

## CARMEN SYLVA, QUEEN OF ROUMANIA.

UPON my desk lies a book on which is printed in bold autograph characters "Tales from Carmen Sylva's Kingdom." But who is Carmen Sylva? Has she, indeed, a realm that is situated in any portion of the globe, or is her kingdom one of pure romance, that has no existence out of the realms of fairy tale? The kingdom is far-distant Roumania, as a State new-comer among the European kingdoms, but as a land and nation older far than the governments around it, to whom it has for centuries proved a bone of contention. "Puin" the natives fondly call their land,—a word that in their speech means "my darling." Puin has had much to suffer from the nations that compass her round about, and have at various periods of her history enslaved her, trampling her fruitful garden under their iron heels, uprooting her flowers, and destroying her labors. But Puin is at peace now, and happy in her ruler, whose consort is no other than Carmen Sylva. There rests upon her brow a dual crown: one formed of leaves of laurel plucked in the gardens of Apollo; one made of stern iron, fashioned out of guns captured from Mohammedan Turks, and given to her by Charles, Prince of Hohenzollern, now King of Roumania. That he, an alien, an unimaginative and inflexible Prussian, has been able to retain the throne, that he has overthrown intrigues, confounded conspiracies, that he has gained, if not the love, at least the sincere respect of his subjects, is due in great part to the lady who sits beside him, and who, a queen in the best and richest sense of the word, has made his paths smooth and has won the hearts of all that come in contact with her. A lovable woman truly; one of those magnetic presences to whom our hearts go out at first sight, we know not why; in whom a true and noble womanhood rises above the factitious dignity of royalty. Brought under the influence of her deep blue eyes, of her full, rich, sympathetic voice, her genial smile, the wish naturally arises to know more of the woman and the queen.

"I was born far from a throne," she said to me one day, as we sat chatting in cozy *tête-à-tête* in the tiny study she had made for herself in the Villa Spinola—that house embosomed in orange and lemon gardens, which stands upon the shores of the beautiful Gulf of Genoa, where she spent some weeks last year. "Yes, I was born very far from a throne, and I am heartily glad of it.

I thus had a more natural youth." She is fully aware of the fact that princes as a rule look at life through the wrong end of the telescope, fully aware that it is a fate from which it seems almost impossible to save them; but she hopes and thinks that she has escaped this doom—thanks to the wisdom of her parents, to the comparative modesty of her origin, to the fact that life has been very real and grave to her, and that she has not been shielded and guarded from seeing aught but its sunny side, or one carefully tricked out for her contemplation. Carmen Sylva, as she calls herself by her *nom de plume*, a name compounded from her fondness for song and wood, was by birth a princess of Wied, one of the many tiny principalities with which Germany abounded. At the time the princess was born, namely, December 29, 1843, her family, one of the oldest among small German princelings, had by their kindness and culture made themselves beloved of their subjects. She was a robust, bright-eyed little girl, a very piece of quicksilver, to whom it was needful to teach reading at the age of three, in order to keep her occupied. Her alert intelligence was carefully trained by her cultured parents and by able tutors. She soon distinguished herself by her knowledge of languages, her passion for poetry and music, and her genuine love of the fine arts. Nor were the strictly feminine branches of education neglected. Princess Elizabeth learned to ply her needle as deftly as her pen, her cooking-spoon as well as her drawing-pencil. But she was by no means a merely studious child. Her lively animal spirits needed constant vent, and many a time would she manage to get outside the park, gather the village children about her, and prove the ringleader of wild and merry games. From the age of five it was her ardent desire, her ideal, to be a national school-mistress; and when she was not romping with them, it was her delight to gather the village children around her and teach them what she had just learned herself. There was not much etiquette in her father's little court, where sorrow and sickness had early taken up a permanent abode. The father was a chronic invalid, and the mother was prostrated for five years, while during the whole period of Princess Elizabeth's intellectual development, for eleven years, her youngest brother struggled wearily with a life of pain to which death hourly held out hopes of re-

lease. It is easy to understand what a sad impression all this must have made on the sensitive mind of the young girl, and why it was needful that the family life should be both quiet and natural. To give her a chance of expanding, to strengthen the health of her second brother, and also in the hope of benefiting the little invalid, the mother caused a farm to be laid out in their country-seat, in which the children themselves tilled the ground, milked the cows, tended the poultry, sowed and cut the grain,—in short, did with their own hands all rural labors. This *régime* was especially healthful to Elizabeth, who was by nature a fantastic child, inclined to weave romances and live in dreamland. It brought her into contact with the real earth, and she learned to know and love nature. Seeing her imaginative leanings, her wise mother had carefully withheld from her works of imagination and poetry, desiring to strengthen her intellect with sterner studies. But she could not prevent the child from secretly inditing verses at a tender age, nor did she remain wholly ignorant of works of fiction. A copy, somehow obtained, of "The Wide, Wide World" was long her favorite reading, and was often found hidden between the covers of some school-book, or under her pillow at night. To succor those in distress, to aid the poor and nurse the sick, was early taught her by precept and example; and with her ardent temperament, which is apt to exaggerate everything, there seemed at one time some danger that she would not have a dress to her back, so liberally did she dispose of her wardrobe to all who asked. Meanwhile, to roam the woods that surrounded the country-seat of the family, if possible alone, accompanied only by her big dogs, so that she might dream her dreams undisturbed, remained the chief pleasure of the little girl. Day by day her German home grew dearer to her, and even among the more stately Carpathians she has not forgotten the vine-clad hills of the Rhine. She, too, has given her poetical tribute to that much-sung river, and in introducing her translations of Roumanian folk-songs to her native land she invokes the Rhine in terms of endearment.

This open-air life, this rustic, simple training, united to a refined intelligence and careful mental nurture, has produced an original and charming result. To this day the Queen retains some of the unsophisticated directness of the tiller of the soil, while there is an aroma of the woods and fields in her poetry and her speech. As a mere child her instincts were toward independence and freedom, and to this day conventionality irks her. Many are the

tales told of her wild exploits while in her Rhenish home. One day, when she was but ten, she was seized with a sudden desire to attend the village school. When her mother, as her custom was, came into the children's room in the early morning, Princess Elizabeth begged for leave to go and learn her lessons with the neighbors' children. The Princess of Wied either did not hear, or did not regard the demand as made in earnest, and the little girl, interpreting her silence as consent, slipped away and entered the school, where all knew her well by sight. The master was pleased, but scarcely surprised; he knew the simple habits of the Wied family, and so he continued his labors, regardless of the new scholar. They were in the midst of a singing lesson and the Princess joined in with all the ardor of her nature and the strength of her youthful lungs. Singing was a delight to her, all the more that at home, among so many invalids, she had to check her exuberant utterances. But, to the no small dismay of the whole class, a little girl standing next her, annoyed at, perchance jealous of, this full-voiced song, unable to sing her down, put her hand over the Princess's mouth to silence her. While she was in this ignominious position, there arrived a liveried servant from the castle, sent in pursuit of the fugitive, whom he bore off humiliated, and who was condemned to several days' captivity in consequence of this escapade.

Journeys to the Isle of Wight, to various German towns, and even to Paris, for the purpose of seeking change of air, and surgical aid for the invalid brother, had broken the monotony of the Princess's life; but not until she was seventeen did she make acquaintance with the great world. She then paid a visit of several months to the court of Berlin. Here an adventure befell her, and if, as Lord Beaconsfield asserts, adventures are to the adventurous, it was but right and proper that a romantic accident should befall the mercurial Princess Elizabeth. Rushing down the stairs one day with her habitual impetuosity, she slipped and would have fallen to the bottom, had not a gentleman who was ascending at the same moment caught her in his arms. It was a fall laden with unexpected consequences, for she had fallen into the arms of her future husband. But as yet she was not to rest in them for good. The young Princess evinced an almost savage dislike to matrimony, and in response to all proposals of marriage made to her replied: "I do not want to marry unless I can be Queen of Roumania." The reply seemed a very safe one in those days, when Roumania had but just been founded, and only as a principality, under the boyard

rule of the worthless Prince Couza. She little realized that later she would be taken at her word. Meantime she went home again to Wied, and resumed her offices in the sick-room and her studies; for until she was twenty-five, indeed until she married, Princess Elizabeth never ceased to take lessons. Her favorite tutor, a cultivated minister of that small sect, the Mennonites, told me that he used to allow her in later years to regulate her own studies. He had early trained her to think, and often for hours master and pupil would discuss their readings. What the Queen never could and never will suffer is surface talk. She has a manner of at once leading conversation away from trivialities, and with her fine knowledge of human nature and kindly sympathy with her fellows, she invariably succeeds in drawing out the best that is in people, and also in making them speak of that which they know best or care for most. She has the rare gift of questioning with *esprit*; she has the yet rarer gift of listening well; and at the same time she is herself an excellent talker, and knows how to set conversation going and to maintain it. In her youth she was a great reader, and had acquired Dr. Johnson's art of tearing out the heart of a book, for she has little patience to wade through detail. Her powers in this respect often perplexed her slower-witted, thorough-going German tutor.

In 1862 her little brother died, and soon after her most intimate friend. In 1867 it was thought well that the Princess should be removed awhile from the house over which ever hung the shadows of sorrow and death. Therefore her aunt, the Grand Duchess Helena of Russia, took her traveling to various parts of Europe. While at St. Petersburg she was struck down with typhus fever, and when she recovered it was to learn the bitter tidings that her adored father had passed away. "Must all I love on earth be borne to the grave?" is the burden of a mournful poem written in her journal of that date. Music became her only consolation, and during her convalescence she took lessons from Mme. Schumann and Rubinstein. In the summer she went home, to find the quiet home yet quieter and sadder. During the next years every summer was spent at home on the Rhine, every winter traveling with her aunt. Even when away she diligently pursued her studies. Thus, one winter at Naples was entirely dedicated to the works of Shakspeare, Scott, and Dickens. From childhood she had spoken English with ease, and had been attracted to English literature.

Meanwhile European public events were changing, a change destined to affect the "wild rose-bud of Wied," as her friends loved

to call her. In 1868 Prince Charles of Hohenzollern had been chosen ruler of Roumania, and in the autumn of the next year he came to the Rhine to remind the Princess Elizabeth of her desire to rule over that kingdom. Even so it was a little while before she could consent to resign her fiercely cherished independence, but she yielded, and in November of the same year he took her to his home amid the Carpathians, after she had been united to him four times over, namely: according to the German civil code, according to the Lutheran, her own religion, according to the Roman Catholic, which is his, and according to the rites of the Greek Church, which is the creed of their kingdom. Arrived in her new home, she at once threw herself with native ardor into all her new duties. She learned to read and write Roumanian, she made herself acquainted with the needs and requirements of the land, and soon saw that she had not been wrong when, years ago, she had aspired after this throne as one which would give her a noble work to do. While keeping herself carefully aloof from the entanglements of politics, the result of her endeavors was soon felt more beneficially than those of cannon or diplomatists. She founded schools, hospitals, soup-kitchens, convalescent homes, cooking-schools and *crèches*; she encouraged popular lectures; she inculcated respect for sanitary laws, most needful in an eastern land; she founded art galleries and art schools. These institutions now bear practical testimony to the Queen's energetic love for her nation and her kind. It was her endeavor from the first to be a mother of her people in the best sense of the word, and "little mother" has long been the tender name by which her people call her. To give but one instance, a small matter, and yet one that has had much influence and greatly contributed to her popularity: It seems that Roumanian women have ever been famed for their powers of spinning and weaving, their deftness in embroidery; but the new Queen found that a love for tawdry West-European clothes and Parisian fashions threatened to extinguish their national art and to render the picturesque costume of the country a thing of the past. Out of her own private purse she founded a school of embroidery, in which the old Byzantine patterns were carefully reproduced. She encouraged the peasants to bring to her the robes they had embroidered, and when in the country she donned the national costume, and made her ladies wear it too, the only difference between her dress and that of the peasants being that she wears the veil, which, as in old Greek costume, as we may learn from the story of Helen, is the mark of queenly dignity. She further made

it obligatory that at the annual charity balls in Bucharest the national costume would be worn.

In 1870 the Queen became a mother, and though her child was only a little girl, and hence of no value to the land as heir, she was none the less precious to her mother's heart. For four years, four precious years, all the Queen's happiness was centered in this child; in her babe's beaming eyes she forgot all griefs, all worries. Joy, of which she had known so little in her life, had taken up its abode beside her, and for a time banished Sorrow, her too faithful attendant. There is a most charming portrait extant of the Queen, in all the pride and joy of young motherhood, carrying her child pick-a-back upon her shoulders. We seem to hear her speak the words of her own poem, "The Mother":

"The fairest word on earth that's heard,  
On human lips the fairest word,  
Is mother.  
To whom such name shall once belong,  
High honor hers her whole life long,  
A mother.  
But all her earthly joys are o'er,  
Who is and then who is no more  
A mother.\*

Alas! she was to be among the latter; her happiness was as short as it was intense. Death, who had already taken from her so much, dealt her the hardest, bitterest blow of all, a blow from which she will never recover. She has well said: "Almost every one has had his Gethsemane and his Calvary. Those who arise thence no longer belong to earth." That is the impression the Queen makes on those who know her. Though she can be merry enough at times, it is evident that earth does not hold her tightly, that she is one of those who have known grief and drunk its bitter cup to the lees. An epidemic of scarlet fever raged in Bucharest, and to this scourge the little Princess fell a victim. "Other mothers had to give up their treasures," said the Queen, "why should I hope to escape?" But it was her ewe lamb that had been taken. Then it came about that sorrow made the Queen an author. From her childhood she had written verses in secret; her thoughts naturally took shape in metric speech, but she had never thought of publishing, or indeed of showing, her verses except to near friends. Now, after this sore blow, her pen became her loved companion and trusted friend. She poured out her woe in song; she versified the tender sayings of her tale; she translated into German the favorite Roumanian folk-songs of her little one. This book she published, in the hope that what had given pleasure to her darling

would also please the little ones in her distant German home among the vineyards and oak forests. All these early poems, as indeed her poesy in general, are characterized by a tone of deep melancholy,—not the fashionable and too often artificial world-pain, but a true and deep life-weariness, the utterance of one from whom life has taken all away, and to whom only death can now be donor. She looks to him to save and release her, and sings:

"Death is one with Joy, 'tis he  
Heals and sets free."

But before the Queen gave to the world a printed volume, she had to suffer the dread horrors of war. The Ottoman campaign of 1877-78 had broken out; Roumania suffered cruelly and fought bravely, and King Charles was ever to the front. Hers was the task to succor the wounded and comfort the distressed. She maintained out of her private purse a lazaretto for a hundred patients, and was constantly found here or in the other hospitals, personally tending the patients; and often her persuasions alone induced the soldiers to submit to painful operations. Again and again was she present cheering and encouraging while the surgeons wielded the knife, and many a death-bed did she solace. No wonder the sick adored her as a saint; no wonder the coldly egotistical *haute société* of Bucharest were shamed out of their indifference, and accorded the Queen pecuniary and even personal aid in her noble work. There stands to-day, in the public place of Bucharest, a fine monument representing the Queen in the act of giving a drink of water to a wounded soldier. This statue was subscribed for by the wives of the Roumanian army as an enduring testimonial of their love and gratitude for her whom the popular voice now christened "the mother of the wounded."

Unwearying, indefatigable, is the Queen in the discharge of her duties; indeed, it is doubtful whether many queens interpret them so rigidly. But Queen Elizabeth is a wise woman as well as a kind one. She has her people's weal at heart, but she has also her husband's. "Yours will be a noble mission," he said to her on the day of their betrothal. "You must comfort tenderly when I have been too harsh, and you may petition for all." He knows that his uprightness is coupled with Hohenzollern lack of sympathy, that hence he often offends against the prejudices of his less sternly molded subjects, when it is his desire to act purely for their good. If King Charles is now a popular sovereign, this is mainly due to his wife,

\* The translations interspersed in this article are from the pen of Miss Amy Levy.

who furnishes the emotional element to his excellent but rigid deeds. "Ours is by no means an easy throne to fill," she said to me. "We are not old and established, but strangers in the land; we must try to gain the favor and good-will of all."

When the Queen has fulfilled all her duties, there comes for her a precious moment when she may retire into her study and live for herself and her ideals. It was in 1880 that she first published. From the beginning she had taken a lively interest in the literature of her new country, greatly assisting its revival and culture; and since she never lost sight of the Fatherland she had left behind her, her desire was to act as interpreter to the European nations to whom Roumania was a *terra incognita*. Hence she translated a selection of Roumanian poems into her "beloved German tongue"; and to the land of grapes and forests, to the Rhine that witnessed her childhood, with a certain regal pride she presents this battalion of Roumanian poets. Behold, she seems to say, Vasilio Alecsandri, who has written eight volumes and has created the national drama; Eminesca, the poet of pessimism; Negruzzi, who writes prose as excellently as verse; Scherbanescu, who writes as vigorously as he fought; all these are citizens of the land over which I reign.

Her next work was called "Stürme," and was thus dedicated to her fellow-women:

"Ye, having heart and strength to bear  
Deep in the fervent-glowing soul,  
Whom the fierce flames of Passion's self  
But strengthen, making firm and whole.

"Ye, having might, when tempests rage,  
To lift the the head, free, fearing nought,  
Whom the heart-pressing weight of life  
Rules with the sway of earnest thought;

"Ye, breathing only light and warmth,  
Forever, like a live sun's ray,  
Till tenderly the bare black earth  
Kindness and joy brings forth straightway; —

"Smiling, great burdens have ye borne,  
Mountains of woe, and still smile on;  
Guerdonless, where no trumpets sound,  
Victorious battles have ye won.

"There laurel is not, nor loud fame;  
There secret tear-drops fall like dew.  
O Heroes, whom no crowds proclaim,  
Women, I give this book to you."

The book contains four narrative poems of very unequal merit. The best is "Sappho," which, though it shows many evidences of immaturity, is original in form and treatment. Regardless of archæological necessity, with a boldness that seems to betoken a lack of reverence for historical accuracy and traditional propriety, the writer has allowed

herself to take great liberties with the old Greek story. The Sappho whom she puts before us, a Sappho who desires to be nothing but a mother, who lives with her daughters and companions in a fabled castle, which for all its Greek name must have stood somewhere in German lands, is a Sappho who never existed. Quite un-Greek is the fable which causes two hearts to be torn asunder by grievous misunderstandings; un-Greek the spirit that pervades the many really charming lyrics interspersed in which the tone of world-weariness prevails; un-Greek too the form, original though the idea undoubtedly is, to blend the pentameter with the old German alliterative rhyme. It rings sonorously, and proves how seriously the writer has studied her art, that she ventures to stray from the beaten path and create a rhythm for herself. Indeed, her style is always correct and often original and striking. All four poems are rich in lyrics. The Queen has caught the peculiar warm, homely, fanciful tone that distinguishes German lyricism from that of other nations. It is in its lyrics that the often roughly handled, but naturally uncouth German tongue shows of what music and subtle fancies it is capable. But these lyrics defy translation; they lose too much when they give up their aroma of native speech. The brief title "Storms" well expresses the dominant note of the poems. Their tempestuous character would lead one to think that Byron had been the writer's model; but I have it from her lips that, unlike most Germans, she cares little for that poet.

Her next publication was in prose, a novellette called "Ein Gebet" (A Prayer), of which a clumsy English translation appeared under the paltry title of "A Love Tragedy." Soul Tragedy would have been more to the point. As a girl the Queen had often desired to write novels, but had ever put them aside with, "When I know the world, not before; I am only a Princess." This story shows she had learned to know the world and its many subtle trials, its bitter silent combats, defeats, and victories whereof the outside public knows nothing. A narrative poem, "Die Hexe," succeeded this, a work suggested by Professor Carl Cauers's statue of a fair demon, a piece of sculpture that excited much attention at the Paris Exhibition of 1878. This work is very characteristic of the Queen's writings, in that she is apt to write too fast, so that excellent fundamental ideas are made abortive by inadequate execution. She does not observe the Horatian maxim; the impetuosity that is a part of her character is reflected in her work. She lacks patience. This fault is really to be deplored, and the more that the Queen has genuine poetical gifts, a fine

fancy, a musical ear, fire and grace. But her facility constitutes her weakness. Had she not been a royal author, had she had to do battle with the exigencies, caprices, uncertainties of publishers and editors, she would have received just that schooling which she lacks, and which hinders her from being a great poet, and confines her within the ranks of the minor singers.

In the "Hexe," and in her next published work, "From Carmen Sylva's Kingdom," the Queen's strong leaning toward the romantic school is plainly marked. The folk-lore of her land has been embellished by passing through the alembic of her fanciful German brain, and hence the tales lose as contributions to comparative mythology, while they gain as fairy stories. This work, too, was penned in haste, but there was a reason for it. The Roumanian Minister of Culture had begged permission of the Queen to make a selection from her poems as a prize book for the national schools. She offered instead to write something specially suited for the purpose, and in three weeks laid before him the version of Roumanian folk-tales which she had actually written in the Roumanian tongue, and had further illustrated with her own pencil. She dedicates the book to the children of her realm, telling them how the proudest kingdom she owns is one which they too can make their own, the kingdom of fancy.

Solely the Queen's own invention are the cycle of stories that followed this book, called "Leidens Erdgang" (Sorrow's Earthly Pilgrimage).<sup>\*</sup> Disconnected stories, they are yet bound together by one fundamental idea, an idea wholly symbolical. The Queen has here dealt with the eternal question, Whence and wherefore is sorrow in the world? Sorrow is brought before us as a child, the daughter of life and strife, a lovely child, and yet one upon whom none can look without weeping. She has no home, but wanders restlessly from place to place, turning in now here, now there, and ever creating havoc by her visits. It is in these visits the author lets us follow her. Sometimes we remain in the realms of pure allegory or of fairy tales; sometimes the stories are so modern, so realistic, that we are startled when, at the end, the symbolical element reënters. After touching the whole gamut of human misery in the last story, the objective character is abandoned, and in autobiographical form, under the title, "A Life," the royal author has told the history of her sufferings. It is veiled under a slight cover of fiction, but it is unmistakable

that here we have Carmen Sylva's soul laid bare before us.

"I wanted to find Truth. Then Sorrow took me by the hand and said: 'Come with me. I will lead you to Truth, but you must not fear on the way!' No, I fear nothing. I am so strong I can carry mountains." Thus she begins her earthly wanderings, guided by Sorrow. She is led into the domain of the arts, and chooses music; and she sings and plays until her voice is weak and her hand fails her, and yet she cannot attain her ideal. Mournfully she puts aside the instrument, seeing she cannot be an artist. She then seeks Truth in science, but is forced to recognize that wisdom is for her but death and dust, and what she desires is to live. Then Sorrow leads her to the death-bed of a youth who fought long and sorely with dire sickness until at last he succumbed. She is made acquainted, too, with other death-beds; she weeps bitter tears beside the graves of her beloved, until at last she would die of grief. "What! die already?" said Sorrow. "You who said that you could carry mountains! Why, you have not lived yet, for you have not loved." Then Sorrow brings her to the man to whom she is to belong for life. "And Sorrow led me into matrimony and made me a mother, and loaded great and rich labors upon my shoulders. I groped about to find the right road, for we had to encounter misunderstanding and mistrust, and on the steep path stood Hate and Strife. But I did not fear, for I was a mother. Yet not many years was this high dignity mine; the beaming eyes of my child were closed, and I laid its curly head in the cold grave. Yet I stood erect, notwithstanding the fire in my breast, and asked of Sorrow, 'Where is Truth? Now that all earthly joys, all earthly hopes, have been borne to the grave, there remains for me nothing save Truth, and I have a right to find her.' Then Sorrow pressed into my hand a pencil and said, 'Seek.' And I wrote and wrote, and I knew not that I exercised an art, since years ago I had, with heavy heart, renounced an artist's life." She then strives to do good where she can; she learns to know mankind. War shakes her realm with his iron heel; she solaces the wounded and afflicted. She is ill and weary, she is no longer young, she has drunk deep of the cup of bitterness, and yet she has not looked upon Truth. "'There she stands,' said Sorrow; and when I lifted my eyes I saw a silent water and a little child stood beside it whose eyes gleamed. 'Is that child Truth?' I asked. Sorrow nodded. 'She is not redoubtable, is

<sup>\*</sup> A translation of this book by the writer of this sketch, has been published by T. Fisher Unwin, of London, and Henry Holt & Company, of New York, under the title of "Pilgrim Sorrow."—ED.

she?' But as Sorrow said this the child grew bigger and bigger, until it held the whole world in its hand and embraced the entire heavens. 'Do you see Truth?' asked Sorrow. 'And now look within you; she is there also.' And as I looked within, I cried, 'Why have I fought and suffered? She was ever there about me and within me, and now I will die.' 'Not yet,' spoke Sorrow. Then it grew misty before my eyes, and I saw nothing more. Sorrow took me by the hand and led me onward."

The Queen's next work was written in verse. It is called "Jehovah," and is a new treatment of that oft-told tale about Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, a legend that may truly be interpreted as a type of its own persistence. Carmen Sylva's version of the myth is by no means the least fortunate and profound, treating the Jew as seeking belief and love, who cannot die till he has found God. And it is both bold and new to treat this motive from a wholly modern and Darwinian point of view. Many stages of existence, many metamorphoses of being has Ahasuerus to go through before he is brought to recognize that God is no visible great King, but a spirit and a truth, a working power pervading the all, whose manifestations have been evoked and made evident throughout the ages in the form best suited to the people, and the temperaments wherewith it dealt; that God in brief is too great for human grasp, but that each man knows him according to his power of comprehension. He learns this at last when, broken and weary, he has given up all hope. Both tender and powerful is the scene in which cognition comes to him, when the spell that bound him is broken, and he dies blessing the great Life that lives eternally.

From her earliest childhood Queen Elizabeth had been in the habit of noting down in large, album-like books her impressions of men and things, her life and thought experiences. Many of these detached utterances were written in French, and when, a couple of years ago, the Parisian journalist Louis Ulbach visited the Queen and regretted that he could not read her writings, he was permitted to see these. Greatly struck, he asked permission to publish a selection,—a permission which was accorded,—and under the collective title of "Les Pensées d'une Reine," these maxims and paradoxes were given to the world. In my opinion, they are quite the best work the Queen has done, and, had she written nothing else, would have given her a standing as an author. They are most remarkable, revealing acute insight, a wide range of intellectual capacity, a broad back-

ground of ripe thought. We learn to know both the sovereign and the woman from these utterances; the Queen, who may not let sincere judgments pass her lips, and says, "Un prince n'a besoin, à la rigueur, que des yeux et des oreilles; la bouche ne lui sert que pour sourire"; the woman, who compensates herself for this imposed silence in private and with her pen; the woman, who has loved and suffered, who judges her position objectively, dispassionately; the woman of keen intuition and fine feeling. Their very personal touch gives them an added charm, while for felicity of expression, for justness and certainty of observation, they can hold their own beside the aphorisms of famous writers in this department of literature. The tone that pervades them is a sad one, mistrustful of humanity, and yet withal not cynical, only at times gently ironical, as is, perhaps, no wonder when we consider that from her position she is forced to behold men in their least noble, most servile aspect. Their diversity is a special feature. She has said: "L'homme est un violon. Ce n'est que lorsque sa dernière corde se brise qu'il devient un morceau de bois." This is true of herself; she is responsive to all touches. I cannot refrain from quoting a few of these aphorisms. Those that treat of women are often peculiarly happy and incisive, though at times a little bitter. Thus, a truth designedly ignored has perhaps never been better formulated: "Une femme est lapidée pour une action que peut commettre un parfait honnête homme." How incisive too is this: "Les enfants de l'amour sont généralement beaux et intelligents. Quelle critique de nos ménages modèles!" Speaking of happiness she asks: "Le calme que vous avez acquis, est-il une preuve de force gagnée ou de faiblesse croissante?" Of sorrow she has naturally much to say, ending up her remarks with: "La vie est un art dans lequel on reste trop souvent dilettante. Pour jouer maître, il faut verser le sang de son cœur." How subtle too is this: "On ne peut jamais être fatigué de la vie, on n'est fatigué que de soi-même." While there is a touch of Heine's self-mockery in the following: "A force de vivre, on arrive à craindre même le ciel, comme la dernière et la plus cruelle déception." Nor would Joubert, that prince of *pensée* writers, have been ashamed to have been the father of the following: "Il vaut mieux avoir pour confesseur un médecin qu'un prêtre. Vous dites au prêtre que vous détestez les hommes; il vous répond que vous n'êtes pas chrétien. Le médecin vous donne de la rhubarbe et voilà que vous aimez votre semblable. Vous dites au prêtre que vous êtes fatigué de vivre; il vous répond que le

suicide est un crime. Le médecin vous donne un stimulant, et voilà que vous trouvez la vie supportable." A few more gems culled at random, and I have done quoting, though the temptation to proceed is great. Here is one on her own station: "La contradiction anime la conversation, voilà pourquoi les cours sont si ennuyeuses." "Le sommeil est un voleur généreux: il donne à la force ce qu'il prend au temps." "Quand on veut affirmer quelque chose, on appelle toujours Dieu à témoin, parce qu'il ne contrédit jamais." "Il faut être ou très-pieux ou très-philosophe! il faut dire: Seigneur, que ta volonté soit faite! ou: Nature, j'admets tes lois, même lorsqu'elles m'écrasent."

The Queen is especially proud that she has succeeded in writing her aphorisms in French, the language *par excellence* of epigram. "Not," she said to me, "because I have done so in a language foreign to me; after all, any one can acquire a language; but I am pleased because I think, and have been told, that I have acquired the Latin condensed and finished mode of expressing thought." She explained to me that it had been by no means easy to her to acquire this Latin accuracy; but she believes that living among a Latin people has been of benefit to her artistic development. The Latins have a precision and clearness of thought lacking to the Germans; if that could only be grafted on German depth and sentiment, then the Queen believes an excellent mixture could be obtained. I reminded her of Goethe's "Spräche." She said they were good, of course, but lacked the French precision: a profoundly just criticism, and one few Germans would dare to make. She defined a *pensée* as a miniature expression in quintessence of an experience or emotion.

The Queen, who speaks with great animation and fluency, is constantly putting forth such *idées mères*, and conversation with her is both stimulating and suggestive. One does not know what most to be struck with, her profundity of thought or the naïve simplicity, the frank sincerity, she has preserved amid courtly surroundings. Indeed, talking with her, one is almost tempted to think that she herself is greater than anything she has yet produced; that would she but write less rapidly, she might take that high rank among modern writers her ambition desires. She thinks it is her title that stands in her way. "That terrible title; you don't know what a block it is. No one will believe in you. They

think you are only praised because you are a queen, or think this is all very well for a queen." But she is mistaken; it is not the title, but the office, that hampers her.

Though it is Carmen Sylva's ardent desire to be a poet and an author, she desires with equal ardor to fulfill the duties of her station; and, in striving after this, she tries to do more than human strength will allow. She endeavors to lead a dual existence. Thus she rises daily at four A. M. (at one time she rose at three, but this she found too fatiguing), trims her lamp, and works till eight. Those hours, she explained to me, were the only ones that were truly hers in the course of the day, when she might be an author and a woman; the rest she is Queen of Roumania. And hers is by no means an easy throne to fill; she has to be forever *en évidence*, at the beck and call of any who like to ask for her; for Roumania is a semi-oriental country, in which oriental customs prevail, and in which the sovereign cannot live in the peaceful seclusion of a Queen of England. She has often to talk for twelve or even fifteen hours at a stretch; and from this cause last winter she temporarily lost her voice. When she and the King sit down to dinner they are often so tired they cannot speak a word. Yet early sleep is not for her. Bucharest is a very gay capital — the city of pleasure, it has been called — and a very late one. Gala performances and balls do not begin before ten or eleven at night. The Queen rarely gets to bed before one, and so has but four hours' sleep. This must wear out her mental and physical organization. In the summer the court retires to Sinaia, a health resort in the Carpathians that combines the grand scenery of Switzerland with the more lovely and romantic features of the Italian Alps. Here in a fine old monastery was the temporary residence of the court, now vacated for the quaint castle that has been built after their Majesties' own designs at a rather higher level. But even here there is no rest for the hard-worked Queen; she must receive and entertain as in the capital. Only three weeks, three precious weeks, in the autumn, are quite her own, when Sinaia is emptied of all but its royal guests. Then she retires to a small chalet she has built for herself in the wood, within sound of the gurgling Pelesch. Here her pen has full play to hurry along as quickly as it pleases. Here she transmutes her personal sorrows and experiences into impersonal works of art.

Helen Zimmern.

NOTE.—The portrait printed herewith is from a photograph kindly taken in Romanian costume for publication in THE CENTURY.





ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ROUMANIA.