

THE MYSTERY OF THE LOSS OF THE ST MARGARET AND THE ARCHDUKE JOHANN SALVATOR OF AUSTRIA

MIKE ROYDEN

The following account of the *St Margaret* is extracted from the forthcoming '*Sailing Ships, Shipwrecks & Suffragists - A History of Thomas Royden & Sons, Shipbuilders of Liverpool*' (due 2022) and is just one of 262 vessels constructed at the nineteenth century Liverpool shipyard.



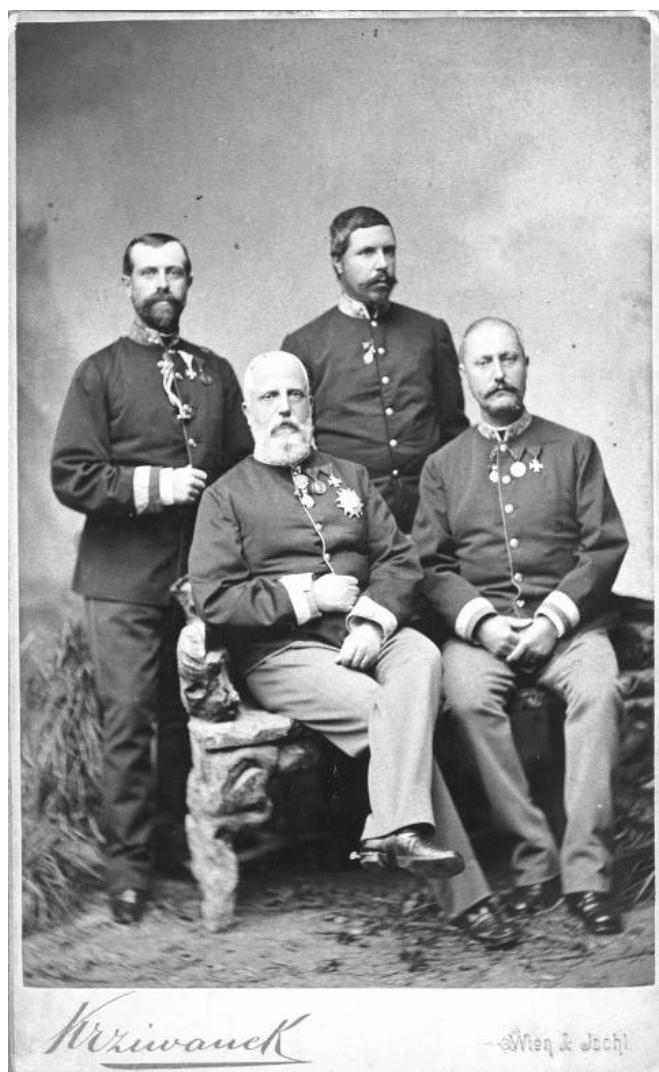
St Margaret (Chinese School, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London)

ST. MARGARET Rig: Iron Ship Built: 1877 GT: 1428 Tons Dims: 233.1 x 37.3 x 22.4

St Margaret was a fully rigged iron-built clipper, originally built for Rankin, Gilmour & Company of Liverpool. She gave thirteen years' service, before she was sold in 1890, although she came close to grief in a cyclone in March 1884 in the southern waters of the Bay of Bengal. In the middle of the night the drifting vessel *Duchess of Edinburgh* almost

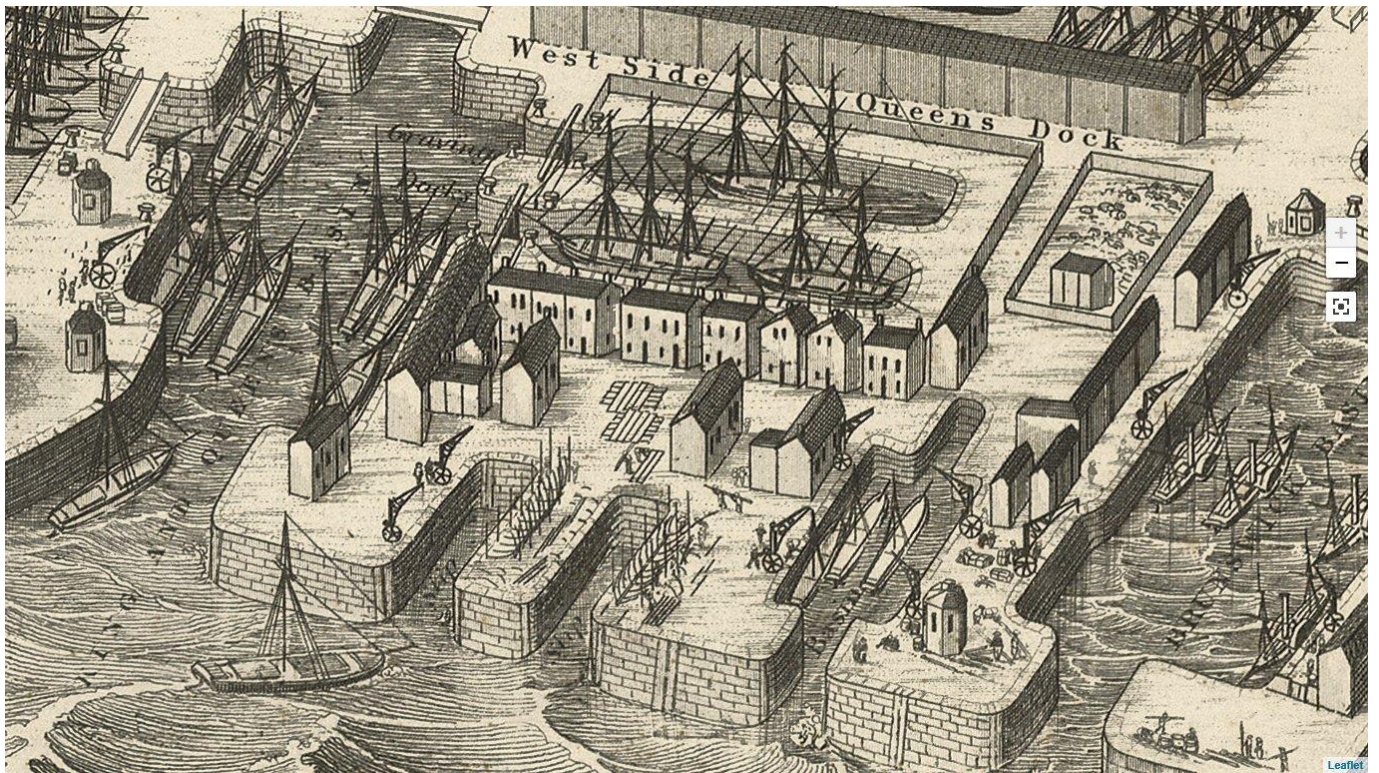
crashed into her, while shortly afterwards the crew sighted the *Terpsichore* with her bulwarks gone, and in the morning, she sailed through the wreckage of the *Cassiopeia*.

When she was sold in 1890, her purchaser was one 'John Orth', but in reality, he was the Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria, a member of the Tuscan branch of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine, and at that time Archduke and Prince of Austria, Prince of Hungary, Bohemia and Tuscany. However, he renounced his titles, split with his family, and took the name John Orth. He disappeared in 1890 and was declared dead in 1911. His story is one of mystery and intrigue and has elements of Edward and Mrs Simpson, plus the circumstances surrounding his disappearance and the countless sightings since, has all the hallmarks of a Lord Lucan style deception. All this, coupled with disputes over rightful inheritance, have reached into the 21st century, even drawing in the science of DNA in an attempt to bring resolution and closure. Of course, there also the question of why he came to purchase a Royden built sailing ship.



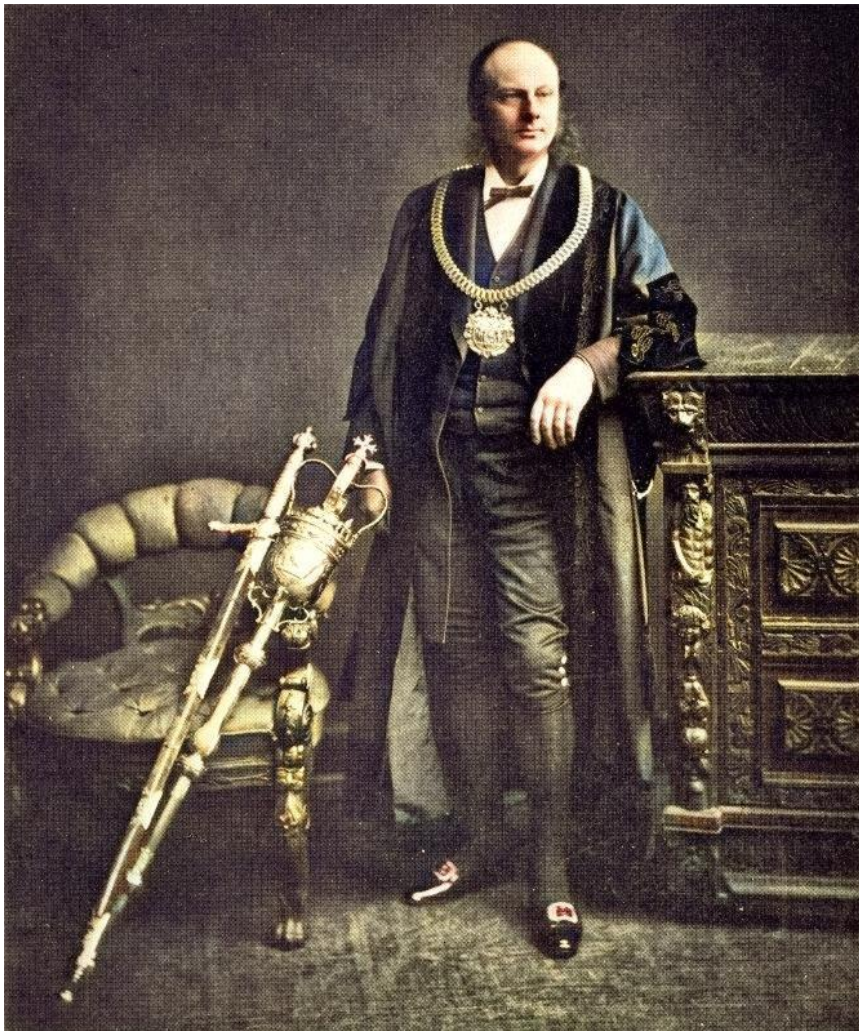
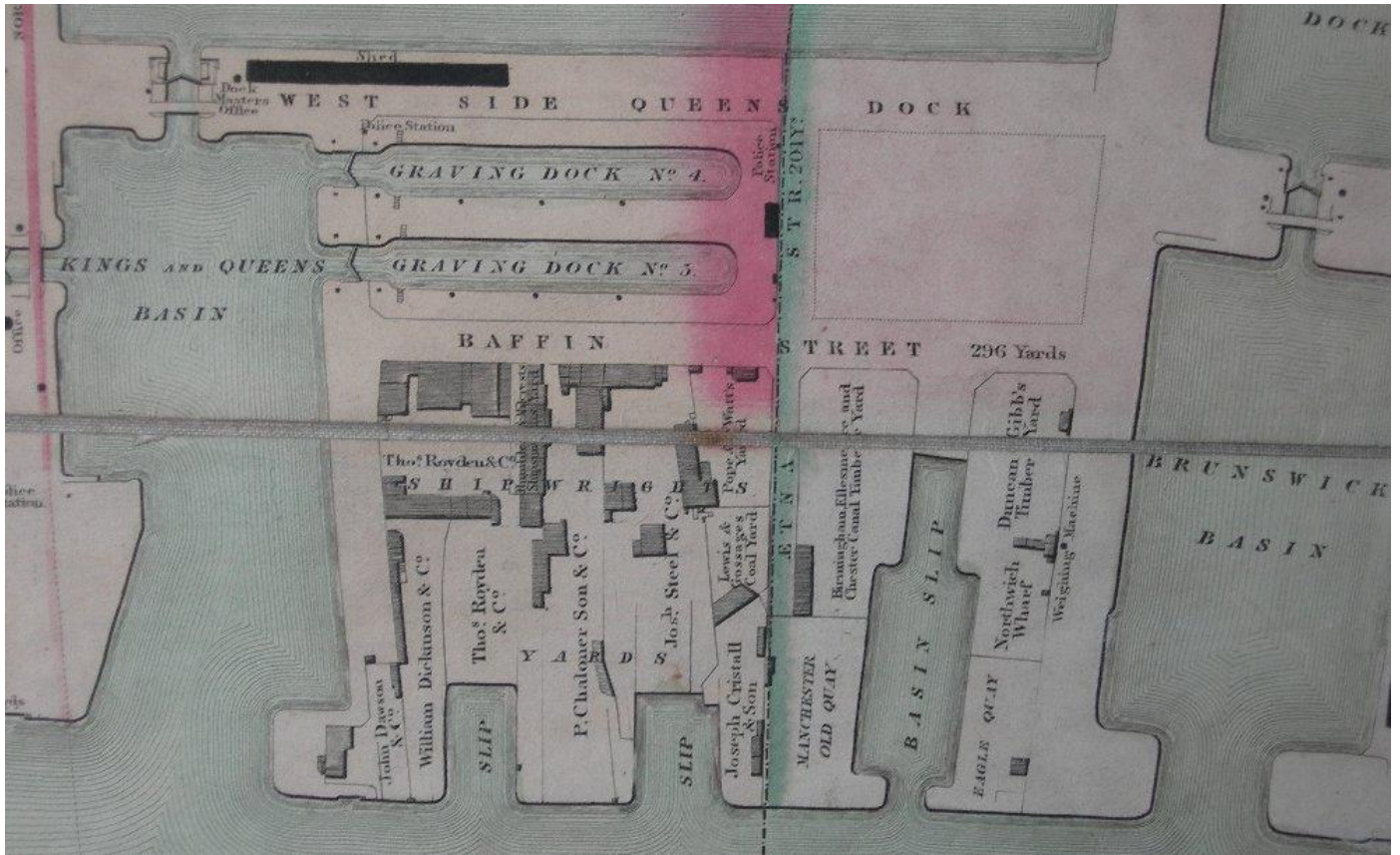
(left) Sons of Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, Archduke of Austria; Standing L-R Archdukes Johann (Orth) (1852-1890?), Ludwig Salvator (1847-1915); Sitting L-R Ferdinand IV of Tuscany (1835–1908), and Karl Salvator (1839–1892).

(Right) Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria-Tuscany (1852 – 1890). He was the youngest son of Grand Duke Leopold II of Tuscany.



The Royden Baffin Street (Queen's Dock) shipyard





**The Royden Baffin Street
(Queen's Dock) shipyard**

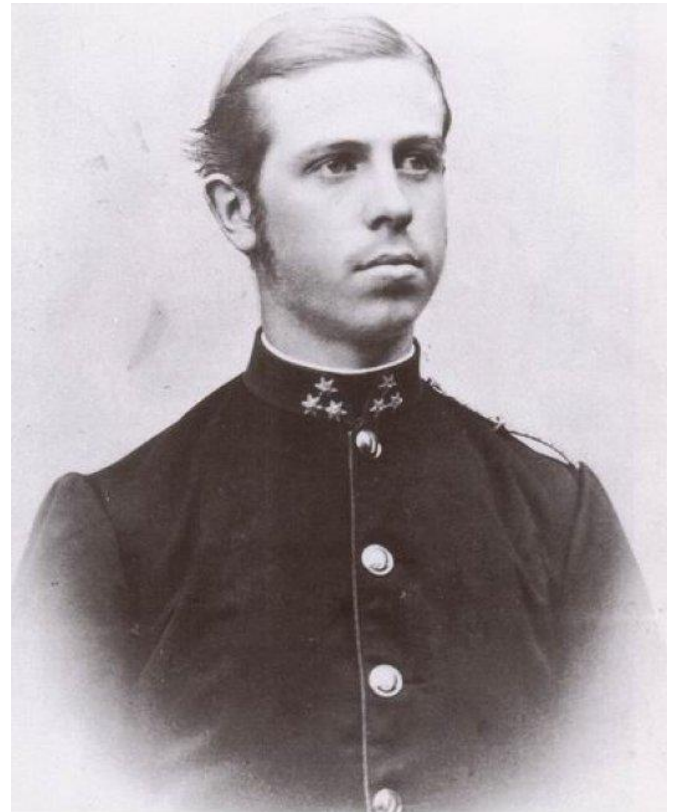
**Sir Thomas Bland Royden, eldest
son and owner of the shipyard
founded by his father. Pictured
her as Mayor of Liverpool
1879/79.**



JOHANN ORTH (ARCHDUKE JOHN).
From a Photo. by A. Reil, Linz.



LUDMILLA HUBEL, WIFE OF JOHANN ORTH.
From a unique private Photo.



Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria (a.k.a. Johann (John) Orth)

and his wife Ludmilla ('Milli') Stubel



Postcard souvenir of the actress Ludmilla ('Milli') Stubel. (*Theatermuseum, Wien*)

Johann Salvator was born in Florence on 25 November 1852, the youngest son of Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and his second wife, Princess Maria Antonia of the Two Sicilies. As a young man, he entered the Austrian Army, and during the Austro-Hungarian occupation of the Ottoman territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, he was put in command of a division of the occupying army and won numerous honours. He was earning a reputation for his independent mind and forthright views, when in 1875 he published a pamphlet on the organisation of the Austrian artillery, in which he berated the old guard for their antiquated methods. He followed this by predicting war between Russia and Germany, and to the chagrin of European diplomats urged a Russo-Austrian alliance with the aim of keeping the victorious Germans in check, topping it off by accusing Bismarck of systematically planning the destruction of the Hapsburgs. For such insubordination, he was disgraced and incarcerated by the Emperor.

By 1887, he was forgiven and brought back into the royal fold, but on 16 October 1889, after a furious row with the Emperor, he resigned his army commission, and renounced his title and the privileges he enjoyed as a member of the Austrian Imperial Family. Turning his back on the Court, he decided to travel abroad. Some sources suggest he was incognito, but this was unlikely given this wry observation in the pages of the Australian press,

AN AUSTRIAN ARCHDUKE BECOMES A SHIPWRIGHT

An Austrian Archduke (says the *Daily News*) is about to emulate the exploit of Peter the Great, and to enter an English ship-building yard. Peter worked at Deptford, as well as in Holland, and we know what came of it in a Russian navy that today ranks among the great navies of the world. The Archduke, John by name, has in one respect more difficulties to overcome than the Russian ruler. Peter was absolute; the other, like all the members of the Austrian Imperial family, is under the strict tutelage of the head of his house. He has accordingly had to solicit the Emperor's leave to earn his own living, and it has been graciously accorded in a telegram that reached Hamburg just before his embarkation for this country. The Emperor was pleased to permit his august relative to take a status better suited to the nature of his employment; and the Archduke John, when working in the incognito of the shipyard, will henceforth be known as Herr Johann Orth.

Johann, of course, will soon become "Jack" in the yard; and as Jack Orth we may expect to find the new mate hail fellow well met with half the Hammermen of Deptford. He will be expected to join a trade union, and he may one day be found carrying a banner in Hyde Park in support of a strike. Johann is to be envied from every point of view. He escapes the tedium of Court life; he enters upon an entirely novel experience; and he is about to know what it is to have an appetite for his dinner. He is approaching that state of felicity attainable by Abernethy's famous rule of health, "live on 6d. a day and earn it." He will have wonders to relate to the Hofburg on his return, if ever, indeed, he should he so unfortunate as to be driven back to his parish, by slackness of work.

***The Brisbane Courier* 28 December 1889**

And so, his new identity was revealed to the world. Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria had become plain John Orth. (Although, Orth was taken from *Schloss Orth*, a castle he had owned). But this was not the only action that had gone against royal protocol. He had met a show girl, a singer and actress named Ludmilla ('Milli') Stubel, and had fallen in love. His request to marry her was refused by the Emperor, which was no doubt the main cause of his dispute, and in true Edward Windsor style, had turned his back on his country and chose Milli instead. As soon as they arrived in London, away from interference from his family and Court advisors, they married in a registry office, and planned a trip to Chile.

But his trip to South America had yet to be arranged. Given the timescale of his arrival in London and later events, it seems that John Orth was ensuring his papers to master his own vessel were legalised, rather than him being down among the shipwrights, as by early 1890 he, or an agent, had travelled to Liverpool to arrange the purchase of the *St Margaret* from Rankin, Gilmour & Company. In an adjustment of translation, she became the *Santa Margarita*, and Orth, his new wife, and a new crew, headed for La Plata, Argentina, on 26 March 1890.

After unloading and taking on a cargo for Valparaiso on the west coast, which necessitated rounding the Horn, they left nearby Ensenada on 12 July 1890. She was spoken by the Hamburg barque *Maria Mercedes* on the 31st, but soon after there was a terrific hurricane, and the *Santa Margarita* vanished, and was never seen again. The Emperor Francis Joseph sent a cruiser to search South American waters, but she returned after some months having found no trace of her or those on board. All were regarded to have been lost at sea;

**HERR JOHANN ORTH'S FATE
HOPE FOR HIS VESSEL'S SAFETY GIVEN UP
CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE ARCHDUKE
MADE HIS VOYAGE TO SOUTH AMERICA
HIS DISAPPOINTMENT IN LIFE - MEN WHO TIRE OF COURT LIFE**

A dispatch printed in this paper on December 26 from Ottawa, Ontario, stating that a request had been received from the Austrian Government for information respecting the fate of Archduke Johann of Austria, alias Captain John Orth, who left Montevideo in February last in command of a vessel called the *Santa Margareta*, bound for Valparaiso, Chile, and who has not been heard of since, gives new interest to this subject, concerning which several articles have from time to time been printed. The Ottawa dispatch stated that the Austrian Government entertains no hopes of the safety of the vessel, but is anxious to learn what has become of the captain and crew.

When the Hamburg report of the Archduke's death was printed several weeks ago, opinions in Vienna as to his fate varied considerably. Letters from him, dated July 12, reached Vienna, in which he said: "I sail to-day round Cape Horn to Valparaiso, where I hope to be at the end of August," so that there is no doubt about his having sailed in the *Santa Margarita*. It was his habit to write, or to telegraph from nearly every station to his aged mother, the Dowager Grand Duchess Maria Antonia of Tuscany, daughter of Francis I of the Two Sicilies, who lives at Traunkirchen, near Gmunden, and because nothing had been heard from him, it was feared the worst had happened. At the same time, the *Neue Freie Presse* heard from some Hamburg shipowners that the story of a catastrophe was not credited. It was thought to be more probable that the ship put into one of the many small bays on the coast for repairs. The Prince took with him when he left Austria 600,000 florins in cash. The Foreign Office telegraphed to all the consulates on the Pacific coast instructing them to cable without delay any news received of the Archduke, but no reply giving a clue to his fate has been received.

This fear for the Archduke's fate gave rise to an interesting article in the *London Standard* on the man's strange career. The writer says:

Thirteen months ago, one of the many Princes of the House of Hapsburg was the Archduke Johann Nepomuncene Salvator Marie Joseph Jean Ferdinand Balthazar Louie Gonzague Peter Alexander Zenobius Antonin, a son of the late Grand Duke of Tuscany, and therefore, a near relation of the Emperor. This Prince of many names, then a man of thirty-seven, had, like others of his family, disposition apt to bring the owner into difficulties, and the freak which finally decided his fate was irritation against his imperial cousin for not advancing him with efficient rapidity in the army.

As the readiest way of emphasising his displeasure, the young Archduke intimated that in future he should drop his title, and be known simply as Herr Orth - Orth being the name of a chateau which he owned. He resigned his commission, and the various dignities attaching to him as Prince of the blood, and lost no time in shaking from his feet the dust of a land which had treated him so ill as to intrust him, at an age when most of his countrymen consider themselves fortunate if they have attained the grade of Captain, with no higher place in the army than that of Major General, and proprietor of a regiment of artillery. This course was, indeed advisable. For the Austrian family, law is strict, and did the Kaiser not grant permission for his kinsman to drop his titles, and his orders, and his sword, he rendered himself liable to a punishment which, even at the hands or so mild a sovereign as Franz Josef I, might have been uncomfortable for a less exalted personage.

In less prosaic days the wrathful Prince would have been sent on a pilgrimage to Palestine, to St. James of Compostella, or to the Shrine of Our Lady of La Garde. Or, if a soldier of the militant order, he might have joined the Knights of St. John in Rhodes, or in Malta, where the Turks were safe to keep him busy, or have taken part in one of the Crusades. If, on the other hand, he was mild of adventures under a more rollicking banner, there were plenty of free companies ready to enlist stout men at arms, and scores of rival Princes who would have been only too happy to annoy the Emperor by employing his kinsman.

But Johann Orth lived in unromantic times, and so went to Chile for a cargo of nitrate. This, at all events, is what is now reported. Last Spring, he seems to have purchased the *Santa Margarita*, a ship of such value that, besides the cargo, she was insured for 330,000 marks. He carried with him a large sum of money, but left with his agent in Berlin all his papers and part of his library. It is certain that the *Santa Margarita* has not yet reached her destination, for no vessel of that name is reported from any of the South American ports. She is known to have left Buenos Ayres for Valparaiso on the 16th July, and it is feared that she has been lost in the gales which blow at that season so fiercely round Cape Horn. On the other hand, the crew may have made for land and be now living among the Tierra del Fuegians, or on one of the desert islands which have so often afforded shelter to castaway mariners. Austrian vessels are frequent enough on the high seas; so that no conclusions as to the fate of the *Santa Margarita* are justifiable from the fact that the Hamburg underwriters report that among some disabled vessels off Cape Horn is one flying the Austrian flag and resembling in some particulars the ship, for tidings of which all the resources of the imperial Court are being put into requisition by order of the Emperor.

Two brothers of the missing Archduke are on the eve of sailing for South America, their mother, the Dowager Grand Duchess of Tuscany, being dangerously ill from the suspense which the absence of any news regarding her son is causing her. The interest of the case lies, of course, mainly in the fact that the long absent Captain is of imperial rank. But there is also a certain romance surrounding the fate of Herr Johann Orth's assumption of plebeian degree. For it is well known in Vienna that, at the bottom of the Archduke's restlessness, there lay a discontent more deeply seated than mere pet [*pique*] over his tardy military promotion. The younger members of the house of Hapsburg have often chafed under the restrictions which their position placed upon the gratification of their special tastes. The unfortunate Archduke Rudolph was a naturalist and a man of letters, and, it is now no secret, looked forward with something like despair to the time when he would be compelled to abandon his comparative freedom of life for more serious responsibilities. Several of his relatives have shown a similar yearning after positions of greater usefulness and less responsibility. The Emperor's own brother practices as an oculist, and a cousin has recently graduated in medicine. Another spends his life in scientific travel, the results of his researches being embodied in a magnificent series of anonymous volumes on the Balearic Isles,

while a Prince of Wrede - not imperial, however - was not many months ago, said to have opened a green grocer's shop in the Kaiserstadt.

The Archduke Johann was troubled with the same restiveness. His difference with the Emperor was probably only the culmination of this yearning for a less artificial surrounding, the turning point in a career marked by a series of minor revolts against the conventionalities of life in the most conventional of society. Even in a more humble sphere, this desire for an existence less under the glare of the limelight seizes men who have no open quarrel with the world. Not many years ago a young Earl, the heir of a great name, and himself a man of unblemished reputation, disappeared. For a long time, he had been wandering about the world, though keeping up a regular correspondence with his family, when suddenly the letters stopped, and when the necessity of settling his fate led to an official search, it was discovered that the self-exiled lord had been serving as the mate of various trading ships, loved everywhere for his kindly ways, and esteemed by 'his owners' for professional skill, without anyone ever suspecting his social rank. He died tended by the hands of strangers, who were amazed to learn that the seafaring man who lived hard and died poor was a Scottish noble with a large rent roll.

No doubt, for men such as he and the Archduke Johann to flee the world amounts to something like skulking. For them, there is something better, something more urgent to do. Their wealth and their social status, and their consequent influence could push to a head a hundred enterprises which would never make headway at the bidding of humbler folk. The day when Prince Henry of Portugal could send ships to discover half the globe is over. But they might sledge round Greenland, or, if so minded, reach the pole, without their exchequer feeling the strain. Or, as the Prince of Monaco is doing, they might explore the deep sea under conditions denied to an expedition defrayed out of the niggard grant or an unappreciative Parliament. Everything is open to such as they. Yet something also must be permitted to poor human nature. Duty is not everything. A life-long martyrdom, even to serve mankind, is often more than the most conscientious can face, and the taste of every Archduke and Earl does not run in the grooves indicated. Like Bobadil, they prefer a private station, or, as the American politician, in declining a European legation, explained to the President, they 'do not wish to pass life in a clawhammer coat.' The glare of publicity is irksome. The etiquette of a Court is wearisome. Stars and crosses and ribbons and uniforms and epaulettes choke them. The *Court Circular* is the dullest of reading, a levée the most formal of functions. It is therefore not difficult to conceive that in certain situations such an existence becomes to peculiar minds intolerable - that King Milan should crave, as he tells us he did, to become a Servian citizen; that Victor Emmanuel was never so happy as when he roved incognito on his native mountains, that James of Scotland loved to play 'the Gaberlunzie Man'; that Henry longed to be the Miller at Mansfield; that as Mrs. Morley, Queen Anne obtained an imaginary respite from her high station, and that in playing at milkmaid Marie Antoinette experienced in a small way much the same pleasure that the Archduke Johann did in becoming master of the *Santa Margarita*."

New York Times, 29 Dec 1890

Over a century on, and we can still draw comparisons with our own Royal family, also having to deal with the intense media intrusion in all its modern forms, into every aspect of their private as well as public life.

A year later, there was still no news of their whereabouts,

They journeyed from point to point through South America and along the Pacific Coast, but no tidings of the *Santa Margarita*. In the Naval Office of every Government the order was promulgated that the captains of all vessels should keep watch for the *Santa Margarita* and this blue-blooded, hair-brained captain. Days, months have come and

gone, and no tidings. John Orth's vessel has vanished from off the seas, and John Orth and his wife, Fraulein Stubel, the actress, who went with him to Brazil, is also assumed to be dead. It is known that the greater part of the Archduke's valuables and money invested will go to the Emperor of Austria, his life insurance will go to his mother.

North Otago Times, 13 May 1891



St Margaret / *Santa Margarita* in full sail



John Orth and his crew

As early as November 1896, newspapers reported that a Cantonal court in St. Gall, Switzerland, ordered the Bank of St. Gall 'to hand over to the relatives of the wife of the long missing Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria 1,000,000 francs,' which the archduke had deposited into an account at the bank 'prior to his departure for South America.';

Milly's mother, who will be one of the recipients of the funds, said with confidence. "John and my daughter are alive, and now that Archduke Albert is no more, they will soon come back." The decision of the Cantonal court, however, "looks like an abandonment of hope," according to the former Archduke's friends.

Delphos Daily Herald, 11 November 1896

On 6 May 1911, despite many 'sightings', Johann Salvator was officially declared dead by the Austrian authorities, followed by Ludmilla Stubel in December 1913.

Since his disappearance, Archduke Johann has been reportedly seen as many times and in many places as Lord Lucan. One report given great credence at the time, was that made by an official investigator of the Uruguay government, who secured affidavits to the effect that the *Santa Margarita* had put in at a lonely place on the coast of that country, where the name had been painted out and she had then sailed up the Uruguay river. 'Orth', the report stated, had then paid off his crew, and with the help of two or three of his intimate companions, had set sail further inland - but here the trail was lost, never to be re-found. During the Chilean war, Archduke Johann was reported to be fighting on the side of the congressionalists, and some ten years later, the son of the president of Argentina stated that he had made the trip from Buenos Aires to Cherbourg with a man who was none other than the former Archduke of Austria. In addition, he has been 'located' in California, has been 'identified' as Admiral Yamagata of the Japanese navy, and was 'recognized' by reputable witnesses in several engagements of the First World War.

In 1925 American newspapers reported with more than a hint of scepticism '*John Orth, Missing Archduke Once More Has Been Found*',

'Again, John Orth has been found. This time in Vienna the body of a peddler has been 'identified' as that of Archduke Johan Salvator of Austria...After years John Orth was heard from again. And again. Once he was reported living under the name of Juan Venning as a planter in Mexico. Once he was said to be leading a Japanese army in Manchuria in the 1890s under the name of Field Marshal Yamugatta. Another time a Swedish fisherman told of meeting the *Santa Margarita* in polar waters and described the Archduke as her master. There was a woman with him, the fisherman said who answered the description of Milly Stubel. Later he was said to be living a hermit's life as Baron Ott, in a hut on the Chilean border. Again, he was found as Johan Salvator working as a mechanic at Painesville, Ohio. And on 1 April 1924 [note the day] the body of Dr. O. N. Orlow, a 72 year old art dealer, died in New York and was 'identified' as that of the Archduke. For many years he had lived in an attic studio and he was almost penniless, although when he came to New York was said to have brought art treasures with him worth \$70,000. The day after his death, Miss Grace Wakefield 51, his ward, committed suicide after having first drowned two parrots and a pet spaniel which had been her companions.

Not once have the Hapsburgs accredited any of these rumours. But three of the Archduke's personal servants have identified as the body of their master that of Albert Goebel, peddler, who died, in the Charity hospital at Vienna.

A Great Romance

Romance and irony are intermingled in the story which the dying peddler told his wife when he called her to his bedside to whisper his life's secret.

“I am the Archduke Johann Salvator”, he said. “We set sail from Buenos Aires to ship a cargo of Chilean nitrate for Europe. I wanted to be master of my own ship in merchant trade. We struck a storm as we rounded Cape Horn. The ship was wrecked. I was rescued in a small boat and with me my first wife. We almost died of cold and exposure before we reached the mainland. I lingered there and watched her fail and die. Then I made my way to Europe, with what little of my fortune I had left, and at Saarbrücken I opened a little restaurant. You know the rest of the story.

Frau Goebel did. Her husband was operating the restaurant when she met him - a woman of the working class who ate there. Ultimately, they were married. Misfortune overtook them. Their business failed. They made their way to Vienna and there among streets where, if he was John Orth, her husband had been acclaimed with military honours, he eked a living by peddling knick-knacks.

The Milwaukee Journal, 25 September 1925

In May 1945, Hugo Kjøhler of Kristiansand, Norway, claimed on his deathbed that he was actually Johann Salvator and that he had bought identity papers in 1880 from a Hugo Alexander Kohler from Eilenburg near Leipzig. This story was also ‘confirmed’ in his diary found after Kohler died. In 2007, relatives of Kjøhler requested that his grave be opened, so that a DNA test could be performed. Should Kjøhler and Johann Salvator actually be the same person, the descendants could have claim to Johann Salvator's heritage, including Schloss Orth. Permission was granted by church authorities, while in the U.S.A. it was reported that a grandchild called Franz Kohler Rolfvaag had taken a DNA test hoping it would match descendants of the Royal Austrian family - but it would seem so far all results have been negative.

The Emperor of Austria, who died in 1916, never placed any credence on the stories that arose during his lifetime, for in Francis Joseph's will was a clause to the effect that the Archduke's estate at some \$10,000,000 was to be held intact until something definite was learned about his fate. Until then, the mystery of the lost grand duke, and his Royden-built vessel *St Margaret*, must remain as one of the most remarkable unsolved riddles of history.

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from *'Sailing Ships, Shipwrecks & Suffragists - A History of Thomas Royden & Sons, Shipbuilders of Liverpool'* by Mike Royden