

Maria Valerie and Mary Throckmorton.

Mary Elizabeth Throckmorton was born in 1832, the daughter of Sir Robert George Throckmorton and Elizabeth Acton. She held the office of Lady-in-Waiting to Elizabeth, Empress of Austria and travelled to the continent multiple times.

Maria Valerie was the fourth child of Empress Elizabeth and the Emperor Franz Joseph born on the 22 April 1868. Mary Throckmorton's relationship the Archduchess Maria Valerie started when Maria very young. On the 4th November 1868 the Empress Elizabeth wrote to Mary Throckmorton, in order to arrange her daughter's education.

'ever since dear baby is born, I had but the one wish, that I might be so happy, as to see you take charge of her education'

Elizabeth knew of Mary through her sister the Queen of Naples; Mary's maternal grandfather, Sir John Acton, 6th Baronet, had been commander of the Neapolitan Navy, and the Acton family still had strong connections with the Royal Court.

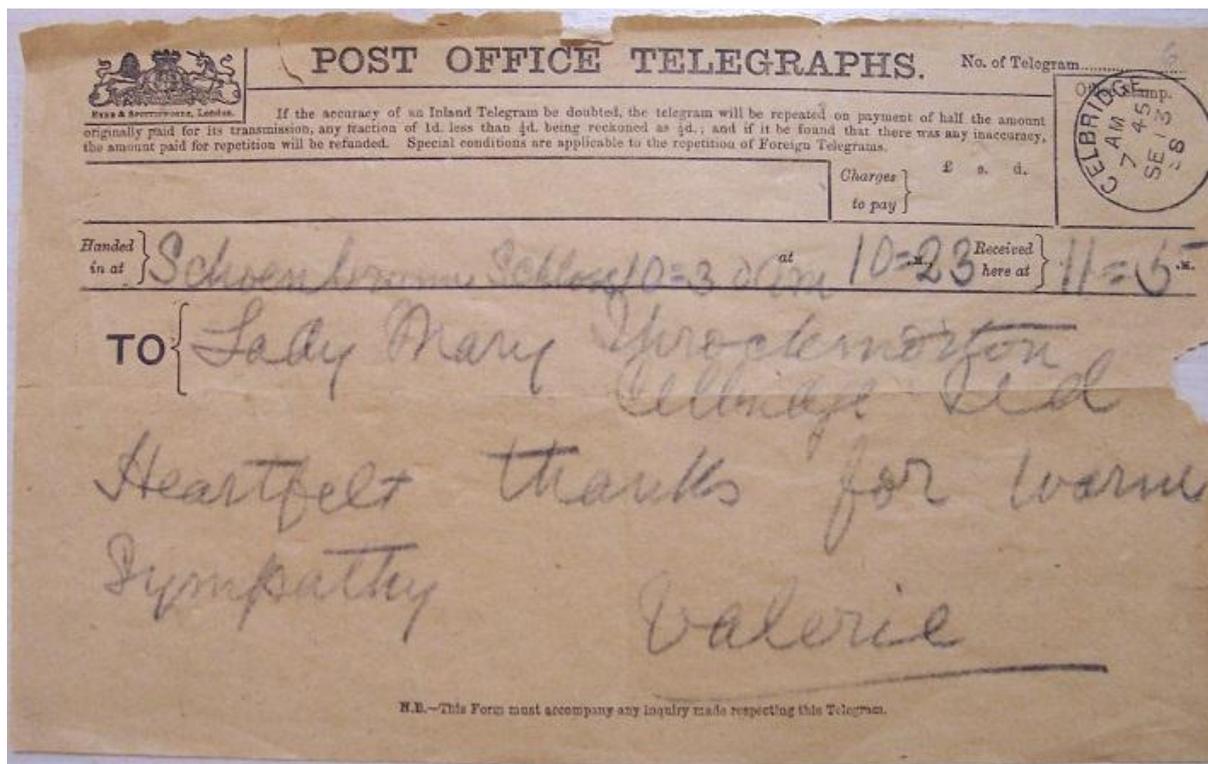
After her time with Maria Valerie, Mary returned to England but remained in correspondence with Maria Valerie frequently visiting her and other friends in the Austrian court. Maria Valerie called Mary 'Aunty Minny' demonstrating the close bond between them.

Maria Valerie wrote to Mary often and as a child this included drawings of people, flowers and animals, which she drew very well. Once she became older there were fewer drawings amongst the letters but she continued to write personal letters regarding important events in her life. The letter displayed shows a drawing of her pet cat Minet in 1880 when she was 12 years old.

The telegram dated the 27th December 1888 announces her engagement to the Archduke Franz Salvator who she married in July 1890.

'I am happy to tell you that I am engaged to the Archduke Francis Salvation'

Later letters also tell of Maria's children and various bereavements in the family including the news of the Empress Elizabeth's assassination in 1898. Mary must have sent condolences for which Marie Valerie expressed her gratitude shortly afterwards via telegram.



CR1998/GS/6 Glass Showcase - telegraph following the assassination of Empress Elizabeth

'Heartfelt thanks for warm sympathy'

In 1898 after the Empress' death she was awarded with the Order of Elizabeth First Class which was created by Franz Joseph in commemoration of his wife; it was disbanded in 1918 on the collapse of the monarchy.

Mary died on the 11 December 1919 a letter to Mary's sister shortly afterwards reflects Maria's sorrow.

'Your dear sister embodied for me remembrances of my earliest childhood, and her so long and true affection and interest in all concerned me and mine touched me deeply and will live on in my heart in loving gratitude'

Maria herself died on 6 September 1924 aged only 56.

The Assassination of Empress Elizabeth.

On the 10th September 1898 Empress Elizabeth of Austria, or Sissi, wife of the Emperor Franz Joseph I, was in Geneva, Switzerland. Travelling anonymously she set out on foot with a Lady in Waiting, the Countess Sztaray, in order to catch a steamship bound for Montreux, having sent her servants ahead by train.

On the promenade Elizabeth was approached by a man who proceeded to stab her with a long thin sharpened file managing to penetrate her heart. Unaware that she had been badly injured Elizabeth continued towards the steamer assisted by the

Countess. Elizabeth made it to the steamer only to collapse on board. It was only when she examined the collapsed Elizabeth that the Countess realised how bad her injuries were and revealed the identity of the Empress to the Captain who took the ship back to Geneva. Elizabeth was returned to her hotel at once and several physicians staying there attempted to revive her, however they were unsuccessful and she died shortly after.

Her assailant had been Luigi Lucheni an anarchist set on killing a member of the aristocracy. He had initially intended to kill the Duke of Orléans who was not in Geneva at the time and therefore opportunistically encountered Elizabeth.

Document Reference Numbers:

CR1998/Large Veneered Box/39

CR1998/55/5/14 SS (Showcase in Saloon)

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