

**THE PRIVATE DIARIES OF  
THE  
EMPRESS MARIE-LOUISE,  
WIFE OF NAPOLEON I**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649050079

The Private Diaries of the Empress Marie-Louise, Wife of Napoleon I by Frédéric Masson

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**FRÉDÉRIC MASSON**

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WITH INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY BY

FRÉDÉRIC MASSON

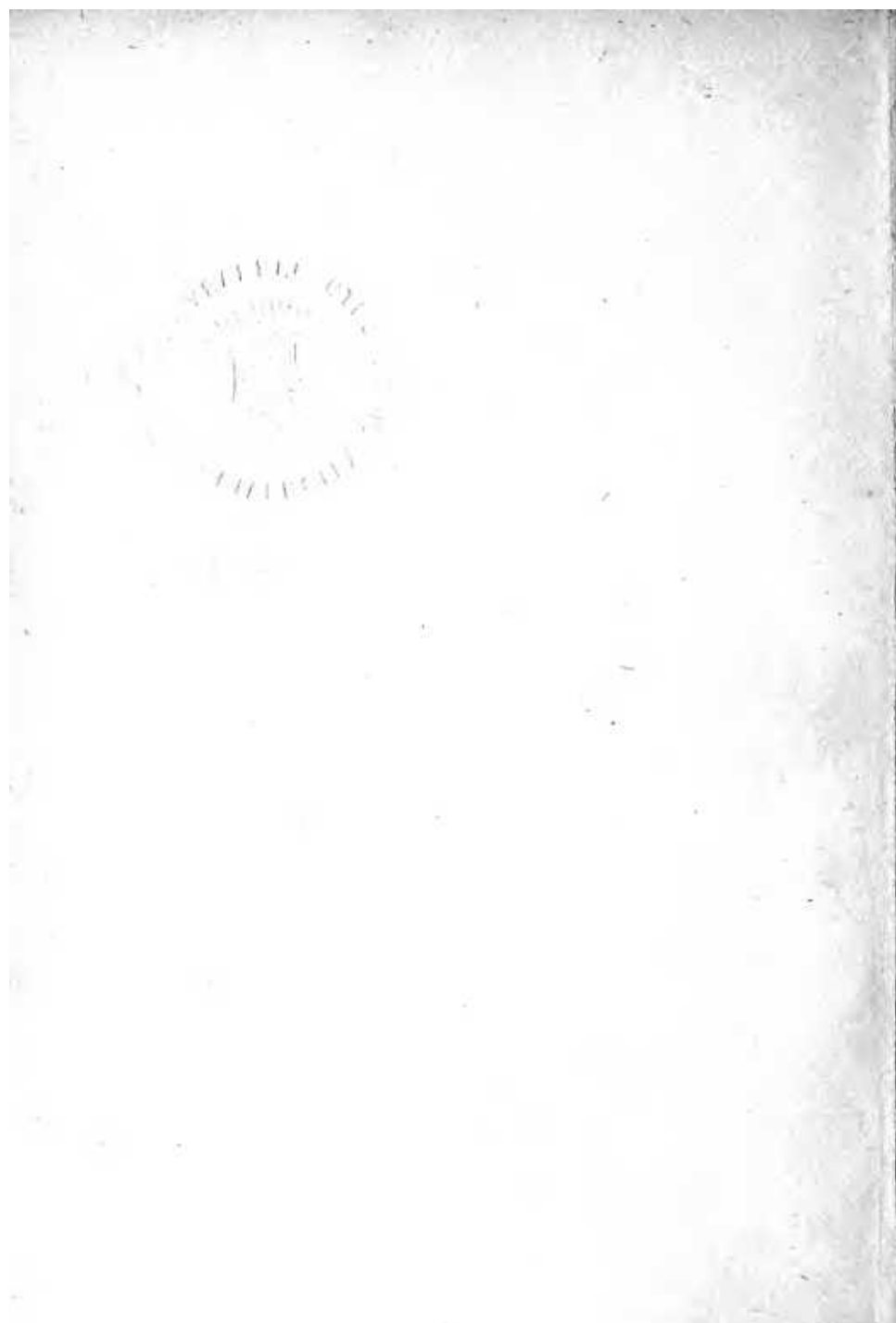
ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE

WITH PORTRAITS

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31.8.22.

NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1922



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THE EMPRESS MARIE-LOUISE . . . . . *Frontispiece*  
*From a print in the possession of Sir Morgan Crofton, Bart.*

THE EMPRESS MARIE-LOUISE . . . . . *Facing page 124*  
*From a miniature in the possession of Sir Morgan Crofton, Bart.*

[*Photos by permission of Paul Laib, West Brompton, S.W.*]



# THE PRIVATE DIARIES OF THE EMPRESS MARIE-LOUISE

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

IN 1918 I received a communication from London in which Lady Thompson invited me to consider a Diary of the Journeys of the Empress Marie-Louise, which had been bequeathed to her, with a view to its publication. I accepted this proposal with much pleasure, and shortly after received the manuscript, the contents of which convinced me of its authenticity.

This manuscript, the size of note-paper, is bound into a red morocco volume, the covers and fly-leaves being lined with green satin. The script is contemporaneous with the early years of last century, being regular and well-formed. At first it did not appear to me to be the handwriting of the Empress; the perusal of the text, however, removed all doubt as to its origin.

In answer to my inquiries as to how this manuscript had come into her possession, Lady Thompson forwarded me a letter from her grandmother, Mrs. Smijth Windham, which runs as follows:—

“ In the year 1836 I became acquainted with a Swiss governess, called Mdlle. Müller, who lived many years with Lady Jane Peel. She was very intimate with a governess I had for my children, and I came into the room one day as she was reading these Memoirs to her friend. I stopped to listen, and then borrowed the book, which amused us much.

“ Some months after this I proposed to her to let me purchase it, and after some hesitation she agreed.

“ All she knew of it was, her brother Monsieur Müller was tutor to one of Marie-Louise’s pages who was in waiting when she escaped from the Tuileries ; he picked it up from the floor and gave it to his tutor some time afterwards.

“ The page’s name is written in small characters on the first leaf of the book—Vicomte de \* . . .—I forget the name. This is all I know.

“ KATH. SMIJTH WINDHAM.”

Nevertheless, there are cogent proofs to demonstrate the authenticity of the manuscript. It is divided into three parts ; the first records the Imperial journey in the departments of Northern France and Belgium, between April 27 and May 13, 1810 ; the second comprises the journey of Marie-Louise to Mayence from July 23 to August 9, 1813 ; the third, her journey to Cherbourg from August 23 to September 5, 1813. These three journeys mark important epochs in the Emperor’s history ; the first was made in the full enjoyment and splendour of a destiny

\* The name of the page is pencilled so faintly that it is now illegible.  
—H. K. Thompson.

fulfilled; the second and the third were undertaken when sinister rumours were in the air, when treason was breeding, when the very basis of the system, the Austrian Alliance, had been destroyed.

It appeared to me indispensable to place these three episodes in a setting that would bring out their full value and significance. While it would be impossible to describe the other journeys made by Marie-Louise in detail, it seemed advisable not to ignore them altogether.

The first, which began at Braunau, March 16, 1810, and ended at Compiègne on the 27th, was followed by many others apart from what were termed the *petits voyages* or excursions, which involved a life of insufferable nomadism, devoid of any permanent centre.

The Diary commences on April 27, 1810, the journey during which Marie-Louise jotted down the first pages. This was followed by a period of delicate health and the birth of the King of Rome. From May 27 to June 4, 1811, she travelled in Normandy, and no diary of that journey has hitherto been discovered. Between September 19 and October 11, she made a journey to Belgium, Holland, and the Rhenish Provinces, where for several days her correspondence with the Emperor formed a diary. In 1812, Napoleon left Saint-Cloud on May 9 with Marie-Louise, from whom he parted at Dresden on the 29th. She went from there to Prague, where she remained until July 1, going thence on the 7th to Würzburg, where she stayed for a week. On the 18th she arrived