

Festivals, Carnivals and Celebrations and Saucy Sophia's Snippets plus trailer for next month.

November, 2023.

Alone now in Karlsbad, Edward Ashbourne did not wonder what to do next for very long, he left the extremely luxurious Hotel Imperial and from the railway station travelled to Dresden arriving there in the late afternoon. In the New Town he found a gasthaus on Leipziger Strasse, a short walk from Neustadt Bahnhof, overlooking the Elbe.



Part of the Zwinger in Dresden, late Nineteenth Century.

The following day, to take advantage of his stay in the “Florence on the Elbe”, he crossed the river by the Marienbrücke and a short distance along Ostrauffer and Devrientstrasse brought him to the Zwinger, the delightful baroque palace complex built to the orders of King Augustus the Strong of Saxony with its pleasure ground, art gallery, porcelain collection and armoury, whilst on the opposite side, overlooking the Elbe, the Royal Opera House, and in the Alt Markt the beautiful baroque Frauenkirche, masterpiece of the architect George Bähr, completed in 1743.

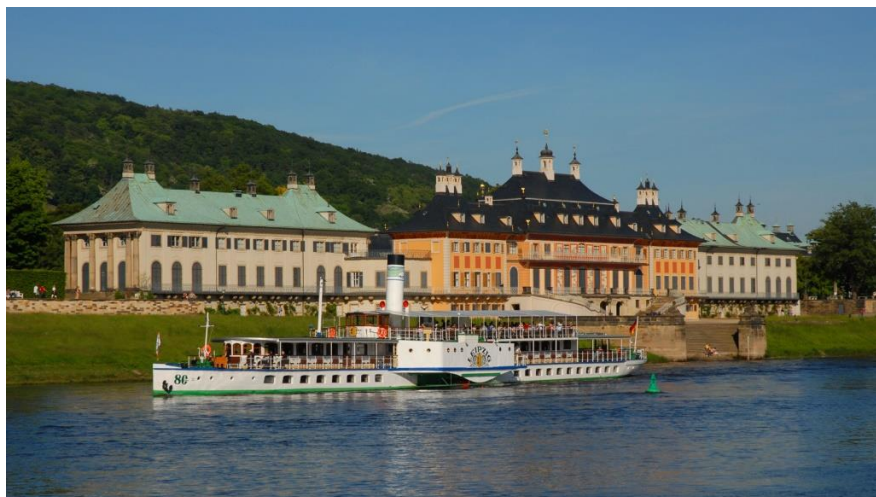
Edward was not a one to let the grass grow under his feet, and at mid-day he visited the booking office at the bahnhof to enquire after trains to Memel in Deutsch Lithuania, with a view to visiting Alexandra, though he only had a vague idea how he could reach her father's house. Whilst at the bahnhof he wrote a letter to his family at home, posted at the railway station, in Herefordshire explaining as far as he thought safe his adventures since arriving in Shanghai, omitting much that concerned the French Government, but providing the address of the gasthaus although mentioning that he expected to be leaving within the next seven days. The remainder of the day he spent exploring the town including the Japanese Palace and the quay where paddle steamers were moored awaiting passengers for the trip to visit the rococo Royal Palace at Pillnitz and the Saxon Switzerland. Edward decided to book a passage on one of the steamers for tomorrow.

Meanwhile he was hoping to receive a reply from home. He dined at a café in the Alt Markt where he stayed until after darkness descended on the city, when he walked across the Augustus Bridge, and on reaching the west bank of the Elbe, looking back he witnessed almost the same view as depicted in Johan Christian Dahl's 1839 painting "Dresden by Moonlight". With the dome and lantern of the Frauenkirche standing proudly above the buildings of the city.

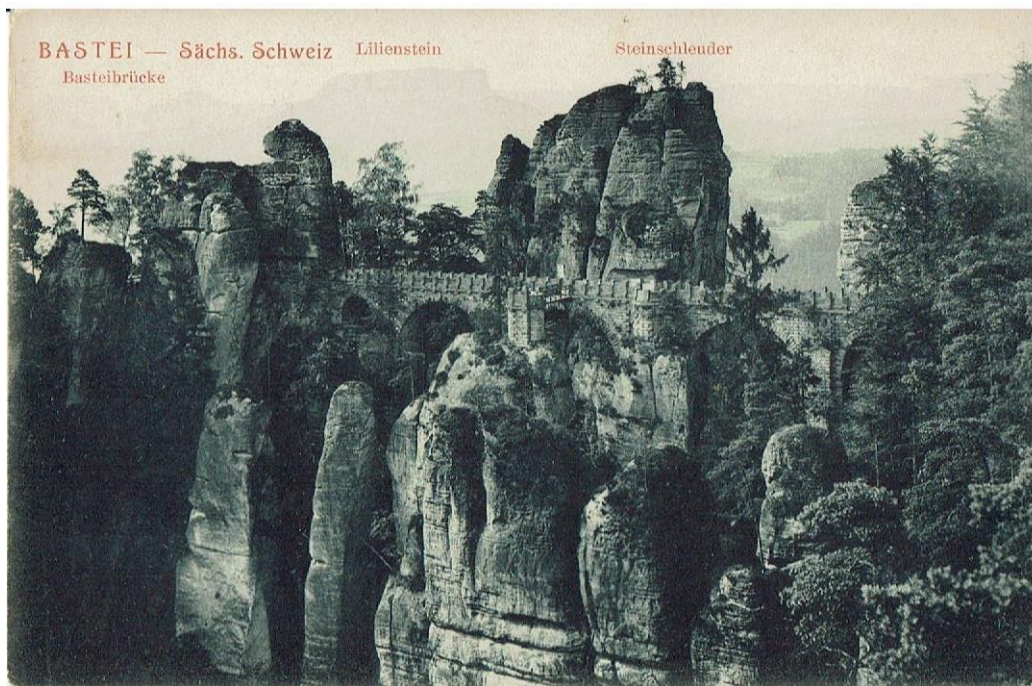


Dresden by Moonlight by Johan Christian Dahl, 1839.

The following day, from the quay by the Augustus Bridge Edward embarked on a river paddle steamer for the Royal Palace at Pillnitz part of which was open to the public together with the extensive grounds laid out in gardens to represent different countries, thus there was an English, Japanese and Italian garden, plus many more, and a camellia said to be the oldest in Europe having been brought there in the mid 1750's. During winter, Edward was informed, it was protected by bales of straw, and being early November, he saw a stack of bales in readiness for the protective work to commence. From the Royal Summer Palace Edward hired a Victoria to take him to the Saxon Switzerland, the much-visited intriguing semi mountainous landscape immediately west of the Elbe. Whilst enjoying the view and the refreshment provided by a local café, he considered his next move. He would travel to Leipzig to visit the city where Johan Sebastian Bach had been choirmaster, then Berlin and finally a port on the German Ocean for a ship to England. There he would call on his uncle in Greenwich to discuss with him what he could usefully do with the copies he had retained of the diplomatic information he had supplied to the "Frogs".



River Paddle Steamer arriving at Pillnitz.



Sachs Schweiz (Saxon Switzerland).

The next three days were occupied in pleasurable activities in Dresden, where there was much to see and do, but on the fourth day after posting his letter home he received a reply from his brother George. In the letter George briefly outlined the case of Nathaniel Smallbeer and the visit to Scarborough, adding that they had been fortunate and that all the Victorias had been sold at a profit. They were all in good health except mother whose health had not improved. George also enclosed a letter they had received, addressed to Edward, from Alexandra unopened. Edward was surprised beyond measure, as although he thought much of Alexandra, he really did not expect to hear from her, and had only not taken advantage of the opportunities presented to him in München and Karlsbad, where there seemed to be an abundance of pretty young ladies eager to make his acquaintance. because he had been under the constant watchful eye of the French Foreign Office official.



The Frauenkirche in the Alt Markt where Edward dined at Schmitt's

However, here in Dresden he did not feel under any such constraint, and dining in Schmitt's restaurant in the Alt Markt that first evening three delightful young ladies were bold enough to join him, obviously gaining confidence in numbers. Gradually two of them drifted away leaving Edward to entertain Gretel, a charming girl of about his own age, and although her English was far from perfect, with Edward's limited knowledge of

Deutch they got along famously exchanging humours stories of the goings on in their own countries. Gretel was intrigued when in reply to her question “What brings you to our fair city?” Edward replied. “It’s a long story, but on a voyage to Shanghai I was promoted to third officer after a typhon in the South China Sea, but on arriving in Shanghai the company refused to confirm the appointment.” Edward paused in his narrative, had he already gone too far and how could he explain his involvement with the French Government. Deep in thoughtful contemplation, Gretel came to his rescue when she volunteered “So you signed on with another shipping company, one of ours which brought you to Deutschland. How exciting.” Her eyes sparkled and at that moment they could have embraced each other most tenderly. But Gretel being a well brought up young lady refrained from such public display, or perhaps she was cautious lest her indiscretion be reported to her parents; whilst Edward was careful, opportunity was one thing, but commitment, however unintentionally, was quite another matter. It was now getting late and the ever gallant Edward settled the bill giving the kellner (waiter) a good tip and helping Gretel with her cape, they left the restaurant and the young gentleman escorted Gretel home. On the way she stopped in a dark corner, an angle in the high brick wall, where they allowed themselves a few moments of passionate embrace, and lingering kiss deferred from “Schmitt’s”, and all the sweeter for the deferment. Although Edward returned to the same restaurant the following evening, and the next he was not alas rewarded by the sight of Gretel again.

Opening Alexandra’s letter on the day of its receipt, Edward immediately realised he would have to alter his plans. Rather than travel to one of the ports on the coast of the German Ocean to take ship for home, he would return to the Dresden bahnhof to obtain more precise details of trains to Insterburg for Alexandra in her letter, had told Edward how she missed him, how with her father’s help they had traced him via the owners of the “Black Swan”. She refrained from mentioning how a turn of the wheel of fortune had, on her uncle’s demise, bestowed on her father the title of Graf (Count or Earl) and that whilst they retained the house near Memel they had moved to Elbenshausen in East Prussia, providing the address.

After wending his way to the bahnhof enquiries revealed that he was very fortunate as only less than twelve months ago special arrangements by treaty had been organised between the Kingdoms of Saxony and Prussia to provide for through running of railway traffic between Dresden and Berlin creating a much fastest route. The extremely helpful booking office clerk also informed Edward that if his intention is to travel on into East Prussia, then he should go to the Berlin Ostbahnhof (Berlin East Station) and make enquiries of the Prussian Eastern Railway.

Edward repaired to a café to compose a letter to Alexandra to thank her for the letter his father had sent on to him, how delighted he is to hear from her and to let her know that as the postmark will confirm he is at present in Dresden but plans to travel to Insterburg.



The Jagdschloss at Moritzburg.

Providing the address of the gasthaus on Leipziger Strasse, he stated that he would remain at the address in Dresden awaiting her reply for the next seven days, and would she like him to come to Lansdorf to visit. The letter contained many endearments and details of his recent adventures but omitted to mention the involvement of the French Government.

For the next two days Edward occupied his time visiting the many interesting locations in the “Florence on the Elbe”, and the surrounding country including a visit on the narrow-gauge railway to Moritzburg to see the Jagdschloss (hunting lodge) and also the menagerie. On the third day a letter arrived bidding him welcome, and saying how delighted Alexandra, her parents, now the Graf and Gräfin Andrius von Czernowitz and Karl, her younger brother much look forward to another visit by the accomplished Englishman. There followed an hour of frantic activity in which Edward packed a small steamer truck with the numerous summer clothes he had acquired, mainly courtesy of the French Office of Foreign Affairs, settled the account at the gasthaus and made his way to the railway station, arriving there a little before midday. The first train for Berlin left early afternoon, so Edward had time to post a letter to Alexandra to let her know he was leaving Dresden for Insterburg, and all being well he expected to arrive there in two days from the date of his letter.

The railway journey to Berlin was fast and uneventful. For the first part the line remained west of the Elbe, crossing the river near the junction station of Riesa, where the Royal Saxon Railway continued westwards to Leipzig whilst the route to Berlin travelled over the metals of the Prussian State Railway stopping at Herzberg and Lubbenau where Edward had his first glimpse of the Spreewald, that extensive area of previously marsh land or bog formed by a saucer of hard rock of some 187 square miles, the source of the River Spree, which Edward would see in Berlin. Many years ago, an extensive network of drainage canals had been dug to drain the land and create rich agricultural soil.



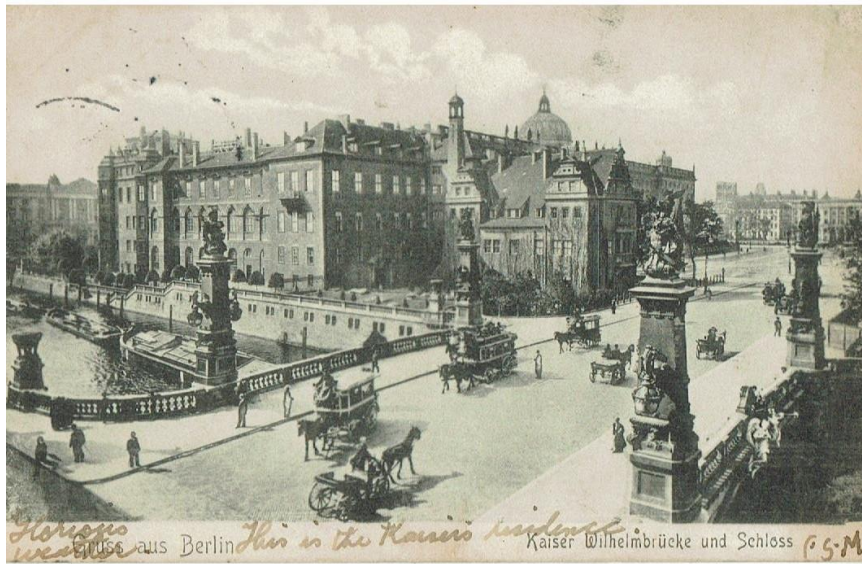
Postcard illustration of the Spreewald.

Edward had a further sight of the area when the train stopped at Lubben, then it was on to Königs Wusterhausen before finally arriving at Anhalter Bahnhof the principal railway station of the Prussian State Railway, a new building opened seven years ago on the 15th June, 1880 on Askanischer Platz adjacent to Königgrätzer Strasse.



Koniggratzer Strasse with Askanischer Platz on the right of Anhalter Bahnhof, Berlin.

Being fit, healthy and young Edward found the walk across Berlin to the Ostbahnhof of the Prussian Eastern Railway in the afternoon sunshine of late autumn a pleasant experience after he had arranged for his trunk to be delivered ahead of his arrival. Striding along the pavements of Berlin Edward cut a fine figure of a young gentleman, and an English gentleman, with a blue serge suit, yellow waistcoat, under a dark blue short top hat. He sported a white carnation in his buttonhole and swung his swagger stick in a self-assured jaunty way displaying all the confidence of a nation who ruled more of the globe than any other and whose Royal Navy had remained unchallenged since Trafalgar over eighty years ago. Unbeknown to him matters were about to take a dramatic change which could wreck all his plans. On leaving the Anhalter Bahnhof he crossed the wide Koniggratzer Strasse and entered a public garden opposite. Walking in the direction of the Prince Albrecht Palace he arrived at Wilhelm Strasse where he turned left and eventually came to the Unter den Linden which crossed diagonally. Looking to his left he saw the great arch of the Brandenburg Tor. Edward turned right and came to the Platz am Zeughaus with the Opera House and equestrian statue of Konig Friedrich der Grosse (Frederick the Great).



Konigliches Schloss and the Wilhelmbrücke.

Crossing the Spree by way of the Schlossbrücke adjacent to Königliches Schloss (Royal Palace) Edward paused to consult his pocket watch which was attached to a gold watch chain drawn from a waistcoat pocket when he was approached by a young lady who asked for his protection from some undesirable characters who she claimed had been following her. Looking briefly in the direction the fraulein indicated Edward did notice three evil looking men making their way over the bridge in his direction. He quickly escorted the young lady onto the island across Lust Garten and into the Dom (Cathedral) where in the semi darkness of the crypt they watched only two villains enter the building, one seemingly having departed, and attempt to search for them without drawing attention to themselves as the House of God was not otherwise empty of humanity, there being at least two dozen people there, some praying, others visiting to admire the various plaques, statues, and tombs. The young fraulein had allowed Edward to stand ahead of her, the better to observe the unsavoury now pair, whilst our gallant Englander considered what to do next. Watching and weighing up the limited options he suddenly became aware that Heide, for in a short, whispered conversation they had exchanged names, seemed to be fumbling with her purse, and offering to assist he was confronted by a changed woman holding a muff gun (derringer) in her right hand pointed directly at him she called softly to her two accomplices. Edward, who was more the greenhorn than he realised, was so surprised



The Dom and the Friedrichsbrücke, Berlin.

at the sudden change of situation, and in particular Heide's transition from sweet young lady to snarling tart that he was momentarily rendered witless. and in those few seconds the two thugs began to set about Edward only to be stopped by the loose woman with the gun who told them in no uncertain manner "Not in here you fools, get him outside to der bier salle", and turning to one of the thieves commanded "You, Fritz, go ahead and tell Oscar we are coming, and to have the passage door open." The young Englander had been enchanted by the seemingly gentle maid in a green damask dress with a bussell and brown button boots with a little heel, he did not notice that they were far from new and had not been polished for some time, but he did notice the low revealing cut of the bodice of her dress - his undoing. Momentarily he was dumfounded by the metamorphous from sweet girl to a gorgon. Holding the gun closely against Edward's side and with their arms linked, for all the world resembling a courting couple they crossed the Kaiser Wilhelm Brücke leaving the island on the opposite or north side. Meanwhile, Edward had recovered his wits and had been considering what to do. It was obvious that when they reached the bier salle he would have little chance against both Fritz, Oscar and Heide the Tart and Hans whose name Edward had only just discovered. At that moment he heard a tram approaching from behind, and grabbing the Mol's right hand which held the Derringer, he forced it away and in so doing her finger closed on the

trigger firing the gun. Fortunately, the bullet sped away over the parapet of the bridge to fall harmlessly into the Spree. This was only the start of Edward's good luck, the wheel of fortune turning in his favour, as luck would have it at that very moment a carriage approached on the side of the road nearest to the group, whilst the tram was on the opposite side, but travelling in the direction Edward wished to go. Trusting that Hans was not armed, Edward dodged in front of the carriage narrowly avoiding the horses shying and/or bolting and causing an accident, whilst the coachman on the box shouted at him, something profane. In one bound he leapt onto the open veranda at the rear of the tram and disappeared inside, where the conductor observed that he should board at the proper stopping place. At the traffic junction at the far side of the bridge the tram was waved across leaving Heide and Hans arguing fiercely by the kerb. Ahead the tram swung left at the next junction, and continued passing the Bourse, and stopping at the Stadt Bahn "Bourse" bahnhof, where Edward alighted.

A few stops on the Stadt Bahn (the inner suburban railway) and the train stopped at the Ostbahnhof, the Berlin station of the Prussian Eastern Railway. Enquiring at the ticket office, Edward was informed that there is an express train leaving for Königsberg in fifteen minutes, that he should change there for the local train to Insterburg. Purchasing a through ticket Edward had just time to organise his trunk to be delivered to the guard's van and board the train before, with a blast of smoke and steam, the massive driving wheels began the turn and gathering up the carriages slowly moved along the track increasing speed at they left the railway station and passed through the eastern suburbs of Berlin. At Kilstrin Bahnhof where the line crossed the Oder there was a brief stop for those wishing to travel to by local train south to Frankfurt am Oder or north to Stettin in Pommern (Pomerania), then it was on to Krenz on the border of Brandenburg and Posen, a major railway station as there was a main line going north west to Stettin and south east to the city of Posen. There was a thirty five minute stop here both for connecting trains and to allow passengers to purchase refreshments, this not being a corridor train with a speisewagen (restaurant or buffet car). Edward very prudently purchased food and drink for the onward journey, as he would be lucky to arrive in Insterburg before midday tomorrow.

At Schneldernihl where the line divided, one route running southeast to Bromberg, whilst the other into West Preussen (West Prussia) towards Dirsehau a major junction. There was little to see now as darkness had descended on the land and the train steamed across a pitch-black landscape. At Dirsehau Edward was disturbed in his sleep as the train jolted to a halt and the porters shouted the station name and reminded passengers for Danzig to change. Then it was on to Königsberg and more fitful sleep. Arriving at the royal city of Königsberg in the early morning Edward retrieved his trunk from the Guard's Van and stumbled to the waiting room where he was thankful for a cheerful coal fire and an empty bench seat against the wall, just the ticket for more sleep while he awaited the train for Insterburg accompanied by the girl on the bier poster.



It was mid-morning by the time the train from Konigsberg steamed into the Insterburg Bahnhof, and as Edward descended from the railway carriage, almost the first person he saw was Alexandra running towards him. They greeted each other as two ardent lovers embracing tenderly, then after Edward had retrieved his trunk before the train departed, it was off to the station yard for the wagonette Alexandra had used for the drive from home to meet her beau. After a few miles she stopped the wagonette on a quiet part of the road to explain to Edward that today, the 10th November, is the eve of Martinstag (Martinmas), sometimes known as Old Halloween, and that that evening the children of the village will

march in procession from the church to the public square carrying lanterns, the event being known as laternelaufen, and that it is a festival to mark the conclusion of harvesting and the winter revelling season. Tomorrow goose will be served for dinner at the Hof and there will be dancing and much merriment, adding that she is delighted he has come in time for the festivities.

It was some ten miles to Elbenshausen, and cresting a hill Edward had his first glimpse of the Martinkus family home, "Lansdorf" the house Andrius inherited on his elder brother's demise, together with a collection of farms let to tenant farmers plus the coveted noble "von" and the rank of Graf (Count or Earl in Great Britain), so that Alexandra's father is now Graf Andrius von Czernowitz, with corresponding recognition for his wife Grafिन, son, Ritter (Knight) and daughter.



Edward's first glimpse of Lansdorf by the village of Elbenshausen.

There had been a brilliant sunset, but mostly behind them as they travelled eastward, although Edward was more than absorbed with the brilliance of Alexandra to even notice the gathering gloom as the day faded.

That evening the whole family attended church in the village, after they watched the laternelaufen (procession of children bearing lanterns) with the local residents as they made their way to the village square, and on arrival Alexandra's father made a short speech of praise for their excellent performance as befitted his rank as the most important of the village. The Master of Lansdorf arranged a feast held in the great hall to which he invited his tenant farmers, and those local tradesmen and artisans and their wives and children who supplied goods and/or services to him and his family. And so the festival of Martinsfeuer, or Martinmas, or Old Halloween was celebrated throughout the Germanic speaking lands and further afield on the Continent providing general enjoyment for all, and especially in Elbenshausen for a very special pair of young would be lovers.

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In Herefordshire there was concern for Grandfather Albert's health, whilst George who had undertaken to deliver to a brake that had been ordered by the Reverend Michael Orton, vicar of Much Birch. He took with him the stable lad Morgan with a trap. All went well until they were almost there when a pair of workmen fitting replacement barn doors

which they failed to secure and just as the two vehicles were passing the doors fell with a terrific crash which frightened the horses causing them to bolt. George managed to control the team drawing the brake, but Morgan failed to bring the horse harnessed to the trap to a halt and the vehicle overturned in the road breaking a wheel. With profuse apologies they returned to the yard in Ross in the brake with the extra horse, to collect extra hands to repair the damage.

Author's Acknowledgement:

Reference to the Ashbourne family, the Martinkus family, their house and village and the vicar of Much Birch are pure invention, otherwise every attempt has been made to ensure historical accuracy, and all illustrations are correct to the period. In this narrative I attempt to mentally and emotionally transport you, my dear reader, to the world of the late nineteenth century, but what I cannot do is to transport you physically.

Saucy Sophia's Snippets

Another post card from
the Author's private collection.



The approximate meaning but not a translation is

“If you waste your cash there will be retribution.”

The stone structure behind the trio is the pinnacle of the monument erected in 1913 to

commemorate the Battle of Leipzig, sometimes called the Battle of the Nations, 100 years earlier in 1813, when Napoleon was defeated by the combined forces of Austria, Prussia and Russia.

Trailer for next month.

There is an unwelcome visitor to the family home in Western-under-Penyard who causes much havoc, chaos and mayhem, while Edward in Elbenshausen receives an offer to set him seriously pondering his future.

Historical Talks.

In addition to writing these articles or “blogs” for the Chimes, I am available to give illustrated power point talks on a variety of historical subjects. To see the complete list please email to me at brockswoodfs@yahoo.co.uk, or telephone 01989 780634.

Dorian Osborne

1st November, 2023.