

## PHILIPPINE WELSER.

By F. MARION CRAWFORD.

With Illustrations.



It is not to be expected that the name of Philippine Welsler should be as familiar in the ears of English-speaking people as it always has been, and is at the present day, to Austrians, Bohemians, and even Bavarians. Her story is at once simple and touching, and deserves to be reckoned among the love-tales of mankind. Rarely in the annals of knightly devotion and womanly virtue have two such spirits met by chance, loved at first sight, waited in patience and in faith, to be united at last in perfect and harmonious happiness. Let all men and women who have loved judge for themselves whether the story of Ferdinand of Hapsburg and Philippine his wife deserves or not to be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested.

Philippine was born at Augsburg in the year 1527, and was the daughter of Franz Welsler and of Anna Adler, often erroneously spoken of as Frau von Zinnendorf, or Zinnenberg, although that title was not conferred upon the Adler family until long after Philippine's marriage. We do not know whether this Anna Adler was beautiful, but her sister, Katherina von Loxan, was celebrated as the greatest beauty of her day. Franz Welsler and his brothers, Anton and Bartholmä, were among the most prominent leaders of that mighty plutocracy which has left such splendid monuments of its magnificent existence throughout the length and breadth of Germany. It is enough to mention that Franz's two brothers manned ships of war at Seville in 1528, conquered Venezuela, colonized it, and governed it for a period of twenty-six years. Franz himself, however, appears to have taken little or no part in the gigantic enterprises of his brethren, though it is certain that he possessed a great fortune of his own which enabled him to entertain at his house in Augsburg both royal personages and dignitaries of the Empire in a princely fashion.

The Imperial Parliament met at Augsburg in the late summer of 1547. The Emperor Charles V. entered the city on the 23rd of July, the sittings began September 1st, and on October 20th, King Ferdinand of Austria, afterwards Emperor, and his son, the Archduke Ferdinand, arrived in their turn. The latter, a brilliant boy-knight, not yet twenty years of age, but already gifted with beauty, strength, and talent surpassing the men of his time, seems to have possessed a goodly share of that virtue without fear and without reproach, of which Bayard's brief, noble life had then lately furnished an imperishable example. The younger Ferdinand was almost as much beloved by Charles V. as by his own father. In 1556, nine years later, when Charles had determined to abdicate the Imperial throne, the Archduke Ferdinand was chosen as ambassador to deter him from executing his resolution.

Long before this the Emperor had thought of marrying Ferdinand to the daughter of Francis I., but this match had been prevented by the renewal of hostilities with France. Then again, King Ferdinand had wished to unite his son with Queen Mary

of England, known as the "Bloody," but this was opposed by Charles, who successfully wooed her for his own son Philip. It is even stated that in 1563 a marriage was talked of between the Archduke and Mary Queen of Scots, but this seems improbable.

There is no doubt whatever that Ferdinand first saw Philippine at Augsburg at the time when the Imperial Parliament was there assembled. A painting of the period still exists, representing the Archduke mounted upon a white charger, galloping across the old Heumarkt, or haymarket, and doffing his hat to the fair Philippine, who



PHILIPPINE WELSER. FROM A PICTURE IN INNSBRÜCK.

looks down upon him from the oriel window of the old house now in the possession of the Krämer family. Ferdinand seems to have been at some former time, while yet a mere boy, the guest of the young girl's father, and it was natural enough that he should now find both leisure and opportunity to visit her in her home. It is clear, not only from the single authentic portrait which is extant, but also from all contemporary evidence, that Philippine must have been wonderfully beautiful. She seems to have possessed extraordinary strength combined with the appearance of singular delicacy. It is recorded of her that she could not only handle her needle with supreme skill to embroider the *Dank* or prize for

the victor in a tournament; she could also bend a tough steel cross-bow and send its bolt unerringly into the bull's eye of the target. She was far above the average height, but delicately and gracefully made. Her face was classic in outline, pale and full of nobility. The small and perfect mouth betrayed the loving, gentle disposition, in which Ferdinand found a ready response to his own heart-beatings; the high curved nostrils promised that unswerving courage of which the young girl gave such abundant proof during the nine long years of waiting which preceded her marriage, and finally, the clear-cut, well-balanced chin and jaw gave evidence of that keen wisdom and wise judgment for which she was afterwards remarkable in the management of her household affairs. This exquisite head was poised upon a throat so swan-like as to make men say and repeat even to our own times that when she drank red wine the

ruby colour of the juice could be seen through the snowy whiteness of the outer skin.

Poets, playwrights, and novelists have treated the tale of true love which began under such difficulties at Augsburg in 1547, to end at Ambras thirty-three years later, in their own fashion, assuming traditions as facts, confusing the personal attributes of Ferdinand with those of his sons, and introducing dramatic scenes for which there is neither foundation in history nor reasonable ground in the characters of the persons concerned. In a paper of this length it is impossible to enter into the discussion of documentary evidence; it may be enough to say here that the writer has carefully confronted the various versions of the story now extant, and has done his best to obtain the personal opinion of such living historians as have dealt with the subject.

Of what took place at Augsburg during the first few months of their acquaintance it is not possible to speak circumstantially, though the subsequent behaviour of Ferdinand and Philippine enables us to cast up from the depths of the past a picture which need lack neither beauty, reality, nor interest. Great nations, great civilizations, great orders and great cities have more than once borne their fairest fruit when nearing the fatal moment of their dissolution. In the middle of the sixteenth century the garden of chivalry was already cross-ploughed and disfigured by the destructive engines of the newer warfare; but its fertility was increased tenfold in certain favoured spots, and between the blackened furrows blossomed still such flowers of knight-hood as Bayard and Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria. Although Ferdinand was not his father's eldest son, his union with a daughter of the mercantile class could not fail to meet with obstacles all but insurmountable. Such a marriage could not be brought about in our own day without great difficulty; Ferdinand's best friends looked upon it as impossible. And yet it is certain that within very few months of their first meeting the lovers plighted their honourable troth. It is pleasant to know surely that neither the Emperor's favourite knight nor the merchant's peerless daughter ever



FERDINAND, ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA. FROM A PICTURE IN INNSBRUCK.

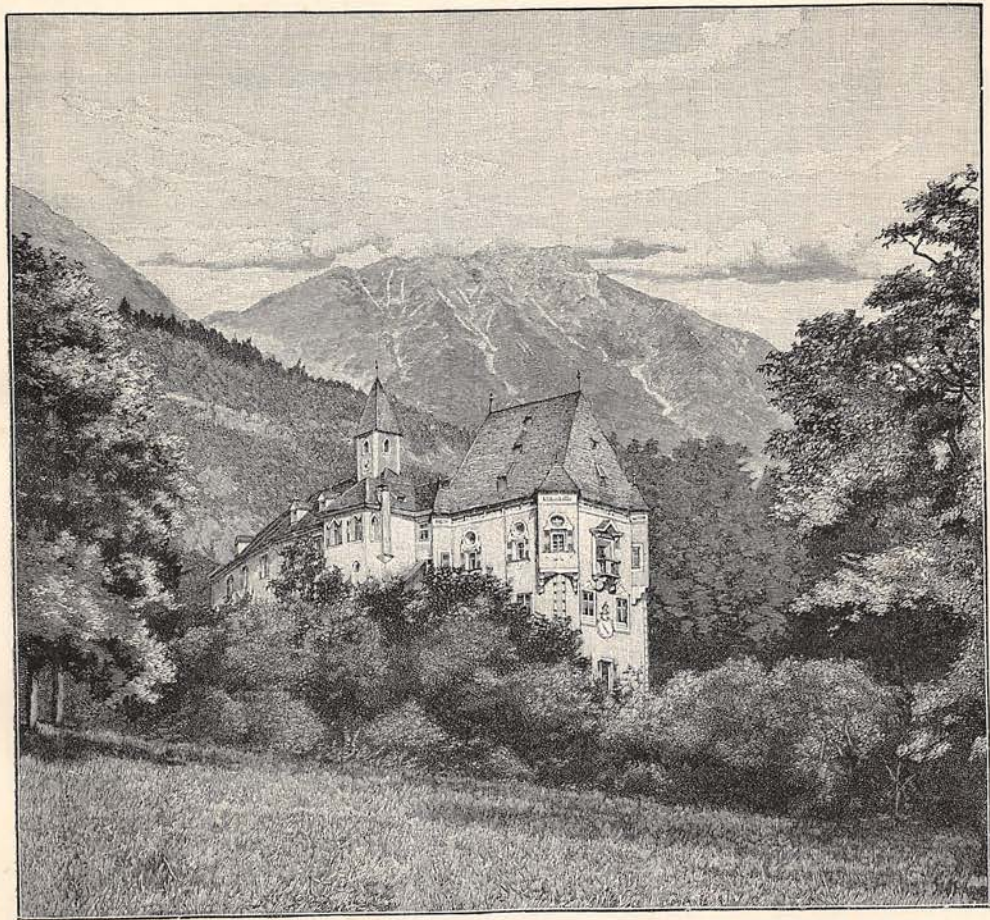
contemplated for a moment a union not blessed by their faith. The test was indeed a severe one. As far as is known the two were free to see each other without hindrance during the nine years which intervened between their betrothal at Augsburg and their marriage in Bohemia. Ferdinand was too exalted a personage to incur the criticism of any but the Emperor Charles, his own father Ferdinand, and his brothers. As for Philippine, her character was as far above suspicion as her grace and beauty surpassed the gifts of ordinary womankind. Her father and mother seem to have known her and trusted her as she deserved. They evidently looked upon her betrothal in a serious light, for they allowed her to leave them and to establish herself under the roof of her aunt, the beautiful Katherina von Loxan, at the Castle of Brzesnitz in Bohemia. Ferdinand, whose mother was the daughter of the last Bohemian monarch, was at that time Governor of the Bohemian Kingdom and Crown-land, and must have resided principally in Prague. The memory of his faithful devotion lingers like a ray of sunshine from other times in the grand and melancholy capital.

But Ferdinand's activity was not confined alone to the direction of a local government. He knew indeed that while Charles V. filled the imperial throne there could be no question of his own marriage, but this seems to have been the only point upon which the Emperor and the Archduke could not have agreed, even if the former had been aware of his young kinsman's wishes. Many and great deeds did Ferdinand in the service of the empire. In the eventful year 1556 he found himself at the head of the imperial forces in the campaign against the Turks in Hungary, as the direct consequence of the courage, talent and loyal devotion he had so constantly exhibited in arms. In the same year he undertook the mission already spoken of with the object of dissuading the Emperor from his intended abdication. There is no reason to believe that he was unsuccessful in this affair through any lack of zeal, but it would be hard to imagine a situation more trying than the one in which he found himself. He doubtless knew that so long as Charles remained upon the throne his marriage must continue to be impracticable; in using his influence against the Emperor's withdrawal he was therefore postponing that happiness for which he had patiently waited during nine years. The Emperor however, was inflexible, and actually retired from the conduct of affairs in October, 1556. Three months later Ferdinand and Philippine were man and wife.

During the long period of her betrothal, in other words, from her twenty-first to her thirtieth year, the Augsburg beauty seems to have spent most of her time in the Castle of Brzesnitz, and those who know anything of life in the country in the sixteenth century and of life in Bohemia at the present day will understand that such an existence could hardly have been gay. There must have been more variety in the wild days a couple of hundred years earlier, when the knights and barons of the fourteenth century tore each other to pieces, burned each other's dwellings and carried off each other's wives and daughters. Under Ferdinand's regency Bohemia was little disturbed except by theological disputes, and the reign of peace was in all probability also a reign of dulness. During the long northern winters, when the rivers are ice-bound, and the wild, undulating forest country is buried in frozen snow, the inmates of great feudal halls are thrown upon their own resources, even in modern civilized Europe, where every art and science has been laid under contribution in the cause of amusement. But in those days a woman's occupation offered little variety. Great ladies found little to do beyond working and praying. Philippine had ample time for both, and so far as it is possible to judge by her after life was idle in neither. When her white hands were not clasped in prayer her nimble fingers must have been generally busy with the needle or occupied in the selection and preparation of those herbs and simples with the uses of which she was so well acquainted. It may be doubted whether a young girl of our own day could retire to the country at twenty-one years of age to wait for her husband until she should be thirty, and emerge then from her solitude in undimmed freshness, beauty and buoyancy of spirits, as is recorded of Philippine Welsler. Whether the result was produced by the work, or by the prayers, or by both together, we cannot tell; but there seems to have been some magic in the manners and customs of those and of earlier times by which the body was preserved in the freshness of youth and the spirit in its pristine elasticity, under circumstances which would nowadays whiten a woman's hair, and bend the strength of the most enduring man.

Although Ferdinand undoubtedly expected to obtain his father's approval in due

time, the marriage ceremony was performed in the strictest secrecy. In the chapel of Brzesnitz, in the month of January, 1557, Johannes de Cavalleriis united the faithful pair in wedlock. The priest was the Archduke's confessor; the only witness present was the widowed lady of Loxan, and this circumstance afterwards produced somewhat unexpected difficulties. It is true that, after the birth of the first son, other persons were admitted to the secret; but the Catholic Church required, and still requires, according to the ordinance of the Council of Trent, the presence of at least one male witness for the formal ratification of the marriage bond. It was still indispensable to obtain the approval of the Archduke's father, who had succeeded Charles V. as Emperor of Germany, and further, it was necessary that the Pope should acknowledge

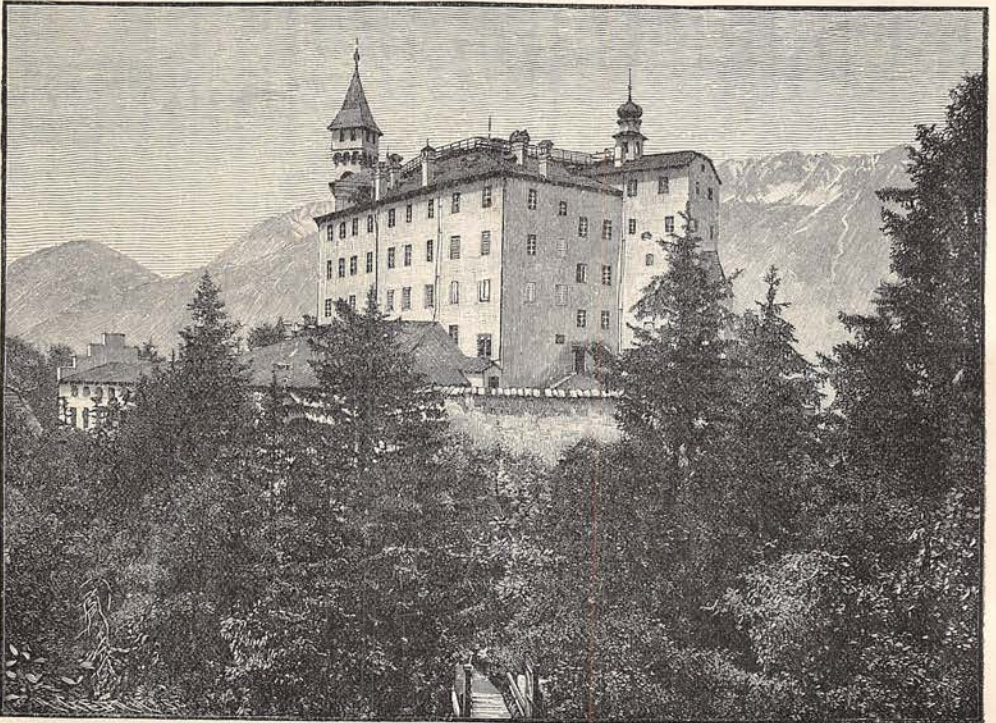


THE WEIHERBURG, NEAR INNSBRUCK, FOR SOME TIME THE HOME OF PHILIPPINE WELSER.

the validity of the union. Until the first of these two steps had been taken, Ferdinand continued to reside either in Bürglitz or in Prague, while Philippine remained with her aunt at Brzesnitz. At the latter place, on the 15th of June, 1558, the first son was born; he was named Andreas, and was afterwards known as Cardinal Andreas of Austria. The birth of the infant was kept a profound secret during the first week of its existence. On the 21st of the month, Katherina von Loxan and her daughter laid the future ecclesiastic on the pavement between the castle gates. Here the babe was found, doubtless in the course of a few minutes, by the gate-keeper, was immediately taken back into the castle as a foundling, formally adopted by its own mother, and baptized on the same day.

It is certain that, so soon as Ferdinand became a father he took energetic steps to obtain an acknowledgment of his marriage from the Emperor and the rest of his family. It is doubtful whether the Emperor himself ever set eyes upon his beautiful daughter-

in-law, and he was assuredly much displeased at the first information he received of the marriage contracted by his son. He must have been moved to clemency, however, as much by the long and patient devotion of the pair as by the certainty that a man of his son's noble disposition would never bestow his affections unworthily. It is said that he signed some document in the nature of an approval on August 1st, 1559, but owing to some delay in obtaining the consent of the other Archdukes, the certificate of reconciliation, if we may so call it, was not delivered until September 13th, 1561. Nevertheless Ferdinand was evidently sure that his father would ultimately yield, for, although the same secret proceedings attended the birth of Philippine's second son which have been already detailed in connection with the birth of the first, the event took place this time in the royal castle at Bürglitz. This second son was christened Charles, and his father probably meant to name him for the great Emperor as well as



CASTLE OF AMBRAS.

for his wife's brother. He also grew to manhood and attained considerable distinction in the empire, as well as the reputation of being the strongest man alive in his time. He was able to stop with his hands a coach dragged at full speed by four horses, could break with his fingers two silver thalers laid together, and could hurl a twenty-eight-foot lance at a target with unswerving aim. Two other children, twins, were born to Philippine in 1562, but they both died in infancy.

The agreement by which the Emperor Ferdinand and his other sons acknowledged the validity of the marriage covered every difficulty which could arise in the future. The children were to bear neither royal nor princely title, and were to be known simply as Andreas and Charles "of Austria." A jointure of 3,000 florins was stipulated for Philippine, and a fixed income was granted to the sons, together with freedom from all taxes and duties for them and their issue. Furthermore, in case the royal line should fail, they and their descendants were to inherit all the principalities and fiefs held by the House of Austria from the Holy Roman Empire, excepting Bohemia and Hungary. A more generous and noble act on the part of the Emperor could not be imagined, but the first clause of the document contained a provision which must have marred the satisfaction of the faithful pair. They were constrained to promise that their marriage should remain an official secret during their lifetime, unless they could

obtain the papal absolution for the irregularity of having had no male witness to the wedding ceremony. It may be as well to say here that fifteen years elapsed before this absolution was obtained by Cavalleriis from Pope Gregory XIII. That Pope maintained that a new ceremony was necessary, but it is characteristic of the Archduke that he flatly refused this condition, declaring in a letter to the Cardinal Bishop of Sebeste that "he would never suffer that what had been once validly done should only be declared valid by means of a new action; for that such a course would cast a slur upon the honour of his wife and children." It having been shown that the ordinances of the Council of Trent had not been really in force at the time of the marriage, the absolution was granted, and at the same time the Cardinal's hat was presented to the eldest son, though he was at that time neither of age nor in orders.

A story is told of Philippine in the first years of her marriage which proves at once the kindness of her heart and the influence she exerted over her husband. The schismatic movement which had begun with the preaching of John Huss, and which was to end in the battle of the White Mountain during the Thirty Years' War, was active in Bohemia under the vice-regency of Ferdinand. Philippine had not been long in the royal castle of Bürglitz before she discovered that Johann Augusta, a Unitarian bishop, had been confined for fourteen years in a windowless subterranean cell of that stronghold. Though she felt no sympathy for the movement, her compassion was roused by the old man's sufferings. On Good Friday she besought her husband to allow her to visit the imprisoned prelate. Ferdinand granted her request, and she entered the dungeon with an interpreter—a fact which proves that during a residence of thirteen years in Bohemia she had not learned the language. The prisoner told her that during the last eight years of his confinement he and his fellow-sufferer, Jacob Bilek, had neither seen light nor breathed fresh air; he implored his visitor to obtain for him permission to spend Easter Day in daylight. This was allowed to him and to his companion through Philippine's intercession, and in a short time she prevailed upon Ferdinand to set them both at liberty.

In 1563 Ferdinand was appointed Regent of the Tyrol, but as his father, the Emperor, died in 1564, he continued to govern Bohemia till the end of 1566, though absent a part of the time in another campaign against the Turks. In January, 1567, he made his official entry into Innsbruck, and took up his residence in the romantic castle of Ambras, which he had bestowed upon his wife three years earlier by deed of gift. In this beautiful spot Philippine spent the remaining thirteen years of her life in close converse with the man of her choice, here she saw her boys grow up to strength and dignity, here she sat down by the waters of happiness which had found their way to the peaceful mere after their tortuous course through the rough and broken ground of other years. Hence, at last, the messenger was sent to Rome; hither, after many diplomatic and ecclesiastic delays, the aged confessor returned in triumph; here, after nineteen years of unacknowledged wifehood, Philippine was proclaimed as "Her Highness the High-born Princess and Lady Philippine of Austria."

The life and good deeds of Philippine at Ambras have never been forgotten by the Tyrolese people. There seems to have been no limit to her kindness, forethought, and power of entering into details. Living in the simplest manner with her husband, her children, and her faithful friend and aunt Katherina von Loxan, she devoted herself to the happiness of those she loved and to the doing of good works among the poor. If the spring and the early summer of her life had been darkened by clouds of doubt, anxiety, and the misjudgment of the world, yet were the harvest-time and autumn made bright by the sun of an unbroken happiness. There are records both amusing and pathetic of her charitable doings. At one time Ambras must have been more like a hospital for paupers than a princely residence. Gorin Guaranta gives a list of the patients present in the castle together on one occasion. There were several Turkish prisoners, one Russian, one Turkish girl, a blacksmith, a carpenter, and a tax-gatherer from Aldrans, besides a number of idiots and epileptics. In order to minister to the needs of these numerous patients Philippine found it necessary to prepare medicines on a large scale. She had a complete apothecary's establishment in which she worked with the physician Guaranta. Her book of recipes contains among other things rose syrup, rose honey, the juice of quinces, wild cherries, and figs; many sorts of lotions, gargles and tooth-washes; remedies for cramp in the stomach, epileptic fits, swollen tonsils, coughs, vertigo and consumption, and finally, antidotes against poisons.

She seems to have employed numerous assistants, amongst others an old woman known as the Heidenreichin. It is recorded that she used oil of absinthe with success in the case of a dropsical labourer ; that she cured a bad case of fever with a decoction of *Cnicus benedictus*, and that she wrote to one suffering from ear-ache advising him to stuff his ears with lamb's wool. Her remedy for cramp of the stomach was drastic, and not intended for persons of fastidious taste. It is as follows : Slaughter a sheep close by the patient, flay it right speedily, lay the warm skin upon the bare body and administer two spoonfuls of the water (recipe lost) ; the attack will soon pass.

She provided countless wedding garments for girls about to be married, many children of her servants and retainers were named for her, and there is no end to the petitions from poor people, still extant. The widow of Peter Schmälz implored her to buy a prayer-book which her deceased husband had begun to illuminate for Philippine, in the hope of saving his family from starvation. A singing boy from the Court Church, "who could not find enough heart in himself" to address the Archduke, begged "his Gracious Lady in Ambras" to obtain for him a small stipend, which she granted, contrary to the advice of her secretary. Many nobles did not scruple to invoke the aid of the "burgher's daughter," the "lover of all sad souls."

Ferdinand's family life in the Tyrol seems to have been little hampered by aristocratic prejudice or formality, and shows his love of unconstrained, simple, and cheerful intercourse, as well with the nobles of the country as with his own household. One of the few forms of ceremony constantly maintained was the custom of dining apart. The Archduke, Philippine, and Frau von Loxan took their meals in their own company in a room of the castle known as the Kirnstube. It is especially remembered that Philippine, like many good German housewives, had a passion for sauerkraut ; and it is noteworthy that when her health began to fail she was advised to eat it with pork, rather than with "fat capon," as being more digestible.

The bond of devoted friendship which had united Philippine to her aunt, Frau von Loxan, throughout her whole life, was hardly severed by death itself. On April 13th, 1580, the elder lady died after a brief illness, and on the very next day her beautiful niece fell ill. She died eleven days later, on the 24th of the month, between four and five in the morning. Her death is minutely described. Father Gampasser assisted her at the last, and many persons besides her husband were present. When she felt that her end was at hand, she turned first to her husband, begging "that he would forgive her if she had not always acted according to his wishes, and earnestly recommending the women of her household to his fatherly care." She called her sons next and bid them so live as to be a joy to their father, and blessed them. Then she looked up smiling, and tightly clasping the cross sent her by the Pope with the absolution of her marriage, once more she spoke a few words with her husband, looked lovingly upon him and gave him her right hand. The Duke of Bavaria, believing that her last moments had come, lighted the taper and held it near the dying woman. She was fully conscious, and seeing that the end did not come, she turned her eyes to the Duke, saying with characteristic thoughtfulness for the trouble of others, "Your Grace must be weary." A few moments later she kissed the little cross, and promised to pray for all if she found mercy in heaven. Then the bystanders heard her last words, "I will soon be with Thee," and she softly sank to rest for ever.

Philippine's death was notified to all the Courts with which Ferdinand maintained diplomatic relations. The curiously worded document by which Ferdinand proclaimed the mourning for his well-beloved wife has been preserved, but a translation of it would give no idea of its quaint pathos. Philippine's body lay in state a short time, and she was finally buried with great magnificence on the 29th of April, in a chapel of the Franciscan Church, which Ferdinand had prepared as a resting-place for himself and his wife. Upon the tomb lies a full-length portrait statue of the good and beautiful woman, and beneath is graven the following short inscription :

Ferdinandus, Dei gratia, Archidux Austriae, Dux Burgundiae, Comes Tirolis, Philippinæ, conjugii carissimæ fieri curavit. Obiit XXIII. mensis Aprilis, anno salutis MDLXXX.

Fifteen years later Ferdinand himself was interred in the same chapel, and there he has lain now more than three hundred years, the armour he wore hanging above him, the woman he loved so faithfully lying at his feet.