

**MARIE ANTOINETTE.
THE WOMAN
AND THE QUEEN**

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Marie Antoinette. The Woman and the Queen by Sarah Tytler

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SARAH TYTLER

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AND THE QUEEN**

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MARIE ANTOINETTE

BY

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CHAPTER I.

MARIA THERESA, THE KAISER, THE ARCHDUKES AND ARCHDUCHESSSES.

MARIA THERESA, daughter of the Emperor Charles VI., was born to be ruler of many kingdoms. Her early struggles were past. She had been brave and enduring enough in her young womanhood to defy the armies of the great Frederic, when he sought to wrest from her ancestral rights and rich provinces. She was true to the instincts of her own loyal, warm heart, and won a fervent response to her passionate, patriotic appeal as a beautiful, helpless princess, with her baby prince in her arms. She summoned Hungarian, Bohemian, Pandour, and Croat to rise and fight in the cause of her and her son, and of national independence against the Brandenburg usurper. The summons was obeyed, and the wars of the Succession and the Seven Years were well over, but the burden of the sway of a far-reaching sceptre weighed heavily on the woman's shoulders, which yet bore them so gallantly. We see

her busy every day with her ministers and ambassadors, working till six o'clock in the evening at an open window, even in winter; for her Kaiser did not love work, while his title of Emperor was but an empty sound. Though it had been otherwise—*die hohe frau war ganz selbständig*—Francis' broad common sense and forbearance did no more than sometimes soften her sternness; and her Prime Minister, Kaunitz, was only her excellent servant.

In the evening, the great Queen read or talked. Like her son Joseph, she was fond of intellectual conversation amongst her friends. But she by no means objected to the splendour of her rank, or to galas and festivities. The opera and the theatre were to her what they are to all true Germans. The whole family were musical, and the clear, sweet singing of many of the daughters was a gift derived from their mother. She enjoyed, so long as her Kaiser lived, the great masqued balls which were the most brilliant entertainments of the generation. She would appear in a robe of silver brocade, the bodice of blue silk sewn with diamonds, and with diamond stars in her powdered hair. She cared almost as much for pearls as her daughter Marie Antoinette cared for diamonds. No woman in Europe had such pearls as Maria Theresa possessed.

Maria Theresa was regular in all church services, fasting, and prayer. When her Kaiser was sick, she

waited on him day and night. During the illnesses and deaths of six of her children, she became their devoted nurse.

The Emperor was a great contrast to the Empress, while he was her first and only love. She was deeply attached to him, and would with difficulty, and only on hard compulsion, blame a life framed on no very high standard, pleasure-loving to excess, and tending to license. She made his name appear with hers in all her proclamations, and liked to have their pictures and statues on horseback placed together. To do Francis justice, he had won the love of Austria and Hungary no less than of Maria Theresa, for he had many manly and lovable qualities. He was brave, honest, kind. He had seen the world—had travelled in Germany, France, England, and Italy. For that matter, the Austrian Court had the advantage of being the least confined to one place of all its contemporaries. Maria Theresa's rule extended to many lands; and though she appointed governors-general, she did more than itinerate among a few castles round Vienna. She resided now in Vienna, now at Prague, now at Presburg, now at Pesth, now at Innsbrück. The Emperor and his son were both crowned at Frankfort. If Francis was no reader, he took an interest in natural science, mechanics, and manufactures, and did his best to promote them. He recognised and acknowledged the higher nature of his wife,

yielding to her. However negligent and unconstrained his own manners and habits, he too loved order and discipline in the great family of children to whom he was tenderly attached, acting to them almost like a *bürgerlicher Hausvater*. He hated nobody; his anger was easily quenched. As far as his hand could reach, he made everybody happy. He was a mighty hunter, tiring out all the young nobles, when the Court was at Laxenburg, by his hard riding in the chase. He was almost as mighty a feaster, delighting in crowded, boisterous evening meals, at which neither Maria Theresa nor her eldest son—who both ate little or nothing at supper—cared to appear. The Kaiser had a passion for the theatre, and was apt to indulge in high play, whether at faro or lansquenet. The Princess Auersberg, a great thrower of the dice, lost in two games at Court four thousand ducats; Khevenhüller, the chamberlain,¹ lost in two years ten thousand florins. In the early years of her reign, Maria Theresa played willingly, and with peculiarly happy fortune: once she won a string of pearls. Latterly regular play was given up at the Austrian Court. Joseph hated all kinds of games.

The Kaiser tramps across the stage, a stalwart, jovial figure, until we can hear the echo of his

¹ Writer of the diary—selections from which have been published by Adam Wolf.

resounding hunting-horn—of the bells of the sledge in which he led the great sledging matches (one of the favourite amusements of the Court)—of the jokes he loved to crack in the French tongue, which he spoke almost always—of his hearty laughter.

Of the ten children of the Emperor and Empress-Queen who grew up, the eldest son, Joseph, crowned first King of Rome and then Emperor on his father's death, was born in 1741, and was fourteen years Marie Antoinette's senior. The relations between Joseph and his mother, even in the youth of the prince, were those of two strong spirits that, in spite of their warm mutual affection, of which there could be no doubt, proved in some respects irreconcilable. The extent of their regard only rendered the lack of sympathy between them more trying, and the almost inevitable discord more grievous. She was of the old *régime*, feudal and patriarchal in her notions; he represented the young Austria of his day, full of the new ideas of independent progress which were permeating society.

Joseph was a tall, slight, handsome lad, fair-haired and blue-eyed, like the rest of the young troop. He had a high forehead, an aquiline nose, a bright keen glance. The old lords about the Court saw with regret that he was inclined to cast aside ancient customs. He despised state and show, hated heavy banquets, danced seldom, did not care to understand

cards, and only engaged in a game of piquet to please his mother. But he was the delight of the young Court when he appeared on horseback, as he gladly did, for he was the best and foremost rider in the *carrousel*, or species of tournament, held in the riding-school. His mother saw him with pride at the head of his regiment. Surely seldom was there a goodlier heir to a crown than the manly, grave young archduke, in his green coat faced with red, gold-laced vest, and yellow leather riding breeches, with his powdered hair thrown back and tied in a black silk bag, as he is to be seen in his picture at Laxenburg. Fortune seemed to shine on him. He was married in 1760, before he was twenty, to a very charming bride, Marie Isabelle, the Infanta of Parma. She was eighteen years of age, beautiful and *spirituelle*, with a dark complexion, and brown, sparkling eyes. Most people know the tender, pathetic story—how Joseph was devoted to her, until their world marvelled at the silent young archduke's passion for his wife; how, in spite of her goodness and the favour which she everywhere inspired, an inexpressible melancholy hung over her, from the foreboding of an early death; and how the foreboding was fulfilled when she died, after the birth of her second child, from small-pox, at the age of twenty-one. Joseph was inconsolable, and wore her portrait to the end of his life.

Joseph's second marriage, to Princess Josepha of