



EMPERESS ELIZABETH BEFORE THE FIRST ESTABLISHMENT

ROMANCES

near to
THRONES
The First Love and
the Last Love of
Emperor Francis-Joseph
STERLING
HEILIG



EMPERESS ELIZABETH AT THE TIME OF HER FRIENDSHIP WITH THE FAMOUS CECILY WOMAN

"GENTLY, cousin. If you make black gravel you will be badly noted in this house."

He had jostled a bad-tempered old man. Slender youth, proud, laughing, with ironic mustache, he thanked the sour Sophie for her warning, as she passed the chateau.

It was May, 1852, in the park of Possenhofen. She was the eldest daughter of Maximilian, duke of Bavaria, a crank convinced that all his dogs had souls. He was Francis Joseph, emperor of Austria, king of Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Etc., and twenty-three years old.

He had come to demand the hand of Sophie. He had seen her. She would do. The Wittelsbach, though plain home folks, were of exalted blood. It to espouse a Hapsburg. His own mother had arranged the match. He would ask Duke Maximilian after the banquet—and make a prompt getaway to Vienna, where pleasure waited.

Alone beneath the trees, a pup came romping to him; and a fresh, sweet young voice cried: "Dick, come back!" And he marveled at the vision of a beautiful girl of sixteen, supple, slender, of proud, pure type, laughing flower on a tall forest stem. She had been running, and stopped, blushing, breathless: "Please excuse Dick, monsieur!"

"Dick's apprentice for Dick, mademoiselle. His friendship is a recommendation. I know the ways of the house," he answered.

"Father thinks so," she laughed.

"Your father? Then you are—"

"Elizabeth Amelia, duchess in Bavaria."

Francis Joseph had already started in for a flirtation. He stepped, troubled. Holding out his hand, he asked:

"Why have I not seen you before?"

Very young, serene and haughty, yet impulsive and tender, unafraid of the youth in tourist tweeds and struck by sudden admiration, Elizabeth held out her beautiful white hand.

"I am too young to figure at the banquet," she said. And Francis Joseph understood. His uncle wished to marry off the elder daughter first. He whispered to the younger girl, laughing, tempting:

"Be dressed, on the lawn, before the banquet. I'll arrange."

It was the first escapade of Elizabeth, and it had the excuse of love at first sight. She dressed and descended calmly, pursued by a frightened dining woman. On the lawn Francis Joseph offered her his arm. The effect was theatrical. Duke Maximilian was wild with anger. After the banquet the young emperor drew him aside:

"My uncle," he said, "I have the honor to ask the hand, not of my cousin Sophie, but of my cousin Elizabeth."

"My nephew," said the duke, "it is impossible."

"Then I'll ask for neither," said Francis Joseph.

So he quitted Possenhofen. Three months later, on the birthday of the emperor, all Ischl was en fête. To the imperial villa many great ones were invited, notably Duke Maximilian, his dutiness, their three sons and four daughters.

The church of Ischl was packed for morning service. To universal surprise, as the imperial carriage entered, the proud mother of Francis Joseph lurching aside, and motioned young Elizabeth, the blonde Elizabeth, to pass before her.

And the young emperor took her by the hand. Approaching the altar, he said to the priest:

"My father, here is my fiancée. Bless us!" Their wedding took place in Moravia. It was an ideal honeymoon in a mountainous country, where the young emperor was worshiped by a loyal peasantry. They rode from town to town, almost alone, Francis Joseph triumphant, Elizabeth happy. She had found the Prince Charming of her dreams.

All changed when they returned to Vienna. The first morning the blooming beauty was refused entrance to her husband's study. An usher in green and gold, with gold chain and ivory wand, barred her way, bowing ceremoniously: "Pardon, your imperial majesty may not enter to his imperial majesty without being announced."

As Elizabeth, simple Bavarian princess, protested that she would pass, a high officer corroborated the usher's words. Ashamed, wounded, angry, she was forced to wait, feeling the smiles of the courtiers behind her back, until word came that the emperor would receive her. Bitterly she complained to him, but Francis Joseph declared that etiquette must be observed.

Scarcely seventeen, Elizabeth had no experience to struggle against a hundred conspiracies of the court suggested by the brutal diplomacy of her mother-in-law.

This relentless woman had desired her son



MME. KATHARINA SCHRAT



EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH

to marry Sophie, whom she could ruin. Forced to yield to Francis Joseph's infatuation, she resolved that the blonde Cinderella should not long rule over the light and thoughtless heart of the emperor.

The first deceptions were wrapped in mystery. His mother feared to risk the tears of Elizabeth.

At that moment they spoke of a beautiful Italian countess. How had she entered the closed circle of Vienna? Just before the birth of Elizabeth's first child, when the mother-in-law again directed ceremonies, the Italian woman was invited to a great court ball, and Francis Joseph paid her such attentions that she was at once dubbed favorite.

Within twenty-four hours a charitable soul informed the tender Elizabeth of her misfortune. She was so stricken that she fell gravely ill, but remained faithful to her system of silent dignity.

Time passed.

The birth of a little son, Rudolph, was a great joy to Elizabeth; yet before he was six months she learned that his bringing up was to be taken out of her hands.

"But he is my son," she faltered.

"He is the heir of the Hapsburgs," replied the Archduchess Sophie.

"But the emperor has authorized me—"

"I withdraw the authorization," said the terrible mother-in-law. Tears, protests were without result; the baby boy was given a wet nurse and governess, replaced later by a tutor, the Count Bombelles, who, many years later, took part in the orgie of Meyerling which terminated Rudolph's life, which shows the character of the tutor.

And Elizabeth was only at the beginning of her troubles.

At this moment there appeared at the palace theater—directed and financed by the emperor—a Mme. Roll, actress of small talent but radiant beauty. During a whole season the court asked one question: "Who is Mme. Roll's protector?" It could not be the emperor. He was never seen with her. At vacation, when it was learned that the Roll would take a villa at Ischl, summer residence of the imperial family, everyone said, "Now we shall know who is the protector!" The bijou town was too small to keep a secret. And within a week it was known to the general stupefaction. The phantom lover of Mme. Roll appeared unmistakably. It was the emperor!

It was too much. Never before had he flaunted a favorite so publicly. Elizabeth told him that he must choose between Mme. Roll and herself; and the emperor pretended to send away the actress. But the wife was not deceived. She waited. She had taken a resolve.

The occasion was a hunting scandal. Francis Joseph, with certain gentlemen, had gone to Murauerschlag, and when he did not return with them a strangely piquant story was confided by one, Count K— to his young wife, on oath of secrecy. The emperor had been struck by the beauty of a peasant girl of tender years, whose conquest had details worthy of a ruler's age. Now the emperor was staying "to console the child."

The Countess K— hurried to the tea of the empress. In a circle of spiteful young women all the details of the adventure were whispered with such tact that Elizabeth heard every word. When the last guest had kissed

her hand she called her old nurse, brought from Possenhofen.

"Pack my valises," said Elizabeth, "we leave tonight."

"For long?"

"For always."

The two women slipped from the Hofburg and took the first train at the southern station. Only the next morning did her mother-in-law learn of Elizabeth's flight. An hour later the chief of police had discovered that the empress was on route for Trieste and the imperial yacht. A telegram was sent to retard its departure on some pretext, while high functionaries followed on a special train.

What they were empowered to promise is not known, but Elizabeth returned.

The scene was terrible, between husband, wife, and mother-in-law. Francis Joseph, fearing scandal, dragged himself on his knees before Elizabeth and even reproached his mother for her cruelty.

But nothing could change Elizabeth's determination. She would only consent to avoid scandal. That night Professor Skoda of the Vienna faculty, after much repugnance and long discussion, signed a bulletin declaring that the health of the empress demanded a milder climate than Vienna. The next day, accompanied by high dignitaries, she left for Antwerp, where a magnificent yacht was hired to take her to Madeira.

She tired of Madeira. The imperial yacht was put at her disposition. She visited Norway, the Mediterranean, the Adriatic. Francis Joseph came on her unexpectedly at Venice and persuaded her to return temporarily to Vienna, for the sake of appearances.

To distract her mind she spent millions on a chateau at Linz, where her great pleasure became to break in young horses. This was the period of her friendship with the famous circus woman, Eliza Renz, whom Elizabeth declared to be a better lady than any of the Vienna court. Finding Linz too near Vienna, she spent other great sums on the chateau of Goedoloe, in Hungary, where her taming of the man-killing stallions of Count Festetics became almost a historical event.

It was whispered that Elizabeth was trying to get killed without the sin of suicide. There were reconciliations. To return to her husband was represented to her a religious duty. Each time, however, the interest of Francis Joseph in the theater seemed so paramount that she started off again.

She returned for Rudolph's marriage, where she wept bitterly. She rejoiced a while in Rudolph's baby child. On the morning after the tragedy of Meyerling it was to her that Count Bombelles brought the awful tidings—Rudolph had committed suicide with Marie Vetschera, and it was Elizabeth who broke the news to the emperor.

Her hobby now became her palace at Corfu, the Villa Achilleon, which will remain famous in history as the greatest folly of luxury and art of a prodigal sovereign. It cost above \$15,000,000.

William II, of Germany now has it.

Only a terrible craving for sleep caused Elizabeth to leave Corfu. Now commenced a round of climates and specialists. At Baths Naubheim the population so followed her about that she decided for Switzerland. Francis Joseph, who had joined her for a week, objected.

"I have had reports on Switzerland," he said. "Full of anarchists."

"I am only a poor woman, Francis," she replied. "They will not hurt me."

Yet Lucchini stabbed her as she boarded the lake steamer at Geneva—like a simple tourist, with a single companion. None suspected that she was more than jostled. The

bent steamed slowly out. The Hungarian orchestra struck up a lively csardas.

Elizabeth fainted. The Countess Szarany cut her corset strings and found a tiny triangular wound below the left breast.

"Quick, a doctor. The empress is wounded!"

There was no doctor, and the boat put back to Geneva. Opening her eyes Elizabeth asked: "What is the matter?"

"Do you suffer?" faltered the countess.

Elizabeth smiled "no" and feebly waved her hand in time to the jaunty music of the csardas. There was a melancholy smile on her face as she slowly shut her eyes.

Elizabeth had died in beauty.

An aged emperor dines alone on gold plate from the famous service whose central decorative piece is worth \$15,000. There is but one guest—a general aide-de-camp or high official of the court. The proudest monarch of Europe is alone with one guest. Etiquette demands it.

Five gorgeous flunkies in pale blue, buff, pink and gold, serve the two men. There have been no flowers on the table since the tragic death of the Empress Elizabeth; but the lights of wax candles glint the golden service and the rare wines in cut glass. They fit from historic tapestries to carved wood furniture and panels such as no museum possesses, and make dancing shadows in the distant corner.

Silence.

The aged emperor is dreaming of the gorgeous gala dinners of the past. He sees the ideal throngs of other days. Again he hears the three taps of the grand chamberlain's cane to announce the entrance of the imperial and royal majesties. How lonely is the immense palace, full of hiding courtiers, functionaries, servants. It is still early, not yet seven.

Francis-Joseph rises. His guest takes ceremonious leave and the sovereign goes to his study.

His real life begins.

A confidential valet helps him into hat and overcoat. By a bijou elevator, whose door imitates a bookcase, he descends to the ground floor.

He walks twenty steps across the little courtyard to the door, where an auto-limousine awaits him. There is no special security—it is to avoid ceremony merely. He gives no directions; the chauffeur knows where to go.

Quitting the frigid, solemn Hofburg, out into the bright-lit bustling early evening of Vienna, past crowds hastening to theater and music hall, into fair streets of residence, the auto stops at a comfortable villa. The old sovereign enters the gate alone. The front door opens as he mounts the three marble steps. When the door shuts he is no longer the dread honied emperor and apostolic king, but Herr Schrat, regularly called the "colonel," careless and cozy, negligent and slouchy, bright, warm, easy, snug among old friends.

Years ago, when the Burg theater was a wing of the Hofburg, the great actress Katharina Schrat—the Sarah Bernhardt and Rejane of Vienna—was presented to Francis-Joseph by Empress Elizabeth herself. For long, she too has lived retired; and the mourning emperor found her so intelligent, so fine and also good, that old loves and sorrows having burnt out, an affectionate friendship grew up to give him a kind of peaceful solace.

Leaving crown and scepter on the hat rack, he enters the bright little cardroom that adjoins two bijou little parlors and takes the best easy chair, while Madame Katharina hastens with the foot warmer.

Herr Schrat sprawls in unspokeable content. The bell rings, and the partners of intermittent games of tarok—a sort of Austrian bridge—arrive. They are two ancient friends of the great actress, become friends of Herr Schrat, always the same; Herr Palmer, director of the Bank des Pays Autrichiens, and an international private banker so extremely illustrious that his name is as well known as Franz-Joseph's, and—a thing that never ceases to upset the court—an Israeliite by race, birth and religion in the strict sense!

The Jewish banker and Monsieur Schrat—not the head of the Holy Roman empire—are fast old cronies to the sorrow and scandal of the Countess Chotek, morganatic but directing wife of Archduke Francis-Ferdinand, heir to the dual crown.

Often the emperor loses all the money in his purse—a dozen florins—at the nightly game of tarok. He plays badly. None wants him for partner; so they cut to see who takes him. He laughs boisterously. Meanwhile tea is prepared in the adjoining dining room.

At ten o'clock the auto-limousine is announced, and Madame Katharina helps the "colonel" into hat and overcoat.

The auto rolls through the streets of Vienna, still bright and boisterous, to the cold, solemn Hofburg. It stops at the little door of the small courtyard. The old man enters, and a silent valet meets him. Up the bijou elevator they ride, to the study he had left three hours ago. The confidential valet takes his hat and coat.

The emperor has returned.

The Wayfarer

By MAUDE BERNARD

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Cecily was born for romance. She hated anything that smacked of the commonplace. Hence when she saw Bruce Esmond, for the first time, she believed herself madly in love with him.

Bruce was an artist with a leaning toward illustration. He set up his easel one April day on the edge of a newly plowed field, and proceeded to make a sketch of Cecily's father.

Mr. Drake resented not only the impudence of having himself put in a picture—but in being put in one when he was not dressed in his Sunday best. So he told Bruce Esmond to go elsewhere for his inspiration. Then Cecily interfered.

"Why, father, he paints such lovely things," she said, "just look at those horses."

Drake grudgingly admitted that Remus and Romulus looked well, and compromised on a sketch in which he should be left out.

"You can put in the field and the sky and the horses," he stated generously, "but not me."

Then he went on plowing and Cecily and Bruce Esmond proceeded to get acquainted.

Bruce said the conventional things—that Cecily was too pretty to be buried in the country, that he was tired of city women with their feathers and furbelows, that Cecily rested him and pleased him.

Thus, Cecily believed herself madly in love with him and if it had not been for the Wayfarer she would either have married Bruce to live unhappily ever after, or she would not have married him and would have felt herself broken-hearted.

The Wayfarer came slouching along the road in old clothes, with a fishing creel slung over his shoulder and a rod in his hand. He did not compliment Cecily at all. He simply asked

Esmond turned an angry face up to him. "What have you to say about it?" he snarled.

"Something," said the Wayfarer, quietly, "I know your reputation in town, Esmond—and Cecily is too sweet to be hurt by you."

"In love with her yourself?" demanded Esmond.

"Perhaps. But that has nothing to do with the case. You'd better pack up your pictures, and run along home."

"I'll take Cecily with me," said the other.

"I think not," said the Wayfarer, "because when Cecily learns the truth I don't think she will want to go."

"It's a pretty small thing for one man to talk about another."

"Not when the other is using the hospitality of a girl's father to accomplish his own ends. I shall tell Drake what I know of your past. He can decide whether it is necessary to warn Cecily. Personally, I don't believe that Cecily will miss you after you have been away a week."

"Like you?"

"At least I can offer clean hands and true and steadfast affection."

The next day the artist went in town.

After his departure Cecily drooped and faded.

"Can it be that she really loved him?" the Wayfarer often asked himself.

He tried in every way to make her happy.

"I'm an old fellow," he said, "but really I know some interesting things."

Cecily began to enjoy the walks with him. He did not talk to her as Bruce had done of the beauty of her eyes and the charm of her smile. But he had a way of telling her things that were delightful, and as time went on Cecily began to feel that she was in close communion with a wonderful heart and mind.

"You don't paint your pictures," she said one day, timidly. "You tell them."

Such a sweet comradeship as it grew to be! The Wayfarer sent to town, now and then, for books, and once there was a box of candy, and at another time a wonderful bunch of violets.

"How extravagant!" said Cecily, sniffing the flowers with delight.

"But you like them," said the Wayfarer.

One day Bruce Esmond came back. "I have a perfect right to come," he said to the Wayfarer. "I am free."

"Legally?" was the question.

"A divorce," said Esmond. "Now I shall marry Cecily."

The anger of the Wayfarer burst out. "You shall not have her," he said. "You will break her heart as you have broken the hearts of other women who have trusted you—you shall not have her."

And just then some one said behind them, "Are you talking about me?" Cecily stood there, looking at them with grave eyes.

It was Esmond who answered her. "He says I shall not marry you," he said. "And probably you think I treated you badly because I wooed you before I was free. But I loved you so much, Cecily. And he—has nothing but his money."

Cecily looked up at the Wayfarer. "Does he mean—that—that you are rich?" she asked.

"Yes," said the Wayfarer.

"But you came tramping along the road like any common traveler."

"Because I was tired of the things that riches could bring. I—I wanted other things—like love—Cecily."

And so they stood before her, these two men, asking, pleading for her favor.

Cecily sobbed with her face in her hands.

"Go away," she said, "go away, both of you."

But as the Wayfarer went slowly, she cried after him, "Oh, I shall miss our long walks together, and the books."

He turned back. "Why should my money stand in the way?"

"You deceived me," she said, "and—and if I should say 'yes' now you might think it was because I wanted to be rich."

"I should think it was because you loved me," he said.

From the other side of the hedge Bruce spoke, bitterly. "It's always wealth that wins."

But Cecily smiled at him.

"He has taught me something that you will never know," she said. "I ask only that we shall be good comrades along the road—wayfarers together—until death parts."



"What Have You to Say About It?"

for a glass of water and sat on the stone bench and drank it. He looked very tired and Cecily invited him in.

"When father comes home he'll have supper," she said, "and he's always glad to have company."

Cecily sat by him on the stone bench and chatted of many things. She talked most of Bruce Esmond. "You've heard of him, of course?"

"Yes. He has a promising career before him."

"Oh, I hope so," said Cecily, ardently.

The Wayfarer said nothing.

"Humph!" said the Wayfarer.

Mr. Drake was very enthusiastic about the Wayfarer that night.

"He wants to board here through the fishing season," said the farmer to Cecily. "I don't know but we might as well let him."

"Of course," said Cecily. But when she told Esmond, he raged.

"How can I have any inspiration with him around? I want only you, Cecily."

"But you see father needs the money," said Cecily, gravely.

Esmond looked at her keenly. "I thought your father owned the farm," he said.

"He does. But there's one mortgage. And times are bad and the crops have failed."

Two weeks later, the Wayfarer, coming up from the stream, stopped behind Esmond's easel. "There are just two things you should try to do," he said, quietly. "You shouldn't try to paint sunlight on that silver pool, or to make love to a girl like Cecily."

How About You?

So many of us boiler, as we wear the heavy collar, that the world is set against us and our plans; as we figure our condition we shut down on all ambition, and prepare to get our complement of cans. But the truth is, could you hit it, and you never would admit it, that you yourself are more than half to blame; you're not treating yourself fairly if you don't treat yourself squarely, and that's the only way to play the game. For the whole world hates a mummy and smart people dodge a dummy; make a noise, grab all the credit you can take, and the world will not reject you. It will make room and respect you—so give yourself the best of every break—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Charge With Irreverence.

Is it a breach of law for a priest to ride through a cemetery, smoking a cigar and with his hat on, while a funeral is in progress? This somewhat complicated inquiry summarizes the charge on which Italian residents of Rock Springs, Wyo., caused the arrest of the Rev. Father M. J. Keley. His accusers assert that while a funeral was in progress, no priest officiating, the Rev. Father Kelley rode around the lot and funeral party with his hat on his head and a lighted cigar in his mouth. The technical charge is that he rode a horse in the cemetery, when under the regulations of the burial tract horses are not permitted within the enclosure. The case is expected to go to the district court and possibly to the supreme court.

Telephone Fatal to Cat.

The telephone has always exercised a curious fascination for a cat belonging to a lady living in Westchester, N. Y. The instrument was on a table in the main hall of the cottage, and every time the bell rang, puss would scurry through the house, leap on the table, cock his head on one side and put his nose in the transmitter. Recently the cat's mistress gave a reception. Just before the guests arrived the little creature suddenly darted down the stairs, supposedly having heard the phone bell. Half an hour later he was found dangling from the phone cord. He had evidently jumped on the table, become tangled in the cord and in trying to free himself strangled.

An Unfeeling Remark.

"I am wedded to my art," said the prima donna.

"Well," replied the harsh manager "if you couldn't treat a regular husband any better than you do your art, some man is lucky."

Watson on Problem Novels

English Poet Thinks Present Day Realists Get Their Stories From the Sewers.

William Watson, the English poet, who has been visiting this country, in voicing his opinion of the "problem" novels says things in a way that many people have doubtless thought, but not been so well able to express. He says:

But why should the novelists make "problems" of these things? Is the great mass of the people interested in a depressing discussion of them? For most of us they are not problems at all. In the hands of the so-called "realistic" writer, however, they furnish an opportunity for prudence, for the exploitation of scenes and situations which were eschewed by the great novelists of the past as being unhealthy and demoralizing. I think the tendency of our present day realists is to take the Goddess Cloacina for their muse, and to hunt through the mere sewers and dregs of human life for their stories.

Mr. Watson is enthusiastic on the subject of John Milton and says: "When I was fourteen I had the whole of 'Comus' by heart and since then I have ever made Milton my favorite study. I don't think that any other poet comes up to his ankles. Walter Savage Landor said that a rib of Shakespeare would have made a Milton; a rib of Milton would have made all the poets who have come since." I don't agree with the first part of the quotation, but I do, heartily, with the last.—Indianapolis News.

New Fashion in Horseshoes.

Rubby—I must take him to the blacksmith. He needs new shoes.

Wife—Can't you have the old ones soled and heeled? The uppers look perfectly good.—Harper's Weekly.

The Reason.

"I have tried in vain to borrow some loose change from my friends."

"I suppose their money is tight."