



THE KING AND QUEEN ON HORSEBACK.

In her girlhood the Queen was a great huntress and one of the finest shots in Europe. She never shoots now, except at city pigeons, for she has an unconquerable aversion to killing anything. The King still shoots, but the diversion he likes most is collecting race colts.

The King and Queen of Italy.

By XAVIER PAOLI

I HAVE always harboured a vagrant spirit under my official frock-coat, and find my pleasure and rest in travelling. Therefore I took advantage of the few weeks' leave of absence allowed me, after the departure of the Russian sovereigns from France, to pay a visit to Italy.

A few days after my arrival at Milan, while strolling, one afternoon, on the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, that favourite Milanese and cosmopolitan resort, I passed a glove shop, and remembered that I had left my gloves in the railway carriage. I thought I might as well buy a new pair, and entered the shop.

A customer had gone in before me, a lady, young, tall, and slender, quietly but elegantly dressed in a plain dark travelling-frock. Through the long blue motor-veil that closely shrouded her face I could dimly see her large dark eyes and masses of black hair. The face appeared to be refined and pretty. She was leaning over the counter and trying on gloves which a young shop assistant handed to her.

"They are too large," she said shyly. "That is because the signora has so small a hand," replied the young assistant gallantly.

She smiled and did not answer. An elderly lady who was with her gave the youth an indignant and scandalised glance. After patiently allowing the measure to be taken of her hand, open and closed, it was indeed a very small one—she found two pairs of gloves that suited, paid for them, and turned to go.

Just then the owner of the shop returned. He looked at the lady, gave a bewildered start, bowed very low, and, as soon as she was gone, shouted to his assistant:

"Have you the least idea whom you have been serving?"

"A very pretty woman—I know that!"

"Idiot! It was the Queen!"

The Queen! It was my turn to feel bewildered. The Queen alone, unprotected, in that arcade full of people! I was on the point of following her, from professional habit, forgetting that I was not at Milan as an official, but as a private tourist. But it was too late; she had already disappeared in the crowd.

The next evening, I was dining at a friend's house, where the guests belonged, for the most part, to the official and political world. When I related my adventure and expressed my astonishment at having met the sovereign shop-

ping in town, accompanied only by a stern lady-in-waiting—

"Did that really surprise you?" I was asked. "It does not surprise us at all. One of our naughty princesses of the House of Savoy said sarcastically that we had gone back to the times when kings mated with shepherdesses. This was merely a disrespectful sally. The truth is that both our King and Queen have very simple tastes, and they like to live as ordinary people in so far as their obligations permit them. Let me give you an instance.

"Whenever they come to Milan—and they never stay for more than two or three days, they go to the royal palace; but, instead of living in the State apartments and bringing a large number of servants, they occupy only a few rooms, have their meals sent in from the Ristorante Cova, and order all the dishes brought up at the same time and placed on a sideboard. Then they dismiss the servants, shut the doors, and wait upon themselves."

The King's economy in his personal expenditure is notorious throughout the kingdom. The giving of alms is one pleasure in which he never stints himself, and it is actually a fact that he moderates his personal expenses in order to give largely to charities. Even his table is affected by his economics, and certain of the Italian noblemen do not scruple to say that they hold against Victor Emmanuel III. the poor quality of his wine cellar. He does not hesitate to serve the ordinary Italian vintages at his dinners, declaring that they are good enough for him and good enough for his guests. I am a Corsican, and we of the sunny countries love pomp and ceremony; therefore I understand the touch of bitterness and regret in the manner in which my friends spoke of their Sovereign's simple habits.

Remarks that came to my ears later led me to conclude that the aristocracy, if not the people, disapproved of these democratic tendencies, which were so in contrast with the ways of the old court, of which Queen Margherita had been the soul.

Queen Helena, on the other hand, is a simple woman, and comes of a simple people. She is a Montenegrin, and grew up in that rugged and austere country. The simplicity of the Montenegrins is proverbial, as well as their good looks (the Montenegrins are generally admitted to be the handsomest race of men in Europe). At the age of twelve the Princess Helena was sent by her

father, Prince Nicholas, to St. Petersburg to pursue her studies. There, in a convent for girls of gentle birth, she was instructed in the melancholy beauties of Slavic literature. When she returned to her own country the Princess Helena enjoyed the independent out-of-door life of Montenegrin women, wholly undisturbed by the demands of etiquette. She divided her time between water-colour drawing, in which she excelled, and hunting, in which she showed herself utterly fearless.

The Queen is one of the finest shots in Europe, not only in comparison with her own sex, but as against all comers. In her girlhood she was a great huntress, but she no longer hunts; she now has an unconquerable aversion to killing anything, and though she still shoots, it is only at clay pigeons or some such mark. It evidences the sympathetic breadth of her nature that this personal distaste for slaughter does not make her intolerant of other people's triumphant "bags." Hunting is one of the King's favourite diversions, and the Queen is proud of his successes.

The Queen saw Italy for the first time in 1855, when her father took her to Venice on the occasion of an exhibition, and it will readily be conceived that she was flurried and a little dazzled by the gaiety of the scene, and by the admiration and attention of the Prince of Naples, whom she met for the first time. When, in the following year, she bid farewell to the crazy mountains and to the proud highlanders, the companions of her childhood, and saw the gay and enthusiastic nation of Italy hastening to welcome her, the twenty-year-old bride, it will be understood that she at first experienced a sense of confusion and shyness.

The shyness, I am told, has never completely worn off. On the other hand, in the absence of more brilliant outward qualities, Queen Helena has displayed admirable domestic virtues; she has been a queen in all that the word implies, in her devotion and goodness to the poor and lowly; and, better than that, she has realised her engrossing duties as wife and mother in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired.

Were this not so, the King, who is quick to take offence, and who is even jealous in his fondness, would have suffered cruelly. A man of domestic habits, who has always avoided society, he wanted a home that in its inner sanctities was as little of a court as possible. He had been brought up in all the stately formalities of the House of Savoy, and it is said that he wearied of them.

When, for love, and against the obvious counsels of worldly wisdom, he insisted on marrying a Montenegrin princess, he made a queen of an essentially home-making woman who has nursed her own children, and who has been known to keep royal functions waiting because the baby must have her attention at the given moment.

The King possesses none of the physical qualities that attract the crowd. He is unimaginative, but remarkably well-informed, highly intelligent, and deeply interested in social problems and the

exact sciences, and none was readier than he to enjoy the charm of a peaceful home which he had not known during his youth. Touching though the attachment between Queen Margherita and her son was, they nevertheless remained separated by the differences in their character, temperament, and ideas. Whereas Queen Margherita kept all her enthusiasm for art and literature, the Prince of Naples displayed a complete indifference to such matters. When he was only ten years of age, he remarked to his piano teacher, Signora Corasoli, who vainly struggled to instil the first principles of music into his mind: "Don't you think that twenty trumpets are more effective than that piano of yours?"

From his earliest youth he showed a marked predilection for military science. He had the soul of a soldier, and submitted without a murmur to the strict discipline imposed upon him by his tutor, Colonel Osio. He is still fond of relating, as one of the pleasantest memories of his life, his impressions when King Humbert first intrusted to him the command of a company of foot, at the annual review of the Roman garrison.

"The excitement interfered so greatly with my power of sight," he says, "that the only people I recognised in the cheering crowd were my dentist and my professor of mathematics."

I have tried to give a picture of the two sovereigns, from the impressions that I picked up in the course of my trip to Italy. Their visit to Paris was destined to confirm its accuracy and to complete its details.

I little thought, on that afternoon when I caught a glimpse of Queen Helena in a Milan glove shop, that two years later, I should have the honour of attending both Her Majesty and the King during their journey to France. It was their first state visit to Paris, and our government attached considerable importance to this event, which accentuated the friendly relations between the two nations. Prince von Bulow, at that time Chancellor of the German Empire, spoke of the situation, none too good humouredly, as Italy's "little waltz" with France.

The letter of appointment, which I received in the beginning of October, 1903, directed me to go at once to await our guests at the Italian frontier and bring them safely to Paris. It was a cold, wet night when the royal train steamed out of the Mont-Cenis tunnel and pulled up at the platform of the frontier station of Modane, where I had been pacing up and down for over an hour. My curiosity was stimulated by the recollection of the episode in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele at Milan. Amused by the chance that was about to bring me face to face with "the lady of the gloves," I longed to know whether my first impressions were correct, and whether the features, which I had conjectured rather than perceived behind the blue veil, were really those of the Queen.

The blinds of the eight royal railway carriages were lowered; not a sign be-



PRINCESS YOLANDA.

The eldest child of the Royal Family, whose resemblance to the Queen is said to be remarkable. From a snapshot taken by her mother.