



adelma von vay



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## **ADELMA VON VAY: HER LIFE AND ROLE IN KONJICE**

International symposium on life and work of Adelma von Vay - Ljubljana, 03. december 2012

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### *Introduction*

First of all I would like to express, that I am really happy, that we succeeded to meet us to present our researches and views of the life and work of Adelma von Vay. Besides that, I would like to thank the Miran Gorinšek, the mayor of the Municipality of Slovenske Konjice and the Institute for the Study of Christian Tradition to give us the opportunity to organize the international symposium of the life and work of the Adelma von Vay.

The intention of my presentation is to present a historical view of life and social role of Adelma von Vay. My researches took part in written and oral sources and some photos, which were found in her manor in Konjice.

I present here a shortened version of the paper.

### *A Girl named Adelheid is born*

Adelheid (Adelma) was born on 21 (As Adelma von Vay's birthday is in the most web pages with family trees of the family Wurmbrand-Stuppach 21 October. 1840<sup>1</sup> October 1840 in Tarnopol in Galicia (today Ternopil in Ukraine) to Ernst Heinrich Gundaccar Kaspar Gregor Johann Nepomuk (1804-1846), Count of Wurmbrand-Stuppach, and his wife Rosa Countess Teleki de Szék (1818-1890). Adelma was the fifth of seven children: Ferdinand (born in 1835), Hermann (born in 1836), Hedwig (born in 1837), Ernst (born in 1838), Adelheid (born in 1840), Ehrenreich (born in 1843), Rosa (born in 1844)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> e. g. . <http://www.geneall.net/>, there is also a record for 20 October, 1840. The fact that Adelma was born on 21 October 1840, is proven by her note in a book: Vay, Adelma, *Tagebuch eines kleinen Mädchens*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2010, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.geneall.net/>

History reveals that the Wurmbrand–Stuppach noble family was a family of soldiers and counsellors that served many generations of Habsburg rulers. The lineage was founded by Leutpold Wurmprant, who first appears in written sources in 1194. The family's genealogy is first mentioned in a document dating to 1322; based on information taken from Heinrich von Wurmprant von Stuppach's tombstone, which was erected in 1265 in the monastic church in Gloggnitz, it lists Helmwig Wurmprant as the founder of the lineage. Living descendants of the Wurmbrand–Stuppach family still live in the castle in Gloggnitz in lower Austria, where the family's ancestral cemetery is also located.<sup>3</sup>

## Childhood

Adelma spent her early childhood at the family's Schwarzau estate in lower Austria, where her father served as a lieutenant.<sup>4</sup> The estate was originally an emperor's hunting lodge, and was later given to the Wurmbrand noble family. Adelma wrote in her diaries that there is no place she loved more than her home in Schwarzau. The manor was designed by the renowned architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach. Adelma mentions that Maria Theresia's father, Karl VI, would visit her grandfather and that they would hunt together. Adelma expressed sorrow upon the sale of the estate.<sup>5</sup> The building has since been converted into a women's prison.<sup>6</sup>

Adelma read a great deal as a child. She enjoyed reading Hans Christian Andersen's fairytales very much: "I like The Little Mermaid the most, it's the best – it is so nice to read fairytales because they are much better than real life."<sup>7</sup>

When she was seven years old she lost her beloved father, who died on 9 December 1846 at Schwarzau castle. Adelma was deeply affected by his death: "It is very sad that daddy is dead – I still remember how it was, when he died and when he was lying in the chapel, we were all crying there."<sup>8</sup>

Adelma's mother Rosa remarried in 1851. Because of the marriage, Adelma left the Hapsburg Monarchy and spent the next ten years in Prussia with her stepfather Friedrich, Prince of Solms–Baruth. In many of her books, Adelma mentions Friedrich as a good father who cared for her: "Dear God gave us a new father – people call him a stepfather, but we would never call him that – we say father – and we love him very much. It is however a pity that we must depart Schwarzbach for another country."<sup>9</sup> Prince Solms-Baruth provided Adelma with a proper Catholic education, even though Prussia was a Protestant state and the Prince himself was a Protestant.<sup>10</sup> On 1 November 1852 she wrote: "A year

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.von-Wurmbrand-Stuppach.com>

<sup>4</sup> Pataky, Sophie, *Lexikon deutscher Frauen der Feder* Bd. 2. Berlin, C. Pataky, 1898, p. 387.

<sup>5</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thuns und Lassens, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 467.

<sup>6</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Tagebuch eines kleinen Mädchens*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2010, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Tagebuch eines kleinen Mädchens*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2010, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 9)

<sup>10</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 362.

has passed since my mother was married in Vienna to a good father. This day we celebrated very solemnly and joyfully. We drank champagne again and uncle W. gave a speech. We visited the town. My mum gave five silver groschen to each of us, that is a lot. I bought shoe laces and a cake of sweet-scented soap. In the evening the guests arrived, which means we had an evening party! Anna and I were not sitting with the adults in the salon, but in the nearby study, which is much more comfortable. Servants brought us milk and many delicious things to soak in it.”<sup>11</sup> On her birthday, 21 October 1852, she wrote: “Today I had my birthday, I am already 12 years old! My dear parents gave me so many beautiful things, which I do not deserve at all. The most beautiful present was given to me by Countess F. It is a small chest of drawers for a doll, and there is all sorts of finery for dolls, cloth, towels, sheets, bed linen.”<sup>12</sup>

### *An idyllic marriage to Baron Ödön Vay de Vaya*

Adelma fell in love with Ödön (10. 5. 1832 – 1. 3. 1921) when she was still a young girl. She wrote about it in her diary: “In 1848, I promised Ödön I’d marry him when I grow up. He was sixteen years old, and a lieutenant in the Austrian army. He used to visit us quite often and I would sit on his lap, I loved him passionately. Once I strung his monocle around my neck and fell asleep with it in my hand. My mum took it away and I cried, saying ‘But I’m going to marry him!’ And twelve years later it happened. That’s what is called keeping one’s word.”<sup>13</sup> It was a storybook example of love at first sight that culminated in a wedding, which took place in 1860, when Adelma was twenty and Baron Ödön was twenty-eight. And it was to remain an idyllic marriage until the couple was parted by death.



Picture 1: Photo of Adelma and Ödön taken around 1870

<sup>11</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Tagebuch eines kleinen Mädchens*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2010, p. 31-32.

<sup>12</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Tagebuch eines kleinen Mädchens*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2010, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thun's und Lassen's, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 480.

Baron Ödön (also Edmund, Eugen, Otto) Vay de Vaya (also spelled Vaja) was of Hungarian descent and a high-ranking cavalry officer.<sup>14</sup> He was a Protestant, and this presented an obstacle to marriage for Adelma and her fiancé. Two weeks before the wedding, she asked the Catholic Church for permission to get married to a Protestant and was refused. She married without the blessing of the Church and was excommunicated from the Catholic Church. The wedding was held in the Protestant church in Golssen. Despite the problems she encountered with the Catholic Church, Adelma did not convert to Protestantism at this time, as she had been raised a Catholic.<sup>15</sup>



Picture 2: Postcard – The church in Golssen

After the wedding, the newlyweds lived in the town of Tiszalök in Hungary<sup>16</sup> for seven years. They then bought Prevrat (Preurath) manor and moved to Konjice (Gonobitz). Proof of the purchase can be found in the land register in Konjice: an entry dated 4 February 1867 lists Adelma von Vay as the owner of the manor.<sup>17</sup>

In light of their idyllic marriage, many wondered why the couple did not have any children. A diary entry from New Year's Eve reads: "In our life, New Year's Day has peacefully passed. The day is much livelier for someone who receives a visit or has children. If God is so willing, I have to accept it. I may take consolation in the fact that no child will die to me. But that's why God gave us a blessing, my talent as a medium."<sup>18</sup> Adelma often stressed that because she and her husband did not have children, it was their lot to do good deeds, to console the downtrodden and to provide help whenever possible.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thun's und Lassen's, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 480.)

<sup>15</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 362–363.

<sup>16</sup> Pataky, Sophie, *Lexikon deutscher Frauen der Feder*, Bd. 2. Berlin, C. Pataky, 1898, p. 387.

<sup>17</sup> Land Register Slovenske Konjice 2 (81-150), including the day 4. February, 1867, District Court Archives Slovenske Konjice.

<sup>18</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thun's und Lassen's, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., str. 5.

In line with their humanitarian convictions, Adelma and Ödön would often donate to poor children. They would regularly give gifts for children at Christmas. A written record from 1890 states that Baroness Adelma von Vay gave gifts of shoes and clothing to 80 children, and that Princess Cristiane Windischgrätz from nearby Trebnik manor gave gifts to 90 children.<sup>20</sup>

Ödön was very fond of Adelma and supported her in her automatic writing, spiritism and acts of kindness. Ödön named the villa the couple bought on the island of Mali Lošinj (today Croatia) after his beloved wife Adelma. She respectfully mentions her beloved husband in her literary works and the dedications of her books. She calls her husband her “dual spirit” (*Dualgeist*):<sup>21</sup> “Ödön is my second Me, so I am just half without him.”<sup>22</sup> Adelma was grateful to him for the long, happy life he provided her.<sup>23</sup>

Adelma and Ödön spent the winter months at Villa Adelma in Mali Lošinj and the warmer months at their home in Konjice.<sup>24</sup> They bought the Villa in Mali Lošinj from the brother of the nobleman Willibald Riedl, who for three years had put all his heart into its construction. He died when it came time to move in, so Adelma in Ödön bought it in 1899. In memory of the kindly Willibald Riedl, they had a memorial plaque made. On Christmas Eve of the same year the couple spent their first night at Villa Adelma. In a séance, Adelma spoke with Riedl's ghost: “Yes, my darling Adelma, I knew you



Picture 3: Postcard – Villa Adelma in Mali Lošinj

<sup>20</sup> Konjice Chronicle, record for year 1897, parish archives Slovenske Konjice.

<sup>21</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thun's und Lassen's, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegismund, 1900, dedication to his husband.

<sup>22</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thun's und Lassen's, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegismund, 1900, p. 198.

<sup>23</sup> Vay, Catharina, Adelma und Ödön, *Geist, Kraft, Stoff*, 5. Auflage, Wien, Guido Kassal 1935, p. 10–11.

<sup>24</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geiste-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 338.



would love the villa, it was my wish that it would come into your hands and I have discovered what fine people you two are.”<sup>25</sup> The ghost of Mr Riedl himself was said to protect the villa in Mali Lošinj.<sup>26</sup> The Vays travelled to Mali Lošinj by train and ship. The main railway station in Konjice was located directly in front of their home and the park.<sup>27</sup>

### *Who was the mysterious Adelma?*

In unearthing historical truths, we come to know powerful personalities from times past. The Baroness Adelma von Vay, born Countess Wurmbrand-Stuppach, is certainly one such personality. When we part the veil surrounding her life, activity and work, we gain an awareness of the significance of this woman who lived in Konjice at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Firstly, Adelma was a humanitarian in the true sense of the word. She never demanded payment for her acts of kindness towards the poor, regardless of their social status. She used various forms of natural and energy (magnetic) healing and homeopathy. She was the personification of good-hearted, modest kindness. As a medium, she was full of honesty and kindness, which is why she managed to get good, pure influences "on her side" and use them to heal the sick and comfort the suffering.<sup>28</sup>

Adelma often visited the sick. She would bring them food and drinks and would comfort them. Among the people, Adelma is still remembered for treating infectious diseases and providing diagnoses and consultations.<sup>29</sup> One day as she was returning from one of her walks, a girl called to her, beseeching her to help her mother, who was dying. Adelma went to the young lady, whose abdomen and legs were swollen, and brought her cheese and Malaga wine. The next day, the priest visited the young lady to deliver the last rites. But when Adelma visited her on the third day, she was sitting up in her bed; though the swelling had gone down, she was very pale, having lost a great deal of blood and fluids. The young lady said that a miracle had occurred – she was cured. Adelma was often shown gratitude by those whom she had helped cure. Yet she remained modest, never letting her deeds bring about a sense of superiority. Adelma wrote that many people appreciated her, that many were fond of her and held her in high regard, but that there were also quite a few who hated her and were impatient with her, and who would poke fun at her because of her healing. But that didn't stop her, and she remained committed to humanitarian work. She believed in her mission.

The beauty of Adelma's soul was also reflected in her appearance. The young Englishwoman Caroline Corner accepted an invitation from the Vays to spend a summer at their home in Konjice; during her

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>26</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 213.

<sup>27</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thuns und Lassens, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 237.

<sup>28</sup> Židov, Nena, *Oris homeopatije v Sloveniji od začetka 19. stol. do danes*, v: *Etnolog* 6 (1996), p. 329–355.

<sup>29</sup> Oral source, Mrs. Jožica Pem, born in 1932.

<sup>30</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister -Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 361–362.

visit, she also visited other sites in Styria. She described her trip in the short book *My visit to Styria*. In the dedication of this book, we find a poem in praise of Adelma's kindness and beauty:



Picture 4: Photo of Adelma with her signature

*My Lady Adelma!*

*ADELMA! Lady mine, is fair of face  
Her form, a sylph could but surpass in grace;  
Throughout the land search, you will not compare  
The matchless beauty of her bronze-gold hair:  
As sunbeams glorify the summer's day  
Her tresses gladden as she wends her way,  
And faces brighten in the Styrian Land,  
And voices greet "Frau Gräffin, Küß die Hand".*

*My Lady's heart of gold is rich in store,  
The poor, relieved, oft pass out from her door,  
While from her sweet lips, great truths freely fall,  
In language simple and open to all.  
A sister- soul, right regal, gentle, kind,  
Her birthright honoured by her noble mind.  
Her bright face ever welcome through the land,  
Calls forth the cheerful greeting "Küss die Hand".*<sup>31</sup>

Caroline Corner described the Baroness as a beautiful and charming woman with curls of gold and a countenance beaming with benevolence, cheerfulness and intelligence and as a devoted humanitarian who helps the sick and those in need of help. She mentions how the *Berlin Court Circular* described

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<sup>31</sup> Corner, Caroline, *My visit to Styria*, London, An edition in Limp cloth, 1882, p. 2 (dedication).

her appearance at the Court balls: “the beautiful Baroness Von Vay, with classical features and hair of gold.”<sup>32</sup> She also describes Adelma’s husband: “The Baron, a Hungarian, big, broad, dark as midnight, and very handsome.”<sup>33</sup> As a noblewoman, Adelma had received a musical education – she could play multiple instruments and adored the piano. Caroline Corner noted that the Baron was a talented musician. She said that he played the zither with such feeling that it brought tears to her eyes.<sup>34</sup> In this context, it should also be noted that in one of her books, Adelma published notation and lyrics for a song entitled *Geisterlied* (“A Song about a Spirit”). The song was said to have been written during a séance.<sup>35</sup>

Adelma von Vay’s name has entered the annals of natural healing, homeopathy and energy medicine in Slovenia due to her numerous medical successes both at home and abroad.<sup>36</sup> Adelma would treat her patients by sending them magnetised wadding and giving them magnetised water to drink.<sup>37</sup> To thank her for her services, a Major in the Austro-Hungarian dedicated a poem to Adelma:

*My doctor*

*In a female silhouette*

*Blooming in a rare beauty.*

*healing in love to those near to her,*

*turning to God's kindness.*

*Laying her gentle arm,*

*praying in her mind,*

*God's Eye is falling upon*

*And approaching recovery to a sick person.*

*Even more she does with magic,*

*Wise is her advice*

*Healing in distance,*

*With a piece of wadding,*

*Which is imbued with might.*

*It was sent to you as well,*

*To put it beside sick,*

*To which love had previously been added,*

*With her blessing.*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 28-29.

<sup>35</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Die Sphären zwischen der Erde und Sonne*, Vierhöfen, Irmgard Hermann Verlag, 2007, p. 20-22.

<sup>36</sup> Židov, Nena, *Jurij Humar in njegovo zdravljenje ljudi z magnetizmom*, v: *Etnolog* 15 (2005), p. 325.

<sup>37</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 323-325.

<sup>38</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thuns und Lassens, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 212-213.



Adelma was very fond of nature. She would admire nature on her long walks; people would greet Adelma warmly on her walks, and she would stop and make polite conversation with anyone who passed her way.<sup>39</sup> She also wrote about the souls of flora and fauna: “Ghosts can see things that man cannot have in his consciousness; I see the souls of cut flowers and plants, of cut trees and murdered animals. That's an interesting perspective in colour and whisper ... When an axe cuts into a tree, a cry is heard and souls run away ... Upon large hunts of hares and pheasants, the air is full of animal souls, sighing and running around. The souls of dogs and horses remain on the Earth for a while; people have already had apparitions of dogs and horses ... It's nice to be a ghost, you see and learn so many new things.”<sup>40</sup>



Picture 5: Photo of Adelma with her dog

### *Adelma's social role in Konjice*

The Baroness Adelma Vay de Vaya, born Countess Wurmbrand-Stuppach, lived and worked in Konjice from 1867 to 1925. The general period marked the turning point in the transformation and decline of the Habsburg Monarchy. It also bore witness to the devastation of World War I and to changes that saw Slovenes become part of a new state, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, which later became the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Adelma came to Konjice as the twenty-seven year old wife of a high-ranking officer in the Austro-Hungarian army, Baron Ödön Vay de Vay.<sup>41</sup> The couple bought Prevrat manor in Konjice, as an entry from the land registry dated 4 February 1867 that lists Adelma von Vay as the owner shows.<sup>42</sup> Originally, Prevrat manor had only one floor, but the couple built and lavishly furnished a new wing. Caroline Corner notes that everything was decorated and furnished with a great deal of style and taste; a special silk covered the walls, and there was a porcelain stove and luxurious furniture. The rooms,

<sup>39</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 360-361.

<sup>40</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 244-245.

<sup>41</sup> Ožinger, Anton, *Zgodovinski oris konjiške prafare od ustanovitve do konca prve svetovne vojne*, v: Konjiško 146–1996, Nadžupnijski urad, Slovenske Konjice 1996, p. 57.

<sup>42</sup> Konjice Land Register 2 (81–150), registered on 4. 2. 1867, District Court Archives Slovenske Konjice.



Picture 6: Postcard with Adelma's handwriting –  
Prevrat manor



Picture 7: Stove in Baronvaj manor from Adelma's time  
(photo: A. B.)

she noted, were bright and comfortable.<sup>43</sup> People have long associated the Baron's name with the manor, referring to it as *Baronvaj*.

Adelma's study had a double window with a view of the ruins of Tattenbach Castle (as Adelma called Konjice castle),<sup>44</sup> the main road and the park. Sixteen mirrors hung on the walls, and her desk and furniture were from the Rococo era. Glass display cases housed neatly ordered Meissner figurines and old Viennese porcelain. There was a rocking chair beside the fireplace. On her desk were a photo of her family, flowers and other valuables.<sup>45</sup> There was also an image of Jesus Christ. We find an explanation in one of her books: A spirit by the name of Mary Magdalene writing through Adelma tells her that if she "sit[s] in the evening at the desk and watch[es] the image of Jesus Christ, I will frequently visit you as a spirit."<sup>46</sup>

Just as the ghost of Willibald Riedl watched over the villa in Mali Lošinj, three sword-bearing angels protected Baronvaj in Konjice against wicked spirits.<sup>47</sup> In one of Adelma's works, we find a beautiful

<sup>43</sup> Corner, Caroline, *My visit to Styria*, London, An edition in Limp cloth, 1882, p. 11-12.

<sup>44</sup> Adelma mentioned the knight ghost Tattenbach often in her books. Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 238.

<sup>45</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thuns und Lassen's, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 239-240.

<sup>46</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Straulino & Strukel, 1910, p. 124.

<sup>47</sup> Vay-Wurmbrand, Adelma, *Aus meinem Leben I.-II.: Ein Spiegelbild meines Lebens, meines Thuns und Lassen's, Erinnerungen, Mediumistisches, Humoristisches etc. in 365 Tagen.*, Berlin, Verlag der Hofbuchhandlung von Karl Siegmund, 1900, p. 237-238.

description of returning to Konjice from Lošinj: Adelma first greets and feeds the animals – horses, cows and pigeons – and plays with dogs. All the animals recognise her voice and run towards her: the horses neigh, the cows moo, the dogs bark. She then goes to the garden and she speaks to people; she looks through a stack of newspapers and reads letters. Adelma was very happy at home in Konjice. “It’s so good to be home.”<sup>48</sup> In discussing her home, Adelma speaks respectfully of her servants. “I am fond of my servants, they obey our orders and they do not demonstrate their own free will; no amount of money could buy their devotion.”<sup>49</sup>



Picture 8: Photo of Adelma in her room



Picture 9: Photo of Adelma with her servants

Baronvaj manor is charmingly situated, and the view, as described, Caroline Corner is stunning. “Above, on the right, are towers of the ruined Tattenbach Castle. On the left, is the more modern castle Windischgrätz, a little beyond the village is the turreted, red brick residence of the Baron Baltin, and sundry other castles and villas belonging to the nobility, but none more pleasing and picturesque than Baronvaj.”<sup>50</sup> A bust of Adelma’s mother Rosa once stood on the ground floor, which was kept till today.<sup>51</sup>



Picture 10: A bust of Adelma’s mother Rosa

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>50</sup> Corner, Caroline, *My visit to Styria*, London, An edition in Limp cloth, 1882, p. 11.

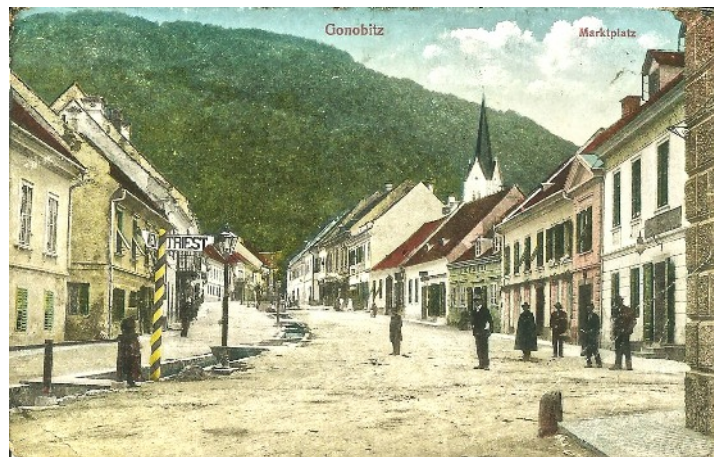
<sup>51</sup> Oral source, Mr. Jože Baraga, born in 1938 – his uncle’s narrative.



Caroline Corner described her visit with the couple at Konjice as picturesque and pleasing because of the favourable climate and beautiful surroundings. “The sun at noon bathes the surrounding mountains in a lovely golden gleam, at sunset, in a soft crimson glow; at eventide, enshrouds the whole scene in a blue-grey shadowy veil. However intense the heat of the day, the evenings are cool; the nights, ablaze with stars, or softened by the hallowing, soul-inspiring moonbeams, are fresh and exhilarating.”<sup>52</sup>

The town square of Konjice, consisting just two streets on each side, struck the young Englishwoman as rather quaint. The bridge in the centre of the square caught her attention, and she found gazing into the crystal clear water below to be refreshing. She also mentions a magnificent structure of saintly figures (Monument to Saint Florian), “before which the pious people are wont to make their genuflections, and, at the same time, perform their lavations.” Her description of the town continues: “The buildings are of white stone, massive and imposing externally, particularly the porticoes. The Inns are conspicuous by a corn-sheaf invariably hung at the door, in addition to the conventional sign. The stores are uninviting. Without, they can boast of little window display; within they are grimy and untidy, and are presided over by wondrously grotesque specimens of humanity. The dwellings of the officials and gentry, from an outside view, are commodious and attractive, but within! Comfort is a state undreamt of in Styrian middle class domestic economy. Our meagre English homesteads are luxurious, compared with theirs of a wealthier order. Far different is it with the nobility, however. Between the two classes is a vast distinction.”<sup>53</sup>

Caroline Corner writes that the daily activities during her stay with the couple were quite diverse: riding, walking, calling on friends, entertaining, and, of course, comforting the afflicted and distressed. “It was gratifying, too, to remark the growing light come into the hollow, sunken eyes, as they followed each movement of their ‘Frau Gräfin’, as they called her.”<sup>54</sup>



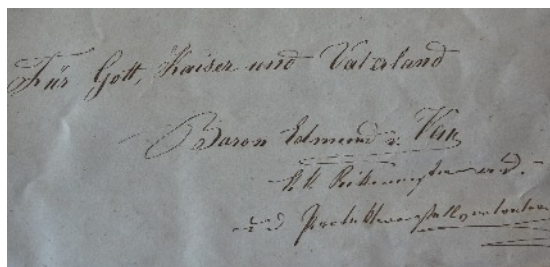
Picture 11: Postcard sent in 1912 – The square of Konjice

<sup>52</sup> Corner, Caroline, *My visit to Styria*, London, An edition in Limp cloth, 1882, p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 11-12.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

The Vays soon gained a reputation in Konjice. As a retired Austro-Hungarian field officer, Baron Vay would organise receptions at the manor for veterans of the Habsburg Monarchy in the *Militär – Veteranen – Verein* organisation.<sup>55</sup>



Picture 12: Baron Edmund's (Ödön's) entry on the Memorial of the Military Veteran Society Konjice, Konjice

The couple's involvement in the Committee of the Red Cross in Konjice also enhanced their reputation. In the 1890s, the Committee built a hospital in Prevrta called *Christiane Lazarett*<sup>56</sup> – named after Christiana Habsburg, the President of the Austro-Hungarian Red Cross. The locals know the hospital as the “Red Cross Hospital”. *Christiane Lazarett* Hospital consisted of two buildings – the larger one (which still stands today) housed the surgical and internal medicine wards and a small chapel, while the smaller one (located in the back) housed a ward for infectious diseases, a kitchen and living quarters for the nuns of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, who cared for the sick. The patients were tended to by doctors from Konjice. The hospital was well furnished for the time, and smaller surgical procedures could be performed.<sup>57</sup> The hospital also had a chapel where Sunday mass was held.<sup>58</sup> A priest named Jernej Voh wrote about *Christiane Lazarett* Hospital in the Konjice chronicle: “On 21 October (Thursday) I christened the new Red Cross Hospital, named *Christiane Lazarett*.”<sup>59</sup> The official opening was on 21 October 1897. 21 October is also the birthday of Baroness Adelma von Vay, and the occasion a great honour for the benefactress.



Picture 13: Postcard sent on 29 December 1914

<sup>55</sup> Gedenkbuch des Militär-Veteranen-Vereines in Gonobitz, Private archive Jože Baraga.

<sup>56</sup> Konjice Chronicle, record for year 1897, Parish archives Slovenske Konjice.

<sup>57</sup> Kolin, Franc, *Veliki Konjičani: records*; Pravite archives Jože Baraga.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Konjice Chronicle, record for year 1897, Parish archives Slovenske Konjice.



At the official opening, the priest Jernej Voh first blessed the chapel. He then blessed Jesus' heart, the bell and holy Christiane, and lastly he gave his blessing to the hospital. The priest delivered a speech in German and, due to time constraints, announced that a Slovene speech would follow next Sunday. He held the first mass in the chapel with help of his vicars Friderik Kukovič and Alojz Šoba. Many famous people from Konjice were present, including the Duchess Christiane Windischgrätz and the religious counsellor Jurij Bezenšek, the parish priest of Čadram.<sup>60</sup>

The Konjice branch of the Committee of the Red Cross celebrated the opening of the building on Sunday, 20 September 1896, when the cornerstone was set in place. On Friday, 3 September, the first Daughters of Charity arrived from Gradec: Ernestina Lešnek from Čadram as principal, Hipolita Vrabec from Pliskovica, and candidate Alojzija Korošak from Sv. Jurij ob Ščavnici. They were received at the church of St. George in Konjice, and the parish priest Jernej Voh gave them his blessing with the ciborium. The Duchess Christiane Windischgrätz then escorted the holy sisters to the hospital, which she had undertaken to manage for a period of ten years – she promised to support the holy sisters and the patients at her own expense. The priest then left for Prevrta and blessed the sisters' quarters.<sup>61</sup>

Baron Ödön von Vay and his wife Adelma erected another building beside the Red Cross Hospital at their own expense. Called *karantena* ("quarantine") the building served patients with infectious diseases. The building was situated behind the hospital and was opened and christened on 18 July 1908.<sup>62</sup>



Picture 14: Photo from the time of World War I: Adelma ( with the bright hat) and Ödön (in the black uniform) with soldiers and other personnel in front of the Red Cross Hospital in Konjice

During World War I there was an increase in the number of patients, so the government opened another hospital in Konjice. The new hospital was located next to where the old wing of the Pod Goro kindergarten stands today. It was named Lazarett Number 2, as postcards from the time show. Adelma and Ödön were important benefactors and donors for this hospital as well.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Kolin, Franc, *Veliki Konjičani: records*; Private archives Jože Baraga. Anton Ožinger, *Zgodovinski oris konjiške prafare od ustanovitve do konca prve svetovne vojne*, v: *Konjiško 1146–1996*, Parish archives, Slovenske Konjice 1996, p. 57.



Picture 15: Photo from the time of World War I: Adelma ( with the bright hat) and Ödön (in the black uniform) with soldiers and other personnel in front of the Lazarett 2 Hospital in Konjice

The Red Cross Hospital in Konjice was operational until the end of World War II, and was later converted into modest flats for socially vulnerable families.

It should also be noted that at the end of the 1880s Adelma's cousin Franziska Sermage moved to Konjice with her daughter Alexandra (often referred to as Sanda in Adelma's writings). Franziska (also Franzi) and Adelma were descendants of the Wurmbrand-Stuppach family, and both were born with the title Countess Wurmbrand-Stuppach. Their fathers were brothers – Adelma's father was Count Ernst Heinrich Wurmbrand-Stuppach, and Franciska's father was Count Ferdinand Heinrich Wurmbrand-Stuppach, as can be seen in the Wurmbrand-Stuppach family tree.<sup>63</sup>

The question of why exactly Countess Franziska moved to Konjice remains unanswered. After divorcing her husband, Count Richard Sermage, in 1886, she and her daughter Sanda moved to Dobje (Dobiehof) manor near Konjice. Her diary reveals that her daughter, who had never married, purchased the manor with her own money.<sup>64</sup> We may suppose that they had chosen to move there because of the close proximity of their relative Adelma. We possess some of the letters exchanged by Adelma and Sanda. Sanda calls Adelma "*Liebe tante Adelma*", although Adelma was in fact her mother Franzi's cousin. This is probably because neither the German nor Slovene language has an expression for this type of kinship relation.

There exist oral sources that reveal that Countess Sanda Sermage helped treat the common people.<sup>65</sup> Like Adelma, Sanda Sermage also wrote (though not automatic texts). Some of her manuscripts are kept in the Historical archives Celje.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.geneall.net>

<sup>64</sup> Personal fund of Alexandra Sermage, Historical archives Celje.

<sup>65</sup> Oral source, Mrs. Jožica Pem, born in 1932.



Picture 16: Letter from Sanda Sermage to Adelma

### *Adelma's attitude towards the Catholic Church*

Adelma, born Countess Wurmbrand-Stuppach, had a Catholic upbringing. And when her father died, her stepfather provided her a Catholic education, although he himself was a Protestant.<sup>66</sup> Adelma would convert to Protestantism much later in life. She wrote that she did not have the energy to do it before, even though Catholicism contained a great deal of dogma that bothered her and that she couldn't accept. She also noted that had she persisted with Catholicism, she would have become a spiritual slave.<sup>67</sup>

Caroline Corner, the Englishwoman who was a guest of the Vays, says that Adelma converted to Protestantism soon after she had returned home to England.<sup>68</sup> In one of her first books, Adelma writes that her first conflict with the Catholic Church occurred when she got married. She was excommunicated because she married a Protestant without reservation. Another conflict arose when she began publishing books about spiritism. The priest would not let her go to confession, saying she had been excommunicated. Adelma then contacted the Bishop, and was told that she would not be allowed to go take the sacraments unless she ceased her involvement with spiritism. Adelma also writes that she was humiliated at a baptism ceremony in Konjice when a Catholic Deacon prevented her from becoming a godmother by telling the parents that she had been excommunicated. All these incidents factored into Adelma's decision to convert to Calvinism.<sup>69</sup>

To many (especially those not familiar with her work), Adelma's attitude towards Christianity seems ambiguous. But sources – and especially her own work – reveal that quite the opposite is true: "I will become a Protestant like my husband and my mother (Adelma calls her mother-in-law 'mother' many times, because they were devoted to each other). No one is going to come between me and my God.

<sup>66</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 362.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 362-363.

<sup>68</sup> Corner, Caroline, *My visit to Styria*, London, An edition in Limp cloth, 1882, p. 18-19.

<sup>69</sup> Vay, Adelma, *Geister-Kundgebungen aus den Jahren 1865 bis 1910*, Graz, Ed. Geheimes Wissen, 2008, p. 363.

Spiritism is not my religion; I am still a Christian in the true meaning of the word. I want to work and fight for our Lord Christ's words. I do not belong to that spiritism that exploits the blessing of God. I stand here as Luther did in the past, and I can do no differently: God help me!”<sup>70</sup>

Adelma also mentions an old friend from Philadelphia in connection with her conversion to Protestantism. Through this friend, she spoke with the spirit of the Catholic Deacon, now deceased, who had excommunicated her from the Catholic Church years ago. The spirit asked her to forgive him and pray on his grave. Adelma heard out the request from her American friend and obliged. Adelma wrote that she is now thankful to the deceased Deacon because he helped her accept the Protestant faith. Thus reconciled, the spirit of the dead Deacon sent her a message: “What I deprived you of while alive I give you now, after my death.”<sup>71</sup>

### *Adelma's spirit lives on*

After Ödön's death, Adelma lived in Baronvaj in Konjice for four years. Being a psychic, she predicted her own death. One Dr Adolf Grünhut from the spiritualist's association in Budapest (*Verein Spiriter Forscher*) reveals the following: Although Adelma was never really sick, she asked her doctor for advice. Before she died, she had been suffering from bronchitis; otherwise she was feeling well. On the eve of her death, she parted with her doctor, who promised to call on her the following day at half past nine even though he wasn't particularly concerned about her health. Adelma replied: “I know I will suddenly die of a heart attack. Do not come at half past nine, because by then I will no longer be available.” The next day, the doctor came at nine o'clock to make sure there was no cause for concern. When a maid-servant came into her room several minutes before half past nine, Adelma said: “I will get up soon, please bring me my tea. When the maidservant brought her breakfast 3-4 minutes later – at exactly half past nine – Baroness Adelma von Vay was no longer alive.”<sup>72</sup>

Adelma died in her home in Konjice on 24 May 1925, and this is the date listed in the official record of her death.<sup>73</sup> Ödön Vay de Vaya died on 1 March 1921 in Mali Lošinj,<sup>74</sup> where he is also said to be buried. Oral sources claim that Adelma wrote in her will that she would like to be buried beside her husband in Mali Lošinj. Although a will is mentioned (and dated 28 February 1924) it has yet to turn up in an archive, so this information cannot be checked. The heir to the couple's fortune was Baron Ladislav Vay de Vaya.<sup>75</sup>

Adelma von Vay's burial was a complicated matter. In accordance with the rules and practices of the time, as a Protestant, she was not allowed to be buried in the Catholic part of the cemetery; however, in Konjice there was no cemetery outside the walls (for non-Catholic burials). The dilemma was cleverly solved by a priest from Konjice, Franc Hrastelj. He decided that Adelma could be buried in the presence

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 364.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 365.

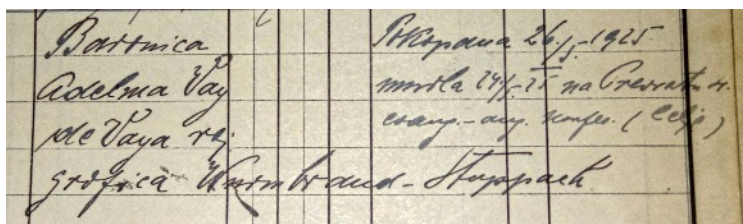
<sup>72</sup> Vay, Catharina, Adelma und Ödön, *Geist, Kraft, Stoff*, 5. Auflage, Wien, Guido Kassal 1935, p. 10-11.

<sup>73</sup> Mortuary book Slovenske Konjice, year 1925, p. 258, Archives Slovenske Konjice.

<sup>74</sup> Seen from the family tree: <http://genealogy.euweb.cz/hung/vay4.html>

<sup>75</sup> Basic purchase contract from 31. 10. 1925 a. 162/25, put in 11. 11. 1925 dn. nr. 976, Historical archives Celje.





Picture 17: Record of Adelma's death in the register of deaths

of an Evangelical Pastor, (In Konjice Mortuary book is on p. 258 written, that an evangelic priest was there from Celje.) but only at the place where the east and south walls of the cemetery meet. Thus there is a modest grave in the corner of the cemetery above the Church of St. Anne in Konjice. A white marble headstone tells us that here lies Baroness Adelma Vay de Vaya, born Countess Wurmbrand-Stuppach, 1840-1925.



Picture 18: Adelma's grave in Konjice

Baron Ladislav Vay de Vaya, the heir to the couple's fortune, sold their estate, including all real estate, to the factory owner Alfred Laurich, as the Konjice land registry<sup>77</sup> and the purchase contract, dated 4 May 1927, show.<sup>78</sup> A folk religion (in the sociological sense) arose around the Baroness, as local inhabitants (especially the simple peasant population who was often in need of help) believed that Adelma had supernatural powers which aid in healing. Many equated Adelma with their faith, and her grave is still visited today by those who believe in her healing powers.

Writing from her own experiences, Caroline Corner described how the peasant population had a strong faith in Adelma's healing powers. The sick, she wrote, would be brought to her from far and near.

<sup>77</sup> Konjice Land Register 2 (81-150), registered on 4. 2. 1867, District Court Archives Slovenske Konjice.

<sup>78</sup> Basic purchase contract from 4. 5. 1927, vlož. 6. 5. 1927, dn. št. 678, Historical archives Celje.



Caroline Corner bore witness to many of the good deeds Adelma performed for the poor, and notes that they showed her their sincerest gratitude.<sup>79</sup>

The memory of her good deeds remains to this day. Various keepsakes from Adelma's life hold valuable memories and have been passed down from generation to generation. One such precious keepsake is the cross Adelma gave her maidservant Marija Trdin as a wedding gift around 1900. Marija Trdin bequeathed the cross to her daughter, the reputable Marija Wedinger. Mrs Marija Wedinger in turn gave the cross to Mrs Jožica Pem in 1956 because she promised to care for her most valued treasure, her lovely daughter Rosvita, who was incapable of caring for herself due to illness, after her death. Mrs Jožica Pem related this touching story with tears in her eyes.<sup>80</sup>



Picture 19: The cross Adelma gave to her maidservant

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<sup>79</sup> Corner, Caroline, *My visit to Styria*, London, An edition in Limp cloth, 1882, p. 12-13.

<sup>80</sup> Oral source, Mrs. Jožica Pem, born in 1932. Good deeds certainly live on through Adelma's spirit.

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- Picture 1: Photo of Adelma and Ödön taken around 1870 (source: <http://axioart.com>)
- Picture 2: Postcard –The church in Golssen (source: <http://www.akpool.de>)
- Picture 3: Postcard: Vila Adelma in Mali Lošinj (source: <http://www.starerazglednice.com/hr/postcard-category/view>)
- Picture 4: Photo of Adelma with her signature (source: Studien über die Geisterwelt, Leipzig, Oswald Mutze Verlag, 1874, 2.Titelseite)
- Picture 5: Photo of a Adelma with her dog (source: private archives Jože Baraga)
- Picture 6: Postcard with Adelma's handwriting – Prevrat manor (source: private archives Jože Baraga)
- Picture 7: Stove in Baronvaj manor from Adelma's time (photo: A. B.)
- Picture 8: Photo of Adelma in her room (source: private archives Anton Rozman; Professor August Munda's heritage)
- Picture 9: Photo of Adelma with her servants (source private archives Jože Baraga)
- Picture 10: A bust of Adelma's mother Rosa (source private archives Jože Baraga)
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- Picture 14: Photo from the time of World War I: Adelma (with the bright hat) and Ödön (in the black uniform) with soldiers and other personnel in front of the Red Cross Hospital in Konjice (source: private archive Jože Baraga)
- Picture 15: Photo from the time of World War I: Adelma(with the bright hat) and Ödön (in the black uniform) with soldiers and other personnel in front of the Lazarett 2 Hospital in Konjice (source: private archives Jože Baraga)
- Picture 16: Letter from Sanda Sermage to Adelma (source: Personal fond Alexandra Sermage, Historical archives in Celje)
- Picture 17: Record of Adelma's death in the register of deaths (source: Municipal archives Slovenske Konjice)

Picture 18: Adelma's grave in Konjice (photo: A.B.)

Picture 19: The cross Adelma gave to her maidservant (photo: A.B.)

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