

was some three years her junior. She lived nearly fifty years, and her life thus covered the first half of the Eighteenth Century. Her *Memoirs*, she says, she wrote for her "own special satisfaction," taking "pleasure in mentioning every circumstance that happened to me, as well as in recording all my thoughts." They fully bear out this description, and are to an extraordinary degree an interior picture of royal life in Germany at the time. Such a narrative is better than any formal history possibly can be for imparting a full and accurate idea of "the other side" of public affairs. It is the artist's shading pencil with which the outlines are filled in. Take, for example, this reminiscence of a visit from Peter the Great of Russia and the Czarina, who were entertained by Frederick William for a little while at the villa of Monbijou, near Berlin:

As soon as the Emperor saw me he recognized me—having seen me five years ago—took me up in his arms and kissed me all over my face. I boxed his ears, and made frantic efforts to get away from him, saying he had insulted me. This delighted him, and made him laugh heartily. . . . The Czarina too made much of me. The Queen and the Czarina sat in arm-chairs under a canopy, and I stood near my mother, the Princesses of the blood standing opposite. The Czarina was small, broad, and brown-looking, without the slightest dignity of appearance. You had only to look at her to detect her low origin. She might have passed for a German actress, she had decked herself out in such a manner. Her dress had been bought second-hand, and was trimmed with some dirty-looking silver embroidery; the bodice was covered with precious stones, arranged in such a manner as to represent the double eagle. She wore a dozen orders; and round the bottom of her dress hung quantities of relics and pictures of saints, which rattled when she walked, and reminded one of a smartly-dressed mule. The orders too made a great noise, knocking against each other. The Czar, on the other hand, was tall and well grown, with a handsome face, but his expression was coarse, and impressed me with fear. He wore a simple sailor's dress. . . . At last we sat down to dinner, the Czar sitting near the Queen. It is well known that this sovereign had, when a young man, been poisoned, and that his nerves had never recovered from it, so that he was constantly seized with convulsions, over which he had no control. He was suddenly seized with one of these attacks while he was dining, and frightened the Queen so much that she several times tried to get up and leave the table. After a while the Czar grew calmer, and begged the Queen to have no fear, as he would not hurt her. Then, taking one hand in his, he pressed it so tightly that she screamed for mercy, at which he laughed, saying that she had much more delicate bones than his Catherine.

But entertainment—except in a qualified sense—is not the ruling function of these *Memoirs*. Taken as a whole they furnish about as painful a story of personal experience as ever finds its way into print. Doubtless there have been girls and women who have suffered more than the Margravine of Baireuth did both before and after her marriage, but they have not commonly lived in kings' houses. Her father was a ferocious brute, her mother was hard-hearted, vindictive, and cruel. The parents quarreled with each other and abused their children by word and deed. The stories which Wilhelmine

## WILHELMINE'S MEMOIRS.\*

THESE *Memoirs of the Margravine of Baireuth*, who is best to be introduced to us as a sister of Frederick the Great of Prussia, are not new to American readers, having been laid before us as long as ten years ago by Mr. Howells in the first two volumes of his edited "Choice Autobiographies." But the present form of them is new and improved, and the octavo of 450 pages, emblematically bound in black and white, with the royal insignia stamped in gilt, is an imposing volume. The Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, whom we know better as Princess Helena of England, is an entirely competent translator and editor. She has slightly expurgated the original text, which, after the manner of its times, touched more freely than modern taste allows upon some incidents of court life, and also has supplied an introduction and an index. There is an autotype portrait of the Margravine, but not a good one.

Wilhelmine, who became the Margravine of Baireuth by marriage in 1731, was the eldest daughter of Frederick William I, the second King of Prussia, and was born at Berlin in 1709. Her brother Frederick, afterwards known as Frederick the Great,

\* *Memoirs of Wilhelmine, Margravine of Baireuth*. Translated and Edited by Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein. Scribner & Welford, \$3.75.

tells of the treatment received at their hands seem incredible. Such scenes as the following were of daily occurrence;

"What is amiss with my dinner-table?" the King inquired, getting very red in the face. "You ask what is the matter with it," my sister replied; "there is not enough on it for us to eat, and what there is is cabbage and carrots, which we detest." Her first answer had angered my father, but now he gave vent to his fury. But instead of punishing my sister he poured it all on my mother, my brother, and myself. To begin with he threw his plate at my brother's head, who would have been struck had he not got out of the way; a second one he threw at me, which I also happily escaped; then torrents of abuse followed these first signs of hostility.

The main cause of trouble between Wilhelmine and this precious pair of royal parents was their determination to marry her off in a political bargain against her will. Before she was in her teens her old reprobate of a father was negotiating here and there for the bestowal of her hand. His preferred plan was to betroth her to the English Prince of Wales, and angered by a failure in this direction, he gave his child her choice between two hateful German princes, to have married either of whom would have been a sacrifice of Beauty to the Beast. In combating these unnatural schemes Wilhelmine's whole youth was spent, standing almost alone against father, mother, and all of the court who had access to her. Her life was one unbroken chapter of misery. Her brother shared in her father's wrath. Repeated sicknesses, treacheries on the right hand and on the left, incessant abuse of every conceivable kind, wore upon both mind and body, month after month and year after year, and it is a wonder that her strength survived the ordeal. Finally, after all manner of threats and punishments had been visited upon her, her father proposed a third suitor, the hereditary Prince of Baireuth, whom she had never even seen; and in utter despair, thinking that to marry him in the dark would be better than marrying either of the others in the light, she consented. On this her father relented a little, but her mother reproached and tortured her to the end. This marriage took place, and Wilhelmine found a worthy and loving husband.

Her troubles, however, were by no means over. Nobody was pleased with her marriage. Her father and mother hated her for it. Her father-in-law was furious over it. The treatment which her brother continued to experience at the King's hands was iron in her soul. She lived in an atmosphere of perpetual domestic dissension and violence. Gossips, backbiters, and false witnesses attempted to make a breach between her and her husband. Her father's promises of dowry and allowance were broken, and an empty purse was added to her other trials. At the table the King would do his best to make her husband drunk so as to shame him in her presence. Her brother was forced to witness the execution of Hatt, his best friend,

before his very eyes. Half of every day was filled with soreness over what had actually happened yesterday, and the other half with forebodings over what was to follow to-morrow. And the Margravine writes down the story of it all with a calm precision and an unflinching circumstantiality which produce the effect of an instantaneous photograph.

A more contradictory and despicable character than that of Frederick William I, as represented in these pages, it would be hard to conceive. Passionate, of ungovernable temper, parsimonious as to the necessities of life and extravagant as to its luxuries, covering his daughter with kisses one day and menacing her with blows the next, hitting right and left with his crutch, using falsehood and intrigue unhesitatingly when such means served his purposes, and bursting into rage when he encountered them in others, he was little less than a monster, a human monster. His wife mated him. Their famous son Frederick, afterwards the Great, appears distinctly in these pages, but in the background, a secondary figure. The German court is a scene of petty quarrels, silly displays, selfish intrigues, and corrupt morals. The German country is a land of romantic castles and bad roads. There is little of European politics in the volume, and of war nothing to speak of, except as related to the domestic life of the royal family. The simple effect of it is to show how a princess could live a hundred and fifty years ago, and to leave one impressed with a new sense of the good honest republican truth that the right of kings is not always divine.

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