

AUGUSTA OF HESSEN-KASSEL (PRINCESS AUGUSTA)

COPENHAGEN 1823 – COPENHAGEN 1889

Princess Augusta was of a princely German family but grew up in Copenhagen. Her mother, the landgravine¹ Louise Charlotte of Hessen-Kassel, was the sister of the Danish king, Christian VIII. Her father, the landgrave Wilhelm of Hessen-Kassel, was the commanding officer of the Copenhagen garrison. The family lived in one of the palaces at Amalienborg (formerly Brockdorff's), where the royal family now resides. Their home was a meeting place for Danish court circles, especially after Frederik VII's controversial marriage to the commoner Countess Danner.

Augusta was the youngest of three children. In 1842, her elder sister Louise, who also painted, married the later King Christian IX, founder of the present House of Glücksborg. In 1854, Princess Augusta married Baron Carl Frederik Blixen-Finecke (1822–1873), who owned estates both in Denmark and Sweden: Næsbyholm in Scania, Nydala in Småland, and Dallund in Funen. (There is a story to the effect that the later French emperor Napoleon III had paid court to her some time earlier.) Blixen-Finecke was the Danish foreign minister under Frederik VII from 1859 to 1860 during which period he tabled some extremely controversial proposals on the Scandinavian succession, then a major problem.

Princess Augusta was a lively person who loved to entertain on a large scale. She and her husband installed a French garden on one of their estates, and at her more modest widow's residence, the Villa Augusta outside Elsinore, flowers played an important part of her life. (The Villa Augusta was in a converted sugar refinery just south of the town and has since been demolished.)

Our knowledge of Princess Augusta's training and activities as a painter is extremely limited. Both she and her sister received tutelage in art from J. L. Jensen. The two sisters might have inherited a talent for painting from their mother, an able watercolor artist.

Princess Augusta exhibited Hydrangea in the Women Artists' Retrospective Exhibition at Charlottenborg in 1920.

M. T.

LITERATURE: "Princesse Augusta," *Illustreret Tidende*, July 27, 1889; Bo Bramsen: *Huset Glücksborg i 150 år*, I-II, Copenhagen 1975, vol.1, p. 103 passim.

¹A landgravine is the wife of (or a woman holding the rank or position of) a landgravin, a German count or noble ruler by hereditary right of a German castle or town and its adjacent lands.