

tivities the Czarewitch said to his parents: "I am determined at last to receive an answer from her lips."

Princess Alix was won, but it is stated that earnest discussions took place between the lovers on the subject of conversion before the engagement was announced.

Even then religious scruples began to trouble her later, and it seemed almost doubtful if the marriage would really take place. But the Czarewitch was so earnest and persistent, and Princess Alix was so fond of him, that her hesitation was finally overcome. Then she devoted herself to a close study of the Russian language.

Shortly after this came disturbing rumours about the health of the Czar Alexander III, to be followed soon afterwards by Princess Alix's departure for Livadia, where she helped the sorrowful Empress to nurse the dying monarch, and, at his wish, consented that the betrothal ceremony should be carried out without delay.

On being received into the Greek Church, Princess Alix was given the title of Grand Duchess Alexandra Feodorovna. This was one of the most trying periods in the young girl's life, and she won the sympathy of everybody for the peculiarly sad circumstances in which she was placed. At a time that should be, under ordinary circumstances, one of exceptional happiness, the young Princess and her affianced husband were overshadowed by a great sorrow, which naturally robbed their wedding of much of its brilliance. Added to this was the ordeal that Princess Alix was compelled to undergo of her change of religion, to say nothing of her change of position, of parting with old friends, leaving her own country, and taking up life in a comparatively strange land, and among people of whose ways she had yet to learn. Much is expected of an Empress, and the young Princess's task was no light one.

The Emperor Alexander was dead, and the wedding of the new Emperor was, in consequence, celebrated very quietly. It took place in the Winter

Palace, St. Petersburg, on November 26th, 1894, not a month after the Czar Alexander's death. The Czarina was twenty-two, the Czar twenty-six, at the time of their marriage.

How wise was the Czar's choice of a Consort has been proved time after time since the wedding. The Czarina is a woman of cool judgment and great power in discerning character. She thinks before she acts, and her advice is always so good and so well-balanced that in her the Czar has found a true helpmate in every sense of the word. She takes life very seriously—as, indeed, who in her place would not?—but she is invariably cheerful and amiable, willing to listen to other people's troubles, and is of the most unselfish character. She is rather above than below medium height, has beautiful regular features, and shares with her sister, the Grand Duchess Serge, the reputation of being one of the loveliest of Queen Victoria's grandchildren. She appears to have completely outgrown her delicacy, and has also lost the slight, fragile appearance that distinguished her as a girl. Her expression is somewhat pensive but very sweet, and there is about her an air of quiet dignity that well becomes her position without in the least bordering on coldness. She has borne on her shoulders the weight of her position in a marvelously cool and confident manner, and it is not too much to say that many of the Czar's best-judged actions have originated from his beautiful Consort.

One of the Czarina's most earnest endeavours has been to ameliorate the lot of the poorer classes of women, and for this purpose she has made herself *au fait* with the Poor Laws of the country, and has been the means of doing much good.

Perhaps the happiest hours of the Empress's life are those spent in the nursery with her four sweet little daughters, the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Anastasia, and Marie. The nation has been disappointed that the Czar has no son, but the Emperor