick and her daughters had not time to reach Berlin before the end.

The funeral took place the following Saturday, and she was laid in the mausoleum at Charlottenburg, by her husband's side, where a suitable monument will be erected to her memory. By her will she left one million marks, or £50,000, to charitable institutions; five million marks to the Grand Duchess of Baden; and to her grandson, Prince Henry of Prussia, a large sum; and her palace at Berlin and the Castle at Babelsberg go to the present Emperor. She has also left legacies to her attendants.

Her fortune was valued at twelve million marks, of which no less than one million was left towards charitable works. Two institutions will always bless her name—the Augusta establishment at Charlottenburg, where the daughters of officers killed on the field of battle receive a good education free of charge, and the Augusta Hospital in Berlin.

She has left a noble record behind her of good deeds accomplished and duties fulfilled, and as one of the German newspapers said, "She will always be thought of with love and thankfulness, for she gave her people 'Unser Fritz.'"



THE THREE MARYS.

"There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalen."—St. John.

LORD, when I see the Marys there,
O give me grace their woes to share;
For sins which aye to Thee are bare,
May I be crucified!*

Be crucified upon the tree—
The only cross Thou givest me—
Past wilful ways and deeds to see,
May I be crucified!

Lord, let my agonies abound;
Let piercèd heart and mind thorn-crowned
Lead on to peace and love profound
Until I rest in Thee!—

Until my Easter morn arise,
When with my namesakes in the skies
I share in heaven th' eternal joys
Thou hast prepared for me!

MARY W.

* "I am crucified with Christ."—St. Paul.