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WHY THE ARCHDUCHESS WANTS HER MARRIAGE ANNULLED

Astounding Story of the Mysterious Plot That Drove Austria's Haughtiest Royal Lady from Her Husband on Their Bridal Night

By Ivan Narodny

THE presence in New York City of Mile. Lucie de Classon, former lady-in-waiting to Isabella Marie, Archduchess of Austria, makes it possible to clear up one of the most extraordinary tragic mysteries that ever cast its shadow upon a royal house of Europe.

All the world was startled recently when the telegraph and cables scattered broadcast the news that the young Archduchess Isabella Marie and her newly wedded husband, Prince George of Bavaria, had separated on the eve of their nuptials, after a scene in the bridal apartments in the Bavarian royal palace at Munich in which the hysterical Archduchess set fire to and destroyed her wedding costume. Beyond the additional details that the Prince departed immediately on a hunting trip and that the distraught Archduchess went home to her mother, the Archduchess of Teschen, there has been,

until now, no further light thrown upon the mysterious affair.

The official explanation of the court of Austria and Bavaria was absurdly inadequate—simply, "a sudden and irreparable clash of two artistic temperaments." The young Archduchess, in bestowing her hand upon Prince George, had been obliged to renounce her claim in the succession to the Austrian throne. This was a solemn and irrevocable act, which carried with it also her renunciation of precedence according to her rank at the court of the Austrian Empire. Not even the annulment of her unfortunate marriage will restore to her these honors.

The rest was mere rumor—that Prince George was moody, talking no interest in sports, not even in his favorite pastime, boxing, and that his Munich residence is for sale.

At the time of this matrimonial tragedy Prince George was thirty-one years old, and one of the most popular officers in the German army. He held the rank of captain in two

regiments. He enjoyed the reputation of being the best boxer in the army, and held both the middleweight and heavyweight championships. The Kaiser had decorated him, and he was in high favor with his maternal grandfather, Emperor Francis Joseph, while being the favorite grandson of the Prince Regent of Bavaria.

Archduchess Isabella Marie was twenty-four. Besides her beauty, she enjoyed the reputation of a great wit and reasoner—a story teller safe from rivalry in court circles.

Significance was added to the separation of this royal couple by the world-wide knowledge that no two thrones in Europe have been more beset with tragedies than those of Austria and Bavaria. Both the Austrian Empress and Crown Prince Rudolf were assassinated, and hopeless insanity has claimed two Bavarian kings—and Prince George is directly descended from both these royal families.

At the time of that bridal night

separation at Munich, Mile. Lucie de Classon was one of the young Archduchess's ladies-in-waiting who accompanied the bride from Vienna to her new home in Munich. Shortly afterward she came to America on a visit to a relative. Learning that she was staying at present in New York City, I paid her a visit and was able to induce her to reveal for the first time the astonishing occurrences of that nuptial evening, in which she was one of the minor actors. Mile. de Classon's narrative is printed on this page in virtually her own words, translated from the French.

"Soon I heard a weird noise, and, looking around, I saw distinct the figure of a pretty young girl in a nightgown, staring at me ironically. How she had come in I do not know. She just walked to the bed and occupied it without a word. I trembled all over. 'Madame,' she said, 'this is not your bed; it's mine.'"

By Mile. LUCIE DE CLASSON,

Former Lady-in-Waiting to Archduchess Isabella Marie of Austria

PRINCE GEORGE of Bavaria and Archduchess Isabella Marie of Austria were married early last February, in Vienna, with all the pomp and ceremony usual at the Austrian court upon such occasions. Representatives of every European court were guests, and a

Quite early the next morning I was summoned to the private apartment of the Princess's chambermaid. I was shocked by the tragic expression which her face held—calamity was written in every feature.

"Leonora!" I exclaimed, "is the Princess ill?"

"Mademoiselle I—I do not know," she stammered. "You will learn from

against the back of the gorgeous bed. "Leonora will help to dress me, but you attend to the rest," she stammered, imploringly.

There was "nothing else left for



Prince George of Bavaria, Whose Wife Forsook Him on Their Wedding Night.

Cardinal performed the marriage sacrament. The bride and bridegroom created the general impression that they made the happiest couple in the world.

It was evident that the marriage was not the result of any political calculations, but was purely the result of love on both sides. The marriage ceremony was followed by a brilliant ball, and immediately afterward the bridal party departed for Munich, the future home of the happy young Archduchess, now consort of the favorite grandson of the Bavarian ruler.

Prince George's residence in Munich—truly a palace of regal proportions—was prepared for the becoming reception of the Princess and Prince. When I retired to the private apartment allotted to me, rather early in the evening, all was serene.

Her Highness." I followed her through many long corridors and wide halls to the door of the bedroom of the Princess, and was immediately admitted. I beheld Isabella Marie leaning against the pillows of her bed in her nightgown, sobbing as if her heart would break. For a moment I was utterly dazed and did not know what to say. Then, summoning all my courage, I asked:

"Your Highness, how can I serve you?"

"My dear Lucie," she said between her sobs, "I wish that you would pack all my things and make all ready for an immediate departure for Vienna. I must leave here. Oh, my dear! Don't ask me any more. I must go. Please, secure an extra car and a closed carriage, so that nobody will know of my departure."

She could hardly finish because of extreme excitement. Trembling and utterly exhausted, she leaned weakly

me than to obey the instructions of the Princess, since I was in her employ. I thought it even advisable to see the Prince, but while passing through the corridor I met the secretary discussing something mysterious with the aged superintendent of the palace. Seeing me, the superintendent left hurriedly and I asked if I could see the Prince.

"His Highness has left the town for a hunting trip in the country and will not return to-day," he replied, embarrassed.

For a moment we both looked at each other as if it was hard to find the words, but finally I told the message with the Princess had given me. The secretary listened with a sphinx-like expression and said that he would arrange the carriage and the special car, while I could go ahead with the other affairs.

Leonora, the chambermaid, was the first to see the Princess at midnight, and had remained with her,

All she could say was that the Princess had wept the whole time.

We left the palace in a mysterious way by the back door and, heavily veiled, the Princess entered the car without being recognized. Most of the way, until near Vienna, she looked mutely out of the window. At last she began to talk and instructed me how to secure a carriage so that no one could see us in Vienna. As I was to leave her upon our arrival, she implored that I should not tell to anyone in the course of a month what I had seen, or of her return to the residence of her mother. I promised. Suddenly she said:

"Oh, dear Lucie, don't marry a man whose past you do not know. The mere memory of my marriage still haunts me. Ugh!"

"Your Highness, I am exceedingly sorry. I suppose the Prince is guilty in his behavior." I said.

"The Prince? Why, of course. But it is something mysterious, something supernatural," she began. "I believe that there are places in the

palace in Vienna which are haunted. I know a gypsy woman who tells my mother and me everything that is going to happen, and it happens. And she told me that a black shadow hung always upon the man who would propose to me, and here I am! Oh, heaven! oh, heaven!"

The Princess paused and groaned. For a long time she looked blankly at the wall of the car, and then suddenly she continued:

"When the Prince proposed to me, I asked him to give me twenty-four hours to think over the matter."

"Don't you love me, Isabella?" he asked me, teasingly.

"Yes," I replied. "But marriage is also a part of mystery and it is not wise to follow only the sentiment of affection."

"He just smiled and said: 'All right.'"

I went to our family gypsy and asked her to tell me whether the man would suit me who just proposed. She read her cabalistic figures, looked at the stars, then at

my hand and whispered:

"There is a black shadow of a woman between him and you. Her name is Otilie. She has long black lashes, a pretty face and figure and big black eyes. If you can drag her down from his neck, he is yours."

"What do you think? My heart throbbed and I spent a sleepless night. I told the words of the gypsy to my mother. She took the prediction seriously; yet she decided that I should accept the proposal."

"When, upon my arrival in Munich, I entered my bed chamber in the evening, I suddenly remembered the words of the gypsy. The room itself looked mysterious. When I undressed myself and went to bed—how can I describe my horror!"

The Princess paused with shudder. Wiping her face, she continued with an effort:

"I beheld on the white pillow three drops of fresh, red blood. How it had come there I do not know. I jumped out of bed, trembling, and rang the bell. But nobody came. I rang more. Still nobody. Then I opened my golden case, containing a sacred amulet and a miniature holy picture and began to murmur a prayer. Soon I heard a weird noise, and, looking around, I saw distinctly the figure of a pretty, young girl in a night gown, staring at me ironically. How she had come in I do not know. She just walked to the bed and occupied it without a word. I trembled all over."

"Madame," she whispered, "this is not your bed, it's mine!"

"I could hardly keep from fainting. She was lying under the covers and pointing at the drops of blood on the pillow as if to say, 'Don't you know that?' She was pretty, with dark long lashes and black eyes, just as the gypsy had told me. Remembering the words of the gypsy I asked her:

"Are you Otilie?" She nodded and whispered: "Certainly I am. What do you want of me?"

Her glance was so full of threat and irony that I could not stand it any longer and collapsed. When I opened my eyes, the Prince was kneeling before me on the floor and keeping a towel with cold water on my head. Holding my hand, he looked at me frightened.

"Is she gone?" I asked.

"Who?" asked the Prince. "Isabella, let me help you to the bed.

What on earth is the matter with you?"

"Well, is she gone?" I asked again.

"The Prince looked at me, embarrassed. I got up with effort and took a seat on the chair. 'Otilie,' I stammered.

"What?" he asked, turning pale.

"Well, if you love her, you should not have married me," I said. The Prince was like a ghost, and did not know what to say. He sat on a chair as if paralyzed and I sat on another. But I did not dare look at the bed.

"George, I am not going to stand this," I said. "You keep your Otilie. But I leave you!"

"Otilie," he mumbled faintly, and staggered out of the room.

"Now I glanced at the bed. The woman and the pillow with the three drops of blood had vanished. It was natural that I could not sleep any more in that horrible bed. Then, Leonora, the chambermaid, came and you met me in the morning. Since that George never came in and Leonora told me when she brought fresh water, that the Prince had dressed himself in hunting costume and left at night for the country. What became of that terrible woman, I do not know."

The Princess finished and fell back on her seat. There was no question that the memory still haunted her. After a pause of a few minutes I said:

"Your Highness, I can't believe that there really was a woman in your bedroom."

"Oh, I have no doubt that it was all a vision," she admitted faintly, "although at the moment when I beheld it I believed it was all reality."

"But Your Highness, then the Prince might be altogether innocent," I argued.

"Oh, no," she objected. "If he had been innocent he would not have acted as he did. He was perfectly bewildered at my knowing of his secrets. That is the reason he left the palace so suddenly, and why he could not see me any more."

Dazed by the strange story, I fell back on my seat unable to say anything more. Since that day the Princess has remained with her mother, and the Prince is taciturn and gloomy. He refuses to make any comment or explanation.