

Petra Tomsová

Theresia von Sternberg. The Life of Noblewoman in the 19th Century

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In recent years, the history of (Bohemian) aristocracy¹ and the life stories of its members have experienced a revival of interest both in the cases of professional historians and common public. Although the contemporary research concerned with this particular area of expertise has advanced substantially, there are many blank spots remaining to be filled. To this day, the rich archive material recounting the history of the junior branch of Sternberg dynasty, which held the dominions of Radnice, Český Šternberk and Jemniště, has attracted barely any attention at all. One such person, whose personal documents waited to be recovered from this collection of primary sources, was Theresia von Sternberg, née von Stadion-Thannhausen (1819–1873).

This Sternberg noblewoman escaped awareness of a wider public, excluding perhaps the visitors of Český Šternberk Castle who have the opportunity to see her portrait being displayed there. Unremarkable and average during her lifetime, her personality nonetheless allows us an interesting insight into a prototypical everyday life of a noblewoman in the 19th century.

¹ The term “aristocracy” cannot be understood as equal to another frequently used term “nobility”. The term “aristocracy” is associated with a very limited group of noblemen descending from a perfect lineage with at least sixteen, though ideally with thirty two or even sixty-four noble ancestors. This privileged class, which was the only one to be properly addressed “aristocracy”, was considered a higher segment of nobility. These members of the aristocracy constituted “first society”, whereas “second society” consisted of both older yet not so high-born houses and newly nobilitated members. Collectively, all these social classes were denoted as nobility. The topic of the “new nobility” is further discussed in J. ŽUPANIČ, *Nová šlechta rakouského císařství*, Praha 2006; ŽUPANIČ, *Neuer Adel in der Donaumonarchie*, in: D. SCHRIFFL – N. PERZI (Eds.), *Schlaglichter auf die Geschichte der böhmischen Länder vom 16. bis 20. Jahrhundert: Ausgewählte Ergebnisse zu den Österreichisch-Tschechischen Historikertagen 2006 und 2008*, Wien, Berlin, Münster 2011, pp. 131–141.

Maria Sophia Theresia² the Countess von Stadion-Thannhausen and the future Countess von Sternberg, was born in Vienna as the third child of Count Philipp von Stadion-Thannhausen (1780–1839) and his spouse Maria Kunigunde, née von Kesselstatt (1795–1872). After the birth of their oldest daughter Sophia³ (†1874) in 1816, the very next year a much anticipated heir came into family in the person of Karl Friedrich (†1898), although he himself never produced any descendants. After her birth, Theresia was followed by another sister Anna Maria (1820–1870), who as the youngest daughter was to be prepared for ecclesiastic career. Although Theresia's mother gave birth to another six children in subsequent years, only the youngest of them, Eduard (1833–1884), reached maturity.⁴

There is remarkably little material on Theresia's childhood. After her birth, she was probably in the care of a wet nurse, as the nurturing of one's own child was considered appropriate endeavour for members of lower social strata but certainly not for a woman from the highest echelons of noble society.⁵ Breast-feeding had considerable impact on woman's life – most of all, it disturbed the stereotypical daily program expected of her, and furthermore the mother would not have been able to sleep all night or could have been even prone to wake up at sunrise. Ideal wet nurse was to be a well-built and young rustic woman having a child in similar age as noble's child she was to take care of. Since it was unacceptable that a low-born could have been fed from the same source as countess' child, peasants' scion was subsequently given

² Among close family and friends, the Countess usually used name Theresia, hence the abbreviated form is to be applied in this article as well.

³ Isabella Maria Sophia was wed to Joseph Adam Count von Ryszewo-Rzyszczewski (1813–1884). Wedding announcement, 1842, No. 375, Státní oblastní archiv v Praze (henceforth SOA Praha), Rodinný archiv Šternberků (henceforth RA Šternberků), Cart. 34.

⁴ Alfred (* ca. 1822, † subsequently), Pauline Everilde (*1824, †1831), Hugo (* ca. 1826, † subsequently), Alfred (* 1826, † before 1829) and Philipp (* ca. 1830, † subsequently). The only child to survive was in full name Eduard Joseph Philipp. In 1862 he married Ludwiga Princess von Lobkowitz (1838–1907). V. POUZAR et al., *Almanach českých šlechtických rodů 2001*, Praha 2000, p. 384.

⁵ M. LENDEROVÁ – K. RÝDL, *Radostné dětství? Dítě v Čechách devatenáctého století*, Litomyšl, Praha 2006, pp. 109–110.

artificial nourishment.⁶ At a suitable time, the wet nurse was substituted by a nursemaid and at the age from three to six children's regular education was commenced.⁷ Young girls of noble birth were educated by a governess, often an unwed young townswoman, conducting the education on the premises of a noble's estate. This was supplemented in later years by a sojourn in a monastic school.⁸ It is beyond our means to corroborate to what extent this stereotype corresponds with an actual upbringing of the Countess, nevertheless she must have been given an education suitable for her social status.

One of the most important documents available are her diary notes shedding light on, among other things, Theresia's childhood and early life.⁹ Oldest records written in German are present not in the book itself, but on the few folded lists inserted into the book itself. The idea to write these first lines was spurred by the journey from Kout, Bohemian Forrest, to the capital city of Austrian Empire, Vienna.¹⁰ The very first note is dated to the 30th November 1830 and eleven years old Theresia describes the departure from Kout. The personality of the author cannot be analysed in much detail – the notes contain only dull description of the journey accompanied by exhausting gastronomic information.¹¹ As keeping a diary belonged to various responsibilities of young noblewomen between twelve and fourteen,¹² it is safe to assume that

⁶ M. LENDEROVÁ, *Tragický bál: Život a smrt Pavlína ze Schwarzenbergu*, Praha 2004, pp. 146–147.

⁷ Z. BEZECNÝ, *Příliš uzavřená společnost: Orličtí Schwarzenbergové a šlechtická společnost v Čechách v druhé polovině 19. a na počátku 20. století*, České Budějovice 2005, p. 82.

⁸ M. LENDEROVÁ – T. JIRÁNEK – M. MACKOVÁ, *Z dějin české každodennosti: Život v 19. století*, Praha 2009, p. 206.

⁹ Diary entries, 1830–1839, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

¹⁰ The concept of blending personal and travel diaries was quite widespread at the time. M. LENDEROVÁ, „*A ptáš se, knížko má...*“: *Ženské deníky 19. století*, Praha 2008, p. 23.

¹¹ Based on Theresia's testimony we can reconstruct the contents of daily meals of Theresia's family – on the 30th of November lunch in Holešovice, Theresia enjoyed semolina soup, beef with horseradish, carrot with sausage as well as various desserts. For dinner in České Budějovice, Theresia's family savoured chicken soup, venison, roast veal and kompot (a canned fruit). Same lists of food are meticulously written in almost every entries. Diary entries, 1830–1839, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

¹² LENDEROVÁ, „*A ptáš se, knížko má...*“ , p. 42.

the incentive originated by a governess or an adult relative. The sentences written in German are supplemented by the description of a journey from 1832, written in French with only a handful of words being adapted from German lexicon.¹³ After two days, the Countess' appetite for leaving a written memory of the journey dissipated with last words being: "*I always write in a carriage, I will not continue keeping this diary, for the weather is far too cold and my fingers are freezing.*"¹⁴

The access to Countess' inner world is severely restricted. Inner thoughts and intimacies are absent in the bound book used for her diary – instead, we can appreciate a wide variety of social events, such as parties and balls, accompanied by the list of both received and conducted visits. Furthermore, it is plausible to identify several personalities she associated with. Instead of German, however, Countess utilized French language for the record of her daily life, since this language was widely used in aristocratic circles as a common language from the second half of the 18th century. Indeed, French maintained in Austria the status of *lingua franca* well into the first half of the 19th century, being a distinctive mark of the noble estate. The only purely German text originated during the aforementioned journey in 1830, although Countess sometimes supplanted French with a few words of German origin. Full sentences in German language occur negligibly, apart from few exceptions such as direct speech which do not span more than just a few lines. A diligent reader also finds poetry written in English¹⁵ which show a clear evidence of young Countess' wide-ranging linguistic abilities.

Individual notes vary both in range and structure. Most of the times the first records present a full-length text, whereas, with the passing time, the thoroughness and extensiveness slowly declines – towards the end of the diary, the records consist of simple entries. Furthermore, Countess' handwriting

¹³ For example *Schnitzel, Strakonitz*.

¹⁴ Diary entries, no date (henceforth n. d.), No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

¹⁵ For example, Theresia transcribed into her diary the text of English rhyme *The Cat and the Fiddle*. Diary entries, n. d., No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

gradually deteriorates as well, although even towards the end of her life she wrote fairly legibly.

Basic characteristic of such a diary is realized through regular notes which necessarily were not conducted on daily basis. Generally, everyday records were common during the beginning of diary keeping or when creating a travel diary during noblewomen's journeys, provided hardships en route did not prevent them in keeping diaries up to date. In the case of voluntary keeping of one's personal diary, the first week was usually symbolised by meticulous diary keeping, filled with detailed description of everyday life.¹⁶ In Countess' case, the very impulse that facilitated the revived diary keeping was the New Year's Eve of 1835.¹⁷ Whether this was conducted voluntarily or spurred under the supervision of an adult is not quite clear. Given the scarcity and simplicity of the very first records, let us consider the latter scenario more plausible.

Theresia's diary, similar in content to the other diaries of countess' female contemporaries of noble descent, shows a structure of annual activities typical to the scions of the higher society. Varying events were based on the particular time of year. In spring, the nobility moved to their estates in countryside and spent there most of warm months. Autumn was spent in nobles' hunting territory, whereas in winter was time of fabulous social season was spent either in Vienna or in Prague, usually commencing in December and concluding in April.¹⁸ In the first months of year, the season was dominated by grand and elaborate balls. Although Theresia's early descriptions are rather scarce and dull at best, the winter social season with its dancing soirées and balls played a major role in her diary's records. Indeed, the art of dance was an utmost necessity for any high-born lady. The first introduction of

¹⁶ LENDEROVÁ, „*A ptáš se, knížko má...*“, pp. 90–91.

¹⁷ The first entries in the diary is dated to the 1st January 1835. Theresia noted these rather scarce information: „*Mummy stayed home. Countess von Erdödy came with Maria. We had a look at Frederick's engravings.*” Diary entries, 1. 1. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

¹⁸ M. LENDEROVÁ – J. PLŠKOVÁ (Eds.), *Gabriela ze Schwarzenbergu: Krátká cesta životem a Evropou*, Praha 2006, p. 47.

a young noblewoman, a debutante, into the high-born society was her formal presentation at the court, usually at the age of sixteen, during a ball.¹⁹ Similar events were organized at various noble palaces, though the young noblewomen also attended children's balls.

Countess listed the dancing season in excruciating detail, with the main focus on the names of individual dancing partners. For year 1838, the diary contains the full eleven pages long list of every visited ball and every dancing partner. Among those people that had the privilege of dancing with the Countess are several members of foremost noble houses, for example Rudolf and Hermann von Czernins, Ludowig von Paar, Dominic von Wrbná, Franz von Stadion and Alfred von Windischgrätz. Quite often are mentioned the members of the house of Fürstenberg.²⁰ Conversely, it is not possible to identify some of the persons in the diary, such as Goold, Gallenberg or Gyula.

Among other social events, theatre plays were quite popular, as diaries of many noblewomen testify.²¹ A great number of Viennese theatres undoubtedly offered many opportunities for nobility to enjoy. Countess Theresia herself enjoyed these fairly regularly, often attending a favourite play more than once. She very much appreciated the premiere of *Der Traum, ein Leben* by Franz Grillparzer, the first part of *Nummer 777* by Karl August Lebrün and *L'elisir d'amore* by Gaetano Donizetti. She appraised the performance of Auguste Crelinger²² in her role of Conradin or singers in Bellini's opera *La somambula*.²³ In subsequent years Countess noted seeing *Reise nach der Stadt*²⁴ and *Die*

¹⁹ LENDEROVÁ, „*A ptáš se, knížko má...*“, p. 208.

²⁰ Ernst, Karl, Joseph and Franz von Fürstenbergs. Possibly sons of Friedrich Karl von Fürstenberg (1774–1856).

²¹ LENDEROVÁ, „*A ptáš se, knížko má...*“, p. 210.

²² Auguste Crelinger (1795–1865), a famous German actress, performed in the plays of Shakespeare, Grillparzer, Schiller, Goethe etc.

²³ “*We saw ‘The Sleepwalker’. It is a magical opera. Madams Schütz and Poggi sang very well.*” Diary entries, 18. 5. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29. Opera by Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835) “*The Sleepwalker*” had its premier in 1831.

²⁴ A play by August Wilhelm Iffland (1759–1814), a German actor, playwright and director.

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gefährliche Tante.²⁵ In both cases, however, we lack any notion of opinion or insight concerning these two plays or its cast.²⁶

In times of carnival, Viennese aristocracy staged plays by themselves. Very popular were tableaux vivants (literally “living picture”), a pantomimic play of a historical scene, a part of literary work or creating an original scene according to one’s imagination. Theresia participated in one such tableau in January 1835: “*We were having a soirée. Erdödys, Nanny von Lich[tenstein], Gabriela and Aglae von F[ürstenbergs] and us performed a tableau vivant.*”²⁷ What role Countess Theresia performed is not mentioned.

Regular visits (among each other) were another one of the nobility’s customs. Possible guests were of course limited to her social group – Countess’ diary counts names of her contemporaries, noble friends and acquaintances. Once again, detailed information, manifestations of envy or gossip are unfortunately absent. The entries indicate frequent meetings with Nanny von Lichtenstein²⁸ and Gabriela von Fürstenberg²⁹ who were doubtless her closest friends.³⁰ Other frequently mentioned names are of Aglae von Windischgrätz, Maria von Thürheim and Karoline von Clam.³¹

Naturally, other entries mention closest family members as well – though the information is scarce and very little is described in detail. Countess’ entries on this topic frequently include visit to grandmother, sometimes visits to aunt and uncle are mentioned. Entries on mother most of the time state “*she*

²⁵ A comedy by Albin Johann Baptist Meddlhammer (1777–1838), a German playwright.

²⁶ Diary entries, 1830–1839, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

²⁷ Diary entries, 25. 1. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

²⁸ Anna (Nanny/Nanni) von Lichtenstein (1820–1900), in 1841 married Ferdinand Count von Trauttmansdorff-Weinsberg.

²⁹ Gabriela von Fürstenberg (1821–1895), wed Alfonso von Pallavicini.

³⁰ Both ladies are mentioned in Theresia’s testament and to the both of them she bequeathed keepsakes. Copy of testament, 8. 5. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

³¹ Aglae von Windischgrätz (1818–1843), daughter of Alfred von Windischgrätz (1787–1862), an Austrian field marshal and military leader famous for conducting military operations against rebels in Austrian Monarchy during 1848–1849; Maria Leopoldina von Thürheim (1817–1886), married into the House of Starhemberg; Karoline Maria von Clam-Martinitz (1822–1898), married Leopold Leon Count von Thun-Hohenstein.

stayed home” or contain some short remarks on her illness. Although probably warm, her relationship with siblings is mostly absent in the records as well.

Living in a Catholic family, the Countess enjoyed a number of holidays which represented a delightful departure from everyday life. Easter in particular stood out in Countess’ diary as the most important Christian holiday. On Holy Saturday Countess celebrated the Resurrection and on Easter Sunday she enjoyed another soirée at her home. During Monday she attended concert by a then-favourite composer Thalberg.³² The holiday was concluded with a play named *Garrick in Bristol*.³³ Although allegedly seeing it for the third time, the Countess nevertheless still found the play “*very entertaining*”. Conversely, Christmas holidays were completely ignored.

During the course of the 19th century, the custom of celebrating birthday and name day was gradually reinforced. The sixteenth birthday is mentioned in Theresia’s diary supplanted by the list of “*portraits for my album*”.³⁴ She also left remarks on her mother’s³⁵ and father’s name day: “*Papa has a name day today. [...] We had breakfast together.*”³⁶ As for Theresia’s name day itself, the program included, among other things, her favourite amateur theatre. Performed not by family but by low-borns, possibly servants, the actors played on this occasion *Der Gefangene* and *Die gefährliche Nachbarschaft* by August von Kotzebue. In other programs prepared for Theresia’s name day appear *Nummer 777* and *Der Educationsrath*.³⁷

³² Sigismond Thalberg (1812–1871), an eminent piano virtuoso debuting in 1836.

³³ A comedy telling the story of British actor David Garrick (1717–1779) by Johann Ludowig Deinhardstein (1794–1859), an Austrian novelist, literary critic, playwright and court officer.

³⁴ Diary entries, 3. 2. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

³⁵ Diary entries, 3. 3. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

³⁶ Diary entries, 1. 5. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

³⁷ A one-act comedy by A. von Kotzebue. The programs of the theatre performances for the celebration of the Countess’ name-day, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

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Naturally, the Countess could not omit from her diary such a pompous event as high-born's wedding – Theresia describes the wedding of Leontine von Metternich,³⁸ although she herself did not attend.³⁹ The loyalty to the imperial House of Habsburg is testified by Countess' concern about emperor Francis I's health: *“The emperor is very ill, we are afraid for him.”* On the 2nd March there is subsequent note: *“On the last night the emperor passed away, I am upset.”* The Countess attended emperor's funeral, though the description is once again brief: *“Today, the emperor was entombed. I could not but walk with bowed head, therefore I did not see much.”*⁴⁰

As the weather slowly turned warmer, the social season in the capital, filled with pompous balls, dancing soirées, concerts and theatre plays was replaced by a sojourn in family's estate in Kout in south-western Bohemia. This social phenomenon is testified by Theresia's entries from the end of May 1835 onwards. After noting the preparation for the journey,⁴¹ the additional records describe it retrospectively: *“At six o'clock in the morning on the 2nd June, we departed from Vienna. The journey was terrible indeed. Papa and Valther were awaiting us in Schwarzbach.”*⁴² *We arrived to Kout the next day in half past ten in the evening. I only washed myself and then went straight to bed at eleven o'clock.”*⁴³

After the 21st June 1835, Countess' entries suddenly disappear and are revived only in December 1836 with the beginning of the Viennese social season. The notes are often limited to scarce, one-word entries – attending of balls and theatres alternate with visits at high-born friends⁴⁴ or

³⁸ Leontine Princess von Metternich-Winneburg (1811–1861), the daughter of renowned state Chancellor of the Austrian Empire Klemens Wenzel Lothar von Metternich, married Hungarian Count Moritz Sandor de Szlavnicza.

³⁹ Diary entries, 8. 2. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁴⁰ Diary entries, 28. 2. and 1., 2., 7. 3. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁴¹ Diary entries, 26. 5. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁴² Presently Černá v Pošumaví.

⁴³ Diary entries, 5. 6. 1835, No. 363, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁴⁴ Quite frequent were visits at Metternichs'.

at grandmother's and sometimes the day is described laconically with only "stayed home". With the passing of early months of 1837 the entries from Theresia's personal life definitely disappear.⁴⁵

Diary entries also document quite reliably interests and skills of the young lady. Cosmopolitanism of the aristocracy presupposed a vast knowledge of living languages, therefore Theresia was to be educated to such extent to fulfil this prerogative. She spoke German, possibly her mother tongue, French, whose elegance was a distinct mark of her social class, and English. It was also typical to teach high-born children to play a musical instrument – in the Countess' case, she could play piano and cembalo. She was also educated in the art of drawing and painting – some of her sketches were even preserved in the diary. It is safe to assume that among other activities, she was taught riding a horse, handwriting, singing and religion. Some of the young female members of high society found pleasure in handiwork – one thing that was not tolerated was idleness and leniency. Additionally, young ladies were to be taught similar subjects to our time, such as history, art history and geography.⁴⁶ The practice of the Grand Tour, an excursion of a young high-born around Europe in order to finalize his or her education, became increasingly prevalent in Central Europe in the first half of the 19th century.⁴⁷ Although we have no testament of Theresia conducting such a journey, it does not necessarily mean that such a journey did not occur. Apart from education and travel, the Countess enjoyed various forms of games – she played billiard, whist and enjoyed herself during the play of blind man's bluff or charade.

Erudite ladies of the 19th century used their language abilities to access numerous books of European Romanticism. Theresia kept a list of finished books and copied her favourite parts into the diary. There are lines from French translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, followed by a work of Victor Hugo⁴⁸ and

⁴⁵ The very last entries describing Countess' everyday life is dated to 24. 4. 1837.

⁴⁶ LENDEROVÁ, *Tragický bál*, pp. 67–68.

⁴⁷ LENDEROVÁ – PLŠKOVÁ, p. 52.

⁴⁸ It is not possible to discern which book by Victor Hugo was copied from.

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twice were copied the lines from Goethe's ballad *Erlkönig*. She was interested in reading most of all historical novels of English writing classics such as Walter Scott (*Waverley*, *The Pirate*, *Guy Mannering*), she perused *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *A Marriage in High Life* by Lady Scott. Apart from *O'Donell* written by Irish novelist Lady Morgan, worthy of mention is literary work *The Poems of Ossian*, the falsified old Gaelic poetry which was supposed to be discovered by James Macpherson and published in 1760. One of her favourite authors was James Fennimore Cooper, some of whose novels Countess read even thrice.

In the case of French literature, Theresia finished Honoré de Balzac's *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, travelogues *Impressions de voyage* by Alexandre Dumas, Sr., the anthology of Madame de Sévigné's correspondence and the fashionable educational novel *Adèle et Théodore* by Madame de Genlis.

As far as German literature is concerned, let us enumerate at least *Die Verlobten*, the translation of Italian historic novel by Alessandro Manzoni and *Der Schwarze Zwerg*, again a translation, this time of the work by her favourite author Walter Scott. There's also a travelogue *Cartons aus der Reisemappe eines deutschen Touristen* by Karl Heilbronner published in 1837.

This list of read books is the very last information appearing in the diary. At that moment Theresia was roughly twenty years old. The reasons for the termination of diary keeping are unclear, though it certainly was not caused by entrance into marriage life, as Countess had to wait several more years for her future groom.

Marriage with a man of the same social status was an indispensable prerogative for securing the purity of a noble house. Wealth and prestigious offices of a prospective aspirant for lady's hand could not compensate in any way the most important values, such as noble descent and ancientness. These were the primary criterions when finding a groom. Mutual fondness and love were considered a pleasant but rather an unnecessary bonus.

Intended marriage was the issue of the whole house or even the whole social group which was hostile and resistant towards accepting among each

other members of lower social standing.⁴⁹ The partner was usually chosen from a limited group of circa 470 aristocratic families of the Austrian Empire.⁵⁰ To find a partner outside of this strictly limited social strata was quite an exception and was considered undesirable among the members of this “first society”.

Theresia’s future husband was a member of the ancient count house von Sternberg, Zdenko (1813–1900), at that time thirty two year old owner of a number of dominions and estates, a successful entrepreneur and an able administrator. The details of events preceding this marriage are not known, however according to the custom, it is more than plausible that such a union was based on an agreement between the two respecting families. If there was any hint of respect given to the wishes of and affection between both individuals destined to marry is impossible to discern, though in future life Zdenko and Theresia would not suffer from absence of love and desire for each other.

Following successful discovery of a life partner and subsequent courtship, engagement was agreed. The ideal span between an engagement and a wedding was roughly two months.⁵¹ In time between these two events, necessary matters were discussed, most of all a marriage contract, dealing with property issues of both individuals, among other things.

The marriage contract was to become the legal foundation of the marriage between Zdenko and Theresia – composed on 14th July 1845, the contract defined in six points their future life.⁵² Article one stipulates that Count and Countess will “*marry each other, if they intend to do so after priest’s blessing, as a man and woman, as it suits Christian husband and wife before mutual doings.*” Article two is focused on Theresia’s financial provision of “*two thousand Guldens of*

⁴⁹ R. ŠVAŘÍČKOVÁ-SLABÁKOVÁ, *Rodinné strategie šlechty: Mensdorffové-Pouilly v 19. století*, Praha 2007, p. 188.

⁵⁰ For the complete list of aristocratic families see W. D. GODSEY, *Quarterings and Kinship: The Social Composition of the Habsburg Aristocracy in the Dualist Era*, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 1999, pp. 94–104.

⁵¹ LENDEROVÁ – JIRÁNEK – MACKOVÁ, p. 147.

⁵² Wedding contract, 14. 7. 1845, No. 338, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 23.

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the conventionsthaler [hereinafter Guldens] *annually*” provided by her future husband.⁵³ The next article deals with issues concerning widowhood: “*If the wife outlives her husband, she is to receive dower of eight thousand Guldens annually, paid quarter annually.*” This widow’s pension would have been paid both in case that the couple did not have any offspring and in case that at the moment of Zdenko’s death the children were yet to reach adulthood. The widow would have had the right of use to half of all groom’s property until one of the children reached adulthood. In the case of Zdenko’s demise the Countess would have also received movable property of her choice in following examples from included list: “*one curricule, [...], two draft horses with two pairs of harness, furnishings of four rooms, treasury [underlined by the author of the marriage contract] and its service, silver cutlery, tableware and table linen for six persons and necessary linen for widow and the residents of the house.*” In order to secure steady income, the groom was to pawn dominion of Radnice and at the same time agreed to “*enter the marriage contract without his further consent into the Zemské desky [Landtafel] of the Kingdom of Bohemia.*” What is quite surprising is the absence of Theresia’s dowry and consequently bride’s price from Zdenko. The text of the marriage contract does not contain any mention of the so called morning gift (*Morgengabe*) presented by a groom after a wedding night.

The contents of the marriage contract are countersigned by the engaged couple, the groom’s father (with sigil) and the mother of the bride. Furthermore, they are followed by seven attestants of noble birth (again with sigil): Moritz Count

⁵³ In 1750 a monetary reform was introduced which implemented the so called Twenty Gulden Currency on which a new monetary system was based. In 1753 Bavaria joined the common monetary union of Habsburg monarchy and the so called Conventionsthaler came into existence (1 Conventionsthaler = 2 Guldens, 1 Gulden = 60 Kreuzer). Since 1762 paper currency (Bancozettel) gradually appeared. German name *Gulden* was used on printed currency, whereas minted currency used the word *Florin*. In February 1811 a sovereign default occurred in Austrian Empire and beside Conventionsthaler the “Viennese currency” was introduced. (1 Conventionsthaler Gulden = 2,5 Guldens of Viennese currency). In 1857 another “Austrian currency” was minted, a base coin being 1 Gulden divided into 100 Kreuzer. Exchange rate between Conventionsthaler Gulden and newly introduced Gulden (of Austrian currency) was set at 100:105. In 1892 Austria-Hungary introduced yet another currency – Crown/Krone (1 Gulden = 2 crowns).

von Dietrichstein, Ignatz Count von Hardegg, Joachim Count von Lichtenberg, Alfred Prince von Windischgrätz, Friedrich Egon Landgrave von Fürstenberg, Count Rudolf von Stadion and famed Austrian Chancellor Klement Wenzel Prince von Metternich-Winneburg.

The wedding festivities were preceded by banns of marriage, official information about planned union for local parish office in order to ensure there was no obstacle to wed the engaged couple. This obligation was introduced by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 and subsequently reinforced on the Council of Trident in 1563.⁵⁴ The banns of marriage were announced from pulpit during three ecclesiastical holidays preceding the date of marriage. If future husband and wife came from different parish districts, the banns of marriage were to be announced in both places simultaneously.⁵⁵

Zdenko's and Theresia's wedding announcement also survived among Sternberg archives. It is quite plain and simple formulated message, printed in black font and on slightly gray paper without any illustrations, intended for friends and family. The 19th century did not favour pompous and original wedding announcements. The message itself was announced by engaged couple's parents or by a groom and not by future husband and wife, as the custom of signing the letter by both man and wife appeared towards the end of the 19th century.⁵⁶

Leopold Count von Sternberg⁵⁷ (1770–1858) and Karoline Countess von Sternberg (1781–1857), née von Walsegg “*announce forthcoming union*

⁵⁴ J. JIROUŠKOVÁ (Ed.), *Svatební rituály u nás a ve světě*, Praha 2012, pp. 25, 31.

⁵⁵ LENDEROVÁ – JIRÁNEK – MACKOVÁ, p. 148.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 149.

⁵⁷ Leopold von Sternberg (1770–1858) amassed considerable wealth and possessions in his hands. In 1804 he bought the dominion of Malenovice in eastern Moravia with two residences – a castle in Malenovice and a chateau in Pohořelice. Following the death of his brother Adam he acquired Žirovnice and after the extinction of older family branch he also obtained dynastic fideikomis Častolovice-Zásmuky. His first-born son died in his early years, second-born son Jaroslav received Častolovice-Zásmuky after Leopold's demise. Since Jaroslav himself conceived only daughter, his possessions were transferred to his younger brother Leopold, in whose family the estates remained. On the Sternberg family members in Moravia, see: Z. POKLUDA, *Moravští Šternberkové: Panský rod rozprostřený od Jeseníků ke Karpatům*, Praha 2012.

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of their son Zdenko Count von Sternberg,⁵⁸ k. k. chamberlain, knight of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, possessor of the dominion Sternberg, Radnice and Darová in Bohemia, with the noble-born lady Theresia, imperial⁵⁹ Countess von Stadion-Thannhausen [...]”. Naturally, both the date and place of the union is not absent – the young pair said their “yes” to each other in Vienna, on the 17th July 1845.⁶⁰

There are no documents available that could narrate the first months after the couple’s wedding. One of the first steps in the new life of married nobles was the honeymoon, which allowed the newlyweds first moments of intimacy and peace in order to get to know each other. It is possible such venture was conducted by Theresia and Zdenko as well.

During the times of separation the correspondence was one of the means to overcome the vast distances. Indeed, nobles wrote during their lifetime large amounts of missives. However, nowadays condition of such archives varies. As far as Theresia and Zdenko are concerned, their extant mutual correspondence, even though they wrote each other several letters a day, is unfortunately only fragmentary.

Beside limited existence of intact archives, the then style of writing presents another problem, since it was under a strong influence of fashion and convention. The actual reality is very difficult to discern as letters of noblewomen tended to be filled with pathos and excessive sentiment. However, it is a useful indicator of how an affection between a noble husband and wife

⁵⁸ Zdenko von Sternberg (1813–1900) was the youngest son of Leopold von Sternberg (1770–1858). He inherited west Bohemian dominion of Radnice from his famous uncle Kaspar von Sternberg (1761–1838). An able administrator, he soon acquired enough wealth to purchase the castle of Český Šternberk in 1841. Other purchases followed – in 1861 Zdenko bought palace on Ungargasse in Vienna and in 1868 dominion and chateau of Jemniště. His enterprising spirit was utilized in building a number of rental houses in Vienna.

⁵⁹ In the case of houses nobilitated through the office of defunct Holy Roman Empire, the titles with adjective “imperial” (*Reichs-*) were banned on the territory of the Austrian Empire. Given renowned Austrian partiality for titles, these adjectives (and similar) were tolerated at least when using such in private matters. ŽUPANIČ, *Nová šlechta*, p. 47.

⁶⁰ Wedding announcement, 1845, No. 338, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 23.

should (and were allowed to) manifest. Especially in times of loneliness, Theresia's letters are overflowing with feelings of sadness and solicitude.

The first documented separation between Zdenko and Theresia occurred in November 1845. Zdenko enjoyed himself during hunting season in Pardubice, whereas the Countess spent her time in Vienna, from where she sent the following lines: *"I have to write you a few words during this evening, my dear beloved Zdenko, to express what immense sadness I feel when separated from you. [...] I count days and hours and there is not one moment without thinking about you. I hope you think about me as well. [...] Good night, my dear friend, I embrace you gently."*⁶¹ Without waiting for answer, Theresia attached another influx of heart-warming words: *"Now you got over the night, I hope you slept well. [...] I cannot express how I miss you every minute. I am looking forward to today's evening, then only one day passes, only one long day of our separation [...] I cannot wait to see Your first letter. [...] Au revoir mon cher adoré, Zdenko. Your loving Resi."*⁶²

Noble ladies did not have a problem to express their longing for an absent husband several times a day. In many letters there are lines added the next day and shortly following the dispatch of their last letter, noblewomen began to write a new one. After the posting of her first, Theresia wrote another letter with similar contents: *"I cannot say how much I envy Julie that she will see you today and will speak with You. I did not know what to give her. If only I could travel with her. If only I could await You after the hunt on Saturday and toss myself into Your arms. If only I could hear you descend under the gate. I am thinking about the moment I see you again with feelings of beatitude. [...]"*⁶³ In the same letter, there is an addendum written the next day: *"Write me, even it were just two words. I am longing for news from my beloved Zdenko, about whom I dreamed last night. [...] I kiss you and embrace you, my dearest Zdenko, with all my heart, which is only Yours."*⁶⁴

⁶¹ Theresia to Zdenko, 19. 11. 1845, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁶² Theresia to Zdenko, 20. 11. 1845, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁶³ Theresia to Zdenko, 20. 11. 1845, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁶⁴ Theresia to Zdenko, 21. 11. 1845, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

Affection and sentimentality do not disappear even after long years of coexistence. If the marriage happened to suffer from difficulties, these do not appear in their correspondence. In every letter the husband is the subject of longing desire.

In summer months of the revolutionary year 1848, Zdenko paid a visit to his brother Leopold in Pohořelice, while Theresia resided in Český Šternberk. *“My dearest Zdenko, I hope that you happily arrived in Pohořelice by now. I imagine the joy that your arrival brought you. That [underlined by Theresia] is the only consolation for me, when I know, how long gone you have been. I would be happy, if Poldi was already there. You could write me something certain about your return, which I anticipate greatly.”* At eight o’clock in the evening sat the Countess down in order to inform her husband of what occurred during the day: *“The day was calm and monotonous”,* she writes. *“Calm because I stayed the whole morning in my room, and monotonous [underlined by T.] because I kept thinking about only one thing [underlined by T.] – You!”*⁶⁵

Similar is the closing formula of almost every letter: *“I have to go now, my dearest Zdenko, dinner awaits me. I embrace you from all my heart which belongs only to You! Come back really soon! I anticipate Your next letter, which will hopefully tell me the day of Your arrival.”* In fact, she did receive Zdenko’s letter and immediately thanks for it a thousand times. Since the Count did not mention the date of his return, Theresia wrote him another letter, just to be sure.⁶⁶

Beside displays of sentiment, the letters include activities of Theresia during the time of separation. Theresia mentions – although very briefly – visits at her friends and acquaintances: *“After having a meal I went to Metternich. Melanie⁶⁷ was not home, because she had a lunch with emperor [Ferdinand V].*

⁶⁵ Theresia to Zdenko, 13. 8. 1848, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁶⁶ Theresia to Zdenko, 13. and 16. 8. 1848, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁶⁷ Melanie Countess von Zichy-Ferraris (1805–1854), in 1831 became the third spouse of Chancellor Klement Wenzel Prince von Metternich-Winneburg.

I saw Hermine.⁶⁸ Then I went to Gabriela⁶⁹ and Elisalex,⁷⁰ I missed them, however.” In the times of solitude the Countess was visited by Karoline von Czernin⁷¹ and another friend of hers, Nanni von Trauttmansdorff-Weinsberg.⁷² Additionally, her mother paid her an occasional visit. She informs Zdenko of her state of health. Detailed description of Theresia’s everyday life is, once again, absent.

Apart from amorous intimacies and description of everyday issues Theresia does not forget to wish Zdenko a successful hunt: *“I hope that today’s hunt will end well and will indeed amuse You.”*⁷³ The next day she writes: *“It seems to me that today will be a good hunt, it is not cold and damp. I hope Your horses are all right and act satisfyingly.”*⁷⁴

The correspondence testifies a very close relationship between the married couple. In one of the letters Theresia indirectly informs Zdenko of her pregnancy: *“I did not have a walk for three days already, for it seems to be that a time comes when I should take it easy.”*⁷⁵ Such information of intimate nature reveals that these letters were not meant to be read in public as it was when writing to friends and acquaintances. Women of noble birth often created types of artistic letters with the intention that these would have been read in drawing rooms in order to entertain noble society.

Five months after writing the letter, the Countess gave birth to their first child, daughter Zdenka Karoline (1846–1915). Subsequently, the main topic of correspondence became, surprisingly, the children. Following the

⁶⁸ Hermine Gabriela (1815–1890), the daughter of Prince von Metternich and his first wife Maria Eleonore von Kaunitz. She remained unmarried.

⁶⁹ Possibly Gabriela von Fürstenberg (1821–1895), married into the House of Pallavicini.

⁷⁰ Possibly Elisabeth Alexandra von Ficquelmont (1825–1878), nicknamed Elisalex, married Prince Edmund von Clary-Aldrigen in 1841.

⁷¹ Née Schaffgotsch (1820–1876), in 1843 married Jaromir Count von Czernin (1818–1908).

⁷² Anna Lichtenstein (1820–1900), married Ferdinand Count von Trauttmansdorff-Weinsberg in 1843.

⁷³ Theresia to Zdenko, 21. 11. 1845, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁷⁴ Theresia to Zdenko, 22. 11. 1845, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁷⁵ Theresia to Zdenko, 23. 11. 1845, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

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birth of their second daughter Kunigunde (†1916) in 1847, Countess ensures her husband: “*We are well.*” and narrates about the children: “*When we ask Zdenka, what she will tell you, when you come, she answers: ‘Dear papa!’ That is her whole speech! It would be nice to hear such short speeches during the imperial diet as well, instead of a long blabber.*”⁷⁶ She also mentions their younger daughter: “*Kunigunde is once again cheerful and slept much better.*”

In 1850 another member of the family was born, son Alois (†1907). Two years later Countess delivered once again a boy who was given the name Philipp (†1924). Their last child was daughter Karoline (1856–1930).

In October 1859 the Countess wrote to her husband from Český Šternberk, where she resided with children: “*The children were very cheerful this afternoon. Louis [Alois] had a very happy expression on his face when I asked him what should have papa brought him. He said: ‘Box with soldiers!’ The children send you many kisses. Kunigunde had one of her smaller teeth pulled out. [...] She was very brave indeed and brought her tooth to breakfast as a surprise.*”⁷⁷

Let us focus our attention towards the correspondence written by noblemen to their wives. Zdenko von Sternberg was longing for the Countess with the very same over-sensitiveness as she did. The Count sent following words from their estate in Březina: “*I cannot say how deeply I crave for the news from You. I hope that a telegram comes from You tomorrow. The rooms are truly sad. When I came home from a walk yesterday evening, Your bedroom was still open. I suffered from that emptiness. I shut the door, immediately sat down to your writing desk and collapsed on papers [...].*”⁷⁸ Curiously, these lines were written after 1870.

Besides longing for his wife, the Count informs her of their offspring, particularly in detail about Karoline who due to her younger age tended to be isolated from her older sisters. “*We lead a very busy life here*” writes

⁷⁶ Theresia to Zdenko, 16. 8. 1848, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁷⁷ Theresia to Zdenko, 20. 10. 1859, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁷⁸ Zdenko to Theresia, after 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

Zdenko from Březina. *“I rode a horse in the morning. At half past eight I had breakfast with Karoline. While we were both breakfasting, she told me: ‘I do not know what to talk with you about.’ She was very cute and tried to cheer me up through conversation. She went to Mr. Pech at nine and I meanwhile sat down to my writing desk.”* Theresia was meanwhile on her way to Jemniště, another family residence, where she travelled with the eldest daughter Zdenka whom the Count sends hugs. She does not forget about the younger daughter Kunigunde who stayed with her husband in Křimice: *“I want to write to Kunigunde and ask her what time she is having as a grass-widow. I doubt Franz gets back from Prague before Friday or Saturday, [...]”*⁷⁹

The Count was also interested in the course of Theresia’s journey to Jemniště, while solicitously asking for her health and sleep at the same time: *“In thoughts I am always with You and by the God I hope that you endured the journey and feel better now.”*, followed by the next letter: *“It seems you did not sleep in Prague”* with addendum *“although this happens to you fairly regularly after a long journey. I hope you will sleep indeed better in Jemniště.”* The next day Zdenko was pleased that the Countess had arrived cheerfully, slept well and felt much better afterwards. In a letter from the subsequent day, Zdenko encouraged Theresia to inform him further: *“I hope that tomorrow I receive a letter where I can find more information about your journey, whether you travelled fast or slowly. Although the telegram describes your health, I hope I can get more news in writing.”*⁸⁰ He also informed his wife of his everyday life and activities, business matters, hunt and situation of the manor farm estate after a particularly malicious storm damaged it.

Most of the correspondence is written in German, which is supplanted by French, sometimes with whole sentences being inserted into otherwise German text. This code switching, or transition from one language into another and often in the middle of a sentence appears quite regularly in Theresia’s and Zdenko’s social strata, particularly when writing to a close friend or a relative.

⁷⁹ Zdenko to Theresia, after 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

⁸⁰ Zdenko to Theresia, after 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

This bilingualism or diglossia was probably facilitated by contacts with other noble houses or by a career in state services. The closer two individuals were, the more regular this switching between languages became. It was also much more common in letters written by noblewomen than their male counterparts.⁸¹

In the correspondence, the husband and wife communicated with each other on first name basis. This custom was practiced from the beginning of the “long” 19th century.⁸² In doing so, aristocrats manifested their superiority over common folk with whom they used the polite form of address. This symbol of noble lineage remained in existence well into the 20th century.⁸³

A more tender form of address is present as well. Theresia usually addressed her husband *liebster Zdenko, mein Zdenko, mein liebster Zdenko, lieber guter Zdenko, mon cher ami, mon cher Zdenko, vielgeliebter Zdenko* or *lieber lieber Zdenko* also appears.

A writing of an aristocrat is not a primary source easy to interpret and explain. Problems are caused not only by the scarcity of sources – unavailable information, hints, impossibility of identifying some names, insufficient description of their activities and last but not least overall exaggerated sensitivity describing rather expectations than reality. Despite all these remarks, one can with certainty assume that Theresia and Zdenko cared about each other deeply. Besides the nature of character and sufficient wealth, even love belonged to the important prerequisites for family’s contentment and happiness.

The main purpose of a high-born wife was to give the house descendants, primarily those capable of continuing the lineage. During the course of the “long” 19th century, the ideal of “new mother” spread vigorously in Central Europe, based on a thought that a noblewoman was to have more

⁸¹ R. SLABÁKOVÁ, „*Il est «Höchst Zeit»“ aneb Jaký jazyk pro aristokracii v Čechách a na Moravě v 19. století?*“, in: K. BLÁHOVÁ (Ed.), *Komunikace a izolace v české kultuře 19. století*, Praha 2002, pp. 109ff.

⁸² LENDEROVÁ, *Tragický bál*, p. 22.

⁸³ C. STERNBERGOVÁ, *Cesta: Paměti české aristokratky*, Praha, Litomyšl 2002, p. 62.

intensive relationship with her children. This vision originated in France after the publication of Rousseau's pedagogical work *Emile: or, On Education* in 1762, which stipulated sentiment of a parent towards his child. Little nobles were subsequently given considerably more attention than in preceding times. However, this approach was mostly a matter of fashion.⁸⁴ Furthermore, this development was also reinforced by the influence of both romanticism and Biedermeier.⁸⁵ Being a mother – such fact gained on importance, motherhood acquired the position of respectable value and attained a very important role in the life of a married noblewoman.

Let us once again reiterate Countess' children. In the decade between 1846 and 1856 she gave birth to five children, three daughters and two sons. The first-born daughter was baptized as Zdenka (Sidonia) Karoline Kunigunde Leopoldine Maria and for the role of her godmother was chosen Karoline Sternberg, her grandmother.⁸⁶ Another daughter was born on the 13th of March 1847 and baptised as Kunigunde Rosina Maria Theresia. Her godmother was this time another grandmother, Kunigunde von Stadion-Thannhausen, deputized by Rosina Princess zu Salm-Salm, Zdenko's sister.⁸⁷

After more than five years of marriage, an heir came into family at long last. Theresia's and Zdenko's first-born son came into the world on the 12th November 1850. The very next day he was baptized by priest August Němeček in the presence of his forthcoming godfather Leopold von Sternberg and was given name Alois Leopold Jaroslav Jan Nepomuk Maria Stanislav.⁸⁸ In another two years the time to celebrate another newborn came – on the 13th August 1852 the Countess gave birth to son Philipp. This time, his godfather

⁸⁴ LENDEROVÁ, *Tragický bál*, p. 131.

⁸⁵ ŠVAŘÍČKOVÁ-SLABÁKOVÁ, p. 137.

⁸⁶ Copy of the Baptism Certificate, 22. 4. 1861, No. 374, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 32, 33.

⁸⁷ Copy of the Baptism Certificate, 7. 7. 1888, No. 374, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 32, 33.

⁸⁸ Copy of the Baptism Certificate, 22. 4. 1861, No. 374, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 32, 33.

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and godmother were relatives from mother's family – uncle Friedrich Count von Stadion (apparently Theresia's brother Karl Friedrich) and grandmother Kunhuta respectively. The boy received name Philipp Friedrich Kaspar Jaroslav Maria.⁸⁹ Theresia's last descendant, daughter Karoline, was born on the 18th August 1856.

The information concerning the course of her pregnancy, birth and early childhood of her offspring is absent.⁹⁰ The only primary materials are once again correspondences with her husband, which is the only proof of her concern of and affection towards her descendants in the time of their minority.

None of her children died in their minority – quite the opposite, every one of them lived to the higher age than Theresia herself. Given the fact that childhood mortality was roughly around 25 %, the family can be considered quite fortunate.⁹¹ Although whether this was the stroke of luck or the consequence of careful solicitude towards them is impossible to discern.

Her children probably followed the very same path towards adulthood as Theresia herself. Offspring were nurtured through the services of wet nurse, replaced by *Kindsmädchen* or *Kindsfrau* at the appropriate time. Young girls were tutored by a governess, while boys were educated by an educator and a teacher.

There is no doubt the Sternberg brothers received rigorous upbringing and carefully conducted education, being taught by private teachers until the time of high school final exam – matura (*Abitur*). Teaching the children of Sterneberg family was the responsibility of Franz Schier, a well respected person by the members of Sternberg family. However, every young nobleman

⁸⁹ Testification of the Baptism Certificate, 22. 3. 1900, No. 374, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 32, 33.

⁹⁰ Since medieval times, the human lifespan was divided into seven cycles, from which two parts were reserved for childhood: *infantia*, (early childhood until the age of 7) and *pueritia* (until the age of 14). Only the first cycle was considered a true childhood. The following cycle was called *adolescencia*, the last brief period before entering a real life (until the age of 24). The society of the 19th century remained faithful to this division. LENDEROVÁ, *K hřichu i k modlitbě*, p. 14.

⁹¹ LENDEROVÁ, *Tragický bál*, p. 139.

was to pass an exam both at elementary and grammar school semi-annually.⁹² The exams for the scions of Sterneberg family were probably held at the Academic Grammar School in Vienna. Philipp and possibly his elder brother Alois as well were accompanied to the exams by the aforementioned Mr. Schier.

Similarly to their parents, the children wrote correspondence to the Count and Countess in times of separation. The letters of Philipp addressed to his parents inform us of the progress of exams in Vienna – in June 1870 the young nobleman was to pass exams from Latin, Greek, mathematics and history. If we were prone to believe his words, he seems to have been quite good student. The Latin exam is described in his words as follows: *“I just came from the exam, which took place from eight to twelve o’clock. According to Mr. Schier, I will be evaluated by marks one or two. [...] I was done before twelve o’clock.”* The next day Philipp wrote: *“Today I was finished at ten and it went really good, even better than yesterday.”*⁹³ Philipp was also to write an essay, in which he excelled as well: *“I just came from exam that took seven hours. I was finished the very first after writing three pages and one line on the fourth [page]. When I was done, I thought to myself: ‘It is eleven o’clock and that is very good.’”*⁹⁴

In order to lessen his longing for family, Philipp sometimes added descriptions of his average day and news from relatives, whom he visited quite frequently and often accompanied them to Schönbrunn.⁹⁵ In the half of June he managed to visit the famous zoological garden located there: *“We went to a menagerie where all animals were outside because of great heat and then on to vista and both ruins.”*⁹⁶ The next day, Phillip delineated preparations

⁹² BEZECNÝ, p. 86.

⁹³ Philipp to parents and siblings, 13. and 14. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁹⁴ Philipp to parents and siblings, 17. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁹⁵ For example: [...] *“Later I went to visit grandma, who looked marvelous. She was just on her way to aunt Sophia’s. [...] Today, I ate at grandma’s and later I am to go with aunt Sophia and Friedrich to Schönbrunn.”* Philipp to parents and siblings, 13. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁹⁶ Philipp to parents and siblings, 15. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

for procession of the feast of Corpus Christi: “*I saw grand preparations for the Corpus Christi procession. The whole St. Stephen Square, Graben and Kohlmarkt were filled with tribunes, planks, beams and various other wooden products.*”⁹⁷ During his stay in Vienna, the young nobleman often complained about tropical heat: “*Streets are empty, water is heating and eternally bright sky laughs at Vienna covered in sweat.*”

Noble children wrote their father letters of courtesy to his birthday or name day. “*Unfortunately, I have to welcome Your merry birthday by the most sincere congratulations from afar.*” wrote Philipp his father from Prague.⁹⁸ Furthermore, following lines came from Vienna: “*I think about papa’s birthday very much so I went to a church before the exam.*”⁹⁹

Philipp was very delighted from every received letter and always wrote cordial response with thanks: “*I found Zdenka’s letter sweaty (I was sweaty, not the letter) on the table. I tore it open and was very glad when I found it, written by you all, my dearest.*”¹⁰⁰ The letter’s parting words are always accompanied by “*Mr. Schier passes respectful regards*” or with addendum “*a kiss on hand [to the mother] and many greetings to Louis*” followed by his signature “*Euer euch innigst liebender Sohn und Bruder*”.

Philipp had the greatest fear from the Latin and Greek exam, for he had heard a gossip that “*what pedantic professor is to be present at the exam from Latin and Greek and with which indifference he attends the other parts of the exam, chatting quite aloud with the other professors*”. An addendum follows: “*For the time being I am planning to behave just as usual, only study more than necessary.*”¹⁰¹

In his correspondence, Philipp recollects his family: “*I was thinking about you during the journey and wished I could have been in Jemniště, for*

⁹⁷ Philipp to parents and siblings, 16. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

⁹⁸ Philipp to father, 11. 6. 1870, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

⁹⁹ Philipp to parents and siblings, 13. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁰⁰ Philipp to parents and siblings, 17. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁰¹ Philipp to parents and siblings, 25. 9. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

East or West, home's best."¹⁰² He also tries to apologise for his letters being "...inexcusably brief". "You all write so long correspondence and experience much more than I do." In his next letter he continues: "Your and father's missive, which I received today, pleased me immensely, the more so when I read that even my brief letters are welcomed among you."¹⁰³

At the end of some of the letters, Mr. Shier again "sends respectful regards" and also inquired Louis, "if she does not suffer from the lack of homework", while Philipp sent his regards as well in addition to kissing their hands, sending "a thousand times something pleasant" at one point even "1 000 000 of pleasant things to all" and he is always to be "obedient son". He planned his departure from Vienna on the 8th October in the evening, a day after his Matura exam.

The education of young ladies was also traditionally conducted at home. It seems that young countesses' upbringing was relatively similar to that of their mother's. The primary issue was the knowledge of multiple languages. We can identify from the archives that Countess' children had knowledge of German, French and English. Classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, were not part of the curriculum. Nevertheless, the young girl's upbringing was similarly exhausting as their male counterparts – in addition to handiwork, their education tended to be longer.¹⁰⁴ Karoline, the youngest, complained to her sister in one of her letters: "I was in pains to write you for a long time, but as you know I am a very miserable and exhausted individual. Everyday studying is on my schedule, followed by homework, more homework, then again studying [...]. Days flow, one by one. You know that from your experience and hopefully will bear with me."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Philipp to parents and siblings, 25. 9. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁰³ Philipp to parents and siblings, 30. 9. 1870; Philipp to mother, 1. 10. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁰⁴ LENDEROVÁ, *Tragický bál*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁵ Karoline to Kunigunde, 13. 11. 1872, No. 366, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 30.

Their brother Philipp, conversely, attained the knowledge of seven languages,¹⁰⁶ although the level of such knowledge amidst some of them is arguable at best. It is more than plausible that his brother Alois acquired the same level linguistic knowledge as well. In one particular letter sent from Vienna in 1876 to his sister Zdenka, Philipp utilised four different languages – after using in letter overall dominating German, he also wrote in English, followed by French and subsequently Czech as well.¹⁰⁷ In most cases, all Theresia's children wrote in German, occasionally with few lines in French. There was a letter written using only the English language as well, written once again by Philipp to Zdenka. In its introduction, he stated that he was curious whether or not he could accomplish writing a missive in English. Though he described himself as untalented writer, he was intent on trying at least.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, French letters are rare as well.

As far as correspondence addressed to Theresia is concerned it was not possible to acquire a letter written by Theresia herself. It is possible her writings did not survive or are hidden in an archive yet to be thoroughly explored. Nevertheless, she probably sent her offspring long missives, offering counsel and guidance. There is no other way than to investigate one-sided testimonies from sons' and daughters' point of view. Their letters addressed to her inform us of their mutual relationships and primarily of their childhood and youth.

Surviving correspondence of Theresia's children records much about their interests and skills, bearing in mind that these varied according to one's gender. Countess' daughters were led to the reading of books, although there are no diaries similar to Theresia's which could offer us a more comprehensive picture of their reading interests. Based on the analysis of correspondence, however, it is provable that Kunigunde read *Fanfan la Tulipe* and she

¹⁰⁶ He was to pass exams from Latin and Greek in the grammar school. His correspondence testifies the use of German, French, English, Czech and Italian languages.

¹⁰⁷ Philipp to Zdenka, 1. 5. 1876, No. 365, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Philipp to Zdenka, n. d., No. 365, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

additionally informed her mother that she had started reading *Mistress and Maid*.¹⁰⁹ Her elder sister likewise read *Amaura* by Alexander Dumas sr. to her¹¹⁰ and Karoline, the youngest of the children, was a diligent reader as well – in 1882 she received on Christmas *Sommermärchen* by Rudolf Baumbach.¹¹¹

Based on the evidence from the correspondence, it is beyond doubt that the young Countesses were also tutored in music. All three of them could play the piano – Karoline played with gusto Wagner's *Lohengrin*, whereas Zdenka played to Kunigunde *Trovatore* by Verdi. They were capable of playing a quadruple piano play simultaneously, all of them also sang arias of their favourite composers. Kunigunde's singing was commented by her brother Alois in following words: "*After I heard with the most sincere delight of you making such a commotion in Prague through your charming voice, my heart suddenly started pounding from that grand joy and I wrote you a song with wavering hand. We are wistfully hoping to hear you singing that song here in Konopiště.*"¹¹²

Theresia's daughters played theatre – in 1867 the two eldest performed in a play during the celebration of their mother's name day. The play in question, *Der Geburtstag der Mutter* by Ernst von Houwald, consisted of three acts and some of the roles were entrusted to their male siblings – Philipp had to deal with intricacies involved in playing old nanny Anna whereas Alois played the brother of Miss Stern, a rich merchant's widow. Among the performers were also Charlotte Mündel and Helena Bergmann, probably housemaids or governesses. The whole production was preceded by a duet performed by Countesses Zdenka and Kunigunda, the aforementioned Missis Bergmann sang Bellini's *Die Puritaner*.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ "*Mistress and Maid: A Household Story*" is novella by English novelist Dinah Maria Craik (1826–1887) from 1864. Kunigunde to mother, 13. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

¹¹⁰ Kunigunde to mother, 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

¹¹¹ Karoline to Kunigunde, 25. 12. 1882, No. 366, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 30.

¹¹² Alois to Kunigunde, 30. 4. 1871, No. 366, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 30.

¹¹³ The program of castle Theatre for the celebration of Countess' name-day, 14. 10 1863, No.

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Young Countesses' everyday life was filled with walks, rides, masquerade and other forms of balls, they also attended hunts (it is not supported by sources that the Countess herself was ever present at such an event) and played various games – Karoline received as a Christmas present *Reise nach Paris*, a game not specified in detail. Furthermore, Zdenka played with her father another game called *Zwick*. In winter season, the favourite way to pass time was ice-skating on Schwarzenbeg pond.

Theresia's sons often had quite different scale of interests – according to their correspondence, both brothers found avocation in painting, certainly apart from their father who was rather a man of practicality. “*I draw relatively often*” writes Alois to his mother, “*I also captured Konopiště Chateau. Whether it was good or bad, I dare not to say.*”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, his younger brother Philipp painted pictures to order: “*I have a lot to do, there are still paintings to be finished which were ordered by few countesses.*”¹¹⁵ Another of his interest – horses – gave subsequently birth to a number of horse racing paintings, today displayed in Český Šternberk Castle, particularly scenes from historically first Great Steeplechase of Pardubice in 1873. While depicting the battle of Königgrätz, Philipp did not forget to include his image among the combatants. Two significant artists, Alfons Mucha and Sigmund L'Allemand were counted among his friends.

A typical pastime for most of the nobles was horse riding and hunting. Some remarks on hunting events can be found even in the correspondence of young Sternberg Counts who remained faithful to their hunting fervour for the rest of their lives. Conversely, with the coming of the winter social season, they attended various balls and soirées or travelled abroad on which occasion they kept a number of travel diaries.

An important task for a noble mother and father was to find suitable grooms and bride for their offspring. The correspondence in question suggests

338, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 23.

¹¹⁴ Alois to mother, 1. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹¹⁵ Philipp to Zdenka, 29. 2. 1870, No. 365, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

that the very same rules which determined Theresia's future husband were in effect during the time of the next generation. The principle of equal social standing of a future husband or wife was still immutable. Individual's wealth and acceptable personality traits were of considerable value as well, sometimes followed by mutual affection, though this was still considered only an ideal case and did not have vast influence over the final decision.

Only second-born daughter Kunigunde married during Theresia's lifetime. On the 19th January 1870 the Sternberg family celebrated her wedding with Franz Eugen Prince von Lobkowitz (1839–1898) in Vienna.¹¹⁶ Whether or not was Theresia satisfied with her future son-in-law is impossible to ascertain. Certainly Kunigunde was, according to the correspondence written to her mother, and at least in a few first months of her marriage she seemed to have wonderful time.

Her new home from the spring of 1870 forth was to be Konopiště Chateau.¹¹⁷ In correspondence to Theresia she stated: *"We live here very comfortably and pleasantly. Only if you could be here with us and see we are happy!"*¹¹⁸ Her separation from siblings and parents was mitigated by their frequent visits and, naturally, by correspondence. At the end of May 1870, Kunigunde was visited by her father and brother Alois, who informed his mother diligently: *"We had wonderful Souper in the evening, father drank two cups of tea, whereas I only one, although instead of tea I had beer. Then I smoked and spent the night in a hidden room in a corner tower of the Chateau. In the morning, we had a walk with father and an accountant in the a garden. Breakfast was exceptionally tasteful. Then we went to a yard, where we had a tour around the whole place and where a locomobile was working under the*

¹¹⁶ Wedding announcement, 1870, No. 361, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 28.

¹¹⁷ Due to considerable debt, Franz Eugen had to sell Konopiště, which was purchased by Archduke Franz Ferdinand d'Este, a pretender to the throne of Austria-Hungary. J. ŽUPANIČ – M. FIALA – F. STELLNER, *Encyklopedie knížecích rodů zemí Koruny české*, Praha 2001, pp. 157–158; E. LOBKOWICZ, *Vzpomínky na monarchii*, Praha 1997, p. 26.

¹¹⁸ Kunigunde to mother, 28. 5. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

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*open sky. [...] Kunigunde looks wonderful [...].*¹¹⁹ Not even proper farewell is absent in his letters from Konopiště: “*Be healthy, I kiss mama’s hands, Zdenka’s left cheek, Philipp’s right cheek and Karoline’s ear. Father, who is today in Jemniště, Kunigunde and Franz heartily embrace you. The writer of this letter is Your grateful, ever obedient son, faithful brother respectively, Louis.*”¹²⁰

Both Kunigunde’s successes and failures in her role of a housewife were confided most of all to her mother: “*I had terrible fear because of papa. The food was truly delicious, papa was satisfied. By your advice, I made a salad and it was not bad at all. However, I made a stupid blunder after the meal – I forgot to serve coffee with cream! [...] I noticed it too late and was very downcast afterwards.*”

The correspondence contains also intimate information on her pregnancy: “*I am well, thank God. Actually, I do not feel ill at all, for which I am grateful. My waist is 70 centimetres thin and I have yet to feel any movements.*”¹²¹

At this moment, it was of grave importance to acquire appropriate wet nurse and nursemaid. The letters written to her mother suggest that Kunigunde consulted these issues with her mother as well. Attention was devoted especially to finding appropriate persons for such positions: “*Most of all, I would like to find a Kindsfrau, but such would not have time this year. We have here a young woman who begged me not to forget her in case I were in need of Kindsmädchen. She seems to be a very nice, orderly young girl.*”¹²² A very important prerequisite for a future governess were her linguistic abilities. Therefore, Kunigunde had to reject her because she could neither write nor speak in German.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Alois to mother, 27. 5. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹²⁰ Alois to mother, 1. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹²¹ Kunigunde to mother, 28. 5. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹²² Kunigunde to mother, 5. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹²³ Kunigunde to mother, 9. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

The young Princess also mentioned what transpired in other families: *“Franz was acquainted with Kamille Windischgrätz.¹²⁴ She is expecting a child as well. Franz does not find her pretty at all and Ernst seems to be henpecked.”*¹²⁵

In the time of her first pregnancy, Kunigunde seems to be quite cheerful and beside *“beloved Konopiště”*, she also spent portion of her time with her husband in Křimice. *“It is beautiful out here”* Kunigunde wrote to her mother. Her first descendant and Theresia’s first grandson was born on the 19th October 1870 and given name Eugen. Her sister Zdenka kept her company and informed their mother accordingly: *“The little boy is well and sleeps a lot.”* In another letter, she remarks: *“The baby boy is very cute. In the evening, when his parents come to bid him good night, Franz sings him. [...] Hearing him, we laughed to death.”* The Countess subsequently informed her mother of Kunigunde’s health: *“Kunigunde is fine, she goes sleep at half past nine,”* she also could not understand why the rest of the family could not come to see her when father was not home. *“It would have been so nice having you here!”* During these moments, Zdenka spent a great amount of time with her sister and their further missives to Theresia were similar in content to her previous: *“The baby boy was charming, I wanted to lull him to sleep but I was not patient enough.”* Once again contemplating and complaining about Theresia’s absence in Konopiště, Zdenka kept her mother informed of the baby boy’s and Kunigunde’s well-being: *“She woke up at half past eleven and lunched very well. Now she is in children’s room to have a look at how her little boy drinks.”* According to Zdenka’s description, it seems that the relationship between the two sisters was very close, which was enhanced further by small difference in age. As Zdenka wrote: *“I am with her all day, breakfasting on her bedside table, combing there, [...]”*¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Kamille Windischgrätz, née Princess von Oettingen – Spielberg (1845–1888), married Ernst Ferdinand Prince von Windischgrätz (1827–1918) in May 1870.

¹²⁵ Kunigunde to mother, 22. 7. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹²⁶ Kunigunde to mother, n. d., No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

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The joy of having a long expected child was soon replaced by the fear for his life. Two days before Christmas 1870, Theresia's sister-in-law sent her following lines: "*Today, I write You in place of our good mother. She and we are very busy with little Eugen. If it is not an illness but just a consequence of malnutrition, then with God's help we can truly hope.*"¹²⁷ The very next day however, Eugen died. We cannot hope to learn precise cause of his death, as the diagnoses of illnesses were often indeterminate and inaccurate. In baby boy's case, there was a number of things apart from alleged illness that could have resulted in the premature death – poor post-natal examination of the newborn, baby duvets for nobles which were impervious to air or a simple fact that the child was not breast-fed by his own mother, according to noble customs. We have no information on how Kunigunde herself dealt with the death of her own child. The very last missive to her mother was still written in optimistic spirit: "*Little boy is, thank the Lord, well, he is eager to drink and active in everything else.*"¹²⁸ Unfortunately, even towards the end of the 19th century, the infant mortality in Austria of 23,6 % was among the highest in Europe.¹²⁹

There is no lack of cordial salutation in the missives of Theresia's children. For her descendants, the Countess was always most of all *liebe Mama!* or *liebste Mama*. Especially her daughters were solicitous of her well-being: "*I hope you slept well and did not have any toothache!*"¹³⁰ her daughter Kunigunde wrote. In another letter she adds: "*The fact that the tooth does not cause you any more trouble is nice to hear. I wish it stays so forever!*"¹³¹ The very same care can be found from Zdenka's missives as well: "*How are you, my dear mama? I hope you sleep well and are not too upset.*"¹³² Zdenka wrote

¹²⁷ Ludwiga to Theresia, 22. 12. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹²⁸ Kunigunde to mother, 4. 12. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹²⁹ LENDEROVÁ – RÝDL, p. 271.

¹³⁰ Kunigunde to mother, 28. 5. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹³¹ Kunigunde to mother, 2. 6. 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹³² Zdenka to mother, October 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

from Konopiště, while she was still thinking about her and anticipated their reunion: “*We thought about You a lot, how alone You must have felt.*”¹³³ And in a different letter she added: “*There is such silence without you, my dear mama! I am looking forward to you coming home. I hope we will come see You tomorrow!*”¹³⁴ All her children undersigned their missives to her as *obedient daughter* or *obedient son*.

People living in the 19th century often had shorter life spans and died relatively young. Around the half of the century of steam, the average age life span of the inhabitants of the Czech lands was roughly 30 years and in the first years of the 20th century, this number increased to 40 years.¹³⁵ Naturally, these values were significantly reduced by rampaging infant mortality rate which was approximately 25 %, as mentioned before.¹³⁶ In the years 1869–1870, the probability of reaching the age of 70 was only 7,2 % for males and 7 % for females.¹³⁷

Theresia von Sternberg deceased in Vienna on the 2nd February 1873 at the age of 54. During the whole 19th century, the passing away occurred at home, in the presence of the family or the closest friends. The course of such an event can be illustrated by the case of Theresia’s nephew Leopold Albert¹³⁸ (1865–1937) – in aristocratic circles of the former Austrian Empire, apparently such customs did not change well into the 20th century. Such experience was deftly described by his daughter-in-law Cecilia von Sterneberg:¹³⁹ “*My father*

¹³³ Zdenka to mother, n. d., No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹³⁴ Zdenka to mother, December 1870, No. 362, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹³⁵ L. FIALOVÁ et al., *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí*, Praha 1996, p. 399.

¹³⁶ LENDEROVÁ – JIRÁNEK – MACKOVÁ, p. 252.

¹³⁷ FIALOVÁ, p. 396.

¹³⁸ Leopold Adalbert was the son of Leopold Count von Sternberg (1811–1899) and Luisa, née Princess zu Hohenlohe-Bartenstein-Jagstberg (1840–1873). He was a k. k. Chancellor, a member of the Geheimrat, a hereditary member of the Herrenhaus (House of Lords) of the Imperial Council (parliament of Austria-Hungary) and a honorary member of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. In 1895 he married Franciska, the Countess von Larisch-Mönnich (1873–1933). Family maiorate Častolovice-Zásmuky was bequeathed to his first-born son Leopold (1896–1957).

¹³⁹ Cecilia von Sternberg (1908–1983), née Countess von Reventlow-Criminil, married

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in law died surrounded by his entire family, to whom of course I then belonged. [...] I was not prepared for the almost public event that dying still was at that time among the Austrian aristocracy. Not only the immediate family attended, but also distant relations and friends, a doctor, a priest of course, a lawyer, and the servants. It had been so too at my mother-in-law's death. To have to listen to each rating breath of the death struggle in case some last word was said or wish expressed, to watch the administering of the last sacrament and to see a familiar face contort and grow unrecognizable shocked me deeply. Had they been my parents who were dying I would in my sorrow have perhaps forgotten the indecency of those who stood by dry-eyed and stared so avidly at physical dissolution. As it was, I felt deeply ashamed even of my own presence."¹⁴⁰

There was a set of rituals conducted after the demise of every nobleman. The common practise was to have the dead body thoroughly examined in order to identify the cause of death and prevent possible burying of seemingly dead people who were actually still alive. The official obligation to conduct such examination was introduced in 1770.¹⁴¹ It seems that the fear of being buried alive was not such a rare occurrence. Theresia von Sternberg herself begged in the testament her husband to wait with closing the coffin as long as possible.¹⁴² Since 1756, there was even a law proclaimed in Habsburg dominions that prohibited burying dead bodies before at least two days have passed, with the exception of deceased being killed by a contagious disease.¹⁴³

Following Theresia's death, all necessities were being seen to by a funeral parlour in Vienna.¹⁴⁴ Among its duties was also to prepare the last farewell with the departed realized in Vienna and ensuing transfer of the dead body to Radnice

Leopold von Sternberg (1896–1957) in 1928. She had one daughter, Diana Franziska (*1936).

¹⁴⁰ Citation according to: STERNBERG, *The Journey*, London 1977, pp. 109–110.

¹⁴¹ LENDEROVÁ – JIRÁNEK – MACKOVÁ, p. 254.

¹⁴² Codicil, 6. 5. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁴³ LENDEROVÁ – JIRÁNEK – MACKOVÁ, p. 254.

¹⁴⁴ It is impossible to discern from documents which funeral home in Vienna performed all the services. The overall price was 1 366 Guldens and 83 Kreuzers of Austrian currency (between 1858–1892, the basic coin unit had 1 Gulden 100 Kreuzers).

in order to be taken to rest in Sternberg family tomb in Horní Stupno. The coffin was usually on display with the guard of honour standing beside and then the relatives and closest ones were allowed to bid their last farewell. After closing the coffin, a train of mourners was formed and subsequently the funeral service was conducted, followed by the placement of the coffin into the tomb which was consequently closed.¹⁴⁵

Currently, the tomb in Stupno hosts five members of the House of Sternberg. The first one to rest there was Aloisia (1762–1831), followed by Kaspar Maria, the most known member of the house. Zdenko Count von Sternberg was laid beside Theresia in 1900 and the last inhabitant of the tomb was to become their eldest son, Alois (1850–1907).

A moral obligation of any Christian was to write a testament. Theresia von Sternberg decided to “*establish my earthly wishes*”, for she intended, as written in the testament’s introduction, “*to be concerned only [underlined by T.] with eternity*”.¹⁴⁶ The foremost thing of importance for the Countess was to warrant her soul’s salvation. This was to be achieved by religious and charitable bequests. Following her death, there was to be 50 memorial services conducted in her memory both at Český Šternberk and Radnice. Furthermore, the poor were to receive 500 Guldens of Austrian currency in both dominions with Countess remarking to have them pray for her.

Christian faith and reverence for God were inseparable parts of her life. First and foremost, Theresia commanded “*her ardently loved husband, their children, mother and siblings to pray for her*” and hoped “*they would never [underlined by T.] forget about her in their prayers*”. She thanked her husband for cheerful years she spent by his side and for all his love. People could find solace in the fact that after they all died, they would have reunite once again in heaven. Theresia’s only wish was to “*stay with Zdenko and*

¹⁴⁵ LENDEROVÁ – JIRÁNEK – MACKOVÁ, p. 258.

¹⁴⁶ Copy of testament of Theresia von Sternberg, 10. 4. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 29.

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her children forever united in God” and therefore urged them to “*never to neglect their Christian [underlined by T.] duties*”.¹⁴⁷

Countess' last settlement attests to her responsibility (or perhaps duty) to domestic staff. Particular attention was given to chambermaid Franziska Rosina (Fanny) who always served her with “*love and fidelity*”. She received an annual pension of 300 Guldens of Austrian currency (henceforth Guldens) and was to further attend to her husband. Countess also donated Fanny most of linen and clothing and expressed a wish that she was to receive a bottle of holy water with a silver stopper, golden brooch and earrings with malachite gemstones (jewels having the total value of 12 Guldens). The other servants were to receive 10 Guldens, whereas chambermaid Leopoldina Holl received 20 Guldens.¹⁴⁸ According to surviving archives, the 10 Guldens were paid to 18 persons,¹⁴⁹ therefore the total domestic staff of Sternberg family probably comprised of roughly 20 people.

Theresia's wealth in currency and in stocks was to be divided equally among all her children. Further distribution of Theresia's property was specified in detail. It is safe to conclude that she preferred her children to her husband and sons to her daughters. In fact, her female descendants indeed received larger portion of property but the sons were to be given the most valuable pieces.

Her most valuable jewellery was bequeathed to her two sons while stipulating that her daughters were to receive compensation in a value decided by Theresia's husband. To Alois, the eldest, a diamond diadem consisting of five diamond roses was given, whereas to younger Philipp she bequeathed a necklace made of six strings of pearls with a brilliant clip and a ruby. In addition, he received a pair of earrings constituted by pearl droplet with brilliant ribbon and brilliant surface. Philipp received jewellery in total value

¹⁴⁷ Copy of testament of Theresia von Sternberg, 10. 4. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁴⁸ Copy of testament of Theresia von Sternberg, 6. 5. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁴⁹ Listing of inheritance shares, 30. 5. 1873, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

of 8 400 Guldens. Theresia also expressed a wish that these jewels were to remain in their own line of the House of Sternberg.¹⁵⁰ Let us add that since Alois died unmarried, the diadem was subsequently given to his sister-in-law, Karoline née Countess von Thurn-Valsassina,¹⁵¹ who was to bequeath it to her son Georg Count von Sternberg.¹⁵²

Jewellery of lesser value was also given to Theresia's daughters. Both Zdenka and Kunigunde inherited a pearl necklace with 222 pieces of pearls and with a brilliant clip in a value of 1 725 Guldens per one necklace. Her youngest daughter Karoline was to receive two brooches of total value of 1 250 Guldens. Theresia's cordial relationship with her daughters was manifested by further presents: The eldest Zdenka also received a golden necklace with a turquoise (80 Guldens), which she always wore and to her, "*it was dearest above all else in her possession*". Kunigunde gained a silver travel cutlery (8 Guldens), whereas a golden utensils consisting of thimble, scissors, pincushion and rivet in total value of 16 Guldens were given to Karoline.

Every of her descendants were given one of rings (4 Guldens a piece) which she wore. All her children were to divide among themselves a collection of silverware – in testament, larger tea set, a small teakettle, a small coffee kettle, two silver dressing tables, double shadow candelabra, a small set, 6 pieces of cutlery and 12 coffee spoons, while adding that the larger tea set was to be reserved for use by Zdenko until the end of his lifetime.¹⁵³ The exclusive part of her wardrobe was also given to her daughters including three Countess' scarves, black and white laces, ermine collar, a fur set of clothes made from

¹⁵⁰ If both brothers have died without any male descendants, the jewels would have been passed to their sisters and subsequently to their offspring. Copy of testament of Theresia von Sternberg, 10. 4. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁵¹ Karoline Countess von Thurn-Valsassina-Como-Vercelli (1863–1944) married Philipp, the Count von Sternberg (1852–1924) in 1884. They had 4 children: Zdenko (1885–1899), Georg Douglas (1888–1965), Maria Gabriela (1890–1934) and Theresia (1902–1985).

¹⁵² Copy of testament of Alois von Sternberg, 12. 5. 1904, No. 374, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 32, 33.

¹⁵³ Copy of testament of Theresia von Sternberg, 10. 4. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

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the marten and a musquash set with a muff in total value of 260 Gulden. As mentioned, the rest of her wardrobe received chambermaid Fanny.¹⁵⁴ One more time, the Countess mentioned her sons – Alois also received the painting of a horse by his father and a portrait of their father painted by Daffinger was given to Philipp.

The Countess did not forget about her husband. She bequeathed him a golden lady's watch (40 Gulden), her prayer book (1 Gulden) and a silver Christian cross (5 Gulden).¹⁵⁵ He was also to receive a golden ring (10 Gulden) and one brilliant earring (300 Gulden).¹⁵⁶

Besides her husband and offspring, the Countess also presented other members of family, as well as close friends, with various gifts. Donated items were often of no considerable value but were of sentimental significance to recipients. In doing so, the Countess strove to comfort them and simultaneously manifest what that particular person meant to her. Another intention was to preserve her memory among the bereaved.

These included various paintings, photographs, rosaries, flacons, casings, spoons, a bookmark, a brooch, prayer books and other minor items.

An inventory of her possessions was compiled on the 28th February 1873. Theresia von Sternberg left a vast property – cash (2 216 Gulden, henceforth G.), jewellery (32 324 G. in total), silverware (901 G.), bonds (38 835 G. and 4 Kreuzers), personal receivables (38 600 G.), linen (78 G.), clothes (820 G.) and various other items (53 G. and 50 Kreuzers). In total, her property amounted to 113 737 Gulden and 54 Kreuzers.¹⁵⁷

By dividing her possessions among family, the life of Theresia von Sternberg, née von Stadion-Thannhausen came finally to an end. Her

¹⁵⁴ Copy of testament of Theresia von Sternberg, 6. 5. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁵⁵ Copy of testament of Theresia von Sternberg, 10. 4. 1864, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁵⁶ Inventory of Theresia's property, 28. 2. 1873, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

personality and benign nature was expressed in words of parish priest of Radnice: *“What a grand, truly noble lady she was, a tenderly caring mother, a devout and godly Catholic woman, kind benefactress of the poor [...] and I dare to say a magnificent and noble patroness of none other than myself [...].”*¹⁵⁸

Those who remembered her most were of course her closest – Zdenko and her children – who always commemorated their mother and wife (not only) on her death’s anniversary. They had requiem held in her memory in order to pray for her soul’s salvation and devoted her (and Zdenko as well after his decease) especial remembrance: *“It will be 15 years tomorrow since our great mother left us and we will devotedly reminisce during tranquil mass, which will be read.”* wrote Philipp to his father.¹⁵⁹ In October 1900 he also wrote to Zdenka: *“We agreed that from this year forth a requiem for our parents will be held in Stupno tomb, always on the All Souls’ Day.”*¹⁶⁰

In 1903, at the age fifty two, Alois remembered her mother in following words: *“Today it is full 30 years since our dear God imposed a hard trial on us, when we lost our dear now deceased mama. It will be indeed odd to hear when I pronounce a doubt if our mother does need requiem to salve her soul at all, since we know that our beloved mama was insurmountably devout and fulfilled her religious duty from A to Z. What an exemplary daughter, wife, mother she was, with what angelic patience and godlike devotion she withstood all her sufferings. Can we even dare to have doubts that our beloved God took her beside him? I am very curious what will you answer to that. I suspect You will tell me – quite right naturally – that fulfilling this children’s duty will benefit us indeed.”* Alois himself did not doubt at all, when he in his letter to Kungunde added that *“a child has an obligation [underlined by Alois] to pray for his or hers parents’ salvation, and if possible to have a requiem*

¹⁵⁸ Pastor from Horní Stupno to Zdenko, 21. 2. 1873, No. 364, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

¹⁵⁹ Philipp to father, 1. 2. 1888, No. 335, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 22.

¹⁶⁰ Philipp to Zdenka, 28. 10. 1900, No. 365, SOA Praha, RA Šternberkú, Cart. 29.

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*held for them. Whether or not the souls of our parents need it, let us leave that for our omniscient God to decide”.*¹⁶¹

After examination of Theresia von Sternberg’s life, it is plausible to state that the Countess was not remarkable at all. Her life was not filled with exceptional or scandal situations, non-standard customs which could be deemed atypical for the lives of noble ladies of the 19th century. However, this is what renders Countess Theresia’s unremarkable life, in fact, quite remarkable, as it allows us to partially reveal the prototype of a noblewoman in the 19th century.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to depict the life of Theresia von Sternberg (1819–1873), née von Stadion-Thannhausen. Although the research of an archive material led to presenting the Countess as average and unremarkable, the look at her private life represents an interesting insight. At the background of Countess’ life, the author presents a certain prototype of a noblewoman of the 19th century and simultaneously offers an insight into the family and everyday life of aristocratic circles. This work is based on the currently unpublished primary sources, primarily the so called ego-documents (family correspondence and Countess’ personal diary). Furthermore, the personal documents of official nature – a marriage contract, a testament or an inventory of the deceased and others – were utilized as well.

Keywords

Noblewoman, Bohemia, Aristocracy, 19th Century, Austria, Sternberg, Correspondence, Biography, Life Style

¹⁶¹ Alois to Kunigunde, 2. 2. 1903, No. 366, SOA Praha, RA Šternberků, Cart. 30.

