

Chapter 52 : Princess Ingeborg of Denmark-Iceland (1878-1958).

Carl has written his memoirs (Prince Carl 1931 & 1936) but these do not mention his private life. This has to be pieced together on the basis of fragments and plausibility. In his youth he was considered stately and have a way with women. He probably had relationships before marriage - perhaps a mistress abroad because he was often in Paris & London under “deep incognito” - but of that we know nothing. In 1887/88, when his brother Oscar married Ebba Munck, Carl and Eugene made a promise - they had even signed a declaration - that they would marry royally or not at all. For a long time it looked like it was going to be not at all:

I was almost thirty years [April 1887], when my parents seriously urged me to think about getting married; both for my own sake and as a public duty. I was invited to visit this year's “meeting” in Frankfurt am Main of Germany's mediatised royal house, which regularly gathered there for a few days to promote cohesion and allow young people to get to know each other. This meeting was commonly called “die Blumen-ausstellung”, and everyone knew what this flower exhibition meant. In order not to make any trouble, I went, albeit very unwillingly, to Frankfurt, and as one had to be blind not to understand what I was doing there, it is not difficult to realize, how extremely embarrassing this visit to “die Blumenausstellung” in Frankfurt was for both parties, not least for the poor “flowers” themselves. Of course, I am now pleased that I left empty-handed, but I became aware of the absurdities to which the freedom of choice in marriage, which is greatly restricted for princes, can lead.¹

In 1897, Carl instead married Princess Ingeborg of Denmark (1878-1958). The fact that Carl was twice as old as the bride raised some questions about how they had met and about the suitability of such a marriage. The way they met was in itself not strange. Prince Frederick visited King Oscar II on his birthday on January 21 and brought the family. Carl in turn used to visit his Danish relatives. There is a chapter about the wedding in Oscar II's memoirs, but this has been censored by King Gustaf VI, on the grounds that it was a family matter. According to existing information, the couple first met in 1887 when she was nine and he was 25. It was not a matter of grooming. At the time of the gold wedding in 1947, they revealed that the marriage was arranged by their parents and that they had not had time to get to know each other before the betrothal.² This was very similar to the situation of Princess Maria and Prince Wilhelm but turned out happier. Let's start from the beginning...

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Princess Ingeborg Charlotta Carolina Fredrika Lovisa was born August 2, 1878, to the Crown Prince Frederick VIII of Denmark and Iceland (1843-1912) and Louise of Sweden & Norway (1851-1926; daughter of Karl XV). Ingeborg was the 5th child out of a total of eight. She was home educated, socialized in a limited circle and interested in music, embroidery and reading. Not a beauty, but she was domestically inclined, fond of children, good at dancing, lively and a (drastic) sense of humour. There is a short biography (Ohlmarks 1979: ss. 114-115). For the Silver Wedding two articles were written about her childhood & youth (Skram 1922; Wedel-Heinen 1922). There are also two “at home articles” (Jaya 1913: ss. 45-50; Quensel, 1924).

¹ prins Carl 1931: s. 400.

² Fjellman 1968: s. 18.

Ingeborg seems to have received a normal education. She had a French governess, was diligent in her studies, inquisitive during classes, played the piano, was close to her father and learned to be polite to both high and low. The schedule until the wedding was: Rise at 7. Quick walk. Breakfast. Lessons 9-13. Lunch 13-14. Reading 14-15. Long walk. Further reading. Dinner. Rest ½ hour. Homework until 21. In bed.³ She was confirmed on March 27, 1896. The late date was thought to indicate that she was late in development, but was probably due to the fact that she and her two-year younger sister Thyra wanted to be confirmed at the same time.

In the beginning of January 1897, there were writings about a marriage between her and Carl. It turned out to be somewhat premature. The engagement was first announced on May 27, the wedding was on August 27 and the bride and groom arrived in Stockholm on September 8. Ingeborg publicly proclaimed that she had been looking forward to the wedding since the end of school. For the next 10 years she was King Oscar II's "deputy queen" and responsible for the female beauty at the opening of the Parliament, court balls and such things. Her liberal values, which she willingly expressed in drastic terms, made her popular even in radical circles. The relationship between Ingeborg & Victoria - two prima donnas - was for this and other reasons not the best and Ingeborg 1907-1930 disappeared from court into private life.

She received a Swedish education from the teacher bachelor of arts Sigrid Leijonhufvud (1862-1937) and doctor of of Greek & Latin Hadar Lilliebjörn (1893-1974). She also learned Norwegian. It took a while before she got used to the Swedish model of royal charity. In the beginning, she just strung along. In 1900 she became the patron of the Society for Child Care, in 1909 its chairwoman and in 1919 patron of Mother's Day & Save the Children. She also devoted much time to Carl's representation. Being invited to the prince couple was a kind of total experience:

The dinner lasted for a long time. Princess Ingeborg always brewed the coffee with her own hand in a glass flask on a liquor flame. It was part of the ritual, she carefully measured coffee and water and stirred until none of the coffee got caught on the silver spoon. Then it was finished. The liquor flame, coffee and cigarette odor mixed with a faint scent of *Molyneux numéro cinque* so I remember the dinners at Fridhem and Hovslagargatan.⁴

Ingeborg seems to have experienced it as a relief to come to Sweden where the royals were not treated with the same reverential and suffocating protocol as in Denmark but were allowed a bourgeois life alongside their royal. She is said to never having danced with anyone of lower rank than a general. In a bourgeois life, Ingeborg considered it necessary to "deepen her essence" by rising above everyday trivialities⁵ and she often discussed subjects such as Eastern & Western philosophy. She enthusiastically followed the Swedish Popular Education Association's lectures and was heavily influenced by its chairman Knut Kjellberg - religious sceptic & liberal MP. Ingeborg's philosophical house gods included Harald Høffding (1843-1931). In his utilitarian *Ethics* (1887), he argued that human actions should lead to "as much prosperity and success for as many conscious beings as possible", which credo seems to have been close to Ingeborg's heart. She was regarded by her surroundings as "something of a subversive"⁶, who even tried to understand the Russian view of things.⁷

³ Norman 1983: s. 29.

⁴ Sparre 1985: s. 96.

⁵ Quensel 1924.

⁶ Palmstierna 1971: s. 182.

⁷ Undén 2002: s. 207.

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There is no coherent depiction of Ingeborg's life but she is glimpsed in the children's biographies. She had an extensive correspondence, mostly with her relatives, but it was burned. In the memories of her surroundings, she seems more apolitical than in reality: Her brother Kristian was King of Denmark 1912-1944, her brother Carl was King of Norway 1905-1957, her daughter Margaretha became a Danish princess, her daughter Märtha became Crown Princess of Norway, her daughter Astrid became Queen of Belgium. Ingeborg ambulated between the courts, kept a low profile, knew most everybody and exchanged gossip. As a mother & “party princess” she considered herself to be outside politics.⁸ She hoped her son Prince Carl Jr could avoid the military & become a doctor but that didn't work out.⁹

She died on March 11, 1958. The last years she had difficulty moving because of arteriosclerosis in the legs.¹⁰ There is an oil painting of her in full figure from 1904 by Oscar Björk. She has also left behind a number of “oneliners” about her life as a princess: “I came directly from the nursery into marriage.” - “I married a complete stranger.” - And about the ceremonies surrounding the pregnancies: “I might as well have been lying [giving birth in public] at Gustav Adolf's Square.”

⁸ Madol 1937: s. 137.

⁹ Palmstierna 1952: del 2, s. 295.

¹⁰ Aftonbladet 1958-03-12.