

**THE MARGRAVINE
OF BAIREUTH AND
VOLTAIRE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649145232

The Margravine of Baireuth and Voltaire by Georg Horn

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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GEORG HORN

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BY
DR. GEORGE HORN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS CHRISTIAN
OF SCHLESWIG HOLSTEIN
PRINCESS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

NEW YORK
SCRIBNER & WELFORD
1888

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY

TO
MY DEAR HUSBAND
THIS TRANSLATION
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

A FEW months ago Dr. George Horn of Berlin, sent me an interesting little volume, containing the correspondence (published for the first time) between the Margravine of Baireuth and the great French author Voltaire. The letters were interspersed with explanatory remarks and comments on them. It struck me that a translation of this volume would be a fitting sequel to that of the curious Memoirs of the Margravine, published lately by me. Having obtained the necessary permission, I now venture to make public my effort, trusting it may meet with as kind a reception as the previous one alluded to. I am quite aware that the volume is open to the criticism that it contains some repetition of matter to be found in the Memoirs, but it should be remembered that the repetition, if such has occurred, was necessary to explain certain subjects to which the letters refer. The correspondence besides, stretches over that period of the Margravine's life, of which she herself gives no account and gives us a fuller and more varied insight into her character.

In her Memoirs she often appears harsh and embittered, whilst her letters prove her to have been a large-hearted

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and generous-minded woman, who forgot her own misfortunes in her solicitude for others.

Voltaire's letters are both graceful and witty, and whilst showing his capacity for true devotion and friendship, he yet maintains throughout them that egotism and vanity which have always characterized him.

I have endeavoured to translate the letters as literally as possible, but as the book was written for Germany, I have been obliged to make the translation a free one, adhering however throughout, strictly to the sense. I have entirely omitted some passages as being of no interest to English readers.

CUMBERLAND LODGE,
May, 1888.

THE MARGRAVINE OF BAIREUTH AND VOLTAIRE.

I.

DURING the eighteenth century Germany, or rather the Holy Roman Empire, was broken up into many small principalities, numbering about three hundred. However great was the mischief wrought to the German people by the shattering of this great territory, so much the greater on the other hand was the benefit its intellectual development derived therefrom. The German nation had since the Thirty Years' War sunk into complete apathy as regarded higher and nobler interests, and it required some stimulus of an intellectual nature to rouse it. This was given by these tiny Courts. The principalities were small, there was little to do in them, and the leisure thus naturally resulting, in a great measure, was the cause of many of the German Courts of the eighteenth century, and especially the less important ones, becoming the seats of science and learning, and spreading their healthy influence over the nation. With many of these princes the cultivation of literature and art may in part have been in imitation of Louis XIV. Every one fancied himself imbued with some of his genius, and was anxious to walk in his footsteps in this direction, though unable to emulate his greatness and splendour.

Of those, however, possessed of capabilities of a higher order, it was the innate desire to extricate themselves from the national degradation to which Germany had sunk, and to take refuge in the vast sphere of intellectual culture. Germany had at that time no literature of its own of any importance, such as is now the case. French was spoken and written at all German Courts, to which the society of the scientific and learned was almost entirely confined. French literature reigned supreme. This could not be called national progress, but it laid the seeds for future intellectual development.

Next to Rheinsberg and later on Sans Souci, the Court of the Margrave Frederic of Brandenburg-Baireuth held a foremost place as regards science and learning, due almost entirely to the influence of his wife, Frederica Wilhelmine, Princess of Prussia. She was Frederic the Great's favourite sister, and she was a worthy object of so great a man's affection. For twenty-three years the Court of a country numbering only 200,000 inhabitants rivalled those of other great countries in intellectual importance and renown. The Margravine was the magnet which attracted all that was greatest and most celebrated, all that was most worthy of esteem and consideration. Much of the evidence of the Margravine's intercourse with her great contemporaries has been lost, but one of the most interesting pieces has yet been preserved to us, and we feel it a duty to make it public.

Among the papers of the family of F. von Miedel, in Baireuth, the author found an old manuscript, yellow with age, on the title-page of which stood written in large characters, "LETTERS FROM VOLTAIRE."

After comparing the handwriting of this title-page with that of the copy of the *Memoirs* kept in the Royal Library at Berlin, there was no doubt that it was that of the Margravine. This manuscript contained nothing less than twenty-five unpublished letters of the celebrated writer to