

The Saddest of Royal Romances

By OLIN CRAWFORD

In the old castle at Laeken, in Belgium, the curtain is falling on the last dismal scene in that saddest of royal romances, the story of young Maximilian and the lovely Carlotta, who between them for a brief span ruled an empire.

An old woman, bent and gray, showing no longer a trace of the grace and beauty that once won for her the heart of the most admired prince in Europe, is close to the end of her days. She is failing fast; a few months at most, so her physicians say, is all that remains to her.

Far better would it have been had death claimed her many years ago, for fate has not been kind to her. For 44 years she has been cursed with madness, and all those years the royal castle of Laeken has been her prison.

Sometimes in her calmer moments a wistful look comes into the old lady's eyes—those eyes that once were so beautiful and full of animation, but that long ago grew dim—and she inquires, as she has done a thousand times: "Will the emperor come today?" And the answer comes, as it has come a thousand times before: "Not today."

Sometimes, although very seldom, her clouded mind clears for a moment and she looks back over the long, long years and realizes that the emperor will never come. For a fleeting moment she knows the ruin that crowded close upon their brief years of pomp and power and the fate to which her feverish ambition led him.

For this withered old lady, to whom the fires of madness bring merciful forgetfulness of all that she has lost, is Carlotta, the same Carlotta who was once known as the most beautiful and accomplished of all royal princesses, and won and lost an empire.

At Laeken for 43 years and more a letter has been waiting for Carlotta to read. It was written by her husband, Maximilian, on the day that he was led out to his execution. In the midst of the ruin that her own ambition, not his, had brought upon him, he had heard of the terrible fate that had overtaken her, and the hope had come to him that sooner or later she would recover her reason and be able to read his lines of farewell. But it is a farewell that has never reached her, although it has been waiting all these years for her recovery. This is the letter:

"My Dearly Beloved Carlotta:—If one day God permits you to recover and you read these lines, you will learn the cruelty of the ill-fortune which has increasingly pursued me since our departure for Europe. You took with you all my soul. So many events and so many sudden blows have broken all my hopes that death is for me a happy deliverance and not an agony. I fall gloriously as a soldier, as a king; vanquished, but not dishonored. If your sufferings be too great, if God call you speedily to rejoin me, I will bless the Divine hand which has so heavily pressed upon us. Adieu. Adieu.

YOUR POOR MAX."

Perhaps it is just as well that poor Carlotta has never been able to grasp the meaning of the emperor's farewell. How many bitter memories it would bring back to her! There is another fallen empress in Europe, grown old in sorrow and disappointment; but fate brought to Carlotta a far more tragic career than shadows the declining years of Eugenie of France.

It has all the material for a great epic poem, the story of Maximilian and his beautiful wife. Surely in all the romance of royalty nothing has been more dramatic, more appealing in pathos and heart interest.

Yet the careers of both began without a shadow or a hint of disaster to come. Whom the gods love they destroy, runs the saying, and the gods seemed to have chosen Maximilian and Carlotta as their especial pets. They had showered each of them with more blessings than fall to the lot of one man or woman in millions.

Of all the royal princes of his time, young Maximilian was reputed to be the most fascinating and accomplished. More than six feet in height, slender, straight as an arrow, strikingly handsome, he possessed talents and education most unusual in a man of his age. Opportunity had smiled upon him from his birth, for he was an archduke and the brother of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria.

At the age of 14 he entered the Austrian navy, and, apart from the preference that would inevitably mark the career of the emperor's brother, he won through his ability and merit the rank of rear-admiral and became commander-in-chief of the Austrian navy when only 22 years old. He was a noted linguist, and a student of the natural sciences whose acquisitions won the admiration of Humboldt.

As commander-in-chief of the Austrian navy he accomplished many notable reforms, and he had won a high reputation throughout Europe when at the age of 25 chance brought him on a visit to the court of King Leopold I of Belgium.

It was there that he first set eyes upon Carlotta, the fascinating girl who was to lead him on to greatness beyond his dreams—and to ruin as well. If he was the most favored of princes, the daughter of King Leopold I was certainly the most favored of princesses. She was only 17 years old—tall, graceful,

beautiful—with a fascination that won all who met her. She, too, was a linguist and a scholar. She spoke and wrote with equal fluency French, German, English, Spanish and Italian. And, in spite of her age, she was no stranger to questions of diplomacy and statecraft, since from childhood she was accustomed to be present in the council of state when questions of diplomacy were discussed, and was familiar with both the open and secret operations in imperial politics.

It was love at first sight with both, and the marriage that soon followed was a love-match rather than one entered upon from reasons of state.

In Austria, on a rocky promontory on the shores of the Adriatic, the young archduke built a fairy-like castle for his bride—the castle of Miramar, which, with its white marble towers and minarets, its terraced roofs and medieval battlements rising from in front of beautiful, far-spreading gardens, with a background of snow-capped mountains, was like a palace of enchantment. The sea beat at its base, and always its moaning echoed through the spacious halls.

What a romantic spot for a honeymoon! But the fires of ambition were already burning in the heart of the lovely archduchess. The splendid castle, glittering and fantastic upon its rocky perch, the glory of sea and sky, the rich colors of hillside and valley she soon found intolerably monotonous.

It was with delight that not long after their marriage she hailed the appointment of her husband as viceroy of Lombardy, then under the rule of Austria. But to Maximilian himself this brilliant opportunity, though he accepted it, did not make the same appeal. He had reached the limits of his ambition and was fond of the solitude of Miramar, where he spent long hours in his library with his studies.

The court the young people set up at Milan had a splendor that vied with that of Vienna. State receptions, magnificent balls, and ceremonies that impressed the imagination of the people by their display rapidly succeeded each other, the young archduchess and her husband as the representatives of imperial majesty receiving the homage of its subjects. It was Carlotta rather than the archduke who was responsible for the magnificence of their miniature court. She was in her element; she loved the pomp and glitter; on the other hand, her husband often found himself longing for a simpler life and for the peace and quiet of his library at Miramar.

It was Carlotta, too, who brought upon them the sharp criticisms from Vienna of what was considered their outrageous extravagance. Although in other respects Maximilian had met with a good deal of success as a puppet ruler, the disagreements that arose with the Austrian government over his expenditures resulted in his resignation after serving as viceroy for two years.

Back they went to Miramar, whose solitude was in striking contrast to the gaiety of the little court at Milan. The archduke was glad indeed to be relieved of the cares of office. He buried himself in his studies and began to write books.

It was different with his ambitious wife. To her the great castle seemed lonely and dismal. She longed for greater opportunity to display her beauty and accomplishments. Petted child of fortune though she was, she chafed and fretted in her fairyland as if beautiful Miramar were but a prison. But the monotony of life there was to be brief. A few short weeks and destiny was to summon her into a far wider sphere of action. Yet if she could have seen through the fleeting years into the future Miramar would have seemed to her indeed a paradise, and her far-reaching ambition worse than folly.

Yes, the gods had surely been good to Carlotta. She had beauty, wealth, high position, the love of the most admired of princes, every fancy gratified, and, as if all this were not enough, they hastened to please her again as soon as she began to fret for more. Aladdin with his magic lamp could have had his wishes no more freely satisfied than this most fortunate of princesses. She wanted a court to rule over, and straightway Dame Fortune was at her side to see that her ambition should be fulfilled to the letter.

Suddenly a dazzling prospect flashed upon her sight. In far away Mexico three European powers, England, France and Spain, had joined in a treaty to demand of the Mexican Republic protection for their respective subjects living there and payment of sums borrowed from their governments by the Mexicans.

An expedition in which each of these three powers joined sailed for the republic when its president, Juarez, acknowledged the debt and promised the required protection. England and Spain then withdrew their troops, but the French army remained. So far as Napoleon III was concerned, the expedition had been merely a pretext to gain the entrance of his troops into Mexico, for he had secretly determined to establish in that country a monarchy that would be subject to his control, that would enable him to check the power of the United States, and by means of which he would be able to utilize certain shores of the Gulf of Mexico which once had belonged to France.

Instead of the French army being withdrawn, it was presently reinforced. Foreseeing its object, Juarez opposed it, and war began. The troops of Juarez were overcome,

and he was obliged to withdraw from the capital.

Marching toward the north, he reorganized his government and obstinately continued in his office as president during the harassing events of the following few years. Through the influence of France, the Mexican people agreed to adopt a monarchical, hereditary form of government under a Catholic prince, who should take the title of emperor.

Thereupon Napoleon cast his eyes about over royalty and thought of Maximilian and Carlotta. Maximilian, he realized, was content at Miramar and might not be eager to grasp such an offer, but he realized, too, Carlotta's restless ambition. And where in all the world was there a royal couple better fitted to occupy the throne of the new empire?

Into the quiet and peace of the fantastic castle by the sea there came in September, 1863, a deputation of nine distinguished Mexicans to tender a fatal gift—a gift that was soon to bring ruin and tragedy to the young couple who were about to be summoned out of their Eden.

But Maximilian hesitated. He realized the difficulties and dangers that would surround the Mexican sovereignty. Perhaps he even had a foreboding of the disaster that was to come. It was a throne poised on the crater of a volcano.

It was Carlotta, who, in his hesitation, decided his course.

IN THE RAIN

A Rondel

Oh, the fresh smell of winter rains that blow
Down the sea border of the Dallas Road;
Where lovely thoughts and wholesome fancies grow
And laggard spirits quicken to the goad.

Pain vanishes as swinging, on I go.
Beneath the spell now lighter grows the load.

Oh, the fresh smell of winter rains that blow
Down the sea border of the Dallas Road!

Wide are the windows of my mind's abode,
Cleared by cold kisses from the moul-tains' snow;
Rain in my face! my heart, it kens the code!
Rain in my eyes!—the only tears they know.

Oh, the fresh smell of winter rains that blow
Down the sea border of the Dallas Road!
—C. L. ARMSTRONG.

"What could be more glorious," she cried, "than to succeed the Aztec emperors and rule over a splendid country?"

If her husband cared nothing for power, she could run the empire herself. She never doubted her ability to overcome all the many difficulties that might arise.

Carlotta was accustomed to being obeyed. Her husband had never denied her anything, and she carried her point. Maximilian, then only thirty-one years old, accepted the tremendous responsibilities presented to him and suddenly found himself an emperor.

Resigning his rights to the Austrian throne in case his brother should die without an heir, he was solemnly crowned in his castle of Miramar by members of the Mexican Assembly of Nobles. Farewell visits were paid by the emperor and empress to the English, French, Belgian, and Austrian courts, and they then returned for a last few weeks at Miramar, the beautiful home of their brightest years, whose gleaming white walls rising above the blue sea must have shone upon them like a vision through the dark troubles that gathered around them.

It was from there that they at last embarked for Mexico. Vast crowds of Austrians made a gala day to bid them farewell, and the young emperor wept as hundreds of dark-skinned emotional people who loved him threw flowers before his lingering steps. But there were no tears in the eyes of Carlotta. Before her the future lay bright and beguiling, and she caught not a glimpse of the dark shadows that were to fall across their lives. Indeed, she took little notice of the scenes around her. Her thoughts were all of the new empire. On the voyage all her time was devoted to the study of maps and books referring to Mexico, to drawing up rules and regulations for her court, to planning the ceremonies of her coronation, to the centre. She worked all day at these occupations, on deck when possible, and sometimes far into the night by the dim light of lanterns.

Surely nothing could have been more auspicious than the entry of the young couple into the Mexican capital. The city was bathed in brightest sunshine, and the streets swarmed with cheering, enthusiastic crowds. The Indian population to a man welcomed the new rulers with every delight, for they saw in Maximilian, with his blue eyes and blond hair, the long predicted fair white man who was to cross the eastern seas to protect their rights and raise them from their oppressed condition.

Triumphal arches spanned streets of yellow buildings, and from balconies, roofs, and windows hung banners and cloths of brilliant hues. The blare of trumpets, the booming of cannon, the ringing of church bells announced the arrival of the imperial procession, and for Mexico a new era.

The new rulers played their parts well. Beginning early in the morning, to the surprise of his indolent subjects, the emperor held councils, attended committees, and received the peoples of all races, to hear their complaints and to endeavor to introduce order and discipline.

On her part, the empress visited hospitals, schools, and institutions, and the clergy and laity marveled at her energy. She was never so happy as when, with the imperial diadem on her head, robed in cloth of gold and wearing a mantle of crimson velvet and ermine, she sat upon the throne beside the sovereign to receive the homage of her subjects. And for a brief time her highest ambition was fulfilled when, on the emperor making a journey of inspection inland, she was appointed regent, and in that capacity presided over councils of state, held public audiences, and alone and unaided governed the nation. Naïve and inexperienced as a girl, she could yet exhibit the energy and fearlessness of a man. All her youthful enthusiasm was employed, and with no little success, for the regeneration of Mexico and for the fame of her consort.

Yet now, at the very height of her ambition, the long, dark days were close at hand, though she did not foresee their approach.

It was Carlotta who was the real ruler of the empire, and she ruled with a strong hand until suddenly fate turned against her. Less than a year after she and her husband came to the throne, the Civil War in the United States was terminated, and the great republic on the north, now free to handle other affairs, turned its attention immediately to Mexico.

It served notice upon Napoleon that the occupation of Mexico by his troops was inimical to the peace of the American Continent. The French emperor was left with no alternative but to withdraw his army or to engage in war with the United States.

Napoleon did not care for war with this country. He agreed to withdraw his army. At the same time he sent word to Maximilian that he was no longer able to support him, and advised him to return to Europe. It was plain to almost every one that with the withdrawal of the French soldiers Juarez would immediately sweep down from the north and conquer the capital, for Maximilian's own army was small.

As Maximilian was about to sign his abdication, the door of his study was unceremoniously flung open and the empress, flushed by excitement, rushed in upon him.

"You must not sign!" she cried. "What madness to throw away our empire and return to Europe humiliated and disgraced! We shall yet save the throne. Trust it to me. I, myself, will go to Europe. I will see Napoleon. I will remind him of his solemn promise to leave his troops for six years in Mexico, and insist on his keeping his word. I will go to all the courts of Europe. I will appeal to the Pope to help us."

Weakly her husband yielded. It was an obedience that cost him his life.

One day in the following month Carlotta arrived at the palace of St. Cloud, where Napoleon was staying with his court. There, in the emperor's private study, she explained the difficulties of her husband's position to Napoleon and demanded vehemently that he keep his promise to Maximilian.

In vain the French monarch argued. He must hold to his solemn promise, she insisted. Nothing else would satisfy her. And at last, when she realized that her pleadings were useless, she rose and, drawing proudly away from the emperor, cried in a voice that was almost a shriek:

"This is indeed my greatest humiliation, that I, granddaughter of Louis Philippe, have condescended to ask a favor of an adventurer!"

Then suddenly, abstractedly, clasping her head with both hands, she swayed and fainted in Napoleon's arms.

After that bitter disappointment the unhappy empress hurried in desperation to Rome to claim protection from the Pope. One morning the whole papal court was thrown into excitement when she appeared and insisted on taking her way to the apartments of his holiness.

Pius IX. was shocked by the empress's appearance, for a great change had suddenly taken place in her. Within only a few short weeks anxiety and disappointment had left heavy marks upon her face. Her beauty had faded, her face was lined and haggard, and in her dark eyes was a strange new light that aroused the Pope's fears as to her sanity.

His suspicions were only too well founded. The lovely Carlotta's mind had broken under the strain. It was a madwoman who faced the head of the Roman Church that day.

Patiently the Pope listened to her wandering statements, endeavoring to calm her, to make her realize that his lack of temporal power forbade him to interfere in the affairs of France. She grew more and more excited. A long day passed, evening came, and she absolutely refused to leave the Vatican. The papal court was alarmed at the prospect of one of her sex remaining within its walls all night, but there she remained the whole night long,

despite all pleadings, the only woman who ever did spend a night within the Vatican's walls.

Back to the fairy-land of Miramar came poor Carlotta a few days later, her mind wrecked beyond hope of recovery. On her way she passed through the Italian and Austrian towns that only the week before had turned out their crowds to cheer her, strew flowers in her path, and pray for her success as she journeyed on her journey to Rome.

Now the same crowds turned out sad and silent as the lovely, mad empress passed on toward the gleaming white castle by the sea, where she had lived as fortune's most favored daughter. And at last, when it was realized that her case was hopeless, she was taken to Laeken in Belgium. There today, forty-four years later, she still lives.

But instead of crushing Maximilian, the tragic tidings of the woman whom he loved seemed suddenly to give a strength to his character it had never had before. His first impulse was to give up everything and hasten to be with her in her misfortune.

Then came the thought of the promise he had given her to remain on the throne in spite of all difficulties. He remembered, too, the loyal Mexicans who had stood nobly by him. For them his abdication would mean ruin; he could not abandon them now. To remain meant for him almost certain death. But his honor was at stake; he would stay there with his friends and fall dying gloriously as a soldier, if fate willed that he should die.

Around his standard he gathered an army of eight thousand men. Soldiers came to his aid from the disbanded armies of the Civil War in the United States. Among his officers were half a dozen Confederate generals and his best friend, Prince Salm-Salm, soldier of fortune, who had commanded a brigade of men in the cause of the Union.

Down from the northern border came Juarez with forty thousand men behind him. Maximilian took command of his own troops in person and led them to the town of Queretaro. There the emperor found himself besieged, and for weeks there was not a day that did not see fierce fighting. Hundreds fell on both sides, and the imperial soldiers performed many heroic deeds, one of them being a brilliant charge into the enemy's ranks by Prince Salm-Salm with his regiment of cuirassiers.

In the thickest of the fighting was Maximilian himself. In the desperate chances he took he seemed to invite death. The scholar of Miramar, who had become an emperor on a perilous throne to gratify the ambition of the beautiful woman he loved, was proving himself the bravest of the brave.

One of his generals came to him protesting against his recklessness.

"Consider, senor," said he, "if you get killed we shall all fall to fighting to see who will be the next president."

At last one night a traitor withdrew the guards from the gates of the town, the enemy rushed in, and Queretaro fell. And so fell the empire.

At Laeken, in one of her fleeting moments of sanity, Carlotta was made to realize how her dream of glory had ended.

"Maximilian will be killed!" she exclaimed. "I know the Mexicans."

A few weeks later he was led out from his prison and shot, scarcely an hour after he had penned his loving farewell to the woman whose craving for pomp and power had wrought the ruin of them both.

But Carlotta is still waiting for her emperor to come to her. Sometimes she speaks of going to find him at Miramar. There is a tale among the peasants around that romantic spot that his ghost walks of nights within the walls of his old home, the gleaming white castle of which a poet has written:

O, the Adriatic's tone sinks to sad, regretful moan,
When Sirocco blows at even, when the nightingale doth call;
And the spirits of the deep seem with mourning chant to keep
Vigil 'round thy vine-enshrined memory-haunted palace-wall.
Miramar!

TRUNKS FOR YOUR AIRSHIP

The progress of aviation is certain to bring in the train of the airship various appurtenances and, as in the case of the automobile, there will grow up a big business in accessories. Almost the first in the field is the aeroplane-trunk.

This is already being manufactured at Newark, New Jersey, by an enterprising business man who believed he had a good idea and acted on the belief. A member of a firm of trunk manufacturers, he was down at the aviation field at Mineola, Long Island, when the inspiration came to him. In a conversation with Tod C. Schriever, he gathered that one of the heavy expenses of attending meets in different parts of the country was expressage on the machines.

Thereupon occurred the thought that if the aeroplane could be packed into a trunk, like other personal belongings, it could be checked as regular baggage, without extra charge. The outcome of this idea was the manufacture of two trunks for Schriever, the larger of which was thirteen feet by five feet three inches by two feet in size. This was for the planes. A smaller one was constructed to carry the rigging. The engine is to be shipped separately.

Mrs. Ostrich: Willie, run to the corner and get a large package of tacks; we haven't a bit of breakfast food in the house.