

Zeßner-Spitzenberg



Death of an *Emperor*



Nossa Senhora do Monte,
the church in which Emperor Karl is buried

Death of an Emperor

From the estate of University Professor
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Preface

Over 80 years ago the unexpected news came of the death of the last Emperor and King of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He had been forced to spend the last part of his earthly life in exile on the island of Madeira, far away from his homeland.

News of this event was met all around with a sense of profound shock.

Yet even in his beloved native country, only a tiny number of people were informed of the conditions and circumstances under which the light of this world was extinguished from the eyes of this truly great man and Austrian.

This article intends to inform everyone, particularly those peoples whom the dearly departed monarch once called "his peoples," of what really happened.

As a devout Catholic, Emperor Karl overcame the trials and tribulations of life with the greatest of joy and bitterest of sorrow. He was never greater, however, than when he died a Christian death in an exemplary way.

His was the death "of a just man, precious in the eyes of the Lord."

The beatification process is being organized by the Emperor Karl League of Prayers for Peace Among Nations.

Please address registrations with this community of prayer and any inquiries to the attention of the Executive-President of the Presidium of the League of Prayers:

Min.Rat Johannes Parsch
Diefenbachgasse 45-47/3/1/7, A-1150 Wien, Österreich/Austria

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Madeira

The little river-steamer drifted downstream towards the sea. The King and Queen were accommodated in the captain's tiny cabin. It was cold. It had been a monotonous journey, and the ship came to a stop at nightfall. There was a fairly long delay near Moldova, and as it turned out, the name-day gift for the captured monarch on this 4th of November lay in discovering the reason for the hold-up. The fact was that the *Croatian* pilots had refused to lead the royal couple into exile despite the high wages they had been offered, meaning a Serb had to be found.

The next day the passengers disembarked in Orsova, and the journey continued by car. Once again, both sides of the street were lined with the local population. "God bless you, Your Highnesses!" cried the farmers, and people fell to their knees at several points along the route. Many of them wept. These scenes accompanied the couple all along the ride, and as the Sovereign and his Consort got on the train they could not help but watch in horror as the people were driven back by rifle butts.

At the last station before Bucharest the Romanian Foreign Minister wanted to pay his respects but was refused permission by the British. A crowd of inquisitive bystanders had assembled in Galatz. Count and Countess Hunyadi, the only attendants permitted to accompany the royal couple, joined their Majesties there. In the meantime, Empress Zita had started to mend the few items of what had become quite tattered clothing. A small steamship was deployed from Galatz to Sulina, on which a former chef of the royal household served and prepared meals. His touching attempts to provide solace were sent up to the royal's cabin in the form of traditional Austro-Hungarian dishes.

Their Majesties repeatedly asked to be granted the opportunity to attend Holy Mass, but even in Galatz their entreaties were

to no avail, since they had been forbidden to enter a church. A Capuchin friar eventually appeared at 10 o'clock in the morning bearing the Most Blessed Sacrament and gave the royal couple his blessing. The exiles were deprived of Holy Mass until they arrived in Gibraltar.

The English cruiser *Cardiff* lay at anchor in Sulina and their Majesties were required to board the vessel immediately. They were assigned to the admiral's cabin. The captain, who was not to be found at first, had gone shooting woodcock but after his return to the ship proved to be an extremely considerate and chivalrous officer. Since he had no desire to be forced to keep the monarch confined as a prisoner, he requested a written declaration of honorable intent, which Emperor Karl was ready to issue on the spot. Even in his later years, the captain safekept this document as an esteemed heirloom. Throughout the voyage it was evident that the pitiful office of jailor he had been asked to exercise offended his sensibilities of being an honest sailor.

The *Cardiff* sailed into Constantinople at half past eight in the morning on the 8th of November. The Emperor and Empress were able to discern the place on the bank where they had drunk tea as guests of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. The ship came to a complete halt in front of the Hagia Sophia. Flocks of seabirds swooped through the skies. A rainbow shone over the beautiful, fairytale-like city.

Somewhat embarrassed, the captain brought up the story which had been spread by the Hungarian government, namely that the Emperor had broken his word by returning to his homeland. He seemed relieved to hear how the monarch was able to dispel the circulation of these rumors by relating the cold facts. He also confessed how he found this assignment a most onerous and despicable burden, explaining that he had just telegraphed London to inquire about the destination to which their Majesties were to be expedited. In the absence of any response, he had next tried to ascertain further details from the admiral, who, he said, appeared to be as uninformed as everyone else.

At 2 o'clock Count Hunyadi left the ship to buy a new suit of civilian clothes for the Emperor. Unfortunately, his choice of a

suit turned out to be too tight, but was still able to be exchanged just in time. The Empress asked permission to write a short open letter to her children, a request that was initially refused, but eventually the admiral came round and agreed to take personal charge of sending the letter. A telegram arrived in the evening from Admiral Strutt stating that the children were well, but further details of the fate of the little archdukes and archduchesses continued to remain obscure.

On the 9th of November the *Cardiff* received orders to sail to Gibraltar and the cruiser weighed anchor at half past twelve at night. It was a remarkable moonlit night with the stars casting a wonderfully splendid light across the sea. The Marmora Sea was as smooth as a mirror. Fog descended over the Dardanelles and everywhere the hazardous waters were filled with the wrecks of ships lost during the Great War. The captain had not been permitted to set anchor, and so the vessel proceeded full steam ahead through the rest of the minefields.

The storm which began to blow up around 2 o'clock in the morning on November 10th held throughout the whole of the 11th. In Malta the captain sent off a dispatch to find out the final destination of the journey. Probably Madeira, came the reply. "I hope so for your sakes," the captain added and confessed, with a degree of hesitation, there had been some talk of Ascension Island, the climate of which no European could be expected to withstand for long. The Empress turned her horrified eyes to the Emperor, who had turned pale with beads of sweat appearing on his forehead. "But that would mean we could never see the children again!" was the first comment he was able to utter. After a moment he wiped the perspiration from his face, smiled, and said in a changed voice: "How little faith I have. They can only send us to the place that God in his wisdom has preordained."

The weather improved on the 12th of February. Sicily was sighted at about 2 o'clock in the morning and the voyage continued, skirting the North African coast. Strutt had sent a further telegram to say the children were well. The captain organized a

bout of clay-pigeon shooting and for the first time in what seemed like an age the Emperor was presented with a shooting rifle.

The cruiser passed Algiers on the 14th of November. Again, the weather turned stormy during the night, but on the next day the southern coast of Spain came into view and the *Cardiff* finally docked in Gibraltar at 7 o'clock in the morning on the 16th of November. Even so, there was still no reliable news as to their Majesties final destination. In the evening orders came to set sail for Madeira, but the prevailing weather conditions were such that the Spanish warships, which had been ordered to set sail to Tangiers, stayed in port. The captain took responsibility for putting off the hour of departure until a later time and arranged for Holy Mass to be celebrated on deck the next day, during which the imperial couple were able to receive Holy Communion. "I know they are keen about it," he commented. Shortly afterwards the English ship set off for the Atlantic Ocean with her captives on board.

The island of banishment came into view on the 19th of November, the feast day of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. With bated breath the imperial couple watched the coast slip by in front of their eyes. The ship rounded a cape and then, against a background of undulating hills, the view of the town and port of Funchal opened up before them. The Emperor carefully took in the marvellous sight before pointing to a spot high up on the right where two truncated towers of a church on a hillside jutted out. "It reminds me very much of our churches back home. I'm certain it's a church of Our Lady. We'll go up there soon!" In fact it was Nossa Senhora do Monte, the church in which he would be buried just a few months later.

The 19th of November was a Saturday, one of the many fateful Saturdays in the life of the Emperor who had been confirmed and attained the age of majority on Saturdays, who had married on a Saturday and been crowned King on a Saturday. At the start of his first restoration attempt, it was a Saturday on which the King of Hungary had returned to his kingdom, and yet again a Saturday when he had taken the momentous decision not to abdicate after the failure of the second Hungarian cam-

paign. The move to the foggy surroundings of the Monte took place on a Saturday. And it was on the Saturday of April 1, 1922, that God called his servant home.

Upon landing at the quayside a locate prelate greeted the imperial couple with the German word "*Willkommen!*" A sympathetic crowd had gathered and called out friendly greetings. Their majesties drove by car to the Villa Victoria, which had been allocated to them. Everywhere they were met by a wave of respectful, silent sympathy. At the express wish of Pope Benedict XV, the bishop was particularly kind in attending to them and let the royal couple use the altar of his private chapel. Before very long they were also permitted to keep the Most Blessed Sacrament permanently under their own roof. After having been through a long period of deprivation, this was a particular source of comfort to the Emperor, who would often say during the day "I wish to go and see whether the eternal light is still burning." Then people knew that he would be gone for a long time and they left him alone in the chapel in front of the King of Kings.

The Emperor and Empress soon began to get to know the town and its surroundings. Count and Countess Hunyadi, who had accompanied them on their journey into exile, remained for a long time the only familiar reminders of home their Majesties had. But what had started out as a somewhat pitying sympathy of the population soon burst into rapturous enthusiasm. Yet again, as once in Switzerland, the Sovereign and his Consort completely won over the hearts of a foreign people. The Emperor smiled as he remarked: "I might just as well say 'my ever loyal town of Funchal.'"

The first weeks passed quietly. Only rarely, and then not without a startled shudder, did the Empress and their most intimate entourage begin to notice the inner heights which the Emperor's apparently unassuming personality had scaled, the mountains his soul had already climbed. As Empress Zita was later to recall: "It was impossible to follow his rapid ascent. He tended to be closed to the outside world, so one never knew which quiet progress of the soul was shrouded by his veil of silence."

At that time, rumors began spreading that Emperor Karl was gravely ill, though regrettably it was hard to escape the impression that the hope he would pass from the land of the living was the progenitor of all that loose talk. Empress Zita brought up the matter in the park of the Villa Victoria. To her astonishment the Emperor's face assumed an expression of anguish and he said: "It affects me deeply because it is so cruel." Then he raised his eyes, looked at the distant church of Nossa Senhora do Monte, and added emphatically: "I do not *wish* to die here!" Shortly afterwards he smiled again and corrected himself: "The good Lord will do as He wishes."

Throughout all these days the Emperor seemed to be engaged in an inner struggle for clarity regarding an important matter, and battled to arrive at a momentous decision. He said that for quite some time now he had been having the feeling that *God wanted him to sacrifice his life for the salvation of his peoples*. Completely taken aback, the Empress was unable to say a word in reply. The Emperor said nothing and seemed to be waiting. Then, as his eyes again looked at the Church of Our Lady on the mountain, he concluded with great resolution: "*And I shall do so!*"

Empress Zita silently begged that God might leave it at this thought, but from that day forth the Emperor began giving her advice about what she would have to do when he was no longer by her side, which might possibly be in the not too distant future.

Weeks went by, and there were more than enough daily cares and woes to deal with. First, there was the concern about the children and the Emperor's mother, then the fear about the fate of their loyal followers in Hungary as well as the fate of their loyal retinue who had been expelled from Switzerland, and then there was always consideration about the increasingly desperate financial situation facing Emperor Karl, who felt quite helpless in this plight. There was also the fact that they had been cut off from the rest of the world and the systematic refusal of the Emperor's requests to be assigned an adjutant from his former entourage. Count and Countess Hunyadi were only able to stay temporarily on Madeira, but before the Count left the island he



The coast of Madeira



Nossa Senhora do Monte



Empress Zita arrives in Funchal with her children. Emperor Karl, who had been waiting for his family, carries the little Archduke Rudolf in his arms as he proceeds down the gangway.

had provided his Monarch a generous loan. What he could not have known at the time was that Emperor Karl would never actually make use of this advance.

The servants, a female cook, a chambermaid and a manservant with his wife were only allowed to embark for Funchal around Christmastime. Count Revertera and Baron Hye tried hard to obtain a visa for Madeira, but to no avail. No one was there who could advise the inexperienced Sovereign in financial matters and the apparently intentional withholding of financial support became an indirect cause of the Emperor's tragic end.

The need to cut back on expenditures, without really knowing where best to begin, drove the Emperor out of the expensive Villa Victoria – an annex of Reid's Palace Hotel – and up into the febrile air of the Monte.

Suddenly, just as hopes were raised that the children might arrive soon, a disconcerting message saying that Archduke Robert would have to undergo an appendectomy arrived. The Empress immediately applied for a Swiss entry visa: after all, she was supposedly “free” and her decision to share the Emperor's exile was entirely “voluntary.” An excruciating game of first granting and then rescinding permits began. The Empress accepted the ridiculous conditions and imposed surveillance procedures and was finally able to set off on her journey in the beginning of January, without companions of any kind. Emperor Karl stayed on the island. Count Almeida, a Portuguese who had once served in the Austro-Hungarian army, was his only company in the ensuing weeks.

The mother was only allowed a few short, hectic hours to see her sick child. As soon as the operation was over, and although the little Archduke still lay in a fever, Empress Zita was forced to leave Switzerland again. On the 2nd of February she arrived back in Funchal with her children (with the exception of Archduke Robert) and was accompanied by Archduchess Maria Theresia. Emperor Karl was standing at the dock. The children's joy was indescribable as he went to greet them on board ship and enthusiastically hugged them all. Tears rolled down the Emperor's cheeks as he carried little Archduke Rudolf in his arms down the

gangway. The attendants who had arrived with the children were shocked to see how tired and grey their Sovereign had become. Yet they searched in vain to find a trace of bitterness on his face and listened in vain to hear him utter a harsh word.

During his time alone the Emperor had made the decision to accept the offer of a local landowner, and in view of his difficult financial situation immediately moved into the Quinta do Monte despite the well intentioned request to postpone the move until summer. But the move to a house, which was only designed and furnished for summer habitation, took place in the middle of February. Although it was surrounded by pretty woodland and held wonderful views of the port and the sea, the house was located at precisely the altitude where thick shrouds of damp fog hung low over the mountain during that time of year. Since for the most part there were no suitable heating facilities – the villa having been built with summer holidays in mind – the walls were covered with moisture. The rooms were very small. But given that his reserves of ready cash were dwindling each day, the Emperor stuck to his decision.

Part of the larger luggage had arrived along with the children, including articles that were needed in the household. These now had to be carried up the Monte and the Emperor helped with the necessary packing, loading and unloading of goods. During breaks he would repeatedly devote himself to his children and also took care of his youngest daughter, the little Archduchess Lotti, who still lay in her stroller. Despite the anguish he felt at the misery and distress of his peoples and despite his troubles and homesickness, Emperor Karl always remained cheerful and poised. “We are all doing undeservedly well,” he constantly insisted.

After the move had been completed the family assembled in the villa’s dining room to pray together for the first time. Then Father Zsambóki, a young priest who had arrived with the children and their tutors and served the family as chaplain, consecrated each room in the villa.

In the following days Emperor Karl frequently went on walks with his two oldest children, Crown Prince Otto and Archduch-

ess Adelheid. One day when they were out walking, they came across a funeral procession. Behind the coffin they could see a sobbing child holding the hand of his mother, who was veiled in black. Otto and Adelheid were shaken. "His father must have died, poor child!" – "Yes. Poor child!" echoed the Emperor as a shadow passed over his face.

On the 2nd of March Archduke Robert, who had now completely recovered from his operation, returned to the arms of his parents. He was accompanied by Countess Korff-Schmising-Kerssenbrock. Once again, for a very short time, the whole family was able to be reunited with their father – though their plight was best described in a letter of a chambermaid living with the family at the time. It is reproduced here, word for word, because of its acumen and unique perspective:

"We moved from Funchal to the mountain, but there was scarcely any furniture up here, so we were forced to borrow almost everything from Hotel Victoria. In addition, our delivery of linens, dishes and glassware had yet to arrive, so we had to borrow these, too, from the hotel. Over the coming days we are supposed to take most of the beds, cupboards, all of the linen, dishes, glassware, pots and kitchen utensils, the washstands and china back down to the hotel. So there's plenty to do, you see. It would be wonderful if we could live down there of course, but their poor Majesties have no money and were no longer able to afford the expensive hotel, so a banker, a part-owner of all the hotels on the island of Madeira, offered their Majesties a villa for free, which their Majesties gratefully accepted of course, given their financial plight. Now the weather here on the Monte only starts to turn pleasant around the months of May and June, while they have sun every day down below, and the rain there never lasts for long; up here we have had only really three nice days, the rest of the time is filled with constant rain, fog and humidity. Of course it's much warmer here than back home in the mountains. Up here we have no electric light, the only running water is on the first floor and downstairs in the kitchen. The villa would be very nice if it wasn't for the cramped space, even though only a skeleton staff is staying here. For heating we only have very green wood, which always gives off clouds of smoke. For washing we must make do with cold water and soap. Thank God we have our washing machine with us, which we have set up outdoors. People only wash in cold water here, the washing is not boiled clean like it normally is back

home, it is the sun has to bleach everything of course. It burns tropically, you see, providing it comes out, that is. Unfortunately we get very little sun here, we are all quite jealous when we look down on Funchal which has sun all the time. The house is so damp that it all smells of mildew, and you can see everyone's frosty breath. For our transportation we only have cars and oxen, neither of which we can pay for; otherwise there's also a funicular which comes up here, though not every day. Nor can you walk down to the bottom of the Monte, because it would almost take the whole day to get back. The poor Emperor, who only takes three small meals, must go without meat in the evenings and make do with vegetables and desserts instead, which we regret more than anything else. For us it doesn't really matter, I lack for nothing, but they don't even have enough to eat here. If we only knew someone with influence among the Entente who could intervene and help their Majesties to rent a decent villa. They should give their Majesties a sufficient allowance so that they could at least live decently, at least have the bare necessities; no matter where you turn, we seem to lack just about everything. The children's teacher, who is a doctor, is accommodated in a shamefully dilapidated garden shack with just one room that has been patched up somehow. The two houseservants and their wives, who work as maids in the house, are lodged in a second little hut which has also gone to ruin, consisting of just one room that has been partitioned with boarding. But worst of all, her Majesty is due to have her baby in May and there are no plans to have a midwife or a doctor to assist. We only have a children's nurse here, but she lacks the necessary experience. So in all likelihood not even a proper midwife will be coming. I am desperately concerned about the whole matter. Her Majesty does not know I am writing this, but I cannot simply stand back and watch how two innocent people have been stranded here in a completely unsuitable house for a lengthy period of time. Someone should protest! Their Majesties are not inclined to kick up a fuss, they would let themselves be locked up in a hovel with bread and water without complaining if it was demanded of them. The walls of our family chapel are covered in a thick layer of fungus and if it were not for the open fires burning constantly in each of the rooms, life here would be completely unbearable. Of course we all pitch in to find a way out of our misfortunes; sometimes we are almost on the point of giving up, but when we see with what patience their Majesties put up with everything, we return to our duties in good cheer. For weeks now his Majesty has had a bad chest cold accompanied by bouts of coughing. Arch-

duke Karl Ludwig is also in bed with a cold. Although there are many cows here, they are all infected with tuberculosis, so the milk must be boiled well. . . ”

During these days, the irregular postal service made it all but impossible to receive and send correspondence back home. The Emperor felt that he had been abandoned and forgotten by everyone.

But the hours of loneliness were not able to exhaust his reserves of fortitude: “I am grateful to the good Lord for everything He sends me.”

Consummation

On the 9th of March Emperor Karl went on a walk with the Crown Prince and Archduchess Adelheid to buy wicker toys for Archduke Karl Ludwig, whose birthday was approaching. Although he had already left the house, Countess Mensdorff managed to catch up with him. She had taken along a coat for the Emperor, but he declined the offer. It was very hot down below in the town, and the Emperor must have caught a cold on his way back home through the fog-bound countryside.

The birthday of Archduke Karl Ludwig was celebrated the following day. It was to be the last family occasion that the Emperor would attend. On the 14th of March he went out for the last time, in order to do some shopping. But immediately upon his return he was overcome with a fit of shivers accompanied by painful coughing and extreme difficulties in breathing. He was forced to go to bed. On St. Joseph’s Day he had the joy of having a home altar erected in his room, which was followed by the celebration of Holy Mass. His state of health deteriorated.

At first, the Emperor was unwilling to call in a doctor, which would have eaten into his meagre financial reserves, and a whole week passed before he finally agreed to summon Dr. Monteiro. It was the 21st of March. Dr. Monteiro discerned the situation to be extremely serious. He found that one lung was infected and, wishing a second opinion, recommended calling in a second

doctor, whom the Emperor disliked. In fact it took a considerable amount of effort and great powers of persuasion to get the Emperor to abandon his resistance to Dr. Porto. The latter then appeared on the following day and confirmed that the right lung was infected.

In the meantime Count Josef Károly, the brother of the unfortunate revolutionary, had arrived in Funchal with news from home. He was received immediately. It was to be the last visit the Emperor would receive.

On the 23rd of March it was decided to move the patient from the confines of his small, narrow room on the first floor to a large room facing the sunny side of the villa where Archduchess Maria Theresia had been staying. At first Emperor Karl refused to entertain this proposal, saying he would "not chase Grandmama from her room." After he had been finally convinced of the move, he got on and off the stretcher unaided. While he was being carried downstairs he spotted Count Károly and sat up to greet his guest.

As soon as he had been moved into his new sickroom, the children poked their heads around the door and called "Good morning!" but the Emperor, fearing an infection, sent them away. It was also on this day that the doctors first considered administering turpentine injections to limit the spread of the infection.

On the 25th of March the Emperor's fever rose to 104° F. Throughout the entire night the patient was seized with bouts of coughing every three to five minutes, but nothing was able to shake the patience and natural courtesy of the Emperor. In the beginning, the Empress decided to look after the patient and spend the nightly vigils by herself. It was only much later that she permitted Countess Mensdorff, a trained nurse, to assist her in this arduous duty.

On Sunday, the 26th of March, a mass was held in the salon next to the sickroom; the door was half-opened between the two rooms. He was pleased to learn from Father Zsambóki that since he was ill he was permitted to take communion, even though he was taking fluids during the night. But since he had eaten a biscuit at 2 o'clock in the morning, he refrained from requesting

Holy Communion, despite the fact that he had gone without the Holy Sacrament in the previous few days. This was because he was primarily concerned he might commit a profane act because of his incessant cough. The Empress communicated this on behalf of the Emperor to the priest before the start of mass. Remarkably, however, the Emperor's cough completely ceased during the Holy Sacrifice. Initially, Emperor Karl had arranged for the doors to the adjoining room only to be left ajar so he would not be seen, but could still listen to the mass. Later he allowed the door to be left open wide, saying: "I so much wish to see the altar!"

After the priest had taken communion, the ill patient turned to the Empress during the *Confiteor*, asking "Who will receive communion?" – "Countess Mensdorff." – "I should also like to receive communion." – "But that's impossible, there is only one host." – "Please hurry and say I *must* receive communion!" The Empress got up, and as she went to the door she saw the priest take out a second host from the ciborium after giving communion to Countess Mensdorff and look over to her, questioningly. The Empress nodded her agreement, and the Emperor received the Body of Christ. After mass, the Emperor expressed the wish for the gospel of the "Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes" to be read to him again.

Empress Zita thought that the Emperor had completely forgotten the biscuit he had consumed during the night, but the Emperor brought up the matter in the afternoon, saying: "There was something quite odd about receiving Holy Communion today. As I listened to the *Confiteor*, it was as if our Savior was standing next to me saying: 'You *must* receive Holy Communion.' And although I did not immediately understand what was meant and had my reservations, it was as if He repeated himself: 'Hurry, you must receive communion this very moment!' or 'I want you to have communion now. There is no longer anything to hinder you!' At that moment I could think of nothing else, not even of my having eaten something during the night. That is why I asked you to hurry."

It was also on this Sunday – the 4th Sunday of Lent – that the inhabitants of Funchal would go up the Monte on their traditional annual procession after mass to honor the memory of our Savior on the Cross. This year their participation in the long walk was dedicated to the “recovery of good King Karl.” After the procession was over, a sizeable number of people assembled in front of the villa to inquire about the health of the patient.

Throughout the day the Emperor’s fever remained at a constant 104° F. It was because of this that the doctors decided to proceed with the very painful turpentine injection they had been considering on the Emperor’s right leg, with the intention of creating a swelling to draw down the infection from the lung. Initially this appeared to produce the desired effect with the patient appearing comfortable and tranquil. But shortly afterwards, his whole leg became swollen and extremely sensitive. Since no real improvement in the Emperor’s health could be clearly discerned, another injection was administered the following day with the same result. The severity of the pain the Emperor suffered could only be noticed after he had drifted to sleep, when he recoiled in agony at the slightest touch and subconsciously tried to keep the blanket away from the point of inflammation.

Nonetheless, the Emperor was overjoyed to hear the voices of his children at play outside his window and their calls to him. He was able to discern the voice of the Crown Prince, who would speak Hungarian on his walks with Count Károly. The Archdukes Felix and Karl Ludwig were also confined to bed with influenza. At times they were very ill, and the Emperor was not remiss in asking about them on repeated occasions. Countess Kerssenbrock was required to report every detail to him.

The 27th of March brought a further worsening of the Emperor’s state of health. During the night he had initially refused the offer of a little aspic that had been made for him – “because I would then not be able to take Holy Communion.” – “Look,” said the Empress: “while *you are not obliged* to take Holy Communion, *you have a duty* to fortify yourself. God would not wish it any other way.” Upon which, the Emperor partook of the aspic, though not without uttering sadly afterwards: “Of course I know

I am not under any obligation to take Holy Communion, but I very much desire to do so." The Empress then decided to confer with Father Zsambóki, who agreed that Holy Communion should be arranged for the following day. From this day forth, the Emperor again received Holy Communion every day, and the Most Blessed Sacrament was placed in his room on several occasions for hours at a time.

Although his painful cough seemed to have disappeared during much of the day, it returned with a vengeance at nightfall. The Emperor dreamed his mother had arrived and started to become delirious. His temperature had risen to 105° F, and his breathlessness had become so labored that it was decided he had to be administered oxygen. Once the Emperor saw the flasks, he asked "Am I already in such a bad way that I have to take oxygen?" In the afternoon the doctors diagnosed an infectious inflammation *on both* lungs, and began to administer injections of camphor and caffeine. As the condition of the patient continued to deteriorate once more towards evening, Father Zsambóki advised that the Emperor should receive the sacrament of Extreme Unction. Emperor Karl immediately gave his consent to this advice, after being told by the Empress, and requested that the sacrament be administered that very evening. Before this took place, the Empress had to read aloud to him the entire ritual of the last rites so that he would later be able to follow the entire rite to the letter. He then asked to make his confession. Since the last time he had made his confession was just eight days previously, the Empress tried to talk him out of this undertaking but the Emperor remained quite adamant: "I wish to make my confession before receiving a new sacrament." Afterwards he said with a smile: "I have made a life-time confession." Then the Emperor summoned the young family priest to his side and said in a loud and solemn voice: "I forgive all of my enemies, all who have offended me and all who are working against me." And he ordered: "Have Otto come here."

It was 10 o'clock at night. The Crown Prince had already been awakened from his sleep, but there was some bewilderment at the Emperor's request, as until now he had not permit-

ted the children to enter his room for fear of infecting them. As Otto came into his room, he beckoned him closer to his bedside, saying: "He should see everything just as it is."

Upon being dismissed, Otto kissed his father's hand while the Empress smiled on. After he had left the room, the Crown Prince broke down in tears "because Papa looked so absolutely dreadful, with a crucifix in his hand, as if he were to die at any moment." Later on, he added: "Now I understand why the Mother of God was so unhappy beneath the Cross."

The first time the last anointing was mentioned, Emperor Karl said kindly, quietly and without complaint: "I thank the dear Lord that this day is drawing to an end. I never knew that such days could be quite so fatiguing." Despite her keen attention, it had even escaped the Empress that he had suffered so much on this very day, since the inexhaustible patience and undemanding nature of the Emperor had been able to disguise and make light of the torment he was going through. After the last anointing, which took place at 11 o'clock, he appeared to improve and the night passed without incident. For the first time, the Empress allowed Countess Mensdorff to assist her during her nocturnal vigils, enabling her to take a little rest for the first time in two weeks. However she did not undress. At 7 o'clock she arose again to be at the bedside of the Emperor. When Countess Mensdorff declined the suggestion to take some rest, the Empress had to specifically order her to go to bed, saying: "If you do not go to bed on the spot, I shall forbid you to help me any further, and I will not ask you to watch over the Emperor tonight."

The night vigils were a purgatory in themselves. Although the patient expressed as few wishes as possible so as not to tire out his caregivers, they of course were also equally unselfish in their efforts to relieve his difficulties in breathing by turning him over to a new position whenever necessary. Since he constantly insisted that his wife should get some sleep, the Empress Zita frequently pretended to do so while observing him under half-closed eyelids.

The improvement in the Emperor's health was not to last. On the morning of the 28th of March the Emperor expressed

the desire that Primate Czernoch and Cardinal Piffl be telegraphed about his condition. Originally, it was thought best to have the Emperor believe he was merely suffering from a severe case of bronchitis, but the Monarch was not deceived and spoke with a smile about his “so-called” bronchitis. In the evening it was diagnosed that the inflammation in his lungs had spread. His temperature continued to remain above 104° F. After the doctors left, the Emperor asked: “What did they say?” – “They are satisfied as the matter stands.” – But the Emperor shook his head with a smile and said: “My Portuguese is good enough to understand what they were saying.”

During the day, Emperor Karl inquired after the health of the Crown Prince. He was truthfully told that with God’s grace, Otto was doing very well. In response the Emperor said: “The poor boy. I should have spared him that episode yesterday. But it was necessary to summon him to set an example. He should know how one ought to behave in such situations – as a Catholic and as an Emperor!”

While he dozed off for a little while the Empress started to read one of the newspapers from Vienna. The Emperor opened his eyes and asked her to read it aloud to him. But since he was always worn out after every conversation, she said to him: “Ah! But it contains nothing of interest!” Yet he insisted on her reading to him the most recent telegrams about the Geneva Conference, and when the Empress objected that this would most decidedly tire him, he remonstrated with urgency: “It is all quite immaterial, you know. It is my *duty*, not my *pleasure*, to be informed of the latest news. Please read!”

In the afternoon he again relapsed into a delirium. Yet such brief impairments to his consciousness constantly revealed his most intimate and hidden thoughts. They centered on his children, his homeland, the army, and his responsibilities as a sovereign. His thoughts soon turned to the children of Vienna, for whom he wished to arrange supplies of milk, then to a Czech soldier languishing in a field hospital. Again and again he was tortured by the failed evacuation of Transylvania in the face of

the Rumanian invasion, about which he had many fierce arguments with Tisza.

From this day onwards the Emperor asked incessantly about the end of the week. "Is it Friday today?" he began to inquire, even though it was only Tuesday. "Will it soon be Friday? What day of the week is it anyway?" It was as if he could not wait until the end of the week.

Wednesday, the 29th of March. The night had passed untroubled until 2 o'clock in the morning. At 4 o'clock the Emperor suffered his first heart attack. According to the doctors his condition was critical, and they prescribed compresses of linseed with mustard to be applied every hour. The Emperor was horrified at this suggestion, saying: "Now they are going to soil my perfectly clean bed." At first he was extremely embarrassed to have Countess Mensdorff administer the compresses and was grateful to hear the Countess say that he only needed to take out his right arm from his nightshirt. He dozed a while and became delirious several times. Before long, however, the constrictions and difficulties in breathing had returned again. In his more lucid moments, the Emperor always asked about the health of the children, and how high the fever in the sick ones was. Archdukes Karl Ludwig and Felix both were in bed with pneumonia, and Archduke Robert had contracted a gastric illness, and one by one, all of the staff had come down with the flu. Moreover, the Emperor summoned Count Károly to find out whether good news had arrived from home. Despite his feverish temperature, the grievously sick patient was able to switch from one language to another without difficulty. He greeted the doctors in French and spoke Czech to Countess Mensdorff right up to the final hours before his death.

The Empress held the patient's hand, which seemed to soothe his feelings of fear during his painful attacks of asphyxiation. Whenever she had to rest a little from her exhausted state, she asked Countess Mensdorff to hold the Emperor's hand. Emperor Karl apologized each time he squeezed the hand of the Countess in his distress, and would say, struggling for breath: "Excuse me, I'm so very sorry that things have come to this

circumstance. Though I can do nothing about it, I still feel comforted.” His hands had begun to tremble and moved from here to there above the blanket as if they were in search of something. He repeatedly looked at his fingertips, which had begun to turn blue on the previous Monday, and the pains he felt in his leg seemed unbearable. It was already the third day he had undergone this torture and he was still unable to turn over on his right side. “*La jambe vous fait mal?*” (Does your leg hurt you?) asked the doctor. “*Pas du tout.*” (Certainly not.) – But the doctor was not to be put off: “*Elle doit même vous faire très mal.*” (It must hurt you very much.) Emperor Karl did not even confide in his wife how much he was suffering. “I have promised the good Lord,” he said during the night to the Empress: “to leave myself completely to the mercy of medical care for the duration of my illness, and not do anything that might be unreasonable, but to follow all instructions for His sake.” And so he lay quietly without expressing any desires, sometimes even lying too far down in his bed despite not being able to breathe normally because he did not wish to disturb anyone, and because he appeared to lie there so normally no one wanted to disturb him. Thus he suffered in silence, without uttering any complaints at all. At one point, a hot water bottle slipped out of its cover and touched the spot where his injection had been given. He first bit his lip in excruciating pain and then said gently: “Something appears to be on my foot. Please take it away, it is dreadfully hot.” Empress Zita approached the bed from the wrong side and thus lost quite some time before she discovered to her horror that the hot water bottle was positioned on the swelling, and yet the patient had not uttered a single word of impatient distress. Once again, both his feverish and more lucid talk were all about the children: “I long to see the children so much. But please do not let them in, it would be far too careless.”

At midday, the Empress absented herself from the sickroom for a very brief time. She had washed her hands, visited the children, and eaten lunch in just eight minutes. The Emperor was pleased to see her return and said: “What, just eight minutes? I thought the time much longer.” She now remained with him

until the end without interruption. Only when he dozed a little in the early morning hours would she make her way to the chapel and ask the priest to give her Holy Communion.

Thursday, the 30th of March. The Emperor had spent a terrible night. Time after time, he was heard to mutter in his sleep “I am tired, so very tired...” Then, after he awoke, he said to Archduchess Maria Theresa: “Please Grandmother, see to it that I no longer have to sweat so much.” – “The doctors say it’s good for you.” – “But I fear I will not be able to stand it for much longer.” The Archduchess pointed her finger to the crucifix and said “He who has sweated his blood for us.” Emperor Karl followed her finger and took a long look at the image of our crucified Lord. Then he began to nod his head over and over as a sign of understanding. From that moment on he no longer mentioned the distress he felt at his profuse bouts of perspiration, which continued until his last hour on earth.

“How thin I have become,” he once said looking at his emaciated arm.

In the evening there were signs of a slight improvement. The doctors prescribed a third turpentine injection, this time in the left leg. Although Emperor Karl knew precisely the pain he would now have to undergo, and that he would no longer be able to support himself on his left or right leg, he immediately showed himself to be willing and prepared to meet the challenges ahead. The doctors identified two new large areas of infection in the lungs during the night and placed six cupping glasses on his back. The patient felt some relief despite the new pain induced by this procedure, which was to be repeated five times gradually turning the Emperor’s back into one large open wound and making it almost impossible for him to lie in any position without being in the most excruciating pain. Yet not a sigh or word of complaint was heard. The doctors began to consider a blood transfusion, and the first to volunteer was the Empress. But this idea was soon discarded.

In the afternoon the Emperor suffered from extreme delusions. He thought that an Austrian delegation had arrived, begging for an audience. “But I can’t, I can’t, I’m far too weak, you

see." The Empress tried to calm him down, saying "Since you're so ill, I shall go and receive the guests." but the Emperor persisted in his febrile delirium: "No, I cannot dismiss them if they have come so far, let them enter, I will at least acknowledge them." He made a great effort to greet the imaginary visitors and added "But all this makes me feel so tired, so tired." Then he dreamed he was giving a talk to a group of Austrian students on affairs of state concerning the rule of the Habsburgs, but interrupted himself and said, wide awake: "Isn't this awkward? There is nothing more to be done, yet I am plagued by the very thought and feeling that there is still something that needs to be done and at the same time it tires me so much." In fact the Emperor was always aware that he sometimes became delusional. Once, feeling quite tender and sad, he whispered to the Empress: "Poor little Elisabeth! To think of all the hardships she will have to go through." *

During the night he awoke with a start several times: "Where are we? Are we all safe and sound on the Monte? And all the children, too? Are they all together here, has nothing happened to them?" – "No, your Majesty," replied Countess Mensdorff: "Korffi is with them." And he calmed down again. When Countess Mensdorff turned him on his side in the morning, she heard the patient say: "*But it is good that there is trust in the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Otherwise all this would be impossible to bear.*"

Friday, the 31st of March. The night was comparatively quiet and the Emperor's temperature went down temporarily to 103° F. His breathing was 50 to 55 breaths a minute. During the night he called out "Mother!" and "Max, is that you?" Despite his difficulty in breathing his voice was strong. Six cupping glasses were placed twice on his back. Anna Hubalde came in carrying a covered hot water bottle in her arm. He asked: "Is it the little one? Give her here!" His arms had become inflamed from the fre-

* Archduchess Elisabeth was born in El Prado near Madrid on the 31st of May after the death of the Emperor. In the event his future child would be a girl, he had chosen the name Elisabeth as a remembrance of the family's first day of arrival on the island of banishment [two days after the feast day of St. Elizabeth of Hungary].

quent injections and his back, which was already burned and blistering in four places after being cupped, was further burned by the mustard plasters. A backrest was brought to his bed, but the patient was not able to sit up properly. His head had to be propped up since the Emperor was no longer able to hold it upright by himself. He wanted to expectorate, but first asked for permission, just in case there was a danger of infection: "...the children here?" – "No," the Empress said setting his mind at ease: "the children are not here." – "I thought I heard something behind the screen." – "No, our children are not here." – "Ours aren't. But I should not wish to inflict this pain on any child."

Throughout his fatal illness the Emperor's self-control, inner tenacity and apparently inexhaustible spiritual reserves were clearer than ever before. The doctors said they had never come across a patient with such willpower. They were almost at a complete loss to explain how the patient was able to control his mental faculties despite his high temperatures, pain, discomfort, and unspeakable physical weakness. He only made a mistake on one single occasion when he greeted the doctors in German, but he immediately corrected himself by switching to French. Each day he inquired after the health of the gardener and the caretaker, both of whom had fallen ill. Not once did he ask for any relief.

On the afternoon of this day the patient was particularly tired and miserable since his continuous bouts of coughing had prevented him from sleeping properly for a long time. Empress Zita took out the picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that he always kept under his pillow and held it up to the Emperor's eyes. She said it was absolutely vital that he tried to get some sleep, and that he should ask Our Savior for this favor. Emperor Karl gazed at the picture and said earnestly and confidently: "Dear Savior, please let me sleep." Then he immediately closed his eyes and slept for three hours. A foreboding idea so terrifying and shocking that it eluded all attempts to put into words now took shape in the Empress's thoughts: suppose the Emperor only needed to *really* desire to get well, and only had to take back with all his heart that which he had previously offered?



Emperor Karl and Empress Zita leaving Funchal cathedral



The house in which the Emperor lived and died on the Monte



In deep sorrow



The Emperor's last journey

The only means of relieving the patient's breathing difficulties was with oxygen. It had to be brought up from Funchal in flasks, but there were only a few of these and each one only lasted for seven minutes. Since the Emperor gasped so desperately for breath, the Empress thought she should give him a word of encouragement. She said how difficult it was to always remain patient and never complain. He looked at her with surprise and said: "Complain? Grumble? If one knows the Will of God, all is well." And then, after a while: "I want to be quite clear in telling you how I feel: *All of my efforts are always aimed at recognizing and following the Will of God in all things as clearly as possible, and as perfectly as possible.*" After a fairly long time he repeated his words: "There must be no grumbling."

The evening had come. The Empress had undertaken to say all of the Emperor's prayers on his behalf so as not to tire him out. Nonetheless, she noticed how the patient's lips were still moving, so she urged him to try and get a little sleep. She said that she had really prayed for everything on his behalf. Emperor Karl declared: "I am really only praying for the schism in Bohemia to be resolved." – "That, too, I have already prayed for you." – "But probably only once. I pray so often during the day about this matter. I cannot return to it often enough. Nor all of my other intentions." – "I have also prayed for those." – The Emperor smiled as he looked at her: "You have no idea everything I pray for." – "Those, too, have been taken care of," she replied. "I have prayed for all the intentions you are in the habit of praying for. The good Lord knows exactly what it is for even if *I* do not." At this point he nodded.

Yet the Emperor was still unable to fall asleep and remained very restless. The Empress sat by his bed and held his hand. Finally she asked what was worrying him and he said: "Nothing. Thank you, everything is all right. It's just that I cannot sleep." After being asked further questions he eventually admitted: "I should like a little water – but only if you don't have to get up and tire yourself out on my account." The Empress immediately got up and brought the water. She was pleased, she said, to be able to give him something, which was the whole point of why

she was sitting at his bedside. “Ah,” the Emperor exclaimed: “I am still wavering between my boundless love for you, my infinite love for the children and my own selfishness.”

A glass of water: that was what he called his selfishness.

Very late in the evening, as the shadows of the night had already enveloped everything, he sighed in the middle of his fever: “*Oh why – why won't they let us go home? I should like to go home with you!*”

He finally dozed off a little. During the night the Empress permitted herself to rest a little once more and left Countess Mensdorff to look after the patient. It was the night of Friday, the 31st of March to Saturday, the 1st of April.

After a short time, the Emperor awoke, turned his eyes to the crucifix, and started to pray. He was so weak that Countess Mensdorff had to help him fold his hands. After a while he said: “I can't go on anymore. I am so tired.” The Countess replied: “Your Majesty should try to sleep,” but he exclaimed: “*I still have so much to pray for!*”

Towards 5 o'clock in the morning his heart began to weaken, and his temperature went down to just below 100° F before rising immediately to 100.6° F and then to 101° F.

Up until this stage the patient had always taken care to make himself understood to everyone around him, but now he only gave a friendly nod, smiled and no longer made any further attempts to communicate. In the meantime the Empress had returned to the sick patient's bedside. She had taken communion during the night before getting a little rest. Father Zsambóki came in and bestowed the blessing of the sick on the Emperor and conveyed the blessing of the pope, which had just arrived.

At a quarter past seven the Emperor was lifted over onto the other bed in order that his own bed could be freshly made. At this moment his joints went completely stiff and for some minutes he was unable to move his arms. Terrible constrictions made the patient struggle for breath and the window had to be flung open. The Emperor held the Empress's hand in an iron grip. Archduchess Maria Theresia shielded the eyes of the patient against the dazzling foggy night by holding up a cushion. The

words "Please, Grandmother, do not tire yourself out," escaped from his lips which had now turned blue. The hands and arms of the Emperor had turned cold. The doctors then administered saline injections. Their opinion was that the patient had just two more hours to live.

The two doctors wept like children and Dr. Porto wrung his hands, saying: "Only a miracle can save us all now!"

The patient was racked with thirst and his temperature rose to 102.4° F. His pulse beat ever more quickly. As one of the doctors was preparing the injections behind a screen, the Emperor asked in his fever: "My dear Dr. Delug, what are you doing?" But then immediately recalling that Dr. Delug had to be in Vienna, shook his head, and apologized, saying "Ah, no." Afterwards he asked about his mother and brother.

Empress Zita was now finishing making up the bed and asked Countess Mensdorff to hold the Emperor's hand in the meantime. Emperor Karl turned his head towards his wife and smiled with gratitude. In doing so the light caught his face. Despite all her attempts to maintain her self-control, the Empress was visibly shocked at the sight of his features, which were now marked by death. With some difficulty she managed to ask him how he felt and he replied: "Well."

Soon afterwards he was overcome with a bout of shivering. The Emperor shook his head in disapproval and said: "I can do nothing about it." The Empress left the room to call the doctors, but after only a short time the patient started calling after her: "Come back soon! Why is it taking you so long out there?" Then he turned to Archduchess Maria Theresia, who once more was holding a cushion against the light. "Grandmother, don't tire yourself out." – "But you know I'm happy to do so" – "Yes, it certainly is pleasant," he conceded. When Countess Mensdorff straightened his pillow, he said: "Thank you very much, Countess, thank you for everything." He went on repeating to himself: "I must say thank you. I haven't said thank you enough."

As he now lay back peacefully on his pillow he felt a little better. Suddenly he became fully conscious and began to say, solemnly and emphatically: "*I again declare that the November mani-*

festo is null and void, because it was forced on me. And no man can take from me the fact that I am the crowned King of Hungary."

Around 9 o'clock the Emperor asked what day of the week it was. "The Mother of God's Day," the Empress replied. – "Saturday, then" the Emperor confirmed with satisfaction.

When his condition began to visibly deteriorate after 9 o'clock, Archduchess Maria Theresia went to Father Zsambóki with the request that he might give Holy Communion to His Majesty. As soon as the Emperor learned that the Most Blessed Sacrament was present, he immediately longed to take it and received the sacrament with great joy.

A ray of sunlight broke through the fog as his death throes began. While the Empress was again straightening the cushions, he said "I want to take a rest with you, come and sit down next to me. Hold me and support me. I've prayed enough now, I can't go on, *I want to go home, I want to go home with you.* Please see if they will let me sleep..."

The Empress moved to the top of the bed on the right. She sat halfway on the bed and halfway on a chair that had been piled high with cushions. The Emperor leaned his head against her left shoulder and his forehead touched her cheek. Her arm was wrapped around his shoulders and her right hand held his, or else wiped away the beads of perspiration that collected on his brow. Archduchess Maria Theresia was kneeling next to her. Facing them on the left, at the top of the bed, knelt Father Zsambóki. He was holding the Most Blessed Sacrament with which he blessed the dying man at regular intervals. The Empress thought she noticed that the Emperor wanted something, and asked him what it was. But he only shook his head. She asked again and received no answer. But the Empress felt that something had to be preying on his mind and urged him for the love of God to tell her what it was he wanted. "How many people are here?" he then asked. – "Grandmother," she replied: "Father Zsambóki, Countess Mensdorff." – "Then ask the last two, not her – to help me sit up a little."

As soon as this had been done his lips again began to move, and he said: "*Let's go home, let's go home together – we're so close after all. Why won't they let us go home?*"

His temperature had gone up once again to 103.5° F. The dying man seemed to feel how heavily his head weighed on the shoulder of the Empress and he asked: "Should I move away?" – "No." – Then after a brief pause once more: "Are you tired? You should go for a walk: when are you going?" – "As soon as you're well again." He nodded and smiled.

After a while the Empress tried to carefully change her position. The Emperor said: "Yes." Now she knelt down by his bed, but just a few minutes later his wistful question could be heard: "Are you no longer tired?" – "No. I wasn't tired at all." – "Then come back again, please. Yes, that's good."

Once again the fever clouded his mind and he asked: "When is mother coming?" Shortly afterwards he turned to the Empress: "Now mind you don't forget: the King of Spain will help you. He promised me he would." As he spoke he stretched his hand out as if to show they had shaken hands on this. The Empress thought he had become delirious and agreed with him. But he opened his eyes, looked at her clearly in the face, and repeated his words. Don't forget. Accept his offer. After all, you know him. King Alfonso is chivalrous, but he's also so-so... "He made movements from left to right with his hand as if to indicate indecision. "But," he continued: "he gave me his solemn word." In fact the last time the Emperor had seen King Alfonso was many years ago. *

It was now 10 o'clock. Suddenly the Emperor spoke up – again quite clearly and very deliberately –: "I have to suffer so much for my peoples to come together again." – The Empress whispered to him "Try to beseech our dear Lord to make you

* When the Empress and her children arrived some time later in Spain, King Alfonso told her how he had been overcome during the night before the Emperor's death with the feeling that if the Emperor were to die and if he, the King, did not attend to the widow and children, his own wife and children would at some stage meet a similar fate. He said that he was only able to find rest after firmly resolving to grant asylum in Spain to the bereaved family after the expected death of Emperor Karl. King Alfonso was as shaken as Empress Zita when she then told him what Emperor Karl had said shortly before his death.

well again.” The Emperor folded his hands and said “Please, dear Lord, *if Thy will be done*, make me well again.” Immediately afterwards the Empress felt him, as it were, shudder inwardly. Frightened, she looked into his face. But he lay so peacefully with his eyes closed that the Empress thought she had been mistaken. Once again he was seized by the same strange shudder. Immediately afterwards the Emperor raised his folded hands from under the blanket to the Most Blessed Sacrament and whispered: “Dear Lord – please.” Then, as if he had received an answer, he began to make an act of perfect contrition. “Oh, my God, I repent with all my heart of these and all my sins and imperfections because through them I have caused Thee offense and displeased Thee!” He did not add a resolution. Archduchess Maria Theresia, who had briefly gone out of the room, came back at this moment. She was startled at the expression on the faces of the imperial couple. What had taken place here? What realization, which could not be expressed in words, had overpowered the two of them?

Immediately afterwards she heard the voice of the Emperor: “Dear Lord, protect our children, Otto, Mädi, Robert, Felix, Karl Ludwig... how does it go on?” The Empress helped him: “Rudolf,” and he continued: “Rudolf, Lotti and the tiny little one. Protect them body and soul; *let them die rather than commit a mortal sin. Amen! Thy will be done. Amen!*” He spoke the last words in a loud voice with particular seriousness and emphasis, and bowing his head with every word. Then he sank back on his bed with his eyes closed. Some time later he was heard to say “*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, come!*” The time was between 11 and 11.30 in the morning.

The Empress said aloud to him quick and fervent prayers, which referred to death. Heroically, as so often in her life, she did not bid him an explicit farewell. She did not want to have his soul, which already seemed so far away, to return to a world of worry, hardship and pain. The last thing that Emperor Karl whispered to her on this earth was: “*I love you endlessly!*”

Again he was given oxygen to relieve his labored breathing. When the oxygen was gone he prayed in a loud voice: “Jesus, I

live for you, Jesus, I die for you, dear Jesus, come!" Then he sighed: "I want to rest now, I am so tired."

About half an hour before the end he opened his eyes, looked first at the Most Blessed Sacrament, then at Father Zsambóki, and begged to receive Holy Communion. The Empress asked him whether he really wanted to receive Holy Communion. He nodded and said: "Yes!" She thought she had not understood him correctly and asked a second time: "Do you really wish to receive Holy Communion again?" The Emperor turned to her and said with the greatest of longing: "Oh, I do, I long for it so terribly!" Who could resist such a request? Father Zsambóki decided to give the Emperor the Body of Christ once more as sustenance for his journey. The face of the dying man, which just a few moments previously had been serious and tired, became radiant with joy when he received the sacrament. This radiance was to remain with him up to the moment of his death.

The Emperor rested a while, then called in a loud and clear voice: "Otto!" Did he want to see the Crown Prince once more, or was the future head of the House of Austria supposed to learn how a Habsburg and Catholic knew how to die? The Empress nodded in agreement and Countess Mensdorff hurried away to go for the Crown Prince.

Meanwhile the Emperor was making a great effort to begin reciting "*Ave Maria, gratia plena...*" But the Empress begged him: "Please don't pray. Our Lord is here and holding you in his arms. Abandon yourself to Him completely." – "Yes," he whispered: "in the arms of our Lord. And I with you. You and I and the dear children." She prayed quietly to him: "Jesus, I live for you..." And he moved his lips along with her words.

At this moment a horrible thing happened; the oxygen ran out just as the Crown Prince entered the room. The Emperor was still sitting almost upright, but without any assistance breathing he soon sank back onto the shoulder of the Empress. Father Zsambóki held the Most Blessed Sacrament before the eyes of the dying man, and said: "Look, here is the Lord." Emperor Karl opened his eyes and looked up to heaven. Again and again the Empress prayed aloud for him, and since he was no longer

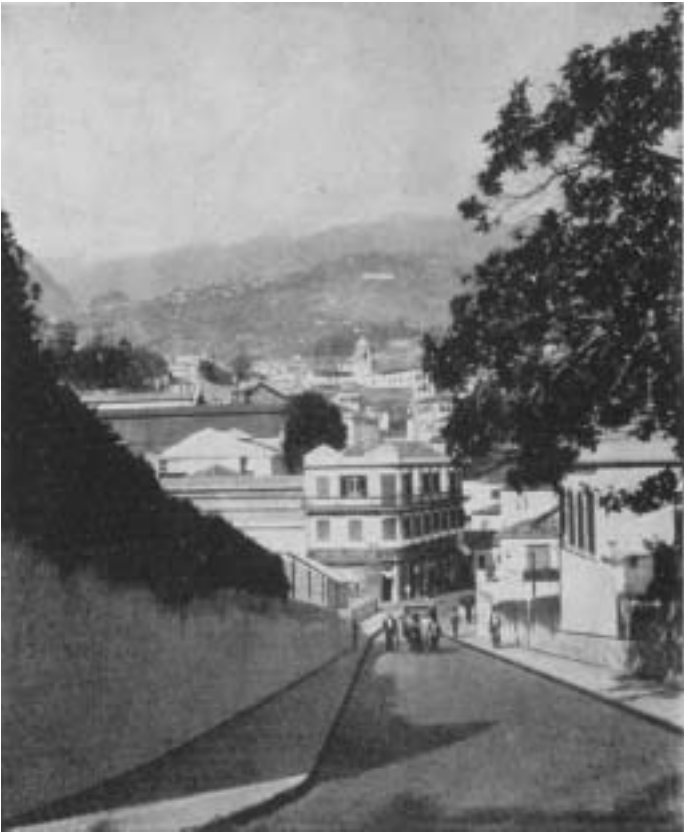
able to repeat the words, he gasped quietly: “Yes – yes!” Tears streamed down Otto’s cheeks as he knelt next to his father’s bed. At first there was some hesitancy whether the Emperor should be made aware that the child was present. Finally, Father Zsambóki said in a loud voice: “Otto is here!” In her heart the Empress begged all the saints and angels that the Emperor might not hear, so that he might not be called back from his state of peace into the cares and worries of this world. She tried to console the Crown Prince as best she could as he sobbed loudly. And it was true – the Emperor no longer heard earthly things. He tried again to pray. Beads of perspiration, of death, rolled down his forehead on which he received the final anointing many times during his hour of death. Father Zsambóki said the prayers for the dying in his ear, but the voice of the Emperor could scarcely be heard anymore. His heart began beating ever more quickly, his face grew ever paler, and his breathing became ever slower and wheezier. The Empress gave him the Cross of the Dying to kiss but he no longer had the energy to do so and only pronounced the name “Jesus.”

About ten minutes before his death he leaned his head back in exhaustion, saying: “I can’t go on any more.” – “Our dear Lord is coming to fetch you,” the Empress consoled him. He gasped back: “*Jesus, come!*” and with a transfigured face he repeated: “*Thy will be done, Jesus, Jesus, come! Yes – yes! My Jesus, as Thou willst. Jesus.*” It sounded like a dialogue. Then his breathing became irregular. With his final, somewhat louder breath he gasped the name: “*Jesus!*”

It was 12:23 in the afternoon.

The heart of the Emperor stood still.

(With regard to the beatification process which was initiated in 1949, and in order to fulfil the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we hereby declare that we submit the facts as described here, to which we attach purely human value, to the judgement of the Church.)



Street leading to the town

**He searched for peace
and found it in GOD**