

König Ludwig II

Ludwig II. - Childhood and Youth

Ludwig's parents were King Maximilian II and Queen Marie from Prussia, and both parents kept themselves at a distance with their sons.

1. Maximilian, father

- He wanted a beautiful wife and got one with Queen Marie.
- He left her alone with the two sons for long periods of time
- Ludwig and his brother were raised strictly, with an emphasis on duty.

2. Marie, mother

- She was a very beautiful woman, who was more concerned about her beauty and what she was wearing than her sons.
- She was a lovely, soft-hearted woman, who was never permitted to interfere with Ludwig's upbringing.
- Ludwig felt he couldn't talk to his mother about his problems.

He did not even acknowledge her conversion from the protestant to the Roman Catholic faith, which she underwent in the church at Waltenhofen. He saw it only as a sign of her inconstancy and opportunism, which led her to adopt the religion of the majority in catholic Bavaria. His relationship with his mother remained a serious problem throughout his life and caused in him a strong mistrust of all things female – despite the fact that these were precisely what he yearned for.

Evidence of her own lovelessness was her aversion to the very word "love". At a symposium organised by Maximilian II in his study at the royal residence, at which the intellectuals of Munich showed off their learning and exchanged profound thoughts over beer and cigars, Queen Marie (who seems to have been there by accident) made the proposal that in future the word "love" should be replaced by "friendship" in all poetry.

This spiritually barren mother is described thus by Paul Heyse: "Despite tremendous efforts, it has proved impossible to interest the queen in literature and poetry. She is only happy with the most trivial chatter..." To one woman Marie said quite frankly: "I never read a book and cannot understand how anyone can just sit down and read." When Ludwig was six Queen Marie wrote the following lines about her son in her diary: "From an early age Ludwig has been fascinated by art; he loves building, especially churches, monasteries and the like."

Ludwig was now crown prince. As a baby he was not suckled by his mother, but, as was the rule in European royal families of the time, by his wet-nurse. Over the years there were many rumours about this nurse; for example, she was said to have had syphilis and, through breast-feeding, to have infected the young Prince Ludwig. However, these rumours seem all to have been unsubstantiated and groundless.

Anyway there is only a basis for such rumours, if one accepts that King Ludwig became mentally ill. But there is no longer any reason to believe this. Ludwig's mother not only denied the child her breast but also the heartfelt love that is so important for an infant. From a very early age Ludwig suffered from his mother's coldness and lack of love. Later he was to describe his royal mother, with whom he always behaved very correctly, as a selfish, opportunistic, materialistic and pleasure-seeking woman, whom he did his best to avoid as much as possible. He always kept himself well informed of his mother's whereabouts, so that he could arrange not to meet her.