

König Ludwig II

Ludwig II. - Childhood and Youth

Maximilian's inflexible ideas on the upbringing of children extended well beyond the subject of food. He insisted that his sons were always woken very early, so that they rarely had enough sleep. He took every step imaginable to prevent his sons, especially Ludwig the dreamer, being pampered. For example, Ludwig had a tortoise which he was very fond of and which he looked after diligently. When his father found out about this he immediately had the tortoise taken away.

It is well known that Maximilian II was captivated by the ancient Greek ideal of a strict upbringing and was especially influenced by the Stoics. So, for example, the king instructed that his two sons, Ludwig and Otto, should never be allowed to eat until their hunger was fully satisfied. He was worried that his sons might grow up as weaklings or fall prey to decadence. Both princes suffered considerably under this régime and as a result of it were always hungry. Both the housekeeper, Liesl, and the footmen frequently let the princes have a share of their own generous rations. In spite of this, it is still not surprising to learn that the princes took every opportunity to escape from narrow confines of the castle.

In the Schramm household the princes were always offered something to eat, even though the Schramms knew perfectly well that this did not accord with the wishes of the royal parents. But it was not only at the Schramms that the princes tried to satisfy their hunger. They also called on other families in Hohenschwangau. And in the fields and meadows Ludwig and his brother sought out the company of Schwangau farm laborers, who tended not to go home for the midday meal but took a simple packed lunch into the fields, which they were happy to share with the two royal youngsters. It soon became well known in the local farming community that the princes were always hungry and that this was caused by the king's eccentric views on the upbringing of children.

Prince Ludwig also frequently accompanied the castle warden, Franz Schramm, on his daily rounds. This was because Ludwig, with his constant thirst for knowledge, never tired of the many stories that Franz Schramm told. Over the years Schramm had become an unrivalled expert on Hohenschwangau castle, its history and legends. He told the princes all the mysterious stories about the castle and the knights of Schwangau as well as a wealth of German folk tales. And Crown Prince Ludwig maintained his contact with castle warden Schramm even after he was crowned king of Bavaria. This fatherly friend became warden of Hohenschwangau when Ludwig was only four years old and held the post until four years after the king's death in 1886.

The young Max Schramm lived with his parents in a house which is now number 25 Alpestrasse. The princes and Max Schramm used to visit each other and play together, either in Hohenschwangau Castle or at the Schramms' house, or they were also allowed to play in the idyllic countryside around the castle. The relationship between Ludwig and Otto and their young playmate, Max Schramm, was not affected by the Arco incident (Max was the eldest son of the Hohenschwangau castle warden and his wife, Franz and Anna Schramm). Their favorite game was for Ludwig to be the king, with Otto and Max playing his subjects and servants.

Apart from very few exceptions, young Ludwig spent his childhood at Hohenschwangau Castle in the company of his mother, the servants of the castle, and the simple mountain farmers. His education was directed by tutors who were not always suited to the active mind of Ludwig. The paintings of German legends in Hohenschwangau Castle captivated the Prince and intensified the romantic outlook on life, which he had inherited from both his father and his grandfather.