

Chapter 28 : Prince August of Sweden-Norway (1831-1873).

Prince (Nicolaus) August, Duke of Dalarna, was born on August 24, 1831, and died on March 4, 1873.

There are 15 short biographies (Carlén 1873; NFB 1876; Almén 1893: ss. 277-281; NFB 1904; SBHL 1906a; Bergstrand 1920; Knagg 1932: ss. 121-143; Elgklou 1978: ss. 86-87; Ohlmarks 1980: ss. 118-119; Vogel-Rödin 1991; Elgklou 1995; Skott 1996: ss. 202-209; Sundberg 2004: s. 219; Opsahl 2009; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 46-47; Norlin 2015: ss. 114-115) and he is a secondary character in memorials (Hellberg 1870; Edholm 1906; Lindbæk 1910; Dardel 1911; Edholm 1919; Lewenhaupt 1937; Lewenhaupt red.. 1939; Edholm 1944) & biographies (Müller 1873; Bååth-Holmberg 1891; Hasselgren 1908; Hagen 1929; Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944; Horn 1946; Braun 1950; Eriksson 1954; Riiber 1959; Ulvros 2007).

The depiction of August's life is here divided into before/after his 1864 marriage. Part of August's biography is found in the portrayal of his wife (in the next chapter).

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August was, if not mentally disturbed, then at least late developed & odd. The family's Norwegian tutor described him in the summer of 1835 as “Prince August, 3 ¾ years, is a nice little boy, round-cheeked & brown as a vagrant, no beauty thus, but good-natured and with an ingratiating smile.”¹ His letters, handwriting & way of expressing himself belong to a younger person.² August was raised 1838-1850 by the court preacher Johan Gustaf Lundberg (1800-1880) & then by his mother. On some occasions he participated in the brothers' education. Few details are known but in the spring of 1847 he received confirmation instruction from Bishop Butsch, on November 6, 1847, he was confirmed by the archbishop & on November 1, 1849, he passed an oral baccalaureate. The subjects were Swedish & General History, Swedish Geography & Statistics, Algebra & Geometry. 1849-1853 he attended courses at Uppsala University, unclear which. His brother Gustaf taught him constitutional law, he listened to lectures at the Agricultural University and attended meetings at the Academy of Sciences where he was an honorary member. Like the brothers, he spent time with his teacher's families, but there are no details. In 1856/57 he was in Switzerland to improve his French, in 1860/61 in Greece & Egypt to widen his views, in 1863/64 he went courting in Germany, in 1864 he married.

There is a narrative from the last few weeks in Egypt.³ The Khedive's farewell was incredibly impressive, and August also received a gift of five thoroughbreds, who he brought home by boat in the autumn. August remembered the journey with pleasure and if he started on it, he was difficult to stop.

In 1845, Augustus received an aid for his military training, Baron Lieutenant Carl Gustaf Posse af Säby (1812-1878), who also became his assistant teacher. The same year he was enrolled as a volunteer at the Royal Guards, at the regiment of Dalarna & at the Norwegian horse rangers where he 1845-1859 advanced to major general. In 1866, he was appointed to succeed his brother Oscar as a drill inspector for the archipelago artillery. During the reign of

¹ Lindbæk 1910: s. 76.

² Ulvros 2007: s. 180.

³ Göteborgs Aftonblad 1861-04-02, s. 2-3.

Charles XV 1857-1872 August is claimed to have been Charles orderly or chief adjutant, but also had his own court. There is a (probably apocryphal) story from a visit to Denmark in the summer of 1863:

At one point, the Prince visited the Danish king Frederik den Syvende (Frederick VII). It was a particularly wet event and Prince August let his host understand that if Sweden received the Danish islands, the defence against the Germans would be easier to manage. The otherwise so jovial and meek kong Frederik took umbrage, and when he met King Charles, he told him what Prince August had said. King Charles looked wide eyed at his Danish colleague and replied: "If you fill August once more, he will also take Jutland and Schleswig!"⁴

As a young man, August had a speech impediment, which caused him to reverse the word order; according to other sources he stuttered. af Edholm reports some mishaps, which he blames on the alcohol.⁵ As an adult August did not make a bad impression: "Prince August, who was incidentally in the area, delivered the actual speech, which was both well prepared and well presented. He had a strong, deep and melodious voice, cut an impressive figure and did not lack the ability to, for a while at least, act with princely dignity."⁶ He was a good dancer. He wrote poems and composed. The poems are forgotten but a mazurka for piano & a march was published, with which merit he 1857 became an honorary member of the Academy of Music. In the military he participated in the regimental music corps where he played bass drum. To make the portrait complete August liked punch & cigars, got excited over nothing & took all criticism to heart. von Dardel describes him in the summer of 1856:

Prince August is now 25 years old but unusually immature. In the best of worlds he would spend the remainder of his life as a private citizen, far removed from the the court. He has a combustible heart, and carries a torch for one woman after the other. At the moment he is enamoured of a m:lle Helene de Pury in Neuchâtel, whose acquaintance he made with my brother in S:t Blaise, when he was there on a longer visit under the name of Baron Dalsköld [autumn 1855 in Switzerland]. He lived in my brother's house under the most severe incognito, undertook small errands on behalf of the family and, in bad weather, carried my small nieces to school. By his natural goodness and high spirits he gained the affection of his entire environment. It was the happiest time of his life!⁷

August was embarrassingly aware of his limitations and spent much time alone in his billiard room at the castle; occupied himself with woodwork, hunting & fishing; visited beach resorts; and accompanied father & siblings on their official trips where he kept a low profile. He and his brother Gustaf were close. When Gustaf died in 1852, he transferred his affection to sister Eugénie. He inherited Gustaf's summer castle Stjersund at the north end of Vättern, but the location was inconvenient. In 1861 he bought the summer castle Kristineberg closer to Stockholm, but sold it after his marriage when he received Haga Castle as summer residence. In 1865 he considered buying the estate Sperlingsholm in Halland, but it never came to pass.

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⁴ Knagg 1932: ss. 131-132; Elgklou 1978: s. 86; Odelberg 1991: s. 99; Elgklou 1995: s. 98.

⁵ Edholm 1944: del 1, s. 200; Elgklou 1978: s. 86; Skott 1996: s. 206.

⁶ Lewenhaupt 1937: s. 141.

⁷ Dardel 1911b: del 1, s. 154-155.

The next nine years August seems to have settled down. Eugénie and his wife supported him and his confidence grew albeit from a low level. He kept away from politics & state affairs - did not even visit his home county, but had an extensive private charity. During the winter he and his wife lived at Stockholm Castle, during the summer at Haga or Tullgarn. He began to behave like a housefather, for example, held a morning prayer & worried about his employees problems instead of his own. There are many stories of his "simple and unpretentious being". Most are about having a drink with the surroundings. In 1869, he attended the inauguration of the Suez Canal. August accompanied his brother Oscar on the yacht Vanadis, but got off at Malta and returned home via Brindisi. No explanation for the defection ever came. At family dinners he behaved like the military man he was, ate too much, drank too much and swore inordinately.⁸ From 1872/73 there are several positive depictions, though:

- If I remember correctly, last year there was a fierce fight here one evening between some artillery men and some skippers. One of the former - a boy with a heart in the right place - took the blame, in order for the companions to get away as lightly as possible, and he was indeed, sentenced to a few months' imprisonment on Långholmen. When released he met Prince August (Major General at the archipelago artillery), who kindly urged not to lose heart, break a new course; "and to help you," added the good Prince, "I have here a place on a ship in Gothenburg and a letter of recommendation addressed to Mr. X and a little travel money". The Prince then handed him letter to a shipping agent in Gothenburg and 50 Rdr in cash. The young man's feelings let themselves be easier imagined than described; and if in the future, he doesn't keep to the right path, it's not his former boss' fault.⁹
- Prince August has for a long time been immobile on account of a leg injury, but is now able to move around. For him, who has no government duties to think about, time may pass slowly under such a "civil arrest," but he seeks to use it in the best way. Among other things, he amuses himself with being - schoolmaster. Yes, what do you think? That is the case, however. He, as well as all other members of the royal family, have their protégés, and among them is a poor youth, whose upbringing was neglected and who the prince, for reasons that may not be mentioned, is under his protection. Two days a week he teaches his protégé, who does good progress under his ducal schoolmaster, who is very interested in his self-imposed teacher's calling. - Prince August is the best master his servants could wish for, why he is much loved. As a small example of his care, and benevolence, even for the humblest in his environment, it is worth mentioning, that he has hired a teacher to improve his employees writing skills. As soon as the prince discovers, that any of his lackeys are weak in this subject - immediately to the teacher with him!¹⁰
- It appears that Augustus' lack of confidence was related to his brother Charles, as it improved after his death. Charles seems to have used him as a laughingstock - e.g. joked about his appearance, naivety and so on. Oscar on the other hand gave August an honourable appointment as lieutenant-general, allowed him to take over as chairman of the Red Cross and to lead the Cabinet while he was in Norway. August got involved in the newly started Stockholm Fire Brigade, constructed a field-capable

⁸ prins Carl 1931: ss. 63-64; Skott 1996: s. 205; Lindqvist. 2010: 46-47.

⁹ "Bref till en vän i viken". Svensk Medborgare, okänt datum; Upsala, 1872-01-16, s. 2.

¹⁰ Svensk Medborgare, okänt datum; Kalmar, 1872-05-01, s. 4.

ambulance wagon for the Red Cross & organized a project for rehabilitation of prisoners after serving their sentence.

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Then he died. It seems to have happened in the same way as for Gustaf (1852), Oscar I (1859), Lovisa (1871), Charles (1872) & Eugénie (1889): A series of infections that eventually left him so weakened that the heart could not cope. He was bedridden in 1846, 1852, 1867, 1870 and 1873. The diagnoses were: 1846 "a fever of a gastric nature". 1852 unknown but probably the same as Gustaf & Eugénie - "gastric nerve fever" etc. 1867 "heart suffering", shortness of breath, intense heart activity & a stroke with transient weakness in the left arm. 1870 relapse. 1873 pleurisy, coughs blood & gradual weakening until death occurred.

August is known for his nickname "dumber than the train". The origin of the phrase was a locomotive named "Prince August". Instead of saying "dumber than Prince August", one said "dumber than the train". This sounds plausible but has not been possible to verify. The expression does not appear in KB's newspaper database until Aftonbladet 1965-08-01 and then as one of many similar expressions. About August, it is first used in an anonymous submission in Svenska Dagbladet from 1986-04-07.