

***HENRY
W. FISCHER***



***SECRET
MEMOIRS***

Henry W. Fischer

Secret Memoirs

The Story of Louise, Crown Princess

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**FROM
LOUISE'S
DIARY**

THE STORY OF LOUISE, CROWN PRINCESS OF SAXONY

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CHAPTER I

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MOTHERHOOD

A sterile Royal Family once fruitful—Diary true record of self—Long legs of Countess Solms—A child only because he can't help it—Wet nurse to Socialist brat—Royal permit for nursing—Royal negligee talk—A Saxon failing.

C

ASTLE WACHWITZ, *February 17, 1893.*

I did my duty towards the Saxons. I gave them a Prince. The Royal House ought to be grateful to me:—I am helping to perpetuate it. Who would, if I didn't? My sister-in-law, Princess Mathilde, is an old maid. The other, Maria Josepha, as sterile as Sarah was before she reached the nineties. This applies also to Isabelle, the wife of brother-in-law, John-George. And Prince Max, tired of ballet girls, is about to take the soutane.

There is just one more royal Saxon princess, Elizabeth, and she succeeded in having children neither with her husband *de jure*, the late Duke of Genoa, nor with her husband-lover, Marquis Rapallo.

Louise, then, is the sole living hope of the royal Saxons that, only 160 years ago, boasted of a sovereign having three hundred and fifty-two children to his credit, among them not a few subsequently accounted geniuses. Augustus, the Physical Strong (1670 to 1733), was the happy father, the *Maréchal de Saxe* one of his numerous gifted offspring.

Alas, since then the House of Wettin has declined not in numbers only.

Poor baby is burdened with ten names in honor of so many ancestors. Why, in addition, they want to call him "Maria" I cannot for the life of me understand, for there never was a Saxon princess or queen that amounted to a row of pins.

I wonder whether they will say the same of me after the crown of the Wettiners descended upon my brow. Those so inclined should consult these papers ere they begin throwing stones, for my Diary is intended to contain my innermost thoughts, my ambitions, my promises for the future, *Myself*, and let no one judge me by what I say other than what is recorded here.

These pages are my Father Confessor. I confess to myself—what a woman in my position says to members of her family or official and semi-official persons—her servants, so to speak—doesn't signify, to borrow a phrase from my good cousin, the Kaiser Wilhelm.

Father-in-law George tells me to trust no one but him, my husband, and Frederick Augustus's sisters, cousins and aunts, and to rely on prayer only, yet, stubborn as nature made me, I prefer respectable white paper to my sweet relatives.

Up to now my most ambitious literary attempts were intimate letters to my brother Leopold, the "Black Sheep." As I now start in writing letters to myself, it occurs to me that my worse self may be corresponding with my better self, or vice versa. If I was only a poet like Countess Solms, but, dear, no. All real bluestockings are ugly and emaciated. Solms is both, and her legs are as long and as thin as those of Diana, my English hunter.

I think this Diary business will be quite amusing—at any rate, it will be more so than the conversation of my ladies. Ah, those ladies of the court of Saxony! If they would only talk of anything else but orphans, sisters of charity and ballet girls. The latter always have one foot in Hades, while you can see the wings grow on the backs of the others.

When the von Schoenberg struts in, peacock fashion, and announces "his royal Highness did himself the honor to soil his bib," I sometimes stare at her, not comprehending at the

moment, and the fact that she is talking of my baby only gradually comes to mind. Isn't it ridiculous that a little squalling bit of humanity, whom the accident of birth planted in a palace, is royalty first and all the time, and a child only because he can't help it?

As for me, I am a woman and mother first, and my child is an animated lump of flesh and blood—*my* flesh and blood—first and all the time. Of course, when baby came I wanted to nurse it. You should have seen Frederick Augustus's face. If I had proposed to become a wet-nurse to some "socialist brat" he couldn't have been more astonished. Yet my great ancestress, the Empress Maria Theresa, nursed her babies "before a parquet of proletarians," at the theatre and at reviews, and thought nothing of giving the breast to a poor foundling left in the park of Schoenbrunn.

Frederick Augustus recovered his speech after a while—though he never says anything that would seem to require reflection, he always acts the deep thinker. "Louise," he mumbled reproachfully—"what will his Majesty say?"

"I thought you were the father of the child," I remarked innocently.

"No levity where the King is concerned," he corrected poor me. "You know very well that for an act of this kind a royal permit must be previously obtained."

Followed a long pause to give his mental apparatus time to think some more. Then: "And, besides, it will hurt your figure."

"Augusta Victoria" (the German Empress) "nursed half a dozen children, and her *décolleté* is still much admired," I insisted.

Frederick Augustus paid no attention to this argument. "Anyhow, I don't want the doctors to examine your breast daily," he said with an air of mixed sentimentality and brusqueness.

These were not his own words, though. My husband, not content with calling a spade a spade, invariably uses the nastiest terms in the dictionary of debauchery. When he tells me of his love adventures before marriage it's always "I bagged that girl," or "I

made something tender out of her," just as a hunter talks of game or a leg of venison.

He doesn't want to be rude; he is so without knowing it. His indelicacy would be astounding in a man born on the steps of the throne, if the Princes of this royal house were not all inclined that way.

Two weeks after my accouchement George and Isabelle called. Though brother and sister-in-law, we are not at all on terms of intimacy. Frederick Augustus made some remarks of a personal nature that sent all the blood to my head; Isabelle seemed to enjoy my discomfort, but George had the decency to go to the window and comment on the dirty boots of a guard lieutenant just entering the courtyard. Frederick Augustus thought he had made a hit with Isabelle and applauded his own effort with a loud guffaw, while pounding his thighs, which seems to give him particular satisfaction.

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THE SWEET FAMILY

Husband loving, but family nasty—Money considerations—Brutal caresses in public—Pests in the family—Awful serenity—Meddle with angels' or devils' affairs—Father-in-law's gritty kiss.

C

ASTLE WACHWITZ, *February 24, 1893.*

I have been married some fifteen months and I love my husband. He is kind, not too inquisitive and passionate. I have better claims to domestic happiness than most of my royal sisters on or near the thrones of Europe. Of course when I married into the Saxon royal family I expected to be treated with ill-concealed enmity. Wasn't I young and handsome? Reason enough for the old maids and childless wives, my new sweet relatives, to detest me.

Wasn't I poor? I brought little with me and my presence entailed a perpetual expense. Now in royal families money is everything, or nearly so, and the newcomer that eats but doesn't increase the family fortune is regarded as an interloper.

If I hadn't "*made good*," that is if, in due time, I hadn't become a mother, my position among the purse-proud, rapacious and narrow-minded Wettiners would have become wellnigh intolerable. But I proved myself a *Holstein*. I rose superior to Queen Carola, who never had a child, and to Maria, Mathilda, Isabelle and Elizabeth, who either couldn't or didn't. But, to my mind, acting the *cow* for the benefit of the race did not invite stable manners.

I wasn't used to them. They hadn't figured in the dreams of my girlhood. I thought love less robust. I didn't expect to be squeezed

before my ladies. Even the best beloved husband shouldn't take liberties with his wife's waist in the parlor.

And Frederick Augustus's negligee talk is no less offensive than his manner of laying loving hands on my person. As a rule, he treats me like a third-row dancing girl that goes to petition the manager for a place nearer the footlights. There is no limit to his familiarities or to the license of his conversation. "*Fine wench*" is a term of affection he likes to bestow on his future queen; indeed, one of the less gross. He has the weakness to like epithets that, I am told, gentlemen sometimes use in their clubs, but never towards a mistress they half-way respect.

My father-in-law, Prince George, is a pest of another kind. While Frederick Augustus is jovial and rude, George is rude and serene of a serenity that would make a Grand Inquisitor look gay.

One of my famous ancestresses, the Princess-Palatine, sister-in-law of Louis the Fourteenth, once boxed the Dauphin's ears for a trick he played on her, by putting his upright thumb in the centre of an armchair which her royal highness meant to sit on.

Whenever I behold George's funereal visage, I long to repeat the Dauphin's undignified offense. I would like to see this royal parcel of melancholy jump and dance; change that ever-frowning and mournful aspect of his. Indeed, I would like to treat him to one of the anecdotes that made the Duchess de Berri explode with laughter.

Frederick Augustus lives in deadly fear of him, and never gets his hair cut without first considering whether his father will approve or not. George isn't happy unless he renders other people unhappy. I actually believe he would rather meddle with the angels' or devils' affairs than say his prayers, though he is a bigot of the most advanced stripe.

Sometimes when the itch for meddling has hold of him, he cites all the married princes of the royal house and lectures them on the wickedness of having no children, winding up by commanding each one to explain, in detail, his failure to have offspring.

Of course, these gentlemen put the blame on their wives, whereupon the ladies are forthwith summoned to be threatened and cajoled.

Prince George had the great goodness to approve of my baby and to congratulate me, also to set me up as an example for Isabelle. When I return to Dresden I shall be made Colonel of Horse.

Twice has George kissed me—upon my arrival in Saxony and five days after the birth of my child. It felt like a piece of gritty ice rubbing against my forehead.

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WEeping WILLOW—EMBLEM ROYAL

A pious fraud—Theresa Mayer—Character of the Queen
—Mopishness rampant.

C

ASTLE WACHWITZ, *March 1, 1893.*

Prince Max came unexpectedly. He is studying for the priesthood and looks more sour than his father even. I was in bed, nursing a sick headache, but presuming upon his future clerical dignity, he walked in without ceremony and sat down on a chair near my bed. Then he raised his hands in prayer and announced that he had come to assist in my devotions.

"Forget that I am your brother-in-law and cousin," he said; "tell me what's in your heart, Louise, and I will pray to the good God for thee."

"Don't trouble yourself," I replied, "I have a court chaplain charged with these affairs. Rather tell me about the latest comic opera."

"Comic opera!" he stammered. "You don't intend to go to such worldly amusements now that you are a mother?"

"Of course I do. The very day I return to Dresden I will take a look at your girl."

"My—what?" gasped Max.

"Your Theresa—Theresa Mayer. I understand she made a great hit in the *Geisha*, and everybody approves of your taste, Max."

Max turned red, then green, and I thought to myself what a fool I was. He's a favorite with the King and Queen, and my father-in-

law believes every word he says.

C

ASTLE WACHWITZ, *March 10, 1893.*

Queen Carola is a good soul though she doesn't dare call her soul her own. I never heard her say "*peep*" in the presence of his Majesty. She looks forlorn and frightened when King Albert is around.

I like her better since I am a mother, for she loves baby. Yes, though she is a Queen, I saw her actually smile at the child once or twice.

Poor woman, the point of her nose is always red, and, like Father-in-law George, she believes weeping willow the only fit emblem for royalty. The look of the whipped dog is always in her weak eyes.

I am too young and—they *do* say—too frivolous to stand so much mopishness. These mustard-pots, sedate, grave, wan and long-faced, make me mad. I don't know what to say—all I can do is try to hide my "un-princess-like" cheerfulness when they are around.

I wish I had an ounce or so of diplomacy in my composition. It might enable me to sympathize with the fancied troubles of the Queen and Prince George, but I am incorrigible.

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MY UNPLEASANT YOUTH

Father hard to get along with—Royal imaginations—Kings cursing other kings—Poverty and pretense—Piety that makes children suffer—Up at five to pray on cold stones—Chilblains and prayer.

C

ASTLE WACHWITZ, *March 11, 1893.*

It occurs to me that, if this is intended as a record of my life—somewhat after the fashion of the *Margravine* of Bayreuth's Memoirs—I ought to tell about my girlhood.

Let me admit at once that my marriage to the Crown Prince of Saxony was, politically speaking, a stroke of good luck. My father, the Grand-duke of Tuscany, had been deprived of land and crown ten years before I was born, and, though he likes to pose as a sovereign, he is, as a matter of fact, a mere private gentleman of limited resources, whom the head of the family, the Austrian Emperor, may coax or browbeat at his sweet pleasure. If papa had been able to save his thronelet, I have no doubt he would be a most agreeable man, open-handed and eager to enjoy life, but instead of making the best of a situation over which he has no control, he is forever fretting about his lost dignities and about "his dear people" that don't care a snap for his love and affection. This makes him a trying person to get along with—mention a king or prince in the full enjoyment of power, and father gets melancholy and calls Victor Emanuel, the second of his name, a brigand.

He seldom or never visits his *confrères* in the capitals of Europe, but when I was a girl our gloomy palace at Salzburg saw much of the ghosts of decaying royalty. The Dukes of Modena and Parma,

the King of Hanover, the *Kurfurst* of Hesse, the King of Naples and other monarchs and toy-monarchs that were handed their walking papers by sovereigns mightier than themselves, visited us off and on, filling the air with lamentations and cursing their fate.

And, like papa, all these *ex'es* are ready to fly out of their very skins the moment they notice the smallest breach of etiquette concerning their august selves. If they had the power, the Imperial Highnesses would execute any man that called them "Royal Highness," while the Royal Highnesses would be pleased to send to the gallows persons addressing them as "Highness" only.

And papa has other troubles, and the greatest of them, lack of money. Poverty in private life must be hard enough, but a poor king, obliged to keep up the pretense of a court, is to be pitied indeed.

Add to what I have said, father's share of domestic unhappiness. Mother is a Bourbon of Parma, serious-minded and hard like my father-in-law, and almost as much of a religious fanatic.

Oh, how we children suffered by the piety of our mother. There were eight of us, myself the oldest of five girls, and seven years older than my sister Anna. Yet this baby, as soon as she could walk, was obliged to rise, like myself, at five o'clock summer and winter to go to the chapel and pray. The chapel was lighted only by a few wax candles and, of course, was unheated like the corridors of the palace. And like them it was paved with stones. Many a chilblain I carried away from kneeling on those granite flags.

And the stupidity of the thing! Instead of saying our prayers we murmured and protested, and as soon as we were old enough we slipped portions of novels in our prayer-books, which we read while mass was said. That trick was not unfraught with danger though, for mother's spies were always after us, and the bad light made reading difficult.

I am sure that if mother had found us out, she would have whipped us within an inch of our lives.

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A FIERCE DISCIPLINARIAN

Diamonds used to punish children—Face object of attacks—Grunting and snorting at the royal table—Blood flowing at dinner—My brother jumps out of a window.

C

ASTLE WACHWITZ, *April 1, 1893.*

Nothing of consequence happened since my last entry, and I continue the story of my girlhood.

Her Imperial Highness, my pious mother, had a terrible way of punishing her children. The face of the culprit was invariably the object of her attacks. She hit us with the flat of her bony hand, rendered more terrible by innumerable rings. The sharp diamonds cut into the flesh and usually made the blood flow freely.

The court chaplain at Salzburg was a peasant's boy without manners or breeding of any kind. While the least violation of etiquette or politeness on the children's part was punished by a box on the ear, or by withholding the next meal, mother overlooked the swinishness of the chaplain simply because he wore a black coat.

One of the chaplain's most offensive habits was to grunt and snort when eating. On one occasion my brother Leopold gave a somewhat exaggerated imitation of these disgusting practices at table, whereupon mother, blind with fury, for she thought a priest could do no wrong, struck Leopold in the face, causing the blood to gush from his lacerated cheek.

Father immediately rose from table and savagely turning upon mother said, "Understand, Madame, that as a sovereign and head