

HOW LEOPOLD LIVED AND DIED

Escapades of King Scandalized Belgium and Congo Brutalities Called for Intervention by Great Britain and United States—Paid Lobby Maintained in Washington.

The death of King Leopold II of Belgium marks the close of one of the most picturesque careers in the history of European royalty. In this eccentric monarch the cruel traits, the love of sensual pleasures, and insane extravagance of the rulers of ancient Rome were combined with the shrewd business tactics of the modern Renaissance.

For more than a score of years the world has stared at his amoral which have shocked the court circles of Europe and disgraced his family, while his barbarous and inhuman treatment of the natives of the Congo Free state, in order to satisfy his mad lust for gold, has proved a blot on civilization.

Leopold was the son of King Leopold I and Princess Louise, and grandson of Louis Philippe, citizen king of the French.

Cruel to Wife.

He was born in 1835, and at the age of 31 was created Duke of Brabant. In 1859, when he was but 23 years of age, he married Maria Henrietta of Austria, daughter of Emperor Joseph. But the match was an unhappy one. His wife was of a religious turn of mind, while the young prince was very fond of the pleasures of life. The indignities which he heaped upon this woman, following his accession to the throne, in 1865, broke her heart, and indirectly caused her death in September, 1862.

The royal couple had one son, Leopold, who died at the age of 18, and three daughters, Princess Stephanie, Princess Louise, and Princess Clementine.

The first two mentioned of the daughters inherited something of their father's nature, and their escapades have been matters of public knowledge for a decade.

Married Count Lonyay.

Princess Stephanie, who married Count Lonyay following the tragic death of her first husband, Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria, was discovered by her father and driven from the palace.

Louise, his second daughter, who had been shamefully treated by her husband, Prince Philip of Saxe-Coburg, ran away with a Hungarian officer, and was later incarcerated in a lunatic asylum. She is now eking out a miserable existence in Paris.

Princess Clementine, the youngest, was her father's favorite. She is an extremely pious girl and was her mother's constant companion. When Leopold, after Queen Maria's death, married the Baroness de Vanhagen, his morganatic wife, and established her in a magnificent residence opposite the royal palace, it proved too much for the princess. She left home and went to live with friends at Spa.

Leopold's earlier days, however, were comparatively tame, but his cold-blooded selfishness and neglect of his wife as disgraced his father, Leopold I, that on his death in 1865, he divided the greater part of his vast estate between his younger son Philip, Count of Flanders, and his daughter Charlotte, Empress of Mexico and wife of the ill-fated Maximilian.

The accession to the throne of Leopold II was the signal for the realization of his avaricious ambitions and sensual pleasures.

Merriest Monarch.

His political sagacity and recognized business ability soon placed Belgium far ahead of any other nation of its size, financially. But the question of state did not by any means monopolize his attention, and his frequent escapades in Paris and London soon won for him the title of Europe's merriest monarch. He was the acknowledged friend of blacklegs and gamblers, and his female companions, of whom there were many, were well known figures in the Parisian cafes. Several of them attained world-wide notoriety owing to their association with this pleasure-loving monarch, who lavished money upon them and covered them with expensive jewels.

One of the first of these was Clara Ward, then Princess Chimay, and an American girl. Leopold became smitten with her in Paris and invited her to his

palace. But Queen Maria was at that time vigorous enough to protest, and she drove the king's companion from the door.

But one of Leopold's favorite axioms was "variety is the spice of life," and he was soon madly in love with Cleo de Merode, a famous danseuse. He even went so far as to present her with a string of the queen's pearls, which caused her majesty to grieve so deeply that she attempted suicide. A servant, who chanced to enter the royal apartment at an unexpected moment, took the halter from the queen's hands and prevented her from hanging herself.

Queen's Heart Broken.

But after that episode, the queen was never herself. Her spirit was broken, and she became melancholy.

The king's prolonged pleasure trips were at times the cause of grave concern among the government officials. In one instance, when his majesty had been absent for some time, and the Brussels cabinet was beginning to despair of ever seeing him again, a dispatch appeared in a newspaper to the effect that "King Leopold and his three daughters" had arrived in a Mediterranean port aboard the royal yacht, where they were received by the authorities with all the honor due their rank.

The real daughters, however, happened to be at the Palace Laeken at the time, and they were forced to remain indoors until the return of their father. The women masquerading aboard the yacht as the king's daughters, were three Parisian ballet girls. These scandalous escapades were the cause of constant sorrow on the part of the pious queen, and resulted in numerous estrangements. She finally died on September 19, 1903, following an attack of syncope. At the time of her death King Leopold was in France, and had to be sent for.

Although getting on in years the monarch still retained his love for pleasure and this was no doubt due to his regular habits. He was very fond of outdoor exercise and drank very little.

Soon after his wife's death he became entangled in another love affair, which has been most severely criticized of his many amours.

Baroness Vanhagen.

The woman in the case was Caroline Lacroix, whose parents were janitors in Paris. She was known as the Baroness Vanhagen, and so infatuated did the king become with her that he established her in a beautiful home, called the Villa Flora, directly opposite his palace at Laeken and compelled the state to legalize their marriage. This woman exercised a greater control over the fickle king than any of her predecessors, and she was treated with far more consideration than any member of the royal family. She bore him two sons, and the question as to whether the oldest of these would be Leopold's successor instead of his nephew, count of Flanders, has been the cause for grave concern.

The priceless gifts, which Leopold showered on this woman, and the magnificence of her surroundings, have been severely criticized by the Belgian press, and it has been rumored many times that the king would be forced to abdicate, if he persisted in his mad infatuation. Protests from several of his ministers proved of no avail but only resulted in more extravagance. So great was the power of this woman that she had her brother created a baron by the king.

Limited Education.

She is now about 31 years old, plump but graceful, with a beautiful complexion and skin, and has quantities of chestnut hair. In character, it is said, she is haughty, sharp, irritable and fantastic. Her choice of words is small for she has had no education to speak of. She is exigent, however, about being treated with respect, and anyone in his majesty's entourage who failed in this, felt his displeasure.

But Leopold's escapades with the denizens of the Parisian cafes, and

the indignation which he heaped upon the several members of his family fell into insignificance when compared with the horrible atrocities committed at his instigation in the Congo Free State. The former revealed him as a sensuous, selfish person without an atom of self-respect or decency, but the latter stamped him as the most inhuman and barbarous ruler of modern times.

Left comparatively poor as a result of the results of his father, and realizing the limitations of a constitutional government, he conceived the idea of establishing an empire in central Africa, where his work would be law.

At the conference of the world's powers held in Berlin in 1884, the charter of the Congo Free State was issued and Leopold was made emperor with the understanding that he would abolish slavery and cannibalism, defend the rights and property of the natives and open the interior of central Africa to the commerce of the world.

Slave Traders Landed.

With his keen insight into commercial affairs he soon realized the enormous wealth that would result from the development of the rubber and ivory trade of his new domain. He immediately issued a proclamation, which took the land out of the hands of the natives and placed it in his own. In order to increase his revenues he then established the famous concessionaire system. This consisted of a number of companies all of which the king was interested in, being granted the sole right to "purchase" the rubber, ivory, and other products from the natives. This step, it is claimed, has been responsible for all the inhuman cruelties practiced in that section of the dark continent, and the idea was conceived by one of his fair Parisian companions, in order that her royal lover could supply her with more jewels. It won for her the appellation of the "Queen of Congo."

In order to obtain quicker results, Leopold called a conference in Brussels in 1889 and secured permission to raise an army of 18,000 under the pretext of putting down the Arab slave trade. The army was recruited from the most ferocious tribes of Africa, many of them being cannibals. The natives were then compelled to bring in a certain amount of rubber and ivory every day and when they failed, they were beaten and tortured and very often murdered. A favorite system of torture was the cutting off of the hands of boys and girls who failed to do the work prescribed.

Sensuous Squire.

In this way the revenues increased at an astonishing rate and were estimated as high as \$10,000,000 a year. But at what a horrible cost. The population was decreased from 25,000,000 to 15,000,000, the missing 10,000,000 having been burned or tortured to death or otherwise exterminated.

A well organized press bureau with headquarters in the principal cities of the world kept these facts a secret for many years, and the only inkling of the horrible crimes that were being perpetrated leaked out from time to time through some missionaries.

These tales read like the stories of Nero's persecution of the Christians and were almost too horrible to be credited.

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One told of the case of a young native girl, who was flung almost to death. The wails on her body were then smeared with honey and she was left to the mercy of the ants and other insects, which swarmed over her body, while the intense heat of the tropical sun added to her torture.

Another described the slaughter of the population of an entire village for failing to comply with the demands of the Belgian officials.

The men and women were slaughtered like sheep and the butchers feasted on the remains of their victims. These, to prove that he had accomplished his work the chief cut off the right hands of the victims and took them to headquarters.

These gruesome tales finally reached civilization and at the beginning of the present century a movement was started to bring this notorious monarch's reign to an end. Since then blood curdling tales of the horrible conditions in Congo have been written by travelers, journalists and missionaries and finally public opinion became so inflamed that a movement was made to appoint an international commission.

Appoints Own Commission.

The wily Leopold objected to this and appointed a commission to his own liking. The members of this body reached Congo in October, 1904, and made a five months' tour of the interior. Their re-

port, however, was not issued until a year later. As the facts were so obvious and were given such wide publicity, the commission was compelled, to a certain extent, to describe the existing conditions.

The civilized world was horrified at the bare facts and vigorous efforts were made to have resolutions passed by the congress of the United States and the English parliament, calling for a further inquiry.

This step revealed another scandal, for it developed that the crafty monarch had a well paid lobby in Washington who were doing their utmost to prevent congressional action. The representative of this lobby was recently a visitor in Portland.

It was also learned that Leopold had granted valuable concessions to a number of American capitalists in the rubber territory of the Congo.

Through the efforts of the Congo Reform association, however, Leopold's rule was finally brought to an end in August, 1908, and the Congo was annexed as a Belgian colony.

According to present reports the improvement under the new regime has not been as great as was expected, but it is vastly better than that of Leopold, who used it solely to obtain money at the cost of millions of human lives.

Leopold's rule of his own state, how-

ever, has been rather creditable, although this was no doubt due to the fact that Belgium is a constitutional monarchy. He has beautified the city of Brussels and made Belgium a financial power.

Beautiful Homes.

Possessing a highly artistic temperament, his residences at Laeken, Spa, Brussels and Villefranche are works of art. He spent 50,000,000 francs in rebuilding and embellishing his palace at Laeken, which was almost burned to the ground in 1890. This palace is the most luxurious royal residence on the continent and the plans of its present form were drawn up by the king himself.

One of his favorite hobbies was the collection of rare plants from all over the world, and the conservatories at Laeken are famous all over Europe. Another was the collection of Japanese pagodas. He gathered them of all shapes and sizes from the miniature creations of the beautiful Japanese art to the great structure which stands in the park at Laeken.

But while Leopold indulged in all sorts of wild extravagances to satisfy his own desires, he was extremely miserly in providing even the necessities of life for his family. The queen was compelled to live on a miserable pittance, her royal spouse having seized

her fortune when they were married. He took over the estates of his children on the death of the queen and they were compelled to resort to the courts to obtain even a part of their fortune.

But in his last days this despot reaped the harvest he had so willingly sown. Deserted by his family, he was left to his own sad and bitter reflections. He sold most of his magnificent estates and made many attempts to sell his palatial yacht. His high life made him a victim of gout and it has been reported that his eyesight was gradually failing. The scathing articles that have appeared in the American and English press as a result of the Congo investigation caused the few royal personages who used to tolerate him to shun his society altogether.

Thus perished Europe's "merriest monarch." And nothing remains to mark his reign except the ghastly monument of skeletons and maimed human beings in the Congo Free State.

Work Starts on Courthouse.

(Special Dispatch to the Journal.)

South Bend, Wash., Dec. 21.—The Northwest Bridge company of Portland this week commenced construction on a \$100,000 courthouse for Pacific county. The structure is to be completed by the first of October next.

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