

NOTES ON CATHERINE OF BRAGANÇA, QUEEN OF
CHARLES II OF ENGLAND, AND HER LIFE IN
PORTUGAL.

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As November 25, 1938 is the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of Catherine of Bragança, some notes about her life in Portugal prior to her marriage and after her return as a widow may be of interest. Much less is known about these two periods than about the years she spent in England.

Catherine's birthplace, the Palace of the Dukes of Bragança at Vila Viçosa in Alentejo, still retains the appearance which it presented in the seventeenth century. The structure was begun in 1501 by Dom Jaime, 3rd Marquis of Vila Viçosa and 4th Duke of Bragança, and was greatly enlarged by his successors¹. It is very large and imposing and the interior, like the exterior, is in an excellent state of preservation. Close to the main building is the so-called *Janela de Lisboa*, «Lisbon Window», from which the Duchess of Bragança, Catherine's mother, is said to have watched for the messengers who brought the news that the Spanish Vice-Reine had been overthrown, and that the Duke of Bragança had been proclaimed King John IV of Portugal.

The Palace of the Condes of Almada on the north side of the *Largo de S. Domingos*, in Lisbon, close to the *Rossio*, was

¹ *Os Duques de Bragança* por B. GUERRA CONDE JÚNIOR.

one of the meeting-places of the patriots who resolved to liberate Portugal from the Spanish yoke and to offer the crown to Catherine's father. A movement is at present on foot to preserve this palace as a national monument. The fact is not so well known that the Portuguese nobles who were to prove the liberators of their country also met in the Palace of the Duke of Bragança in Lisbon. This magnificent residence was located on the heights behind the modern *Praça do Duque da Terceira*, close to the *Cais do Sodré*. It was here that the noblemen heard of the consent of Catherine's father to become King. This Lisbon Palace of the Braganças was begun in the fourteenth century by «The Holy Constable» Nuno Alvares Pereira whose daughter married the first Duke of Bragança, illegitimate son of King John I. When Catherine's father ascended the throne of Portugal as John IV and occupied the Royal Palace on the *Terreiro do Paço*, the family mansion of the Braganças was converted into the *Tesouro*, Treasury, and *Guarda-Joias* of the royal family. Vestiges of the building were in existence as late as 1841 when they were completely destroyed by fire. Subsequently, the Braganças erected many fine residences on this area, including the famous *Hotel de Bragança* which, in the nineteenth century, was Lisbon's leading hotel and which has now been transformed into the offices occupied by the *Companhias Reunidas de Gas e Electricidade*.

It is interesting to read in the records of the reign of John IV of the measures which this enlightened monarch approved to introduce healthier conditions into the city of Lisbon and other towns in his kingdom. Amongst the laws passed were those dealing with the disposal of dead animals. All the bodies had to be buried, and transgressors were to be fined 200 reis for neglecting to inter the carcass of an ox or a sheep, and 100 reis and 50 reis respectively for leaving the body of a dog or a cat unburied¹.

In the Lisbon Royal Palace Catherine was brought up in strict seclusion, as was customary for a seventeenth-century Portuguese princess. Maynard, the English Consul in Lisbon,

¹ Cartório da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa. Livro I. Tit. 68. par. 15 and following.

described her as being «as sweet a dispositioned princess as ever was born, a lady of excellent parts, but bred hugely retired. She hath hardly been ten times out of the palace in her life»¹. Historians have referred to the probability of Catherine having been educated in a convent of which she subsequently became patronesse. It seems more probable, however, that her association with the Convent of the *Sacramento*, described by Sir Francis Parry, the British Chargé d'Affaires, as «standing just inside the great gate that goes to Alcântara», dated from 1679. In that year, when the Popish Plot became a menace to Catherine's life in England, the Portuguese Government were anxious that she should leave her husband and return to Portugal, and Sir Francis Parry mentioned that the Convent of the Sacramento would be a suitable institution for Catherine's residence. This very aristocratic convent was situated in the immediate vicinity of the present *Rua do Sacramento a Alcântara* which is a continuation of the *Calçada de Pampulha* and leads into the *Praça de Alcântara*.

A great deal of information respecting the Lisbon of Catherine's day is obtainable from the documents relating to the festivities connected with her departure for England as Queen. When the news reached Portugal that Charles II had informed Parliament of his intention to marry Catherine of Bragança there was much rejoicing, not only in Lisbon but throughout the whole of Portugal. Amongst other festivities there was a procession which passed up the *Rua Nova* to the Church of *S. Domingos*. The streets and houses were magnificently decorated, musicians and dancers entertained the crowds of spectators, and the author of one chronicle remarked that the finest ornaments of all were the lovely ladies at the windows, adding that Lisbon had always been celebrated for the beauty of her daughters².

The nobles participated in the gala bull-fights which lasted

¹ Letter to Sir Edward Nicholas, Secretary of State.

² *Relacion de las Fiestas que se hizieron en Lisboa con la nueva del Casamiento de la Serenissima Infanta de Portugal Doña Catalina con el Serenissimo Rey de la Gran Bretaña Carlos Segundo.* (Lisbon 1662).

for three days and were held on the *Terreiro do Paço*. Such magnificent stands were erected for the spectators that the same chronicler lamented the expense incurred for so short a period.

The *Relacion* mentioned in the footnote includes references to the arrival in Lisbon of «Hugo Cholmly», bearer of letters from Charles II to his bride; of «Duarte Montegu», *cavalleirigo maior*, grand equerry of the new Queen of England, and of «Ricardo Talbob», *Caballero Irlandez muy principal em sangue*, a distinguished Irish aristocrat. These three British nobles were housed first in the royal *Quinta de S. Sebastião da Pedreira*, in the vicinity of the *Parque Eduardo VII* of today, and subsequently in the *Casa del Senor Infante Dom Pedro* in the *Corpo Santo* district. This palace was filled with treasures and was noted for its luxury. It was here that Lord Sandwich stayed when, on arrival with the fourteen men of war that were to escort Catherine to England, he made a triumphant entry into the capital.

Four days before her departure, which was fixed for St. George's Day, April, 23, 1662, Catherine received all the English residents in Lisbon and they had the privilege of kissing her hand.

On the day on which she was to sail, Catherine bade farewell to her mother in the great *Paço da Ribeira* on the *Terreiro do Paço*. In the Print Room of the British Museum there is a series of plates by Stoepp illustrating Catherine's progress from Portugal to England. In several of these most valuable records there are excellent views of the Lisbon Royal Palace as it was in Catherine's day. Begun by King Emmanuel the Fortunate (1495-1521), the Palace was extended and embellished by John III (1521-1557) and by Philip II of Spain when he was King of Portugal (1580-1598). The last named monarch employed the Italian architect Terzi to design additions which included a tower overlooking the river. This tower was situated on the area of the river frontage of the present Ministry of War. When the Great Earthquake of 1755 shattered the Palace, the value of the treasures lost was incalculable. The library which had been noted as one of the finest private libraries in Europe was also destroyed.

In the *Torre do Tombo* (The Record Office) a letter is preserved from the Duke of Cadaval with regard to the position that his carriage was to occupy in the great procession from the Palace to the Cathedral where Catherine attended a benedictory Mass before embarking. Eventually it was decided that this nobleman should be in the first coach. Immediately behind him was Lord Montague the grand equerry of the new Queen of England. Catherine, with her two brothers, Alphonso VI and Prince Pedro, afterwards Pedro II, occupied the third coach. Triumphal arches erected by the various commercial guilds of the city decorated the route, via the *Tanoaria*, the *Calcetaria*, the *Rua Nova* and the *Padaria*, to the Cathedral.

After the service in the Cathedral the procession returned to the riverside, close to the *Ribeira das Nãos*. The royal coach entered a garden through a door specially constructed for this purpose: everybody else had to proceed on foot to a pier or jetty which was ornamented with flags and pennons. The scene of the embarkation is most graphically depicted in one of Stoep's plates.

Thirty years were to elapse before Catherine returned to Lisbon but, as her letters testify, her affection for the land of her birth never weakened. There was, all down the years, a regular exchange of correspondence and dispatch of gifts between the Queen of England and her relations. In the State Papers of Portugal of the years 1674-1676 there are interesting references in the letters of Sir Francis Parry to a silver bedstead which Dom Pedro, then Regent for his brother Alphonso VI, despatched to his sister.

In a letter dated March 30 / April 9, 1675, the following passage occurs:

«But the «Saudades» rode safe all the while; whose Captain tells me that they assure him that she shall saile for England the Munday sennight after Easter Day. She hath been staid all this while for the Presents they are sending to his Mag'ty and the Queene, viz, a Bedstead of silver filigree with its furniture, two cabinetts, and all sorts of sweet waters; there is also a horse to be sent with a very rich saddle which was the Marquesse de

«Fronteira's, but this goes on a Merchant-man. The Bedstead was made for the christning the Infanta, and I can't heare that there is any other alteration made in it than that of the Arms, Her Matys of England being putt in the place of this Queen's. The People seeme to be as well or better satisfied than the Court with the rich Presents the «Saudades» brought hether, valuing them in their ordinary discourse at forty thousand Crowns.»

In a further letter, dated April 13/23, 1675, Sir Francis Parry gives additional information about the bedstead:

«I have already informed yor Honor that a silver Bedstead was sending hence to her Maty on the «Saudades», that the Bedstead was made for the christning the Infanta, and that noe other alteration was made in it but that the Arms, the Arms of England being putt in place of the Queene of Portugall's, and consequently on the left hand of the Portugall Arms, about which there arising some scruples, the Bedstead (that was packt up and ready to be imbarqu't) was order'd to be unpackt, and the position of the Arms to be chang'd; but this morning I heare that upon further consideration 'tis resolved it shall goe as it was, with the Arms of Portugall in the first place.»

The «Saudades» was a little frigate built by Catherine at her own expense as a contribution to her husband's fleet during the years when his exchequer was empty after the Plague and the Fire of London in 1665, 1666.

In a letter now in the Egerton Collection written by Catherine from Somerset House on September 13, 1686, the year after she had become a widow, there is a touching reference to her faith in a memento from Vila Viçosa:

«Yesterday the King¹ came to make me a visit himself, although with all ceremony. I was in bed, having been there for twelve days, so ill with pain that was so strong and continuous that after groaning and perspiring three or four

¹ James II.

«hours without its diminishing, but increasing, I sent for one of the priests, being persuaded that my hour was come. «While he was at my bedhead, God be praised! at that «time the pain began to lessen, which I impute to a little «oil which I have from the lamp of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin of Vila Viçosa, which, on the «occasion of my quinsey at three years of age, had the same «effect¹.»

Catherine left London for Portugal in March 1692, but she travelled slowly across France and Spain and did not reach Lisbon until January 20, 1693. On the morning of that day her brother King Pedro II set out with the principal members of his court to greet her, and the coaches containing the brother and sister with those of their followers met in the narrowest of streets in Lumiar. Catherine descended from her coach and drove in the King's carriage, seated on his right, to the *Quinta de Alcântara*, where Dom Pedro's second wife, Queen Maria Sophia awaited them.

After her return to Portugal, one of Catherine's ardent desires was to visit Vila Viçosa and in the spring of 1699 she paid a visit of over two month's duration to her birthplace. On her way back to Lisbon she halted at Evora where she was received with great ceremony and made a state entry. John Colbatch, who was chaplain in Lisbon from 1688 to 1705, wrote a work on «the State of Religion and Literature in Portugal» which was published in 1700. In it the author described Catherine's mode of life after her return to Portugal, as follows:

«But tho' her Majesty be her self the same, her outward «Circumstances are somewhat alter'd, since her leaving England; her Court is lessen'd almost to a private family, «those few Persons that waited on her from hence, being, «for the most part, either dismiss'd with their Salaries «continued to them, or excus'd their Attendance; there is «now no Noise, nor Ostentation of Grandeur about her House, «but all things are quiet and still, except it be on days of «Ceremony, when Persons of Quality will be coming to express

¹ Egerton, I.534, Letter 51.

«the great Veneration they have for her; then, indeed, her «Court is as great, and full, as the Nobility of the Country «can make it.»

So simple indeed was Catherine's mode of life that when in 1704 the Archduke Charles of Austria, *soi-disant* Charles III of Spain, visited her in her palace of *Bemposta*, courtiers and servants had to be borrowed from the King's Palace in order that Catherine could receive her guest in a manner befitting her rank.

Colbatch stated that the Jesuits, in place of the Franciscan fathers, became Catherine's spiritual directors. Probably it was for this reason that the Jesuit priest, Father Preposito of *S. Roque*, in Lisbon, was mentioned in her will, and to him was entrusted the election of «six honest and virtuous young Virgins who desire to be nuns», to each of whom Catherine left a «portion» of two thousand cruzados. Father Preposito's assistant in this task was to be the Father Prior of the *S. Deos* in Lisbon. The Father of *S. Roque* who was appointed to assist the prisons, and Father Preposito, were also authorised to dispose of further sums for releasing prisoners incarcerated in the *Limoeiro* and *Tronco* for petty debts, and for assisting such other «prisoners as are most necessitated».

Catherine died on December 31, 1705. Many of the art treasures which she amassed have passed into the hands of private collectors. It would be of great interest and value to the Lisbon Branch of the Historical Association if owners of such treasures would be kind enough to send information about them to the Honorary Secretary.