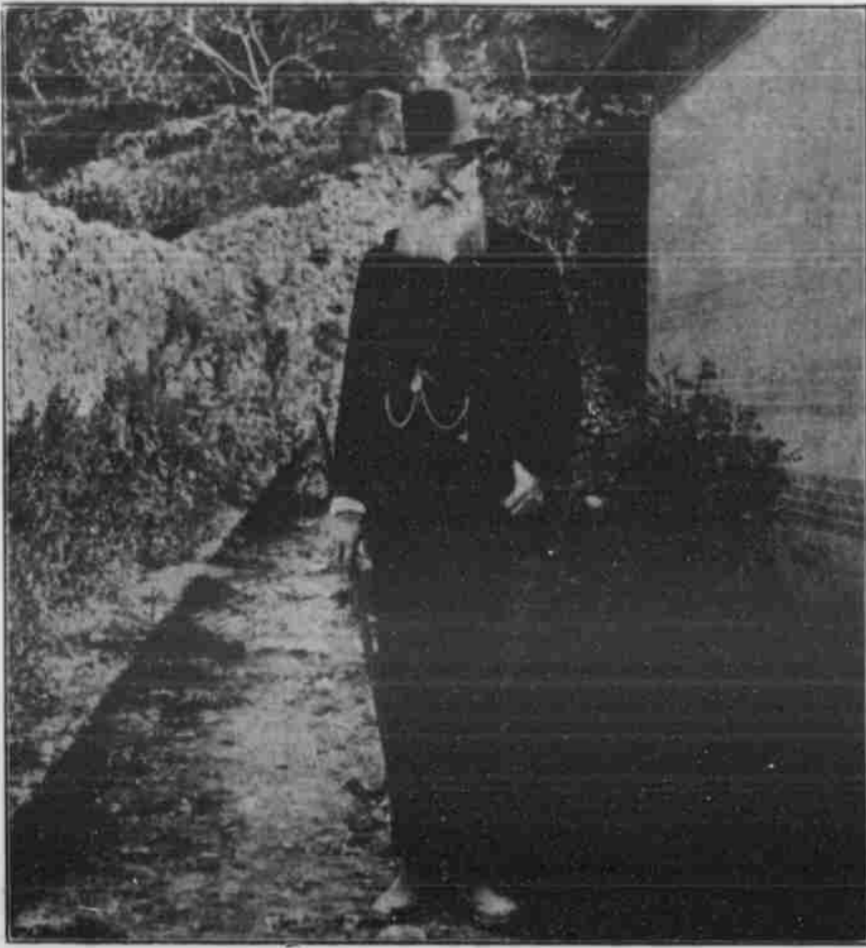


# King Leopold II of Belgium and His Royal Family



KING LEOPOLD II OF BELGIUM.



PALAIS DE JUSTICE AT BRUSSELS.

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**B**RUSSELS, Jan. 7.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I saw the king of Belgium walking alone in the park near his palace this morning. Yes, alone! He was sprinting along with a springy step, his shoulders well back, as though walking for a wager. He had a cane in his hand and his trousers were rolled up, although the paths were perfectly dry and the sun was shining. He was dressed in business clothes and wore a sack coat and derby hat. Altogether he looked more like a gentleman farmer with a touch of the sport in him than the king of one of the busiest little nations of Europe.

Nevertheless Leopold II is a king in every sense of the word and as kings go he is not so bad after all. He is now 67 years old and he has been ruling Belgium for more than thirty-seven years. He ascended the throne just about the close of our civil war and has held his own through the various changes of government in France, Germany and the other countries about him. His title, you know, is Leopold II, King of Belgium. He is the second king that Belgium has had. This country was a part of the Netherlands until 1830, when it became an independent kingdom, and its congress elected Leopold, the father of this man, as its king. Holland went off to itself and since then Belgium has walked alone. Austria, Russia, Great Britain and Prussia guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium and a few years later all the states of Europe recognized it as an independent government.

Leopold I was the ruler from 1831 until 1865 and upon his death his eldest son, the present king, took his place. During his administration the country has steadily grown in population and wealth. It is hardly bigger than some Texas counties and its seacoast is not longer than from Washington to Baltimore; still it supports one-twelfth as many people as the whole United States and it has a population greater than any of our states with the exception of New York.

Indeed, Belgium is as well managed as any land on the globe. The soil is naturally sandy, but every acre of it is well farmed. The country is divided up into small holdings and the greater part of it is worked with the spade, so intensively that it produces vastly in excess of other countries. Not only the farms, but the mines and factories are well handled. There are 1,600 stone quarries, which are worked, employing about 37,000 men and yielding an annual product of \$11,000,000. I have already written of the 125,000 coal miners and what they produce, and I might fill a page of stories of the different industries.

Belgian iron goes all over the world. Its galvanized roofing is used all along the coast of South America and the great railroad projected from Hankow to Peking is being built with Belgian steel rails. There are three steel plants here, now working on a 50,000-ton order of steel rails for Mexico, and other factories are making tons of railroad iron for Maryland. I have traveled pretty well over the world, but I have never been able to get out of sight of Belgian goods, nor to find a country where Belgium had not more or less commerce.

Think of a land like this not more than one-third the size of Indiana which is thus able to put its fingers into the pockets of all the world and draw the dollars out. They say its king is a sport, and my information inclines me to believe they are right, but he must be a business sport in order to accomplish such business results.

Let me give you a few commercial facts. In 1900 Belgium sold more than \$100 worth of goods for every man, woman and child in



PRINCE ALBERT, NEPHEW TO KING LEOPOLD AND HEIR TO THE BELGIAN THRONE.

the country, or more than \$500 per family. Think of a land that can produce so much more than it needs that every family can sell \$500 worth a year to foreign nations. That is what Belgium did. It buys as well as sells and in this it is interesting to us. Its imports amount to about \$700,000,000 annually, and of these more than \$50,000,000 worth come from Yankeeedom. It buys even more than this from France, Germany and Great Britain, but it sells to each of them almost as much as it buys, while our Belgian imports are a bagatelle in comparison.

But I started writing on the Belgian king. He is so wrapped up in the country that it is hard to separate him from it. And still in many respects, if gossip tells the truth, he gets his fun out of other things than business. Notwithstanding his 67 years of life and thirty-seven years of reign he is gay and giddy. His eye is as keen to recognize a pretty girl as it was at 18 when he married Marie Henrietta, the daughter of Archduke Joseph of Austria. All sorts of stories are whispered about Brussels of the king's escapades and of his liberality to certain female persons who, to say the least, are no better than they should be. He is said to be a patron of art, and especially of that kind of art connected with the opera bouffe stage, the prima donnas of which when in straits appeal to him and seldom in vain.

The king is fond of the theater and of the ballet. He is a great lover of horseback riding and frequently rides alone. You may sometimes see him in the parks in the suburbs of Brussels going along at a good trot through the woods, with as little ostentation as I saw him out walking this morning.

Indeed, Leopold has many things to commend him. He lives simply. He has a palace or so in the upper part of Brussels, but his home is not extravagant as far as its exterior is concerned, and it costs as little, perhaps, as that of any great monarch of Europe. He has a civil list fourteen times as big as the salary of President Roosevelt. He has \$700,000 a year to keep up his establishment, and in addition he owns a large private fortune. He owns lands in Belgium, hotels at Ostend and has been interested in the gambling houses there. For a long time he was the sole possessor of the Belgian Congo, the vast territory which he acquired through Stanley, but of late this has been turned into an independent state, with him

as the ruler, and I can't tell you just what he gets out of it. I only know that its government revenues now amount to not quite \$6,000,000 a year, and that the expenditures are greater than that. Whether Leopold has any private property there or not I do not know.

His majesty has been accused of not being a very good guardian of the wealth of his own family, and especially of that of his sister, who was the wife of the unfortunate Maximilian of Mexico. Her name was Carlotta, and, as the story goes, when Maximilian was executed he left her a vast estate, of which King Leopold was trustee. Then Carlotta became insane and her estate was almost absolutely in the power of her brother. It is gossiped that the most of this property has been squandered in various speculations and that a large part of it has gone into certain enterprises along the Congo river. In the meantime the enemies of Leopold say Carlotta has recovered her reason, but that his majesty does not dare to take her out of the asylum for fear of being held to an accounting.

King Leopold has no son to succeed him. He has had three children, but they are all girls. Princess Louise, who is now 44, was born before he ascended the throne, as was also Princess Stephanie, who is now 33. Both of these princesses are married. The third daughter is Princess Clementine, who was born July 30, 1872, and who is consequently 30 years of age. By the constitution, however, the succession can only go in the direct male line of the family, and the girls have no chance. If the king should die today his brother, who is two years his junior, would take his place, and in case of his death the succession would go to his son, Prince Albert, who is now 27, and who has a baby boy named Leopold, about 2 years old, ready to succeed him in case he dies.

The government of Belgium is somewhat different from those of the other European monarchies. The king has little more power than the king of England, the most of the governing being carried on through the congress and ministers. All the royal acts must be countersigned by one of the ministers, who thus becomes responsible for them. The congress consists of a senate and house of representatives, elected by the people, and it is a curious thing that some men have as much as three votes. Every citizen over 25 years of age has one vote and those over 35 who pay at least \$1 a year in house tax and have had children have each an additional vote, as has also every citizen over 25 who owns property to the amount of \$400 or who for two years has received \$20 annually from his government bonds or funds in the savings banks. Graduates of high colleges have two extra votes, but no man can have more than three votes. Another regulation provides that every man must vote and that if he does not he may be arrested and punished. Thus, you see, the government enforces voting and gives premiums of extra votes to such who have children, property and higher education.

In Belgium, as in most of the countries of Europe, the government owns the telegraphs and telephones, and to a large extent the railroads. Each of these branches is worked at a profit, and they add materially to the government revenues. The revenue from the railroads last year was about \$55,000,000 and that from the telegraph \$2,000,000. The railroads are managed in the interests of the people, and more especially for the lower classes. The different roads have workmen's tickets, by which a laborer may go to his factory and back if it is within fifteen miles for 37 cents a week every day by train. There are also reduced tickets for school children



BABY SON OF PRINCE ALBERT, HEIR-PRESUMPTIVE TO THE BELGIAN THRONE.

and a half rate for school excursions where the children are taken away under the charge of the teacher for instruction purposes. The ordinary rate for a bicycle taken along with a passenger is 14 cents, and dogs travel at third-class rates.

The Swiss system of yearly passes at a fixed rate prevails here. For about \$125 you can get a ticket that will allow you to travel throughout the year second class on any of the state railways and tickets for a shorter time proportionately low rates. At present there are more than 2,800 miles of railroads in the country, with a passenger traffic numbering about 140,000,000 rides per year.

I find the cars very good, although they are generally filled. The service at the stations is excellent. There are plenty of porters, dressed in blue jeans and black cloth caps and numbers on them, who take your baggage, weigh your trunks and carry your small trunk into the trains for 10 cents, or even less, per person. I have been riding second class and I find it comfortable. The cars are divided up into compartments, with seats facing each other, so that each compartment will accommodate six. The seats are cushioned with felt or leather, and their backs are upholstered to high above your heads. The fares are remarkably low.

The Belgian postoffice department manages also the telephones and telegraphs, as well as the savings banks. The telegraph rates are much lower than ours and the service is quite as good. You can send fifteen words for 10 cents, fifty words for 24 cents, paying only 2 cents for every ten words thereafter. There are now about 4,000 miles of lines in the country, with enough wire to reach around the world. There are 37,000 miles of telephone wire and 15,000 stations. The conversations last year were almost 40,000,000.

The national savings banks are patronized by all classes. The books number more than 1,500,000 and the deposits approximate \$120,000,000. In addition to this there is a fund of government annuities amounting to \$33,000,000, so that the Belgians have in their own savings banks about \$150,000,000. The most of such accounts are small and the savings come from the poor. More than 60 per cent of the books have a total of less than \$20, and fully three-fourths of them are under \$100. Taking the whole population into consideration there is one savings bank account for every four inhabitants, or on the average above one per family. The accounts are steadily increasing and the people deposit thus more and more every year. The system enables deposits to be made in the smallest villages, and every laborer has a safe place to put his savings if he wishes it. It is a pity that some similar arrangement cannot be made for the United States.

I like Brussels. It is one of the best built

and best managed cities of Europe. It has only about 200,000 people in the town proper, but with its suburbs its inhabitants are more than 500,000. It is in the heart of Belgium, and as such is within a couple of hours or so of the whole population of more than 6,000,000.

The town is divided into two sections, one of which is high above the other. It is in the upper part that the king's palace and all the government buildings are situated. It is here that most of the foreigners live, including about 2,000 English residents. Our minister has a fine home not far from the palace of the king, and the consul general is about equally distant from the palace in an opposite direction.

The government buildings are especially fine. Take the Palais de Justice, which stands upon a hill high above the business part of the city. It is said to be the grandest structure of the world. It is bigger than the capitol at Washington and covers one acre more than the enormous Church of St. Peter at Rome. It is built of marble and it rises high over Brussels with a dome 100 feet higher than that of our capitol. The structure in general is pyramidal, each successive section diminishing in bulk. It is beautifully decorated, the rotunda being embellished with colossal statues of justice, law, strength and mercy, and the vestibule adorned with statues of Demosthenes and Lycurgus and of Cicero and Domitius. Not far from this are other government buildings, including the famous art gallery, the National Bank and the Palais de la Nation.

As far as education is concerned the Belgians do not compare with the Swiss. I seldom met a man in Switzerland who could not speak more than one language, and in the cities nearly every one understood more or less English. Here the people speak French and Flemish, but many of the lower classes have a dialect of their own which is difficult to understand.

The Belgians are Roman Catholics. Of the six million odd people in the country there are only 19,999 Protestants and 4,000 Jews. The constitution grants full religious liberty, but, notwithstanding this, many of the schools are under the church, and this is always detrimental to education. There are in all four universities, two of which belong to the state, and also schools of arts, engineering and manufactures, which have about 1,500 students.

The public school system is not as good as that of Switzerland and the percentage of illiteracy is much higher. In Switzerland you can scarcely find a man who does not read or write. Here fully one-fourth of the population cannot read, and of the young men called out for military service last year more than 12 per cent could not write.

This is the only place I know of where newspapers are sold for nothing. There are two of the kind in Brussels and both are making money. One is known as Le Soir and the other as Le National. Le Soir has 125,000 circulation and it has made the fortune of its founder, who was a newsdealer originally, starting with nothing. He distributed his paper free and gradually built up a business out of the advertisements. The only charge for the paper is for delivery, which costs 6 cents a month if the customer lives on the ground floor or 12 cents if he lives upstairs. Mail subscribers pay merely the postage and the newsboys sell the papers on the street for a cent and pocket all the profits.

In addition to these two papers Belgium has a number of other journals which are paid for, but no other dailies of large circulation. There are in the whole country less than 1,500 journals, of which 429 are political, 178 commercial, industrial or agricultural, 180 financial and 755 devoted to other subjects. FRANK G. CARPENTER.