

## König Ludwig II

### Childhood and adolescent years

Even as a boy, he roamed the valleys and forests around Hohenschwangau. He kept his love of the mountains and its simple, devoted, and uncomplicated inhabitants all his life. The Prince, who seldom had a person in whom he could confide and to whom he could pour out his heart, erected already in his youth a world of his own remote from life and self-centred. Growing older, he directed his main interest to literature. Above all, the young Prince loved the pathos of the poems and dramas of Friedrich von Schiller. This poetical style suited the idealistic-minded and romantic enthusiast, and even then helped him to divorce himself from a profane world and to flee into a "spiritual paradise", where everything was noble and beautiful.

At nine Ludwig was given a tutor, Major General Theodor de la Rosee. Wilfried Blunt described him as a thorough snob "who spent more time admonishing his pupils and ensuring that they kept a proper distance from the lower orders than he did teaching them the contents of their schoolbooks". The dreamy child had considerable difficulty with learning. He learnt to speak French fluently, because he was highly motivated and because the language suited his self image and outlook on life, but he did not get far with Latin and found Ancient Greek even more difficult, although he did manage to absorb a basic knowledge of the classics.

Ludwig's childhood years did have happy moments. He lived for much of the time at Castle Hohenschwangau, a fantasy castle his father had built near the Schwansee (Swan Lake) near Füssen. It was decorated in the gothic style with countless frescoes depicting heroic German sagas. The family also visited Lake Starnberg. As an adolescent, Ludwig became close friends with his aide de camp, Prince Paul of Bavaria's wealthy Thurn und Taxis family. The two young men rode together, read poetry aloud, and staged scenes from the Romantic operas of Richard Wagner. The friendship ended when Paul became engaged in 1866.

*"Ludwig enjoyed dressing up ... took pleasure in play acting, loved pictures and the like... and liked ... making presents of his property, money and other possessions", said his mother.*

**This was not to change. His vivid imagination, his tendency to isolate himself, and his pronounced sense of sovereignty were also already evident when Ludwig was a child.**

The boys were given only meagre amounts of pocket money. One day, in order to get hold of some money, Prince Otto went of his own accord to a Munich dentist and tried to persuade him to take out two of his back teeth, because he had heard that healthy teeth fetched a good price. Ludwig kept accurate accounts of his money in an exercise book. This shows that he gave away the majority of his limited pocket money or spent it on other people.

One thing that he bought for himself at the age of 15 was a statue of William Tell, and a while later he also acquired the story of Swiss hero. At Christmas, just like other children, Ludwig wrote a list of the presents he wanted. This included a model railway, a penknife, a prayer book called "Flowers of Devotion", which he especially wanted to have bound in ivory with a spine of blue velvet and a lapislazuli cross on the cover. Other things that he asked for for Christmas were a picture of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, a clock or a picture of the tournament of the Knights of the Swan.